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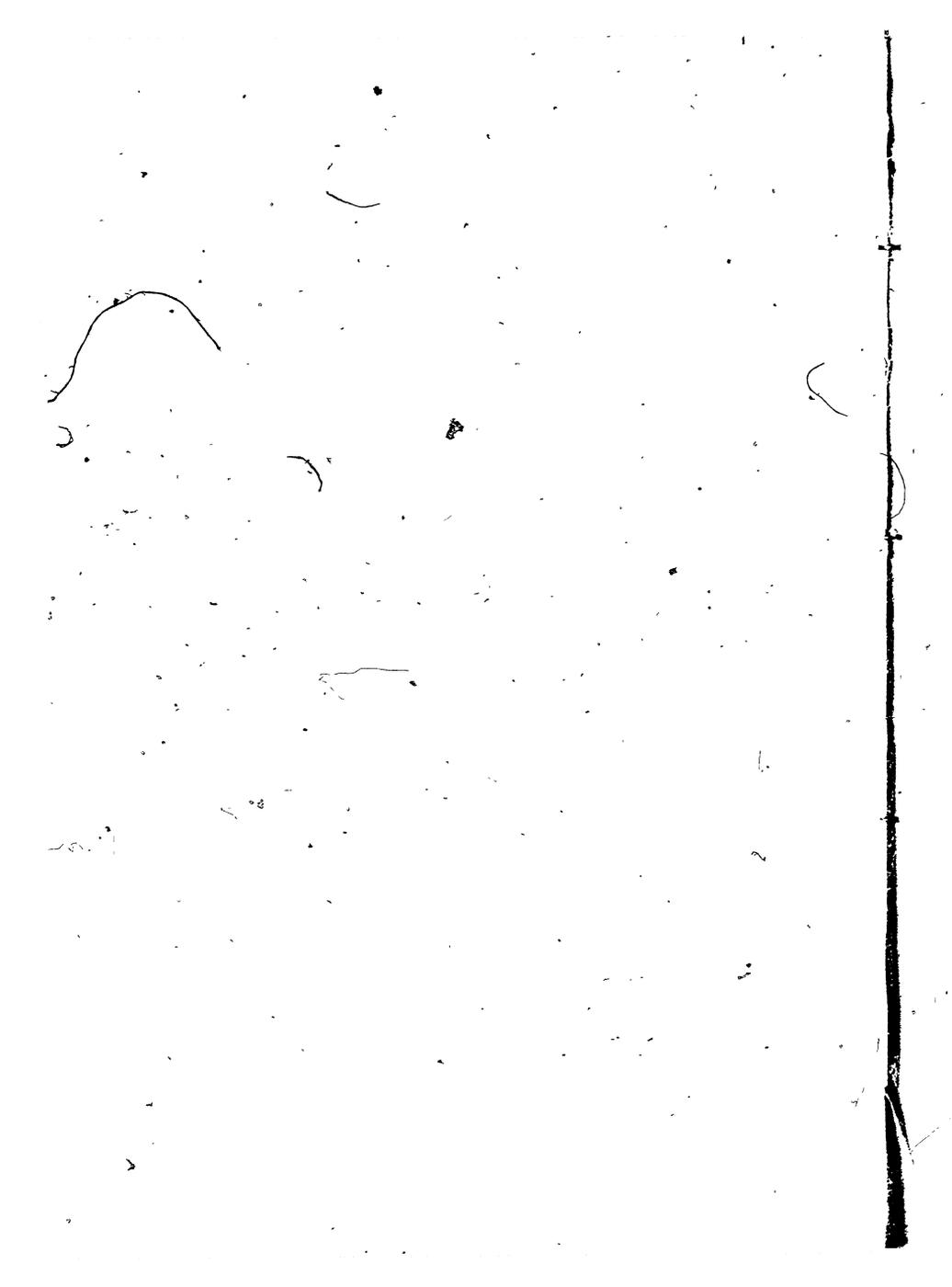
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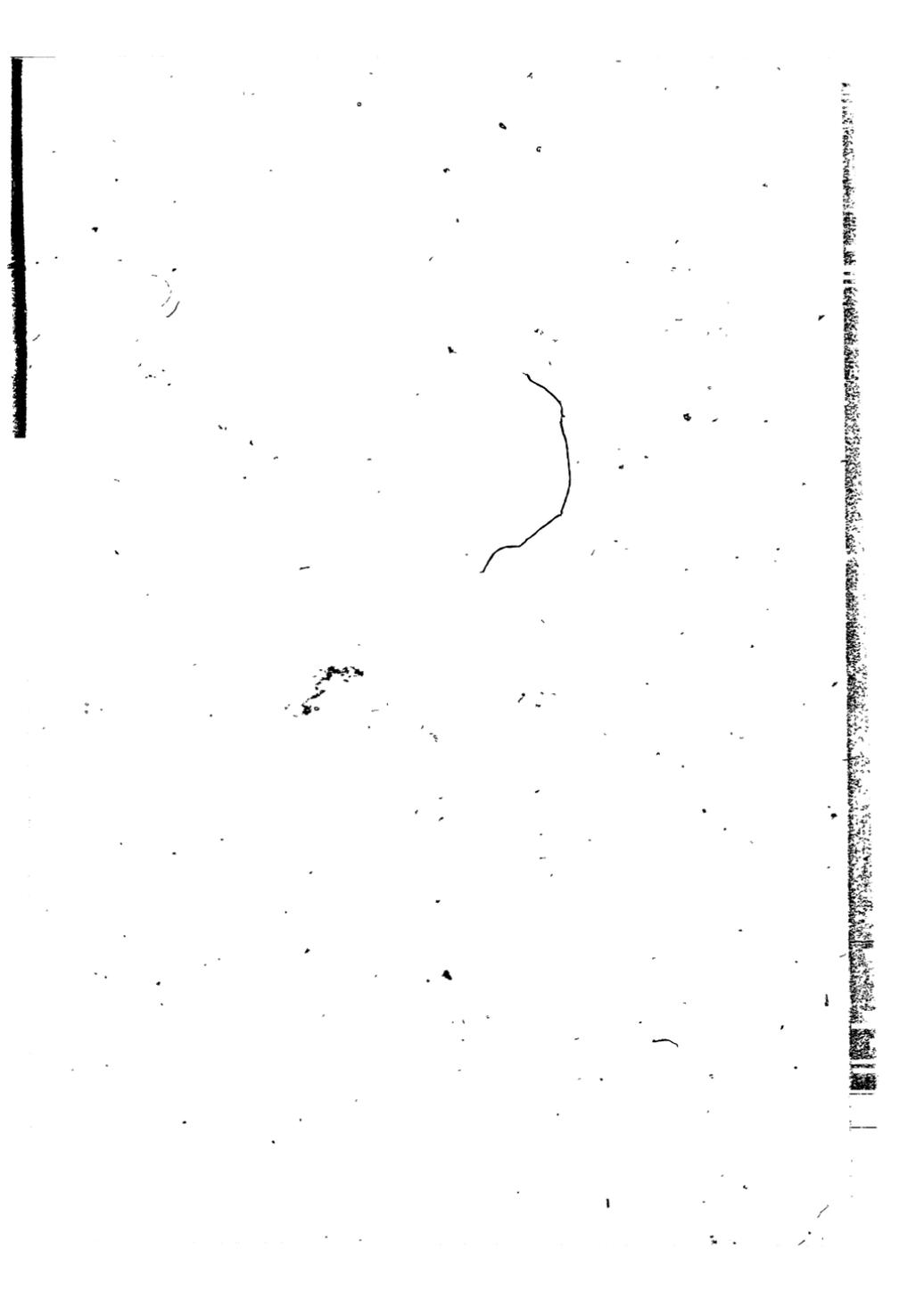
ELIZABETH GLEN, M.B.



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Frontispiece.

ELIZABETH GLEN.

ELIZABETH GLEN, M.B.

The Experiences of a Lady Doctor



BY

ANNIE S. SWAN

(Mrs. Burnett-Smith)

AUTHOR OF

"HOMESPUN," "A BITTER DEED," "A FOOLISH MARRIAGE,"
"ALDFRSYDE," ETC.

With full-page Illustrations by

D. MURRAY SMITH AND RICHARD TOD

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ELIZABETH GLEN, M.B.:

The Experiences of a Lady Doctor.

A BOARDING-HOUSE ROMANCE.

I HAD dropped in late one afternoon to see my friend, Dr. Elizabeth Glen, of 18, Rayburn Place, Bloomsbury, being anxious to interest her in a case which had excited my own sympathy and compassion. I was disappointed to find her not at home; but hearing that she was momentarily expected, I elected to await her return, and was ushered into her study—dear little cosy, womanly room—where she and I had had many a confidential talk. The history of our first acquaintance would, in itself, make no bad story, but I need not enter into it here. Suffice to say, that though there is a disparity of twelve years—a goodly

slice in a woman's life—between us, we are friends close and dear. There are but few pages in my life she has not read ; none, I believe, in hers she has not laid bare to me. The difference in our domestic affairs—I being married, she single—has made no difference in our friendship. She is a woman of so large a heart and so wide an experience that I have often said wifehood and motherhood could scarcely improve her in that respect. It always soothes me to go into my friend's room, even when she is absent from it ; her spirit seems to be always there. It does not differ materially from the private room of professional men, has the orthodox bookcase, study table, and consulting couch ; but it has many other touches—a perfect harmony of colours, a judicious arrangement of pictures and ornaments, and the inevitable flowers, without which no woman's room is complete. I laid my cloak on the couch, took off my gloves, and lifted the medical journal she had evidently hastily left. I looked into it with but a languid interest, finding nothing new. Of medical doings and sayings I have so much in my own home that I have lost that morbid interest in them sometimes exhibited by the uninitiated, though familiarity has still deepened my conviction that the medical pro-

fession, regarded from the highest standpoint, is the noblest in the world.

Presently I laid down the paper, and gazing intently into the fire, ruminated upon a matter which was troubling me considerably—the choice of a subject. It was not that I lacked material; the point was to find something at once personal and interesting. Sitting there, in Dr. Glen's own chair, the intuition I had so longed for came to me. I would ask her permission to record her experiences. Many of them I knew, some of them I had shared. My mind was illumined by this brilliant idea when I heard her latchkey in the door, and her firm but light foot coming towards the room where I sat.

I jumped up; and I suppose I must have looked particularly animated at the moment when she opened the door, for she gave a little satisfied nod.

“You looked worried last time I saw you. You've got a light, evidently. How are you to-day?”

While we shook hands I looked at her with a new interest. I had long loved her as a friend, and admired her as a woman, both physically and mentally. She was now to become something more, if she could be persuaded—the heroine of a tale. And

as I looked, I told myself she was an ideal heroine, intensely interesting, because she looked rather different from the ordinary dazzling creatures with perfect features and crowns of golden hair whom we are expected to trot out in the pages of fiction for the delectation of those who admire such uncommon beauty. I have always considered Elizabeth Glen to be a beautiful woman, and she is so still. Can you conceive of a perfect combination of womanliness and strength in the outline of face and figure? Rather above the middle height, straight as a pole, well moulded, and elegantly dressed, a sweet, grave, attractive face, with a mobile yet firm mouth, and glorious grey eyes, capable of a bewildering change of expression—such is my friend as she appears to me; beautiful, womanly, lovable exceedingly.

“I am very well,” I said, “and I am happy because I have got a new idea, though it is just possible that you may shatter it to atoms.”

“Am I such a bloodthirsty wretch?” she inquired, as she laid down her hat, and pushed her fingers through the short bright hair above her brow.

“I knew you were here to-day; I felt it as I came

along the street, and was glad of it. I have had a long, hard day, and have not broken my fast since breakfast."

"But that is nothing unusual; and you don't dine for an hour yet."

"No; but Margaret will bring us tea presently. You are all well at home, I suppose? And now for the new idea. Will it help, do you think?"

"Yes, if you will give it a chance."

"I! What can I have to do with it? My dear, nobody in this world, except perhaps your own husband, can be more interested in your work than I am, but I do not aspire to help you, except by being an occasional safety valve for your grumblings."

"You have helped me often, though," I could not help saying. "Often when I have been depressed you have uplifted me."

"How? I should like to hear in what way," she said, leaning her elbows on her knees, and, with her chin in her hands, looking over at me with those large, lovely, inquiring eyes, which must have wrought havoc with many a man's peace, though I have seldom dared to hint at it.

"Oh, because you are strong; purpose-like, as we

Scotch say. You always look as if you could surmount any difficulty, and rejoice in it."

"Then I'm a fraud, I fear. I have my cravings for the idle life of other women; as to-day, for instance, when desire has failed, the grasshopper has been a burden, and so on."

"Your digestion is out of order," I ventured to remark boldly; "and anyhow, I am not in the least sympathetic to-day, except towards myself. I'm swallowed up in this new idea. Don't you want to hear it?"

"I shall have to hear it, I suppose, whether I do or not," she said resignedly, and leaned back in her chair with her elbows on the arms, and her long, slender, strengthful fingers meeting at the tips, "so go ahead; and if I shut my eyes, pray don't imagine I have gone to sleep."

"You won't shut your eyes, I promise you. I've got the title for my new series of short stories. Will you make a guess at it?"

"No; time, and leisure, especially, are too precious to be so scandalously wasted. Don't treat me like a baby, or try to whet my curiosity. Be honest, as it is your nature to be, and tell me what you mean."

"Don't you think it will look well?" I said, tearing a leaf from the tablets on which I had written

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EXPERIENCES OF A LADY DOCTOR.

She took it in her hand, eyed it steadily for a moment, and then threw it into the fire.

"The new idea is exploded, dear," she said, gently but firmly. "Now for the evolution of another."

I slid down from my chair, and, folding my hands on her knees, began to talk very rapidly, and, as I thought, very convincingly. I can't remember all I said, but I know I tried to show her what a glorious idea it was, and how capable of being worked right to a successful issue, if only she would not be as obstinate as a mule.

"Well, I must say you plead well, but what about my reputation? I shall have half-a-dozen, or a dozen, libel actions immediately. Pray, will you bear the costs of these, provided I am willing to bear the ignominy?"

I got up then, feeling a trifle aggrieved.

"I see you are not amenable to any kind of reason, Elizabeth Glen," I remarked, "so I am going. No ;

not even Margaret's scones will lure me to stop to-day!"

"Sit down, you spitfire, and let us talk over this utterly unfeasible scheme rationally. Don't you foresee a thousand complications that might arise—complications from which, clever women though we account ourselves, we might find it difficult to escape?"

"Oh, there are difficulties in everything, if you go to look for them," I interrupted lamely.

"Besides, I am a sane woman, if a trifle erratic, and I'm not going to walk open-eyed into mischief."

"There is such a thing as changing names and disguising facts, is there not?" I suggested mildly.

"Here comes Margaret, timely interruption," said my friend with assumed relief; and the gaunt, keen-eyed, faithful servant-woman, who had gone into exile for love of her mistress' "dear bairn," came marching into the room, bearing the tray.

Those who did not know Margaret Inglis abhorred her; those who did, adored her. There was no middle course. I belonged to the ranks of the latter class, and she had so far overcome her prejudice against a woman who wrote *novells*, as she pronounced it, with an indescribable, inimitable accent of scorn, as to

bake scones especially for my coming ; and that meant a great deal more than any mere words. She paused, privileged by her place in the household to inquire kindly for me and mine, and when she departed her mistress did not speak.

“Margaret will stand out beautifully—a kind of Caleb Balderston in petticoats,” I said cheerfully, “and her devotion to you is one of the sweetest things I have ever seen. My dear Elizabeth, you can’t escape your destiny. Your personality is too striking and too lovely to be passed over.”

Still my friend did not speak, but I saw a wavering, lovely smile touch her mouth into exquisite sweetness. I took it as a sign that a thaw was approaching.

“Now,” I said, “just do one thing for me. Tell me the story of your first patient, just as you told me it that memorable day, seven years ago, when we first met. I shall take it down in shorthand, and after I have manipulated it at home, read it over to you. Then I promise you that if you still entirely disapprove, I shall never broach the idea again.”

“Very well. I’m called a strong-minded woman, but it seems to me when you talk to me that I have

no backbone except the meagre portion you graciously allow me. Put down those scones to toast, and let me fill up your cup, for if I begin I sha'n't stop till I have done."

"Very well," I said, and, with note-book in hand, took down every word as it fell from her lips. Two days later I brought the manuscript and read it to her, having carefully changed names and localities. She gave her consent to its publication, and has promised me further leaves from her journal, only stipulating that the stories should be written in the third person, and that she shall not be made more prominent than is absolutely needful. The story of her first patient, however, I give in her own words as follows :—

"It is not necessary to enter here upon the considerations which induced me to enter the ranks of professional women, nor to expatiate upon the many difficulties, at times almost insurmountable, which barred the way, and made the attainment of my life's purpose seem an impossible task. When I look back upon the bitter humiliations of my early struggle, I marvel much that courage and endurance were mine to pursue my course in the face of opposition most bitter and strenuous from all I loved. Although time

and success have somewhat mellowed their objections, I am, to this day, the Ishmaelite of my family, a being regarded with a mixture of pity, disapproval, and mild contempt. From my first entry into the practice of my profession it has been my custom each night to note down the events and experiences of the day. I have, therefore, in my possession several bulky and closely written volumes, which contain such odd bits of life's comedy and tragedy as come daily under the observation of a doctor. Before I tell you the story of my first patient it is necessary to state that, having obtained my degree at Dublin University, and studied for twelve months at the schools of Paris and Vienna, I took a small house in the Bloomsbury district, furnished it according to my own somewhat erratic ideas, installed therein a faithful old Scotchwoman who had been my nurse, and who, though sternly disapproving of the career I had chosen, was willing to share my exile from the land we both loved so well; and having put up my modest plate—

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sat down to wait for patients. I had, happily, an income of my own sufficient for the simple needs of

my small household, and my good Margaret is, as you know, a shining example of our national forethought and thrift.

“I was sitting here one evening about eight o'clock, my after-dinner coffee growing cold beside me, while I reflected on the harshness of destiny and the disappointments of life. Two months had passed without bringing in a single summons from without. This I had anticipated, and prepared for, and had stoutly resolved to make trial of the neighbourhood for twelve or eighteen months. My relatives, when they condescended to discuss the matter, had disapproved of the taking of the house, advising me rather to take rooms in a better locality. But I had, on that day, completed my tenth week of residence in Rayburn Place, and I had not once crossed the doorstep professionally. I had actually begun to seriously contemplate the complete downfall of my ambition, and to admit to myself that nobody in Bloomsbury seemed to be in need of a doctor, certainly of a woman doctor least of all. Being a very proud person in my own way, this thought brought with it its due meed of humiliation, and there were some very unprofessional tears standing warm and bright in my eyes, when I was startled by a very loud and peremptory ring at

the hall bell. I heard the hasty tread of my good Margaret on the kitchen stairs, and my strained ear did not fail to catch the sound of voices in brief, but evidently excited, colloquy at the door. Then Margaret appeared, large, comely, and excited, at my study door, and gave her message with a distinct note of triumph in her faithful voice: 'You're wanted, Miss Glen, at once, to 198, Bloomsbury Square.'

"I jumped up with glowing cheeks and shining eyes.

"Get my hat and jacket. Who brought the message? Any particulars about the case?"

"No, ma'am; but it's a lady very ill, the lassie said, a servant lassie, but poorly put on, though she had a fringe of hair on her forehead as good as a bonnet."

"I took my stethoscope from my desk, with a smile at Margaret's thrust at the servant maid's fringe, and having donned my neat double-breasted jacket and my felt hat, I sallied forth upon that eventful visit—eventful to me, since it was the absolute beginning of my professional career.

"Bloomsbury Square is not many steps from my own door; and I was not greatly surprised when I

discovered 198 to be one of the many boarding-houses in the Square. My smart knock was answered by a seedy-looking youth in a waiter's garb, and my nose was assailed by a mingling of odours left by the late dinner, which is the event of the boarding-house day.

"As I stepped into the large, bare hall a door opened, and a lady appeared, a large, important-looking person in a black satin gown, and a quantity of jewellery about her. She looked surprised first, and a trifle disappointed.

"'Oh, good evening, madame,' she said; 'what can I do for you? I'm expecting the doctor for a sick lady upstairs.'

"'I'm the doctor,' I said, without flinching, though, truth to tell, I felt it keenly. 'And I have come in response to the message left at my house a few minutes ago. Where is the case?'

"'I thought I had stormed the castle; and though the large lady looked distinctly dubious, she made a move towards the stairs.

"'Oh, well, if you are a doctor you'd better come up. I sent the gal for the nearest. Where do you live, may I ask?'

"'18, Rayburn Place. My name is Glen. What

is the matter with the lady? Was she taken suddenly ill?’

“‘You’ll see,’ said the lady significantly. ‘It’s a queer business, very queer altogether. I only hope you’ll understand it, and help me to save the credit of my house.’

“She then, without further parley, led the way up the long winding stairs to the top storey, and there, holding open one of the many doors, motioned me in. As I stepped past her a low moan came from the interior of the room, which was in semi-darkness, one small gaslight burning near the toilet-table between the two windows. It was a decently sized room, sparsely furnished, but fairly clean; the bed stood out from the wall, and on it lay my patient, a woman, young and lovely, as I saw at a glance. Mrs. Mallow, the landlady, also entered the room and closed the door. I confess that, for the moment, I was completely puzzled to make a diagnosis of the case.

“‘She’s been so dreadfully sick,’ said Mrs. Mallow, interrupting me as I took the feeble pulse. ‘It’s my belief, on account of everything, that she’s been and took something.’

“The same thought had occurred to me; and now, having all my wits about me, I saw in my patient’s

condition certain signs of poisoning. I glanced round the room inquiringly. Mrs. Mallow's glance, following mine, observed, simultaneously with me, a glass on the mantelpiece, which had a white sediment at the bottom. Mrs. Mallow handed it to me in visible excitement. I recognised the sediment at once as that of a simple article of domestic use, yet deadly enough in its action to bring about results the most fatal. Fortunately my patient, ignorant of quantities and their action, had stopped short of the fatal dose. I sent at once for the necessary antidote, and administered it with the desired effect. The poor young creature was very prostrate, and there was a look of dumb entreaty in her eyes, which touched me in a very unprofessional part. All this time the landlady was watching me keenly and with a critical air, which convinced me that I was, so far as she was concerned, on my trial.

“Feeling that my successful treatment of this curious case might be a matter of the utmost importance to me, I put my best foot forward, as the Scotch say, and I had the satisfaction of feeling that I had made a very favourable impression on Mrs. Mallow. It was about two hours before I could say I observed any improvement in the condition of my poor young

patient. By that time her skin had lost its clamminess, sickness had ceased, and the burning pains were considerably eased. But her appearance still left much to be desired. The languor was excessive, and though she looked at me with perfectly conscious eyes, her expression was one of settled melancholy. I signed to Mrs. Mallow to come to the window with me.

“You can, I suppose, tell me something about this poor girl?” I said. “She looks little more than a child, though she wears a wedding-ring.”

“Yes, but that doesn't make her a wife,” said Mrs. Mallow grimly. “She came here with her husband about three weeks ago, as handsome-looking a young couple, I will say, as ever I set eyes on. He said he was an artist, and that they might be here for some time, as he was going to make some copies in the National Gallery. All right, of course, I took 'em in; for she's as sweet a young creature as ever walked, and sings like a nightingale. Sometimes they came to the drawing-room of an evening, and made themselves agreeable, as only real quality can. He's that, anybody can see; and they adored each other. It has made mouths water in this house, my dear, to see their happiness.”

“‘Then why,’ I ventured to inquire, more and more surprised, ‘why has it come to this; and where is the husband?’

“‘In the country. He went the day before yesterday, in consequence, I do believe, of a letter that came to ‘im that morning. They got it at breakfast, and I saw ‘im look kind of queer, an’ then he went away.’

“‘Not deserted her, I trust,’ I said, casting a look of compassion towards the bed and its occupant.

“Mrs. Mallow shook her head.

“‘It’s my belief she thinks that, a sweet dear, if ever there was one, but too excited an’ fly-away for any sensible man’s wife, a spider-webby kind of cretur, Miss Glen, all fancies. It’s in ‘er very eyes.’

“Mrs. Mallow was undoubtedly a keen, discriminating observer of human nature, and thus gave me, in a few words, a grasp of the whole situation. The details I filled up, though somewhat wrongly, for myself.

“‘She won’t die, do you think?’ inquired Mrs. Mallow. ‘It would be a very bad thing for the house, of course, having an inquest, and all sorts of unpleasant things. The other ladies and gentlemen wouldn’t like it, would they?’

“Indeed they wouldn’t. But I assure you there is not the slightest fear of death, or of any serious consequences. Her ignorance of the power of the poison she took has saved her. Do you know anything about the husband’s whereabouts? He ought to be sent for. He should be here at a time like this.”

“I know no more than I’ve told you, and Mrs. Capel, poor dear, is very close, though as sweet-mannered as she can be. Maybe she’ll tell you. Doctors get a many stories, an’ you have a good heart, an’ a true woman’s way with you, ma’am, though it does seem queer to think you are a doctor.”

“I smiled a little at this frank expression of opinion, but felt secretly glad that I had made so favourable an impression on the good soul, who might be able to do me a good turn. I then walked over to the bed, and laid my hand on the square white brow of my young patient.

“My dear,” I said, as gently as I could, ‘you are greatly better, I think. Could you answer me a question?’

She signified by her eyes that she could and would. The vague terror had left them, and a more peaceful

and natural expression had returned to her face. Mrs. Mallow, with a delicacy which caused me to think yet more highly of her, immediately left the room.

“Who are you?” inquired my patient, when her eyes had followed the kind landlady to the door.

“I am the doctor; my name is Elizabeth Glen. And now I want to know, my dear girl, what is the meaning of this?”

“A faint flush began to rise to the girl’s fair cheek, and her eyes avoided mine.

“You meant kindly, trying to save me,” she said in a low voice. “But it would have been better to have let me die. I suppose I shall get better, sha’n’t I?”

“Yes, you will. You will be nearly all right to-morrow,” I said cheerily. “In time to receive your husband when he comes back; and I hope,” I added severely, after I had hazarded this remark, “that he will give you the talking-to you deserve.”

“Who said he would come to-morrow? He said he would come last night. I don’t think he will come back any more!” she said passionately.

“I pursed up my lips and gave a little nod. ‘So

it is that! Clever Mrs. Mallow!' was my inward remark.

"I continued to stroke the sweet white brow on which the bright hair curled in baby ringlets, giving to her that very young and childish look.

"My dear, you talk nonsense. You know how dearly he loves you. He will be here to-morrow, as surely as my name is Elizabeth Glen.'

"I made this statement with boldness, and it reassured her a little, I could see. The distress gradually faded entirely from her face, but a great wistfulness took its place.

"How kind and good you look!' she said, and, pulling my hand down with her small, white fingers, she pressed her cheek against it. 'Perhaps he will come back, though I spoke so harshly to him. You see, I have ruined his life, and he knows it; and how can we be happy? It would be far better for me to die.'

"You have not ruined his life, and he loves you better than himself,' I said, amazed at my own assertions. 'There will be some explanation of his prolonged absence, and you will be very sorry to-morrow when you see him for what you have done.'

"I was very proud of myself as I made these bold statements, not knowing in the least what I was talking about.

"There is only one explanation. He has gone to see his mother because she is ill, and they have plotted to keep him away from me. They have persuaded him not to come back; and if he loves them better than he loves me then he can remain with them, and so I told him."

"This little gleam of a passion so natural and so womanly made me smile, because I was pleased to see it. It was decidedly a healthy sign.

"Oh, nonsense! Did it not occur to you that his mother might be so very ill that he could not leave her? She may even have died in the interval, while you have been judging him so hardly."

"Then he might have written or telegraphed, she said shrewdly, and even pettishly. 'You are very kind to try and reassure me; but then, you see, I know better than you, because I am his wife.'

"This was rather conclusive, and I felt that it was useless to say much more.

"That is true; and because you are his wife you ought to know better than anybody how dear you are to him. It was so patent a fact,' I added, with

a little smile, as I took my gloves from the table and prepared to depart. 'So patent a fact,' I repeated with emphasis, 'that everybody in this house envied you. Mrs. Mallow told me so this very evening.'

"A lovely light, sweet and soft as a baby's smile, smoothed all the hardness from her sweet face, and I saw her eyes grow dim.

"'I think he loved me a little. It was I who did wrong to marry him. You see, I am a nobody, an orphan working with my needle for my daily bread, and he was the son of a great house.'

"'Yes,' I said, intensely interested, as every woman is in a love story. 'But I should say that you were a fit enough wife for him; you are gently-born yourself.'

"'No, I am not. My father was a poor tutor, my mother a teacher too; we are of no family. I met him at Bournemouth, which used to be my home. We forgot everything but ourselves, and it is always wicked to be selfish. Selfishness is always punished sooner or later.'

"'Is he, then, the heir to a great estate?' I inquired, with a curiosity natural and womanly, though quite unprofessional.

“‘No, he is the second son; but his mother is an earl's granddaughter, and she will never forgive him. She has said so, though he is her favourite child.’

“‘Poor child, all will yet come right, I hope and expect,’ I said, and stooping down, kissed her brow, and my eyes were not dry as I turned away.

* * * * *

“I was very early at my patient's bedside next day, and found her much better and brighter. It was quite evident that the dawn of the new day had given her hope, and that she expected her lost happiness to be restored to her before it closed.

“‘Has she had a letter, then?’ I asked Mrs. Mallow before I went up, when she told me of the quiet night and the bright disposition of the morning.

“But no letter had come, nor did any come that day nor for many days to come. Although my attendance could well have been dispensed with, I continued to visit the young wife every day. Needless to say, I was intensely interested in her case, but the interest of the woman exceeded that of the doctor.

“Frances Capel was no longer a patient, but a

woman suffering, as so many of us do, through that delicate and terrible organ we call the heart. As the days went on, and no word or sign came from the absent husband, I began to entertain a strong resentment against him, and to fear that perhaps, after all, his wife did know him best. There might be wheels within wheels of which I knew nothing. One thing only was certain—the highly strung temperament of that undisciplined girl could not long stand such a strain. It was not difficult to foresee the end.

“I therefore considered myself justified in taking a decisive step. Mrs. Mallow, whose goodness of heart and true motherly kindness shown to that distraught creature have sanctified to me for ever the maligned class to which she belonged, was not less anxious during those weary days, in which our patient passed through many vagaries of mind, many stages of acute spirit anguish. I found her alternately passionate, resentful, reproachful, sometimes railing at fate, and even threatening once to end all by her own hand. But I was able, as before, to convince her of the sin of such a step, and to show her that, however hard and intolerable the burden, yet must the creature not lay violent hands on the

life given by the Creator for a wise purpose, which is in every case through time revealed. Those wild moods, however, passed, and she relapsed into a state of quiescence and apathetic silence which I, as her medical attendant, could not regard without concern.

“ ‘Something must be done, and that at once, Mrs. Mallow,’ I said; ‘and I have an idea. I shall myself this very afternoon pay a visit to Mr. Jack Capel, and see whether he is really dead to every feeling of manly honour, to say nothing of common decency.’

“ Mrs. Mallow regarded me in silent admiration for a full minute.

“ ‘Miss Glen, if there be a hangel, you are that hangel,’ she said, making free with her *h*’s in her emotion. ‘If you were known in this neighbourhood as you deserve, the gentlemen doctors, with all their hairs, wouldn’t ’ave no chance.’

“ ‘Something has got to be done for her, Mrs. Mallow, and that soon, or we may have a repetition of the scene when we met first,’ I said significantly; and, walking out of the house, I took the first hansom in sight, and drove to Charing Cross Station.

“ It was only after I was in the train, which was

rapidly conveying me to Bartlett Common, that I realised what a very delicate and precarious mission I had taken upon myself. Only the knowledge that I acted from the very highest motives, and the conviction that good must come of it, bore me up to my journey's end. It was rather a longer journey than I had anticipated, and the afternoon was waning when the train drew up at Bartlett Common, the nearest station for Capel Court. It was a wet and dreary day, a thick mist enveloped the landscape, and I could not see many yards beyond the little enclosure, where sundry vehicles awaited the arrival of the train.

“‘Capel Court, miss?’ said the porter, to whom I put the question. ‘It ain’t but a few steps down the village, and first turning on the right. You see the gates? Not expected, miss. There ain’t no carriage from the Court ’ere to-day.’

“I thanked the man, and tramped away down the muddy but picturesque village street, past the ‘Capel Arms,’ the old church, and the cosy red vicarage, and so to the gates of the great house, thinking all the while of the poor, shrinking, little wife, who had won a son of Capel Court from the allegiance to the family pride.

"I had to ring a bell to gain admittance, and the woman who came out of the lodge looked so friendly that I ventured to ask whether Mrs. Capel were likely to be at home.

"'Oh yes, she be, ma'am; and Mr. John is a little better this evening. The doctor has just been and gone.'

"'He is here, then?' I said, completely taken off my guard. 'And what is the matter with him?'

"'Why, fever; he's been near death's door. He was taken bad the very night he came, an' has been off his head every minit since, an' goin' on dreadful.'

"I must have had a very curious expression on my face, for I observed the woman regarding me with something uncommonly like suspicion. I thanked her hastily, and turned my steps up the avenue towards the house, quite conscious, though I did not look back, that the lodge-keeper was staring after me. I did not care. I was happy and filled with trembling excitement, a sensation altogether new to one who had always prided herself on her calm temperament and remarkable powers of self-control. Capel Court was an imposing, if somewhat gloomy-looking mansion, a great house, indeed, in

every sense of the word, and the interior was more suggestive of gloomy grandeur than brightness or comfort. I was allowed to wait in the hall while the man took my name to his mistress; no hardship, however, since a glorious fire blazed in the wide dog-grate, and many luxurious chairs invited me to rest. But I was too excited to do anything but pace to and fro, wondering what was likely to be the issue of my errand.

"I had pictured Mrs. Capel a woman after the melodrama type of the proud and unbending mother, a woman of noble figure, and handsome but forbidding cast of face. The reality was entirely different—a little mite of a creature, with a fair, round, placid face, and yellow hair arranged so neatly about her head as to give the idea of extreme precision in all things. Her manner, however, had its own touch of hauteur, and when she spoke her voice had a harsh, unmusical ring.

"'Good afternoon,' she said, with a slight bow, and waited, with a faint touch of haughty inquiry in her whole bearing, to hear my message.

"'You do not know my name, of course,' I said. 'I come from London. I am a doctor, and I have been attending your son's wife.'

She gave a little start. The expression of her mouth changed, its outline becoming long and thin, and even cruel.

“‘Yes,’ she said languidly. ‘Then you will be able to give me her address. My son came to see me because I was ill, and was taken ill himself directly he arrived. I suppose the fever—typhoid—was on him when he left London. He is quite delirious, and I cannot find the address in his pocket. Please to give me it. I shall send for her, in case of any serious issue. I would wish to do my duty, though she is not, of course, a person of whom I can approve.’

“She delivered herself calmly and precisely, and kept her cold blue eyes fixed full on my face. I only hope I looked as angry as I felt, and I have been told that I can assume a very forbidding expression.

“‘I can give you the address, madam,’ I said, as I took out a card. ‘Mrs. Capel has been very ill indeed; the anxiety and suspense have nearly killed her. Although you cannot approve of her she is devoted to your son, her husband. Her devotion and her unselfishness have been a daily wonder to me since I have made her acquaintance.’

"Perhaps I stretched a point, but the calm, even stare of those cold blue eyes made me wild.

"The address?' she said inquiringly, and with that slight deprecating glance which said quite plainly she could very well dispense with any further expression of my opinion. I scribbled it on the card, and gave it to her as ungraciously as possible.

"Can I take any message to Mrs. Cape?"

"You can telegraph for me if you will be so good. Tell her to come, that my son is here, and that I have no wish to part husband and wife,' she said calmly. 'If you will please sit down tea will be sent to you. There is no train to London, anyhow, for an hour or more.'

"It was not a graciously offered hospitality, but I accepted it, in the hope that she would stay and talk. There was so very much I did not know, and which I wished to know.

"She rang the bell, and, having given her orders, looked at me again with a frank curiosity which I confess surprised me not a little.

"So you are a lady doctor? You do not look like it. Who employs you?"

"The manner of the speech was almost rude, but something in her face disarmed me. Now that the

sore subject was laid aside I saw another side of the mistress of Capel Court.

“ ‘I have only begun the practice of my profession, and your daughter-in-law is my first patient,’ I said, with a slight smile. ‘But I hope she will not be the last.’”

“ ‘You are a lady, I can see. What induced you to take a step so extraordinary, and, if you will excuse my frankness, so bold?’”

“ ‘It is a long story, Mrs. Capel, but I think I am doing right. I have decided to give it a fair trial, anyhow; and if, at the end of eighteen months, I have still nothing to do, I shall bury my ambition, and return, a sadder and wiser woman, to the bosom of my family.’”

“I laughed a trifle bitterly as I said this, for I did not relish the idea, even in jest.

“ ‘You are a north-countrywoman by your accent,’ she said. ‘And perseverance is your national characteristic, is it not? I trust there will be no occasion for you to forego your ambition. Would you like to go upstairs and see my son?’”

“This request, so suddenly proffered, took me entirely by surprise. Needless to say, I assented at once, and Mrs. Capel herself led the way up the

luxurious staircase to the sick-room. I glanced about me with an involuntary sigh of regretful envy, recalling just such another roomy and lovely old family house, where my place was empty, and where my absence was deplored. It is a sign of weakness to yearn for the flesh-pots of Egypt; nevertheless, the contrast between the old life in my father's house and the new was painfully strong at that moment, and made me half a coward.

"I was recalled from these gloomy thoughts by my intense interest in the young man lying so ill in that pleasant sick-room, containing everything that money could buy to alleviate pain.

"There was a nurse in the room; and the sick man, delirious still, kept up an unceasing babble of talk, to which she paid no heed. I looked at him with pathetic interest, admiring his noble head and fine features, though his mother assured me he did not look like himself. He was in the acute stage of the fever, and it was impossible to prognosticate the end. We did not long remain; nor did we say anything until we again returned to the hall.

"What is your opinion?" she asked then, and the question flattered me, of course.

"There is not much to give. The fever must

simply run its course. The issue depends, of course, on what strength is his to battle with the crisis when it comes. I——?

“The roll of carriage wheels interrupted us. Mrs. Capel, in evident surprise, walked to the hall door, and threw it open. To my amazement there stepped from the hired fly my patient, Jack Capel's wife. It was a strange moment. I almost held my breath. She took out her purse, we watching her, and paid the man, saying quietly, ‘You need not wait.’

“Then she walked into the house. She looked very frail and fragile, I thought, but lovely beyond expression. She did not appear to see me, but paused in front of Mrs. Capel, and lifted her large eyes to her face.

“‘My husband is here, and he is ill,’ she said. ‘I had a dream that told me so. You hate and despise me, I know, but you cannot keep me from him. Will you take me to him, if you please, at once?’

“Mrs. Capel's face was absolutely white. I saw her give a little shiver, but her expression conveyed nothing.

“They regarded each other steadily for a moment. The elder woman was the first to finch—

“‘I have no desire to keep you from him,’ she said quietly then. ‘I had no address, or I should have sent for you before. Step this way.’

“‘You do not look so unkindly at me as I expected. If I have wronged you—as I have bitterly disappointed you, I know—I ask to be forgiven. It is too late to remedy it now, but I love him——’

“Her sweet voice broke. I saw the elder woman shiver again, and a curious trembling light broke upon her face. The sweet humility, the childish grace of that desolate young creature had won the heart of the earl’s granddaughter, I could see.

“‘Nay, my dear, it is I who have wronged you,’ she said, and I marvelled to hear the tender cadence in her voice. ‘I had not seen you. I ask to be forgiven. Now, come.’

“She put her arm, with a protecting touch of motherly kindness, about the girl’s shoulders, and led her away. The better nature, the highest of all, since it is nearest to the Divine, had triumphed at the supreme moment, and there was peace.

“I was left, as I was destined often to be, on the outside. It did not trouble me to know I was forgotten. I drank the tea they had set before me, adjusted my wraps, and went away from Capel Court,

back to my solitude, to my little quiet home, to my hopes and fears, a little less lonely, perhaps, than when I came. Yet my woman's heart was not without its ache. It was many years, and then under very much altered circumstances, before I saw my first patient again."

II.

A SHADOWED LIFE.

"I SUPPOSE," I said to my friend one day, "you have always found men look more askance at you, professionally, I mean, than women?"

"I don't quite catch your meaning," she replied at once. "I have found women a great deal more sceptical about my abilities than any man could possibly be. In fact, at first at least, no woman would have me of her own free will, though, after a little experience of me, she generally changed her mind. The prejudice to be overcome against women doctors, even to-day, my dear, is tremendous."

"And perfectly unwarrantable," I supplemented calmly.

Dr. Glen smiled a little curious smile, and I saw a slightly mischievous gleam in her eye.

"Well, I don't know, or rather I *do* know what my private opinion is, but I am not bound to give it to

you for the asking," she replied. "Now, don't you want to hear about my first patient of the other sex? I was looking over my journal the other night, and when I read the account of him I wondered what you would say; probably, that it would not be calculated to suit your purpose."

"Let me hear it; I am the best judge of that," said I, feeling that I owed her a retort for the first part of her speech.

"I have no doubt you are," she said absently, and took out her watch. "It's half-past four. Supposing you've drunk sufficient tea—too much, if you ask me—will you drive with me to Hampstead? I have to see a patient there, close by the Heath. I have just time to do it comfortably before dinner. I can drop you at your own door as we return."

"And tell me the story as we go. I dreamed last night I had burglariously entered your abode, and borne away your story triumphantly."

Dr. Glen laughed, and gave the tip of her nose a rub with the palm of her hand, a curious little habit of hers which has often amused me.

"I'll take care you don't lay burglarious hands on that, madam. I'll burn it first. Well, are you ready?"



I assented, and we proceeded to the door, where the neat victoria waited further orders. Prosperous days had come to Dr. Glen, and the carriage was paid for out of her own professional earnings. She was proud of her success, and she stepped into her own carriage, and sat down in it too, like a woman who always has been used to it. It is a grace of manner difficult to acquire., Dr. Glen has it to perfection.

“Well, about this patient of mine, this man,” she said, with a curious intonation on the last word. Of course, I got him by mistake, and it was as good as a pantomime to see his face when I entered his room. Do you know this, dear?—there is not a woman in twenty who can bear up under the constant humiliation of such looks. They nearly slew me—at first; and though I don’t get so many of them now, of course the effect is just the same. Well, it was not long after the Capel case, and I was just wondering whether I had seen my first and last patient, when I was called up at two o’clock in the morning. Imagine the excitement of hearing the night-bell ring in my dressing-room, and of speaking down the tube for the first time! It was a delicious sensation. Curious how we change; now I wish the bell-wire would

break, and I feel inclined to stuff my stockings down the tube to ensure a quiet night. It was a man who spoke up to me, asking if I'd come at once to a neighbouring street to see his master, who had had a seizure. I said yes, of course, and asked him to wait a minute for me. I was a trifle nervous then about the streets at night, though I had to get over that. You think you can dress quickly,—I've heard you make your boast of it,—but you can't beat me. And I didn't go out a fright either, or forget to do my front hair. I even put on a pair of fresh cuffs, and I was down that stair in seven minutes from the time the bell rang. By this time Margaret had let the man in, and there he sat on the hall seat, and when he saw me he had the queerest look on his face you ever saw.

“I suppose you knew I was a lady?” I said, a trifle sharply; and he slapped his hand to his forelock respectfully at once.

“Yes'm—but—but——”

“But what?” I asked.

“Not so young, please'm,” he said, a trifle doubtfully.

“I presume the case is urgent. We had better go,” I said, with all the dignity I could command,

and wishing my hair would suddenly grow grey. 'Are you the gentleman's servant?'

" 'Yes'm, his valet,' he replied.

" 'You can tell me about your master as we go,' I said with dignity, and we passed out together into the chill air. *You* don't know what it is to rise out of a warm bed and march out into the raw air at two o'clock on a November morning; so be thankful for your mercies, and respectful to me.

" I gathered from the valet, whose name was Williams, that his master had had a sudden seizure about midnight, when preparing for bed, and that he was in an unconscious state. The house was not far off—only a stone's throw from my own—but Williams had gone out of his way naturally to avoid the lady doctor, and it was only in desperation, after calling on two medical men and finding both out, that he came for me. When I entered the house, I saw at a glance what not a man in ten would have noticed—that though the hall was quaint, and in some respects shabby; it contained much that was valuable, and which belonged to a person of wealth and taste. It was a private house, not a lodging-house, as I quite expected. A middle-aged, respectable-looking house-keeper came running downstairs to receive me, looking

at once relieved and a trifle disappointed with my appearance. My dear, in spite of all you and the doctor said about it, it *was* a mistake to make myself smart and youthful looking ; it only implanted distrust in the bosoms of my elderly patients, and a lack of respect in the young ones."

"I don't believe it," I replied flatly. "If we'd let you make a guy of yourself to begin with, we shouldn't be riding out to Hampstead in *your* victoria, Dr. Glen, but in a hired one at three shillings an hour. But there is no gratitude in this world—now proceed about the old gentleman."

"I calmly nodded to the housekeeper and pulled off my gloves as I went upstairs behind her and in front of Williams. By the time I entered the large, lofty room where my patient was, I was so interested in him that I forgot all about them, though they stood by while I made my examination, watching me like hawks. I saw at a glance what was wrong. He had had a paralytic shock, in the left side fortunately, so that his face was not much distorted. It was a good thing, for he was the very ugliest old man I have ever seen. He looked about seventy years of age, and from the colour of his skin I thought he must have spent the greater part of his

life in a foreign country. Though this was my first case of the kind, I was at no loss how to proceed ; and the two pairs of suspicious, watchful eyes upon me kept me up to the mark. I forgot nothing, and I gave my orders in a quick, decisive way, which favourably impressed them, I could see, while it filled me with admiration for myself. There are moments, as you know as well as I, when he who hesitates is lost. I know that my prompt action saved my reputation with these two menials, who have stood up for me like Britons ever since. It will not be very interesting for you to hear the details of my treatment ; suffice to say that before I left him I had the satisfaction of seeing my patient open his eyes, though they did not appear to look with much intelligence. Still, anything is better than unconsciousness. I perceived that the pair, Williams and Mrs. Davis—both Welsh names, by-the-bye—were considerably relieved by even such a slight improvement, and that they were undoubtedly attached, and strongly too, to their very ugly old master. When I left about six o'clock, Williams respectfully followed me downstairs, and asked whether I would like him to walk back with me.

“‘Oh no,’ I replied cheerfully. ‘It is day now, and I am not afraid. I shall come round after breakfast : meanwhile you know what to do.’

“‘Yes’m,’ he said, with a curious touch of wistfulness, which made his plain, unintelligent face quite attractive.

“‘Would you please tell me how it’s likely to turn out for my master?’

“‘I can’t,’ I replied frankly. ‘Because I don’t know. I can assure you this stroke will not be fatal, that is all. He may entirely recover, or he may be left partially disabled. We shall not be able to tell for some little time. Has he had anything special to worry or annoy him lately?’

“‘Yes’m, a heap ; he’s always bein’ annoyed ; they don’t give him no peace,’ he said quite savagely.

“‘Who are “they”?’ I inquired suggestively.

“‘His relations, the Brynfords of Plas Martyn ; they’ve done their best to suck him dry, and worry the life out o’ him. It would be the best bit o’ news they ever heard if he died, but you won’t let ’em hear it yet, will you, Miss—Doctor—beggin’ your pardon?’

“‘No, we won’t, since they are so bloodthirsty,’

I replied, with a smile. 'Then my patient's name is Brynford?'

"'Yes'm, Brynford Martyn it should be, but he dropped the Martyn long ago.'

"I nodded and left the house, beginning to be interested in the curious old man, who evidently had a history of his own. He could not be so repulsive as he looked, since he had won the devotion of the two servants, who waited upon him hand and foot, evidently out of pure affection. I saw him again in the course of the day, and found him, though conscious, in a dazed condition. He appeared to know I was a stranger, and to wonder what I wanted, but he always submitted quite quietly to all my ministrations. This went on for some days, until he was able to talk, a little thickly and incoherently, of course, and his faithful servants appeared to be overjoyed to hear the tones of his voice again. His first question to me was not very encouraging. What do you think it was?"

I said I did not know.

"Well, he asked me if I had been disappointed of a husband that I had taken to medicine, and if I had no relatives to put me in a lunatic asylum."

"And how did you answer him?"

"I told him frankly to mind his own business, and not to forget altogether that he owed his life partly to me. That was stretching a point, maybe, but I was bound to hold my own with him. And he liked it; he chuckled over that retort as if it were one of *Punch's* best jokes, and was very civil to me for two days. He was the queerest mixture. Sometimes I positively hated him, and vowed I should never pay him another visit. At other times he was almost amiable, and there was something touching in his loneliness, and in his utter dependence on his servants, who lavished upon him a devotion which he must have earned, since it had nothing mercenary about it."

"Did he never suggest that you should have another opinion, or appear to object to regard you as his medical adviser?"

"No, he was most amiable so far as that was concerned; and his confidence in me did a great deal towards restoring my self-respect, which so many months' idleness had brought to the lowest ebb. We used to have long conversations on every conceivable subject, and became very friendly, after he was quite strong enough to speak. One morning Williams came for me in the greatest haste, saying

Mr. Brynford had had another seizure, and would I come at once. He explained as we hurried to the house together that some of his relatives from Wales had arrived that morning, and that there had been a scene, ending in the collapse of his master. When we entered the house, a lady came out of the dining-room, a large, haughty person, of most forbidding aspect, and without so much as a civil greeting asked me what I wanted. 'I am the doctor in attendance on Mr. Brynford, madam,' I replied, and if ever I looked haughty I think I managed it then; 'and I cannot attend to you until I have seen him.'

"She stepped out into the hall and followed me upstairs. I suffered her to ascend out of the hearing of Williams, and then turned to her politely.

"'I am sorry I must forbid you Mr. Brynford's room just now, madam. I understand it is your sudden arrival which has again prostrated him. Until I give permission no one except myself and his attendants must go near my patient.'

"Splendid," I murmured. "Splendid; you were born to command, Elizabeth; but go on."

"You should have seen her face! She looked for a moment as if she would disregard me. She was nearly twice my age, and she had an eye that

might have pierced a stone wall, but I met her gaze steadily, and she saw that I meant what I said. She was neither a lady nor a good woman; therefore I had no compunction at all about her feelings. When I entered the room I turned the key in the lock. Mrs. Davis was alone with her master bathing his hands, and doing everything she could think of. I saw at a glance that what I feared had not occurred; he had had no second seizure, but had only gone into a fainting fit, out of which I managed to bring him, and when he opened his eyes I saw that there was a scared look in them, as if he had got a fright.

“‘That woman, Sophia Brynford Martyn,’ he muttered. ‘Has she gone?’

“‘She shall not come in here, sir,’ I said soothingly, and I laid my hand with real tenderness on his head. He was very ugly, and generally most disagreeable, but I felt a great rush of pity for him, and could not help showing it. Mrs. Davis took my hand and kissed it, with a queer sudden gesture, and tears standing in her eyes.

“‘But has she gone out of the house? You’ll put her out, won’t you, Miss Glen? Get the police to her, only put her out,’ he said, with piteous eagerness.

“‘She shall leave the house within an hour,’ I replied, with that colossal assumption at which you have often professed yourself amused. He appeared more contented after that, and when I had given him something fell into a sleep of exhaustion. Then I bethought myself of the large woman awaiting me downstairs.

“‘Mrs. Davis,’ I said in a whisper, ‘will you come into the dressing-room a moment?’

“She followed me at once.

“‘Can you tell me anything about the lady downstairs? I am going to order her out of the house—at least it amounts to that. But what relation is she to Mr. Brynford?’

“‘His cousin’s wife, doctor; but never mind, order her out an’ welcome. She’s a bad ’un, she is.’

“I have never professed immunity from the common weaknesses of my sex, and I was fearfully curious concerning my patient and his objectionable relative, but it did not become me to force the confidence of a servant; so I withdrew to deal as diplomatically as might be with Mrs. Brynford Martyn.

“She was pacing the hall, a most imposing-looking figure, and when she heard me on the stairs she

opened the dining-room door and motioned me to enter. I did so, and saw there a gentleman, sitting at the table unconcernedly reading the *Times*, a small, rather evil-looking person, with red hair and furtive shifting eyes. He merely glanced at me, but a curious and not very attractive smile was on his face, as if he anticipated a pleasant excitement in the encounter between his wife and me.

“‘Well,’ said Mrs. Brynford Martyn, very sharply, how did you find him?’

“‘In a fainting fit, from which he has now recovered,’ I replied politely. ‘I know nothing, madam, of Mr. Brynford’s family affairs, but I do know that in his present weak state he does not wish your presence in the house; and he desires me to ask you to leave without delay.’

“‘And pray, who are you, to bring me any such message?’ she inquired, in a most insulting voice; but I kept my temper, and replied calmly:

“‘I am his medical adviser.’

“‘His medical adviser!’ she repeated, with a sneer. ‘And a pretty one you are; don’t you think shame of yourself, at your age, a disgrace to your sex, nothing more?’

“‘I smiled, because I could not help it.

“I have sent for another doctor, miss, a proper doctor, who will take Mr. Brynford’s case into his own hands, and you can send in your bill as soon as you like, though I suppose you and Williams and Davis have feathered your pockets pretty well out of the old fool’s purse.’

“Her vulgarity took the sting from her words, and though I was very angry, I didn’t show it.

“I am Mr. Brynford’s medical adviser,’ I repeated calmly, ‘and I keep the case in my hands until he desires other advice. As you have sent for another doctor, I shall, of course, wait to see him, and explain the matter to him. If necessary I must remain in the house altogether, to see that you do not annoy Mr. Brynford. A few more shocks of the same kind can have but one issue.’

“The pair exchanged glances and a few words in Spanish, which I unfortunately did not understand. Then Mrs. Brynford Martyn’s manner suddenly changed, and became almost conciliatory.

“I did not mean to be rude to you, Miss Glen, but I have been naturally annoyed, of course, at having been kept in ignorance of my cousin’s state of health. We are his only relatives, and it has grieved us to see him so entirely in the hands of

servants. He is a very rich man, and I fear these people only serve him for their own ends.'

"I don't think so, madam,' I replied courteously. 'I have had every opportunity of observing them, and I have never seen greater personal devotion than Williams and Mrs. Davis bestow on Mr. Brynford.'

"She shrugged her shoulders, and made no reply to that.

"As my cousin has unfortunately taken some strange umbrage at us, and we cannot but think that his mind has been poisoned against us,' she said, 'Mr. Martyn and I will leave the house to-day. We shall go to the Inns of Court Hotel in Holborn, and there remain until Mr. Brynford is better.'

"This was so much gained, and within an hour the pair had left the house. I went up to inform Mr. Brynford of their departure, but found him still asleep, and after I had seen the medical man whom Mrs. Brynford Martyn had called in I also left."

"What did the other doctor say?" I inquired.

"Oh, he was very civil, and we have been most friendly ever since. Well, I did not see my patient till the evening, and then he was quite himself again, very weak of course, but apparently relieved in his mind.



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"I WILL ADMIT A NATURAL CURIOSITY, MR. BRYNFORD."

“‘You gave us all a pretty fright this morning, Mr. Brynford,’ I said.

“‘He smiled faintly, and asked me to sit down, which I was not loth to do, being exceedingly anxious to have some light thrown on the occurrence of the morning, though I hardly anticipated that Mr. Brynford would give me his full confidence.

“‘Well, did you have a hot quarter of an hour with her this morning, my dear?’ he asked, with a curious gleam in his restless black eyes. He sometimes said ‘my dear’ to me, and never offensively. I knew by it that he was immensely pleased.

“‘She is certainly not a very agreeable person,’ I replied. ‘But I succeeded in convincing her that it would be better for them to leave the house, and that was the main business, wasn’t it?’

“‘Indeed it was. No, she isn’t an agreeable person, Miss Glen; she’s a fiend, a woman without heart or principle. It is due to you, seeing you have done so much for me, to tell you something about her, and how she came to have such an evil influence on my life.’

“‘I will admit a natural curiosity, Mr. Brynford; but if it will agitate you to speak of her, pray don’t.’

“‘Oh, it will agitate me, but no worse than

thinking of her. Besides, I want to tell you. I've never known anybody like you, so good and true, and possessing so much sound common sense." There, see how unblushingly I can sound my own praises ; but it's all a part of the story.

"I think I see the poor old gentleman yet, sitting up in bed, with his gaudy Eastern dressing-gown round his shoulders, and a Turkish cap on the back of his head, his thin white hair straggling out below it, making his face look even more parched and yellow by contrast. He was a pathetic sight.

"You wouldn't think, looking at Sophia Martyn,' he began, 'that she once appeared to me a beautiful and attractive woman. But it is the case. I have spent the greater part of my life in India. I was on the Government survey, and in the course of my journeys took up shares in various tea-gardens, which turned out a good speculation, and helped to make my fortune. I rather enjoyed the wandering life after I got used to the privation of being almost totally removed from civilisation. There was a young fellow on our staff, Fred Clayton by name, who was a great chum of mine ; we were as intimate as brothers, loved each other more dearly than most brothers, till we both fell in love with the same

woman—the woman you saw here this morning. We saw her first at her brother's bungalow in Assam, where she was keeping house for him. He was manager of a tea-garden there, and they were a rough lot altogether, and were spoken of lightly all over the district. But they were jolly, and Clayton and I, careless young fellows, hung about their place, travelling long distances to it whenever we got the chance, and of course we fell in love with her, or imagined ourselves in love, which amounted to the same thing. She was a very pretty girl then, and had that peculiar fascination which a woman, not good at heart, can sometimes exercise for the time being over the best of men. But only for the time being, mark you; the revulsion of feeling is bound to come sooner or later. She was not particularly comfortable at the bungalow with her brother, having come out to him against his express desire, and he often showed her pretty plainly that she was hardly tolerated. That, of course, made her doubly anxious to get married, and she did her utmost to secure a husband, making the mistake, however, of letting her efforts be too plainly seen. She had had plenty dangling after her, but somehow they always sheered off at the critical moment. Clayton and I were about equally hit, and

she made it her business to find out which of us was the best match. The luck was on my side. I belong to an old Welsh family, and I had a property in Carnarvon, and my prospects were much better than poor Clayton's, who had nothing but his profession to look to. So she favoured me. Clayton was madly jealous, of course, and over Sophia Blake we fell out for the first time since our acquaintance began. If she had only been honest to poor Fred, things might have gone differently, but she gave him encouragement when I was not there; in fact, at the bottom I believe she liked him best, as well as such a heartless woman could like anybody. Well, things came to an awful crisis when we went up together to spend Christmas with the Blakes. There were other people there—not a very nice set—and there was a good deal of gambling, and other objectionable games went on. Sophia's behaviour was the reverse of what it ought to have been, but we saw no fault in it. They gave a dance on Christmas Eve, and there were about thirty persons there.'

“‘Thirty!’ I repeated in surprise; ‘where did they all come from?’

“‘Far and near. People think nothing of riding twenty miles to a dance in India. I've done it

myself, many a time: Sophia flirted outrageously all the evening. I was sitting a dance out in the verandah with her, and was just on the point of asking her the all-important question, which I should have regretted always, when Clayton came out. I had my arm round her waist, as I had often had. I saw in a minute that Fred was in a passion. I didn't know, of course, that she had been sitting with him just in the same position not an hour ago. He only looked at us both steadily a moment, and then re-entered the bungalow.

“ “Poor Fred looks struck all of a heap, doesn't he?” she asked coquettishly. “But what was it you were going to say?”

“ “I couldn't for the life of me have said it. The look on Fred's face haunted me. I got up suddenly, and said we'd better go back to the house. She was angry and chagrined, I could see, but I didn't care. I knew now that Fred was much harder hit than I was, and I made up my mind to leave him an open field, forgetting that I had a woman to deal with as well. We re-entered the house, and as I was standing at one of the portière curtains, someone tapped me on the shoulder, and Fred's voice spoke :—

“ “Come out, Tom. I want to speak to you.”

“I turned round and followed him at once. A little avenue of deodars ran straight down from the front of the bungalow to the rough road, the jungle being on the other side. It was a pretty wild part of the country, and the tea-garden one of the latest brought under cultivation. On this road, in the open space, Fred stood still. I think I see him still, his face distorted with anger and his eyes blazing. He had always a passionate temper, which often got the better of him, but I had never seen him so worked up.

““I want to know,” he said, and his voice was thick, “what you mean by making love to my affianced wife. We can’t both have her, and I want you to understand that she belongs to me.”

“I don’t know what it was in his look and tone that irritated me, but I got angry too.

““That’s for the lady to decide, isn’t it?” I said, with a slight sneer; “and I don’t think she has decided yet. Suppose we call her here to do it on the spot.”

““We can decide it ourselves if you like, a fair field and a fair fight,” he said suggestively. “If you don’t give her up, swear to me here that you’ll never breathe love to her again, I’ll kill you, Tom Brynford, where you stand.”

"I laughed right out. I was sorry for the boy, but at the same time he amused me.

"I've only to snap my fingers and she's mine, my lad," I said lightly, not dreaming that my idle word would have such an awful effect. He whipped a pistol from his breast, and, pointing at me, fired a shot which missed me clean. I jumped back, of course, and before I recovered myself there was another double report, and I saw poor Clayton fall to the ground, with a red stain on his glossy shirt front. As quick as lightning a woman's white form flashed among the deodars, and Sophia flew out from her hiding, where she had been listening to our conversation. We bent over him together, but he never spoke nor moved. He was dead.

"At this point the poor old gentleman was quite overcome, and I had to give him a stimulant. It was some time before he could speak again, and then he did not say much.

"You are a good woman," he said, 'so you can't comprehend the depths of a bad one. I don't want to expatiate here on Sophia Blake's wickedness; it, and my own bitter regret, have cursed my life for the last forty years. Instead of being sobered and changed by the lad's awful fate, she sought to make

it the stepping-stone to her own advancement. She said that if I did not marry her she'd tell a story which would be so badly against me that my life wouldn't be worth an hour's purchase. Marry her! I'd rather have served myself with the same pistol that had killed poor Fred. It was mine, too, and she might have made the evidence strong. There was an inquiry, of course, but an inquiry in India and one in England are not synonymous terms. I refused to marry her, but fool that I was, I offered her money as compensation, though compensation for what I did not very well know. I was distracted, in fact, and didn't know what I was doing, and I put myself in her power. But marry her I didn't, and never would. I'd have killed her and myself first. She followed me to England, and I knew no peace till she married my worthless cousin, Robert Martyn; and as he never could earn a penny for himself, I allow them to live at Plas Martyn, and give them enough to live upon. But she has an eye to my money, and would hold the old threat of exposure over me yet if I would see her, which I haven't done for some years. She stole a march upon me this morning.' And that was his tale.

“Though he told me the story that night, he never

alluded to it again, nor did I, and I never told him about a letter I wrote to Mrs. Brynford Martyn at the Inns of Court, letting her understand that I knew the story of her life and my patient's. She replied most insultingly, of course, but from that time she left him alone."

"And did he recover?" I inquired, with intense interest.

"Oh yes, and went about as lively as a cricket for several years, till another shock carried him away only six months ago."

"And I hope he was properly grateful to you for your attention, for saving his life, and ridding him of a torment."

"I didn't think so at the time," replied Dr. Glen, with a very odd little smile. "I sent him my bill in due course, putting, as I thought, a fair value on my services, and he sent Williams back with it, to tell me it was exorbitant, and that I must take off the odd shillings."

"And did you?"

"No, I never reduce a bill, my dear; it's a bad precedent to create. Either it must be paid in full or not at all. He did pay it, though with grumbling. He was a very queer old man. I have never told

you it was Mr. Brynford who left me the money to buy the carriage, and a letter, which I may show you some day when I am particularly amiable, and you are not on the hunt for copy. Here we are!"

III.

A CHRISTMAS BABY.

"BABIES?" said Dr. Glen meditatively. "Yes, I know something about babies,—not very much perhaps, but enough to convince me that they are not so helpless as they are called. A good, decent-sized baby has as much power in its small finger as some grown people have in their whole anatomy, and a larger capacity for tyranny in its tiniest squall than an autocrat in his most autocratic mood."

"Could you demonstrate the fact?" I enquired, with a smile.

"I could, but you don't require it to be demonstrated. You can't contradict it."

"Have you got anything specially interesting about babies in that journal of yours?" I enquired, with cautious meekness.

"Yes, indeed," replied Dr. Glen cheerfully. "But who wants to hear about babies?"

"Everybody," I asserted boldly. "Those who have babies like to read about them, if only to see whether the writer knows what she is talking about. Those who have not got them wish they had, and are devoured with curiosity regarding their habits and customs."

"You wriggle out of everything with surprising agility, for a person of your age," said Dr. Glen whimsically. "I suppose the long and the short of it is you want a baby story this month, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then why couldn't you say so in plain language, instead of trying to walk round the enemy in that fashion?"

"Well, to tell the truth, the enemy wears rather a forbidding aspect to-day, with that ominous pucker between her brows."

"Well, I am worried, awfully worried," said Dr. Glen; and, sitting down, she let her square, beautiful chin drop into her hands, and regarded me solemnly over her finger-tips. "I've got a patient, a woman, who won't get better, nor show the tiniest

bit of improvement even. She defies every known remedy, and I'm at my wit's end."

"What's the matter with her?"

"Well, between ourselves, I don't mind telling you the diagnosis of her case has been a puzzle to me. Sometimes I think she has one thing, sometimes another."

"That's a fearful confession. Hasn't she any symptoms?" I enquired vaguely.

"Far too many; and you needn't adopt such a superior air. Your husband has been in the same dilemma often, I could take my affidavit, though, being a man, he wouldn't admit it."

"How hard you always are on men, Elizabeth," I said, in mild remonstrance.

"Am I? They can survive it; but it is a worrying thing, dear, to go on day after day, doing one's very best and seeing no result. One has no credit by such patients; they haven't sufficient energy in them even to take a disease thoroughly, and give a poor medico a chance."

"Has she a history?"

"Oh yes, she's going into the journal by-and-bye."

"I'll take her to-day if you are not in the mood for babies," I said insinuatingly.

"No, no, she isn't nearly ready, but to be continued for some time to come. I *have* a good baby story, and as I suppose you mean to sit there till you get it, I had better begin at once."

"Do," I said encouragingly, with my note-book ready in my hand.

"Well, this baby happened pretty far back in my experience, and as he was my first baby, it was fitting he should have something to distinguish him from all the rest. Looking over my books the other night, how many babies do you think I found myself to have assisted at the earliest stage of their existence?"

"I shouldn't like to say, but tell me."

"On second thoughts I won't—at least not to-day. Well, this baby is a great fellow now at Loretto School. I had——"

"At Loretto!" I interrupted. "What's he doing there? Is he Scotch?"

"Yes. See what a word can do!" said Dr. Glen, with a little tender smile. "I say Loretto, and you immediately forget all about babies, and see nothing but that little quaint old town, where the grey sea tosses up to the green links, on which the red jackets of the college boys make lovely bits of colour; is that not so?"

"Indeed it is," I admitted, and there was even a moisture in my eyes as she drew the picture for me, for my heart filled in many details she did not mention. The quaint sea-beat town, made classic by its old college, is haunted by many memories, and there is a house there, facing the sea, hallowed to me by thoughts of some who are "away."

"There are lots of precious bits in the old land for you yet, dearest," said Dr. Glen, and her face wore its loveliest look. "But I can't have you growing sad over it, because I'm a bit out of sorts myself, and if we both go down at the same moment it will be a bad business. Besides, this isn't a sad story, though it begins in sombre colours. It's a story that will rejoice your soul, a record of noble endeavour, of difficulties manfully overcome."

"Go on," I said, putting the point of my pencil to the page once more.

"Well, about this great boy—when I saw him the other day I could not believe, when I looked at his broad shoulders and long legs, that I had once held him in my arms, a limp atom of humanity, with nothing distinguishing about him but his yell, which was truly stentorian."

"Begin with the yell," I said, with suggestive

haste, for by certain signs and symptoms I gathered that Dr. Glen was not in a dependable mood.

"I must begin before that," said Dr. Glen. "Well, one night I was sitting at dinner, when the bell rang in a rather fast and furious fashion. I had the Brynford case in hand at the time, and I quite expected a summons to the old gentleman, when Margaret came to say a young gentleman wanted me in the consulting-room, 'An' he's Scotch, Miss 'Lizabeth,' she said in her canny way. 'An' a bonnie man, though trouble sits upon his face; an' his vera tongue warms up a body's heart.'

"This sounded so interesting that I left my pudding unfinished and went to interview my patient. He was standing just by my table there, a big, powerful, broad-shouldered fellow, fairly well dressed it appeared, though when I saw him in daylight I discovered that he was very shabby. His face was very honest and winning, but it was haggard with trouble, and at the very first moment I thought he looked as if he wanted a good meal. And that impression was correct. If I regarded him attentively he returned my steady look with interest, and there was a distinct appeal in his eyes which made me soft at once. Yes, though he was only a man, I made up

my mind on the spot that whatever help he needed—and help it was, anybody could see that—I would not refuse.

“‘You are Dr. Glen?’ he said: and his voice had precisely the effect Margaret had described as ‘warming up your heart.’ That phrase expresses it better than anything else.

“‘I am. Won’t you sit down?’ I said pleasantly: but he did not do so. ‘I am in trouble,’ he said, in that honest, direct way which wins everybody even to this day. ‘My wife is very ill, and I came to see if you would see her.’

“‘Why, of course I will,’ I said cheerfully. ‘Can you wait just ten minutes till I finish my dinner? Is it far to go?’

“‘No; only to Riego Street.’

“‘Riego Street?’ I repeated, the name not being familiar to me.

“‘It’s a poor place; off Gray’s Inn Road,’ he said, and his face flushed a little. ‘And it is my duty to tell you that we are very poor, and it may be some little time before we can pay your fee; but I will pay it, madam, I give you my word.’

“‘Oh, pray don’t mention it,’ I said hastily, feeling quite ashamed that he should so assure me. ‘What

is the matter with your wife? Has she been long ill?’

“‘She has ailed for some time, but not seriously. The truth is she expects to have a child.’

“‘Oh!’ I said, with intense interest, for remember it was my first case, and I would have tramped miles to it for nothing. ‘And does she expect it to-night?’

“‘Oh no, not for a week or two,’ he replied, with a melancholy smile. ‘But she is so very poorly, I felt I could not wait any longer.’

“‘But do you mean to say you have not engaged anyone to attend her till now?’

“‘No. She had heard of you, Dr. Glen, and would not hear of anyone else. We were waiting till I could bring your fee in my hand, but I have not been able to earn it; and I could not see her suffer any longer. I trust you will not refuse to come.’

“‘Annie, I felt dreadfully ashamed and sorry for him. The man was a gentleman; conceive what it must have cost him to stand there and utter those humiliating words.

“‘What do you take me for?’ I asked brusquely, to hide my real feelings. ‘You are a countryman of my own: and if I can do anything for you, you are

welcome. Pray don't say any more, but sit down until I get on my boots, and then you can pilot me to Riego Street.'

"In ordinary circumstances I should have let him go and followed alone, but I wanted to talk to him a little more, to learn something of their circumstances before I saw my patient. I had one stupendous desire as I hurried back to finish my dinner, and that was to send Margaret to the consulting-room with a steaming hot plate of soup; but there are things one daren't do, how ever much one wants. I did not keep him waiting long, you may be sure, and directly we got out I made him hail the first hansom. And he handed me into it, my dear, as only a gentleman can, and at my request got in beside me.

"'Now,' I said, in quite a motherly manner, though he was my own age, if not more, 'tell me something more about your poor wife. Is she Scotch like yourself?'

"'Yes, she belongs to Edinburgh.'

"'And how long have you been in London?'

"'Nearly two years; and what an awful struggle it has been!'

"He leaned back, and his face grew more haggard and his mouth trembled. We like men to be strong

and self-reliant, and to exhibit no sign of weakness even in trying moments, but there are times when such weakness is no dishonour to manhood. The man was beaten, and as I could easily see, the first words of genuine sympathy, though but poorly expressed, broke him down. I did not speak to him for a minute or so, and then I said cheerfully :

“ Oh, but all struggles come to an end, and there are bright days as well as dark in every life. Suppose you tell me your name ! ”

Then Dr. Glen paused half a moment and looked me whimsically in the face.

“ I'm going to give you a fictitious name, my dear, for very obvious reasons ; as I may tell you some day.”

“ Never mind the name, it's the story,” I cried quickly. “ Go on : don't be tantalising.”

“ Well, I must say that for a woman who concocts novells deliberately planned to keep people on the tenterhooks, you display a very commonplace curiosity which does not raise you in my estimation,” she replied, with her sweet, sudden, bewildering smile, which I have heard her admirers say “ goes for everybody.” “ Well, suppose we call him Charles Rutherford ; it will do as well as anything else.

When he had told me his name, I asked him as gently as I could what was his employment.

“I haven't got any,” he said bitterly. “That's the trouble. Miss Glen, thank God that you have never known what it is to tramp these stony streets day by day, asking little, only work sufficient to keep life in your dearest, and being refused everywhere. It's experiences of that kind that change men into——”

“Hush,” I said, very gently. “She would not like to hear you say that, I am sure; and it won't go on like this for ever.”

“It can't,” he said, with a little hard laugh. “We very nearly made up our minds one night to try the French plan and buy a pan of charcoal, but she would not, because of the child.”

“I could not speak, dear, for there was a lump in my throat like to choke me.

“Aren't we near the place?” I asked, to divert his attention from my emotion.

“Only a step more.”

“Well, now, what was your occupation prior to these hard times, Mr. Rutherford?” I asked.

“I was a journalist, that is my profession, and I have—or rather had—literary aspirations, but

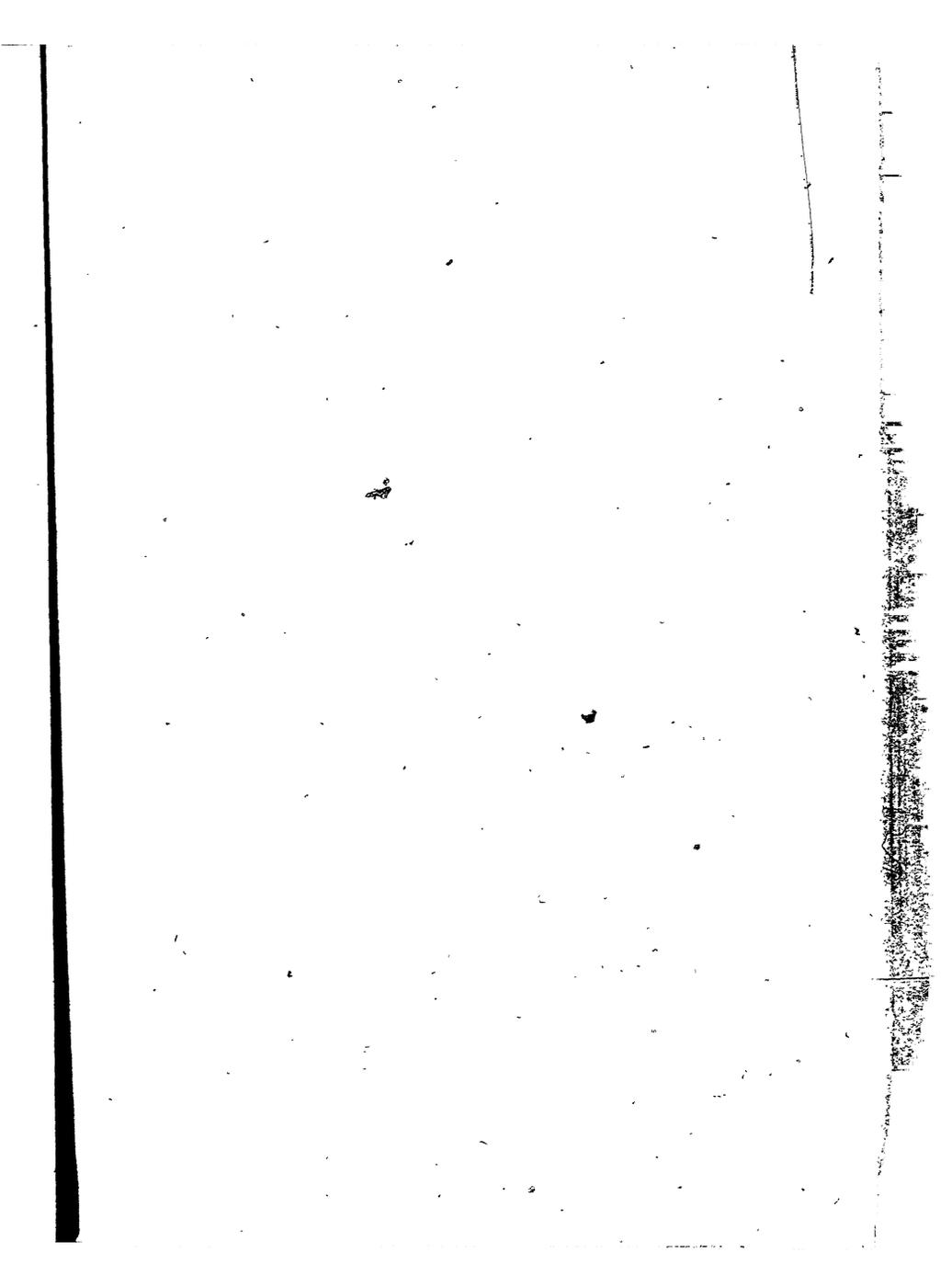
hunger starves these out,' he answered. 'We are quite friendless here and elsewhere, orphans both of us, and we are thankful for it, since nobody suffers through our degradation.'

"'Not degradation,' I corrected. 'Nothing is degrading but dishonour.'

"'So she says. Women can bear more, they do not rebel as we do. A man can't always wait to pick dainty words. This is the place, Dr. Glen. You have tempted me to lay bare a bitter story to you—why, I cannot tell, unless because you are a country-woman, and because your face inspires trust.'

"I did not make any reply, but dismissed the cabman and waited for Mr. Rutherford to pilot the way.

"It was a squalid street, though it had an outward semblance of respectability. You know the strange custom that prevails among a certain class here—how one takes a house of fairly good size and lets it out in rooms to different tenants. It is a bad system, from which in the course of my practice I have seen many evils result. For one thing, there is generally a dearth of kitchen and sanitary appliances, and those provided are quite inadequate to the number who





"A VOICE OF BLESS AND MISFALL! THAT I HAVI BATHY, LOOK'D UPON."

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require them. I am always sorry when I hear of a young couple beginning in a room in such a house, because if they have not sufficient pride and pluck to desire a house of their own at the beginning of their married life their prospects are not likely to improve. Our Scotch system of flats in those big 'lands' you and I remember may have its drawbacks, but it is far preferable to this sub-letting. But I must go on. Mr. Rutherford opened the main door of one of these self-contained houses, and led me upstairs to the very top, which is at least always preferable to the basement floor under the street. The house smelt musty and close, and there was a vile mingling of cooking odours which very nearly upset me. But I became oblivious of all that presently, when Mr. Rutherford opened the door of his own small domain and we entered it together.

"The room was quite small, and lighted by a solitary candle. It was the middle of December, and the weather was bitter and raw, but there was no fire in the grate. A more cheerless and miserable place I have rarely looked upon. The furniture consisted of a paltry thin bed, a small round table, and one chair, and the floor was quite bare. On the bed I could distinguish the recumbent figure of a woman, lying in

an attitude suggestive of the abandonment of grief or the sickness of despair.

“‘Jessie,’ said my guide, and his voice took an entirely different tone. ‘Are you asleep, dear? Here is Dr. Glen come to see you.’

“She moved wearily, and finally turning round, endeavoured to raise herself on her arm.

“‘Will you excuse me?’ she said in a low, quiet, refined voice. ‘I am afraid I am not able to get up.’

“‘Pray don’t attempt it,’ I said hastily, and taking the solitary candle from the table I approached the bed and allowed its light to fall full upon her face—a sweet, serious, womanly face, very thin and worn, and with great purple circles about the eyes that told their own tale. She looked older than her husband. I should have said she was thirty at least.

“I set down the candle without saying anything, removed my gloves and felt her pulse, which was quite as low as I expected to find it. All the time the husband never took his eyes from my face, and I felt them reading my very soul.

“‘You have no other room, I suppose?’ I said; and he shook his head. ‘Then I must speak to you on the landing just for a moment.’

“A spasm of fear shot across his face, and, like

a man who makes haste to know the worst, he opened the door and stepped out, I following.

“‘No, it’s not a death-warrant I’m going to deliver into your hand,’ I said at once. ‘Now look here; I know you are a proud man, that you are a gentleman and your wife a lady, and that both of you are likely to resent charity, however delicately offered it may be. But this is not charity, it is common humanity. Your wife must have nourishing foods, good wine, a warm fire, or she will die. I am a rich woman—at least I have a father in Scotland who has more money than he knows what to do with—and this is the doing that would delight his soul. Take that, and bring or send all that is necessary—bread, tea, sugar, butter, wine, coals, and if you forget anything you’ll be sent back for it.’

“So saying I whisked back into the room again, and locked the door from the inside. He seemed to stand still a moment; then I heard a sound suspiciously like a sob, and his retreating steps on the stairs. I had now to make the best of my time with the wife, who had laid herself down again, and appeared to take but little interest in what was passing. She looked indeed like one who had given up the fight and surrendered at discretion.

“Suppose you open your eyes, my dear Mrs. Rutherford,’ I suggested cheerfully, ‘and try to answer me a few questions.’

“I sat down on the bed, and when she looked at me a faint inexpressibly sweet smile dawned upon her pale lips and a tear rolled down her cheek

“‘It is so long,’ she said brokenly, ‘since I heard a lady speak, or looked upon such a kind face.’

“You see,” said Dr. Glen, in rather an apologetic tone, “I’m telling you everything, even the flattering things they said to me, just to show you how stupendously grateful these two people were for a simple service.”

“A simple service!” I repeated, and rubbed my eyes. “But please go on with the story.”

“Well, I asked her all the questions necessary, and if I was touched before I was nearly overcome now. Such a story of young love and faith and courage, of honest, whole-hearted endeavour unrecognised, of hopes gradually quenched, till there seemed to remain only the agony of despair. She had had a little needlework, but her poor health affected her eyesight, and it was thrown back to her with bitter complaints, and finally taken from her altogether. Would you believe it, my dear, the baby

was expected in a week or two—might come any day now, and the poor creature had nothing prepared, not even a shawl in which to wrap it! And she a lady born, and a woman whose instincts and tastes were all refined. Could there be any martyrdom at the stake much worse than hers?

“‘I could have prayed, Miss Glen,’ she said, ‘that I might die with the baby, were it not for poor Charlie. He has been so good. What do you suppose we have done so sinful that we should have been so hardly punished? We did not ask very much, only enough to eat, decent clothes to wear, a simple roof to shelter us, honest work to do. But there seems to be no room in the world for us.’

“‘Oh yes, there is,’ I cried cheerfully. ‘It’s been a long lane, but we’ve got to the turning. Stop till we bring this precious baby home. He’s going to bring luck to the Rutherfords; see if he doesn’t.’

“‘Did Charlie tell you, Dr. Glen, that we had nothing to pay at all? Perhaps I ought to go into one of the places where they take poor women in circumstances like mine. I have little enough pride left, but I shrink from that.’

“‘I should think so. No, no, I’m going to have all the credit of this baby; he’s going to be a

wonderful baby, I feel sure of that; and perfectly sure that he's going to bring back the luck to the Rutherfords.'

"She looked brighter and more hopeful as she listened, and while I waited with considerable impatience for the return of my errand boy, she told me some further particulars of their family history, and filled in all the outlines in that story of unmerited misfortune. At last I heard the lumbering of feet on the stairs, and threw open the door to admit Mr. Rutherford with a big package in his hand and a boy staggering behind with a basket of coals. 'Now,' I said gleefully, 'we're going to have a house-warming. You build the fire, and see you do it right. I've never met the man yet who didn't think he could kindle a fire better than any woman that ever was born. Where can I get some water to fill the kettle?'

"There was a very ominous quiet in the little room, and I was glad to chatter any nonsense to prevent the overflow of two absurdly grateful hearts. I felt in a wildly extravagant mood. I lighted four candles, and turned out the contents of the basket joyfully. He had done his shopping well for a man, as I told him; nothing essential had been forgotten. In an

incredibly short time we had a blazing fire and a steaming kettle, and I wish you could have seen that man's face when he put in his wife's hand a cup of real good fragrant tea and a dainty morsel of buttered toast I had made with my own hands. I saw that it was time for me to depart, unless I wanted to participate in a scene. I saw that for the moment he had forgotten me ; he knelt on his knees beside the bed, and he fed his poor wife with every morsel ; and if I have sometimes said I didn't believe in wedded love, I take back my words ; yet that was not love, it was worship pure and simple, and the whole scene was so indescribably touching that I felt I was on the point of making a complete idiot of myself.

“‘ Now, good people,’ I said, all in a hurry, ‘ I'm going away ; you don't want to see any more of the doctor just now ; so good-night to you both ; and I'll come back some time to-morrow.’

“ Then I ran away ; positively ran, my dear, down those stairs as if I was pursued, and I didn't slacken my pace till I reached the corner of Gray's Inn Road. Then I stood still to collect my thoughts, which were all of a jumble. I had not then seen so much of the stress of London life as I have seen since ; and the

night's experience had most powerfully moved me. I do not suppose there was a much happier woman than I in the neighbourhood, it is so exquisite to relieve distress. But at the same time, though I had relieved immediate want, that was but a temporary benefit, which could not be often repeated, and I knew very well that the only substantial way in which to help these people was to get the husband something to do. But where or how? I was myself a comparative stranger in London. Had you been here then, I should have had no hesitation where to apply; but I knew so very few people, and these not at all likely to be able to give the precise assistance I wanted, that I felt perplexed. All of a sudden I bethought myself of my cantankerous old patient, Mr. Brynford Martyn. He was now almost convalescent; it was after the episode of his relatives' invasion. I had seen him in the morning, and though he had been then rather cross, owing to an attack of indigestion, I determined to make an appeal to his generosity, and wended my way joyfully to his abode. Mrs. Davis was surprised to see me, for I had left off paying two visits in the day, and even sometimes allowed two days to elapse without calling, which, I may say, always made the old gentleman rather

cross. But it does not do, my dear, to make oneself too cheap in any walk of life.

“Mr. Martyn had dined, and was playing cribbage with his man, which showed that he was considerably better. He now spent his evenings in the drawing-room, into which he was wheeled in his chair, and there I found him, looking a very different man in every respect. I saw at once that he was in a good humour, which meant that he had beaten Williams in the game. He received me graciously, told Williams he could go downstairs and bring coffee for two, then he bade me sit down.

“‘You haven’t been here, Doctor,’ he said, rather grimly—‘you haven’t been here in the evening for a long time.’

“‘No, I haven’t, and I shouldn’t be here now. Mr. Martyn, if I didn’t want something, you may believe that.’

“‘Ay! what do you want?’

“‘Something which I hope you will grant. As you are nearly restored to health, to say nothing of having beaten poor Williams to-night, you ought to be in a very generous mood.’

“‘What on earth do you mean?’ he asked, and his eyes glared at me from under their shaggy brows

in a way which might have frightened me had I not known him so well.

“‘Just what I say,’ I answered calmly. ‘Don’t you feel at peace with all mankind, and moved at this particular moment to do something to help a fellow-creature in distress?’

“‘If you don’t say out what you want, I’ll get Williams up again, and go on with my game,’ he said brusquely. Then I told him the story, not in such elaborate detail, of course, as I have given it to you, but I made it as graphic and touching as I could.

And the old man was touched, I could see that, for he flourished his big red silk handkerchief with a great deal of unnecessary vigour, though all the time he wore an expression which would have frightened you out of your wits.

“‘Well, you are easily imposed upon,’ was his interesting comment when I had finished. ‘Don’t you know there are shoals of such frauds in London ready to deceive a guileless soul like you?’

“I felt angry, but tried not to show it. ‘If that is all you are going to say to me I’m sorry I came,’ I said in a very dignified way. ‘And all I’ve got to say is, that I should be ashamed to exhibit such a spirit after having such recovering mercy vouchsafed to me.’”

"That was a bold stroke, Elizabeth," I could not refrain from interpolating. "And how did he take it?"

"Oh! imperturbably as usual; he told me to keep my temper, and asked how much money I wanted.

"I don't want any money,' I said quickly. 'I have enough of that to do what is necessary in the meantime. What I do want is a situation for Mr. Rutherford; and you have a connection in the city, Mr. Martyn, that can get that situation at a moment's notice, you know you have; and I'm disappointed in you, after all I've done for you.' Wasn't it awful to go on at the old man like that? When I told Margaret about it afterwards we both wondered how I dared; but I felt as if I were conducting a crusade.

"And do you suppose, young lady, that I'm going to give anybody you like to pick up a situation at a moment's notice? You are a very guileless young person indeed.'

"I was nearly crying with vexation, because if he failed me I did not know where to turn. It was that solitary tear I could not force back that did it; I know it was.

“I'll tell you what I'll do, Doctor; I'll see this young man, if you like, to-morrow morning at ten sharp,” he said presently. ‘I used to be a good judge of character, and if he satisfies me I'll do what I can.’

“‘I don't want any more,’ I cried joyfully. ‘If my new friend doesn't pass the bar of your judgment I've made the biggest mistake I ever made. Oh, Mr. Martyn, if you had only seen the picture I have just left—the poor young wife dying, positively dying from want of proper food—you'd thank God you had it in your power to do anything to help him.’

“‘Now I'm going away, and I think you're a very nice old gentleman when you like, and Mr. Rutherford will wait on you to-morrow morning at ten sharp. Don't bully him—but I don't think you will, because he isn't the sort anybody can bully. No, I won't have any coffee—good-night to you, and a thousand thanks. I'll be here at noon to-morrow.’

“Then I went home to Margaret, and, after we had had a long talk together, I wrote home to Glen Speed to my father, telling him the story, and asking him to forward to me immediately a certain trunk that stood in an unused room, and which was full of

the linen I had used when I was a baby. Not that I intended giving it all away, it was too fine and costly, but I knew there were plain things there as well, and it was better to have it all sent, as then Margaret and I could make our selection. Yes, it came in due course, and a proud woman am I this day to think that baby wore anything that pertained to me, and I may be prouder yet of it before I die.

“Well, next morning by nine o'clock I was at Riego Street ; and I found a different atmosphere in the little home, and I saw a brightness in the young wife's face which I knew had not been there for a long time. She was much better, and the sight of her improved condition had kindled anew the feeble spark of hope in her husband's breast, and he was preparing to go forth with fresh courage to seek a place in the ranks. What did they say to me ? Now, my dear, don't ask me to linger on that. I don't think they said very much, but I have never felt more grateful to God for opportunity given to do a little kindness than I did that morning. Such an experience is worth five years' of selfish enjoyment. I gave the husband Mr. Martyn's address, and tried to prepare him as well as I could for the kind of

reception he might expect, and I thought as he left the room with a kiss and a fond look to his wife that I had never seen a more gentlemanly, capable-looking, winsome fellow, and the mystery to me was that these manly qualities so evident in his whole appearance and bearing had met with such meagre appreciation. I remained an hour with his wife; my time was not so precious then as now, so I could easily afford it; and as he did not quickly return we both took courage, and I was not afraid to assert boldly that Mr. Martyn had sent him to the city. Then I repaired to my old gentleman, to find him impatiently expecting me.

“Well, I hope you’ll be satisfied now,” was his greeting. “I’ve sent your *protégé* down to an old friend in King William Street, and asked him to give him employment at once.”

“Then you didn’t think him a fraud,” I said mildly, though I felt so deliriously grateful I could almost have kissed him—almost, but not quite.

“No, he’s all right. It’s astonishing the bad luck some poor fellows have. Would you believe it, he’s had a university education?”

“Yes, I could believe it, or anything else good or astonishing about him. Well, Mr. Martyn, Christ-

mas comes next week, and it'll be a happier one for you and me because of this; don't you think so?'

"Humph! I don't know. If you say so I suppose it will be; you are a very assertive young person. I should like to see the wife; couldn't she come?"

"Not at present. She shall bring the baby by-and-bye, Mr. Martyn. I'll fetch them both."

"He affected to make a wry face, but I could see he was secretly pleased.

"Well, my dear, that's my story; don't you think it a pretty one?"

"Lovely; but I'm not going to be defrauded in that way. I've called it 'A Christmas Baby,' and there isn't anything about the baby. Do you think I am going to insult my readers like that? Tell me more about the baby at once."

"There isn't anything to tell. He was born on Christmas Eve, is a lovely boy, and is growing fast up into a handsome man."

"And she got well quickly, and he got the situation, and their prospects improved; you must tell me all that, or I'll have a shoal of letters asking a hundred questions. You must spare me that, Elizabeth."

She smiled a slow, meaning, inexplicable smile. "I wonder if I should tell you. I suppose I must; but you must promise secrecy. Where do you suppose they live now?"

I shook my head.

"In — Square; and haven't I told you the boy is at Loretto?"

"And are there any more children?"

"Yes, three. The last, a little girl, was only born last year; her name is Elizabeth Glen. Now, positively not another question."

"Only one more," I pleaded. "You have been very good, but I do want to know whether he ever succeeded in his literary aspirations? You said he aspired, didn't you?"

"Yes." Again Dr. Glen smiled, and this time there was real mischief in her eyes.

"You are a reliable person, on the whole, so I won't spoil the story for you; but if you revealed the climax, the consequences would be appalling. I told you, didn't I, that Rutherford was a fictitious name?"

"You did."

"Well, here's the true one."

She stooped down and whispered two words in my

ear, and I feared I could not have heard her aright. I repeated them after her, the words of a name honoured in the world of letters, and beloved by all to whom it is known. Then I went home, to ponder anew on the mystery of life.

IV.

MRS. PLATT'S HUSBAND.

"I HAVE seen a great many specimens of the genus Husband," said Dr. Glen, with an odd little smile. "Do you remember a certain quiet little village where you had your home for a while, and where I paid you a memorable visit?"

"I have not forgotten it, I believe," I replied; nor had I. It was one of the bright spots of that particular time.

"Well, do you remember, among the many other quaint customs which used to divert us, how they spoke of certain individuals as So-and-so's man—Easy Tamson's man, do you remember him, and how appropriate we thought his designation?"

"What a memory you have, Elizabeth!" I exclaimed; "Easy Tamson's man had become as shadowy as a dream until you spoke of him. What has he got to do with the present case?"

"That you will see presently. Yes ; I've seen a lot of husbands, come into contact with them in all sorts of trying conditions, behind the scenes, where they sometimes appear heroic, sometimes ridiculous, and sometimes pathetic. The one I have in my mind's eye at present generally appeared to me in the last light, though he was pretty cheerful on the whole, considering his trying surroundings. We'll put him under the heading 'Mrs. Platt's Husband.' Have you got it down?"

"Yes," I said, "I have, but I wanted a love story this time, pure and simple. I hope you've got some in your repertoire, because you see I have so many young people among my readers, and they don't want always to be reading about matrimony in the real. This is the fourth story, remember, and it's matrimonial too."

"Well, if you don't take Mrs. Platt's Husband to-day I fear you must go without, my dear. I saw him to-day, and I've got him mixed up with everything. To mollify you, I promise that number five or six shall be a *bona-fide* love story, with only a promise of wedding-bells at the end.

"I made the acquaintance of Mrs. Platt's husband the very first winter I was here, not very long indeed

after my experience with the Rutherfords. It was on one of the most disagreeable days of January, the sort of day when it can't make up its mind to fog, rain, or snow, and so does a disagreeable mixture of all three. And the cold? It was simply penetrating, a raw, biting, bitter cold that ate into one's bones, and left a creepy, shuddering feeling. Talk of north-country cold! It's a bearable kind of cold anyhow, and you know what to do with it. Well, I was sitting about three o'clock in the afternoon 'grouching,' as we say, over the fire, and not feeling in a particularly amiable frame of mind, when Margaret showed somebody in upon me with her usual lack of ceremony. It was grey dusk in the room, and it was not till Margaret lit the gas that I saw my visitor was a long lank slip of a girl, apparently 'about fifteen, with a white, anxious, weary-looking face, such as we look for in the mother of many small babies who has limited means and innumerable mouths to feed.

"'Good afternoon,' I said; 'what can I do for you?'

"'Will you come and see mother, please?' she said, and her voice was in keeping with her face, listless, but without life or hope.

“‘Yes, my dear, I will,’ I said with alacrity.
‘And where is mother to be found?’

“‘At home in Portland Street,’ she replied. ‘I’ll go back with you, if you like.’

“‘Very well, and what is your name?’

“‘Clara Platt.’

“‘And why, my dear, have you come all the way from Portland Street for me?’

“‘Mother sent me,’ replied the girl, and as there was no other explanation forthcoming, I made ready as fast as I could, and accompanied my new friend to Portland Street. She was not a very interesting child. I tried to talk a little to her, but did not find her at all responsive. She seemed depressed, and had none of that natural buoyancy we look for in a person of her age. She was fairly well dressed, but the garments did not seem to assort somehow; when I arrived at her home I discovered why. She could not tell me much about her mother’s state, merely saying that she was feeling very poorly, though not in bed. In due course we arrived at our destination in Portland Street, a shop with two windows, containing a very heterogeneous collection, and above the door the sign, ‘Platt, Dealer in Antiques, Uniforms, etc.’

Ladies' and Gentlemen's) wardrobes purchased for cash.'

"Yes, I've been in many queer places, my dear, during the last few years, and have got my fastidiousness rubbed off. I followed my young guide through the untidy, close-smelling, musty emporium into the mysterious back regions where Mrs. Platt and her family lived. I was ushered into a large sitting-room, well lighted, and too warm for comfort, nor was it clean and pleasant to the eye. Several children were amusing themselves, in rather a subdued manner, with some old coins on the table, and at the fire sat a woman whom I supposed to be my patient. She was lying back in a leather-covered easy-chair, and had a large, dingy grey shawl wound right round her head and shoulders, and almost entirely covering her face. She seemed in figure a large, loose person, and her gown was a rusty and grease-marked black merino; while her feet, resting on the stool, seemed to be bursting out of a pair of old Court shoes with high heels and broken paste buckles.

"'Mother, here's the doctor,' said Clara, and then slipped away, in that quick, noiseless, subdued manner of hers, back to the shop.

"Oh, you've come!" she said, sitting up, and pushing back her shawl to reveal her face, which was thin and shrewish, and lit up by a pair of black eyes which surveyed me with extraordinary keenness. 'Well, I'm glad to see you. I'm bad, proper bad, I can tell you, and I promised Platt I'd send for a doctor to-day. I hope you know your business.'

"I hope so," I replied coldly, for the vulgar manner of the woman and her stony stare angered me, I did not know why. I laid down my gloves and proceeded without further parley to make the usual examination and put the usual questions.

"I had no difficulty about my diagnosis, the case was as evident as the day.

"First thing," I said, severely, 'you must go to bed.'

"I won't go to bed," she replied. 'The whole thing goes to sixes and sevens when I'm a-bed; so you must just treat me at the hearthstone, miss.'

"I can't do it, and I won't," I replied firmly. 'If you don't obey my orders you must get somebody else to attend you. You have a serious attack of pleurisy, and if you persist in your determination to sit there, why then anybody can foresee the end.'

"You ain't afear'd to speak up, miss, but I ain't

going to bed yet at least, so that's flat,' replied my patient calmly. 'So now you can do what you like.'

"I looked round at the children, who continued their quiet play, paying no sort of attention to our talk. I felt much inclined to walk out there and then, but something about the house interested me, I could not tell why.

"I must try and get your husband on my side, Mrs. Platt,' I said then; 'and for that purpose I shall call again when he is at home.'

"'Oh, well, you can,' she said, with a queer little smile. 'But Platt's a bit soft, and knows he can't come it over me. It's a cold I've got, I reckon, and if I keep myself warm by the fire, it'll cure itself.'

"'Then why did you send for me?' I enquired bluntly.

"'Oh, I thought I'd be on the safe side,' she said serenely.

"'And I suppose you thought, too, that because I am a woman, I'll let you do just as you like,' I ventured to suggest.

"'Well, no, I sent for you because I believe in women doctors,—I think they should be encouraged; and because I lost one of my children through the

carelessness of one of the other sort. Clara, it's time to light up,' she cried, raising her voice shrilly. 'Well, ain't you going to give me any medicine?'

"I won't do anything for you till you go to bed," I maintained firmly.

"We'll see; if I get Platt to move a bed down here would that do? as you see then I can see an' hear what's goin' on."

"It might do, though I wouldn't advise it," I said cautiously, feeling, however, that I had gained a point.

"It'll have to do in the meantime," she replied. "You can come back in the evening, if you like, and see; Platt'll be in then. He get's 'ome about seven."

"He does not help you then in your business?" I said enquiringly.

"Oh, no. I wish he 'eard you. He hates the business, does Platt; it makes 'im sick, it does. You see, miss, it's like this. I took an' married a gentleman and a scholar, an' I've 'ad to suffer for it. Oh, it ain't been all beer and skittles for me. But he's only a clerk, an' earns no mor'n pays the rent; an' what's to feed five children, an' us two, an' get clothes to our backs? He's mad at me fetchin' up Clara to the business, but I know what's what, an'

there's money in the second-hand line, though 'tain't what it was.'

"She spoke of her husband with a species of good-natured contempt which considerably amused me, and I naturally felt no small curiosity to behold the 'gentleman and the scholar' upon whom Mrs. Platt had thrown herself away. I left some simple directions, again recommended her to get to bed, and, promising to call in the morning, took my departure, though I must confess I lingered a little in the shop to look at some of the curios it contained. The place was in a frightful state of disorder, but the old clothes, which I discovered were the most profitable part of the business, threw everything else into the background. Nevertheless there were some things worth looking at, odd bits of china and bric-à-brac, upon which I cast covetous eyes. The child Clara's dull face brightened when I spoke to her appreciatively of some curious bronze figures, and an old Dresden coffee set which was really lovely of its kind, and I saw that she had the soul of an artist hid under her rather phlegmatic exterior. I thought of them a good deal as I walked home, but I found a letter from my father full of home news, and containing a cheque for my birthday, which sent

all my thoughts coursing in a new and pleasanter direction. I was at dinner when I was told that Mr. Platt wished to see me, and I again became conscious of the keenest curiosity about him.

"His appearance, I must say, considerably surprised me. When I entered the consulting-room he was standing by my table with his hand on the back of my chair, his whole attitude apologetic, as if he expected to find his intrusion resented. He was a long, spare man, wearing a suit of rusty black; he had fair hair, and a thin, fair, effeminate face. I could not discern the colour of his eyes, because he wore a pair of dark spectacles. He had a depressed appearance, as if long experience of Mrs. Platt had been too much for him.

"'Good-evening,' I said pleasantly. 'You have come from Portland Street? I trust Mrs. Platt is no worse.'

"'Yes, madam, she is—that is why I have come,' he answered, and his accent was educated, his manner gentlemanly. 'She seems so very ill that I thought I had better come at once. Would it be convenient for you to pay her a second visit this evening?'

"'I'll make it convenient, it's my business,' I said, cheerily. 'I had some thoughts of coming on

my own account later on, to see whether you could exercise your authority. She is far too ill to be out of bed.'

"I know that, but she is very headstrong—a good, kind soul, Miss Glen, but very headstrong,' he said, and taking off his spectacles, he wiped them with the corner of a very old discoloured silk handkerchief.

"The spectacles made such a difference that I gave a little start of surprise, and even forgot myself so far as to stare at him. He looked quite young, not more than five-and-thirty at the most, and his eyes were so frank and pleasant that they gave him quite a boyish look. When I thought of the home he had come from, the untidy old clothes shop, the musty back room, inhabited by the unhealthy-children, and, above all, of the big, frouzy, unkempt woman who was his wife, I was more than amazed, and I felt like asking him, on the spot, how he had ever got himself into such a scrape.

"I did not accompany Mr. Platt back to Portland Street, but followed him later on. It was about nine when I arrived, and I found him at the shop-door eagerly looking out for me.

"'I'm glad you've come,' he said in a tone of

relief. 'She is very bad indeed. It is alarming to look at her.'

"'Indeed!' I said. 'I am astonished to hear that.'

"I was still more astonished when I saw her. She was not in the back room, but upstairs in her own bedroom,—in bed too, and directly I crossed the threshold and heard her breathing I knew the change for the worse was serious.

"She looked towards me with a slight glance of recognition and a faint smile.

"'I gave in,' she said. 'I s'pose it's all up with me.'

"'When did this change take place?' I enquired as I took out my watch.

"'After tea. I had to go in the shop to see a customer as was good for five pounds, and I felt the wind from the door cut right through me. Am I agoin' to croak?'

"I made no reply for a moment. The pulse was rapid and feeble, and her whole condition serious.

"'You've seen Platt, haven't you? He's a gentleman an' a scholard he is, but 'e can't make a livin' for the children. Pull me through, miss, if you can.'

"It is not possible for me to convey to you the pathos of these words, but it went to my heart. There was a whole history revealed in them, a history that was half a tragedy. Of all the marriages that have puzzled me that seemed the most curious.

"I'll do my utmost, Mrs. Platt," I said, and went downstairs to see if I could get anybody to take my orders. I found Mr. Platt sitting at the table alone, looking the picture of perplexity and concern.

"Clara was in the shop, the cadaverous children seemed to be all a-bed.

"Well," he said, enquiringly, 'how's my poor wife?'

"Her condition is critical. Are you in a position to afford a nurse? If so, I shall send you one as I go home.'

"We are not well off," he answered, 'so far as ready money is concerned; but there are things in the shop worth money. If you think a nurse is necessary, she will be paid somehow.'

"I looked at the man gravely. He seemed kindly and solicitous, but his look of utter helplessness, so unusual in a man, perplexed and even irritated me.

I felt as if I should like to give him a good shaking up.

“‘She must have somebody to wait upon her; and your daughter, with the shop and the house and the children, I should fancy, would find her hands pretty full. Do you not agree with me?’

“‘I do; it’s a sad business. I hope, Miss Glen, you do not think my wife will die?’

“‘She may. I have said that her condition is critical.’

“‘If she dies,’ he said helplessly, ‘what is to become of the children?’

“‘Others have been left motherless, Mr. Platt,’ I said severely; ‘your case would not be any more serious than many another—but we may pull her through—’

“‘I hope to God you will,’ he said, with a most unusual burst of passion. ‘Poor Susan! our marriage was a mistake, a frightful mistake; we both admitted it long ago, and I fear she has had a hard struggle.’

“‘She apprehends the future for the children,’ I said; ‘she seems anxious to live for their sakes.’

“‘But not for mine,’ he said, sorrowfully. ‘Well, you see it was an awful mistake. She’s ten years

my senior, and I had a university education; how could the result be otherwise?’

“‘How did it come about at all?’ I inquired bluntly.

“‘It’s a long story, but it can be put in few words. She was a lady’s-maid in a family where I was tutor. I was very young then and ambitious, but had nobody to help me on. I wanted to continue my career at Oxford; I thought I could do something there. She helped me with money. She had a mistress who was very generous to her; and I thought I should succeed and be able to repay the loan. I didn’t; there are a number of causes why a man doesn’t succeed, Miss Glen; but I did what I could, and I married her.’

“I did not say what I thought—that it was a great risk to repay a loan in such a fashion.

“‘She looked very different then,’ he said, apologising, manlike, for his own selection. ‘She was a handsome, bright woman; but of course when things went against us, and the children came so fast, she lost heart; but a good soul, a good soul as ever breathed, and I’ve been as good to her as I knew how.’

“I did not know which to pity most; I thought

it a pathetic tale ; but it also savours of tragedy to hear from a man's lips such a confession of utter failure.

" 'This business,' he said, waving his hand towards the door, and slightly reddening as he spoke, 'was the very last resource. Her former mistress still remembers her, and gives her cast-off wardrobes. There's money in it. Of course, we've had less sordid anxiety since we went into it, but it's a bad atmosphere for children to be reared in ; and I will not disguise from you that it has been a very keen trial to me.'

"I saw it all, and I did not know whether to despise or pity him most.

"He was weak evidently, lacking in every quality that makes for success, but the alloy of pride remained —well, an Oxford man and an old clothes shop have not much in common. I thought of the ailing, probably dying woman upstairs, of the brave front she had shown, the struggle she had made to fill up the breach, and I reproached myself for my first shrinking from her untidy appearance, her vulgar speech, her unattractive look. After all she had in her the stuff of which heroines are made.

" 'If I can trust you to carry out my directions

I will not see the nurse till morning,' I said. 'I shall come very early. You can sit up with your wife to-night, I suppose?'

"Yes,' he said, 'I can do that surely, but if you think the nurse necessary pray send her to-night.'

"I think the morning will do,' I replied, and went into the shop to speak to Clara about preparing some nourishment for her mother. She brightened up as she had done before when I spoke to her; and I noticed that her father, who had followed me, looked at her with rather more interest than usual.

"Can I get you a cab?' he asked politely, but I said no. I thought I should walk home. He accompanied me to the door, and just before I went off asked me a curious question: 'Miss Glen, I fancy I see disapproval in your eyes. I trust you do not think I am in any way to blame for my wife's present illness?'

"For her illness? Oh no, not at all. How could you possibly be to blame for a perfectly natural seizure?' I replied. 'But, of course, there is no doubt that her anxiety and worry for the future may retard her recovery.'

"But what can I do? I have my place of business to go to.—If I absent myself even for a day,

it is quite possible my services may be dispensed with. Such are the conditions of life, even for the competent and the educated, in this city of London,' he said, with a slight shade of irony. 'Such as they are, I must regard them. Do you not think so?'

"'It is not for me to say,' I replied. 'But I gathered from your wife that your present post is not a particularly lucrative one. It might be to the advantage of all concerned were you to remain here and attend to this business.'

"'I had no sort of right to make any such suggestion, but he was plainly seeking an expression of my opinion, and I gave it as candidly as I knew how. He shrugged his shoulders and glanced back into the emporium with undisguised scorn.'

"'I may come to it in time—though not till it is a case of desperation with me,' he said rather peevishly. 'I find it bad enough to have it as environment during the few hours I spend here. But to become identified with it perpetually, Heaven forbid!'

"'It is a perfectly respectable business, Mr. Platt, and your wife says there is money in it. I do not see why you should have such an aversion to it.'

"'Do you not? Then you would think it no humiliation for me to be here some fine day when

one of my Balliol fellows might step in. I could not stand the risk of it. That is why my wife's name is above the door and not mine. If I told you my name you would recognise it as belonging to one of the oldest Surrey families. I have relatives there, near ones too, who have disowned me since my marriage. If they knew of this,' he said, with another comprehensive wave, 'they wouldn't speak to me in the street.'

"It was a false and despicable pride, yet how natural! I did not feel the contempt for him I ought, because I knew very well that there are very few in like circumstances who would not have felt just like him. It is a very rare and high-class nature, my dear, which can absolutely rise above all such considerations. Think over your own experiences, and see how many instances you can record.

"Well, I must not stand talking here any longer, Mr. Platt, so good-night,' I said, and walked off quickly, thinking a good deal of the curious episode which had come in my way.

"I had an unusually early breakfast next morning, and piloted my way through a thick fog to Portland Street shortly after nine. The depressed-looking Clara, rather worn, and red about the eyes, was

making an attempt to dust the contents of the shop, and at sight of me the tears swelled in her eyes afresh.

“Well, my dear, how is your mother this morning?”

“Very poorly; pa hoped you'd come before he went away. She's had a bad night.”

“I'm sorry to hear that,” I said, and passed into the inner room, pausing just half a minute to pat the children and ask them how they were. Nice little things they seemed, too, if they had been cleaner, and exhibited more of the liveliness of childhood. Even in their play they were very sober, as if early oppressed by the reality of life. I found my patient much exhausted, and after I had made my examination feared the worst. She seemed pleased to see me, and gathering my concern from my face, put to me a very straight question.

“Am I agoin' to die?”

“You are very ill,” I replied at once, for I never hide the truth, especially when it is so earnestly sought. I laid my hand on hers as I said it, and I suppose I looked the sympathy I felt. My heart indeed overflowed with the pity of it, and I felt nothing but honour for the poor woman who had made such a mistake, and paid for it more dearly perhaps than I knew. She was uneducated and

plebeian of course, as the Surrey family would have had no hesitation in telling you, but she had feelings as acute, sensibilities as easily wounded, as the gently-born, and the knowledge, never hid from her by 'the gentleman and the scholar,' that she had dragged him down, had been as bitter as gall to her, and brought out all the unlovely traits in her character. 'You look so kind, miss, an' there ain't nobody I can speak to; will you sit down, and hear what I have to say?'

"I did so, still keeping my hand on hers, and she turned her dim eyes on my face with a whole world of pathos and entreaty in their depths. 'Only for our children I wouldn't mind much. I've been a drag on Richard, that's Platt, from the first. I might 'a' known it never does for a gentleman to marry a servant, but I didn't think, and as Heaven is my judge, I loved 'im dear. Not that Platt's ever been bad to me—he wouldn't be bad to nobody, poor fellow, he ain't got as much venom in 'im, or he might 'a' got on better. But 'e's fretted after 'is own kind, as is nat'ral, I suppose. Oh, them children! what'll become of them? Heaven knows, I don't.'

"'The way is always opened up,' I said soothingly, 'and it is quite possible that left entirely to his own

resources their father may develop new capabilities. I am afraid you have too often stepped into the breach.

“Maybe. We never had no bitter words only over this business, but I knew there was money in it, an’ I had to think on the five. I wish ’e’d let Clara keep on. She’s beginnin’ to know it, and she takes such an interest in the bits o’ china and things; if ’e’d let Clara keep in I think I’d die with an easy mind. If ’e doesn’t, then they’ll starve, ’cos he makes only sixty pound a year, and has to go like a gentleman. Maybe you’d put in a word for the business, miss, for Platt, he took mightily to you last night, anybody could see; he said that you was a lady born, an’ that goes a long way wi’ Platt, being a gentleman and a scholar hisself.

“I promised to do what I could, and when I went away my heart was hot and bitter against the man who had, though perhaps not intentionally, made the burden of life so heavy for the woman who had given him herself and all she had.

“That evening, when I paid my second visit, I was the unwilling witness of a painful and pathetic scene. I went after dinner with my mind made up to talk very plainly to Mr. Platt, but when I arrived I found

no opportunity. Directly I entered the room I saw that my patient was dying. He sat by the bed looking painfully and pitifully at her, and at sight of me appeared immensely relieved. But it was very little I could do. She smiled wanly upon me as I bent over her, and tried to press my fingers as they touched her hand.

“‘I’m a-slippin’,” she said, “an’ I’ve been a-talkin’ to Platt. He says I ain’t agoin’ to die, an’ won’t promise anything. Jes’ say a word to him, miss, for the sake o’ Clara an’ the children.’

“She spoke with extreme difficulty of course, her breathing being much oppressed. I turned to the husband, who stood on the hearthrug twirling his thumbs, the picture of helplessness and discomfort.

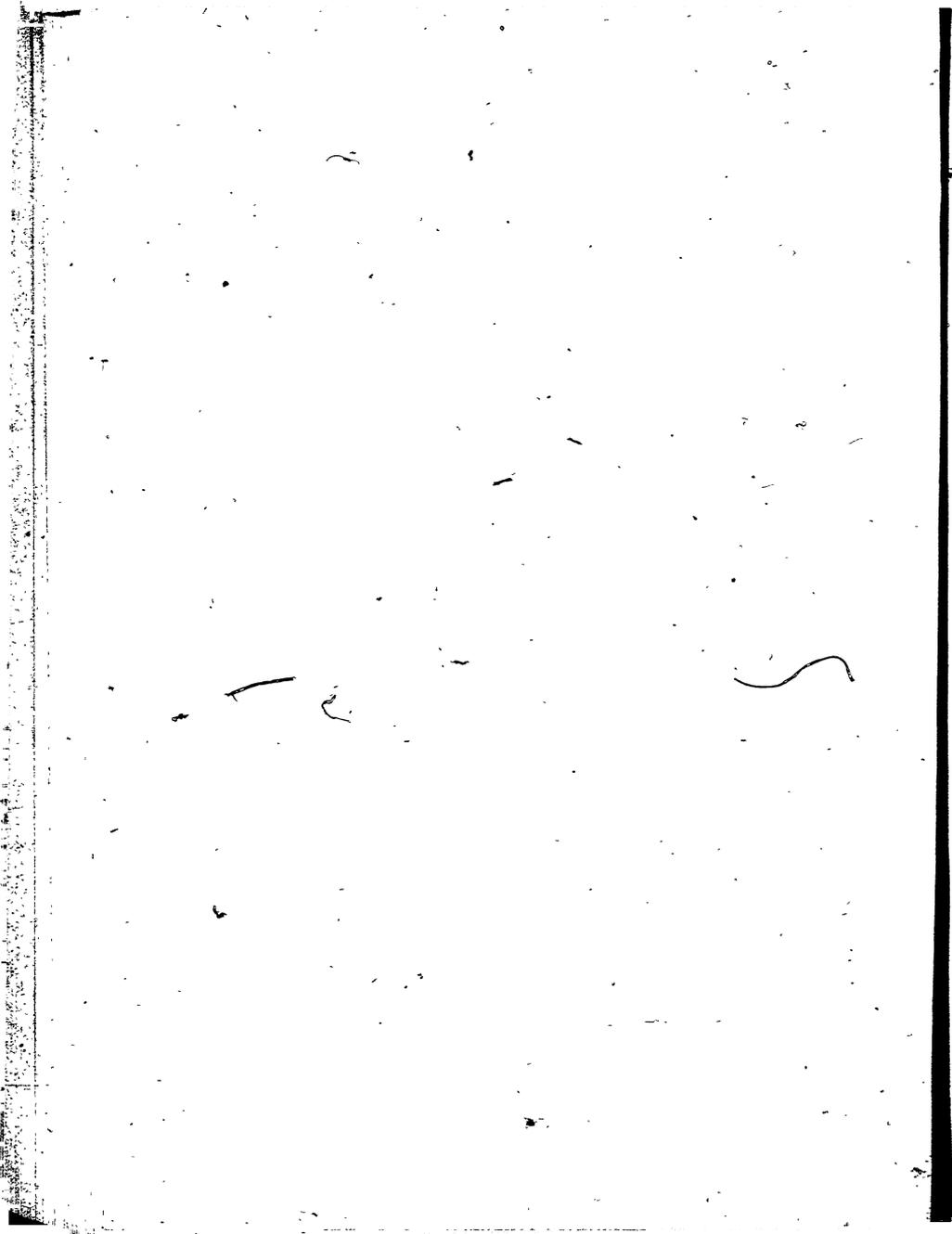
“‘You hear what she says, Mr. Platt. She wishes you to promise that you will keep this home together for the children, and let Clara do what she can with the shop.’

“‘Is she going to die?’ he asked incredulously, and with a scared look in his eyes.

“I nodded, and, to do him justice, he then exhibited a very genuine distress. He threw himself down on his knees by the bed, and implored her to forgive him for all the past.



"YOU HEAR WHAT SHE SAYS."



“There ain't nothing to forgive, Dickie,” she said, with a faint, pleased smile such as she might have bestowed on a baby at her breast. ‘You’ve never been bad to me, nor said no cross words, ’cept about the business. I did wrong to marry you, though I loved you dear, an’——’

“I stole away, for these were not words for me to hear. I did not leave the house, however, but remained in the sitting-room talking to the little boy, the only one of the children not in bed. After a little I heard a hurried movement upstairs, and Mr. Platt quickly calling my name. I took the little boy in my arms, called to Clara, and ran up.

“Yes, the end had come, and poor Mrs. Platt’s face wore a perfectly serene look as she sat up gasping among her pillows.

“‘Dickie, fetch the baby, and Will, and Fanny,’ she said, and turned to me with a smile. ‘It’s all right, miss, between Platt an’ me at last, an’ he’ll let Clara keep on. You’ll look in now and again, won’t you? I’d like to think of you lookin’ in on the little ones, an’ it might help Platt to be more reconciled, as, you see, you’re a lady born. Here’s the baby, bless his little ’eart, rubbin’ his eyes; wot a shame to wake ’im up, but I wanted to kiss ’im once.’

"She stretched out her arms, and her husband laid the child at her breast. She bent her face over him a moment, and then looked towards me.

"There ain't no parson, nor nobody to say a prayer; could you, miss, for the baby's sake?"

"I knelt down at once in the midst of the wondering children, and what I said I know not; but words fitting and appropriate were given me, and I know I had a strange feeling of nearness to the Divine.

"She echoed my 'Amen' in a faint whisper, and closed her eyes, while her feeble clasp on the child gradually relaxed. So she died. Your eyes are full, listening to my poor recital of that pathetic scene; you can imagine what it was to be a witness to it. Well, dear, that is my story; sad enough, eh? but, curiously, it is one of my favourite bits: and I have an odd, reverent feeling whenever I think of Mrs. Platt."

"What became of them?" I asked, with intense interest. "Did Platt rise to the occasion, as you predicted?"

"Clara did. The development of that child was most extraordinary. Would you believe that every bit of antique furniture and some of the very scraps of china you have coveted in my drawing-room came from Platt's in Portland Street? The aristocracy

patronise it now. If you go down any fine morning in the season, you're sure to see a coroneted carriage at the door. It's an art and vertu shop now, though; the old clothes which so exercised the soul of Mr. Platt are a thing of the past."

"But Mr. Platt himself," I reiterated, "what about him?"

Doctor Glen shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, he exists, and deigns to own the concern now it flourishes, but I have never forgiven him. May I be forgiven myself for my lack of Christian charity!"

"But he has remained true to her memory?"

"He hasn't married again, and, to do him justice, I believe he thinks of her with a tender regret. It's the old story over again—only when death, kinder sometimes than life to humanity, steps in and takes something from us do we recognise its value. Mr. Platt makes a kind father to the children, and the eldest son is at Balliol; so I suppose he beholds his ambition live again in the boy."

"And the despised shop provides the wherewithal?"

Dr. Glen nodded, and somehow the bantering mood I knew so well fell from her, and she seemed to be musing on the irony as well as the pathos of life.

V.

NORA FLEMING.

IN the early days of my acquaintance with Dr. Glen, I sometimes puzzled myself not a little over her religious views. I knew from sundry remarks I had heard her make that she was not quite orthodox, and she sometimes said things which startled me just a little ; but I said to my husband long ago that I wished there were more of Elizabeth Glen's kind of Christianity in this world, and I sometimes say so still. She is not a woman from whom you can get a direct expression of opinion at the very moment you may happen to want it ; in fact, she takes a little delight at times in keeping you angling after her views, just as I have seen her angle herself for the brown trout in the peat streams of Amulree. One day I went to her, puzzled and a little downcast over one of the problems that often exercised me : why the best people, whose daily life is a gracious

benediction to all it touches, should so often be called upon to bear such unheard-of and almost-unbearable trials of patience and faith. I had a particular case in my mind that afternoon, a fine young fellow, full of promise, whose robust manhood was a thing to rejoice in and thank God for, yet who in his venture matrimonial had drawn not a blank, but what was worse, a genuine cross.

If I were ever tempted to make copy out of the sad family histories that have come under my observation, that young man would serve as an exemplification of the old saw, Marry in haste, repent at leisure.

Dr. Glen was busy when I arrived. She had got to that stage in her profession when you always found two or three people in her waiting-room during her consulting hours, which she had fixed from two till four. Margaret took me to the drawing-room, and lingered to have a little talk over things in general. She always called me "the mistress," and took the liveliest interest in my affairs, even to the extent of criticising the Scotch in my novells. Many a skirmish we had over the meaning and spelling of certain words, and lofty was her scorn of Dr. Jamieson, my authority and standby.

“He disna ken a’thing,” she would say. “Div I no mind it frae my mither’s knee?” Dear old Margaret! In her late years she took the matrimonial fever badly, and married a wastrel, so that her last days were worse than her first. Dr. Glen, being by nature the most womanly of women, was always making the most delightful alterations and additions to her drawing-room. Do you know drawing-rooms that are, as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, rooms you go into month after month and year after year, knowing you will never see anything there to relieve the monotony of perpetual order? It is the room of the conventional woman, who sternly represses any original idea which may by some strange chance occasionally occur to her. Dr. Glen was not conventional, and though I am fond of moving furniture about myself, and of introducing variety in my home, I do not rival her. Entering Dr. Glen’s drawing-room, you always have a fresh, delightful feeling, like recognising old friends with new faces. The artistic arrangement and the interesting items which contribute to it make half an hour’s waiting there seem less irksome than anywhere else. But I must hasten on.

Elizabeth came in about half-past three. She looked a little tired, I thought, but fresh and dainty in her dress as usual. Shall I tell you what she wore that day, my most unorthodox of lady doctors? A brown serge skirt and a blue cambric blouse, with starched cuffs and turnover collar, both fastened by her magnificent yellow cairngorms in their settings of gold, the only ornaments she possessed which I really coveted. They had been found on her father's estate, and were heirlooms in the Glen family, but I don't think anybody whoever wore them was more stately than my Elizabeth. She had a quaint silver belt round her waist, which was very slender for her height, and she looked every inch what she was—a simple, well-dressed, well-bred gentlewoman. She threw herself on the couch and folded her hands behind her head.

“Isn't it hot? We have not many Aprils like this in London, and what will August be like? Are you going to Amulree this year?”

“I don't know whether we can afford to go anywhere.”

“Oh, is that it? Well, I'll take you if you can't. I made five pounds this afternoon. This thing is going to pay. I've seen nothing but Amulree before

my eyes all day. Oh, my dear, do you remember that view from the old road between Corrymuck Loch and Achnafauld? I shall always love you for making Sheila happy just there. Don't I wish I saw it with my own eyes at this very minute!"

"Elizabeth, don't make me homesick. It's bad enough to have a man at home always raving about Amulree."

"Who introduced me to its loveliness? It is a favourite remark of yours that all things are by comparison, and when one tramps the streets baking under a tropical sun, then must the soul that has seen Amulree be fain for it. I just feel that if I had a blush, as Margaret would say, a genuine blush of Amulree rain swept clean up from the sma' glen into my face, I should get rid of the London smuts. I hope, my dear, you have no evil designs on me to-day. I'm positive it was only the day before yesterday I gave you 'Mrs. Platt's Husband.'"

"Three weeks ago, Elizabeth," I said; "so you're in for it again."

"Aren't you worming more than your due out of me, and making surreptitious use of it?" she asked whimsically; then we both laughed.

"I called on the Harrisons as I came through

Bedford Street, Elizabeth, and I am more than usually depressed about them. Can you tell me why good people have such a poor time of it, some of them at least, in this world?"

"Yes, because somebody must have a poor time of it, and the good show up to the best advantage under difficulties. That's the conclusion I have come to. The Lord is a great deal wiser than we who believe in Him know."

I didn't say anything, for I was looking at my friend as she spoke. Her eyes were shut, but her face wore a most steadfast and lovely look, which almost made me feel that she was conversing with the Unseen. Presently she opened her eyes wide.

"Your question makes me think of something you might like, but it's sad, and it's about married people too. You said, I remember, referring to Mrs. Platt, that you had had enough of married people, and wanted a genuine love-story, though it's my opinion that by far the most interesting love stories are to be found in the lives of married folks. The other is only the prelude."

"I'll take anything to-day, and be thankful. The young ladies who are clamouring for unmarried

romance can wait without serious consequences to themselves or to me."

"Such meekness demands its reward," said Dr. Glen, and after a minute's pause went on: "Of course you know I have many Scotch folk among my patients, and as a rule I prefer them, chiefly, I suppose, because I understand them better. There is more difference than one would think between the two nationalities, and it is more noticeable among women than among men."

"I have heard my husband say the same thing," I remarked. "But I should think you could accommodate yourself to anybody or anything, Elizabeth; you are the most adaptable person I ever met."

She turned her head and looked at me straight, as if to ask just how much or how little my words might mean.

"It's a fact," I nodded. "You are the sort of person to make yourself at home anywhere, and to take the bearings of persons or things at a glance."

"You have a good opinion of me, dearest, and though I know how far it falls short of the real, I love you for it. Nevertheless I do make some gigantic mistakes, and I made one in my first estimate of the little woman about whom I am going

to tell you ; and of course I was mistaken too in my first impression of Mrs. Platt. One afternoon, soon after I fixed these consulting hours; a lady was shown in, a lady with a baby in her arms. She was very well dressed, in a serge gown and a sealskin jacket, was very young, not more than three- or four-and-twenty, and she looked so extremely fragile that I jumped-up hastily to give her a chair. It was rather a pretty face, though in my first glance I thought it lacked character, and with my usual hot haste drew a mental estimate of its possessor.

“ ‘ I have heard of you, Dr. Glen,’ she said, in a voice of winning sweetness, ‘ and I have brought my baby to see you. I have an aunt living in Russell Square, who says you are very clever, so I have come to ask your advice.’

“ ‘ Yes ; then let me see the baby,’ I said, bending over her as she put up the child’s veil and unfastened its white cloak. Then I saw that it was a white-faced, puny little thing ; in a word, a baby who did not thrive.

“ ‘ A little girl,’ I said nodding, as I pushed the granny bonnet off its little head.

“ The usual questions were asked and answered. It was a common tale of a London baby—the mother

unable to nurse, difficulty of procuring satisfactory milk, gradual decline of the child. You must make haste to get that little house in the country, dear, in order that yours may escape the common fate. And after having discussed the baby and settled what was to be done, the mother and I fell into a little friendly talk, during which she mentioned her husband's name, which for obvious reasons I must again make fictitious. She called him Mr. Fleming.

“‘Why,’ I said, ‘that’s pure Scotch; but *you* are not Scotch, Mrs. Fleming?’

“‘Oh no; but my husband is. He is a clergyman, Dr. Glen—curate to Dr. Mainwaring at the church in Marlwood Road.’

“‘Oh,’ I said. ‘I know him perfectly by sight, and I have heard him preach.’

“Her face flushed a little, and she bent over her baby, I thought to hide it.

“‘We live in Marlwood Road. It would not be too far, would it, for you to come and see baby?’

“‘No. I shall be only too glad to come,’ I said, speaking from a friendly point of view. I began to be interested in the little woman, and that flush puzzled me. Was it pride, or sensitiveness, or shame, I wonder, that could have caused it?—not the

last, surely, because I knew the Reverend Wallace Fleming by name as a rather brilliant person, who could fill the Marlwood Road Church of an evening when his rector couldn't.)

"He was a very handsome person, too, the adored of the young ladies of his charge, so I had heard. Yet, curiously enough, I had never heard of his wife. It occurred to me, even in that first interview with Mrs. Fleming, that she was not a particularly happy woman. There was a curious wistfulness in her eyes and a droop about the lips which suggested more heaviness of heart than she had any business to feel; but the genuine cause of it never occurred to me at the time. I learned not long after, however, that it was caused by heart hunger, and the yearning of a deeply religious soul over another which she thought deviating a little from the right way: My dear, you find deep religious sentiment and a consciousness sometimes morbid in the least likely places. I never expected to find them in Nora Fleming. Yet there they were, and my subsequent intercourse with her did more to deepen my own religious convictions than anything has done since my mother died. My poor little Nora Fleming!"

For the moment Elizabeth seemed to forget me;

the associations called up by the story she had begun seemed to engross all her thoughts.

"About a week after that I was summoned to Marlwood Road," she said at length, "and when I arrived I found it was to see the mother, not the child. She was not in bed, but sitting at her bedroom fire, a fragile little figure in a blue dressing-gown, looking so childish and *petite* that I felt like treating her accordingly. But a big, strong, noble, womanly heart beat under that blue dressing-gown, Annie, a heart meet only for the Kingdom.

"'Baby is ever so much better,' she said, greeting me with a bright, sweet smile. 'Yes, I am a little down; and I thought I wanted badly to see you. Did you know how much good you did me that day I called?'

"'My dear, I didn't prescribe for you. It was the baby I treated,' I said bluntly.

"'No, but you made me feel strong, and you are good, I know. I have often wished for a strong woman friend. I am so weak myself.'

"'Weak in body you may be, but nowhere else,' I said cheerily. 'But come, let me feel the pulse. Mothers can't afford to make such a fuss. I must get you out of this room.'

"The pulse was very weak, and there was a languor and depression about the little woman which made me think there was a heart trouble at the bottom. I sat down in front of her, and I suppose I looked very grave and serious. I certainly felt so.

"'Now, Mrs. Fleming,' I said, gently but firmly, 'pray forget that I am a woman, and think of me only as the doctor. Have you got anything on your mind? Are you fretting about something? There isn't anything the matter with you that I can find, unless there's a worry at the bottom.'

"'Oh, I have a lot of worries—every woman has,' she said evasively. 'There's baby; you know; and the servants are not very satisfactory. We are not rich, and can't afford to pay experienced ones. I have a good many household cares, and Mr. Fleming doesn't really know how much it takes out of one. It's the sort of thing which seems too trivial to talk of,' she said, dropping her voice to a whisper. 'But it makes one's heart cry out to God all the time. He always understands women, don't you think? If it were not for that, indeed, indeed I could not bear it.'

"There was a lump in my throat. I stroked the white, fragile little hand, and said to myself, 'Eliza-

beth, you big, soft creature, don't weep, or your credit as a doctor is gone.'

"Of course, when one is not very strong all such worries assume mountainous proportions,' I said bravely. 'I am the happy possessor myself of "a perfect treasure" in the shape of my own old nurse, but I can sympathise with you for all that. You have never got quite strong, I think, since baby came, and what you want is mothering, and country air. Is your mother alive?'

"She shook her head.

"Oh no, she died when I was quite little. I have nobody, only Aunt Kate, who lives in Russell Square. She has a school. I lived with her and helped a little with the younger children before I married. She is very clever, but you see her way of life is different from mine now, and she does not quite understand all I have to do.'

"You don't do any parish work, of course?' I said bluntly.

"She shook her head.

"I wish I could. I am afraid I do very little to help Wallace; but really there are plenty of workers. If I had been a little stronger, of course I should like to have taught in the Sunday-school.'

“I suppose Mr. Fleming is a very busy man? Marlwood Road is a big church,” I said inquiringly. Somehow I had got it in my head that the minister was at the bottom of the worry.

“Oh yes, he is very busy; he cannot be in very much, and I am always so sorry if I do not feel well and cheerful when he is in. He likes everything bright and dainty, and when baby is cross and the servants trying, he doesn’t like it; no gentleman does.”

“I got up and took a turn across the floor. I had got the key to the mystery, and I had only one desire, to make a few plain remarks to the popular minister of Marlwood Road, and to point out one duty which in all his intellectual and ambitious flights he had wickedly passed by.

“I’ve got a new carriage, of which I am very proud,” I said, changing the subject abruptly. “And to-morrow I have to go to Cricklewood to see an old patient of mine, who is staying there temporarily. If it is fine, may I come at four o’clock and fetch you and baby for a drive?”

“She answered me only by a bright smile, and two big tears which rolled from under her long lashes, and glittered on her cheeks.

“On Sunday evening I went to service at Marlwood

Road—yes, for the sole purpose of beholding the Rev. Wallace Fleming and hearing him preach.”

“So like a woman,” I murmured. “No man doctor would ever have thought of such a thing.”

“No, he wouldn’t, my dear ; you are quite right. I always do my duty by the man doctor, as you call him, but I know very well that it is just in such cases that he makes his professional mistakes. He would have gone on exclusively treating poor little Norah Fleming’s body, when the mind was at the bottom of it all the time. It was sympathy she wanted, and mothering, and loving understanding, for she was being worried and neglected into the grave.”

“And what kind of spiritual food,” I inquired meekly, “did you get from the Rev. Wallace Fleming?”

“Well, my dear, I will not deny that I got an intellectual treat. To begin with, his very presence in the pulpit was eye-satisfying. He is a man of splendid physique, and his head is noble. Oh, the man has gifts—even the most prejudiced would not deny that—but somehow I felt inclined to get up and contradict him every minute. His sentiments were unimpeachable, doing equal credit to his head and heart ; and as I observed his calm, complacent,

self-reliant air, and looked round on the rapt faces of the congregation, among whom young ladies predominated, I thought of the little wife at home, and I felt in that state of mind which Margaret describes as my birse being up. No, of course the service did me absolutely no good whatever. My last view of the Rev. Wallace Fleming was seeing him the centre of what was undoubtedly an admiring throng, who were probably telling him how much good they had derived from his discourse. Next day, when I went to see his wife, I had the felicity of being introduced to him.

“It was about noon, and I found her dressed and in the dining-room, looking very worn and weary, and thinner than ever in her close-fitting black gown. She had the baby in her arms. Mr. Fleming was lying on the couch reading the newspaper, and he jumped up, all courtesy, to receive me. Really his manners were quite charming; he had that peculiar suave, deferential touch which women like, and even I began to wonder whether I had been in my thoughts a trifle hard upon him.

“‘My poor little wife has not been very strong, and nothing would satisfy her but the lady doctor,’ he said, with a grand smile. ‘I am very glad to make

your acquaintance, Dr. Glen; and I hope you do not find Mrs. Fleming in a serious condition. What she wants, as I tell her, is stimulating, looking on the bright side of things, and making her own environment bright. I make a point of preaching the doctrine of sunshine; we have enough dark creeds in our midst already.'

"That is quite true, Mr. Fleming," I replied gravely, as I laid down my gloves and took the baby in my arms. "And I agree with you that it is sunshine Mrs. Fleming wants; but somebody has got to create it for her."

"He looked at me as if my words puzzled him a little; their hidden sarcasm I am positive he did not see.

"She worries too much. I am always telling her she worries, and household cares should never be obtruded. The wheels of domestic machinery only want oiling with tact and graciousness, and all will go smoothly."

"I saw the faint glow of a pitiful smile on the little woman's grave lips, and she smoothed the front of her gown with her hands in a nervous little way, which let me know this was the sore bit.

"That is so like a man's speech, Mr. Fleming,"

I said, and I believe the tone of my voice was almost rude. 'Perhaps you will consider it presumption on my part to remind you that there is still the old-time difference between theory and practice, between the real and the ideal. The plain facts of the case are that the baby and the servants are too much for Mrs. Fleming meanwhile, and we must get her away for a time. Suppose we say Scotland for a month?'

"It isn't possible. I shall not be free till August this year, as Dr. Mainwaring takes his recess in June and July. I am confident you are exaggerating, and that if Mrs. Fleming would only exercise a little more strength of mind she would feel herself perfectly well,' he said quite coldly; and the critical, disapproving look he cast on his wife showed me that his heart, so far as her condition was concerned, was as hard as the nether millstone. For the time being his eyes were holden so that he could not see. At that moment a servant said somebody wanted him in the study, and we were left alone.

"Perhaps Mr. Fleming is right, Dr. Glen,' she said presently, trying to brace herself up, I could see, yet speaking with an unconscious touch of bitterness. 'Yes, I am weak and foolish, and perhaps selfish; but oh! I am worried. Jane has given notice this

morning ; she says the work is too heavy. I have not told Mr. Fleming yet. He says that a woman who changes her servants as often as I do does not know how to manage ; but what am I to do ? They are inferior girls, and they leave whenever they tire and want a change ; and the work is heavy, I know that.' I thought of you at the moment, dear, of the way you pour your domestic worries on to your husband's head, and I wondered what part an experience like Mrs. Fleming's would take in your development. I have an idea that it would not tend to make you or me a better woman."

"No," I replied with conviction, "I am perfectly sure it wouldn't."

"I was at church last night in Marlwood Road, Mrs. Fleming, and your husband gave us a very eloquent discourse," I said, and again that slight, inexplicable flush suffused her cheek. Then, quite suddenly, she turned to me, and there was a whole world of wistfulness in her eye.

"Dr. Glen, do you think many ministers preach the gospel ?"

"Yes, it was a poser, and I answered lamely enough :

"I hope they do."

“What did you think last night? Tell me honestly. I am sure you know. Did my husband say anything that would help a suffering or a doubting soul? Was he in earnest with his message?”

“She spoke feverishly, and I saw that the matter was one of serious moment to her. I felt it impossible to trifle with her. I was brought to bay.

“The sermon was an intellectual treat to me,” I replied simply. ‘But it may have affected others in an entirely different way.’

“It would not, it would have exactly the same effect. I don’t know what makes me speak out so frankly to you, Dr. Glen. I have never breathed this anxiety, which is eating into my soul, to a living creature. But oh! I fear my husband thinks but little of the message he has to deliver, of its solemn import to his hearers. He is carried away by ambition, and by the adulation of people who go to hear him because they admire his fine sentences and his eloquent delivery, and it is killing his soul.”

“I looked at her in amazement, marvelling to hear such strong, true words from her lips. She did not look like one who could probe so deeply into the heart of things. But there was no doubt she had the kernel of the whole matter in her hands.

I could not for the moment find words to reply, and presently she went on in a quieter, calmer voice: 'I do not think somehow that I shall live very long, and perhaps the feeling of nearness to the unseen gives me a sharpness of vision I should not otherwise have had. Wallace gave me that sermon to read, and I told him what I thought, but he did not seem to understand, and he thinks it is presumptuous of me to criticise. But, Miss Glen, it is not criticism. It is because I feel so keenly what a responsibility is his. He does not realise it himself. He is perfectly satisfied.'

"He re-entered the room at the moment, and I almost immediately left. He accompanied me to the door, and there was the same impatience visible in his manner as I again urged the absolute necessity of complete rest and change for his wife.

"It was quite evident that something was out of joint in the household, and that if there had ever been any sympathy or understanding between the pair it had not been maintained. The popular preacher, to whom worldly success and the applause of the multitude had come, was hardened by prosperity. The adulation and the praise of others had made him dissatisfied, critical, harsh to those of his

own household. His pastoral visitation took him into the homes of the rich and leisured, where he was made much of and flattered; its effect was to make him fastidious over trifles, hard to please, dissatisfied with his own plain home, where his wife, struggling with failing health and limited means, did the best she could. If he did not absolutely regret the marriage, which had been the idyll of his student days, he was bitterly disappointed over its issue, and too selfish to hide it. All that I guessed, and my estimate of the situation was absolutely correct. Do you think I have presented an impossible picture, dear? It is the naked truth. The soul of the man was a stunted and miserable thing, against which his wife's, pure, womanly, unselfish, shone with the whiteness of Heaven, only, as I said, his eyes were holden so that he could not see. Well, this condition of things went on for some time, until the hot weather began in earnest. I visited Mrs. Fleming at intervals, sometimes professionally, but oftener in a friendly manner. The baby improved, but she did not, and I soon foresaw the end. We had many long talks. Do you remember how in the early days of our acquaintance you used to quiz me a little about my religious views,

and I did not give you much satisfaction? I was not very sure of them myself. Medical study is a crucial test of religious faith, I think; either makes shipwreck of it or establishes it on a foundation of rock. Your husband will tell you the same thing. Just ask him the result of his own experience and observation. It will perhaps astonish you, that is if you haven't talked it over already. Well, I was for some years in a transition stage. Nora Fleming helped me out, and set my feet, please God, on the Rock for ever."

Here Dr. Glen paused again, and I saw that she was moved as I had seldom seen her. I sat very still, waiting for her to go on.

"She lived through the summer till August, and then slipped away, and I thought that, but for the child, she was not sorry. Life had cheated her of the highest gifts. She had grasped only a shadow for the happiness essential to the very being of such a woman. In a word, marriage had been for her, in its inner and most sacred sense, a failure."

"Tell me about it—the end, I mean; that is, if you care."

"I do care; the story would be incomplete without it; because I think Nora Fleming accomplished by

her death what her life could not do. Her husband will never forget her.

“Well, it went on as I said all the summer, she fading early like a flower from whose roots the sap had gone, and the end was very near before he saw it. I will give the man his due, he had many engrossing interests. The rector, being very frail, was away nearly all summer, and the claims on Mr. Fleming’s time were undoubtedly heavy. The probability was that ere long the living would be vacant, and of course it was a natural and not blameworthy desire on his part to make it impossible for the congregation to pass him over. Therefore he did his utmost to make himself indispensable to the church, and he succeeded.

“Well, at last the end came. She was not in bed; she went about, poor, frail, brave creature, to the last. About three o’clock in the afternoon I had looked in to see her, and found her lying on the couch in the sitting-room, and I did not like her look. Her smile was very faint and feeble, and she could do no more than press my hand when I asked her how she was. I went out of the room, and inquired of the servant whether the minister was in the house. He was not, having gone to open a sale

of work at the church. He came in shortly, however. I saw him pass by the window, and went out to the hall to meet him.

“‘Sir,’ I said, and I don’t know how my voice sounded, only I know my heart was wrung with pain, ‘your wife is dying.’”

“He stared at me in simple incredulity, and replied hastily :

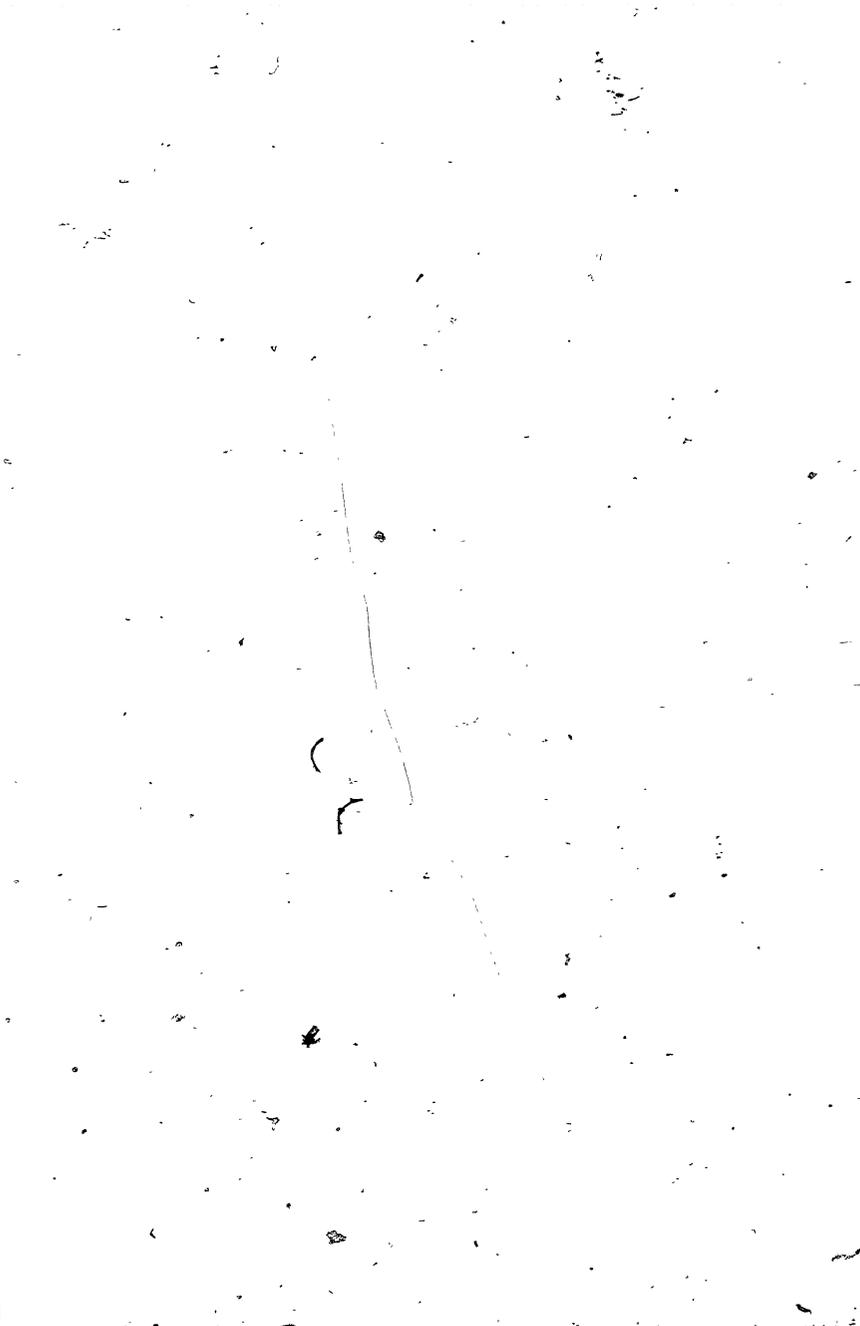
“‘Oh, nonsense, perfect nonsense ; she was all right at dinner-time. It is only the heat ; it is very warm to-day.’”

“‘She is dying,’ I repeated. ‘It will be all over probably before sunset.’”

“‘She can’t be, I tell you,’ he said, raising his voice excitedly. ‘It’s all nonsense. Nora dying ! How dare you say such a thing ?’”

“‘Come and see,’ I said, laying my hand on his arm. ‘But gently ; you must go gently. You must not trouble too much the passing soul.’”

“I saw him grow white and haggard, and the great pain lines, which have never left it again, deepen on his brow, and I softened to him, as every woman must soften, even to a bad man, when he is in an extremity of anguish ; and he was not a bad man—only one who had made a gigantic mistake.





"HE FELL UPON HIS KNEES BY HER SIDE."

“So I led him in. And directly we were within the door he saw it for himself, and a strange cry rang through the room—the cry of a strong man in bitter agony, made intolerable by the sting of a great remorse. He fell upon his knees by her side, and I stepped out to the hall, and there paced to and fro, nervously waiting till I should be summoned; for summoned I knew I should be soon, but I had no business with them in that supreme and awful moment, when the heart of each was laid bare to the other in the fierce light of a final separation on earth. It seemed a long time, and at last I tapped lightly at the door and looked in. She was sitting half up on the couch, but leaning against him, and her face, turned towards the door, was radiant with the sunshine of heaven. His was hidden, but I saw his broad shoulders heaving, nor was the hand which supported her as steady as its wont.

“She held out her hand to me with a lovely smile, and I took a step forward. Then he looked up, and met my eyes with a look which cut me to the heart.

“‘Save her, Miss Glen, save her to me, for God’s sake, for the salvation of my soul!’

“‘I cannot,’ I said, and my tears fell. I could not keep them back.

“If you cannot, then pray to God to help me. I know now what I have done. When she is gone, I shall feel that I have murder on my soul.’

“She laid her hand on his lips, and kept it there while she spoke.

“Though I am gone, I shall be with you, Wallace. Heaven is not far away. Nay, it is about us everywhere, and the spirits of the redeemed are nearer than we think. He blames himself too much, Dr. Glen, and I see more clearly than I did. I think perhaps I shall help more when I am gone than by his side; my spirit will give him a message when he needs it most. God will grant that as compensation to me and to him; so will his ministry be blessed as it has never yet been.’

“Perhaps these were not her exact words, but they convey her meaning to you. She spoke with extreme difficulty, and appeared so worn out that I asked him to rise while I laid her back upon the pillows. I did what I could to relieve her, and went away; coming again sorrowfully in the evening, not knowing whether I should find her in life. She was in life, but no more, and just after midnight she died. He did not appear to realise that the end had come; he seemed like a man mortally stricken. I left him

sitting on the couch with his arms folded across his chest, the picture of despair; and remembering the child, I took her from her cot in her little white nightgown, and laid her in his arms. She awakened then, and her little cry seemed to startle him, and to arouse in him a strange, sad wonder.

“‘You must be father and mother to her now,’ I said very gently, and when I saw the look he cast upon her I knew that he accepted the trust, and that hope had revived in the man’s soul:

“‘No, he has never married, and it is nine years since his wife died. He will never marry; of that I feel sure. If you want to hear the gospel message fitted to the need of every human soul, go to the church in Marlwood Road, any day at any hour; it will never fail you. It is a centre of blessing, the work is honoured of God, and many souls are given him for his hire. But the crown of glory is hers; she began the work; and when I go there, as I often do when I want a little new courage for the battle, I think all the time of Nora Fleming, and these texts are always uppermost in my mind:

“‘She being dead yet speaketh’; ‘her works do follow her.’”

VI.

JOHN RANSOME'S LOVE STORY.

"YOU must have come across many interesting love stories, Elizabeth, during the last ten years. I want one so badly to-day, and I want you to give it to me gracefully and spontaneously, because I'm too tired to try and conciliate you."

"Well, I do think that is very calm," said Elizabeth, with assumed indignation, "seeing I've come of my own accord to see you to-day, and seeing this is the sixth story you've had. Yet you basely insinuate that I have not always been civil over it."

"Oh, civil, yes," I replied, smiling in lazy enjoyment of her indignation. "But I have often bored you, and the interests of truth compel me to say you seldom took pains to hide the fact that you were bored. You see, dear, I was wise at the beginning. It would have been far better had you just given me the diary, and allowed me to make my own selections."

"I think a good deal of you, and I think you are more discreet than many of our sex, but my trust is not so limitless as that," replied Dr. Glen. "Oh, I know very well how you would revel in that journal if you could get it into your hands, but nobody shall ever see that while I am alive, and I think I'll destroy it one of these days to make sure nobody will see it after I'm dead."

"Oh no, you won't, and somebody *will* see it; you're going to have a sort of Arabian Nights Entertainment by-and-by, reading it out of an evening to your husband."

"You are safe this time, because you are pretending to be an invalid, and I can't shy anything at you," said Dr. Glen, rather quietly. "But I'll be even with you yet."

"Oh, Elizabeth, it isn't any sort of pretence! It's rather too real to be pleasant, and I don't enjoy lying on a sofa, in which attitude I am painfully conscious that I don't even look as interesting as the weakest of my own heroines. I'm the sort of person who is seen to the best advantage tearing round like a whirlwind. Repose doesn't suit me, nor invalid ways, so you ought to be sympathetic, and not disagreeable."

"I'll try," said Dr. Glen meekly. "To hear you

speaking, one would think I was disagreeable most of the time. But we'll cease mutual recriminations, and improve the time. This is John Ransome's Love Story. Will you accept my title? Nothing else will suit it."

"Yes. I hereby agree to accept anything, and to retract all my former disparaging remarks," I said, as I shook up my cushions and brought out my notebook, "although I must say the most of them were true." I was not used to invalid ways, and the whole paraphernalia of shawls and cushions and things worried me. There was not a sofa in the house on which I could establish myself comfortably and feel at home. Elizabeth got up, and in three minutes I wondered what she had done, for I began to think you might lie on your back in the daytime with some degree of comfort, and even feel a kind of calm satisfaction in the arrangement of cushions. Elizabeth was a nurse as well as a doctor. Had I been in a better mood, I would certainly have called her a ministering angel. There was a whimsical, tender look in her eyes, which told me that she did not like to see me there, and that her big heart was brimming over with all the sympathy I sometimes felt I so badly needed.

"It's good for you, dear, to feel like this just for once in your life, so that you may know what others have to bear," she said, quite soberly. "I shall never be just what I ought as doctor or nurse till I have had a bad illness myself. Well, now for John Ransome, one of my heroes, dear; and it's as pretty a story as you need wish to hear."

"Tell it," I said peremptorily, and she began at once.

"I knew the Ransomes by sight for a good while before I ever spoke to them. They lived only a few doors from me in Rayburn Place, and I sometimes saw them of an evening at church in Marlwood Road, of which they became regular attenders after Mrs. Fleming's death. I always thought them interesting, refined people. The mother was a widow, a pretty, faded sort of person, who had some little affectations, which I noticed before I spoke to her; there were two daughters, ladylike girls, and a son, whom I rightly imagined to be the prop and stay of the household. He was a big, fine-looking fellow, with a boyish, open countenance, which was a true index to his frank and manly heart. There was an air of cheerful strength about him which inspired me. He passed my window every morning when I was at

breakfast, and I got to look for him, and even to have a little smile ready for him, though of course he never saw it, or had the least idea that I was looking out. I don't suppose he even noticed that my house was the abode of the woman doctor. I decided that he was something in the city, on account of his regular hours, and yet he did not look like the ordinary city man ; and I wove all sorts of little romances of which he was the hero. But the real romance of John Ransome's life was a great deal prettier than any hatched in my poor unimaginative little brain. One night one of the girls came for me in a great hurry. She had not waited to put on hat or cloak, but came in breathless and bare-headed, and crying helplessly :

“ ‘Oh, please do come to mamma, Dr. Glen. She is in a dreadful state ; we don't know what to do with her. She won't be quiet.’

“ ‘What do you mean, my dear?’ I asked, as I hastily threw on my cloak.

“ ‘She screams out so; we think she has taken a fit.’

“ ‘Hysteria,’ I said to myself, in no way surprised. I had sometimes thought of Mrs. Ransome as a likely person to suffer from that trying complaint. I felt inclined to make light of it ; but seeing that the girl was genuinely distressed, I held my peace, and fol-

lowed her to the house. I found her in the usual state. Yes, hysteria is a very alarming affliction to those who know nothing about it, and any uninitiated person beholding Mrs. Ransome lying on her bed, screaming at the pitch of her voice, might with reason have concluded that she was fit for a lunatic asylum. You know that hysteria requires very drastic treatment, and I therefore deemed it wise to ask the daughters to retire while I did my utmost to calm the excited woman's nerves. She talked a good deal reproachfully about John, whom I supposed to be her son, and generally behaved like a suffering martyr. In time I got her quietened down, and then she became sulky, and would not speak. Then I went down to the dining-room to her daughters to give some instructions. They were both there. The younger one, who had come for me, was a second edition of the mother, but I thought her preferable to the elder, who was a cold, haughty, sarcastic person, with an extremely repellent manner. I thought her singularly indifferent to her mother's condition, which, though by no means serious, was yet alarming enough.

" 'Well?' she said, regarding me with a kind of haughty inquiry, which conveyed to me her impression

that a lady doctor was a very questionable person indeed. 'Have you been able to do anything for my mother?'

" 'She is much quieter. Would you tell me, if you please, what caused this attack—I mean whether she has had anything special to agitate her?'

"The sisters exchanged glances, then the younger one spoke.

" 'You'd better tell her, Clara. Doctors always do ask questions, I believe.'

" 'My mother *has* been agitated, Miss Glen,' replied Miss Ransome then, in her most guarded manner. 'My brother has vexed her very much to-night. Is it necessary that I should tell you how?'

" 'Not at all,' I replied, coldly. 'Only she had better not see him again, to-night at least. One of you should remain with her; and if you could please send round to my house in about half an hour I shall have a soothing draught ready for her.'

"I had no temptation to linger, as one sometimes has, to have a little chat with a patient's relatives; accordingly I took my departure, and I could not help feeling very sympathetic towards the erring John. Certainly I could not but think that life with such a trio must be more or less of a trial to any

average man. They had not exhibited a single lovable or attractive trait, and as I went home I pondered on the deceitfulness of appearances, and how easy it is for one to get wrong impressions from mere casual observation and speculation regarding one's neighbours. Well, I went back to my surgery and prepared Mrs. Ransome's draught, and I was enjoying my post-prandial coffee two hours later than usual when somebody called for the medicine ; not the maid, as I expected, but Mr. John Ransome, who sent in a message that he wished to see me. When I entered the consulting-room I thought I liked the look of him a great deal better than I had liked his women-folk, and I bade him a very pleasant good evening and asked him to sit down. He looked worried ; he kept tugging the ends of his moustache, and his brows were knit a little ; then he kept looking at me very intently with a pair of keen grey eyes, which seemed to inquire how far I might be trusted.

“‘I hope,’ he said bluntly, ‘that there isn’t anything seriously the matter with my mother?’”

“‘Oh, nothing,’ I replied cheerfully. ‘A hysterical fit, which will probably be over by to-morrow. I suppose she is subject to them?’”

“‘I have often seen her hysterical, but never in

such a condition. I confess it alarmed me very much. Does a person in such a condition absolutely lose all nerve control?’

“‘All,’ I answered promptly. ‘I have seen worse cases than Mrs. Ransome’s, often. She made a great deal of noise, but was less obstinate than many. Have you seen her again?’

“‘No ; my sisters gave me your message, and indeed I had no wish to see her just at present. I have got myself into a frightful hole, Miss Glen ; and I must occupy myself to-morrow in getting out of it again.’

“His serious frankness charmed me more and more, and as I met his honest eyes, I told myself that it might be a hole, but that there could be no possible doubt that it was an honourable hole. Dishonour and John Ransome had nothing in common.

“‘I hope you will find it an easy matter,’ I said kindly ; then he smiled, and the last atom of my heart went ; that is, I registered myself on his side of the fight, whatever it was.

“‘I don’t expect to find it easy. I left my situation to-day without any warning, and it was because of that, and because I refused to tell my mother the cause, that she became so fearfully excited.’

“‘Dear me,’ I said. ‘I quite thought you had been guilty of some very serious misdemeanour.’

“‘Well, it may be serious enough, for no man knows in these hard, competitive days where to lay his hand on a situation; and of course my salary is all we have to depend on. But as I said to my mother and the girls, they might trust to the fact that I am not the kind of man to be numbered long with the unemployed. I’ll get something to do.’

“‘I should think so; but I suppose this situation you have left, I am sure from the best of reasons, was a very good one?’

“He took a deep breath, and his colour rose.

“‘It was, in some respects, the best a man could have had, but I couldn’t stand it any longer. It was impossible, either for her or for me, that it could go on.’

“With that he got up, and I appeal to you whether anything could be more tantalising. I saw quite well that the last words had dropped unawares from his lips, and his face wore a kind of far-off expression which let me know he had forgotten my presence; and I was seized on the spot with the most insatiable desire to get at the bottom of John Ransome’s love story; of course I scented a love story at once, and

one of the most interesting kind. It was a speech extremely difficult to answer. I therefore stood in polite silence, waiting for him to say something else, or to go away.

“ ‘Well, I need not take up any more of your time, Miss Glen,’ he said presently, with his fine winning smile. ‘Perhaps I have said too much, but when a fellow is on his beam ends and looks into a sympathetic face he is apt at times to forget himself.’

“ ‘If you are on your beam ends, you won’t be long there, I prophesy,’ I said, and I shook hands with him and went out to the door with him myself. And I knew he’d come back to see me, perhaps next day. He did not pass by when I was at breakfast next morning, and I paid Mrs. Ransome the first visit on my list. I found her in bed, calm and resigned, wearing that particularly aggravating look of self-imposed martyrdom which many women use as a shield and defence against the ordinary worries of life. She was a remarkably pretty woman, and her mental state was not so serious but that she had taken care to make the most of her surroundings. Her dressing jacket was heliotrope adorned with soft lace, and her cap and bows of the same coloured ribbon. She looked at me expectantly, and just with

the proper touch of mournfulness, which I regret to say did not awaken in me the sympathy it ought. I felt that she was a humbug ; besides, I had mentally taken the enemy's side, though I had not the remotest idea what it was all about. I was not surprised to hear that she had passed a sleepless night, but I doubted it. Her pulse was strong, and her face looked fresh and rested ; in fact, she was, practically speaking, out of my hands.

“ I am afraid I alarmed you very much last night, Miss Glen ; and I felt glad that you were a woman and not a man. Men do not understand the suffering of a highly strung and nervous woman. Have any of my daughters told you the cause of my distress ? ”

“ No ; they simply said you had been agitated,” I replied, and hesitated whether to say that her son had given me such meagre details as I possessed.

“ Indeed I was. Perhaps you do not know that I have only one son—a good boy, but headstrong, very headstrong. He has occasioned me a good deal of anxiety. He has had for the past two years a splendid situation at the East End, manager in a large printing establishment, Barratt and Co. ; you must know the name. Some of the most elegant works that are published come from Barratt's. Old

Mr. Barratt died last year, and there is practically no head to the firm. My John was head and shoulders and everything to it, and now he has thrown it up when he ought to have been made a partner.'

" 'But how could he be made a partner if there is nobody to share with?' I inquired, in a perplexed voice.

" 'Oh, but there is somebody; that's the ridiculous part of it; there's a chit of a girl, Evelyn Barratt, Mr. Barratt's daughter and sole heiress. She hasn't long come from school, and instead of stopping at home at Rickmansworth with her chaperon as she ought—a lovely place it is too, fit for a prince—she comes poking down to Mile End, and makes all sorts of trouble. She is one of those objectionable persons with ideas, and she wants to upset the whole thing. I have often told John he was too forbearing with her, but at the same time I never thought he'd be such a fool as to throw up the situation. He's mad, Miss Glen, positively mad to do it.'

" 'I am sure he had the best of reasons,' I said softly, and the romance took definite shape.

" 'No reason was sufficient to justify such a step. Why, you don't know what he's done for the place; he has simply made Barratt's. He's both an artist

and a mechanical genius, and he's invented new machinery that has saved them hundreds of pounds—saved it for whom?—that upsetting Evelyn Barratt, who treats him like the dirt beneath her feet. Everything that comes from Barratt's press bears the stamp of my son's genius, and to think he should have thrown it all up, and declined to tell me his reasons; but I've written to Miss Barratt a letter, which I flatter myself will bring her to her senses.'

"I thought of John Ransome's face, and I wondered how it would look set in anger. I also thought that my curiosity might be satisfied if I could see him when he was told for the first time of the step his mother had taken. She was very communicative, but when her elder daughter, still, composed, and proud as usual, came into the room, she became at once reticent, and I soon afterwards left, with a promise to pay another visit in the evening. The thought of John Ransome tramping the streets in search of work was with me all day, and I was also pursued by a most insatiable desire to behold the cause of all this trouble, Miss Evelyn Barratt, of Barratt's Rest, Rickmansworth, and Bruton Street, W.

"I had my desire gratified rather sooner than I expected. It was winter time, and the weather was

bitterly cold. In response to Margaret's solicitations, I had agreed to come home always at one o'clock for a bit of hot lunch; and on the third day after I was called to Mrs. Ransome's, I came home as usual, to find a very smart carriage at my door, a brougham drawn by a lovely pair of black horses, and attended by two imposing-looking menials in the most orthodox and immaculate livery. Visions of an aristocratic patient made my heart beat a little quickly as, mindful of the scrutiny of the aforesaid menials, I walked with dignity up the steps to the door. I had just newly engaged my Buttons, who looked so very fresh and smart as he let me in that I felt quite proud of my establishment, which, if modest, was perfect of its kind. A lady, Buttons said, was in the drawing-room, and when I entered I was confronted by the most lovely and radiant young creature I had ever seen. She had on a velvet carriage mantle, trimmed with sable, which represented a small fortune; and a little toque of the same, with some cunning little sable tails, made the most bewitching setting for her sweet face. And it was a sweet face, and her manner had not an atom of pretentiousness in it. I felt that she was as good as she looked, and I have never changed my mind.

“‘Good morning. My name is Barratt, Evelyn Barratt,’ she said, and I feel sure I must have looked amazed. ‘I came to see you on a little matter of business. Your servant said you would be in directly, or I should not have presumed to come in. But if it is your lunch hour, or anything, I can easily come back another time. You see I am a person of no occupation, and I feel a great reverence for you.’

“At this I laughed, and begging her to be seated, said I was entirely at her disposal. And I thought with a vast pity of my hero, John Ransome, for there did indeed appear to be a great gulf fixed between him and this radiant vision. And yet for a man to come in contact with her and not love her was a thing impossible.

“‘I want you to do something for me, to engage your services, that is, if you are willing and can spare the time,’ she began, in a quick, nervous, earnest way. ‘I happen to be connected with an establishment in which there is a very large number of young women employed. I take the deepest interest in these young women, and I am trying to do everything in my power to make the conditions of their hard life more comfortable. I want to organise a sick benefit club, and do you think you could spare the time to give it

medical attendance? I don't mind what I pay, but I do wish them to have a woman doctor, and I know how clever you are. I have heard of you from my friend Mrs. Capel, of Capel Court, whose town house is next door to mine in Bruton Street.'

" 'Oh, indeed ; that is extraordinary,' I said, and indeed I thought it was. 'If you will give me a little more information about the time and attention which would be required, Miss Barratt, I can give you an answer at once.'

"I had made up my mind on the spot to accept it, at whatever inconvenience, and I own frankly, as I did to her long after, that I had the basest designs on my innocent client. She forthwith launched into a minute account of her scheme, and as I listened, carried away by her enthusiasm, I felt that she was one of the right sort, who do much to keep the world from despair. Of course I promised everything she asked, and we waxed very friendly and confidential over the matter, and she seemed quite reluctant to go away.

" 'I quite envy you your profession, your aim in life, Miss Glen,' she said, as she rose to go. 'It is dreadful to be rich and useless. They tell me I shall never be able to spend my income, so I must try to

get others to help me ; but what a lot of worries one has, finding the right way.'

"The radiance left her face, and a great wistfulness took its place, the sort of look seen on a face like that which makes a man forget everything but his desire to try and banish it for ever. I thought of John Ransome more and more ; and at last I made a bold plunge.

" 'I am attending a family to whom your name is known, Miss Barratt,' I said. 'The Ransomes, who live in this street.'

"I saw that I had made a mistake. Her face flushed painfully, her eyes filled with tears, and bidding me a brief and, as I thought, extremely curt good afternoon, she took her hurried departure, leaving me vexed with myself.

" 'A lesson to you, Elizabeth,' I said to myself, as I watched the perfect equipage drive away. 'A lesson to you to abstain in future from uncalled-for meddling in other people's concerns.'

"I thought I had mortally offended Miss Barratt, as I did not see her again nor receive any communication from her for more than a week. During this interval I continued in attendance on Mrs. Ransome, because she insisted upon it ; and though I

could really do nothing for her, I could not refuse to visit her. She obstinately persisted in remaining in her own room, and, in order to show her son how entirely she disapproved of his action, declined to see him on any pretext whatever. An aggravating case, you think? Oh, very; but there are many similar. It's a way some women have; when things don't go just as they please, they go to bed out of sheer spite. The only thing that brings them downstairs again, my dear, is the dropping of a hint that their room is better than their company. I have never yet known such a hint fail in its effect, when indisposition was the result of bad temper. They get up for the same reason that they lie down, because they think it will annoy somebody, or pay them out. I did not take any more kindly to the Ransome women on closer acquaintance. I felt quite ashamed of them; and to think that these two strong and capable girls should be content to depend on their brother, and to give him sour looks when adverse circumstances overtook him, was almost more than I could bear in silence. But I was growing wiser. I had so often been wholesomely scolded for volunteering a candid opinion that I went about putting a continual curb on myself. Now I see and hear everything like a stoic,



and never give my advice or pass a remark unless it is asked or desired. I was still smarting from the snub administered to me by Miss Barratt, and I never mentioned to Mrs. Ransome that she had called, though she talked of her every day. She told me she had written and sent the threatened letter to Bruton Street, but that it had elicited no reply. That week I saw a good deal of John Ransome. He came every night to inquire how his mother was getting on—the feeblest pretext, of course, because I told him the first day that there was nothing the matter with her. But he seemed to like coming, and we became very friendly, chatting over every conceivable subject. It was about the end of the week, I think, before he referred to the event which had caused our acquaintance. He was very downcast when he came in, and I knew he had had another bitter day of disappointment.

“‘I’ll have to do it, I fear, Miss Glen ; but it goes against the grain.’

“‘What?’ I asked, looking as sympathetic as I could.

“‘Apply to my old employer for a testimonial ; it’s no use hunting for another place without.’

“‘And why shouldn’t you apply for a testimonial ? Even suppose you quarrelled ever so badly, that

doesn't affect past services. Surely he would be a very unjust man to refuse you a testimonial.'

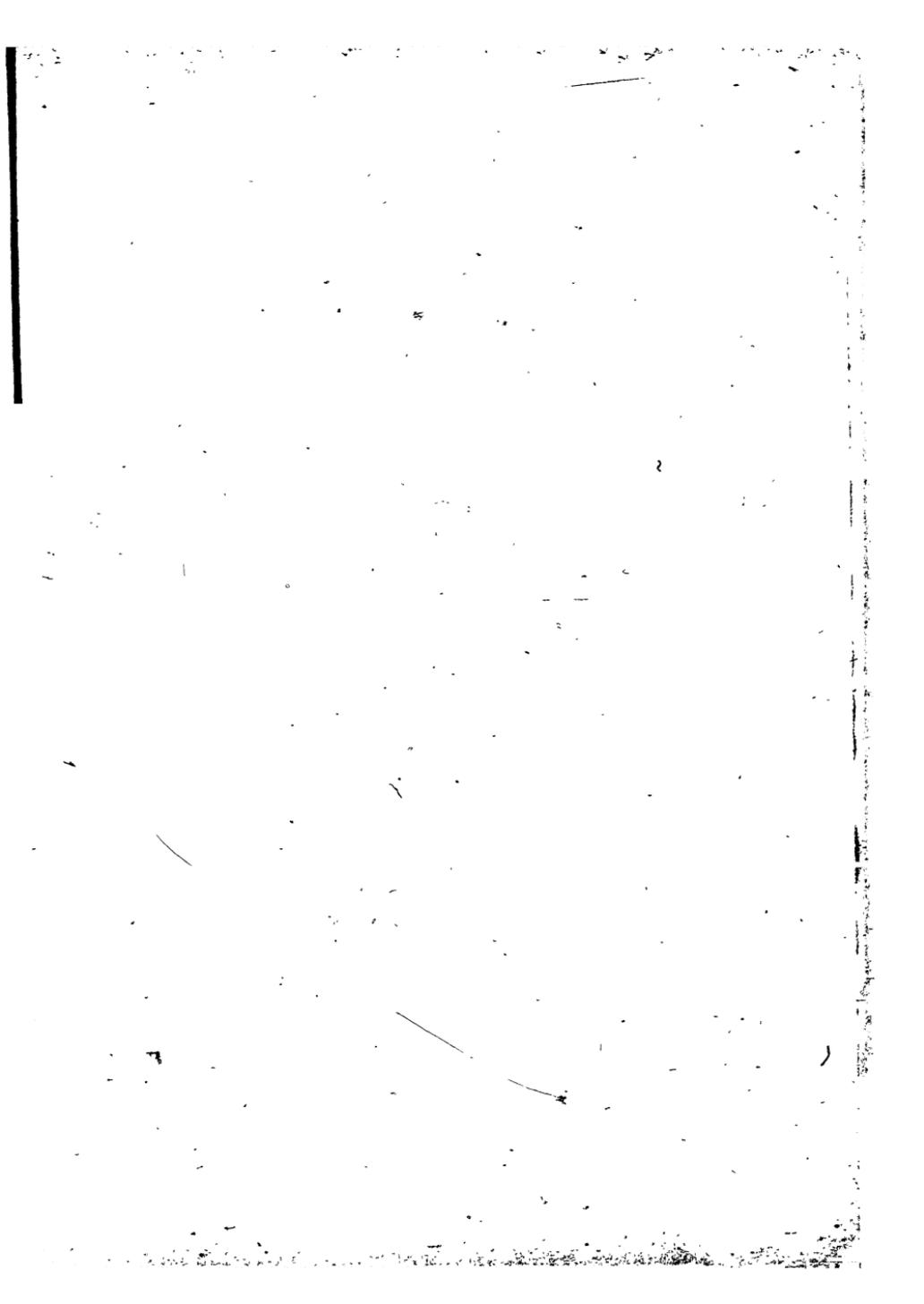
"His face flushed a little.

"It isn't a man at all; it's a woman—a mere girl; that's where it stings; and she's as innocent of business as a baby. I ought to have remembered that, of course; but she was so entirely unreasonable, I forgot myself. It's a misfortune to be born with a hot temper, Miss Glen.'

"I've got one myself, and it has its advantages sometimes,' I said cheerfully. 'I daresay this arbitrary young lady wishes she had been less arbitrary by this time.'

"I believe she does, just as I wish I had been more forbearing. But you see she was demoralising the whole establishment with her quixotic ideas, being taken advantage of right and left. I couldn't stand that, so I put my foot down; then the tempers flew up, of course, and we are pretty equally matched.'

"I could not forbear a little smile as I saw the tenderness leap in his eyes; his secret lay open to any who were quick enough to read. The keenest sting of all was that he was parted in anger from the woman he so faithfully, though hopelessly, loved. It was just on the tip of my tongue to tell him Miss





"HE ONLY BOWED STIFFLY, AND WALKED OUT OF THE HOUSE." p 167.

Barratt had been to my house, and for what purpose, when there came a tremendous ring at the door-bell. Immediately John Ransome got up to leave. I walked with him to the consulting-room door, and when we looked out into the hall what did we behold? Evelyn Barratt in an evening gown of white satin and an exquisite crimson cloak trimmed with white feathers, just far enough open at the neck to reveal its lovely contour.

“‘Good evening, Dr. Glen,’ she cried gaily. ‘I’m going to a party, but I wanted to see you just for a moment. Pray excuse me—oh—’

“‘The ‘oh’ was caused by her recognition of John Ransome; but he only bowed stiffly, and walked out of the house with as much haste as was compatible with dignity. I saw that Miss Barratt’s cheeks rivalled her cloak, and that her eyes had a very bright, rebellious look. But I gave her a perfectly matter-of-fact greeting, and asked her to come in, which she did, and I saw that she was quite upset.

“‘I’ve had a bad cold, and not been able to go out. Yesterday I went to Mile End for the first time, and the girls are enthusiastic about the sick club. They’ve all joined. Dr. Glen, have you known John Ransome long?’

"No, only ten days. I was called to see his mother week before last, so our acquaintance is purely professional."

"What do you think of him?"

"I admire him very much; I think him a true man, which is more than one can say for all his sex; and I'm very sorry for him too."

"Why?"

"Because he's out of work for one thing, and can't get anything to do; and because he's got three horrid women at home, a mother and two sisters, who nag the life out of him; and I think he's a very badly used person all round."

"I was forced to say it, even if it cut the connection between me and Miss Barratt for ever. I saw the sweet colour pale out of the girl's lovely, earnest face, and I knew that I had wounded her to the heart."

"He should not be so proud and unreasonable, then," she said, just a little stiffly, though her eyes, moist and tender, belied her words. Then she began to talk with great rapidity of her benefit and sick club, and never recurred once to the subject of John Ransome. But I saw her depart to the party, feeling very sure that her enjoyment of it was spoiled, and somehow I didn't care. Next night, a little earlier

than usual, John Ransome came, and the first thing he told me was that he had written to Miss Barratt for a testimonial, and had also expressed his regret that he had parted from her in such haste and anger. We were just talking of it, when Buttons brought me a message, which he delivered fortunately in a low voice. I asked Mr. Ransome to excuse me a moment, and went to the drawing-room, where I found Miss Barratt, and she had her ex-manager's letter in her hand.

“It's an odd thing, Miss Glen, that I should trouble you with my affairs, but after what you said last night I felt I should like to show you this, and to own that I believe I did not treat Mr. Ransome very well after all. Fancy how humiliating for him to have to ask a testimonial from *me*.”

“I read the letter, since she desired me to do so, and because I knew the man who wrote it would be pleased for me to read it; then I handed it back to her with a very straight, keen look.

“Mr. Ransome happens to be in my consulting-room again to-night,” I said quietly. “Perhaps you should see him. Let me send him here.”

“She hesitated, and her face flushed softly again.

“It is a good opportunity for me to apologise,” she

said naïvely; 'and if I wait till to-morrow I may harden up again, and write him a horrid letter. I am that kind of person, Miss Glen. Yes, pray let him come.'

"I darted back to the consulting-room and told him to go in. He leaped to his feet, and I saw a very curious look on his face.

" 'I'll go, but I'm sure it isn't wise. I'll make a fool of myself. How is any man to help making a fool of himself before her? But I'll go.'

"I shook hands with him on the spot, and my eyes said what my lips dared not. Absurd, wasn't it? Yes, highly so, I know; and I, plain Elizabeth Glen, paced that consulting-room for one mortal hour like a lion in his den. Fortunately for themselves, no patients came that night. At last I could bear it no longer, and went to the drawing-room door. They appeared to be very silent, for I could not hear a single sound. My little knock, however, brought John Ransome to the door, and when I saw his face I knew that it had been an eventful hour for him.

" 'Please, it is nine o'clock,' I said humbly; 'would you say to Miss Barratt that her coachman has just sent in a message that the horses are getting very chilled?'

"He opened the door wide and motioned me in. Then I looked from one to the other inquiringly,

wondering which would enlighten me as to the result of this prolonged interview. She spoke first; she was looking lovely—with that peculiar loveliness which is never more conspicuous than when a girl's heart first owns its deep interest in a lover. I saw that there had been a talk of love between them, but that it was by no means satisfactory.

“Mr. Ransome will perhaps come back to Mile End, Dr. Glen,” she said. “I have told him how he is missed, how badly they want an organising hand, and how impossible it is for anybody to use the machines he has made except himself. And I have apologised, as I said I would, for my unreasonableness; and now I do not think he is treating me very well.”

“John regarded her steadily, and his eyes were aglow with the honest passion of his soul. She saw it too, and I knew it made her glad, but a little tremulous too. He answered then to me exactly as if I were the judge called in to arbitrate upon their case.

“And I have told her that it will not be wise for me to return; she knows well why. You must know also, Dr. Glen, because you are a woman yourself.”

“Both waited for me to speak. Now wasn't that a pretty corner for a respectable practitioner to be put into by two people almost strangers to her?

They said afterwards, when I tried to show them the enormity of their conduct, that I was quite equal to the occasion, and that they believed I rather enjoyed it. I took the bull by the horns at once. It was the only way.

“‘It has resolved itself into a love affair,’ I said frankly, ‘and there is no middle course in that. It must be aye or no.’

“‘That’s what I say,’ Miss Barratt remarked, with the most whimsical, lovely smile, ‘only he is as unreasonable as he was before.’

“‘Dr. Glen, I am in a sore strait,’ he cried then. ‘Think of the difference in our positions. Her carriage is at the door. I have not a penny I can call my own—not even a calling to my name. I am nobody. Could I take such stupendous advantage? Even love—and God knows that is genuine enough—could scarcely bridge such a stupendous gulf.’

“‘Love can bridge anything,’ I said, with the bold assumption of ignorance. ‘I’ll tell your coachman he can go home, Miss Barratt, and perhaps you will join me at coffee in half an hour.’

“‘Then I left them, and sent the astonished and rather indignant Perkins back to Bruton Street, with a skilfully concocted message for Miss Barratt’s chaperon.

"Yes, they got married, but there was a good deal of friction at first with Miss Barratt's trustees and sundry dissatisfied relatives. No great match for her—well, perhaps not, for she was very rich—but I put it to you, was she not better with honest John Ransome, who adored her, and who, besides being a genuine manly fellow, was a genius, of whom she has lived to be proud, than with somebody with greater pretensions and less real worth?"

"They live the best part of the year at Rickmansworth, but they're in town now. I have to dine at Bruton Street to-morrow night; that's why I couldn't come to you."

"And what about the mother and sisters?" I inquired with interest.

"Oh, they were delighted, of course. They still live here in Rayburn Place, and are very proud of John's wife and the son and heir; but young Mrs. Ransome, though very kind to them, rather holds aloof; she does not understand them. Well, do you like John Ransome's Love Story?"

"Very much," I replied heartily. "There is only one other love story, I think, which might equal it, and that is Dr. Glen's."

VII.

LUCY GERMAINE'S MARRIAGE.

"I HAD a good many patients out of the Marlwood Road Church," said Dr. Glen. "And I was interested in a good many people who were not my patients. Among them was a very pretty girl who sang in the choir, and who had about her something so winsome and bright, that I felt very friendly towards her quite a long time before I knew her, or had even heard her name. One day I was summoned to see a new patient in one of the handsomest houses in Marlwood Road, and when I had waited a few minutes in a particularly elegant drawing-room, who should come to me but the sweet-faced girl who had the finest contralto voice in the church choir.

"Our recognition seemed mutual, and she gave a pleasant little nod as she cordially shook hands.

"Good morning, Dr. Glen; it is granny you are to see. She has been quite low for some days, but

would not hear of a doctor till last night, when Mr. Fleming persuaded her to send for you.'

" 'Mrs. Carlyon is quite an old lady, I suppose?' I replied: 'I know you very well by sight. Is Carlyon your name?'

"No, mine is Germaine—Lucy Germaine. Granny is my mother's mother; but I am an orphan. I thought I had better come and talk to you a little first to prepare you for granny. She's a dear old lady, but has whims, a good many of them, and is sometimes a little trying to those who don't know her.'

"She spoke very prettily, and as I looked at her I admired her more and more. She was a slim, girlish thing, very dainty in her dress, and very winsome altogether. I thought granny very well off indeed to have such a nurse and companion.

" 'And granny doesn't believe in doctors at all,' said she, with a little twinkle in her eye, which showed that she could enjoy a little joke. 'So if she is very rude to you just set it down to her prejudice against your profession. She is really very good and kind at heart.' She gave a little sigh, however, as she said this, which let me know that there was a little sore bit somewhere, and it was not very long till I found it out

“‘I’m not at all afraid of formidable old ladies, Miss Lucy,’ I said confidently; ‘I generally manage to get my own way by letting them think they are getting theirs. This plan is very efficacious with old gentlemen, too, and I’ve had a good deal of experience with them.’

“She gave a little laugh.

“‘Everybody loves you as well as admires you for your skill,’ she said frankly. ‘I have always wanted to know you, and Mr. Fleming so often speaks of you. He says he could not bring up that baby without you.’

“I perceived that Mr. Fleming was a privileged and familiar friend in the house; and I remarked, as I followed Lucy Germaine from the room, that Mrs. Carlyon’s prejudice against my profession did not extend to the calling ministerial. We ascended the wide, handsome staircase, and I found my patient in a large and luxurious dressing-room, where she lay on a couch, wearing a dressing-gown and having a fine, soft, white shawl round her head and shoulders. She was without exception the finest-looking old lady I have ever seen, and I was quite transfixed with admiration. But it was a very haughty and stern old face, and the keen black eyes had not much softness in their depths. Her features were almost

perfect, and her figure, when I afterwards saw her walk across the floor, had lost none of its youthful erectness and grace. She surveyed me very critically as she answered my salutation, and then bade her granddaughter leave us alone.

“So you are the lady-doctor who has become the fashion in Marlwood Road Church?” she said brusquely.

“Well, I must say, you look a capable, self-reliant sort of person. Well, what is the matter with me?”

“That I shall find out presently, Mrs. Carylon,” I replied cheerfully, for I saw I had a person of strong character to deal with, an experience I always enjoyed.

“Now please to answer me a few questions.”

“Humph! I thought a woman of your pretensions and abilities could diagnose without the usual quizzing,” she said grimly. “I see you’re just a humbug like all the rest.”

“This did not disconcert me, and after a little skilful manipulation, I managed to get from the old lady the necessary information. There was not much wrong, only a feverish cold, which would keep her in her room for some days. I did not seek to prolong my visit, and when I had told her I should send her medicine in the evening, I put on my gloves, prepared to go.

“‘Nó, you don’t waste much time,’ she said, still in the same grim way; but something told me she was not displeased with me. ‘Couldn’t you sit down now, and talk to an old woman for five minutes?’

“‘I could, but I have still seven visits on my list, Mrs. Carlyon. And besides, a doctor should never degenerate into a bore.’

“We both laughed at this, and at the same time I sat down. I had just got a pair of new gloves, which fitted particularly well, and as I stretched my hand out to put in the buttons, I surveyed the well-gloved hand with satisfaction.

“‘You are as vain as a peacock, I believe,’ said my old lady. ‘But you’re right, quite right; every woman is, to make the best of her appearance. Yes, you’re the fashion in the church at present. Mr. Fleming thinks you are a nonpareil; and I wonder he hasn’t fallen in love with you. Do many of your patients do that?’

“‘I have never had one affected that way,’ I replied. ‘Mr. Fleming is simply grateful, because I take an interest in his little Nora, for her sweet mother’s sake.’”

“‘Ah! she had a short life, poor thing—very delicate, I believe. Don’t you think he ought to marry again?’

"I don't know. I don't think he ever will."

"To my amazement my old lady flushed a little at this, and looked annoyed.

"And pray why not? He is quite young, only four-and-thirty. Why should you condemn him to a single life?"

"I don't condemn him," I said mildly. "I only ventured an opinion. I am almost sure he won't marry again."

"Then he is a fool," she said, with such acidity that I looked, as I felt, much amazed. Then, as I was not particularly interested in the second marriage of Mr. Wallace Fleming, I went away. Her last words were a command to come back next morning without fail. Lucy Germaine waited for me downstairs, and seemed anxious to hear how I had fared.

"Granny is very cross just now, Doctor Glen, and I am not in her good graces. I have offended her dreadfully. Sometimes I think she will never forgive me. It is so hard to know what is right."

"It becomes plain to us what is right after a bit, if we wait, and ask to be guided, my dear," I said kindly, for the anxious look on the sweet young face touched me very much.

"I wish I could tell you. I am in such a

dilemma, and so unhappy,' she said impulsively; and just then a bell rang with loud impatience, and bidding me a hasty good-bye, she ran to answer the summons. But I thought of her a good deal that day, and I feared, if it were a contest between her and her grandmother, the odds were against Lucy Germaine.

"Next morning I paid my visit to my new patient about eleven o'clock, and found her not much improved.

"'I didn't take your medicine, because I didn't feel like it,' she said calmly, 'and I didn't sleep.'

"'I should think not, with such a temperature and pulse,' I replied as calmly. 'Well, Mrs. Carlyon, unless you obey my orders I'm not coming back.'

"'And why, pray? If I choose to pay you for coming, and do not choose to take your drugs, where's the difference?'

"'The difference is this. You called me here for the purpose of consulting me as to your health. It is not my business to make morning or any other calls upon you except for that; and as my reputation would certainly not gain credit by such a patient, I shall not come back except on the condition named.'

"'Well, well. You are a Tartar, and no mistake.

Pour out the obnoxious stuff and I'll swallow it,' she said, quite good-naturedly. 'Truth is, I'm a good deal annoyed just now, and I've too much on my mind to let me sleep. What do you think of my granddaughter, Lucy Germaine?'

" 'I think her a very sweet girl,' I replied, considerably surprised by the question.

" 'I suppose so. She's sweet to everybody but me. Would you believe, Doctor Glen, that girl has as much obstinacy in her as a stone wall, and as much resisting power? She's got entangled in a love affair which I'm determined to stamp out! She shall not throw herself away as her silly mother did.'

" I looked interested, 'I suppose, though I said nothing, for she presently went on.

" 'I told Mr. Fleming there was nothing but mischief in choir practices and literary society meetings, and I want him to do away with them in the church, but he's pretty obstinate, too. The lad is a medical student at Guy's; a nobody, without any people, who goes out as a tutor to pay his fees. I've no doubt he counted the cost beforehand, and thinks he has nothing to do but pop into my money after Lucy inherits it; but if they persist in this they'll find their mistake.'

“Don't be too hard on them, Mrs. Carlyon. Even as you tell it, the story sounds well, and he must be an honest, hardworking fellow. What do people matter after all? and if he honestly loves your granddaughter he'll make a living for her.”

“I won't have it, I tell you. I'll never give my consent,” she said, quite fiercely. “Now, if she'd take my advice and marry Mr. Fleming, what a splendid thing it would be for them both.”

“Well, but if they don't see it, Mrs. Carlyon?” I remonstrated. “No good ever comes of forcing such things. Has Mr. Fleming ever asked her?”

“No; how can he with that fortune-hunter dangling after her, and she encouraging him? But I'm sure he's thought of it.”

“I felt equally sure he hadn't, but abstained from saying so.”

“I wish you'd give her a word, Doctor Glen. You are, or ought to be, a woman of sense, and you could point out the folly of going against me. Why, she has nothing and nobody in the world but me; and my mind is made up that she shan't marry this Walter Farndon. If she does, I wash my hands of her, just as I did of her mother before her.”

“I am not going to interfere, I do assure you,

Mrs. Carlyon,' I replied frankly. 'For two reasons : first, because it would be a thankless and quite useless task ; and, secondly, because I am afraid my sympathies are very much with the culprits, though I never saw Mr. Walter Farndon in my life.'

"'His father had a shop!' she cried, in shrill scorn. 'A haberdasher's shop in Holborn,—sold sixpenny ties over the counter ; and my father was a colonel, Dr. Glen. Do you suppose I like to see the old stock going down in the dirt like that?'

"I got up, for I wanted to say something which would not do any good. So I thought I had better go.

"'Now look here,' she said rudely, 'you needn't go gossiping over this affair to the first person you meet. I'm sure I don't know what tempted me to talk to you about it at all.'

"'And I am sure neither do I,' I retorted curtly. 'I wish you a very good morning, Mrs. Carlyon.'

"'And you'll come back ; see you come back to-morrow,' she called out shortly. 'And if you can give that Lucy of mine a word of caution and advice I'll make it worth your while.'

"'I'm not going to do any such thing, Mrs. Carlyon,' I replied flatly, and ran away. Lucy, as

usual, awaited me downstairs, and I saw quite well from her look that she quite expected and guessed that her grandmother and I had been discussing her.

“ ‘Wasn’t granny awful to you this morning, Doctor Glen? she was awful to me. Has she told you—I am sure she has—what is making her so angry?’ ”

“ ‘Yes, my dear, she has told me; but perhaps time may do wonders in this affair as in so many others, so keep up your heart.’ ”

“ ‘Oh, but you don’t know granny; she never forgives or gives in,’ cried poor Lucy, tears standing in her eyes. ‘Her only objection to my poor Walter is that he is poor, but he is so clever he will be sure to get on, and I’ll help him all I can.’ ”

“ ‘How far on is he in his medical course?’ I asked with interest.

“ ‘He hopes to qualify in summer; then he will go as an assistant, and I am sure he will get on.’ ”

“ ‘I am sure he will,’ I heartily agreed; ‘with such an incentive any man ought to get on.’ ”

“ ‘Granny has got it into her head that I ought to marry Mr. Fleming, and it is so absurd,’ she said, half laughing and half crying. ‘Because I am quite sure he has never thought of such a thing.’ ”

It seems an awful thing to say about one's granny, but if she weren't so old I should say she was in love with him herself.'

"It is quite likely—love of a kind. I have seen instances of such infatuation in old ladies before now. But I think you are right about Mr. Fleming's own view. I feel sure he will remain true to his wife's memory.'

"I wish you'd tell granny that; it might do some good,' she said. 'But I wish more than anything you could get to know Walter and speak for him. Granny has taken such a fancy to you. She says you are not afraid to speak your mind.'

"Well, I don't think I am. Now I must go; and keep your heart up, my dear,—I am sure all will come right.'

"So I bade her good-bye. A few steps from the door I met Mr. Wallace Fleming himself, and was not surprised to hear he was going to call on Mrs. Carlyon.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Fleming, for recommending me to a new patient,' I said, when we had cordially shaken hands. 'How is my little Nora?'

"Very well, chattering as usual,' he replied,

with a happy light in his eyes. 'And what do you think of Mrs. Carlyon?'

"A very strong-minded old lady,' I replied. 'Mr. Fleming, do tell me about Mr. Walter Farndon. Is he any good?'

"A great deal—a fine, honest, hard-working, clever fellow,' he replied warmly. 'His only fault is that he is poor.'

"A fault the qualities you have mentioned will soon mend,' I said cheerily; 'you and I must do our best to get the old lady round to our way of thinking, and so make that sweet Lucy Germaine as happy as she deserves to be.'

* * * * *

"I paid Mrs. Carlyon a few more visits, and then there was an outbreak of scarlet fever, and I was so busy I forgot all about her, nor did she send for me. I heard that they had left town to spend Easter, which fell very early that year, at Bournemouth, and I did not see or hear anything about them for quite a long time. One day I met Mr. Fleming, and he told me that they had gone abroad for the summer, so I did not think of them much, having a great many other things to occupy my time and thoughts.

"One night, in the autumn of the same year, a

young man was shown into my consulting-room, where I had had a very busy two hours. I was feeling very tired, and wishing the bell would stop ringing for the night—you see we are never content; however, I concealed my weariness, and turned as interestedly to the new-comer as if he had been the first. I did not think from his appearance that he had come to consult me, for he certainly looked the picture of health. He had a very honest, ugly face, with a certain attractive strength about it which I liked. He looked about five-and-twenty.

“My name is Farndon—Walter Farndon, at your service, Dr. Glen,” he said, and in an instant I remembered who he was and all about him.

“Oh, yes, I have heard your name from Mrs. Carlyon and also from Miss Germaine,” I said at once. “Perhaps you have come to tell me something about them. I have heard or seen nothing of them for ever so long. Have they returned from abroad? they went to the Engadine, I think, if I remember rightly.”

“Yes, they have been at Pontresina for three months, and they returned about three weeks ago. I came to tell you that I am going to be married to Miss Germaine on the fourteenth of October.”

“Oh, indeed,” I cried, with the liveliest interest. “The old lady has proved amenable then, after all. Well, I congratulate you very heartily.”

“Well, no, she hasn’t exactly. We’re going to marry without her consent,” replied Walter Farndon ; and I must say I could not detect the smallest shade of regret or embarrassment in his tone. He stated the fact as calmly as if it were of no consequence whatsoever.

“Perhaps I ought then to withdraw my congratulations ; but you look as if it were all right,” I said. “I suppose you have got your licence, and have some sort of prospects for the future?”

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“Yes, I have got an excellent outdoor assistant-ship in the Midlands, with the prospect of an early partnership. Of course, it is not what I would like for Lucy, nor what I mean to have, but she was so unhappy, we could not think of any other way out of the difficulty.”

“Well,” I said, very deliberately, “I suppose you know your own affairs best, and have counted the cost ; and I must say I think Miss Germaine has the real grit in her. So there is no prospect of the old lady coming to?”

“None ; she’s an old—an old — but I’ll hold

my tongue, Dr. Glen, in case I use language too strong. But the way she has persecuted my poor darling!—Lucy told me she tried to throw her at the head of Mr. Fleming, who doesn't want to marry anybody, as every one knows; and when that failed an old colonel turned up at Pontresina, old enough to be husband to Mrs. Carlyon herself, and he fell in love with Lucy. It is to escape their united persecution that we have decided on this step.'

“‘And where is Lucy now? Still under Mrs. Carlyon's roof?’

“‘No, she is in lodgings; in fact, she has run away, and I came to see you to-night to ask you to be kind to her, and to come to the wedding on Tuesday morning.’

“‘I felt a good deal puzzled. I did not approve of the running away, nor of Lucy's being in lodgings by herself, but my private sympathies were entirely with the young couple, though I did not choose to say so.

“‘Who is going to marry you?’

“‘Why, Mr. Fleming, of course. He quite approves of it. He's been wonderfully good. I know if Mrs. Fleming had been alive they'd have taken Lucy to their own house.’

“I'm rather astonished at Mr. Fleming ; but his approval is very satisfactory,” I said smiling. “Well, Mr. Farndon, if you will give me Lucy's address I'll go and see her to-morrow—perhaps this very evening, if it is not too far.”

“Oh, it is not far at all. I felt sure you'd come. Lucy said you would be too busy, and that probably you had forgotten all about her. But I was anxious to tell you, because I feel very much of course that Lucy must miss having lady friends at such a time.”

“You are a wise man, and I think you are a very plucky pair. I am afraid Mr. Fleming will have damaged his reputation in Mrs. Carlyon's eyes.”

“Oh yes, she forbade him the house ; it's been a terrible business, I do assure you. But I'm not afraid. If I keep my health, Miss Glen, I'll be able to support my wife yet in the position she deserves ; and she trusts me absolutely ; that always brings out the best that is in a man.”

“He spoke with such simple honesty and sincerity that I felt my heart warm to him ; and told him so in a few kindly words. And just as soon as he was gone, I put on my hat and went round to see the runaway bride, whom I found quite bright and cheerful, and when I heard from her the story of the

harsh old woman's persecution—it was nothing short of that—I did not wonder that she had preferred the dinner of herbs where love is, and was willing to cast in her lot with her true-hearted lover. I fetched her straight away to my own house, and there she remained till the marriage day, and we had quite a pretty wedding, I assure you, and no lack of guests either. The young couple went straight to their new home in Worcestershire, and I heard from them occasionally. Then there came a long silence. After the marriage, being mortally offended with Mr. Fleming, Mrs. Carlyon severed her connection with the church in Marlwood Road; nor did she again call my services into requisition. Occasionally I remembered her when in the neighbourhood, and wondered whether she were still alive; but it was quite two years after her granddaughter's wedding when I saw her again. She came into my consulting-room one afternoon in early spring, looking very handsome and stately, and I was very much surprised to see her, nor could I help telling her so.

“‘You may be. I haven't forgiven you yet—for what you did two years ago—and I haven't come to consult you either,’ she said quite gravely. ‘I

have come to ask you a simple question. Do you know anything about that headstrong girl, whether she has lived to repent her ingratitude ?'

"The tone was forbidding, the words ungracious, but I was shrewd enough to detect a certain anxious interest underlying them.

"I know nothing about them, Mrs. Carlyon. It is eighteen months quite since I heard from Mrs. Farndon. She was then well, and Dr. Farndon getting on famously.'

"'Humph! she'd say so—that's the way; she'd say they were all right at the last gasp. But I don't believe they're all right. I'll take their address, if you please.'

"I opened one of my drawers and took out two or three letters in Lucy's handwriting which I had kept. I tried to hide a surreptitious smile as I did so, and I was surprised and inwardly delighted at the turn affairs had taken.

"Mrs. Carlyon wrote down the address and went away ungraciously as she had come.

"That same night, curiously enough, by the last post I received a letter bearing the Birmingham post-mark. It was in the handwriting of Mrs. Farndon, and as I broke the seal I was naturally struck by

that curious association of ideas which has in it so often something savouring of the mysterious. When I read the letter I thought it still more odd, because it gave such foundation for Mrs. Carlyon's strong anxiety. It was quite a short letter, evidently written in haste; and the object of it was to borrow five pounds. Yes, it startled and horrified me, and the few brief lines did not give me as much satisfaction as I could have wished. It simply said that Dr. Farndon had been out of health for some time, and had had to leave his situation; also that a serious operation was necessary for him, and though they were willing and anxious to do it in Birmingham, he wished particularly to come to London to his old Professor at King's College. Would I oblige them for old times' sake with the loan of five pounds to pay their fares to London?—and that was all. There was a reticence and self-restraint about that letter which betrayed a great deal more than the words. I sat quite stupefied for a few minutes, recalling how I had last seen them go forth together, young husband and wife, in the glory of their youth and happiness, looking fit to conquer worlds. And in two short years it had come to this. I felt angry, impatient, badly used—that my hopes should have

been so poorly realised, and chagrined that Mrs. Carlyon's grim prognostication should have been so abundantly fulfilled. I drew a telegraph form across the desk, wrote upon it that I would arrive in Birmingham next day at noon, and had just rung for Buttons to take it out, when the hall bell rang, and who should be shown in presently but a young woman with a little child in her arms—a poor, worn, and wasted creature, whom I recognised with a little cry of consternation as the brilliant bride of two years ago.

“‘Why, Lucy, Lucy, my dear!’

“Yes, I began to cry, I could not help it, I felt so sore. I took the child from her arms, and made her sit down, but it was quite five minutes before she could speak.

“‘Dear Dr. Glen, I knew you'd help us. Walter got so impatient he could not wait for your answer. I had some little things I could sell, which got enough to pay the train fares, and he will go into hospital to-morrow. We thought perhaps you'd find us just enough to pay a quiet lodging. Oh, isn't it awful!’

“She didn't cry—she was past that. She sat on her chair, and her hands crossed themselves in her

lap, and she looked me very straightly in the face, and her look cut me to the heart.

“‘Lucy,’ I said, ‘I shall never as long as I live forgive you—never, so you needn’t ask it.’ She did not smile, or appear to take any notice of my words.

“‘The last blow is the only one left to fall. It will if the operation prove unsuccessful; yes, it is a very serious one; they told us that at Queen’s Hospital at Birmingham. That is why Walter was so anxious to come here. He knows all the surgeons at King’s, and he said you’d be kind to me and baby; there isn’t anybody else.’

“‘I think,’ I began in a shaking voice, ‘the very least you could have done was to let me know you had this baby. You have not behaved well to me, Mrs. Farndon.’

“‘I had to get it out somehow, the misery of the whole story was so hard for me to bear.

“‘I always meant to, but I had poor health so long after, and our troubles thickened so fast. Walter’s principal was not a nice man; he treated him unfairly and very harshly whenever he was unable to do the drudgery, and he didn’t keep to the letter of the agreement either. It has been a fearful

struggle, and all through it Walter was so brave and good and unselfish, never grumbling at all until this terrible thing came to him. What have we done that we should be so hardly punished? Was it so great a sin to run away from granny? I think it would have been a greater sin to stay and marry as she wished me—to marry an old man I hated.

“‘We won’t go into that, meantime, dear,’ I said; and just then the baby, a lovely boy, little more than a year old, opened his eyes and crowed into my face as if he recognised a friend. Then the young mother smiled, and so became a fleeting vision of the Lucy of old.

“‘Where’s Dr. Farndon now?’

“‘He’s in the cab at the door,’ she replied; and I jumped up so quickly that the baby gave a little cry of terror.

“‘In a cab at the door! then he comes in here; and here you stay all of you till I take the bearings of the case,’ I said, and, heedless of her remonstrances, I tossed the baby to her and ran out to the cab myself. And when I saw poor Walter Farndon, worn to a shadow by terrible disease, I could have cried again. He demurred very little to my proposal. He was in that quiescent state brought

about by great weakness, and seemed to have but a shadowy interest in what was passing. And yet, when his eye fell on his wife and child, I saw a spasm cross his face, a spasm of pain more real and acute than any physical pang, and his eyes met mine in that mute, anguished appeal one sees in the eyes of strong men beaten in the battle of life. Margaret's sympathies were not difficult to enlist, and the top floor of the house was given up to my guests; and in my house the surgeons held their consultation, and it was decided that they should operate, and that I should watch the case. And I told Doctor Farndon that such an opportunity was a very abundant payment to me for any trouble they might make in the house.

"They were all agreed that no time should be lost, and the operation was fixed for three o'clock in the afternoon of the third day, which was Friday. I was present the whole time.

"Lucy was not in the house. We had kept the hour and the day secret from her, and I had, under the pretence that both she and baby required fresh air, sent them with Margaret in the carriage to Potter's Bar to execute a commission for me there; and as they would have tea at the inn, I knew

they'd be safely out of the way till six o'clock at least.

“ It was got well over, and, as far as we could see, in an entirely satisfactory manner. By the time the carriage returned there was not a sign of what had taken place, except the dainty, soft-footed nurse moving noiselessly about the room. And when Lucy heard it was all over, successfully, too, as far as we could then predict, she fell down upon her knees and remained still for so long a time that I was afraid. But when I touched her, and she looked up, I saw that her face was sunshiny and peaceful, and that she had been alone with God, who had taken her trouble from her, as you and I have proved, dear, that He can take all our troubles from us and make our hearts light as air. She begged so hard to be allowed to sit a little while with her husband that we allowed it, and I was in my room amusing myself with that absurd baby, whose high spirits nothing could damp, when Mrs. Carlyon was shown in. She looked very troubled I could see, and she gave me, almost without greeting, a returned letter, which, of course, did not at all surprise me. While I looked at it, she picked up the baby, whom I had laid down on the hearthrug. He was just beginning to toddle, and he soon wriggled

himself from the old lady's lap and stood at her knee, looking up into her face, babbling his pretty baby nonsense, which nobody but his mother ever pretended to understand. Glancing at the two, I saw a big tear run down Mrs. Carlyon's cheek, and I knew that the baby had done what nobody else could—softened her heart.

“Gone away, left no address,” I said, “Well, what can you do now?”

“It would be no use going down, I suppose? They haven't got on evidently, or he would have stayed longer in the place. I'd give a good deal to know something about him. Why, I cannot tell, because they treated me abominably, only I know I can't get them out of my head.”

“Would you do anything for them, Mrs. Carlyon?” I enquired. “Suppose you found them out and knew they were in harassed circumstances?”

“I might, if they were in a proper frame of mind; only young people of the present day are so independent, and Lucy's like that, as I once told you—she's as stubborn as a stone wall. Whose lovely child is this? I suppose you have visitors?”

“Yes, I have,” I replied, and my heart beat a

little faster as I conceived a harmless plot. 'Isn't he a beauty?'

"He is. I used to imagine how pleasant it would be to have Lucy's children running about.' She said this with a vague wistfulness that betrayed an empty heart. 'And I believe, if they had behaved decently, I would have given in at the last. Oh, you darling!'

"The child playing bo-peep behind her chair suddenly made a little rush at her and clambered on her knee. Then, begging her to excuse me a moment, I left the room and ran upstairs to Lucy.

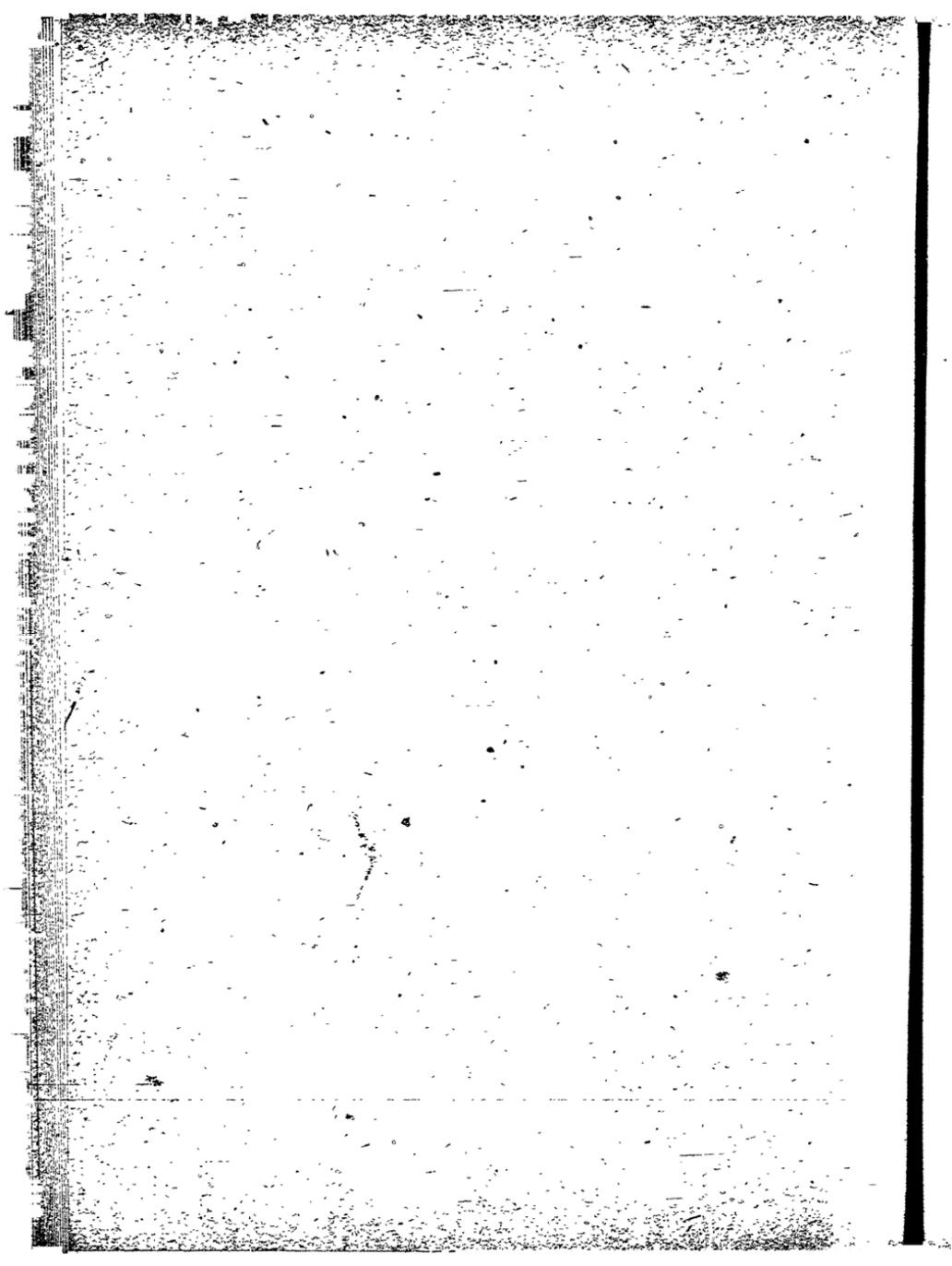
"There's a lady downstairs anxious to see you, Lucy,' I said; 'baby is amusing her meanwhile, but you'd better run down.'

"She rose obediently, and with a look of love towards the prostrate form on the bed went downstairs. I heard the quiet opening and shutting of the consulting-room door, and then no more. When nurse, who had been downstairs at supper, came to relieve me, I went to the consulting-room door, and basely listened, and when I heard the continuous murmur of their voices, I made bold to give a little knock at the door and then to enter; and there they were, granny in my chair with the baby asleep in her



"MOTHER'S LOVE"

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arms, and Lucy sitting close by on a stool, and traces of tears were on both their faces.

“‘Granny has forgiven me, Dr. Glen, and we are friends again,’ she said; ‘thanks be to God—and to you.’

“‘You have taught me a lesson in human charity I shall never forget, my dear,’ said the proud old lady, and the look she cast upon me warmed my heart; ‘and I shall never forget it. I pray God it will do me good to the last day of my life.’

“She stretched out her hand to me, afraid to rise lest she should disturb the sleeping child; and when I had warmly pressed it, she touched Lucy’s bent head tenderly with a mother’s touch.

—“So the breach was healed, and tribulation was blessed to those young people, and they often in after years admitted the sweet uses of the adversity which at the time seemed so bitter.

“Yes, Dr. Farndon was restored to comparative health; and in the autumn the young couple were established in a house of their own, in a growing London suburb, Mrs. Carlyon providing the wherewithal, every penny of which, however, Dr. Farndon has scrupulously repaid. He has an immense practice,

has just taken a partner, and they are still my true, dear friends."

"How fortunate you are, Elizabeth!" I said with a vague envy, "to have so many opportunities. What lovely things you constantly do for people; and how nicely all your stories end!"

"Not all. I've made my bitter mistakes, dear, and I have my sad moments; and you, with all your blessings, need not grudge me such compensations as these. Remember that, with them all, I am still a lonely woman, standing on the outside always."

Then very soberly she kissed me and went away.

VIII.

PORT LEYTON'S HEIR.

"The pathos exquisite
Of lovely minds set in harsh forms."

GEORGE ELIOT.

"WHAT is it, Elizabeth? You look not only sad and out of sorts, but there is a gleam in your eye which seems to me to indicate a certain degree of indignation."

She had come to me at a most unusual hour in the evening, and though I was glad to see her, I felt that something had brought her, possibly that she had a story to tell me. She threw herself a trifle wearily into her favourite chair, and began to unbutton her gloves in a most unusual silence.

"I can stay a bit," she said presently. "I have sent John away with the carriage, and will go home on the humble 'bus. Can you give me anything to eat?"

I rang the bell, and, looking at her, I saw that she had been crying.

“You have not been home for dinner, I suppose,” I said severely. “But fortunately my larder is not quite empty. Who has been vexing the soul of Saint Elizabeth?”

“Oh, my dear, give me time, and I will vex your soul likewise. I have just witnessed the culminating act of a long injustice heaped upon the head of a child. Ah, now your eyes flash! In the Bible you and I read and love there is a text, ‘Can a mother forget her sucking child?’ and you think it hardly possible; but there are women to whom motherhood has no meaning unless it be for the advancement of their own selfish aims and ambitions, and then the children suffer. Do you remember my telling you about John Ransome, who married his rich employer?”

“Yes, but surely that sweet girl—you told me she was sweet—has not developed such objectionable characteristics?”

“Oh no; the little Ransome boy has been born with a silver spoon in *his* mouth so far as his mother is concerned; but it was through Mrs. Ransome I got acquainted with this—this person, Mrs. Leyton Brooke,

one of my aristocratic patients, and one of the sort that makes one endorse the most radical notions, even to the total abolition of the aristocracy."

My husband entered the room at the moment, and caught the last sentence, but Elizabeth was not in the mood for the gay badinage which they often enjoyed. It was not until she had had a little refreshment and we found ourselves again alone that she returned to the subject of Mrs. Leyton Brooke.

"They are very fine people," she began, with a curious long curl of the lip which I knew well. "An old Buckinghamshire family, and of course it is a great honour to attend them, but I have paid my last visit, professional or otherwise, to Mrs. Leyton Brooke."

"Why?" I inquired innocently. "Has she dismissed you?"

"No," replied Elizabeth grimly. "I have dismissed her; but you must not have the end of the story before the beginning. I don't really mind, I believe, though you put it in names and all. A woman like that deserves to be shown up—a creature, God forgive her, without a heart."

I waited with no small impatience till Elizabeth

had recovered herself sufficiently to begin at the beginning.

“It is not very long since I made the acquaintance of the lady,” she said, after a short silence. “I met her one afternoon in Mrs. Ransome’s drawing-room in Bruton Street, and she was introduced to me as her cousin. I thought her that afternoon one of the handsomest women I had ever seen, and she was dressed like a fashion-plate, as we used to say when we were girls—really elegantly dressed, in a style which displayed both boundless wealth and an individual and perfect taste. I admired the outward woman very much, as one is bound to admire what is beautiful and out of the ordinary run. She had a little boy with her, a handsome, lovely child about seven, of whom she was evidently more than proud. He was dressed picture fashion likewise, a trifle fantastically, perhaps, but there was no doubt about his beauty. He was a spoiled child, a perfect nuisance indeed; it was impossible to be in the room five minutes with him without finding that out. He devoured the sweet cakes on Mrs. Ransome’s tea-table, and ate sugar till he nearly made himself sick, his mother smiling indulgently on him all the while. She remained about fifteen minutes after I arrived,

and as she monopolised most of the conversation, I gathered that she was a very fashionable lady indeed. She talked of royalty and other exalted personages with a familiarity that almost took my breath away. She was gracious in a condescending sort of way to me, and even to Mrs. Ransome. I thought her manner a trifle patronising. But she interested me a good deal, and her beauty afforded me a positive delight. When she departed at length with her objectionable child, who, by the way, was called Frank, Mrs. Ransome turned to me quite eagerly.

“‘What do you think of my cousin, Dr. Glen? Is she not lovely? I hope she liked you; I think she did. My dear, if she consults you professionally, your fortune will be made. She knows everybody. Of course, you must have heard of her—her portrait is everywhere.’

“‘I don’t go everywhere, dear Mrs. Ransome,’ I said, with a laugh, ‘and I am in such a state of heathen darkness that I never even heard of her till to-day.’

“‘All the same, she is quite distinguished. I admire her very much of course, myself, but somehow one does not love Letitia,—I don’t know why; and one

thing I can't forgive her. Isn't that a horrid little boy? John says he has but one desire where Frank is concerned—to give him a proper whipping.'

"I smiled in sympathy with honest John Ransome's sensible views.

"The child is more to be pitied than blamed,' I said cautiously. 'One day, however, Mrs. Leyton Brooke may discover that she has prepared a rod for her own back.'

"That's what John says, and that she will richly deserve it; and the worst of it is that Frank is not an only child, nor even the heir. It is that I cannot forgive Letitia, and it makes John positively savage.'

"What?' I inquired, with interest. Mrs. Ransome's remarks were decidedly vague.

"She has another child, a son—Myles, two years older—but he is deformed, quite an object so far as his figure is concerned, though he has the sweetest face. Nobody ever sees him. Fancy, I have not seen him for quite a year. He lives mostly at Port Leyton, their Buckingham home, but I hear he is in town just now.'

"And is his mother unkind to him?' I inquired.

"Well, not positively unkind, I should hope, but of course it was a fearful disappointment, and Letitia

really can't bear the sight of him. She says he makes her ill, and her husband feels pretty much the same. You see, Port Leyton is such a splendid old inheritance, and, with Letitia's money, there is almost nothing the Brookes could not aspire to; and it is disappointing, of course, that the heir should be a poor little crippled hunchback. All the same, were he my child I should just love him ten times more than if he had been all right, wouldn't you?

“Anybody with a heart would,” I replied; and, though we afterwards began to talk of other things, my mind would not rid itself of the picture her words had called up, and I saw before me that day, and for many days to come, in all my odd moments, the sweet, patient face of the afflicted heir of Port Leyton, whom nobody wanted, and who was an eyesore to his own parents. I thought it likely, in my vague thoughts of him, that little Myles Brooke, sensitive as most such afflicted ones are, would suffer mentally as much as physically, but of the keen heart- and spirit-anguish possible to a child so young I did not dream until I had seen him. Now I know, and I thank God it is over, that to-night I, with my own hands, closed his eyes in their last sleep, and saw the seal of eternal peace set upon his brow.”

Elizabeth paused there, for a deep sob shook her.

"It will pain you very much, I can see, to tell me. I can understand without telling," I said gently.

"I want to tell you; I came to tell you," she replied. "It will do me good. You will, perhaps, at the end help me to understand why God permits such things in a world controlled by His love.

"I first met Mrs. Leyton Brooke at the very beginning of the season, quite early in February, and it was about a fortnight after that I received a note from her, requesting me to call at her house in Portman Square. I was quite excited over the summons—not for the reason for which Mrs. Ransome had desired her to call me in, but because I thought I might have a chance of seeing the heir. I arrived at the mansion about four o'clock in the afternoon, and found no one to receive me except the servants.

"'It's for Master Myles, I believe, madam,' the footman said, when I had informed him who I was. 'I have no orders, but I'll inquire of nurse.'

"He left me in the magnificent library, and shortly returned with the request that I would walk upstairs. I followed him up three flights of stairs, and on the highest landing was received by a nurse—a middle-

aged person of kindly aspect, who eyed me with the keenest enquiry; which I did not resent, because it betokened an interest in her charge. She asked me to go to her room and sit down, while she explained matters a little.

“‘Master Myles, dear lamb, has taken a dislike to the doctor who has been attending of him here,’ she said, wiping her eyes, ‘and when ’e come it puts the poor dear in that state that I begs missus to stop his visits. He don’t need no doctor, poor dear, and ain’t long for this world; so at last, though she were very angry over it, she agrees and sends for you, all along of Mrs. Ransome, pretty dear, that has a ’eart as soft as wax.’

“‘Is he in bed?’ I asked.

“‘No, ma’am, nor you mustn’t put ’im there; an’ please, ma’am, when you go in first don’t look surprised-like at the poor dear, ’cos he ain’t made jes’ like other folks. ’E is a little gentleman at ’eart if ever there was one, ma’am; and I often say, I do, that the Almighty’s ways is past findin’ out; but I tells ’im it’ll be all right there, an’ ’e knows it, dear lamb, jes’ as well as I can tell ’im. Will you come now, ma’am; and see ’im? ’E doesn’t know you’re a-comin’, but I think you’ll have a nice way with

'im. Mrs. Ransome said you would, and I think you will.'

"'I'll try, nurse,' I said, and followed her to the room. It was a large, light, pleasant place, containing all that was necessary for comfort or well-being, and there in his reclining chair by the high, wide window sat the child I had come to see, the heir to a great estate, which he has now exchanged for a heavenly crown.

"'Oh, nursie,' he cried, as we opened the door, 'they're lighting up ever so soon. Is it tea-time already?'

"Then he gave a great start, seeing me, and turned away his face.

"'This is a kind lady come to see you, to try and take away your cough and your nasty headache,' said the nurse, with an infinity of tenderness a mother might have envied. 'Turn your head, my dearie, and speak to her, just to please nursie, for a moment.'

"He did not turn his head, but I walked over to the chair, and then I saw a little white fox terrier puppy lying on the cushion at his feet, and I took it up and laid it against my cheek with one hand, while with the other I softly touched the brown head of my little patient.

“Don't you think this is a very well-off doggie indeed?” I said cheerfully, ‘and isn't he a beauty? but I would be ashamed of such a mean little tail. I am sure he feels it very much to have such a stumpy tail, don't you, doggie?’

“No, he doesn't,” said the little master, quite briskly. ‘His tail is just the proper length, Fenton 'll tell you so; he measured it, and docked it himself, and he's perfect.’

“Who, Fenton or the doggie, eh?” I asked, as pleasantly as I could, and his eyes met mine; and looking into their large, lovely, serious depths I felt my heart stirred within me with a great and tender pity. I think somehow that look made us friends, and I sat down by him, and we talked of dogs and other pets for quite a little while. Then in the middle of our talk he stopped quite suddenly, fixing me with those speaking, pathetic eyes, and said suddenly:

“But, I say, I want to know who you are. What's your name?”

“My name is Elizabeth Glen, and I'm the doctor,” I replied smiling. ‘How do you think you'll like to have a lady doctor, Master Myles?’

“I don't know,” he said doubtfully. ‘I like you; but you won't hurt me like the other doctor did? I

asked mamma not to let him, but she said it was for my good. But what is the use when I shall never be well any more?’

“‘I shall not hurt you, my darling; I promise you that.’

“The endearing word slipped out unawares, and the child, who was starved of love by all from whom he had the right to expect it, looked at me with a sweet, bright smile, and gave me his thin, childish hand with a confiding gesture more eloquent than words.

“‘And you’ll come and see me, won’t you, every day? Sometimes nursie and I are a little dull when nobody comes up all day long; and even Ted gets cross and won’t play.’

“Nurse had now lighted the gas, and before she drew the blinds she wheeled the chair away from the window, and then I saw for the first time the misshapen, distorted frame, and my heart bled for him afresh. It needed no special skill to see that the seal of early death was on the boy’s high white brow, and I felt as I bade him good-bye that the end for him when it came would be great gain.

* * * * *

“I had visited my new, and to me most interest-

ing, patient many times before I saw any of the rest of the family, except the other boy, Frank, who was in the room one day when I called. To see those two brothers together was an interesting study in human nature, and I thought that had John Ransome seen the spoiled child in his brother's room, even he would probably have been unable to keep his hands off him. His demeanour to Myles was patronising and a trifle contemptuous, and I saw the quick temper of the boy in the invalid chair rise in eye and cheek, and I said to nurse it would be better if she could keep them apart. My little Myles was by no means a saint, nor one of those good little boys who in story books die young; he was hot-tempered, and impatient, and full of life, chafing wildly against the bars of his poor prison house. But he was a creature it was impossible to help loving, and he crept day by day more closely into my heart. I think—nay, I know—he loved me too; he proved it to me one day as we sat together. I always stayed an hour by him when I found it made him happier. Well, he proved it to me one day when he spoke to me of his heavy cross. He alluded to it simply and boyishly, but with a certain wistfulness which betrayed its import to him.

“Am I so very ugly, Miss Glen? That day you saw me first, did you think me so awful?”

“Hush, my darling; I saw only your sweet face,” I replied, laying my hand on his thin, flushed cheek.

“He looked pleased for a moment, but presently shook his head with a faint, melancholy smile.

“Mamma says I make her ill,—I heard her say so; and even papa can’t bear to see me, though he talks quite kindly. Have you seen mamma? She is like an angel.”

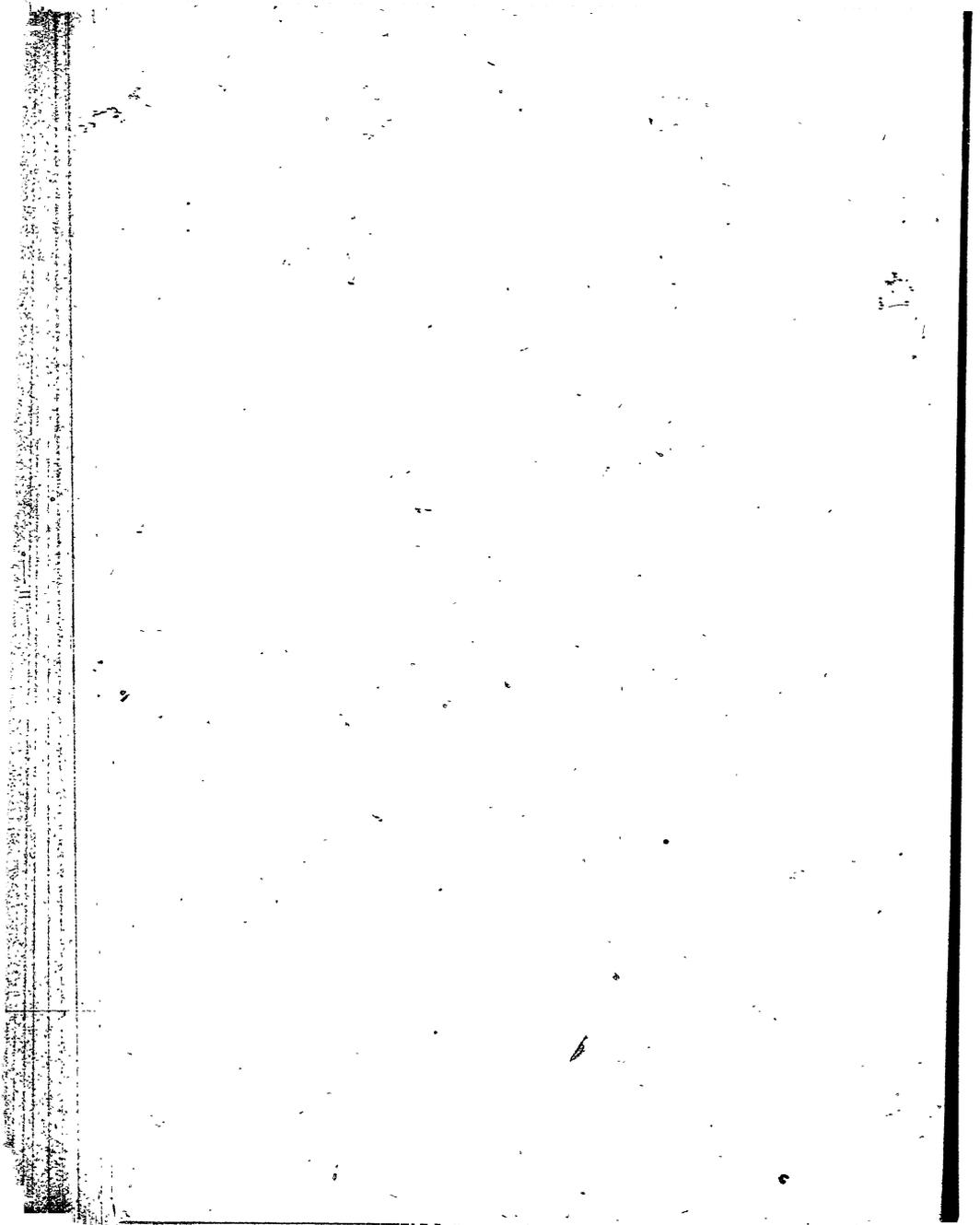
“I did not think so. My heart beat hard against her, and I longed for just one opportunity to tell her the straight and solemn truth. I am not a mother—may never be one, but surely I know that if a mother cannot give love to the child she has borne she has no right to the name, and had better forfeit it to the meanest wretch who has a woman’s heart.

“‘Before you came,’ he said presently, ‘I wanted awfully to get back to Leyton. It is so dreary here; I never get out, but mamma says I must wait till Easter. At Leyton Fenton takes me out in my bath-chair.’

“‘Why did they bring you here where you can



"WHAT DAY YOU SAW ME FIRST, DID YOU THINK ME SO AWFUL?" .p. 21



see nothing and never get out?' I asked bluntly, though I might have guessed.

"'I'm not sure, but I think they brought me to see if the other doctor could make my back straight,' he said confidentially, 'and of course he couldn't. I knew that all along. He only hurt me. You know, don't you? that nobody can make my back straight, but only God, and I've left off asking Him.'

"'He will make it straight in His own time, my darling,' I said very gently. 'One day you will shut your eyes and open them in another world, where there is no such sorrow as yours.'

"He gravely nodded, looking through the window and away across the gray expanse of London roofs.

"'You mean that I shall die. I shouldn't mind it much, I think, only Teddy would miss me, and nursie, and I believe Fenton would cry. He did when I came away this time, and he is nineteen, and quite a man, even with a moustache.'

"'A good many people love you, you see,' I said cheerfully.

"'Yes, nursie and Fenton and you. I'm so glad I know you. There's one thing,' he said, with an

old-world, wise look in his face. 'If I died Frank would be the heir. I'm the heir, did you know? that's why it's so hard on papa, for, of course, if I grew up, and was like this, who would look after Port Leyton? Don't you see it would be better if I did die?'

"I got up from my chair. I could not bear it, indeed I could not. To hear such a child gravely discussing the possible advantage to others of his death was intolerably cruel. It showed that the truth as it appeared to these selfish people had not been hid from him, and the sensitive heart of the boy had grown familiar with the idea until he regarded it as a sad and inevitable fact. That very day going downstairs I met Mrs. Brooke. She had just come in from a drive, and the carriage with its prancing horses, perfect in every detail, stood at the door, quite eclipsing my humble equipage. She was a radiant vision in her elegant carriage cloak trimmed with priceless Russian sables, but as I thought of the lonely child heart upstairs I could not admire her; I only felt sick at heart. She looked surprised for a moment as if struggling to recollect me; then she bowed with extreme graciousness and spoke.

"'Oh, you are Miss Glen, of course. You come

every day, I am told, and I have been sorry not to see you, but I am so much engaged. Will you step in here a moment?’

“I followed her into the room, which happened to be the drawing-room, and where a footman was seeing to the fire and the lights.

“‘Bring tea now,’ she said quickly, and the man withdrew.

“‘Now please do tell me what you think of your patient,’ she said, with a quick imperiousness. ‘How do you find him?’

“‘Growing weaker,’ I replied, sadly and listlessly. The contrast depressed me. I had not sufficient energy even to show the indignation which surged in my heart. ‘I should advise you to take your boy back to the country if you wish him to live.’

“I could not help throwing a certain amount of significance into the last sentence, but if she noticed it she disdained to show it. ‘We shall all be going shortly, in less than three weeks. I should think it would be better to wait till then, it will be warmer.’

“‘He is eating his heart out for the freedom and the freshness of the country, Mrs. Brooke,’ I said. ‘If it is not convenient to move him there, why not

let him go out daily in the park with his nurse? It is only a stone's throw.'

"'It has been very cold as yet, and his chair is not here, neither is the man who attends him at Port Leyton,' she said, tapping her foot impatiently on the ormolu fender. 'It was quite a mistake bringing him here, but his father would.'

"I had never seen the father, but that remark made me think better of him than I had yet done. 'I can only advise, Mrs. Brooke,' I said coldly. She was a great lady, accustomed to be flattered and conciliated, and I saw that my manner angered her.

"'What do you think of his condition as a whole? Mrs. Ransome says you are very clever. Have you discovered anything the other doctors overlooked?'

"There was a light mockery in her tone which at another time I should have been quick to resent, but I only answered quietly, 'There is nothing to discover. The boy has a delicate frame, of course, sensitive to every change. With care he may live to be an old man.'

"I saw her face change, and I knew that she felt disappointed. You look shocked, dear, and almost as if you thought what I am telling you impossible ;

but I am not exaggerating, and I say that that woman, the idol of society, the lovely and popular Mrs. Leyton Brooke, was at that moment at heart a murderer, because she truly wished the death of another creature, and that her own child. He was a burden and an eyesore to her; she wished he would depart to make room for her own idol. That was the naked truth, and she knew that I knew it. After that, of course, I did not remain to tea. I could not have broken bread in her house. Well, the days went on, and Myles Brooke was not sent home to Leyton, nor was my advice about the park followed. The weather grew milder, the breath of spring was abroad; the fresh downy buds were on every hedge and tree, the brooding twitter of birds even in the London air. One day, when alone, Myles managed to open wide his nursery window to feel the spring, as he said to me, and sitting there for nearly an hour with his head laid on the window-sill trying to coax the sparrows to come to him, he caught the cold which took him away. They sent for me that evening, and I found him in a hot fever, and complaining of an acute pain in his side. From the first I never had any hope of him, because his strength was reduced, but I did what I could. He grew daily worse, how-

ever, and at length, when I had told his mother there was no hope, she elected to make a great fuss, calling in for consultation all the famous physicians in town. It was absurd, there was nothing to consult about. The child was dying of a simple and common complaint; and all the skill of all the colleges on earth could not have saved him. His father was salmon-fishing in Scotland, enjoying the first rod on a duke's preserves, and though word was sent him he did not hurry himself. I will do him the justice to say he did not think it urgent, the boy had so often been seriously ill before. I spent as much time as I could with the child, who was often delirious; then he would call for his mother in tones of the most intense longing. He betrayed in all his delirium how much the one idea possessed his soul, the idea that he was a burden and a cumberer of the ground. One day—only yesterday indeed—she happened to look in during my visit, and as we stood by the bed he looked straight up at her and said simply:

“Mamma, I'm going to die, and Frank will be the heir. When you come to heaven and see my back straight will you love me like you do him—”

“I don't know how she refrained from clasping him to her heart, pouring into his ears a thousand

endearing words, but she only coloured uneasily and gave him a careless pat on the head.

“‘Nonsense, Myles, you are not going to die yet. We are soon going back to Leyton, where you'll get your chair and all your other things next week; won't he, Miss Glen?’

“Myles looked at me with a slight, sweet, understanding smile.

“‘We know better,’ he said, in a faint whisper; ‘and Frank will make a better heir.’

“She looked as she felt, truly uncomfortable. With a light kiss she left him, and that was the last time she saw him in life.

“This morning I paid my first visit there, and found him far spent but quite conscious. I would tell you if I dared trust myself how he clung to me, seeming happier when I was with him. His talk, when he was able to talk at all, was all of heaven, where he firmly believed there awaited him a heritage of health and strength. We know very little of these hidden things, of course, but we do know, that compensation will be adequate; so I had no hesitation about allowing and encouraging him to dwell upon the happy home to which he hastened. It will be to the end of my life a sweet thought

that I had been able to call up a smile and a look of peace to that worn, sad child-face. On my way home from my round this afternoon I called at Portman Square again, and finding my poor boy so ill, I remained. The end was not far off. His mother was not at home, and when she did return, about half-past six, had to make haste to dress for a dinner at the French Embassy. About seven o'clock, as nurse and I watched by our darling's bed—heartbroken because we could do so little for him—he quietly closed his eyes, and we saw that God had taken him, and I knelt down by his bed and uttered a passionate thanksgiving for so happy a release. Before I left the room I cut one of his curls from his head, and here it is. As I slipped downstairs I saw the woman—his mother—come out of her dressing-room in all the bravery of her white satin and flashing diamonds, and while her slight, cold salutation trembled on her lips I looked her very steadily in the eyes.

“ ‘Madam, I have come from your son's death-bed, and from thanking God on my knees for his release. Yet I loved him well.’

“ ‘So I left her, and I have come straight to you. Oh, my dear, I thank God you are not a fashionable

mother, and that your child will never know the heart-hunger that killed poor little Myles Brooke. Compensation—yes, there had need to be compensation somewhere for such sorrows, else must belief utterly fail.”

“It is sure,” I said softly. “And He loved the children, and has already welcomed little Myles Brooke to the kingdom forbidden him here. Let that thought comfort you, Elizabeth. Keep it in your heart beside the happy knowledge that you were able to do so much for him here.”

But a weight of sadness oppressed my friend's heart, I could see, and I loved her for it.

It is such natures who make every human sorrow their own; who carry out here the Master's behest, and who impart His message of hope and comfort to suffering souls in their hour of need.

IX.

BARBARA.

DR. GLEN and I had been discussing the servant question, and had come to the conclusion that our mothers surely possessed some secret they had not bequeathed to us, a secret which seemed in those earlier and simpler days to have solved the whole difficulty of household management.

"You have used the word which is the key to the whole matter," said Dr. Glen, in her usual quietly decisive way. "It is simplicity we want. We exact too much from our domestics."

"I am sure you don't, Elizabeth," I made answer calmly. "The way you pamper that Margaret of yours has become a matter of history."

"Oh, Margaret is an exception, and besides, I had no particular case in view when I made the assertion. I merely laid down a general principle, and I know that your view entirely coincides with mine, for I

have heard you say practically the same thing dozens of times."

"You are very sharp to-day, Elizabeth, and I won't risk argufying, as Margaret says. I came for my dole of copy anyhow, and not to discuss the burning questions of the day. You always do put me off till the last moment, but I must have it this afternoon. I'm behind as it is, and can't help myself."

"You ought to have been a man, dear, and you would have shone in diplomatic circles; but there, I shall not tease you any more. Talking of servants, the old race and the new, the Caleb Balderston type is not quite extinct yet."

"No, so long as Margaret is the prop and mainstay of this perfectly appointed establishment. I know all about it."

"Don't be in such a hurry. I wasn't thinking of Margaret, whom I know you wickedly covet, but of another, superior in some respects to her. Shall I give you the story?"

"If you think it'll do," I said doubtfully. "If not, postpone it, for I really am in a hurry."

"Well, if it doesn't do for one section of your readers it will for another. I think myself it is one

of the most touching little bits I have come across for years."

"Well?" I said inquiringly; and Elizabeth took up a piece of work she was busy with, embroidering a baby's frock.

"You don't look a bit like a doctor, Elizabeth. I really think you grow younger every day," I said suddenly, struck by her bright, beautiful, girlish look. "I have ever so many letters asking your address, and I believe I am right in withholding it. So long as I wrap you in a veil of mystery, my readers regard you with a proper mixture of awe and respect, while——"

"A personal interview would entirely dispel it," she supplemented. "You are nothing if not complimentary and candid."

"They'd fall in love with you, every man and woman of them, and you know it, Elizabeth. But really, dearest, you seem lately to have acquired the secret of perpetual youth."

A vivid blush rose suddenly and quickly to her face, and she hid it in the creamy folds of the baby's frock.

"I wish you would remember how rude it is to make such personal remarks," she said, with an odd,

disturbed little laugh. "Do you want that story or do you not?"

Of course I said I did want it; and after a little pause she began:—

"I met my heroine in very unconventional circumstances, and at first sight I paid no sort of attention to her, being misled, as we so often are, by mere appearances. And certainly Barbara Waite was not a particularly romantic-looking person the first time I saw her in my surgery on a certain December evening a year or two ago. My consulting hours were over, and I was making up my books, when the bell rang again, and Barbara was shown in. It was half a minute before I even looked round, and when I did I saw a short, spare person in a rather scanty black gown and an old waterproof cloak, under which I saw the hem of a white apron. She had the hood of her cloak drawn over her cap, so I had no difficulty whatever in divining that she was a domestic servant.

"'Good evening,' I said pleasantly, but a trifle severely. 'My surgery hours are over; it's after nine.'

"'Yes, ma'am; but I don't want to see you myself. It's my mistress,' she replied; and when she spoke I looked at her in secret amazement, and with a new,

keen interest. I have heard many voices, both sweet and harsh, in my time, but I never heard one more musical than Barbara Waite's; it was simply exquisite.

“‘ And where does your mistress live ? ’ I inquired ; and her face now began to attract me, though it was rather thin, scraggy, and worried-looking, with no special beauty of feature to recommend it. But it was an honest, good face, and the eyes were tender and true. She looked a woman of five-and-thirty, or even more.

“‘ Not far, ma'am, only in Bedford Square, ’ she replied, with a little eager, pathetic glance. ‘ She's been bad for some days, and we can't do anything with her this time, so I came of my own accord for you. ’

“‘ What's the matter with her ? ’ I asked briefly.

“‘ She drew her hand across her eyes, and I saw a faint, colour rise in her cheeks.

“‘ I'll have to tell, ma'am, I suppose, though it hurts, it does indeed, for we were children together, as it were, in the old Surrey village, ’ she said, with a catch in her voice.

“‘ Drink ? ’ I said inquiringly.

“‘ She nodded, and an expression of relief came

upon her face. Evidently she had dreaded being called upon to give copious explanations.

“‘You say you can’t do anything with her. Has she got delirium tremens?’

“‘She nodded again, and immediately burst into tears. I turned back to my book and left her to recover herself, which she speedily did.

“‘Excuse me, ma’am,’ she said, ‘but it’s been bottled up in me that long I can’t help it, an’ you do look as if you understood things. It’s for the master and the little children my heart’s broke, as well as for her.’

“‘Has she been long at it?’ I inquired, as I locked my ledger up and prepared to accompany her.

“‘Yes’m, more or less for five years, an’ it’s changed ’er very natur’, it has.’

“‘It always does,’ I said briefly. ‘When a woman once takes to drink, it’s almost hopeless. Is she young?’

“‘Not so very—near forty, ma’am. Miss Ethel, she’s sixteen.’

“‘What’s her name?’

“‘Etheridge; an’ master, he’s a banker in the city, an’ there ain’t many like *him*,’ she said, with emphasis; but I did not ask her whether it was for

good or for bad qualities he was distinguished. I supposed I should soon find out for myself.

“I walked round with Barbara Waite, she talking all the way, telling me little things about her master and mistress, to prepare me, as it were, for my reception. I saw that the faithful soul was devoted to the house in which she served, and that a secret shame over its dishonour was hard upon her; and I also felt that her outspokenness indicated that she had found in me some quality that inspired her faith. She felt intensely relieved, I could see, that I took her story in such a matter-of-fact way.

“The house was a good one, well furnished and well cared for, all by the hands of Barbara Waite, assisted by a tall slip of a girl, Ethel Etheridge. They had done their utmost to keep their sorrow hid. In order that no outside person might behold it, Barbara Waite cheerfully did the work of three, and it had told upon her, making her old and unlovely before her time.

“The cries and mutterings of my poor distracted patient met us at the door. Barbara looked at me with a wistful, meaning look, the pathos of which I never forgot. We went upstairs at once, and a gentleman came out of a room on the first landing,

and looked at me very keenly as he said 'good evening.' He was a fine-looking man, not much over forty, but his face was haggard and careworn, and his hair prematurely silvered over the temples. I felt interested in him at once.

"'Good evening, Dr. Glen. I suppose Barbara has informed you of the condition in which you will find my poor wife?'

"I nodded gravely. It was not a case for speech. He opened the bedroom door, and we three went in. As we did so, the poor creature, pursued by the phantoms of her delirium, leaped out of bed with a scream of terror and crouched at my feet, a pitiful figure in white, with a wild face and despair-haunted eyes. I need not expatiate on her condition. If you have ever seen a person suffering in this way, you will understand how poor Mrs. Etheridge looked; if not—well, I need not try to draw the picture for you. She calmed down a little when I spoke to her, and by-and-by we managed to get her to bed. She kept hold of my hand like a vice, seeming to feel some support in my presence, and I sat there till Mr. Etheridge, under my directions, prepared the draught I had brought. She was still young, and must have been once a beautiful creature;

but you know, of course, how such indulgence robs the human face of its higher beauty, because it destroys the soul. Although quieter, she talked incessantly, railing against her husband and her faithful servant, glaring at both so vindictively and viciously that I marvelled. Just as the draught was beginning to take effect, a young girl entered the room, the eldest daughter, sweet Ethel Etheridge, who is going to be married next month to my friend Dr. Gower. She looked just as you might expect a sensitive girl to look in such circumstances, worn and terrified and sad. Gradually, as the strong draught did its work, Mrs. Etheridge grew quieter, until at last she lay perfectly still, and her fierce grasp on my fingers relaxed.

“‘Thank God,’ said the unhappy husband, as he looked on the unconscious face of his poor wife; and I saw Barbara wipe her eyes and take a long breath. I gave a few simple directions, and when I rose to go Mr. Etheridge accompanied me down-stairs.

“‘Will you step in here a minute, Dr. Glen?’ he said at the dining-room door, and I silently followed him in.

“‘Will you tell me quite frankly what you think of Mrs. Etheridge’s condition?’”

“‘It is most serious,’ I replied at once. ‘Evidently this unhappy state of affairs has lasted a long time. I find her nervous system so completely shattered that I conclude she has had many such attacks as the one she is now suffering from.’

“‘Yes, many,’ he replied, in a low, hopeless tone. ‘We have done what we could. God knows everything has been tried, and yet she finds the where-withal. It is a fearful curse, Dr. Glen, especially when it falls upon a woman, and the mother of children.’

“He was not a man given to much talk, I could see. He struck me rather as being reserved and self-contained. His case moved me deeply, and I suppose I showed it in my face, thus encouraging him to tell me more.

“‘It is an inherited tendency,’ he continued; ‘and I have done my best to shield her. But in London, surrounded as we are on every hand by such fearful temptations, our poor precautions were but a mockery, and she has gone down step by step till every spark of feeling for those she once loved is dead.’

“‘Have you not sent her away, or tried living in the country?’ I inquired.

“‘Yes, everything has been tried; Barbara will tell you that; but it is quite hopeless. If I were to tell you the whole history of her case, with its painful examples of diplomacy and cunning, it would make your heart ache; but I must not detain you. You find her seriously ill, then?’

“‘I do. Of course it is not easy to predict in such cases. They are most deceptive. But my opinion when I left her was that her recovery was doubtful.’

“‘He took a stride across the floor. I saw his face twitch; then he opened the door.

“‘Will you come here a moment, Dr. Glen?’

“‘I followed him mutely, and, in a back room fitted up like a nursery, he showed me three children asleep, the youngest a baby of two years, lovely as an angel. The adoring love in her father’s face as he bent over her might have stirred her little heart, even in that sweet, unconscious slumber.

“‘Would you not think these worth living for? And I—I have tried to be a good, kind husband to her; but she is as indifferent to me and to these as if no tie bound us. God help the children, and save them from their mother’s fate. I sometimes have a pang of remorse looking on them. It might have been better for them had they never seen the light.’

“Oh, hush !” I said, a little sharply. “Take what comfort you can, and for the rest—trust in God.”

“I do not often use such words. Talking religion is not my forte.”

“No, you live it, Elizabeth,” I said, looking into her sweet face with a sober gladness, because she was my friend, and because I knew she loved me. She smiled a little, and went on :

“My words, commonplace as they were, seemed to comfort him, and when presently I went away he wrung my hand at parting, and blessed me for my coming. Never had I felt more keenly that my skill amounted to but little, after all. I could do nothing but administer what would soothe and quieten, and somehow I could not but think that death for once would be a healer and a kind friend to Mrs. Etheridge herself, and all in that unhappy house upon which such a bitter curse had fallen.

* * * * *

“She only lived three days, and passed away in a state of coma, without being able to speak a word of comfort in passing to those whose hearts her sin had torn. I was present when she died, and I went round again in the evening, when I saw Barbara, and had a long talk with her.

“‘It began, Dr. Glen,’ said she, ‘soon after her marriage. She was a wild girl at home—her own mother could not control her; and she never wanted to marry Mr. Etheridge, good as gold though he is. Her heart was set on a young barrister, who would have broken her heart if she’d married him, and it’s my belief that that was the beginning of it. It never does to force anybody to marry, does it, ma’am?’

“‘Did Mr. Etheridge know that she cared so little for him?’ I asked, interested in spite of myself. I had no hesitation in asking, for Barbara was so truly a friend of the family, so devoted even to the poor creature who had passed away, that I felt it was betraying no trust to listen to her.

“‘Not till after. It was hurried on, and then—and then’—and here Barbara’s cheek flushed a little—‘she met the other in London, and that was the beginning here. It nearly broke his heart—my master’s I mean—for he worshipped the very ground she trod on, and it’s a mercy, I think in my own soul, that she’s gone, for things were getting quite desperate.’

“‘I suppose,’ I said gently, ‘you will remain here and take care of the children?’

“‘Oh yes,’ she answered in some surprise. ‘I’ve

always been here, and I shan't go to no place else, please God, as long as the children need me.'

"They adored her, and it was no marvel. Her gentleness, her untiring patience with them, was wonderful to see. I was a witness to it in the next six weeks, when the three young children had scarlet fever. I visited every day, of course, but always in the middle of the day, when I did not see Mr. Etheridge. The atmosphere in the house, however, in spite of the sickness among the children, was brighter, and some girlishness began to steal back to Ethel's sad face, and she became more like a girl of her years. She and I became very friendly; she used to come to the surgery of an evening for the children's medicine, and I found her intelligent and companionable beyond her years. One evening, after I had stopped my attendance at Bedford Square, and the convalescents had all been packed off to Bognor, Mr. Etheridge came round to pay my bill, though it had not been sent in. And we talked a little, as was natural, of the children and their prospects.

"'You have a treasure in Barbara,' I remarked incidentally. 'It must be a great comfort to you to know that she is so utterly devoted to you and yours.'

"'It is a comfort,' he replied, and it struck me that

he spoke rather curtly and coolly, so I changed the subject; but his manner left a little sting in my mind, and I even felt a trifle indignant, imagining Barbara was not appreciated as she deserved to be. I did not see any of the Etheridges for some time after that; it was quite six months after, I should think, when Mr. Etheridge came again one evening to my surgery. I thought him a remarkably fine-looking man as I rose to shake hands with him, and I observed that he looked younger and happier, like a man who had taken a new lease of life. I congratulated him on his looks, and when I had inquired for all the children and for Barbara, I waited for him to state the business on which he had come.

“‘I want to consult you, Dr. Glen,’ he began, with a slight nervousness, ‘not quite professionally, but on a purely personal matter.’

“‘If I can be of the slightest use I shall be very glad,’ I replied, sincerely enough, for I liked the man, and I had always felt sorry for him because he had been cheated of his best happiness. But I believe I must have looked a little surprised; I certainly felt it.

“‘I am contemplating a second marriage,’ he said bluntly, as was his way. It was impossible for him to beat about the bush.

"'You are a man in your prime still, Mr. Etheridge,' I replied, as politely as I could. 'Nobody could blame you.'

"'I don't approve of second marriages,' was his next remark, certainly a totally unexpected one, 'especially where there are grown-up children. Ethel will soon be seventeen.'

"Not knowing what to say, I said nothing. A man who is contemplating giving his children a stepmother has generally a good many excuses for the step he proposes to take. I waited for Mr. Etheridge to make his.

"'But this is quite a different case, Dr. Glen. I want to marry Barbara.'

"'You want to marry Barbara, Mr. Etheridge? oh, impossible!'

"I could not help saying that, for as I looked at the man—handsome, winning, every inch a gentleman—and thought of the scraggy little 'general,' I felt faint with surprise.

"'Yes, and why not?' he asked, almost fiercely. 'If you can point me to another woman in all London with a heart to compare with Barbara's, I'll marry her; but it can't be done.'

"'What you say is true,' I admitted. 'If you

ask me for my opinion, I will say Barbara has no equal ; if for my advice, I will say, Don't do it.'

“ ‘Why?’ he asked, standing over me in quite a menacing fashion.

“ ‘Because she is not suitable in many ways. You mean well, I feel sure ; you would reward her devotion by the highest honour a man can confer on a woman ; but if it is her happiness you desire, you will think of some other plan.’

“ ‘It is my own happiness also, Dr. Glen ; I love her.’

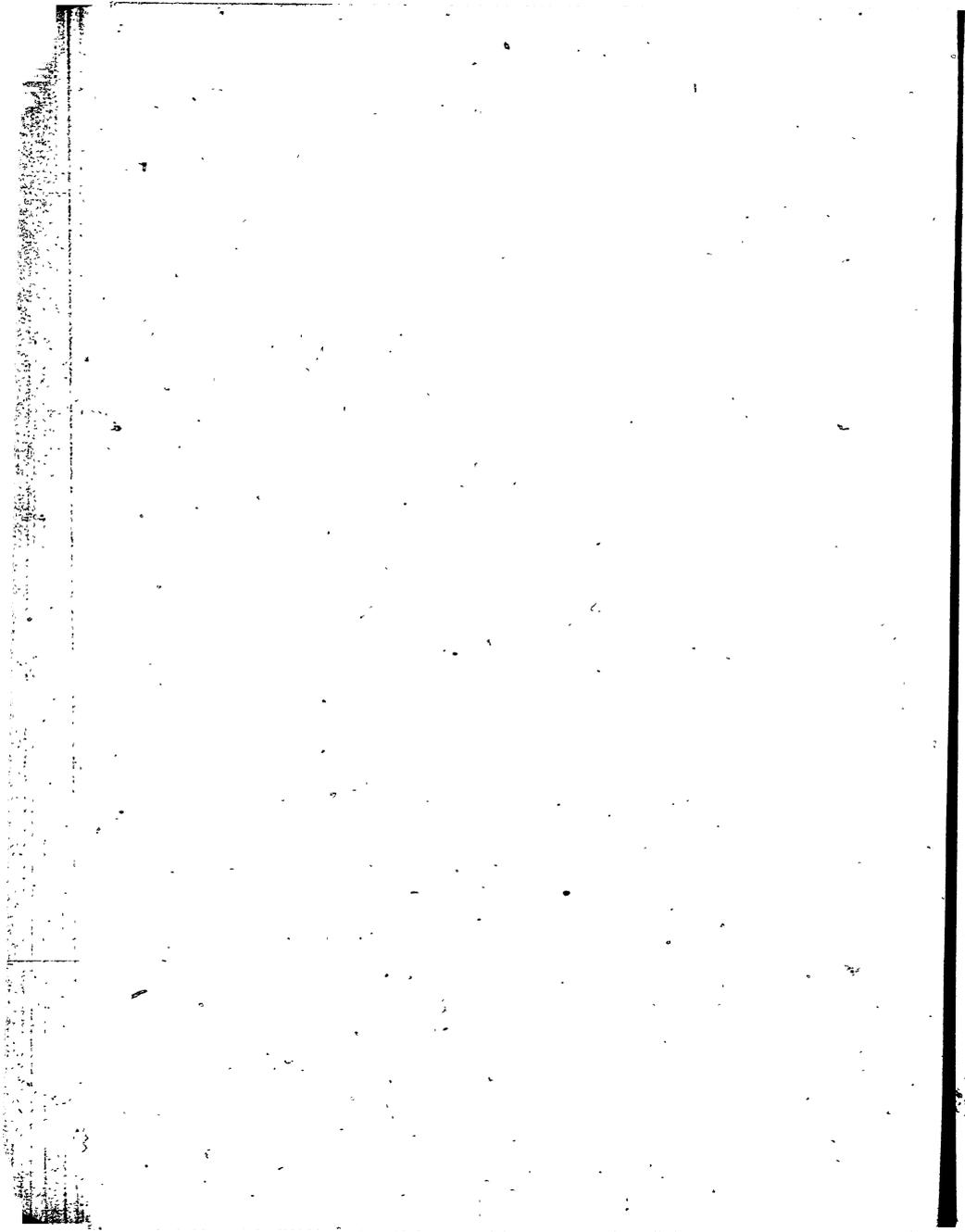
“ I looked at him incredulously, again drawing a mental comparison between the two. My last memory of Barbara was seeing her bending over a wash-tub in the scullery, making the children's things all clean and sweet for Bognor. What was there about her to win the love of a fastidious, cultivated man like Stephen Etheridge?

“ ‘She's out of health. Why? Because she's ruined it in my service. She wants to go away because she's not able for the work, and can't bear to see another in her place. If you can tell me anything else I might do with her except marry her, I shall be very much obliged.’

“ I could not help smiling.



"IF YOU ASK ME FOR MY ADVICE, I WILL SAY, DON'T DO IT." [p. 242]



“‘If you care for her as you say, it alters matters, of course,’ I ventured to remark.

“‘I do care for her. She creates an atmosphere of comfort and peace wherever she goes. My children love her so dearly, they cannot do without her—nor can I.’

“‘Ethel?’ I said inquiringly.

“‘Ethel is included. I ought to have said all my children. There will be no difficulty with them. The difficulty will be with Barbara herself.’

“‘Have you spoken to her yet?’

“‘No. I wish you to do it.’

“Yes, you may laugh, dear,” said Elizabeth, with a comical smile. “I would about as soon have cut off a leg. Did I do it? Yes, I did. The very next evening, down comes Barbara, sent by Mr. Etheridge, and when I saw her come in I felt about as queer as ever I felt in my life. But I took a good look at her all the same; and somehow, in the light of a new interest, I discovered new beauties, hitherto undreamed of in Barbara Waite. I saw that her toil-worn hands were small, and that she sat down gracefully, and that her face was interesting and full of possibility. Her eyes and her voice were always lovely, and many a woman with smaller

weapons has conquered fate. I tried to picture her in a lady's attire, and I began to be a trifle ashamed of my disparaging remarks to Mr. Etheridge, especially as she was beaming at me from out her sweet, true eyes, regarding me as a friend of the family.

"Mr. Etheridge thinks you are not very well, Barbara, and he wants me to have a little talk with you,' I began, lamely enough. So far, however, the situation was natural enough.

"That's true, ma'am, I'm not well; an' did he tell you I wanted to leave?"

"There was a curious wistfulness in her eyes as she asked the question, which touched me not a little.

"He did; but he will never allow that, Barbara."

"But I am not able to do the work,' she said piteously, 'and I'm not going to stop when I'm no use to nobody.'

"Barbara,' I said calmly, 'it is very wicked to talk like that. No use, when you have brought up all those children, and made them what they are! You can't leave them.'

"It'll break my heart,' she said in a low voice, 'to leave them and him; it'll break my heart.'

“ ‘You have no idea, I suppose, what Mr. Etheridge wished me to say to you?’ I said then. She shook her head, and I saw that she was thinking of something else.

“ ‘Well, you needn’t leave them, Barbara, as long as you live. Listen to me, my dear.’

“I leaned forward and laid my hand on hers, and I saw the slow wonder gather in her sweet, serious eyes. ‘You are a good woman, one of the noblest and most unselfish,’ I said impressively, though I was trembling a little, feeling the responsibility of waking the heart of the woman before me. ‘Others beside me have discovered it. It is a hard task Mr. Etheridge has set me, Barbara, but I will do it. He wished me to ask you not to leave him—to become the children’s mother in name, as you have long been in loving thought and deed. He cares for you, Barbara, as a man should care for the woman he wishes to make his wife. Don’t for any foolish scruple throw away such a chance of happiness for him, for the children, and for yourself.’

“She looked at me straight and steady for a full minute, as if not comprehending; then she clasped her poor red little hands together, and said with a little gasp:

“ Oh, my God ! ”

“ It was like an appeal or a prayer, in which there was nothing but reverence, and she fixed her eyes on my face ; and though she said nothing at all, they made me talk. And talk I did. I can't remember now the half I said. After a time she went away, and there was a dazed look on her face, and a dainty flush which told me her heart was touched. It was awaking slowly. I had but opened the door a little way ; it was for Stephen Etheridge himself to set it wide. I prayed for Barbara that night, and next morning I went out of my way to call at Bedford Square. Ethel opened the door to me, and when she saw me she threw her arms round my neck and gave me a hug.

“ Oh, dear Dr. Glen, such a funny, delightful thing has happened ! Barbara's away, but she's coming back soon to be our mother. Papa took her last night to her aunt's at Putney, and we're all alone, only a charwoman to help us till she comes back.”

“ Of course I said how glad I was, and I felt a trifle eager to behold the interesting pair. Barbara herself came to me that night, and when I saw her I kissed her, and she sat down all of a tremble, so womanly

and so modest in her demeanour, and yet so glad. Her gladness shone all over her face.

“‘I’ve come to tell you that it’s going to be,’ she said simply. ‘I don’t rightly understand how it’s come about, but we can’t part, any of us, and I’ll do my best, my very best, he knows that.’

“‘But you care for him, Barbara?’ I said anxiously. ‘The risk is too great otherwise.’

“‘I have always worshipped him, Dr. Glen,’ she said simply; ‘and there’s the children.’

“So ended, or rather began, the romance of Barbara. What do you think she said as she went out of the door?”

I shook my head.

“She said, ‘Poor missus! I hope it won’t make her feel bad where she is—anyhow I’ll be good to the children.’”

“And how did it turn out, Elizabeth?”

“Very well. Some day I shall ask you to tea to meet Mrs. Etheridge, and then you can judge. There was a great deal of truth in his remark that she created an atmosphere of peace and sunshine about her—that’s just Barbara; and I think if you saw them together now, you would probably say, ‘What a happy-looking, well-matched pair.’”

X.

A COMMONPLACE TRAGEDY.

“**H**AVE you ever met with any tragedy in the course of your practice?” I asked Dr. Glen one day.

“Lots of it,” she replied promptly. “There is a great deal more of it occurring constantly in apparently commonplace lives than most people imagine. Of course, the doctor gets behind the scenes, where people act without their masks. I have seen things that would make the angels weep; some of them I have never dared to reveal even to the innocent pages of my journal.”

“Tell me something exciting, Elizabeth,” I said, coaxingly. “The holiday season has commenced. Everybody is on the wing; and we want a little spice of excitement even with our literature.”

Elizabeth smiled a trifle sadly. It might be imagination, but my husband and I had of late noticed

a change in our friend. She had not grown less lovable,—nay, there was a pensive and subtle charm about her which was more fascinating than her former high spirits. She was more thoughtful and subdued, and sometimes had a far-off, contemplative look on her face which seemed to indicate that she had things to think of we knew not of. Often I was on the point of questioning her, but was always restrained by the thought that Elizabeth would be sure to give me her confidence when she felt the need of speech. Between such friends as she and I have been these many years, there is no need, neither is there the desire, to ask many personal questions. Confidence concerning certain things comes spontaneously, the rest is sacred, and that is one of the reasons, I think, why our friendship has never become a common or a vulgar thing. When I hear people boast of a friend or friends, saying, “We have no secrets from each other,” I only wonder, because there must remain for ever in the human soul a holy of holies entered only by the Unseen and the Eternal, who alone can give consolation when sorrow enters there. But I was not the less anxious about Elizabeth, because I detected at times a certain wistfulness in her regarding of me ; and I could guess that she was pondering something

very seriously in her mind, and was not quite sure of my opinion regarding the same. I could wait, however, with patience on Elizabeth's time.

"Talking of holiday making, do you remember the accident to the Scotch express, ~~not~~ far from Belford, some years ago—the accident—I was in?" she asked presently.

"I remember it perfectly," I replied. "And a narrow escape you had."

"I had. I told you, I think, that a lady in the compartment with me was killed."

"You did."

"Well, there was a little bit of very real and awful tragedy connected with that woman I have never forgotten, and never shall. I'll tell it you; then you can use your own discretion about using it. I daresay, though it should be printed, names and all, it wouldn' do much harm. You remember I was on my way home from visiting you for the first time at Amulree, and the glamour of the place was over me still. I had slept the night at the 'Balmoral,' in Princes Street, and in my sleep I confused the murmur of ~~the~~ streets with the rush and roar of that peat stream where your husband taught me to fish; and even when I got to the station I moved as

in a dream, thinking how the warm yellow sun would look that lovely morning on the purple moors, and wondering whether it was helping to clear the burns to give the fishers a good day. The London train, as usual, was full. I was late, and had to take a seat in a very full compartment, which, however, was nearly emptied at Berwick, where there was an agricultural show being held. When we started off again, there were three persons in the carriage with me, a gentleman and two ladies—husband and wife and friend, apparently, so far as I could gather from their conversation, which was animated, at least between the husband and the friend. The wife was rather *distracte*, and once or twice the look of weariness on her face assumed the deeper shade of absolute unhappiness.

“She looked any age from thirty to forty, and though she had a sweet, serious, winning face, she seemed dispirited, almost as if she had lost pride in herself. She was wrapped up in a rather shabby and unbecoming travelling cloak, and her bonnet did not suit her—altogether she presented a striking contrast to the younger lady, who was daintily attired in a travelling coat and skirt of brown homespun, a pink cambric shirt, and a natty little hat, which sat jauntily

on her stylish head. She was rather pretty, but there was a pertness in her expression I did not like, and I did not at all approve of the very decided flirtation she carried on with her friend's husband. He was a well-built, rather attractive-looking man, about forty, and I was puzzled to make out what profession or business he followed. They talked a great deal—chaff\ mostly—and though I kept my eyes on my book, I could not help listening and being amused by it, though, of course, it was all in very bad taste. They were London people, I gathered from their talk, and had evidently been having a holiday trip together, doing the usual tourist round in the usual tourist way. Some of their remarks highly amused me, and sometimes I felt tempted to protest at the lordly manner in which they disposed of Scotland and her institutions; but I held my peace.

“‘Do be quiet, Mr. Claydon,’ said the younger lady once, with an air of coquettish reproof. ‘Don’t you see poor dear Isabel is tired and bored?’

“‘Is poor dear Isabel tired and bored?’ enquired Mr. Claydon, turning to his wife with a slightly mocking air, which I saw she resented by the slow uprising of a dull red flush in her cheek. She gave her head an impatient shake, and shot a curious glance

across at the younger woman, whom I had heard them call Amy.

“‘Now Isabel is cross with me, I know she is,’ said that young person, with a pout. ‘All your fault, Mr. Claydon. How you do talk! Don’t mind him, Isabel.’

“‘I am glad he amuses you, dear,’ she replied, with a slightly languid smile, in which I imagined a faint touch of scorn.

“‘What a wet blanket you are, Isabel; and why do you always wear the air of a suffering martyr?’ said Mr. Claydon shortly; and Mrs. Claydon opened her book, saying quite coldly:

“‘You might remember, Willie, that we are not alone in the carriage.’

“She settled herself in the corner, put her book up before her face, and spoke no more. The other two, however, talked enough for us all—such silly nonsense too. I hated myself because I could not help listening, and I felt so contemptuously towards them that I could have shaken them. There is a type of man who, whether married or single, deems it his duty to chaff every woman he meets. He thinks they like it—some do—this person of the name of Amy certainly did; and she was quick at repartee, and had

a great many pretty little airs that pertain to the born coquette. It makes no difference to her whether the man to whom she is talking be married or single, provided he is habited in the garb of a man. Well, this sort of nonsense, distracting to anybody who wanted to be quiet or to read a book, went on from Edinburgh to Berwick and beyond. It is not a long run from Berwick to Belford, and you know it was just on the edge of one of those desolate Northumberland moors where the accident took place. I forgot to mention that we arrived at Berwick in a pouring rain, and as we got into the wide sweep of Northumbrian country the blinding mists came down, giving to the landscape an indescribably dreary look. It beat against the carriage windows, and, though the air was quite warm, made us feel inclined to shiver. I was standing at the window, trying to clear a little spot on the glass with my handkerchief, when the thing happened; and the marvel was that I should have escaped as I did quite unhurt."

"Was it a collision, Elizabeth? I have forgotten," I asked.

"Oh no, a collision was not likely to occur on that line in the daytime, and with the ordinary traffic; the train ran off the line."

"Ran off the line?" I repeated. "I can't imagine how it happened."

"It did, though. They had been repairing that particular part of the line, and the rails had not been able to bear the pressure. I believe that is the explanation given, but I can't make it any clearer; anyhow, it was a most extraordinary business, and I have sometimes wished I could have witnessed the great thing tearing up the ground as it ploughed its way off the line—before the final smash up. We felt the shock as it left the rails, and even while we looked at each other in mute horror the crash came. I was holding on like a vice to the carriage window, and just at the awful moment what do you think happened? That man Claydon, before his wife's eyes, sat down by the girl and put his arm round her. Perhaps he was beside himself, but there it was, and I shall never forget the look on Isabel Claydon's face. The anguish of a broken heart made the fear of death seem as nothing in her sight. And death it was, sure enough, poor soul, for her.

"When I came to myself, I was holding on still to the door of the compartment, though I had been forced to my knees. And there was a great wreck all about us, and a confused babel of sound, like

nothing I have heard before or since. The horror of it haunts me in my dreams.

"The cold rain beating on my face revived me, and I struggled to my feet and stepped out of the débris. The first thing I saw was the girl Amy, sitting on the bank in a hysterical condition, and Claydon, with a big purple bruise on his forehead, standing helplessly over her. The wife I could not see. I turned from them in sick disgust, but presently the natural instincts of my calling rose uppermost, and I made haste to lend what aid I could to the sufferers. I was the only doctor in the train, and we were a good many miles from town or village, so my hands were full enough. Fortunately, I had my pocket instruments case and a good many other useful articles in that little brief bag which goes everywhere with me, so I was not altogether without resource. I had enough of surgical work that morning to satisfy me for a considerable time to come."

"How glorious to feel that you could be so useful. Just think how helpless you would have felt had you been an ordinary woman," I said impulsively.

"I hadn't much time to think about anything except the work in hand till the other doctors came," Elizabeth replied. "Several were killed instant-

neously, as perhaps you may remember. Poor Mrs. Claydon died in about half-an-hour after we extricated her."

"Well?" I said interrogatively, when Elizabeth paused as if not inclined to go on. "And what about that wretched husband of hers?"

"You may well call him wretched," said Elizabeth, with curling lip. "It was some little time before I could get her restored to consciousness, and even when her eyes opened the look of anguish did not leave her face. She died with it. It was not physical pain, nor even the horror of the accident, but the agony of a trust betrayed, the confirmation of a fear which had haunted her for years—that she was supplanted by another woman in her husband's heart."

"Where's Willie?" she asked, when she could speak. "Is he hurt?"

"No. I'll fetch him," I said, though indeed I felt in no haste to do so.

"No, no. You look kind and good,—I thought so in the train; a woman one could make a friend of. You saw it, didn't you?"

"I bowed my head. I could not say I did not, or that I had not understood. Besides, she was dying, and the dying are hard to deceive. For the moment

is given to them a clearness of vision which enables them to see through every pretence and tear the mask from every deceit.

“ ‘It’s been going on ever so long,’ she said, moving her poor head restlessly from side to side ; ‘and of course she’s very attractive. Men like brightness and youthful looks ; but I’ve had so many children, and—and I’m older than Willie. Don’t be too hard on him.’

“The pathos of it nearly broke my heart, and I couldn’t speak a word. Motherhood had not made her sacred to him. She had gone off in looks, and the superficial, selfish, heartless man was unable to appreciate the beauty of the soul which shone in her very eyes.

“ ‘He’ll marry her, of course, and I don’t mind dying—perhaps he’ll be happier with her ; but oh, the children—poor little things ! God help them ; there’s nobody to care for them ; he never did ; and she can’t be expected to take any interest in them. O God, it is hard !’

“It was. For the moment a great bitterness surged in my soul—a fierce rebellion against life’s sad irony. I could even have questioned the justice of Heaven, as I looked upon poor Isabel Claydon, and

thought how poorly she had been compensated here for many sorrows. It comforts me now when I think of her, as I sometimes do, to believe that she has entered upon her heritage beyond, and has had fullest recompense for the anguish of earth.

“‘I’m dying, am I not?’ she asked presently. ‘I feel it.’

“‘Yes,’ I replied slowly. ‘It will not be long.’

“‘Get Amy. I want to speak to her, to ask her to be good to the children.’

“‘And your husband?’

“‘No,’ she answered. ‘I would rather not see him.’

“They were not far off. They stood side by side, like culprits—cowards in the face of death. I motioned to her to come nearer, which she did; but he turned away. Conscience had smitten him, and he dared not look his wife in the face.

“I, too, would have moved from my place by the dying woman’s head, but she held my hand fast in hers, and I had to stay.

“‘Amy,’ she said, as the empty, frivolous thing cowered weeping before her, ‘promise me you’ll be good to the children.’

“‘Oh, Isabel, forgive me! I’m a wicked girl. I

never meant any harm, but only amused myself. Say you forgive me, or I shall die too.'

"'Promise me you'll be good to the children,' repeated the dying woman, with sad persistence. 'I hope he'll be good to you. Take a word of warning from me. Don't make a slave of yourself, as I've done. You'll get your thanks one day, as I have; but I pray you will never suffer as I have done, and be as glad to die as I am to-day.'

"She could say no more; the numbness creeping upward had reached her heart; in five minutes she was dead."

"Did he never come to speak or look at her?"

"Not while she lived. I tell you the man was a pitiful coward, and conscience had him in grips. But not for long. He was too shallow to suffer long or deeply. I did not speak much to him, for I could not hide my contempt."

"But the story does not end there, Elizabeth," I said. "It ought not, in the interests of justice, to break off just there. Did he never get his deserts?"

A slow smile rippled to the corners of Elizabeth's grave mouth.

"It does not end there. I was permitted to see a further development of it, which interested me very

much, and also afforded me a species of very unchristian satisfaction over the complete subjugation of a fellow-creature."

"Well?" I said impatiently. "Don't stop at the most exciting bit."

"I like to hear that," said Elizabeth calmly. "How often in the course of these narrations have I had to request you to curb a most unwholesome curiosity! You ought to be ashamed of it, seeing you have not the smallest compunction about keeping all your readers on the tenter-hooks for an indefinite time."

"It's you that's doing it this time, Elizabeth, and they can't stand it, I feel sure. Do go on."

"Well, about two years ago—yes, quite two years after that—why, now I come to think of it, it was only last September—I was called to a house in a side street opening off Marlwood Road. Claydon was the name, but it is not so uncommon as to attract my attention, and I took no thought of the episode of the railway disaster when I obeyed the summons. A long slip of a girl, untidily dressed, but with rather a pleasant, thoughtful face, opened the door to me, and asked me to walk in. She left me in the dining-room while she went upstairs to see whether I might see

the patient. When I was left, I looked round the room, of course—an ordinary middle-class dining-room, with nothing to distinguish it from fifty others. But suddenly I saw facing me above the sideboard a crayon portrait of a woman, whose face seemed strangely familiar, though I knew I had never been in the house before. In a moment it all flashed upon me, and I knew I had met, or was about to meet again, one of the chief actors in that sad bit of tragedy I had witnessed on the Northumberland moor.

“Presently back came the tall young girl, and asked me to walk upstairs.”

“‘Mrs. Claydon is ready to see you now,’ she said.

“‘Then they are married?’ I exclaimed, without a moment’s thought. The girl looked surprised, but answered simply, ‘Yes.’

“I felt more than curious as I followed her upstairs. She left me at the door, and I entered the room alone. And there she sat up in bed—the same pert, pretty, youthful face—which, however, had a kind of sharp, eager look, as if she were perpetually on the watch.

“‘How do you do, Dr. Glen? Of course you are

surprised to see me,' she began, in rather a hurried way. 'We go to Marlwood Road Church, and I saw you there one day. Of course, I recognised you at once, and I determined to send for you if I ever required a doctor. Now tell me what is the matter with me.'

"It was not much. I put the usual questions, and presently assured her it was only a feverish cold.

"I didn't think it was much myself, but I didn't feel equal to getting up, and I thought I'd better see you in time. Well, are you surprised to see me here as Mrs. Claydon? I mean——"

"Well, yes,' I admitted. 'But of course I rather expected you would marry ultimately. How do you get on?'

"It was a queer question to put, and I don't know what made me ask it, for I am usually rather reticent, and never pry. But her manner invited remark, and I somehow felt that she had sent for me more to talk than to prescribe.

"Oh, I get on all right. I look after him,' she said, with a distinct eagerness. 'He wants looking after, I tell you; and I often think of poor Isabel. But I'm not so soft as she was. I'll not stand by and

let every chit of a girl put me in the shade ; and Will Claydon knows it by this time, you may be sure of that.'

"This was, of course, rather painful for me, and I looked at her with pity I could not hide. What a mockery of the marriage tie seemed the bond between these two, who between them had broken a good woman's heart !

"He's the sort of man that thinks every woman he sees is in love with him, and he can't help talking nonsense to girls ; but he's stopping it by degrees. I've made him do away with all the lady clerks and typists at the office, and I never let him go out after business hours alone. I pop into the office myself, too, at all sorts of unexpected times, just to see what he is doing ; so he never feels himself safe a moment in the day, he says, and why should he ?

"Her voice became rather shrill as she asked this question, and her colour heightened visibly. My pity for her increased ; and I suppose she saw it in my face.

"'Winnie let you in, didn't she ?' she inquired presently. 'That's Isabel's eldest girl. You remember what Isabel said to me before she died ; well, I haven't forgotten it, and I think I'm good to the

children. Would you mind asking Winnie for yourself? I'd like you to know it from her.'

"I should not think of asking such a question, Mrs. Claydon," I answered hastily; and just at the moment the door burst open, and a little boy about four years old ran in and clambered on the bed in that boisterous and joyous fashion which you only see in happy children. His evident love for her seemed to gratify her, for she pressed her cheek to his and spoke to him as lovingly as his own mother could have done, and my heart warmed to the poor creature, who was being punished now through the very jealousy which had slain the boy's mother.

"How many children are there?" I asked with interest.

"Five; poor Isabel had eight, but three are dead."

"You have none of your own?"

"No, and I don't want any, in case these should suffer, though I don't think I could love my own more dearly than I do them."

"Were you a relative of Mrs. Claydon's?" I asked.

"Oh, no. I was Mr. Claydon's book-keeper, that

was all. That is why I look after him. I know all the nonsense that went on in the office, but it's put a stop to now.'

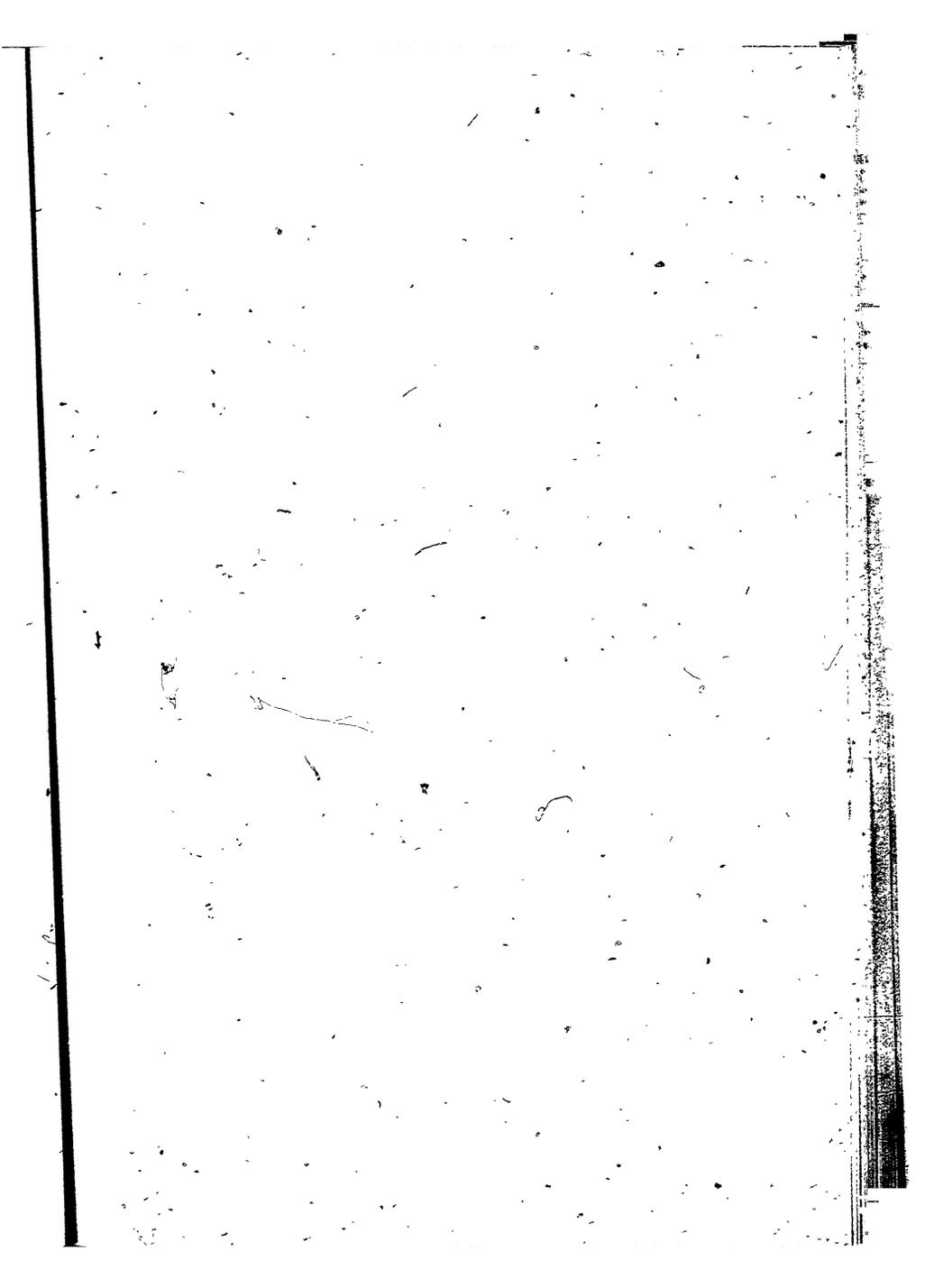
"'You can't be very happy,' I said involuntarily.

"'No, I'm not; except for the children, I couldn't bear it. I thought I cared for him, and so I do after a fashion, but I'm never a moment at rest. It's my punishment, I suppose, and I know what poor Isabel must have suffered. You see I can't trust him, and if a woman can't trust the man she is married to, God help her, that's all.'

"She rocked herself to and fro in the bed, still keeping her face close to the little one's chubby cheek. I pitied her with a vast pity. If she had sinned, none could say her punishment lacked, nor his.

"'I'm sure I don't know why I tell you all this, especially after the way you looked at us that dreadful night. I shall never forget your eyes; they seemed to slay me. But you are the sort of person people trust; and then doctors see all kinds of things.'

"She stopped talking quite suddenly, and though I felt something was expected of me, I did not know what to say.





"HE SEEMED TO FEEL MEETING ME,"

[p. 267.]

“‘It is not a very happy state of affairs,’ I said at length. ‘I do not know very much of Mr. Claydon, and I saw him at the greatest possible disadvantage. Still, I cannot think the sort of treatment you have described can conduce to anything but misery. Don’t you think this open distrust and espionage are enough to render a man desperate? I couldn’t stand it myself.’

“‘I can’t help it,’ she said rather sadly. ‘I’m wretched and uneasy the moment he is out of my sight.’

“‘You should try and get over that. Let him see rather that you trust him. It will be the first thing to rouse his chivalrous feeling.’

“‘He hasn’t got any, or he would have been more loyal to his first wife,’ was her flat rejoinder; and as I saw there was no use trying to reason with her then, I went away. I felt more curious to see Mr. Claydon than I can tell you, and as his wife’s cold developed into influenza, and she was not able to get up at all, I saw him one evening as I went downstairs from her room. He was greatly changed, and looked so worried and miserable that I couldn’t help feeling sorry for him too. He seemed to feel meeting me. I thought he looked humiliated; and

though I knew he deserved it, I could not help, as I said, being rather sorry for him. He did not mention the past, nor did I."

"And is that all, Elizabeth?"

"That is all meanwhile."

"Weren't you able to put matters straight there, as you have put them straight in so many other places?"

She shook her head.

"What could I do? I could only advise her; but really it was of no use. Her mind was diseased on that particular point. She is a jealous wife, and will remain one, I fear, to the end. It is one of the most hopeless of all diseases."

"It must be awful," I said fervently. "And do you see them sometimes still?"

"Oh yes, often; and though the children make a bright spot in that miserable home—she has been good to them, dear, and they reward her with devoted love—I never leave the house without having recalled to my mind certain lines of Longfellow's, and also a particular Scripture text."

"What are they, Elizabeth?"

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;

Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all."

"And the text?"

"It will readily suggest itself," replied Elizabeth gravely. "'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

XI.

A GENTLE LIFE.

“H AVEN’T you had any amusing or interesting holiday experiences, Elizabeth?” I asked, one day after we had been discussing our summer plans.

“Not very many ; the most interesting happened at Lucerne last year when I went to visit Ellen Douglas. Do you remember Ellen, who was the torment and the pet of the old Edinburgh school ?”

“I remember Ellen perfectly !” I replied, “and have often wondered what has become of her.”

“Why ! you must have heard ; she married a Swiss, who was a student at Zurich University when she was governess to that queer Dutch family, the Van Rasselars. He was their cousin, and visited at their house. Don’t you remember, I told you about the marriage at the time ?”

“I must have forgotten if you did tell me ; so

please give me a few particulars. Is the story about Ellen?"

"No, it happened when I was visiting her last August; but it had nothing to do with her. She has written so often, urging me to visit her, that I stole a fortnight last summer, when you were buried in the Highland wilds; and I enjoyed it very much."

"Has the marriage turned out well then?" I asked. "And doesn't Ellen find existence in Lucerne all the year round a trifle monotonous?"

"She does; she admitted it to me quite frankly. She told me she did not suppose there ever was a more unhappy woman than she that first year, considering she married her Professor of her own free will and out of pure love. He is worth it, too; he is a fine fellow, with a big, pure, simple heart, and he is as handsome as Apollo. Ellen always did admire a handsome man, though she thought, being a plain little thing herself, she had no chance of one as a husband."

"They are happy then?" I enquired with interest, for I had not hitherto regarded mixed marriages with approval.

"Oh yes! they adore each other. - And then they have two lovely boys, who have done more to

reconcile her to the land of her adoption than anything else."

"Has she any society?"

"Oh yes! a few nice friends; but I think they are sufficient one to the other at the Chalet Loret. What a lovely place it is! It stands on the high ground beyond the Schweizerhof, and commands one of the finest views of the lake and all the mountains. I used to sit for hours in that old orchard, simply feasting, and I think I got to know Pilatus in all his moods, grave and gay, though I was never fired with the common ambition to stand on his crest. But I must say that at the end of a fortnight I was not sorry to make tracks for my dear grey old London. I enjoyed my glimpse of Ellen's sweet Arcadia, but oh, my dear, I could not live there for all the golden-haired Professors in the world."

"Ellen only did it for the sake of one," I suggested; and Elizabeth laughed, though her colour rose.

"She was very glad to see me, however, and when we parted she had a wistful look we see on the faces of those who are 'far frae hame.'"

"And the Professor—how did he regard you? Was he not horrified at the very idea of a lady doctor?"

"No; there are a good many women students at Zurich now, and, besides, he is broad-minded as you would expect Ellen's Professor to be. The most charming man, dear; such manners! so old-world, so courteous, so chivalrous! Our boys should be sent to such homes as the Châlet Loret to learn true courtesy. But it strikes me I am giving you Ellen's story instead of the other one."

"Just tell me a little more about her house," I said coaxingly. "What is it like? I have always longed to see the inside of a Swiss chalet."

"It was a queer mixture of English taste and Swiss adornment, which is very simple. The floors I specially liked, and she had some Liberty rugs, which looked homelike. Her crockery was English, and her tea decidedly so; with cream from her Swiss cow, it was a beverage fit for a prince. She has it sent with other things from the stores, not sharing at all our views about big monopolies, which don't give smaller traders a chance to live."

"Oh, it doesn't matter there, I should think. Well, I'll ask you some more questions about Ellen later. Go on with your story now."

"You won't print all this about Ellen, dear; she might not like it," said Dr. Glen doubtfully.

"Oh, I'm sure she wouldn't mind; we can change her name if you like," I said, with the cheerful alacrity of one accustomed to dispose lightly of such scruples; "or we can send the proof to her if you like; then if she objects we can take it all out, though I must say it would be a pity."

"Yes, send her the proof by all means; it will amuse her, and it would be worth while hearing the Professor's verdict," said Elizabeth. "Now for my story, and I've only half-an-hour to tell it you, my dear, for I have to be at Belgrave Square at half-past seven."

"Any dukes or marquises ill?" I asked teasingly. "I didn't know you had any patients in that aristocratic square."

"I haven't. I'm going to a dinner party."

"Whose?" I promptly enquired.

"You are too insatiably curious, my dear, and I shall not answer you just at present," said Elizabeth, most whimsically; and again the colour glowed warm and red in her cheek, but still I regarded her guilelessly, unsuspecting as a child. Many romances had been discussed between us, and somehow having grown accustomed to the idea, often expressed in her own words, that she stood on the outside always, I had

forgotten that it might be possible for Elizabeth to have a romance of her own.

“Well, one evening after dinner, Ellen and I were sitting in the orchard, talking sometimes, and again watching through the Professor’s wonderful glass certain stragglers toiling up Pilatus to spend the night and be up in time to see the sun rise. It was an evening of surpassing and wonderful loveliness, such as we do not often see in our misty isle; the air soft, still, serene, bearing every sound on its breast, and so crystal clear it seemed to breathe new life into one. Not a cloud, nor even a fleecy film disturbed the azure of the sky, except in the east, where the horizon was purple—a royal purple—merging to softest lilac ere it met the blue. The west was the usual ruddy splendour, and——”

“You ought to have written books, Elizabeth, and not I,” I interposed.

“Are you laughing at me? Well, I shall not weary you with any more tedious description.”

“How touchy you are, Elizabeth! I do not know what has come to you. I’m not going to let you off in that fashion. Tell me how the lake looked.”

“As if you did not know how Lucerne mirrors every passing mood of the canopy over it. It was so

still I thought only of the sea of glass the Bible speaks of, and the little boats as they glided to and fro scarcely seemed to disturb it. Only the steamers, laden as they came up from Fluellen and Stausstadt, with their noisy puffing and their long black trails of smoke, seemed like a desecration."

"I see it, I see it all, Elizabeth; and the fringe of green on the banks, dipping down to meet the water, and the laughter of the evening crowds on the Quay. Well, what then?"

"We were sitting, Ellen and I, and I believe we were talking about you, when a boy—a page from one of the hotels—came hastily into the garden and, with hat in hand, respectfully addressed us in pretty broken English.

"The English madam—who is the doctor—would she be so good—at the Schweizerhof—a lady wishes her—immediate."

"Ellen promptly interviewed him in German, which she translated to me disjointedly. A lady was taken suddenly ill at the Schweizerhof, and would I go to see her without delay. We sent the lad off to tell them I was coming, and Ellen and I got our hats and followed almost immediately. She said she would sit on the Quay where the band was

playing, and wait till I came. As I crossed the road from the Quay to the hotel I secretly wondered how the lady had learned I was at the Châlet Loret. When one pays a private visit one's name is not usually to be found in the list of visitors. I had not asked the lady's name, but the hotel porter was on the look-out for me, and I saw by his face that something serious was apprehended; and the moment I entered I was taken in an elevator to the third floor, and into a large, handsome sitting-room, where an old lady came to me presently, the sweetest old lady I think I had ever seen. She looked terribly distressed, and regarded me so imploringly that I felt a trifle confused. The moment she spoke my heart warmed to her, for she was Scotch, and had the real Edinburgh accent, which is music to me always and everywhere.

“It is my daughter, Doctor Glen,” she said falteringly. “My name is Lawrence. I knew your mother before she was married, and I have heard of you from my friend Lady Hamilton, of Flisk Castle.”

I wondered a little just then why Elizabeth turned away her head, and why her voice distinctly trembled as she uttered these, to me, unfamiliar names. But she did not pause at all, and presently in my interest

in the story I forgot my momentary wonder, though it recurred to me more than once as she went on.

"I knew who she was instantly, of course, the widow of a well-known Edinburgh advocate who had died suddenly in his prime, leaving her with one child, the daughter who was now so ill. I remembered seeing her once at Flisk, a pretty golden-haired little girl who won everybody's heart."

"You knew the Hamiltons well, then?" I asked; and Elizabeth answered again without looking at me and with that odd constraint still in her voice.

"Yes, Flisk is next to Glenspeed. We have always known the Hamiltons," she replied.

"I have not heard you speak much about them, I ventured to say, but Elizabeth continued her story without noticing that suggestive remark.

"Your daughter has been taken suddenly ill, Mrs. Lawrence," I said sympathetically. "What was the cause?"

"I don't know. We can't make it out," said Mrs. Lawrence mournfully. "Effie has always been healthy, though not perfectly robust. She felt a little upset by the journey yesterday, and I kept her in bed to-day. Since lunch she has grown rapidly worse."

“I had better see her at once,” I said, a trifle anxiously. I felt so sorry for the widowed mother whose one ewe lamb had thus been stricken. The bedroom opened off the sitting-room, and when I followed the mother in and looked at the patient I felt more anxious still. She was in a high fever, and complained of so much pain that my first care was to administer something to relieve it. She had not much reserve strength, I could see; propped up among her pillows I thought her a fragile-looking creature, one of the sweetest and most guileless that ever drew the breath of life.

“Oh, it is so nice to see you instead of a horrid man-doctor, especially a foreign one, with long whiskers perhaps, and goggle eyes,” she said, almost gaily. ‘Mamma thinks I am very ill. Isn’t she needlessly frightened, Doctor Glen? and what a lucky chance that you should be in Lucerne at the same time.’

“I could not laugh and joke much with her, for I was anxiously concerned. I did not like any of her symptoms, and I was in haste to go out to the nearest chemist to get all I required.

“I always knew how clever you were, Doctor Glen,” she said, looking at me with a slight wistfulness.

"Keith has told me you are good, but perhaps you have heard that I am engaged to Keith, and that we expect to be married in October. Then I go to Flisk Castle, and poor mamma will be left quite alone."

At this point Doctor Glen suddenly stopped and looked me very fully in the face.

"Before I began this story, Annie, I knew certain parts of it would be inexplicable to you, but I must beg of you not to interrupt me by a single question. Before I come quite to the end you will understand perhaps how I felt as Effie Lawrence spoke these words.

"No, I have not heard," I replied, as steadily as I could, though I knew I must have looked queerly. Certainly I felt it. I had only one desire—to get out of the room, to feel myself quite alone, for the name had set my heart throbbing like the waves of a tempestuous sea, and I was for the moment unfit for the duty of my profession. But it passed, and when I followed Mrs. Lawrence out into the sitting-room I was quite calm and ready to speak and to hear collectedly.

"You are anxious, Doctor Glen, I can see," said the poor mother tremulously.

“I am very anxious. There is another English doctor in Lucerne. He comes from London as I do, and I know him pretty well. He is at the Hôtel de l'Europe. With your kind permission I will go and fetch him. He has probably not yet risen from table-d'hôte.”

“I shall never forget the anguish in that sweet face, yet, as such women do, she kept perfectly calm, and assented to all my suggestions at once.

“You heard her say she is engaged to her cousin Keith Hamilton,” she said. “He is in the Tyrol at present, at Ischl, I think, and was to follow us here next week. Had I better send for him?”

“You had better,” I replied; and then she took my hand between her two thin white palms, and looked at me most pitifully.

“My dear, it is a bitter cup. Pray that it may pass from me. She is my all, and has done no harm in this dear world. But His will be done.”

“I hurried out. I could not speak. Oh, my dear, there are times when we feel our puny knowledge but mocks us, when we are inclined to think our profession worse than useless. So I felt then. I forgot all about Ellen, but drove back to the Hôtel de l'Europe for Doctor Ridgway, of Bryanston Square,

whose name I had accidentally seen in the visitors' list that very day. I caught him leaving table-d'hôte, and he came back with me at once. His opinion coincided with mine—we could not give Mrs. Lawrence any hope."

"What was it?" I asked.

"Oh, a common trouble enough; but one which often baffles all the skill we have," Doctor Glen replied, "and often it is sudden and fatal in its results. After Doctor Ridgway left, I offered to watch all night, or part of the night, by the poor girl, and they both seemed grateful. Then I remembered Ellen, and went back to the Quay to find, of course, that she had gone. I returned to the hotel, wrote a hasty note, and despatched the boy with it. I asked her to come along after breakfast next morning, as I might require her. I knew she was a good nurse, even in her girlhood. Then I went up to Effie's room. It was almost midnight before I could persuade Mrs. Lawrence to go and lie down, and she only consented when I pointed out how serious it would be to have two patients on my hands instead of one. The child seemed pleased to have me beside her. She liked me to sit quite close to the bed, and I could not tell you all the things she said.

Her constant talk about Keith Hamilton was almost more than I could bear ; the keenest pain of all was because I knew that the fragrance of an old dream was not yet destroyed ; and that I was weak—weak where I had prided myself on my strength. But she guessed nothing of that inward and terrible struggle as I listened to her constant babble about her happiness, and her oft-expressed fear lest she should not be fit enough wife for such a good, noble, clever man.

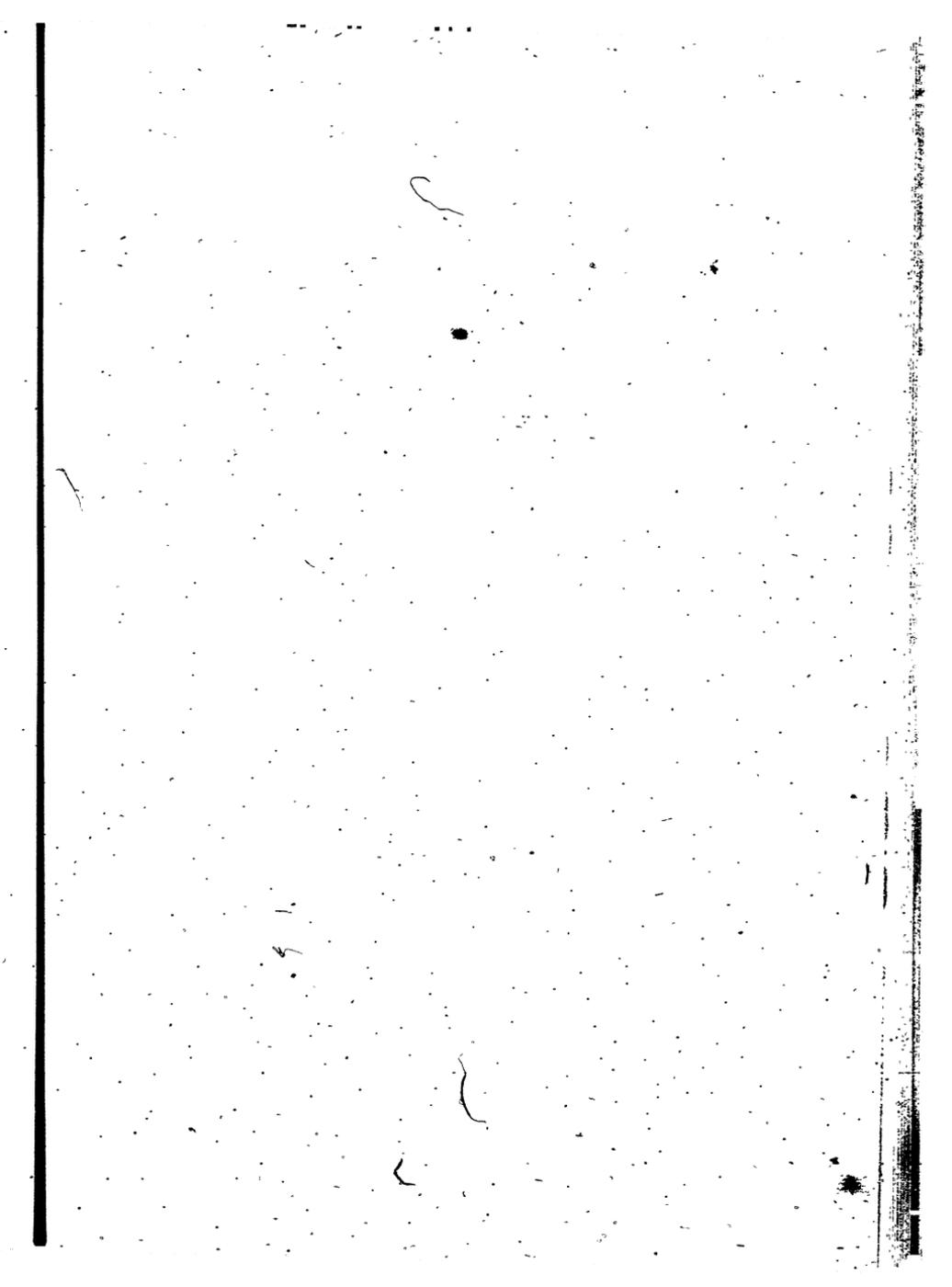
“ ‘It is so good of him to stoop to poor little me,’ she said, with child-like humility. ‘I have always loved him, but I never aspired to be his wife. Don’t you think Keith Hamilton deserves a better wife?’

“ ‘He could not possibly find another so good or half so sweet,’ I replied ; and truer words I never spoke.

“ ‘But he is so clever and knows so much,’ she said wistfully. ‘Perhaps some day he will be sadly disappointed in his poor little wife. I hope I am not quite so bad as Dora in “Copperfield.” Do you think I am?’

“ ‘Hush, my darling ; Keith Hamilton knows as well as I do that all intellectual gifts pale before the radiance of a pure, unselfish heart like yours,’ I said ; and, bending over her, I kissed her twice, and the

last kiss was my farewell to a dream from which I knew in a moment of supreme bitterness that I had never parted all these years. But it was over now. Very early in the morning the distressed and anxious mother came to relieve me of my vigil. I went up to her room and threw myself, dressed as I was, on the bed, but sleep was impossible. Too many memories haunted me, and the bitterness of a past time rose up before me with such vividness that I did not know how to bear it. I rose at length, and throwing open the window, allowed the sweet breath of the morning to cool my hot face, and the loveliness of the new dawn, before the heat and burden of the day had robbed it of its freshness, laid a hush upon my fevered spirit. Looking out upon that placid lake, with the silver shadows of the morning twilight still on its breast, and the soft grey mists rolling backward from the mountains to prepare them for the sun's caress, I felt that nature has a message for us in every mood, and will give comfort to our souls even in their extremity if we only understand her silent speech. I felt such a desire to be out of doors that, though it was only half-past five, I put on my hat and stole downstairs. A few sleepy-eyed servants were about, and the porter undid half the door to





"YOU HERE! . . . WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?"

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let me out, asking civilly what boat I wanted to catch, and if I had had any breakfast. I thanked him and passed out to the porch. All the flowers and plants before the door were wet with dew, and the air had a cool, clean touch which most refreshed me.

“As I stepped across to the roadway, a cab rattled up to the gate, and a gentleman, in great haste, flung himself out. Then all the earth seemed to rock beneath my feet, and the landscape swam before my eyes; though I stood quite calmly before Keith Hamilton, and gave him good-morning in a voice cold as ice, as he has told me since. He looked even more stricken than I. His first words were,—

“‘You here! what does it all mean?’

“I saw that his strong brown hand trembled as he thrust it in his pocket for the necessary change, and I would have turned away, but his eyes chained me—those frank, fearless eyes, which had never known the droop of shame or the swerving of dishonour, and I said to myself, as I waited while he dismissed the man, that in all my travels I had never met his equal; that Keith Hamilton was my woman’s ideal of all a man should be, even as he had been the idol of my girlish dream.

“‘Now,’ he said, and he looked me very straightly

in the face, and his glance warmed my starved heart, for I saw its deep tenderness, its unspeakable yearning, which dared not now find a voice. And a great joy possessed my soul, because I saw that I was not forgotten.

“‘I have been watching by poor Effie Lawrence all night,’ I said, ‘and I wanted a breath of fresh air. I am glad you have come.’

“‘What is the matter with her?’ he asked, almost roughly. ‘I saw her in London only ten days ago, and she was then perfectly well.’

“‘She is not so now,’ I replied gravely. ‘You may prepare yourself; it is impossible she can live.’

“He regarded me sternly for a moment, then a great sob shook him, and he went his way without vouchsafing me another look or word, and I stole across to the deserted Quay, and sat down on a seat close to the water’s edge, and pondered in my heart many, many things, both bitter and sweet. But in all my thoughts was I most loyal to that sweet, innocent soul, so soon to pass from earthly ken, and I prayed, if a miracle might yet be permitted here, that her life might be saved. Yet knew I all the time that no earthly aid could avail. I had not watched these

silent night hours for nought; and I knew the end could not be very far away.

“At eight o'clock, Ellen came down from the Chalet Loret, full of sympathy and anxious desire to help; when she saw me, she appeared much concerned.

“‘Why, Elizabeth,’ she said, ‘I could not have believed that the loss of a few hours’ sleep would have so changed you!’

“‘It is not that, Ellen,’ I answered. ‘I found in my poor patient one I knew once, associated with the old life at Glenspeed, and it has greatly upset me. Oh, my dear, life is a great mystery! I wish our eyes were not always so holden that we could not see.’

“Dr. Ridgway also came most kindly after breakfast, and all—all was done to prolong that sweet life, to save it to the love of those her love had blessed. It was my strange experience, I who loved Keith Hamilton as my own soul, to remain a watcher in that room while he sat by Effie Lawrence’s bed, she looking upon him as her lover, almost her husband; and so strangely are we constituted, and so abounding is the grace and mercy of God, that not only could I witness it without bitterness, but I could pray incessantly with unceasing and intense

uplifting of heart that, if possible, she might yet live. But it could not be! Her gentle race was run. In her brief span of life she had known no sorrow and much joy. Hers was a nature the breath of sorrow would have crushed; and though it seemed hard to all looking on that a life so young and beautiful should thus untimely end, perhaps it was well, for even to the sheltered and the cared-for, sorrow, the heritage of all earth's children, must sooner or later come. She died at sunset in Keith Hamilton's arms, and in my soul I blessed him, because from him had gone forth no shadow to add a pang to her passing.

"About an hour before she died I was there alone with her. Not always could the poor mother bear up, and when her grief obtained the mastery she always left the room. Poor Effie had been, as we thought, asleep. When her mother had left us alone she opened her eyes and looked at me with a quiet, brave little smile.

"I am very ill and tired. Poor mamma cannot bear it. Something has whispered to me I shall not get well. It is just a little hard, when I was so happy; but perhaps, after all, it is better, in case any one should have been disappointed."

"I knew quite well what she meant, but I could not answer her. I laid down my cheek on her pale hand, and I felt my soul cleave so to her that I would fain have laid bare before her the burden which had lain upon it for years. I am glad now I did not with my sorrow trouble her tender heart.

"'You are so good. Keith always told me so; but now I know it,' she said, very quietly. 'Will you come nearer to me till I whisper something to you which nobody else must hear?'

"I did so—so near that I almost held her to my heart.

"'It is just this: If, after I am gone, Keith should be very lonely, and, reverencing you as he does, should ask you to—to help him, will you remember that it will make me happy in heaven, because I know that, however happy you two might be, I shall never be forgotten?'

"I could not speak; but, somehow, she seemed to understand, and I do think that there came to her in that last hour a clearness of vision which revealed to her what was passing in the hearts of others; but I felt that she knew my stormy heart-history just as well as if I had myself laid it bare to her, and so we came very near to each other,

though we both loved Keith Hamilton with the one love of a woman's life.

"And so—and so—she died."

"But that is not all, Elizabeth," I said, very softly, fearing to intrude upon what I saw was so sacred to my friend.

"No, not all; but I cannot tell you any more to-day. It will be my story and Keith Hamilton's next time, dear, when I am able."

"Will you give me that, Elizabeth?"

"Yes; why not, when I have given so much? Some explanation must be forthcoming, anyhow, for the sudden retirement of Elizabeth Glen from the practice of her profession," she replied, and a very faint smile dawned on her face, making it so inexpressibly lovely that I wondered I had never before thought her really a beautiful woman.

And though both our hearts were full to overflowing, and though I had heard for the first time such great and wonderful news, we parted without speech, and I thought more of Effie Lawrence than of Elizabeth as I went my way.

XII.

HER OWN ROMANCE.

"IT is a complicated story," said Elizabeth, "but I must begin at the very beginning, which dates from a time before you knew me—when I was a long, lank slip of a girl at Glenspeed, and he was a Trinity boy coming home from Glenalmond at Easter and midsummer and Christmas, full of boyish slang and boyish sports, all of which I shared."

"Slang, too, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, every word, till Aunt Grace and father had to lecture me individually and collectively, and point out the enormity of such an offence in the heiress of Glenspeed. I did not mind the lecturing, and I don't believe it did a bit of good. It was a jolly, happy, never-to-be-forgotten time. If I live to be a hundred I shall cherish the memory of it as the most precious of my life."

"Flisk is near to Glenspeed, isn't it?"

"It is the next place, and we knew all the short cuts. Keith was an only child, like me, and we were quite inseparable. I used to write letters doleful and sentimental, interspersed with a few facts about puppies and calves and colts, until one of them, the most doleful and sentimental I ever wrote, fell into the hands of one of his chums, who read it to every boy in the form. I leave you to imagine what kind of life poor Keith had after it, and there was ample excuse for the kind of epistle he launched upon my devoted head. I've got it still, and I'm going to show it to him one of these days when he happens to be more aggravating than usual."

"What did he say?"

"I don't think I dare tell you."

"Yes, do—I shall understand him ever so much better."

"Well, he said, if I wrote one more like that to him he'd never look near Glenspeed again, and that he'd take back Silver, the setter puppy he had given me for my birthday, and make Donald, the Flisk forester, put gates on all the footpaths, and lock them, too, and more such stuff, which is very amusing reading now, though it took away my appetite for two

whole days, and made me water poor Silver's glossy head daily with my tears. I had it out with him, and made him beg my pardon, too, the very next time he came home; but I wrote no more love-letters to Glenalmond. His father is one of the finest old gentlemen you could wish to see. You have often said my dear old father is your *beau idéal* of what a gentleman and a father ought to be; but you have never seen Colonel Hamilton. He won the V.C. in India, and though he is such a grand, brave soldier, his heart is as simple as a child's."

"Is his mother alive also?"

"She was then—Lady Marjorie, a daughter of the Earl of Mount Meldrum. I loved her, too, but I believe I adored the Colonel, and when the estrangement came it nearly broke my heart."

"Elizabeth, to think you had this in your heart all these years, and I never dreamed of it!" I could not help saying.

"It was no treason to you, dear, to keep it hid. The thing was over, and if I had allowed myself to speak of it or brood over it, I should have been unfitted for my work. I always meant to tell you some day, and that day has come."

"Only when it was inevitable," I said, bound to

have my grumble out. "I don't suppose you'd exactly wish me to hear of your love affairs from an outsider."

"Oh, don't be so touchy, dear," said Elizabeth brightly, for she saw I was only teasing her. "Do you or do you not wish to hear the history of Elizabeth Glen's first and only love affair?"

"Go on," I said, giving my pencil a new point, and smoothing the paper of my note-book—which I shall for ever keep because it bears the record of Doctor Glen's romance.

"Well, from Glenalmond, Keith went to Oxford, and did well there. His father would have liked him to enter the army, but his tastes lay in the occupations of a country gentleman. He was the best rider, the best shot, and the best rod in the county, and he worshipped every stone that lay on the lands of Flisk, so when he attained his majority he settled down to look after the estate."

"How old were you then, Elizabeth?"

"Nineteen, he was one-and-twenty, and for a time we were as great chums as ever."

"And what led to the estrangement?"

"Why, this thing, my desire to be a doctor, and to live a more useful and a fuller life than that of——"

"Keith Hamilton's wife?"

She nodded, and her face flushed softly, and her eyes shone. "It began when Mary Rutherford came one summer to Glenspeed and announced her intention of becoming a medical missionary and going in for Zenana work. Have you ever seen Mary?"

"Why, yes; that little black-eyed, weary-faced creature, who always looked so intense and melancholy; but she had a true, unselfish heart."

"That she had; and she has done, and is doing, a great work. But, you see, her case was different from mine. She was an orphan—only tolerated in the house of the aunt who brought her up. Papa had nobody but me. But we are so headstrong in our youth; we see nothing but what we wish to see, and imagine we are called of God to a great work, whereas it is only self pointing us to a congenial course."

"True, Elizabeth," I murmured fervently, as my thoughts went back to my own headstrong youth. "You never spoke truer words than these."

"Mary came to Glenspeed that summer fired with her new enthusiasm. I was young and very impressionable; she soon convinced me I led a life of luxurious and sinful ease, though I sometimes thought I had a good deal to do. She brought her medical

books with her, and we used to study them together. Before she left Glenspeed my mind was made up. I was determined to go in for a medical course, and to follow Mary to India at the earliest possible moment. But how to break it to father and Aunt Grace! It kept me awake for nights.

"Well, I did a very foolish thing. I confided my secret ambition first to Keith Hamilton."

"Were you engaged to him then?"

"No, we were simply chums, but I knew as well as he did that to see us married was the secret and most cherished desire of those who loved us best, and till now I had rather looked upon it as a settled thing that I should marry Keith one day when father had no further use for me. But there had never been a word of love between us."

"Keith, then, very naturally objected," I said, with intense interest.

"I shall always remember that day," said Elizabeth reflectively. "It was October, a lovely, crisp afternoon, when all the fields were bare, and the 'trees hingin' yellow,' as the song says. Keith and I had been for a ride up Glendarroch, and the wind of the hills was in our ears as we came down into the low ground once more."

“Did you ride together all over the country like that, Elizabeth?”

“Why, yes; we were sometimes out together six days in seven, and on the seventh we met at church. Yes, we were a good deal to each other, and after the breach it was not to be wondered at that life looked rather desolate.”

“I should think not indeed. Was he angry, then?”

“No. He listened to all I had to say, and there was a kind of aggravating smile on his mouth—he has a handsome mouth, too, even when he looks his sternest; and when I had finished he laid his hand on my bridle-rein, and looked at me rather keenly.

“‘It’s well you’ve told me all this, Liz,’ he said calmly. ‘For, of course, it’s the beginning, middle, and end of the whole thing.’”

“‘What do you mean?’ I asked rather hotly, for there was a calmly decisive air about him which put up my temper.

“‘Why, that it is out of the question altogether, of course, that’s all,’ he replied.

“‘And why, pray?’ I enquired.

“‘Well, to begin with, it’s all very well for people like Miss Rutherford to go in for that sort of thing,’

he said, and I imagined a note of contempt in his last words. 'It's out of the question for you.'

"'Why? You make statements and you can give no reason for them,' I said hotly. 'And you need not allude so contemptuously to Mary as "that sort of person"; she is a great deal better than most people, and she is capable of a great deal of sacrifice which we could never hope to emulate.'

"'We don't want to—at least, I don't; and I hope to goodness, Liz, neither do you,' said Keith grimly. 'Look here, dear'—and his voice fell a little, and grew very tender—'you're not going to throw me over like this. Everybody knows we're to be man and wife some day.'

"'Then everybody knows too much,' I cried rebelliously. 'And I'm not going to be disposed of in any such fashion to you or anybody else, Keith Hamilton. I can live my own life, thank Heaven, independently of you or of any other man.'

"'What made you so mad, Elizabeth?'" I asked. "These words sound harsh enough now, but if you spoke them in the heat of passion they must have been rather hard hearing for Mr. Keith Hamilton."

"I was awfully angry, dear. I never remember feeling quite so angry before or since. You see, he

just took the wrong way with me. I had trusted him before anybody with a secret which was almost sacred to me in those days, and to have one's most cherished ambition pooh-poohed is not very easy to bear. And all the time there was a secret soreness because I knew I liked Keith so much that it would nearly break my heart to leave him."

"Well, what did he say next?"

"Just the very thing, of course, which he ought not to have said. He began somewhat in this fashion, and I imagined a certain lordly, patronising air in him which made me wild.

"It would never do for you, Elizabeth, to go in for such advanced ideas. No woman who thinks anything of herself would or could go in for medical study. Why, it takes a fellow all his time to get hardened to it. Your father will never consent to it; and to me it is intolerable to think of you subjected to experiences which will rob you of that exquisite womanliness which makes everybody love you."

"'Exquisite humbug,' I said, for these were the very arguments Mary had prepared me to expect. 'If my womanliness is to be so easily damaged, Keith Hamilton, it is a quality not worth possessing, and I'm very much obliged to you for your very

poor opinion of a woman you have known all your life.'

"He looked at me perplexedly, and I saw him bite his lips. We had fallen out many times in our lives, but these were the first hot words which had passed between us since we accounted ourselves grown up; and they hurt us both a good deal more than we would have cared to acknowledge. Presently he began again.

"'Putting aside all these other considerations, which I regard as serious, though you scoff at them, it's an awfully hard grind. I don't believe you'd ever get through, and if you do it'll be at the expense of your health.'

"'We'll see,' I said grimly. If there had been a lingering spark of indecision in my heart these words dissolved it, and from that moment I was a person of one idea—to obtain with the highest possible credit that difficult degree.

"We rode on then in silence for a time, and I could see that Keith was very miserable, but I didn't feel a spark of pity for him. He had wounded my pride and my susceptibilities too deeply, and I told myself he'd need to humble himself in the very dust before I would forgive him."

"Why, Elizabeth, how vindictive! I had no idea you could cherish so much malice."

"I was very young," said Elizabeth, with a faint, sweet smile, "and if it's any satisfaction to you to know it, I was quite as miserable as it was possible for him to be, though I would rather have died than admit it. So we rode on in silence till we came to the lych-gate at Glenspeed, generally our parting as well as our trysting-place. You remember the bridle-path that comes up through the birch wood, and past the old burying ground? Well, we rode up there in silence, and our horses, by use and wont, stopped at the gate. Then Keith looked at me quietly and steadily, and I returned his look with equal steadiness, though I don't know how I managed to control myself."

"I say, Liz, you didn't mean all that. You're not really contemplating such a disastrous step."

"You don't choose your words very happily," I replied coldly and evasively.

"I use the words which express what I feel. If you persist in this folly of course it is disastrous. It will put an end to everything that is worth thinking about in this world."

"Opinions differ," I said lightly. "To me it

seems but a beginning—the beginning of a new life full of usefulness and absorbing interests.’

“‘Then my wish—my, my happiness—is of no account to you, Liz. What a fool you have made of me! I thought you cared for me as I have done for you all the days of my life.’

“A mist swam before my eyes, but I took care he should not see it. I never uttered a word.

“‘You won’t give up this absurd idea then, and I suppose it is all over between us.’

“‘I don’t know what you mean by “it,”’ I said calmly; ‘I was not aware there was ever anything between us except neighbourly kindness.’

“‘I saw him get a little white about the lips; but I went on mercilessly, ‘You have taken too much for granted, Keith, like the rest of your sex. But there is one woman in the world to whom marriage is not the Ultima Thule of existence.’”

“Oh, Elizabeth, how could you?” I exclaimed.

“I don’t know how I could, but I did. I told Margaret about it long after, when we were rather despondent one day together in London, at the beginning of my career, and she said, ‘Sakes, lassie, the de’il was in ye,’ and I suppose he was. I felt wicked enough anyhow to have said a great deal more.”

"I don't know whether it is a relief or a disappointment to learn that you are as unreasonable as the rest of us, Elizabeth. I should think the poor fellow felt pretty bad just then."

"He did. I can see him now, just as he looked then. He lifted his cap, and after opening the lych-gate for me, turned his horse's head without another word, though I called him back to say—what do you think?"

"I couldn't hazard a guess."

"Well, I just said quite sharply, 'May I ask you not to mention this matter to my father? He does not know yet, and I would wish him to give my case an impartial hearing, which will be impossible if he first sees you.'"

"What did he say?"

"Not a word, but rode away as if the wind pursued him, and the next thing I heard of him was that he had gone to Egypt with a party from Oxford, though he had formerly declined their invitation."

"Well, and how did you get on with your father?"

"It took me three months to wring a consent from him, and then I was allowed to begin my studies only on the understanding that the idea of following Mary to India should be given up at once and for ever."

Mary consoled me by telling me I had a field among the heathen at home. I must confess I began my new career rather half-heartedly, and had Keith come to me in a proper mood any time during the first year, I might have ignominiously given in. Would you believe it, I never saw Keith for twelve whole months? though I was home three or four times, and he was always at Flisk when I happened to be at Glenspeed."

"Did your father know of the estrangement?"

"He knew we had disagreed about the medical career; and when he told me he had hoped to see Glenspeed and Flisk joined by a closer tie than mere friendship, I just said flatly, 'Keith has never asked me, and I'm not going to throw myself at any man's head.'"

"That wasn't true, Elizabeth."

"It was literally true, though I knew, of course, that there was nothing Keith Hamilton wanted so much in the world as to marry me. And I meant to marry him, too, when he had come to his senses."

"Which he never did."

"Not in time. I got interested in my work, and nothing would have moved me to give it up. I had a pretty successful college career, as you know, and

my father grew rather proud of my prowess. When he got used to the idea, he saw nothing incongruous in my setting up as a doctor, and after I cured him of a troublesome cough his confidence in me was unbounded."

"Did you ever get a chance to crow over Keith about your success?"

"I never did. I used to meet him occasionally—but never alone, of course—and we met just like acquaintances. Yes, I had a good many sore hearts over it, but I stuck manfully to my work, and found a panacea in that. But all the time I never forgot him. I used to compare all the men I met with him, and though I could have been married again and again, I felt somehow that I belonged to him and that all would come right one day, though how I did not know. Therefore you can understand what a shock it was to me to meet him in such circumstances last year at Lucerne."

I saw Elizabeth's mouth tremble and her eyes grow dim.

"But I can't imagine, dear," I said gently, "what kept you apart all these years. How long have you been in London?"

"More years than I care to count, as I told Keith

only yesterday; for now I wish I was young and lovely for his sake."

I felt tempted to say, as I looked at her true face, upon which was writ large the sweetest and most perfect womanhood, that her loveliness far surpassed the charms of youth and mere girlish beauty; but I knew that Keith had told her so himself.

"Can you tell me any more, Elizabeth, or are we to couple your Lucerne experience with what you have given us, and fill up the gaps for ourselves?"

"No, I'll tell you—there isn't much to tell. It was a very commonplace meeting after all, and there was very little said to smooth away the silence of the years. I saw him at Lucerne the day they left, taking poor Effie Lawrence back to Scotland to bury her in familiar soil. He came up to the Châlet Loret and made a call, and just before he was going Ellen went out of the room. Then Keith turned to me, and his eyes read me through and through.

"I want you to forgive me, Elizabeth, for what I said. I was mad with my disappointment. Time has shown that you were wiser than I; and I want to thank you for what you did for poor Effie. I shall never forget it."

"I could not speak a word. Oh, how my heart

went out to him! When I looked at the grey hairs on his temples, and saw the grave lines about his mouth, I knew that I had cheated him of a man's best gifts; and that the grey, desolate years had set their seal upon him more cruelly than upon me.

"Are we friends then, dear?" he asked, in the same grave, gentle way. 'Let us leave here the barrier which has been so long between Flisk and Glenspeed and be as we were, for Effie's sake.'

"It is I who need forgiveness, Keith; I alone," I said. 'Don't say another word, I can't bear it; I can't indeed.'

"So he went away then, and I saw him no more till last month—one sultry evening when I was sitting dreaming in my own room, and counting the hours till I should go to Glenspeed, which to me meant a chance of seeing him. I no longer hid from myself that I was a miserable, empty-hearted woman who had tried to feed herself with the husks of life, and only found herself hungry still. I knew now—ay, and bravely faced the meaning of the dull heart-ache I had often experienced going about my work, when I would get a sudden, sweet glimpse of home happiness, and see what life can be to a woman whom

God has blessed with the devotion of a true husband and the love of little children. Yes, I sat alone with my empty, empty heart when he was shown in by Margaret, who cast upon me, ere she departed, a look so distinctly significant and imploring that it has made me laugh since many times. I did not say I was surprised to see him, because he had been so perpetually in my thoughts that it seemed the most natural thing in the world to see him standing before me.

“‘I did not know you were in London,’ I said quite quietly.

“‘I came only last night,’ he replied; ‘I had something important to see after. My father has been at Belgrave Square for the last six weeks.’

“‘Living alone?’ I asked.

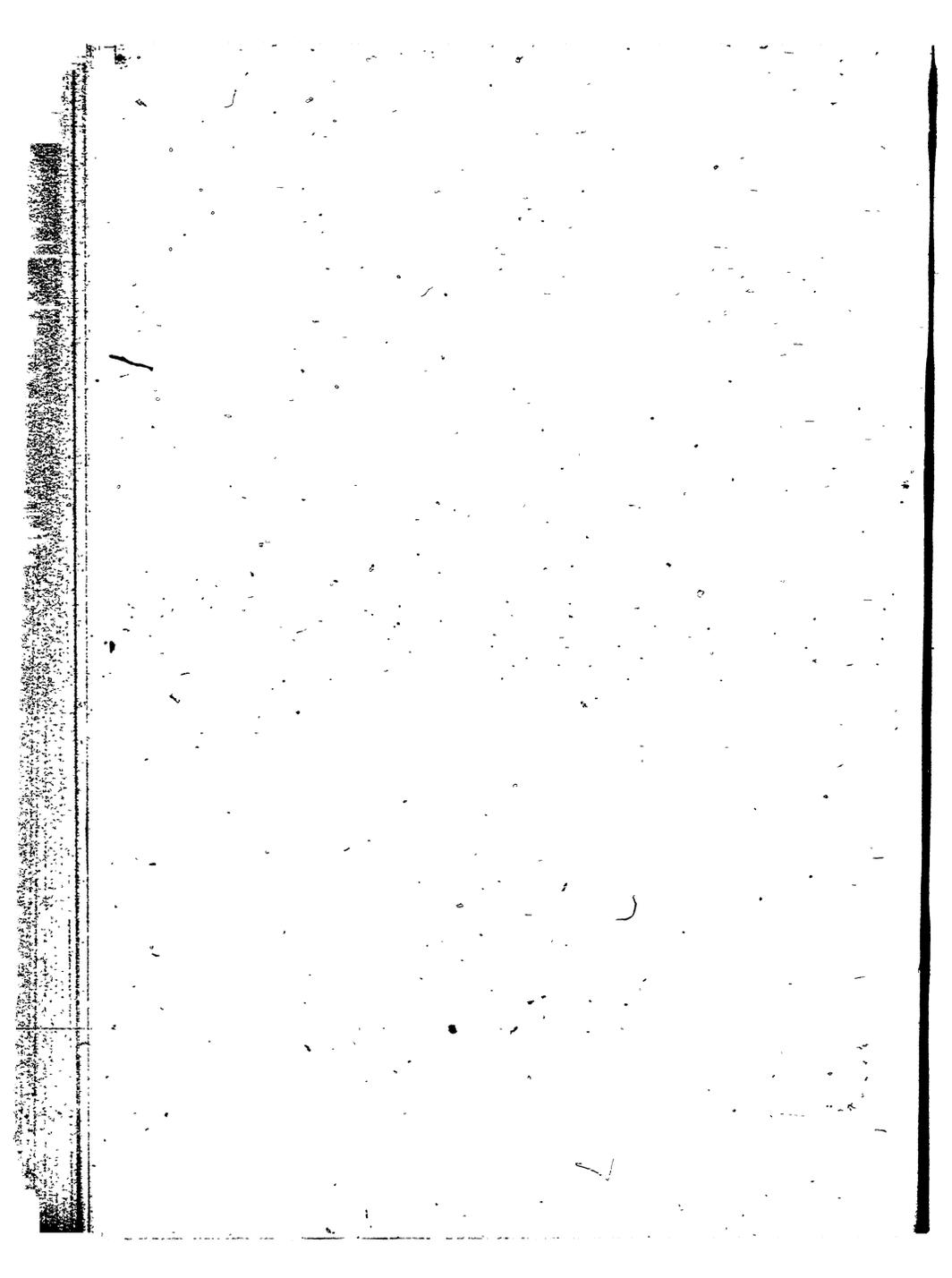
“‘No, my aunt, Mrs. Crawford Page, and her two daughters are there. They have occupied the house this season; my cousins were only presented this year. Have you heard that there is to be a dissolution?’

“‘What of?’ I asked vaguely; and he smiled, a ghost of his old merry smile.

“‘Why, of Parliament, to be sure, and my father wants me to stand for the county.’



"HE WAS SHOWN IN BY MARGARET."



“‘Oh, do,’ I cried, all interest at once. ‘They want men like you in the House. I hope you’ll go in and win.’

“He turned to me with a sudden light in his eyes.

“‘I will, Elizabeth, if you bid me,’ he said quietly. ‘I told my father what I came for. I know very well if I do go in I shall be the successful candidate, and I’m not going to exist six or eight months of the year in clubs; nor am I going to inhabit that big house in Belgrave Square alone. What do you say, then?’

“I could not speak, dear; I knew the turning point of my life had come. He did not seem to resent my silence or to wonder at it. He took a turn or two across the room, and then came and stood in front of me.

“‘I know that you have now a successful and influential position here, Elizabeth,’ he said quietly. ‘I have heard of you in a great many unexpected quarters. It is asking a great deal, that you should give it up for such ordinary things as I can offer. Only my love is not ordinary, Elizabeth; my very soul cleaves to you, as I knew that bitter day at Lucerne when we met face to face, and I realised what I had done in asking another woman to fill

the place you and you alone could fill. It is right you should know the outs and ins of that episode now. Before my mother died she asked me to marry Effie Lawrence, whom she loved as her own daughter. I gave my promise, and I would have done my utmost to make her happy had she lived. But it was an awful mistake; I knew it that day when I saw you on the steps of the Schweizerhof. Neither of us is young, Elizabeth, but we have still a goodly portion of life before us. If you can care for me, for God's sake don't let anything come between us this time. You are a lonely woman here. Flisk is empty without a woman's presence, and I love you as my own soul.'

"I could not answer him in a moment, and I saw the quick shadow of disappointment gather in his eyes.

"'Is it too much to ask?' he began, breaking the painful silence. 'It is all very well just now—when you are able to enjoy your work, and feel no need of anything else. But another day will come, Elizabeth. It is that which makes me bold. Weigh it all well before you send me away.'

"Still I could not speak.

"'I don't even ask you to give up your profession

now. I would leave you perfectly free, Elizabeth. Couldn't you trust me as far as that?"

"'Trust you!' I said, and I felt my face glow as I turned it to him. 'I'd trust you, Keith, to the end of the world, and after it, without a word. And if you are willing to take me now that my youth is gone, I'll give up everything for you—and be glad to do it'—and I am," said Elizabeth, looking at me without blush or shame. "For he's an honest, big-hearted fellow—and a good man—who makes the moral atmosphere pure wherever he goes—and then, you see," and she blushed as she spoke, "I have loved him all my life."

"So you are going to settle down into a member's wife? Your next ambition will be a political salon—exit Doctor Glen, enter Mrs. Keith Hamilton, of Flisk Castle, N.B., and Belgrave Square, S.W. Well, well; life is full of surprises."

Suddenly Elizabeth looked at me with a great wistfulness, and put a question so woman-like that my tears rose.

"Tell me truly, dear—you love me, I know, but it is not that sort of love which is blind; am I very faded? Do I look my thirty odd years? Yes, I'm as foolish as a school-girl over her first

lover. I want to be young and lovely for his sake."

Then I tried to tell her how beautiful she was, and how time, unrelenting to most, seemed to have forgotten her in his flight. A beautiful, gracious, queenly woman is our Elizabeth, still retaining that indescribable charm which is the heritage of youth.

And when my husband and I left the house in Belgrave Square, on the evening of Mrs. Keith Hamilton's presentation day, whither we had gone to admire her in all her bravery, I said to him, "Elizabeth among all her potions has not forgotten to mix the elixir of perpetual youth." So Doctor Glen, beloved of many, is no more, but we, though walking in humbler by-ways, still keep our friend, and we have made another. And when we go to Flisk, and I see what Elizabeth is to her husband's people, and how perfect is her happiness, and that of the good, noble man she has married, I have but a passing regret for that cosy consulting-room in Rayburn Place. And I often point to her proudly as a living exponent of my fondly-cherished theory, that the woman whose intellect has been fully developed and whose heart beats warm, and sweet,

and true to her sex, by bringing all her powers of head and heart to bear upon her surroundings achieves the highest possible results, and more nearly than any can make the perfect home an accomplished fact.

THE END.