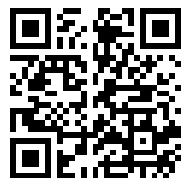

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NEW-YORK ORGAN TEMPERANCE TALES, No. 3.

THE
L O S T CHILDREN,

A Temperance Tale,

BY T. S. ARTHUR,

AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN

THE NEW-YORK ORGAN.



ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS BY TUDOR HORTON.

ALSO A NUMBER OF CHOICE ANECDOTES.

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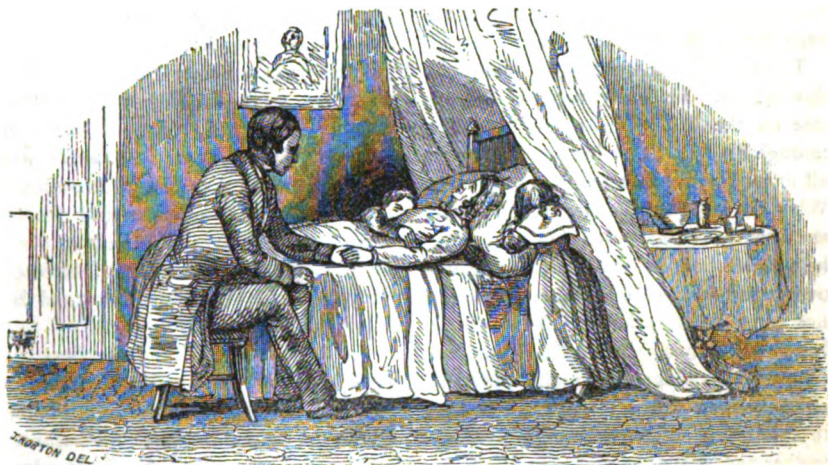
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1856, Nov. 14.

Friend

Mr Charles Spear
Boston.

THE LOST CHILDREN.



A DAY in autumn was about expiring. The morning had been warm and bright with sunshine, but evening was gathering its shadows amid clouds, fierce driving wind and rain. A fit emblem was this expiring day, of the closing life of one whose early years had passed in light and smiles, but whose later experiences were full of bitterness.

A mother lay upon her dying bed. In the chamber of death were three persons besides the sufferer. One was a man in the prime of life, whose face bore many evidences of the evil habits that had cursed both himself and his family. The other two were children; one a girl between ten and eleven, and the other a boy not beyond his seventh year. The father sat by the bed, holding the thin white hand of her whom he had promised, years before, to love and cherish with the tenderest affection; and while he did so, the rebuking past came back, and the sting of an upbraiding conscience troubled him deeply. The little boy had climbed upon the bed,

and was lying close to his mother, with his arm thrown across her bosom; and the girl stood with her face buried in a pillow. She was weeping.

A deep silence had pervaded the chamber for nearly half an hour. In that oppressive half hour, how many troubled thoughts had passed through the mind of the unhappy man who was about losing one whose virtues, whose patience, whose sufferings, whose wrongs, were all remembered now, although they had been little thought of through the last few years of his wedded life!

"Henry!" The man started—raised his eyes from the floor, and turned them upon the face of his dying wife, who looked at him earnestly for some moments, and then said—"Henry, when I am gone, these dear children will have no one to love them, no one to care for them, but you."

"I will both love them and care for them," quickly returned the man. His voice trembled, and he spoke with emotion.

"I leave them in your hands," resumed the mother, speaking more solemnly, "a priceless legacy. Two immortal souls—two innocent, helpless ones, who, in the sight of the angels, are precious beyond imagination. Oh, Henry! love them and guard them from evil, for my sake. When you look upon them, think of me; and think of me as present; for my love, it may be, will bring me nearer to you all, even though you cannot see me."

The strong man was deeply moved by this appeal. He bent over and hid his face on the bed, while a tremor passed through his frame, and his eyes, that were all unused to weeping, ran over with tears. When he looked up, after five minutes or more had passed—a period of deep silence—he was startled by the hue of death that overspread the face of his wife. He called her name eagerly, but she did not hear him; he grasped her hand, that was covered with a clammy sweat, but she did not appear to feel the touch. The tears that fell like rain over the face of the mother and wife; the voices so full of anguish, that called her name, had no power to bring her back again to mortal consciousness. The silver chord was loosened and the golden bowl was broken! The mother had passed away from her children—the wife had parted from her husband.

Next we find Henry Altemas alone. He has left the chamber of death, and retired to another apartment to weep—to muse sadly over the past—to repent—to form good resolutions. There had been enough of evil in his life: and there had been an enough of consequent suffering to others. From comfort, ease and competence, he had reduced his family to want, privation and suffering. Step by step, through a course of five years of dissipation, he descended lower and lower, until the hope of change failed in the heart of his long suffering wife, whose patient spirit was never betrayed into the utterance of rebuke. Alone, under such circumstances, with such memories to haunt him! Alas, unhappy man! The bitterness of one hour

thus spent; how does it overbalance all the pleasures of sensual excesses, even though indulged in for years! Dearly bought are they at such a price!

Those who came in to take charge of the cold remains of her who had risen into a truer and a better life, removed the children, Alice and Henry, to another room, where they remained for a long time alone—the boy held tightly to the bosom of his sister. Young as they were, their life-experience had been such that a double desolation fell upon their hearts at the loss they had sustained. It was long since they had drawn near their father with love—long since they had lain their heads, as of old, upon his breast, and felt the sweet joy of knowing that he loved them. To them, their mother had been every thing; she was now taken away, and they felt indeed alone.

On the day following, the dead was carried out, and then a still deeper desolation was felt by the sorrowing children. As for the father, his repentance was sincere, and his resolutions of amendment earnest. But, he did not understand the value of total abstinence as a means of reformation—as, in fact, the only means of reformation. How utterly fruitless were all his good resolutions, we need hardly say. They were like cords of gossamer on the arms of a strong man. On the very day that the sad rites of burial were performed over the body of the departed one, he tasted the cup of confusion. To taste, was to drink deeply. It was the old story. Henry Altemas returned, that night, to his little ones, as he had too often returned before, half insensible from intoxication. They had waited for him an hour past their usual bedtime; and it was to meet him thus! Alice looked up anxiously into her father's face as he came in. One glance sufficed. Her eyes were too familiar with the sad, humiliating evidences of her parent's degrading vice, not to perceive, in an instant, that he had again fallen. The father did not speak to or even notice his children, as he staggered into the room

where they were sitting, and then staggered out again, and groped his way along the passage and up the stairs into his now desolate chamber. But he did not feel its desolation.

Alice, as soon as her father left the room, took little Henry's hand, and rising, said in a low voice, that was composed by a strong effort—

“Come, brother.”

The child rose up and went with his sister. Henry was not long awake after his head pressed its pillow, but Alice did not sleep for more than an hour, and when slumber at length sealed her young eyelids, troubled dreams were her companions through the night.

At breakfast time, on the next morning, Mr. Altemas met his children in shame and silence. Alice took the place at table which had been left vacant by her mother's death, and served the coffee. She looked frequently at her father, but his eyes were not once directed to the face of his child. He could not look at her. He sat only about half his usual time at the table, and then rose and went out. Alice tried, but could not eat; and soon after her father left, got up and went into another room, the door of which she closed, and then sitting down in a dark corner, covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly. Henry soon found her out, and crouching down beside her, mingled with hers his tears, although he scarcely knew for what reason he was weeping.

Mr. Altemas went out with a fixed determination not to drink a drop of any thing. He felt deeply mortified at having been betrayed into excess on the very day that he had followed the remains of his wife to the grave; and especially so, when he remembered that his children had seen him come staggering in at night—the children whom he had promised his dying wife to love and care for in her stead. He could not look into their innocent faces when he met them at the breakfast table, although he was conscious that their eyes were upon him; and he withdrew from their presence as quickly as possible.

Mr. Altemas had been a successful merchant, but dissipation caused him to neglect his business, which, after a while, tumbled in ruins around him. He was now a clerk in the receipt of a small salary, that had proved insufficient to meet the wants of his family, as well as supply the cravings of a vitiated appetite. From his house he went to the store at which he was employed, and attended to business until about eleven o'clock, the time at which he generally went into a neighboring tavern to get a drink. The usual hour brought the usual desire for liquors. This was, for a while, resisted; but the first effort at resistance made the desire tenfold stronger. The struggle was but brief. Evil allurements were too powerful to be withstood—Mr. Altemas turned aside as usual to taste the cup of pleasure, and he again fell. That night he did not return until late. His children were in bed and asleep when he came in. He would have sought his home earlier, but he feared that they might be again sitting up for him.

Thus it went on, daily, in the old way. Night after night the unhappy man came home, sometimes early and sometimes late, but always more or less intoxicated. In the morning he was silent when he met his children at the breakfast table; and his countenance generally wore a gloomy aspect. At dinner time he was in a pleasanter mood; but at tea time, when he did come home, he was more than half stultified by drink. Thus he passed before his children at three brief intervals during the day, and that was all they saw of him. There was nothing to call out their affection; nothing to make them look for his coming with pleasure. Alice grew old rapidly; not by the lapse of time, but by suffering. The loss of her mother, the neglect and errors of her father, and the tender years of her brother, who looked up to her and depended upon her for every thing, changed her, in a very short time, almost from a child into a woman. She took the entire charge of Henry, because there was now no one else to do it. The

hired domestic cared little for any thing around her, and, in such an ill-regulated household, with no observant head, took any privilege she happened to desire.

Things had proceeded in this way for about six months, when the employer of Mr. Altemas becoming out of all patience with him on account of his irregular habits, and consequent neglect of business, discharged him from his service. For three weeks the miserable man tried, but in vain, to procure another situation. At the end of this time, on coming home one day, more sober than usual, he called Alice to him, and said, speaking with some feeling—

“Alice, I find that I shall be obliged to leave the city. But I hope to be back soon. While I am gone, you and Henry are to stay with Mrs. Walton in Division street, who promises to be very kind to you.”

The only reply made by Alice to this announcement was a gush of tears. She wept for some time. At last, looking up into her father's face she said—

“Oh papa, don't go away !”

“I must go, dear,” replied Mr. Altemas, who was moved by the child's distress. “I can get nothing to do in this city ; but where I am going, I will find employment, and then I will soon come for you and Henry. You must be good children while I am gone.”

Alice made an effort to dry her tears and look cheerful. But a weight remained upon her heart. She did not know who Mrs. Walton was. She had never heard her name before.

“Will Mrs. Walton be good to Henry ?” she asked.

“Oh yes. She will be very kind to both you and Henry, I am sure,” quickly replied the father.

“When must we go there ?”

“In the morning. I told her I would bring you to her house to-morrow morning.”

Alice said no more. In a little while she went out of the room, and stole up quietly to the chamber that had been her mother's. After closing the door, she looked around

upon each familiar object that brought back most vividly the memory of her who had died in that room ; for only a few moments did she thus stand ; then she seated herself by the bed, and bending forward hid her face in her hands. She did not now give way to tears ; but oh ! how lonely she felt—how desolate her heart ! Soon after, Mr. Altemas came up and entered the room. He saw Alice, and instantly retired. There was a deep rebuke in her attitude, as well as in her presence in her mother's chamber at that time. Half an hour afterwards, he re-entered the room and saw Alice in the same position. He again paused, instinctively, and was about retiring ; but he checked himself and came into the chamber. Alice did not move. He called her name, but there was no response, except in a long fluttering sigh, or sob. On coming nearer to her, he found that she was asleep. The feelings of the unhappy father, already disturbed, were now deeply moved

For a moment he gazed earnestly upon her form. He could not help reading in her condition, the story of deep suffering ; of a heart sensible of a great wrong, and apprehension of still greater misery in the future. His thoughts ran back to former happier days. A new pang shot through his heart as he recollected the high hopes, the smiling friends, and unalloyed happiness of that hour when he led her mother, now at rest, to the altar. And then the very image of his wife seemed to fill the room ; her form and features were stamped on every thing around, and so true, so life-like, he could hardly resist the impression of reality. Involuntarily he closed his eyes, as if to test the illusion ; but clearer, brighter, plainer, stood his wife before him. Was she there to reproach him ?

The thought was maddening. His heart beat with a violence almost suffocating, and his brain grew painfully giddy. Then, as in previous troubles, his mind reverted to the usual panacea—intoxication. The thought instantly peopled the place with all the horrid spectres so familiar to nerves

shattered by alcoholic stimulus; yet even these were a relief. Any thing he could endure better than the presence of child or wife, real or imaginary.



"Wretched man that I am!" he murmured, in bitterness of spirit, as he turned away, and left the chamber, the very atmosphere of which oppressed him. He not only left the chamber but the house, and paused not until he breathed a grosser and more congenial atmosphere—that of a drinking house, where he drowned, in strong potations, the stern voice of an upbraiding conscience.

On the next morning the children were removed to the dwelling of Mrs. Walton in Division street. A vendue, that had already been advertised, was held at the house of Mr. Altemas on the same day, and every article of furniture sold. Not even the mother's work box, beautifully inlaid with costly woods, a husband's present in happier days, was reserved for Alice. All passed under the hammer. Fifty dollars of the proceeds of this sale were paid into

the hands of Mrs. Walton in advance for the children's board, and the balance, about two hundred dollars, Mr. Altemas placed in his pocket, and after parting with his children, started for New Orleans. In Baltimore he remained for a few days; long enough to have his pocket-book stolen from him while he was intoxicated. In this were a hundred dollars in bills. Luckily, it happened that the rest of his money was in gold, and contained in a purse, that escaped the search of the person who robbed him. From Baltimore, he pushed on by the quickest route to New Orleans. Three weeks after his arrival, he was without a dollar and without employment; and there we will leave him and return to Alice and her brother.

Mrs. Walton received the children, when brought to her, with a great show of kindness; but Alice felt that nothing of all this

came from the heart. Both the woman's appearance and manners were repulsive to her, and she could not bear to come near her. Henry seemed to feel as she did, for he fixed his eyes upon her, half-fearfully, and shrunk close to the side of his sister.

"Dear little fellow!" said Mrs. Walton, putting her hand upon Henry's head; but the child drew closer to his sister, and seemed to shrink from her touch as if it had been a blow.

"He is a timid child, and strange now," said the father; "but he will soon feel himself at home with you."

"O yes! I'll soon make him feel at home; dear little fellow!" returned Mrs. Walton, smoothing his hair, while Henry continued to cower beneath the touch of her hand. All the time his eyes were fixed intently upon her face.

Mrs. Walton was a widow, somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty, who kept a third-rate boarding-house. She had agreed with Mr. Walton to take his two children at a charge of three dollars a week, and he had promised to advance her fifty dollars—a part of which she was to lay out in clothing for them—and also to remit her more money by the time that sum was exhausted. Mrs. Walton, we are sorry to say, was rather a bad specimen of a woman. She was selfish, coarse and vulgar-minded, unfeeling and hypocritical. Some ten years of rough contact with the world as the keeper of a cheap boarding house, during which time she had come into close proximity with all sorts of people, had in no way tended to improve her character. In worse hands Mr. Altemas could hardly have left his children.

"You can stay here and amuse yourselves," said Mrs. Walton to Alice and Henry, after their father had retired, and then she hurried away, leaving them in the dark and dingy room which she called the parlor. Henry leaned his head against his sister, and said in a sad voice—

"I wish papa wouldn't leave us here."

"We shan't be here very long, I hope,"

returned Alice. "Papa says he will come and take us away soon."

Although Alice spoke thus encouragingly to her brother, her own heart had no confidence in the words she uttered. To her, the future had a dark and uncertain aspect, and she felt an inward, shrinking fear, as she looked into it. It was about ten o'clock when their father left them at the house of Mrs. Walton. They remained alone in the parlor, not stirring from where they had at first seated themselves, until nearly two o'clock, when they were called to dinner. Henry had slept during a portion of these unhappy hours. The afternoon was spent, as the morning had been, in the parlor, alone. At night they were taken up into a small garret room to sleep. The room was comfortable enough, and so was the bed that it contained.

On the next morning the father called to see them early. He was to leave for the south at nine o'clock.

"Oh, papa! Don't stay away long," said Alice, her eyes filling with tears.

"I will be back for you very soon," he replied.

"How soon?" asked Henry, as he held on tightly to his father's hand.

"I cannot exactly tell. But it will be very soon."

"In a month?" asked Alice.

"I hope so."

"A month is four weeks. It will be so long!" said Henry. "Come back sooner, papa, won't you, and take us away from here?"

"Mrs. Walton will be kind to you, my son."

"I don't like to stay here," returned the boy.

"You will like it better in a little while. You must love your sister, Henry, and mind all she says to you, and try to be a good boy, and I will come for you as quickly as I can. And now good bye, my children."

"Good bye," was the low and sad response made by Alice and Henry. Mr.

Altemas shook them by the hand, kissed them, and departed.

How slowly did the time pass! Four weeks seemed like a year. At last the period at which the father's return was looked for by the children, came round, but it brought them only a bitter disappointment. He did not come back as they believed he had promised them he would do; nor had any word been received from him since he went away. Another and another week expired, but the father did not return; neither was any letter received from him. During this time, Mrs. Walton let the children take care of themselves. She had little to say to them unless they came in her way, and then her manner and words were coarse and repulsive. Alice took the entire charge of her brother, dressing and washing him in the morning and putting him to bed at night. As time wore on, the manner of Mrs. Walton became more and more indifferent; or, as she happened to be in the humor, coarser and more repulsive. One day, about three months after Mr. Altemas went away, she came into the room where Alice sat mending her brother's clothes, and said to her abruptly—



"See here, girl! Do you know where your father has gone?"

"No ma'am," replied Alice in a low voice, and with a half-frightened manner.

"Didn't he tell you where he was going?"

"No ma'am."

"It's very strange. Well, I can tell you what,—I don't believe he means to come back at all. I believe he has just left you on my hands, and that the money he gave me when he went away is every dollar I shall see. But I will not be imposed upon in that way. Not I! So, my little miss, I will just tell you what you've got to depend upon. If I don't hear from your father in two weeks, I will not give you house room for another day. I believe you knew as well as he did, that it was all a trick to get you pushed off upon me. But it won't do. Polly Walton is too old for that. So, take my advice, and look out for another home at once, for you can't stay here but a little while longer. I've said it, and I mean it!"

By this time Mrs. Walton had worked herself into quite a passion, and, with glowing face and arms akimbo, she stood bating the affrighted children, without an emotion of pity touching the icy surface of her unfeeling heart.

After she had left them, Henry burst into tears and sobbed and wept bitterly, but Alice sat tearless and motionless as a statue. She was completely stunned. Feeling and thought were, for a time, almost suspended by this unexpected and cruel assault. In her own mind, there had arisen many misgivings about her father; and many fears had haunted her for weeks. But, for all this, the words of Mrs. Walton came with a shock that paralyzed her for a time.

Two weeks fled quickly away, and, during the time, the warning of Mrs. Walton was many times repeated, and with undiminished rudeness. But Alice did not go out to seek another place for herself and Henry. Where could she go? She knew no one. She was a mere child, and alone in a great city.

The two weeks passed. Mrs. Walton was in earnest in what she had said. but she could not turn the children into the

street. Appearances would have been against her; and even she had some little regard for appearances. They might fall into the hands of the police, and their story might get into the newspapers, and she be held up to rebuke and scorn. She did not, therefore, thrust them out, literally, but she got rid of them.

"Alice," she said one day, at the expiration of the time she had named; "your father has not come back, and I don't suppose ever intends returning. As I told you, I can't keep you any longer for nothing. I can't afford it. You are old enough to go out and get your own living; and that is what you will have to do. Mrs. Gordon, in the next block, wants a little girl to tend her baby, and is willing to take you. She will give you your victuals and clothes. It's a good place."

"But, where will Henry go?" asked Alice, quickly and earnestly. "Will Mrs. Gordon let him live there with me?"

"No, of course not. She has children enough of her own. Henry can stay here for a little while, until I can find a place for him."

"Henry is not old enough to work," said Alice.

"I know that. But I can get a place for him where he will be treated kindly, and be well taken care of."

"Where?" asked the sister, anxiously.

"Never do you mind. I'll see that it's all done right. I'll find him a good place."

"But don't you think Mrs. Gordon will let him stay at her house if I do every thing for him? He won't be any trouble."

"No. So don't think of such a thing. She's got a house full of children of her own, and don't want the bother of other people's. Go and get your bonnet, and I will take you round to see Mrs. Gordon."

Alice went up stairs, and put on her bonnet. She came down, leading Henry, who had his hat in his hand. Mrs. Walton was waiting for her.

"Your are not going to take him with you," said the latter, half angrily.

"Go and sit in the room there until I

come back," Alice said, stooping down and speaking very gently and kindly to Henry. "I will be home soon."

The child's eyes filled with tears. He stood still, and let his sister go without him.

"Here is the little girl I was speaking to you about," said Mrs. Walton, on gaining the presence of Mrs. Gordon, who occupied the upper half of a house in the block next adjoining the one in which she lived.

"Ah, indeed!" returned Mrs. Gordon, smiling very pleasantly. "How old are you, my dear?"

"Most eleven, ma'am."

"Think you are strong enough to nurse a baby?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

"Be sure she is! plenty strong enough! I nursed a baby before I was as old as she is," broke in Mrs. Walton impatiently.

"You are willing to try. I suppose?" said Mrs. Gordon.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I will try."

"Very well, take off your bonnet. Here is the baby."

Alice drew back.

"Take off your bonnet, child," said Mrs. Gordon.

"Must I come now?" asked the little girl, looking into the face of Mrs. Walton.

"Certainly, if Mrs. Gordon wants you! Why not now, as well as any other time?"

"But Henry," said Alice.

"What of him, I wonder?" remarked Mrs. Walton, tossing her head.

"He expects me to come back, you know."

"Well, suppose he does, and you don't come, is that going to kill him? Take off your bonnet, child, and let us have no more parleying about the matter. Mrs. Gordon wants you now."

Alice laid off her bonnet, and sat down upon a low chair, to which Mrs. Gordon pointed. The baby was placed in her arms, and she was directed to nurse it carefully. The mother of the babe left the room, to have ten or fifteen minutes gossip with Mrs. Walton.

"Oh dear!" she said, as soon as they were alone, "what a relief it is to get that child out of my arms!"

"It's the hardest work in the world to be tied to a baby from morning 'til night."

"That it is. This seems to be a right nice sort of a little girl."

"Indeed, and she is, Mrs. Gordon. She'll make the very best kind of a child's nurse. You don't know how well she has attended to her brother. She has taken the whole care of him."

"What are you going to do with the little boy?"

"Send him over to Long Island."

"To the Long Island Farms?"

"Yes. It's the very best thing that can be done with him. I don't believe the father will ever come back. I've found out that he is a drunken, worthless fellow, who has beggared his family."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I'm told that he was very well off once, but went through with every thing."

"What a pity! But don't you think Alice will grieve after her brother?"

"At first, I suppose she will a little. But she'll soon get over it."

"When do you think about sending her brother over to the Farms?"

"I shall see about it at once."

"It seems like a pity to separate them," said Mrs. Gordon, a thought of her own children passing through her mind.

"So it does. But then it can't be helped. It's the very best place for him. He will be well taken care of, and receive an education. And when he is old enough, he will be bound out to a good trade. It is a most excellent institution."

"It certainly is. No doubt it will go a little hard with him, at first, to be separated from his sister; but he will get over it soon and be very happy."

"O yes. Children's grief is never very deep. He'll forget Alice in a week or two. It will do them both good to be separated. She is spoiling him. I think it will be best not to let them see each other again."

"Do you?"

"Yes. I don't believe, after being away from him for a short time, that Alice would consent to a separation at all. The child is a perfect baby, and I suppose, will do nothing but cry for a day or two. If Alice were to see him crying, she would get so worked up about him that nothing would do but she must have him with her."

"That would never do in the world."

"No, indeed. You couldn't have him here."

"Me! oh no! I've got young ones enough of my own to see after. He can't come here."

"Of course not. But I'll manage all that."

You see that Alice does not get round to my house for a day or two, and by that time I'll have Henry safe enough at the Farm school."

"Very well."

When Mrs. Gordon returned to the room where she had left Alice, she found her weeping.

"What is the matter? What are you crying about?" she asked, a little impatiently.

Alice looked up into the woman's face, and said with a look and tone that ought to have touched her heart—

"I promised Henry that I would be back in a little while. I didn't think I was to stay now. Oh, ma'am! he will cry so when he finds I do not come back with Mrs. Walton. Can't I go and see him just for a few minutes, and tell him that I am not to stay with him any longer?"

"Mrs. Walton says she had rather you wouldn't. She will be kind to him, and he will soon forget you."

"Forget me!" said Alice, in surprise.

"Oh, no, ma'am; he won't never forget me. I don't think Mrs. Walton will be very kind to him. She never has been. Please, ma'am, won't you let him come and stay here? He won't be a bit of trouble to you. I'll do every thing for him."

"Come here! Good gracious child! no! I can't have him here. I've got enough children of my own."

"Then won't you let me go and see him, and talk to him just a little while. It will make him feel better."

"No, child, I can't do it. I want you to

nurse the baby. And, besides, as I told you, Mrs. Walton thinks it will be better for you not to see him just now."

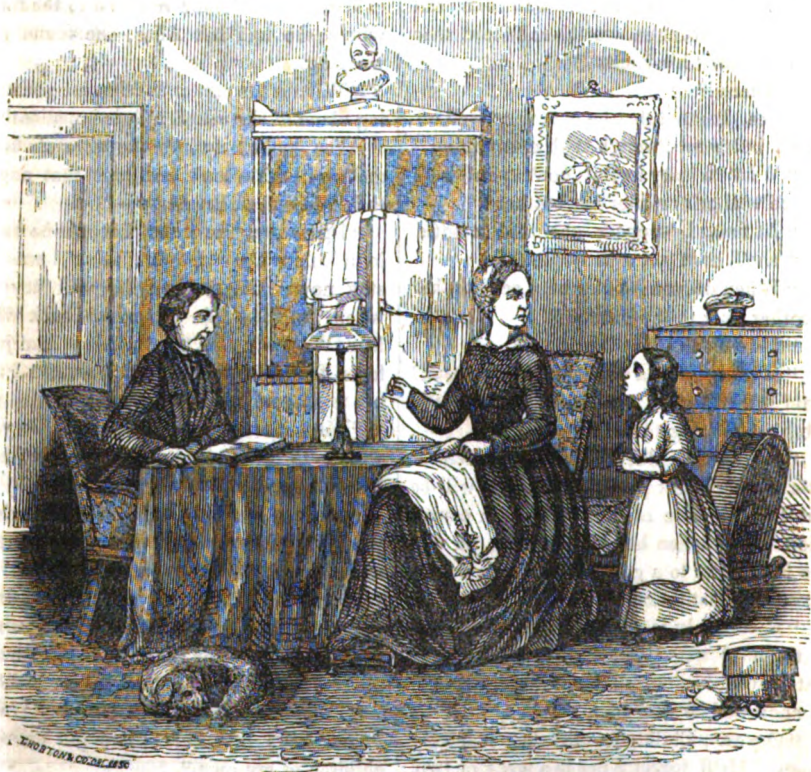
Alice bent down over the babe she held in her arms, while the tears that had been restrained for a few moments, flowed afresh.

"Come! come!" said Mrs. Gordon, fretfully. "I don't want any blubbering and crying here. I have enough of that among my own children."

Alice stanchied her tears with an effort. That is, their outward flow. But the inward, heart-gushing tears, of which these visible drops were only the outward sign, gushed more freely. These the eye of Mrs. Gordon could not perceive, and she did not, therefore, seek to check them.

Slowly and sadly passed that long, long day to Alice, her mind partially sustained by the feeble hope that when night came, Mrs. Gordon would permit her to run round and see Henry just for a few moments. Not for a minute at a time during that, to her, long period, was the image of her brother from before her mind. She saw him weeping bitterly, or sitting alone in silent grief at her absence; or, shrinking away in alarm from the harsh words of Mrs. Walton.

Night at last came. The tea table was cleared away. All the children had gone to bed, and the baby lay asleep in its cradle. Mrs. Gordon sat down by her work-table to sew, and Mr. Gordon, who had come



home from the business of the day, took a book and began reading. Alice was sitting near the cradle, but the babe slept so soundly that no motion of the rocking bed was

necessary to prolong its slumber. The little girl arose, and coming near to Mrs. Gordon, looked into her face with swimming eyes, and said—

"Please, ma'am, do let me just run round for a minute and see Henry. The baby is asleep."

"Didn't I tell you this morning that you couldn't go?" replied the woman sternly. "What is the use of your asking me again? Please to understand that I always mean what I say."

Alice shrunk from the side of Mrs. Gordon, with a frightened look. Mr. Gordon glanced up from his volume, and let his eyes rest upon the little girl for a few moments, and then upon his wife. But, as the latter made no remark to him, he resumed his reading, satisfied with letting matters that did not concern him alone. He had received some lessons on that subject during his life-time, which impressed themselves pretty deeply on his memory.

Waking or sleeping, that night there was but one image present to the mind of Alice—the image of her brother. In the morning, she arose early, unrefreshed. It seemed to her that she could not live another day without seeing Henry. She had been down stairs about half an hour, and was dusting the sitting room, after it had been swept up by the domestic, when Mr. Gordon came in with the morning paper in his hand, and sat down to read it. There was something kind in the face of Mr. Gordon. Something that gave the heart of Alice confidence, when she looked into it. She had felt this from the first. As he sat reading his paper, he noticed that the little girl frequently came near him and appeared to linger, as if she was about speaking every time she did so. At last she said something in a low voice, that he couldn't make out distinctly. He looked up and said, kindly, "What is it?"

"Please, sir, won't you ask Mrs. Gordon to let me go and see my little brother." The child's voice trembled, and her eyes were filled with tears.

"Certainly I will," replied the kind-hearted man. He had heard something about the separation that had taken place; but nothing very distinctly. His wife did not care to be very particular in the information she gave him on that subject.

Alice went away from his side with a brighter countenance and a lighter heart. As soon as Mrs. Gordon came down stairs, and sent Alice into the chamber to take the baby, her husband said—

"Anna, why don't you let that little girl go and see her brother?"

"Because Mrs. Walton don't want me to do so. She says the child is a perfect baby, and that if Alice goes there she will not be able to do any thing with him."

"But it is downright cruel, Anna. Alice is evidently pining to see her brother."

"It may go a little hard with her at first; but it's not going to kill her. It's a great deal better, as the separation has to take place, to let it be permanent. It will only make things worse if she is allowed to go and see him. Mrs. Walton was particular about it, and I promised to do as she desired, when I took the girl."

"Well, I suppose you know best; but I think it's a cruel thing. Imagine our Emma and George placed in the same circumstances."

"But they are not."

"There is no knowing how soon they may be. Neither your life nor mine is guaranteed for an hour."

"That's just the way with you, Mr. Gordon. You're always interfering with my affairs. I never trouble myself with your business. I never question what you do. I don't think I'm a very cruel woman. If the girl can't stay as I want her to, she may just go back again. If I'm to have all this trouble with her, I won't have her at all."

And Mrs. Gordon ran on in this strain for about five minutes. But long before she was done, her husband had sought refuge in the columns of his newspaper, and either did not, or pretended not to hear a word that was uttered. He pitied the child, but gave up all idea of becoming her champion.

The hope that Mr. Gordon's words had inspired in the mind of Alice, lived there for hours. But as nothing was said about her going to see Henry, even up to dinner time, that hope began to waver. When Mr. Gordon came home in the middle of the day, the first one he met was Alice. Her

earnest, almost imploring look, smote upon his heart. He wished to say something to her; but, what could he say? Nothing that he wished to say—nothing but what would make her more unhappy than she really was. He, therefore, said not a word; but, he felt guilty before the child—guilty of inspiring a hope that he did not, or, he thought, could not gratify.

Another day drew to a close, and yet Alice had not seen her brother, nor, from all appearances, was there any prospect of her being likely to see him soon, unless she acted in direct violation of the wishes of Mrs. Gordon. When fully satisfied that all appeals were in vain, the child resolved to go to her brother, and brave all consequences. So, just about nightfall, when the babe was asleep, and Mrs. Gordon was out of the way, she stole quietly from the house, and ran as fast as her feet would carry her to the dwelling of Mrs. Walton. Entering through the basement, she glided up stairs, and sought the room where she and Henry had usually spent the day alone. But her brother was not there. As she came out into the passage, disappointed, she met Hannah, the chambermaid.

"Where is Henry?" she asked in a hurried voice.

"Bless me, Alice! Is this you?" exclaimed the chambermaid. "Why in the world haven't you been to see your brother? I thought he would have cried himself to death."

"They wouldn't let me come. But, where is he? Where is he?" said Alice in a choking voice.

"He isn't here. He's gone. Didn't you know that?"

"Gone! Oh, where? where?" The poor child staggered back, and sunk upon the stairs.

"They took him away this morning."

"Where? Oh, tell me where!"

"I don't know. He cried dreadfully, and asked for you? They took him away in a carriage. But they spoke kindly to him. I don't think they will treat him bad. Indeed I don't, Alice! I wouldn't cry so about

it. He'll get over it soon. I'm sure they'll be good to him. The man spoke very kindly. He looked like a good man."

Just then, Mrs. Walton, hearing voices in the passage, came down stairs.

"Why Alice, child! What are you doing here? Did Mrs. Gordon say you might come?"

"Oh ma'am!" exclaimed Alice, springing up, and catching eagerly hold of the woman's dress, "Where is Henry? Tell me where he is. I must see him! I must go to him!"

"Don't be silly, child," said Mrs. Walton, coldly. Henry is doing very well. He's in a good place."

"But, where? Oh, ma'am, tell me where?"

"I can't do that. You are not to know where he is at present."

The hands that clasped tightly the garments of the unfeeling woman, relaxed their hold, and the stricken child sunk upon the floor. This was more than she could bear.

"It's cruel, so it is!" ejaculated the chambermaid, as she stooped down quickly and lifted Alice in her arms. Every muscle was relaxed; her eyes were closed; her face was ashy pale. "You've killed the child, I believe!" she added with indignant emotion.

"Hush! will you?" said Mrs. Walton, in a passionate voice.

The girl carried the insensible body up stairs, and laid it on a bed.

"There!" she said, turning to Mrs. Walton, who had followed her—"see what you've done! A brute couldn't have acted worse. If these children were any thing to me, this would be a sorry day for you, my lady. Oh! you needn't look black at me in that way. I'm not afraid to speak out my mind to any body."

"Go out of my house, this instant, you impudent huzzy, you!" Mrs. Walton stamped her foot violently, while her face grew black with passion.

"You'd better look after the child, that she doesn't die," returned the chambermaid, coolly, "and not waste your words on me. If she does die, I'll stand evidence that you

killed her. Yes, I'll swear to that any day—so I will!"

This caused a feeling of alarm to arise in the heart of Mrs. Walton, who repressed her anger, and turning to the insensible child, sought by bathing her face in cold water and vinegar, and by the free use of hartsborn, to restore the vital energy that had retired into the deep and hidden interior of her body. It was half an hour before these efforts were attended with success. Then Alice roused up partly, and called in a most piteous tone for Henry. Even the hard heart of Mrs. Walton was touched; while the chambermaid burst into tears.

"Go 'round and tell Mrs. Gordon that Alice is here, and say what is the matter with her," said Mrs. Walton. "She'll wonder where she is."

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were sitting at the tea-table, with their three eldest children, when Mrs. Walton's messenger came in.

"Mrs. Walton sent me round," said Hannah, "to tell you that Alice is there."

"And what is she doing there? I positively forbade her going."

"She came round to see her brother. But he was gone, and the poor child fainted when she heard it. It was a downright cruel thing, it was!"

"Fainted!" said Mr. Gordon, in surprise.

"Yes, sir. And she's just coming to. Oh! if you could hear how she is calling for little Henry, and she not more than half herself, it would make your heart ache! But I must run back. I only came to let you know where she was." And the impulsive, warm-hearted Hannah, turned away and left Mr. and Mrs. Gordon in no very comfortable frame of mind.

"Yes, it was a downright cruel thing!" exclaimed Mr. Gordon, as soon as Hannah had retired. "And I'm very sorry that we have had any thing to do in the matter."

Mrs. Gordon felt a little strange, but she did not say much. This left room for her husband to express himself pretty freely, which he did not fail to do.

After tea, Mrs. Gordon went into Mrs. Walton's. She found Alice restored to rea-

son, but grieving bitterly for her brother. Nothing that was said to her gave her any comfort. To every thing she answered by desiring to be taken to Henry. But this she was told positively could not be; as he had been taken out of the city. To her earnest entreaties to be told where he was, no answer was given. Heart-sick and almost hopeless, the unhappy child went back with Mrs. Gordon, who more than half repented having had any thing to do with her. Days and weeks passed by, but no word came to her of Henry. From the time she parted with him, all was, in regard to him, a blank. She had ceased to grieve openly, but there was a fountain of tears ever pouring out its waters in her heart. Her daily thoughts and nightly dreams were for her brother. But all availed not. From Hannah she hoped to learn something definite; and with this end, she stole round to Mrs. Walton's to see her, one evening about a week after she had learned the distressing news of Henry's removal she knew not where. But Hannah's plain speaking had lost her her place. A stranger to Alice was there in her stead. Months went by, and still she could learn nothing of Henry, although many times during that period she had tearfully implored Mrs. Gordon to tell her where he was; but that lady thought it best, upon the whole, to keep her own counsel in the matter. She argued with herself that it could really do Alice no good to know where Henry was, and might be the means of completely spoiling her, and making her brother unhappy in his new and excellent home. She was sure, if Alice knew where he was, that she would seek him out in spite of all interdictions, and such a meeting she believed would be productive of more harm than good. Thus she satisfied herself; but her husband never felt easy about the matter. He, however, quieted his conscience by assuming that it was his wife's business, not his.

Time did little to mitigate the grief of heart occasioned by this rude separation. Alice eat but little, and moved about with

a quiet, subdued manner, that was ever felt by Mr. Gordon, when he came in contact with her, as a reproof. Her form grew thinner, her countenance sadder, and her cheeks paler, every day. Her voice was never heard, except in reply to some question, and then it was low and had so mournful an expression, that Mr. Gordon could not bear to hear it.

"Anna," he said to his wife, one day, "I wish you would either let Alice go and see her brother, or send her away. I cannot bear to look at her. She is dying by inches. Her sad face reproves me every day."

"Nonsense!" returned Mrs. Gordon quite fiercely. "I don't see but she is doing well enough. I'll be bound she hasn't thought of her brother for a week. It's all your imagination."

"Not by any means, Anna. I can see that her face gets paler and sadder all the time. But, at best, I can't make out what harm is to come of her being allowed to see her little brother."

"I can, then. I can see that she won't be worth a copper to me, afterwards."

"I'll guarantee that she will be just as valuable again. But that out of the question; humanity calls upon us to put her heart at rest in regard to her brother."

"I don't think it does, if the act is going to make them both more unhappy than they now are; a thing that certainly will occur. I believe I am quite as tender-hearted as you are, and can feel just as much for the child as you do; but I am settled in my belief, that the very best thing for both of these children is to let them remain in ignorance of each other. The policy of the school is to sever all former relations, in order that there may be no interference. When a child is old enough to be bound out to a trade, the place to which he is sent is known only to the managers of the institution, and is never divulged."

"Then it is settled between you and Mrs. Walton, that Alice is never to see her brother again?"

"I wish, Mr. Gordon, you would not

meddle yourself in things that don't concern you, as this doesn't."

"I rather think, Anna, that it does concern me a little," quietly returned Mr. Gordon. "I feel myself to be just as much responsible in this matter as you are, and just as guilty of wrong to these children."

"You are a strange man to talk, Mr. Gordon; a very strange man!"

"And you are a strange woman to act, Anna; a very strange woman!"

This so inflamed the ire of Mrs. Gordon, that she gave her husband such a setting down as made him glad to be quiet. And so all his good intentions in regard to Alice were, for the time being, laid into quiescence.

Change we, now, the scene of our story to a southern city, and advance the time two years from the period of its opening. Three or four men were sitting in a coffee-house, frequented mostly by flat-boatmen and others of the same grade, drinking, smoking and swearing, when a wretched-looking creature, with bloated face, and clothes torn and dirty, who in every way presented a most debased and miserable appearance, entered, and going up to the bar, called for whiskey and water.

"You owe me three or four bits, now, for liquor," said the bar-keeper. "Where's your money?"

The man fumbled in his pocket for some moments, muttering to himself as he did so—

"Confound it all! I had a picayune here, that a man just gave me for holding his horse."

At this there was a laugh through the bar-room, and one of the company said, aloud—

"Hurrah for Altemas! He's had another horse to hold!"

"It won't do any good, fellow," remarked the bar-keeper. "You don't come it over me in that way, no how. You've done it once or twice too often. But you can't do it again, old chap! I've heard that horse story too often."

The man became excited at this, and said angrily—

"Shut up, will you!"

"Look here, old fellow; I don't want

any of your jaw," retorted the bar-keeper, getting angry in turn. "You're a cheating old rascal; and you'd better take yourself off in double quick time, or you may happen to get rowed up Salt River."

"Shut up, I tell you!" said Altemas, sternly.

"You're not put there to insult customers."

"If you're not out of this room in two minutes by the watch, I'll throw you out neck and heels."

"It'll take a better man than you to do that, my fine young chicken!"

"You've got but two minutes, and I advise you to make good use of your drumsticks in that time, or by ——"

"Bah!" broke in the man. "You'll have to shave with something else be-

sides the back of a razor before you can do that!" and he turned away and deliberately seated himself in a chair.

The bar-tender stood coolly looking at the clock, until the minute-hand had moved over the space comprised between three dots. Then coming round into the area in front of the bar, he advanced towards the object of his ire, who remained quietly in his chair.

"Go out of this room, sir!" he said, in a loud, authoritative voice; "or I'll throw you out, neck and heels."

"Don't put yourself in a passion, Jimmy! It isn't pleasant this warm weather."

"Are you going! Once! Twice! Three times!"



Saying this, the angry bar-tender seized upon Altemas by the collar, and with one vigorous pull, drew him half the length of

the room. Before the latter could recover himself sufficiently to offer the resistance he had meditated, he was reeling into the

street. He fell across the curbstone, with a shock that completely stunned him.

"That was a cowardly trick, Jimmy!" remarked one of the inmates of the room, showing his teeth as he spoke.

"Do you take it up?" enquired the bar-keeper, whose mind was in a fever of excitement.

"Yes I do; and I think you'll find me rather more of a match than a poor, miserable, broken-down creature like the one you made yourself so valiant upon just now."

As the man said this, he drew from beneath his coat a long heavy knife, with which one might easily kill an ox, while a murderous scowl darkened over his face. The bar-keeper instantly produced a similar instrument, that glittered as he held it forth. A serious conflict would have ensued immediately, had it not been for the entrance of a couple of police officers, who demanded to know why the man on the pavement had been thrown from the house, and who had done it?

"There, Jimmy! There's some other business for you to settle first," said one of the persons who had gathered around him and his antagonist to see the sport.

"I did it," replied the bar-keeper. I ordered him out, and he wouldn't go."

"But that didn't give you the right to throw him out in the way you did," returned one of the officers. "The man, I should think, is seriously injured. It may cost him his life. You will come with me, sir, and give bail for your appearance to answer in this matter."

A summons like this was not to be disputed, and Jimmy went off, with his courage that had so highly vaunted itself, quite down to zero.

In the meantime, Mr. Altemas lay stunned upon the pavement. On being lifted up, a severe contusion was found upon his head. Opposite to where this scene had occurred, was the shop of a tailor. The owner of it saw, from his window, the brutal manner in which the poor wretch had been thrust from the coffee-house, and was one of the first who came to his assist-

ance. He had him carried into his house and taken into a back room, where every possible attention was shown to him. It was not long before the vital current began to flow again through the body of the injured man, and with it came a free effusion of blood from the wound upon his head. A doctor was called in and the wound dressed.

"My good friend," said the tailor, mildly, after Mr. Altemas was himself again, and able to sit up firmly, although his head reeled a little when he attempted to stand—"I should think, that, by this time, you had found the words of Holy Writ true, and proved that the way of the transgressor is hard."

No reply was made to this remark.

"Have you any children?" asked the tailor, changing his mode of address.

"I have," was replied.

"In this town?" further enquired the tailor.

The man shook his head and compressed his lips in a way that indicated his wish not to be questioned on that subject; but the tailor had an end in view, and, therefore, continued his enquiries.

"How many children have you?"

"Two," was answered.

"Girls or boys?"

"One girl and one boy."

The tailor noticed that the voice of the poor, fallen, and degraded creature, slightly quivered in making this last reply.

"They are grown up, I suppose?" he continued.

"No. The girl is about thirteen, or thereabouts, and the boy not over nine years of age."

"Indeed! So young! Are they with their mother?"

Altemas shook his head.

The man who was interrogating him, saw that his questions were throwing the mind of the unhappy drunkard back upon a subject that could not be thought of without pain, and, it was evident, more or less disturbance of mind. All this he hoped would prove salutary. He was one of

those who never despaired of a drunkard. He had been one himself, and was now reformed. He had seen hundreds reformed as debased and besotted as the individual before him. He had assisted in the reform of very many, and he hoped to reform the poor wretch who had fallen into his hands.

"Is their mother living?" he next asked.

A shake of the head was the reply to this question also.

"Where are your children, my friend?"

"God knows! for I don't," he said with visible emotion.

"You left them with friends, I suppose?"

"For Heaven's sake! ask me no more questions," said Altemas, turning partly away.

"Pardon me!" mildly answered the tailor. "I naturally felt interested in you; for, there was a time when I was as much cursed by a craving appetite for liquor as you are now."

"You?" said Altemas, speaking with much apparent surprise.

"Yes, my friend. Three years ago I was as you are now. My children were scattered; my wife was almost broken-hearted, and I was a miserable, debased, unhappy wretch. But I was saved, and so may you be."

"Me? No—that is impossible! I am lost! If I could not reform years ago, when I tried hard and prayed earnestly for strength, how can I be reformed now? No—no. The sooner I am dead the better! It is no use for me to try."

"So I said, over and over again; and yet you see me a reformed, a prosperous, and a happy man to-day, just what you may be. Think of your children, and for their sakes, my friend, make one more effort; and if you make it in the way I made it, you must, you will succeed!"

"How did you make it?"

"I joined the Washingtonians, under the total abstinence pledge. And since that, the Sons of Temperance."

"Became a teetotaler!" said Altemas, with a slight, involuntary expression of contempt.

"Yes, thank God!" warmly replied the tailor. "And that is what you must become. That will save you; but nothing else will. Unless you take this pledge, you will die a drunkard's death, and fill a drunkard's grave. But you look pale, and are trembling from head to foot. We will talk no more about this now. That fall has hurt you a good deal. Come up stairs and lie down for a while, until you recover yourself. My wife will take you up a bowl of strong coffee to refresh you."

"You are very kind," said Altemas.

It was a long time since he had heard a kind or sympathizing word. Accepting the tailor's invitation, he went up stairs and lay down upon an old sofa. A bowl of coffee was brought to him which he drank eagerly. He then fell off to sleep and slept for two or three hours. When he awoke, he found the tailor in the room with him.

"You feel better, I hope?" said this disinterested friend, as Altemas rose up from his recumbent position.

"A little better, I thank you; but I am terribly dry. Have you any water?"

A pitcher of cool water was brought. Half of its contents were emptied at a draught.

"Will you have a cup of coffee and something to eat?" was now asked.

"If you please. But I am sorry to give so much trouble."

"All this is no trouble to us, but a pleasure. If we can do you good, that will doubly reward us."

Coffee and food were brought. Altemas eat, and wondered. He could not understand why such interest should be taken in a miserable outcast like himself. The act, and the manner of the act, touched him a good deal. After he had eaten and felt refreshed, the tailor drew from him, little by little, a history of his life. This brought back the drunkard's better feelings. He thought of his children, and how he had forsaken them, and left them among strangers—young, helpless, and friendless. Bitterly did his heart smite him for this

cruel act of desertion. For their sakes, the desire for reform took possession of him.

"Oh! If there was any hope! But there is none. I am too far gone," he said mournfully.

"No man was ever too far gone for that, until dead. While there is life there is hope. As sure as there is a God in heaven who pities our weakness, and helps us when we call upon him and strive, at the same time, to overcome our evils, you may reform. Are you willing to try?"

"Oh, yes."

"Will you try in the way I direct?"

"Yes. Only point me out the way, and I will seek to walk in it."

"You have never signed a pledge?"

"No."

"Nor tried total abstinence?"

"No."

"Be of good cheer, my unhappy friend! All will yet be well. In the pledge signed by your own hand, in association with those who have themselves been reformed, you will find a power all-sufficient to sustain you. To-night there is a meeting of our association of reformed men. Will you go with me, sign the pledge, and be a free and happy man?"

Altemas glanced down at his ragged and dirty garments.

"I cannot go any where among decent men in these."

"If you wish to sign the pledge, if you are really in earnest in this matter, as I trust you are, I will provide you with better clothes. I have some old garments that I have laid aside that are much better than the ones you have, and you shall be welcome to them."

This additional act of kindness touched Altemas deeply. He was really more sober than he had been for months, and could think and feel clearer and more acutely.

"Heaven knows I am in earnest," he said. "Oh, if I could but be a man again, and undo some of the wrong that I have done!"

"The way is all plain before you, my friend. Enter and walk in it steadily to the end," replied the tailor.

Altemas was supplied with water to cleanse himself; with a clean shirt; a very good pair of pantaloons; an old vest, and a coat partly worn. After washing and dressing himself, he came down stairs, looking so different from what he had done a short time before, that the tailor could not help an exclamation of surprise. Mr. Altemas enquired where the meeting was to be held, saying, at the same time, that he would certainly attend and sign the pledge.

"You must stay and take supper with me," replied the tailor to this, "and then I will go with you to the meeting. Where are you staying?"

"Alas, my good friend, I have really no home. I am an outcast. I have fallen very low."

"Then you must return and stay at my house to-night. To-morrow we will try to get you something to do, and you can then enter regularly at a good temperance boarding-house, to the keeper of which I will introduce you."

This was so unexpected to Altemas, that it quite overcame him.

When night came, he went gladly to the temperance meeting. Half a dozen experiences were related, so nearly resembling his own, that he listened in amazement, and took hope. When the invitations to



sign the pledge were given, he was among the first to subscribe his name to that in-

strument. At the close of the meeting he went back with the tailor, and remained at his house for two days, when a situation as clerk in a wholesale grocery store, kept by a Son of Temperance, was obtained for him. The salary was eight dollars a week.

Henry Altemas, now clothed and in his right mind, bethought himself at once of his children. He wrote to Mrs. Walton about them, and waited with anxiety and impatience for an answer. Six weeks, more than time to hear from New-York, elapsed, but no reply came to his letter. He wrote again, promising to send money the moment he heard from her; but the same silence was the result. The more he thought about his children, and the longer he was in suspense about them, the more anxious did he become. He next wrote to an old friend, and from him received for answer, that he had enquired at the number in Division-street which he had named, and learned that Mrs. Walton had been dead for more than a year, and that no one in the house knew any thing about his children.

It was three months from the time he received this intelligence, before the unhappy father, who had remained faithful to his pledge, could save from his small salary enough money to take him to New York, and bring him back with his children. Then, with seventy-five dollars in his pocket, he took passage in a boat for Wheeling, as a deck passenger, in order to go in the cheapest possible way, so that he might not exhaust the small sum he had with him before his return.

On arriving in New York, Mr. Altemas sought, but in vain, to learn something of his children. Mrs. Walton was dead, and no one that he could find knew any thing about her. After remaining in New York for a week, during which time his fruitless search was continued, he advertised for information in regard to his children. On the second day after this advertisement was published, a young woman, whose appearance was that of a domestic, called upon Mr. Altemas, and informed him that she

had lived with Mrs. Walton as a chambermaid at the time his two children were there; and that Alice had been put out as a child's nurse to a Mrs. Gordon near by where Mrs. Walton lived, while Henry was sent to the Farm School. She described quite vividly the affliction of Alice when she discovered that her brother had been sent away.

"Oh, sir! It was a cruel sight," she said. "A cruel sight; and it made my heart ache. I spoke out my mind plainly enough to Mrs. Walton; I couldn't help it; and it lost me my place; but I didn't care for that."

After taking the number of the house at which Hannah, whom the reader has recognized, lived, Mr. Altemas hurried off to find Mrs. Gordon. But a family by another name lived in the house. On referring to the Directory, he found many "Gordons" named. A whole day was spent in running from one of these to the other. At last, to his oft-repeated enquiry—after seeing the lady of the house at which he called, and for whom he always asked—

"Does a little girl named Alice live with you?" he received for answer—

"A child by that name did live with me nearly two years ago; but she went off one day, and I have never heard of her since."

"Had she a little brother in the Farm School?" enquired Mr. Altemas.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know any thing of him?"

"No, sir; nothing at all."

"And you have heard nothing of Alice since she left?"

"No, sir."

"Have you no idea where she has gone?"

"None in the least, sir."

Mr. Altemas turned away, dreadfully disappointed. Without a moment's further delay, he started for the Long Island Farms. On arriving there, he asked if they had a boy in the institution named Henry Altemas; but was answered in the negative.

"You must have, surely!" he said, showing a good deal of agitation.

"No sir, I believe not," was replied.

"But the boy I speak of certainly did come here."

"When?"

"About two years ago."

"In what month?"

Mr. Altemas thought for a moment, and then named the month, as near as he could.

The records of the institution were examined.

"Yes sir, a lad by that name, was sent here at the time you mention. But I find it recorded, that he escaped from the school and was never brought back."

"Strange!" said the father. "Is that all the intelligence you can give me about him?"

"Every word, sir."

"Was no search made for him?"

"Every possible effort, I presume, was made to recover him. Such is always the case. But it seems that it was of no avail."

Heart-sick and distressed was the unhappy father, as he turned away, and went back to the city, almost hopeless of finding his children. What they had suffered since he left them to the tender mercies of strangers, he knew not. But that they had suffered severely, and might, if alive, be still suffering, he felt, must, too surely, be the case. What to do, or which way to turn himself, he knew not. Advertisements were renewed, and papers out of the city requested to copy them as an act of humanity. Weeks passed, but no intelligence of the lost ones came.

The reader will remember the interview between Mr. Gordon and his wife about Alice, and how, for the time-being, the good intentions of the former were overruled by the imperious spirit of the latter. Several weeks elapsed, during which time there were few days in which Mr. Gordon did not think of the suffering child that was an inmate of his house, with feelings of pain. One morning he sat in the breakfast room, reading the newspaper, when Alice came in with the baby which she had just received from its mother, and sat down near him with the infant in her arms. Mr. Gordon

glanced over the edge of his paper, and let his eyes rest upon her face. Its look of pain and sadness touched his feelings as it had often done before. From his very heart he pitied her. While looking at her, he noticed that her breast heaved with a slight convulsive emotion, and then a faint sigh stole upon his ear.

"I can stand this no longer," he said to himself, as he drew the newspaper before his eyes, and mused for some moments.

"Alice," he at length said, letting the newspaper fall in his lap.

The child looked up at him quickly.

"Alice, has no one yet told you where your brother is?"

"No sir," she replied, in a low voice, but with an eager expression of countenance.

"Then I will tell you; but I do not wish you to say to any one that I did so. Your brother is at the Farms School."

"Where?"

"At the Farms School on Long Island."

"What is that?"

In a few words Mr. Gordon explained to Alice the nature of the institution, which was for the reception and education of destitute young children. He also told her that it was located about five miles above Williamsburg, on the East River.

"Can't I go and see Henry?" enquired Alice, trembling with the eager desire with which she was instantly seized.

"I believe Mrs. Gordon thinks your brother will be much happier if he does not see you. If you should go where he is, he would want to come away with you, and you know that could not be. He is well treated, and I am sure must be quite contented by this time."

"Oh no, sir! He can't be contented without seeing me. Won't you take me to see him? Oh! if he should get sick and die!"

The voice of Alice faltered, and her eyes filled with tears. Mr. Gordon felt deeply for the poor child.

"You must be patient for a little while longer, Alice?" he said, kindly. "I have

told you where he is, and now your heart can be at rest on that subject. It will not be long, I hope, before Mrs. Gordon will think it right to let you go and see your brother. But, until that time, you must try to be as patient as you can."

The entrance of Mrs. Gordon closed this interview with a grateful look from the tearful eyes of Alice. All day long the little girl mused upon what Mr. Gordon had told her: and during most of the night that followed she lay awake thinking about her brother. So intense became her desire to see him, that on the next day, while the family were at dinner, she quietly left the house, and ran as fast as her feet would carry her to the Williamsburg ferry.—When her father went away he gave her a few coins, which she put in a little purse, her mother's present; this money she had never spent. It was now of use to her, for she could pay her fare across the river. On arriving at Williamsburg, Alice asked a man on the dock to tell her the way to the Long Island Farms. He said they were a long distance up the river—some four or five miles. The man spoke short and roughly, and the child shrunk away from him. She felt afraid to ask any one else. Making her way out of Williamsburg as quickly as she possibly could, Alice took the river shore, and commenced her long and weary journey, with the hot sun blazing down upon her. She had not gone far before she felt frightened at being thus alone, away from houses and people. But the thought of her brother restored her courage, and she pressed on with eager footsteps. It was two hours before she reached the Farms. When she applied for admission, she was told that she could not come in, unless she had an order from the office of the Alms-House Commissioner in New-York. This, to the poor child, whose heart was yearning to see her brother, was more than she could bear. She covered her face with her hands, and leaning against the gate, sobbed and wept bitterly. The person to whom she had applied, was touched at this exhibition of her sorrow.

"What do you want to come in for, my little girl?" he asked in a kind voice.

"I want to see my brother Henry," she replied, looking up with tearful eyes.

"What is his name besides Henry?"

"Henry Altemas."

"Has he been long here?"

"Oh no, sir! They carried him off when I was away, and nobody would tell me where he was. I didn't know until yesterday; and I've walked all the way out to see him. If I go back, they won't let me come again, I know. Oh, sir! do let me see my little brother Henry! It won't make him unhappy, I know it won't."

The man was touched still further by the deep tenderness expressed in the child's face, and the earnest, pleading pathos of her voice. He told her to wait a little while and he would go and see the Superintendent. On consulting with this individual, he said the little girl couldn't come in without a permit. He went, however, to see her at the gate. Her manner quickly overcame his objections, and he yielded to his feelings and broke the rule by admitting her. Taking her by the hand, he led her into a room where were about twenty small children. They all looked up with countenances of interest, but one of them gave a cry of joy, and starting forward, was almost instantly in the arms of Alice, clinging around her neck, and almost devouring her with kisses, while tears gushed from his eyes. Alice was so overcome, that she tottered back, and sunk upon a bench, still holding on to her brother, and laying her face down and pressing it upon his wet cheeks. The Superintendent turned away to conceal his emotion. His kind feelings prompted him to remove the two children into a room by themselves, where they were left for awhile alone.

About an hour after Alice came, he went into the room where he had left her, and found Henry lying asleep in her arms. The child aroused up on his entrance, and Alice drew her arms more closely around him.

"Well, Alice," he said—"I believe you

told me that was your name—isn't it time for you to go back to the city?"

Henry began to cry at this; and Alice lifted her large blue eyes to the face of the Superintendent, with a look of pleading distress.

"You can't stay here, you know, Alice," he said. "We let you in, even against the rule, to see your brother, and you must go back now, or we can never let you come in again."

"Oh, don't go 'way Alice! Don't go 'way!" cried Henry, shrinking closer to his sister. "Stay here with me." And the child trembled with the fear of being again separated from her.

The Superintendent found himself in a dilemma. It grieved him to do violence to the feelings of the children, but his duty was plain in the case. It was out of the question for Alice to remain there. Sitting down beside them, he asked the oldest of the two many questions, and learned from her the cruel manner in which her brother had been separated from her, and her ignorance of where he was until the day previous. After half an hour's reflection, he told her she might stay until the morning, if she would promise then to leave her brother and return to the city without opposition. She promised, but the Superintendent saw that it was not from the heart, and that he should find it hard, even in the morning, to separate the children.

That night Alice slept again in the same room with Henry, or, rather lay awake through most of the night thinking about their separation in the morning. The thought of it was dreadful to her. She fell asleep late, and awoke some hours afterwards, aroused from her slumber by a dream that her brother had been taken from her! She went quickly to his bed, and passed her hand over it. He was there.—Back to her own couch she stole, and lay now wide awake, thinking about the morning. Suddenly the thought of trying to get Henry away came into her mind, and caused her heart to flutter. She arose and went to the window. The moon was shining. She could see the way she

came, and the wish that she were beyond the fence of the institution, with her little brother, even in the night, took possession of her. After looking forth, and thinking about this for many minutes, she went up to Henry's bed, and shook him several times. This awakened him. After he clearly understood where he was, and that his sister was with him, Alice asked him if he would not get up and go away with her. He unhesitatingly replied that he would.

"Can you find your way down stairs?"

"Yes," he replied.

"After you are in the yard, can you get out?"

Henry said that he could. There was no more doubt nor hesitation on the part of Alice. She dressed herself silently and quickly, and then assisted Henry on with his clothes. When they were ready, they went down in their bare feet, and opened the door, and succeeded in making their escape from the premises without alarming



any one. Swiftly as their flying feet would carry them, did the little fugitives hurry to the river side, and take their way towards New York along its winding shore. The hope of escape extinguished all their natural timidity. They felt not that it was night, gloomy night; they only felt eager to get far away from all successful pursuit. It was day-light when they reached Williamsburg. Milk wagons and market wagons were crowding upon the ferry-

boat, that was just about leaving the wharf. The children passed on board, not, however, without a remark from the ferryman that it was rather early for such little folks as them to be abroad. Alice was frightened; but the man made no attempt to detain them.

As soon as they landed in New York, Alice struck directly across the city with her brother, for one of the ferries. The unusual circumstances in which she was placed, made her thoughtful and sagacious beyond her years. It occurred to her that search would be less likely to be made for them in the direction she was taking than it would be in any other, and this was the reason why she started direct for New Jersey. In crossing the city, she reached, first, the Jersey city ferry. Without a moment's hesitation, she stepped on board of the boat with Henry. Her heart did not beat easy until after the boat had moved out from the slip, and was rapidly leaving the city. Then she sat down, with Henry by her side, and, for the first time, the question as to where they were to go, and what they were to do? arose in her mind. She had about a dollar and a half in her purse. This she knew would buy them food for the day, and might procure them lodgings for the night; but she did not know how that would be. She dreaded, lest when night came, and they asked for lodgings, they would be taken and sent back to New York. These thoughts troubled Alice, as the boat bore them rapidly away from the city.

It was ten o'clock when they reached Newark. Alice bought a few cakes for Henry at a shop, and then they made their way into the country by the first avenue that opened before them. Alice eat nothing. She had no desire for food. They walked at a quick pace, along an unsheltered road, with the sun shining hot upon their heads. By noon, Henry was tired and thirsty, and complained that his feet hurt him. Alice tried to urge him on, but the little fellow was worn out with fatigue, and oppressed with the heat. A

short distance from the road was a small cluster of trees; towards these they directed their steps. The grass was high and soft beneath them, and a cool stream of water murmured near at hand. Alice bathed her own and her brother's feet in this stream, and then sat down in the pleasant shade, with Henry's head in her lap. In ten minutes both were sound asleep.

How long they slept Alice did not know, but when she awoke, the sun had sunk much lower in the sky, and the shadows that lay close around the trees had stretched far away from them. Henry still slumbered heavily, and it took her some time to arouse him. After she had bathed her own and her brother's face in the cool stream that sparkled close by, they both felt greatly refreshed and again proceeded on their way. But whither they were going they knew not. They were abroad in the wide world without a home, and in fleeing from certain evils, willing to encounter whatever might be before them as easier to be endured than separation.

Many weary miles were trodden by their young feet, and many farm houses and dwellings by the road-side passed, before the sun touched the red horizon in the west. They had not tasted food since they left Newark, and feared to ask for it at any of the houses lest questions should be put to them that it would be difficult for them to answer.

A pleasant house stood near the road-side; and children were playing around the door. Through the windows, as they passed wearily along, Alice saw the mother busily preparing the evening meal, while the father sat looking out upon his happy little ones, whose voices were ringing in music upon the air. The sun had left the sky, and the quiet of eventide was falling upon the bosom of nature. A loneliness such as she had not before experienced, and a feeling of helplessness fell upon the heart of Alice. She paused involuntarily and looked wishfully at the group of children, but recollecting herself, she moved

on again, and entering a deep valley densely shaded by trees, soon lost sight of this attractive spot. Loneliness now changed to sadness. The thick wood made night seem even more rapidly approaching than it really was. Henry shrank closer to her side and asked, anxiously,

"Where are we going, Alice? Where will we sleep to-night?"

"We will ask them to let us sleep at the next house," Alice replied.

"Wouldn't they let us sleep there?" meaning the dwelling they had just past.

"I don't know, but they will at the next house we come to, I am sure. Let us walk faster; it is getting dark."

The children quickened their pace in order to get through the gloomy woods; but the further they advanced, the darker and gloomier it became, and no opening appeared ahead.

"O sister! it is so dark!" said Henry, drawing still closer to Alice.

"It will be light soon. We shall be through the woods in a little while," Alice replied in an encouraging voice, while her own heart was sinking.

But the darkness continued to gather gloomily around them, and the woods to become denser and denser.

"Let us go back," Alice said, stopping suddenly. "Perhaps they will let us stay all night where we saw the children."

"Oh yes! let us go back," quickly answered Henry. "I'm afraid here."

As hastily as they had been moving forward did the children now retrace their steps, but night had fallen upon them—the moon had not yet risen, and they were nearly an hour's walk from the habitation they sought. They had retraced not over half the distance, when Henry, overcome by weariness and fear, began to cry. Alice tried in vain to soothe him; but was unable. He stopped, and burying his face in the folds of her dress, refused to go any farther. Persuasion, entreaty, and every inducement Alice could hold out, were in vain. The child seemed to have lost all thought in fatigue and alarm.

Alice had stood for nearly five minutes endeavoring to pacify Henry and get him to walk on, when the sound of horses feet and the rumbling of wagon wheels reached her ears above the mournful crying of her brother.

"For mercy's sake! what are you doing here? and who are you?" she heard a moment after, uttered by a woman's voice, as the wagon stopped close to where she was standing.

Never had a more welcome sound reached the ears of the frightened children. Henry's cries instantly ceased.

"We want some place to sleep to-night," said Alice. "Won't you give us some place to sleep until morning?"



"Bless us!—Children!—Who are you? Are you lost?"

Alice murmured "Yes," in a low voice.

"Where do you live?" said the woman, who was alone, in a small light wagon.

"We've got no home," replied Alice in a sad voice.

"No home! Bless me! Lost here at night, in this lonesome place! Come up, quick, into my wagon. I'll try and find you a place to sleep. Strange!"

The children needed no second invitation. Alice lifted up her brother, and then got in herself.

"What is your name, child?" asked the

woman, kindly, as she pulled the rein and her horse started on again at a light trot.

"Alice."

"Alice what?"

"Alice Altemas."

"Where do you live?"

"Father went away and left my brother and me in New-York a good while ago, and has not come back since. We don't know where he is."

"Where is your mother?"

"She is dead."

"Is there nobody to take care of you?"

"No ma'am."

"Why did you leave New-York?"

These rapid questions embarrassed Alice. She did not wish to evade the truth, and she feared to answer directly lest she should be sent back to New-York, and her brother to the Farms School. To the woman's last interrogation she was, therefore, silent; and also, to two or three others that followed, which she felt she dare not answer by telling the truth.

After riding along the main road for about half a mile, the woman turned her horse down a lane, which, in about ten minutes brought them to a small house. Here she drew the rein and the wagon stopped. Henry was, by this time, fast asleep. The woman got down, and lifted out the sleeping child tenderly, saying as she did so—

"Poor little fellow! He's forgot all his troubles." Alice followed quickly, and then they entered the house, the door of which was opened by a stout girl.

"Tell John to put the horse away and then do you bring in supper," the woman said to the girl as she passed her. Henry was taken into a room adjoining the one into which they had entered, and laid on a bed. He still slept soundly.

The lighted candles which were upon the supper table gave both Alice and the woman an opportunity to observe each other, and their eyes met in an earnest look as the latter returned from the next room. There was something in the woman's face that instantly gave confidence to the heart of Alice, and there was something in the face of

Alice that warmed the woman's feelings towards her.

Mrs. Belding, who had come across the children so opportunely, was a kind-hearted widow, who lived on a small place, which she owned, about twelve miles from New-ark. She had been the mother of three children, all now dead. One of them, a girl, died when about the age of Alice, and a little boy had been taken from her when just as old as Henry. The other died when a babe. The moment she saw the face of Alice, she was reminded of her lost daughter. Their eyes, complexion, and cast of features were the same.

"If these children have, indeed, no home and no mother," she said in her heart, "this shall be their home, and I will be their mother."

"Come dear," she said kindly to Alice, about five minutes after they had come in, and after the tea had been placed upon the table. "Come, sit up, and get some supper.

"We won't wake your brother, for I expect sleep is better to him than food."

This was spoke so encouragingly, and with something so warm in her voice, that Alice, who had felt but little inclination for food, experienced an almost instant return of appetite. She drew her chair to the table, and partook of a hearty meal. Mrs. Belding forbore asking her any more questions. Soon after tea she showed her into a room where Henry was lying upon a bed, and told her that she could sleep there for the night.

On the next morning, Alice, who felt an instinctive confidence in Mrs. Belding, related to her, freely, everthing that had occurred since the death of her mother. The excellent woman to whom this artless relation was made, could not refrain from tears.

"My dear child," she said, with much tenderness, when she had concluded, "I know that all you have told me is true. Do not be afraid; I will not take you back to New-York; Henry shall not be separated from you; this shall be your home; I will be your mother."

Alice looked into Mrs. Belding's face with

a wondering countenance, and Henry left his sister's side and went and leaned against her.

"Do you think you would like to live here?" the excellent woman asked, as she took the little boy's hand in hers.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," he replied.

"If I am good to you, will you mind all I say to you?"

"Yes ma'am, I will always mind you."

"I am sure you will," and she laid her hand gently upon his head.

Alice was overcome and wept freely.

"And you will be like my own daughter to me, I know," said Mrs. Belding, looking into the face of Alice.

"Oh ma'am! I will do every thing for you," replied Alice, the tears still streaming down her face.

And the child not only meant what she said, but she strove in every way to redeem her promise. Her little hands were busied from morning until night in trying to do what would be useful to Mrs. Belding, who grew more and more attached to her every day, and, in a short time, loved her almost as tenderly as she had loved her own child.

In this pleasant home, with nothing to trouble her mind but the thought of her father, Alice lived for two years with her brother. Mrs. Belding treated them as if they were her own children. No search that was made for them, ever extended into her neighborhood, and no one ever intruded upon them in their happy retreat, for none cared for them.

One day, Mrs. Belding came home from Newark, looking quite sober. She retired into her room, and fastening the door, sat down, and drawing a paper from her pocket, read over slowly an advertisement it contained, which was the cause of her disturbed state of mind. The advertisement ran thus:—

"Between two and three years ago, the subscriber went South, and left his two children, Alice about eleven, and Henry seven years of age, in the care of a woman named Mrs. Walton, who kept a boarding house at No. — Division street. Circumstances, not necessary to relate, prevented him from

returning to New-York until the present time. During the whole period of his absence, he did not once hear from his children. Now, he finds, that within a short time after he left the city, his little boy was sent to the Farm School on Long Island, and his daughter put out to service, and that his daughter went away from her place and succeeded in getting her brother from the Farm School without the knowledge of the Superintendent. Since that time all trace of them has been lost. Any information in regard to them will be most thankfully received at the ——— Hotel, by

"HENRY ALTEMAS."

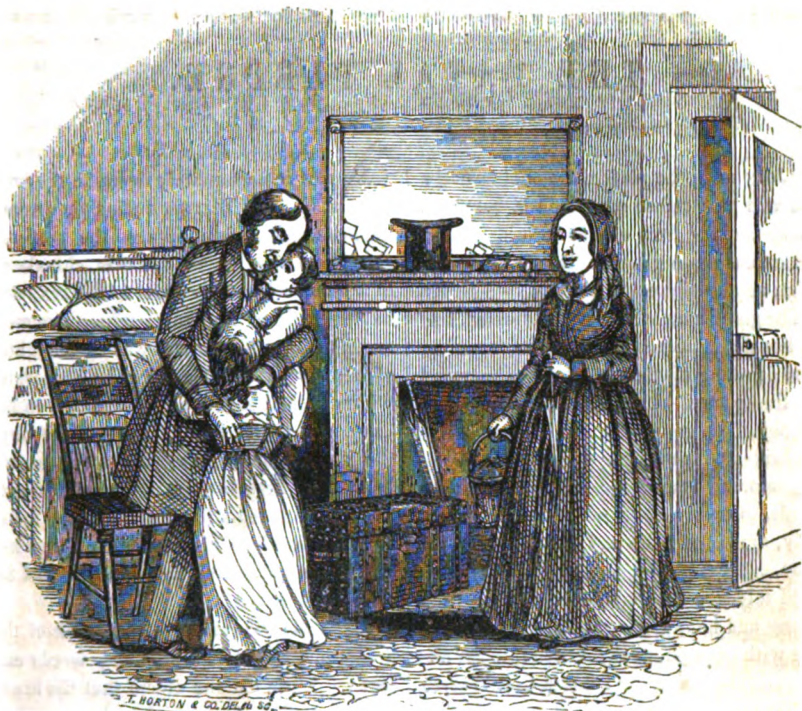
After reading this over, Mrs. Belding sat and mused for a long time. Then she seemed to have come to a fixed conclusion, for she rose up, saying in a firm voice, as she did so.

"They are his children, and I have no right to keep them. They must be restored to their father. I have had my reward for all I have done. But it will be hard to give them up."

The money of Mr. Altemas being nearly exhausted, and more than double the time for which he had obtained leave of absence from his employer having expired, while all search for and effort to obtain his children had proved fruitless, he found himself compelled to return back to the South. He had tried to get employment in New York, in order to remain there, and continue the search for Alice and Henry, but was unsuccessful in this. There was nothing left for him but to go back, earn some more money, and then come on and make new efforts to discover his children.

He had packed his trunk, and was waiting gloomily, for the hour to arrive at which the cars were to start for the South, his mind filled with self-upbraidings and bitterness for the consequences that had followed his career of folly, when there was a knock at his room door. Supposing that it was the porter for his baggage, he called out for him to "come in." The door opened, but he did not turn to look at the man, merely remarking in a low voice—

"There it is, William. I will be down to the boat in a little while."



“Father!” said a low tremulous voice.

Altemas sprung to his feet with a sudden bound. An instant, and his two children were in his arms, while his heart was almost bursting with tumultuous joy.

In a few, plain words, we will give the rest. Mrs. Belding, a true-hearted woman as ever breathed, much as she loved the children, and pleasant as they had made her home, could not withhold them from their father. It cost her a severe struggle, but she did her duty, and immediately restored them. Mr. Altemas deferred returning to the South for a week, and, at the solicitation of Mrs. Belding, paid her a short visit with Alice and Henry. As he was leaving the cars at Newark, an old friend touched him on the shoulder, and ten min-

utes conversation followed, during which Altemas briefly related what the reader knows of his reform, and the recovery of his children. The old friend, an active Son of Temperance, was engaged in manufacturing in Newark, and it so happened, had just lost his clerk. He offered Altemas the place at seven hundred dollars a year. It was gladly accepted.

A few years have passed. Altemas holds the situation still, and his children remain with the excellent Mrs. Belding—now Mrs. Altemas—where they are very happy, to see their father three or four times a week, as he returns *home* from the labors of the day, to find, in the smiles of an affectionate wife and the caresses of grateful children, the ample recompense of a life of industry and sobriety.

THE FATAL PLEDGE.

"JOIN us in the pledge, Colonel—surely you will not refuse *me*," said a beautiful bride emerging from a bevy of bridesmaids, and extending a glass of brimming champagne as she spoke.

The gentleman whom she addressed, had studiously refrained during the evening, from drinking of the costly wines prepared for the guests. But finding himself thus the object of general attention—for when the bride spoke every eye was upon him—he colored, stammered a few indistinct words, took the glass, and, bowing gracefully, drank long life and happiness to the bride.

"I told you I should succeed," said the young and happy creature, her eyes sparkling with triumph, as she retired into her circle of bridesmaids. "I knew Col. Warren would not refuse *me*. What a pity he has got such puritanical notions in his head. He used to be the foremost with a happy allusion or eloquent sentiment when the wine circulated."

No one was there to contradict this joyous, but thoughtless creature, or to tell her that Colonel Warren's indulgence in wine had nearly proved his ruin. He had been absent from his native city for some years, during which period he had formed a resolution not to drink, in consequence of a conviction of his own weakness. On his return his old associates in vain persuaded him to alter his determination. On various festive occasions they had endeavored to induce him to join them in pledging each other, but his answer had always been the same. This was the first time since his return, that wine had been introduced into the presence of ladies. It was resolved to try whether the influence of the sex would not break a resolution which more than one felt to be a reproach on himself. How the scheme succeeded we have seen.

No pen can adequately describe the emotions of Colonel Warren during the instant he hesitated, before taking the proffered glass from the bride. He was chivalrous to a fault in his demeanor to the sex, and had never been known to refuse a request of this kind. The bride was the daughter of his early friend, a cherished treasure, whom he had many a time dandled on his knee, and whom he had never done anything to slight or pain. He stood, as we have seen, irresolute for a moment, hesitating between fears for the result, and a dislike to disoblige his favorite on this her wedding night. But at length he had fatally yielded.

Little did the young bride think of the dreadful issue of her tempting words and smile. Little did she dream that the hankering love for wine, which had once reduced her victim to the verge of confirmed inebriacy, awoke again at the taste of that glass, and raged with more violence than ever. Young, happy and thoughtless, she looked only at the present triumph, without considering the result. How then was she surprised to hear a few months after her marriage, that Colonel Warren was becoming an inebriate—that he rarely retired to bed unless in a state of intoxication—and that, in consequence, his fine person was becoming disfigured, and his large fortune wasting away. She shuddered, but still did not think of her own agency in the matter, and when she next met him, with the privilege of youth and beauty, she ventured to plead with him on the subject.

"Madam," said he in reply, and the melancholy and somewhat stern tone in which he spoke, never left her memory, "it is *too late!* I was once as I am now—I rallied and took a resolution never to drink again—I broke that resolution, you know how, and when, and now I am a hopeless inebriate."

He turned and left her presence. Her eyes were opened. Oh! how bitterly did she reproach herself for having spoken those fatal words. For nights she could not speak. She sought again and again to see her victim, but he avoided her presence. They never met again but once. Reader, would you know how?

Some years after, on a cold, bleak morning in January, a travelling sleigh, drawn by two splendid horses, was dashing along the turnpike between Norristown and Philadelphia. There had been a snow-storm during the night, and the flakes lay piled against the fences and banks where they had been driven, by the icy wind which swept down from the hills beyond the Schuylkill. The sky was still overcast; the wind yet raged violently, and it was intensely cold. Few scenes could be more desolate. Houses, barns, trees, and hayricks were covered with snow, and the cattle, cowering in the sheds, seemed everywhere to beseech the sky in vain. As the sleigh, with its merry bells, whirled down the long hill that leads to the Manayunk turnpike, the horses suddenly shied, nearly precipitating the vehicle into an opposite snow bank. A lady slightly screamed, and looked out in alarm from the furs which enveloped her; but seeing no cause for danger, she was about to order the driver to proceed, when her little boy, pointing

to the object which had startled the horses, said—

“Mother, what can that be in the road? Surely it is a man’s hat!”

The lady turned. In the centre of the highway was a drifted snow pile, a little longer than a human body. One end of the pile had been blown away, disclosing as the boy said, a man’s hat.

“Gracious heavens!” she exclaimed, “can it be that some poor wretch has frozen to death here. James,” and she turned to the footman, “go and see.”

With intense interest the lady watched while the servant brushed away the snow. In a few seconds, it was apparent that a corpse was indeed there, and it was not long before the cause of the man’s death was evident in an empty jug beside him. The spectators breathlessly awaited while the icy flakes were being removed from the face, for the lady was within a short distance of her home, and thought that perhaps she might recognise the being. She stepped out of the sleigh, and approached the corpse.

“Colonel Warren!” she said, becoming hastily pale and staggering: “Colonel Warren dying thus, a common drunkard! Oh! just heaven, this is too much.”

And thus the victim and his destroyer met for the last time. It was the once thoughtless bride who now stood above the corpse.

TEMPERANCE ANECDOTES.

Eating the Fruit.

THE following anecdote is beautifully illustrative of the beneficial influences of the temperance cause, in restoring confidence and augmenting domestic happiness.

A blacksmith in one of our villages, had in his possession, but under mortgage, a house and piece of land. Like many others, he was fond of the social glass.

But he joined the temperance society and about three months after, he observed one morning his wife busily employed in planting rose bushes and fruit trees.

“My dear,” said he. “I have owned this lot for five years, and yet I have never known you before to manifest any desire to improve and ornament it in this manner.”

“Indeed,” replied the smiling wife, “I

had no heart to do it until you joined the temperance society—I had often thought of it before, but I was persuaded that should I do it, some stranger would pluck the roses and eat the fruit. Now, I know that with the blessing of Providence, this lot will be ours; and that we and our children shall enjoy its products. *We shall pluck the roses and eat the fruit.*"

~~~~~  
**Great Men, How Fallen!**

One day some weeks ago there were taken to the Tombs in New York, while in a state of beastly drunkenness, a lawyer, who had been somewhat distinguished in his profession—a historian, the author of a standard work—an editor once talented and of great respectability—and lastly a *clergyman*, a man of refined manners and highly educated. The lawyer was let off the next morning on promise of better behavior; the historian succeeded in getting his liberty to get drunk again the morning following; the editor was sent to the Alms House, and the clergyman, at the date of our information, still remained in durance. What an example this of the leveling down power of strong drink! Truly "it spares not the high nor the humble."

~~~~~  
I Have a Good Home Now.

An industrious female, upon being asked how things were going on at their house, said, "I have a good home now. No drinking, no swearing, no fighting; but peace and comfort since my father took the pledge." We would rejoice to hear every female honestly acknowledge the home-reforming advantages of true temperance. The whole family, eight in number, are teetotalers.

~~~~~  
**Who Would!**

Who would entrust an important law suit in the hands of a drinking Attorney?

Who would employ a drunken Clerk to transact his business?

Who would vote to place a Drunkard in an important office of trust?

Who would trust his life in the hands of a drunken Physician?

Who would employ a Drunkard in *any* capacity.

*Not even the Drunkard himself.*

~~~~~  
The Young Man's Course.

I saw him first at a social party. He took but a single glass of wine, and that in compliance with the request of a fair young lady with whom he conversed.

I saw him next, when he supposed he was unseen, taking a glass to satisfy the slight desire formed by his sordid indulgence. He thought there was no danger.

I saw him again with those of his own age, meeting at night to spend a short time in convivial pleasure. He said it was only innocent amusement.

I met him next late in the evening, in the street, unable to reach home. I assisted him thither. He looked ashamed when we next met.

I saw him next, reeling in the street; a confused stare was on his countenance, and words of blasphemy on his tongue. Shame was gone.

I saw him yet once more—he was pale, cold and motionless, and was carried by his friends to his last resting place. In the small procession that followed, every head was cast down, and seemed to shake with uncommon anguish. His father's gray hairs were going to the grave with sorrow. His mother wept to think she had ever given being to such a child.

I thought of his future state. I opened the Bible, and read—"Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of Heaven?"

~~~~~  
**A Truth Mated.**

"If you had avoided rum," said a wealthy though not intelligent grocer to his intemperate neighbor, "your early habits of industry and intellectual abilities would have placed you in any station, and you would now ride in your own carriage." "And if you had never sold rum for me to buy," replied the bacchanal, "you would have been my driver."

# POPULARITY OF THE NEW-YORK ORGAN.

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☐ The New-York Organ has lately come out with a new head, and in a new dress.—The Organ is an able advocate of temperance, and is always full of life and spirit. Our children when they come into the office always hunt out The Organ from our immense pile of exchanges. We wish it a very extensive field of usefulness.—*True Wesleyan.*

☐ The New-York Organ, devoted to temperance, is one of the best papers in the country.—*Skaneateles Democrat.*

☐ The New-York Organ is devoted to temperance and its kindred subjects, and is one of the best papers in the nation.—*Genesee Evangelist.*

☐ The New-York Organ, a paper devoted to the cause of Temperance, is among the best of family papers, and well deserves the patronage bestowed upon it by its friends.—*Onondaga Standard.*

☐ The New-York Organ is one of the best papers in the country.—*Star of Temperance.*

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THE  
PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

A NOVEL.

BY H. DE BALZAC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY A LADY.

New York :

J. WINCHESTER, NEW WORLD PRESS, 30 ANN STREET.

NEW OFFICE, CORNER FULTON AND NASSAU : BURGESS & STRINGER, 222 BROADWAY : J. C. WAD-  
LEIGH, 429 BROADWAY : BRAINARD & CO. BOSTON : R. G. BERFORD, PHILADELPHIA :  
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We beg leave to assure our friends and the public, who ought to be our friends, that the book we shall give them, will be highly creditable both to the editor and publisher; and that it will contain *every fact and incident* detailed by Alison, in as full, circumstantial and clear a manner as is necessary for the full satisfaction of the reader, whether he be old or young, learned or ignorant.

Among the many commendatory letters in reference to our proposed abridgement of this great and faulty work, we refer with pleasure to one from no less distinguished a personage than the Hon. ROGER MINOT BRIDGEMAN, of Connecticut. It is as follows, and singularly corroborative of the views which we a fortnight since, expressed on the subject:

Fairfield, Conn., October 2, 1843.

"MY DEAR SIR—I have taken all but two of the 16 numbers of Alison's history, and have read half of it. It is so filled with tedious and useless details as greatly to impair its value. The period it embraces is one of the most interesting in the annals of the human race, and all the important facts are given with fidelity. But the vast compilation of facts, which are neither interesting nor instructive, prevents its very general perusal.

"I was much gratified to find by the New World of September 23d, that 'Edward S. Gould, Esq.' had abridged the work, reducing it to one octavo volume. I will suspend my future attention to the copy which I now have, and await the arrival of the abridgement. A dollar is stated to be the price. I enclose that sum, and wish you would have the goodness to procure the volume for me, and send it by the first opportunity.

Very truly yours,

R. M. SHERMAN."

The capitals and italics in the foregoing letter are, of course, our own. We are proud to place the name of the venerated writer first among the purchasers of our work—a name dear to all lovers of learning and true patriots. Mr. Sherman's lofty standing and character are too well known to need the record of our pen; but as he is among the great men of a former generation, and has never mingled in the political contests of the day, there may be those who are not aware that he is the most eminent member of the bar in Connecticut, and for many years held the office of judge in the highest court of that State. Approval from such a source is highly gratifying, and counterbalances the false abuse of a thousand such interested parties as Harper and Brothers.

NEW-YORK, October, 1843.

J. WINCHESTER, 30 Ann-street.

THE

PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

A NOVEL.

BY H. DE BALZAC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY A L.



NEW-YORK:

J. WINCHESTER, NEW WORLD PRESS, 30 ANN-STREET.

1844.

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## P R E F A C E .

Among the numerous Novels of Mr. BALZAC, only a very few would, in their tone, suit the American public. The majority of them are intended, it would seem, by the author, to illustrate the existing evils attending the false mode of marriage in France; and the frightful immorality resulting from considering women creatures of affection purely, and not equally with men, subjects of that moral law, which elevates both sexes above weakness. Yet but few of them, perhaps, could be selected, which it would be desirable to translate.

But this sweet tale of domestic life in Flanders—where all the affections so deeply at work are sanctioned by law and religion—must interest every heart of sensibility. It illustrates, too, a species of calamity which never before has been made the subject of representation, and which the author has certainly treated with consummate genius.

In the present instance, it affords to the proprietors of the *New World* no small gratification to furnish the public with a translation so faithful, so elegant, and in every way so worthy of the series, which they design to publish, as this, of that delightful romance, entitled in the original *La Recherche d'Absoluc*. P. B.

NEW-YORK. Dec. 12. 1843.





# THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE CLAES HOUSE.

In the town of Douai, in Flanders, in the rue de Paris, still stands a dwelling, whose features and internal arrangements, in their every detail, retain the character of the old Flemish buildings, so truly appropriate to the manners of that good old country. This dwelling it is necessary to describe, notwithstanding the prejudices which some ignorant persons entertain against didactic details, who would have emotions without their generating principles;—the flower without the grain;—the fruit without the germ. But, should more be required of literary art, than of nature?

So intimately are the events of human life—whether public or private—connected with architecture, that accurate observers could reproduce nations and individuals, in all the truth of their habits, by the remains of their public monuments, or the examination of their domestic relics. Archæology bears the same relation to social nature, that comparative anatomy does to organized nature. A Mosaic reveals a society, as the skeleton of the ichthysaurus underlies the creation;—everything, in the different parts, may be deduced and connected together: from the cause the effect, from the effect the cause may be divined; and the learned man can thus resuscitate antiquity, in all its minutæ. Hence, whenever the fancy of the writer does not pervert the elements of an architectural description, it inspires a prodigious interest. Every man reasons from it to the past; and to relate what is past, seems to tell what is to be. The painter of ancient places always recalls to us vows betrayed, or hopes in flower; and, to compare the present, which disappoints our secret wishes, with the future, that may realize them, is an inexhaustible source of melancholy and sweet satisfaction.

But of all modes of life, which have been exhibited on so large a scale as a nation, the old Flemish life is that which seems most completely to have excluded the uncertainties of human existence. Its family ties and festivals; its gross ease, which seems to promise a perpetuity of comfort; its repose,

which resembles beatitude; and more especially, the calmness and monotony of its simply sensuous happiness, in which enjoyment precludes desire—inspire a species of sweet melancholy. For, however, the impassioned seem to crave the tumults of feeling; not even they can behold, without emotion, the image of that social state where the throbbings of the heart are so well regulated, that by the superficial it seems even cold. The vulgar generally prefer an irregular, normal strength, to that equal strength, which triumphs by perseverance. They have neither time nor patience to prove the immense power hidden under a uniform appearance. To strike the crowd, which is borne away by the stream of life, Michael Angelo, Bianco Capello, Mademoiselle Lavalliere, Becthoven, have gone beyond the mark. But great calculators know that this is not necessary. They have respect only for the strength impressed on the perfect execution, which, informing every great work with a profound calmness, takes captive even the most irregular minds.

The most exquisite materialism was imprinted on all the habits of this essentially economical people. In the comfortable English homestead, we find dry tints, hard tones; but an old Flemish interior, rejoiced the eye with soft colors—a perfect *bonhomme*. It implied labor without fatigue; and the pipe realized the *far niente* of the Neapolitan. Over all was diffused a peaceful feeling of art, for it exhibited the most necessary condition of art—*patience*; and *conscience*, the element which renders all its creations durable. These two words, patience and conscience, describe entirely the old Flemish character, which seemed to exclude the rich shades of poetry, and to render the manners of the country flat as its plains, and cold as its misty heavens. But civilization has displayed its power upon it, in modifying everything, even the effects of climate. The Flemings have found means to throw brilliancy into their fuliginous atmosphere, by the political vicissitudes which have successively subjected them to the Burgundians, the Spaniards, the French, the Germans, and the Dutch. They have appropriated the luxurious scarlet, the rich satins, the magnifi-



exiled families, that, up to the last days of the 18th century, the Claes had remained faithful to their manners and family usages. They allied themselves only to the purest citizens. It was necessary to have a certain number of Bishops, or Burgomasters on the side of a bride, to admit her into their family; and they went to seek their wives at Bruges, at Ghent, at Leige, or in Holland, in order to perpetuate the customs of their domestic hearth. Toward the end of the last century, their society had become insensibly restricted; being confined to seven or eight families of parliamentary noblesse, whose half Spanish manners, costume, and majestic gravity, harmonized well with their habits. The inhabitants of the city regarded them with a kind of religious respect, which had the character of a prejudice. The constant honesty, the stainless loyalty of the Claes, their invariable decorum, caused a superstition as inveterate as that of the feast of Gayant, and it was well expressed in the name of the Claes House. The whole spirit of old Flanders breathed in this habitation, which offered to the antiquary a type of the modest dwellings of the rich Burgers of the middle ages.

The principal ornament of the façade was a door with open folds, garnished with nails, disposed checkerwise, in the centre of which the Claes had sculptured two shuttles laid crosswise. The frame of this door, built of gray stone, was terminated in a pointed arch, which supported a lantern, surmounted by a cross; in which was seen a little statue of St. Geneveive, threading her distaff. Although time had darkened the delicate work of this door and its lantern, the extreme care which the people of the house took of it, enabled the traveller clearly to discern its details; and the chambrante, composed of an assemblage of little columns, preserved a deep gray color, which was as brilliant as if it were varnished. This façade had been cleaned carefully, twice a year, ever since it was built. If the mortar ever broke away in any joint, the gap was immediately filled up; and all the windows, the buttresses, and the stones, were daily brushed more carefully than the most precious furniture in Paris. Indeed, nothing about the house exhibited any trace of decay; and, except the deep tints caused by the age of the bricks, it was in as good preservation as an old book, or an old picture, cherished by an amateur; and which would be always new, if they were not subjected under our atmosphere, to the changes of temperature, to which ourselves also are a prey.

The cloudy sky and humid atmosphere of Flanders, and the shade produced by the narrowness of the street, took away from the Claes House some of the lustre it received from its refined neatness; and ren-

dered it cold and sombre to the eye. A poet would have loved to see grass growing on the light of the lantern, and mosses on the cracks of the free-stone; he would have desired that the ranges of the bricks should be broken, and that swallows should have built their nests in the triple red cases which ornamented them. The finish and nice air of the façade gave to the house a dryly honest and respectable aspect, which certainly would have made a romantic man, who lodged opposite, change his lodgings.

When a visitor had drawn the twisted iron cord of a bell, that hung alongside the door, and a servant from within had opened the fold—in the middle of which was a little grate—it immediately escaped again from his hand, and carried back by a weight, fell, reverberating as heavily under the vaults of a spacious flagged gallery, and into the depths of the mansion, as if it had been made of bronze. This gallery, painted like marble, always fresh, and spread over by a layer of fine sand, led to a large interior court, paved with green polished flagstones. On the left, were the laundry, the kitchen, and the servants' hall; on the right, the wood-house, the coal-house, and common lodging-rooms, whose doors, windows and walls, were ornamented with designs always kept exquisitely neat. The light, *sifted in (tamise)* between the four walls that were painted red, and striped with white lines, contrasted these same reflections and rose-colored tints, which lent to the figures and the smallest details, "mysterious grace," and a fantastic appearance.

A second house, exactly similar, except the door, to the building that fronted the street, and which in Flanders bore the name of the Rear-quarter, was built at the bottom of this court, and served for the habitation of the family. The first room on the ground floor was a parlor, lighted by two windows, looking into the court, and two others, upon the garden, which was as large as the whole house. Two parallel glass doors opened, the one upon the garden, the other upon the court, and corresponded with the street door; so, that at the entrance, the eye could embrace the whole dwelling, and even the pale foliage, which ornamented the bottom of the garden. The front house, designed for reception-rooms, and whose second story was appropriated to strangers, inclosed many works of art, and treasures accumulated by time; but nothing could equal, in the eyes of a Claes, nor in the judgment of a connoisseur, the treasure which adorned that room, where, for two centuries, the family had lived.

The Claes, who had died for the liberty of Ghent, (an artisan of whom this age would have too mean an idea, should the historian omit to say he possessed nearly fourteen thousand marks of silver, gained

by the manufacture of sails for the powerful Venetian marine,) had had for his friend, the celebrated sculptor, Van Huysium, of Bruges, who, for some time, drew upon the purse of the artisan. But a little while before the revolt of Ghent, Van Huysium becoming rich, secretly sculptured, for his friend, a massive ebony wainscoting, on which was represented the principal scenes of the life of Artavelde. The casing, composed of sixteen panels, contained nine hundred distinguished persons; and was considered the master-piece of Van Huysium. It is said that the Captain, who had charge of the Burghers, that Charles the Fifth decided should be hanged the day he entered his native city, proposed to Van Claes to let them all escape, provided he would give him this work of Van Huysium. The weaver had already sent it to Douai. This parlor, therefore, entirely wainscoted with these panels,—which, from respect to the names of the martyr, Van Huysium himself went to Douai to incase in wood, painted with ultramarine and stripes of gold—was indeed the most complete work of that master; for whose least fragments we, at the present day, pay almost their weight in gold.

Over the chimney-piece, Van Claes, painted by Titian, in his official costume, seemed still to be the leader and head of this family, who venerated him as its great man. The chimney, built of stone, with a very high mantelpiece, had been rebuilt, in the last century, of white marble, and supported a ship, and two twisted lamps with five branches, in bad taste, but in massive silver. The four windows were decorated with large curtains of red damask, embroidered with black flowers and lined with white silk; the furniture, of the same material, had been renewed under Louis the Fourteenth. The inlaid floor, evidently modern, was composed of large planks of white wood, inclosed in bands of oak. The old ceiling, formed of cartouches, terminated by a grotesque head, also chiseled by Van Huysium, in the taste of the revival, had, however, been represented, and preserved the tints of the brown oak of Holland. At the four corners of the room, were truncated columns, surmounted by lamps with five branches, similar to those on the chimney-piece. A round table occupied the centre of the room; and along the walls card-tables were symmetrically arranged. Also, at the time this history begins, were to be seen upon two gilt consoles, over the white marble mantelpiece, two glass globes full of water, in which were swimming red, gold, and silver fishes, over a bed of sand and shells. The parlor was at once brilliant and sombre. The ceiling necessarily absorbed the light, without reflecting it; and although, on the side next the garden, the light abounded, and came trampling into the cuttings of ebu-

ny; the windows toward the court giving little light, hardly made visible the stripes of gold, impressed on the opposite walls. This parlor, so magnificent on a fine day, was most of the time filled with soft, ruddy and melancholy tints, such as the sun spreads over the tops of the forests in autumn.

It is not necessary to continue the description of the Claes House into its other parts, where necessarily took place many scenes of this history. It will be sufficient at the moment to relate these principal arrangements.

In the year 1812, toward the last of the month of August, on a Saturday after veapers, a lady was seated on her couch before one of the windows, which looked into the garden. The rays of the sun, falling obliquely upon the house, touched her scarf, crossed the parlor, and faded in fantastic reflection upon the decorated walls of the court, enveloping the lady in a crimson zone, reflected from the curtain, which draped the long window. Had a very indifferent painter taken her at this moment, he would certainly have produced a striking work, in copying that head, so full of grief and melancholy.

The general attitude of the body, and the manner in which the feet were thrown forward, bespoke the dejection of an affliction, that loses the consciousness of physical being, under the powerful concentration of mental anguish, when the soul is occupied with one powerful thought, whose consequences pierce the future. The hands, thrown over the arms of the chair, hung outside, and the head, as if too heavy, reposed upon the back. A very full robe of white cambric muslin, prevented one from judging the proportions of the lady, and her shape was concealed under the folds of her scarf, which was crossed and tied around her. Although the light did not put her face in relief, she seemed better pleased to leave it open to view than expose the rest of her person; and it would have been impossible not to have attended to it almost exclusively. Its expression, which would have struck the most careless child, was rigid and cold stupefaction, notwithstanding the burning tears, which furrowed her cheek. Nothing is more terrible to see, than that extreme grief, of which nature permits the expression only at rare intervals, but which remains upon the face, like congealed lava around a volcano. One would have called her a dying mother, obliged to leave her children in an abyss of misery, without the power to bequeath them any human protection.

The countenance of this lady, who was about forty years, at that time less abundant in beauty than it had been in her youth, presented none of the characteristics of the Flemish women. Her face entirely Spanish,

of brown tint, with little color, and ravaged by the small-pox, arrested attention by the perfection of its oval form; whose outlines presented, notwithstanding the alteration of its lines, a finish of majestic elegance, that reappeared entirely, whenever some effort of the soul restored to it its primitive purity. The feature which gave most distinction to that noble face, was the nose, which, curved like the beak of an eagle, and too much arched toward the middle, seemed to be badly formed within; yet there was in it an indescribable firmness, and the partition of the nostrils was so delicate, that the transparency permitted the light to redder it. The curves of the mouth, whose lips, a little large, were very much folded, expressed the pride inspired by high birth and conscious worth, ennobled by constant happiness, and polished education. It was a face at once powerful and feminine, whose beauty we might dispute, but which commanded the attention. Then, although this woman passed as ugly, here and there in the world, yet, even while she was a girl, some men returned to look at her, strongly moved by the passionate ardor expressed by her head, and by the signs of an inexhaustible tenderness; and became conscious of a charm irreconcilable with her visible defects; for she was short, lame, hump-backed, and some persons even persisted in denying her talent. She resembled much her grandfather, the Duke of Casa Real, a Spanish Grandee.

But, at this moment, the charm which formerly so despotically seized poetic souls, gushed from her mind, more powerfully than at any moment of her past life. Sometimes her eyes rested on the glass globe near her, and she looked at the fishes, but without seeing; then she raised them with a despairing movement, as if to invoke Heaven; for her sufferings seemed to be of that kind which must remain concealed from the world, and which a woman can confide only to her God. The silence was undisturbed, except by the crickets and grasshoppers that chirped in the little garden, and by the dull sound of plates and chairs moved by a domestic, who was serving dinner in the room contiguous to the parlor.

At this moment, a sound seemed to strike the afflicted woman's ear; she appeared to collect herself, wiped away her tears with her handkerchief, destroyed the expression of grief impressed upon her features, and tried to smile; and soon one would have believed her in that state of indifference, in which a life free from disquietude leaves us. Whether the habit of living in that house, to which her infirmities confined her, had caused her to recognize effects naturally imperceptible to others, and to which persons of extremely refined feeling are a prey; or, whether nature had compensated for the physical misfortunes with which she was loaded, by giv-

ing more delicate sensations to her, than to beings more advantageously organized;—she had heard the steps of a man in the gallery, by which the rooms in front communicated with the rear-quarter.

The sound soon became more distinct, and was drawing near; and—without the power, by which a creature so impassioned as this woman, had frequently annihilated time and space to unite herself to her other self—a stranger could have easily distinguished the steps of a man on the stairs, descending from the gallery to the parlor; and certainly, at the sound of those steps, the most inattentive mind would have been awakened to thought. It was impossible to listen coldly. A precipitant or jerking step frightens us. When a man cries fire, his feet speak as loud as his voice. If this is so, a contrary step must cause us no less powerful impressions. Now, the grave slowness, the dragging step of this man, would have merely tired an unreflecting person; but an observer, or a nervous person, would have experienced a feeling allied to terror; in listening to the measured sound of feet, from which life seemed absent, and which made the boards creak, as if struck alternately by two metallic weights. It was either the undecided and dull step of an old man, or that of a thinker, who carried the world with him.

When this man had descended the last step, putting his feet upon the marble floor by a hesitating movement, he remained for a moment upon the landing-place; and a light shudder, like the sensation produced by the electric spark, agitated the woman sitting in the chair; but, at the same time, the sweetest smile animated her lips, and her countenance, moved by the expectation of a pleasure, became resplendent as a beautiful Italian Madonna. She suddenly found strength to drive back her terrors to the bottom of her soul; then she turned her head toward the panels of the door, which was about to open, at the corner of the parlor; and which was immediately pushed, so roughly, that the poor creature appeared to have partaken of the commotion. Immediately Balthazer Claes entered, taking some steps, without looking at his wife, (or, if he looked at her, he did not seem to see her;) and remained standing, in the middle of the parlor, resting on his hand his head, slightly bent. A horrible pang, to which this woman could not accustom herself—although it returned frequently, and every day straitened her heart, dissipated her smile, furrowed her brown brow, between the eyebrows, toward that line, which is deepened there, by the frequent expression of extreme feeling—filled her eyes with tears; but she dried them suddenly, in looking at Balthazer.

Certainly, it was impossible not to be profoundly impressed by this head of the Claes

family. In his youth he resembled the sublime martyr, who threatened Charles the V. with being another Artavelde; but now he appeared more than sixty years old, although he was only fifty, and his premature old age had destroyed that noble resemblance. His tall figure was slightly bent, either because his labors obliged him to stoop, or because his spine was curved by the weight of his head. He had a large chest, a square bust; but the lower parts of his body were slender, although nervous. This discord in an organization, once evidently perfect, puzzled the mind, which sought to explain, by some singularity of existence, the reasons of this fantastic form. His abundant white hair, little cared for, fell over his shoulders in a disorder that harmonized with the general oddity of his appearance. His large brow exhibited the protuberances, in which Gull has placed the poetic world. His eyes, of a clear and rich blue, had the sharp vivacity frequently remarked in great seekers after hidden causes. His nose, which had doubtless been perfect, was elongated; and the nostrils seemed gracefully to open more and more, by an involuntary tension of the olfactory muscles. His cheek bones were high; and his cheeks, already thin, appeared from that circumstance, yet more hollow; his mouth, full of grace, was drawn between the nose and a short chin, but very noble. Nevertheless, the form of his face was rather long than oval; and that scientific system, which attributes to each countenance a resemblance to the face of an animal, would certainly have found one proof more in the face of Balthazer Claes, which it would have compared to the head of a horse. His skin clung to his bones, as if some secret fire incessantly dried it; and for moments, when he looked into space, as if to find there the realization of his hopes, one would have said, that he breathed out of his nostrils the flame with which his soul was consumed. Indeed, the profound thought of a great genius animated his pale countenance—which was strongly furrowed with wrinkles, and exceedingly thin—and sat upon his brow, which had folds like those of an old king full of cares; but especially were they seen in his brilliant eyes, whose fire seemed to be alike increased by the chastening arising from the tyranny of ideas, and by the internal heat of a vast intelligence. Those eyes, deeply sunk in their orbits, were rendered still more singularly hollow, by incessant vigils, and by the terrible reaction of hopes, always deceived, but always springing anew.

The jealous fanaticism, inspired by science and art, were further betrayed in this remarkable man, by a constant and strange abstraction; of which his countenance and air gave proofs, and which agreed with the magnificent monstrosity of his visage. His large hairy hands were dirty; his long nails

had very deep black lines at their extremities. Alone in the house, the master seemed to have the privilege of being slovenly. His shoes were stringless and not clean; his black cloth pantaloons were full of stains; his waistcoat was unbuttoned; his cravat, put on crossways, and ragged green coat, completed that fantastic assemblage of little and great things, which generally discloses the misery engendered by vice, but which in Claes was the negligence of genius. Nothing more resembles vice than genius; for is it not a constant excess which devours time, money, the body, and, even more rapidly than bad passions, brings a man to the hospital? And is it not the only one among the vices to which men refuse to give credit, and whose misfortunes they never pardon? The benefits of it are too remote to enable the social state to make any account with its living possessor.

But notwithstanding his continual forgetfulness of the present, if Balthazer Claes for a moment quitted his mysterious contemplations—if some sweet and social intention re-animated his thoughtful countenance—if his fixed eyes lost their intense severity in the expression of a sentiment—if he looked around him and came back, as it were, to common life; it was difficult not to yield involuntary homage to the seducing beauty of his face and the gracious spirit expressed there: so that any one seeing him at such a time, would regret that he did not belong to the world, and would involuntarily exclaim, "he was beautiful in his youth!" But certainly Balthazer Claes had never been more poetic than at this moment. Javater would certainly have been arrested by that head, so full of patience, of Flemish loyalty, of burgher perseverance, of candid morality; where everything was large and grand, and where passion was calmed by its own strength. His morals had ever been pure, his word sacred, his friendship constant, his devotedness complete; but the wish to employ his faculties for the profit of his country, the world, or his family, had disappeared. Bound to watch for the happiness of his household, to manage his fortune for his children, and lead them to a noble future, he seemed to live, forgetful of those duties and affections, in communication with some familiar spirit. To a priest, he would have appeared full of the word of God; an artist would have saluted him as a great master; an enthusiast would have taken him for a scer of the Swedenborgian church.

The torn, wild costume which this man wore, was contrasted singularly with the refined graces of the woman who studied him with so much sadness. Deformed persons, who have mind and a beautiful soul, are exquisitely tasteful in their toilet. They either dress simply—comprehending that their charms are all moral; or they know how to



make the misfortune of their proportions forgotten, by a sort of elegance which diverts the eye and occupies the mind of those who see them. This woman not only had a generous soul, but she loved Balthazer Claes with that instinct of her sex that gives a foretaste of the intelligence of angels. Educated in one of the most illustrious families in Belgium, she would have learned taste if nature had not endowed her with it; but further enlightened by the desire of constantly pleasing the man whom she loved, she knew how to dress elegantly, and conceal the two faults of her conformation—a curved spine and a large shoulder. Having first looked into the court, and then into the garden, as if to assure herself that she was alone with Balthazer, she addressed him in a sweet voice, full of the subdued tenderness which distinguishes the Flemings; for love had long since driven from between her husband and herself, the pride of a Spanish Grandee:

"Balthazer! thou art much occupied. It is the thirty-third Sabbath that thou hast not attended mass or vespers."

Claes did not reply. His wife bent her head, joined her hands, and waited. She knew that his silence was caused by no contempt or disdain, but by the tyranny of a pre-occupied mind. He was one of those men, who preserve long in the depths of their hearts the delicacies of youth; and he would not have forgiven himself for wounding, by a wanton negligence, a woman already oppressed with consciousness of physical deformity. He was one of the few men who know that a word, a look, can efface years of happiness; and are immeasurably more cruel, when put in contrast with a constant sweetness—for our nature resents the pain of discord in happiness, more than it experiences enjoyment from meeting a pleasure in the midst of misfortune.

Not for some moments did he appear to wake up; when, looking cheerfully around him, he repeated, "Vespers! oh! the children are at vespers!"

He stepped forward to look at the garden, everywhere magnificent with tulips; but suddenly stopping as if he struck against a wall, he cried out, "Why did they not combine in that time!"

"Oh! he has gone mad!" exclaimed his wife, with profound terror.

But, in order to understand this scene, it is indispensable to throw a glance back upon the previous life of Balthazer Claes, and the grand-daughter of the Duke of Casa Real.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FLEMISH HOUSEHOLD.

In the year 1783, Balthazer Claes was a young man of about twenty-two, and what is now called in France, a handsome man.

He went to Paris to finish his education, where he formed excellent manners in the society of Madame Egmont, the Count of Horr, the Prince of Artemberg, the Spanish ambassador, Helvetius, and many Frenchmen of Belgic descent, as well as native Belgians, whose birth and fortune placed them among the great lords who, at that time, gave the *ton*. There young Claes had found relations and friends, who introduced him to the world of fashion just as it was tottering to its fall; but, like most young people, he was more attracted at first by glory and science, than by vanity. He associated with learned men, and particularly with Lavoisier, who, at that time, was better known by his immense fortune as Farmer-general, than by his chemical discoveries; although now his fame as a chemist has made the Farmer-general forgotten. Balthazer was strongly attracted to the science which Lavoisier cultivated, and became his ardent disciple. But he was beautiful as Helvetius, and the ladies of Paris soon taught him to distil exclusively the spirit of love; and although he had embraced the study with so much ardor, and Lavoisier had awarded him great praise, he abandoned his master to listen to the mistresses of taste, from whom the young take their last lesson in the knowledge of life, and are fashioned to the customs of that lofty society which forms in Europe one family. This enervating dream of success lasted, however, but a short time. He soon left Paris, fatigued with that harassing life that was so little in unison with his ardent soul and loving heart. Domestic life, so sweet, so calm, as it came back on him in his reminiscences of Flanders, appeared to him better suited to the ambition of his heart and to his whole character. The gilded saloons of Paris had not effaced the memory of the melodies of the brown parlor and little garden where his infancy had flown by so happily. There was neither friends nor country in Paris. It is the city of the cosmopolite, the worldling, or the devotee of art and science.

The child of Flanders returned to Douai, like a bird of passage. He wept with joy in entering it on a day of the triumph of Flemish recollections, the Feast of Gayant, a sweet superstition, whose introduction was contemporary with the emigration of his family to Douai. The death of his father and mother left the Claes House deserted, and he occupied it for some time; and when the first burst of filial grief was over, he desired to complete his happy existence by marriage. According to the old custom of the family, he went to seek a wife at Bruges, at Andevarde, and at Antwerp, but met no one that pleased him. Doubtless, he had some peculiar ideas upon marriage; for, from his youth, he had not been accustomed to walk in the common path.

One day, being at Ghent, he heard one of his relations speak of a lady of Brussels, whose merits became the subject of lively discussion. One of the party found Mademoiselle Termininck unfortunate, and deformed, notwithstanding her beauty; the other found her beautiful, notwithstanding her too short foot, and her large shoulder. The old cousin of Balthazer said, that whether beautiful or not, she had a soul, for which he would marry her, were he a marrying man; and he proceeded to relate, how she had renounced a fortune left her by her parents, to procure for a younger brother a marriage worthy of his name; and by preferring his happiness to her own, had sacrificed to him her whole life; for it was not to be supposed that, old and without fortune she would marry, since no one had offered his hand when she was young and an heiress. Soon after this conversation, Balthazer Claes sought an introduction to Mademoiselle Termininck, at that time about twenty-five years of age, with whom he was immediately delighted.

At first, Josephine Termininck believed herself the object of a caprice, and refused to listen to Balthazer. But passion is contagious; and for a poor, hump-backed girl, to inspire with love a young, well-proportioned man, was too flattering to the heart, not to affect her sensibility, and she consented to admit his attentions.

Would it not take a volume, adequately to paint the love of this young girl, humbly submissive to the opinion that proclaimed her ugly, while she felt the irresistible charm produced by true sentiment? There would be the ferocious jealousies at the aspect of happiness; cruel wishes of vengeance against the rival, who might be thought to steal a look; emotions and terrors unknown to other women, and which it would be ruin to betray. Doubt, so dramatic in love, would be the secret of an analysis, essentially minute, where all would find again the lost poesy of their own first agitations; those sublime exaltations, at the bottom of the heart, of which the countenance says nothing; the fear of being misunderstood, and the illimitable joy, at having been understood; that magnetic hesitation, and those melting advances, which give to the eyes innumerable shadings; those irresolute suicides, caused by a word, and followed by a profound melancholy, in its turn dissipated by an intonation of voice, as deep as the sentiment of which it reveals the inconceivable perseverance; those trembling looks, which cover terrible courage; those sudden promptings to speech and action, repressed by their own violence; that penetrating eloquence of words without significance, pronounced by a quivering voice; the mysterious effects of that primitive modesty of soul, and that divine discretion, which yields, however generously, without a draw-

back, and gives an exquisite relish to unknown devotion; in short, all the beauty of young love—all the weakness of the spring-time of its power.

Mademoiselle Termininck was a coquette, from magnanimity of soul. The sense of her apparent imperfections, rendered her as difficult as if she had had great beauty. The fear of one day displeasing, awakened her pride, destroyed her confidence, and gave her courage to keep in the bottom of her heart those first successes, felicities which other women love to publish by their airs, and which they are proud to display. The more she loved Balthazer, the less she dared to express to him her sentiments. The gesture, the look, the reply, or the question of a pretty woman, which are flattering to a man,—would they not become, in her, humiliating speculations? A beautiful woman can easily be herself; the world always excuses her stupidity and her folly: but a look will arrest the most magnificent expression upon the lips of an ugly woman; intimidate her eyes, increase the awkwardness of her gestures, and embarrass her air. She knows that she is forbidden to make a mistake; for every one refuses her the boon of repairing it, and no one furnishes her an occasion of doing so. The necessity of being always perfect, strains her faculties, and congeals their exercise. She can live, only, in an atmosphere of angelic indulgence; but where are the hearts from which indulgence flows to her, without a stain of bitter and wounding pity?

Those thoughts, to which she had been accustomed by the horrible politeness of the world; and those looks, which, more cruel than injuries, aggravate misfortunes by commiserating them, oppressed Mademoiselle Termininck, causing her constant pain, and forcing to the depths of her soul her most delicious impressions. They struck with coldness her attitudes and her looks; she was amorous of concealment; she dared not meet eloquence or beauty, except in solitude; and unfortunate by day, she would have been ravishing, if she had been allowed to live only by night. She often disdained the dress which would have hidden her defects; but she displayed her pretty foot, and her magnificent hand, to try love at the risk of losing it—and her Spanish eyes grew brilliant, when she perceived that Balthazer found her beautiful in *negligé*.

Nevertheless, distrust poisoned the rare moments, when she ventured to analyze her happiness. She soon asked herself, if Claes did not seek to marry her, in order to have a slave in his house; if he had not some secret imperfections, which obliged him to content himself with a poor lame girl. These perpetual anxieties, gave an unheard of value to hours, when she believed in the permanence and sincerity of a love, which would

avenge her on the world. She challenged delicate discussions, by exaggerating her ugliness, in order to penetrate to the depths of her lover's conscience, and then drew from Balthazer unflattering truths. But she loved the embarrassment in which he found himself, when she had brought him to say, that what we love in a woman, is, above all things, a beautiful soul, and that devotion which renders all the days of life happy; that after some years of marriage, the most charming woman on earth is, for a husband, equivalent to the most ugly. In short, after having stated that which he thought, in paradoxes which tended to diminish the value of beauty, he suddenly perceived what his propositions involved; and discovered all the goodness of his heart, by the delicacy of the transitions, by which he knew how to prove to Mademoiselle Terminck that she was perfect for him.

She had, then, all the merit of the most beautiful devotedness, for she despaired of being always loved; but the perspective of a struggle, in which sentiment should prevail over beauty, tempted her;—she also felt a grandeur, in giving herself, without confidence of continued return; in short, happiness, however brief might be its duration, would cost her too dear for her to refuse to taste it. These uncertainties and conflicts, communicated the charm of passion to this legal pursuit, and inspired in Balthazer a love almost chivalric.

The marriage took place in the year 1795. They returned to Douai, to pass the first days of their union in the patriarchal mansion of the Claes, to whose treasures Mademoiselle Terminck added some pictures of Murillo and Velasquez, her mother's diamonds, and the magnificent presents sent her by her brother, recently become Duke of Casa Real.

Few women have been happier than Madame Claes. Her happiness lasted fifteen years, without the slightest cloud, and, like living light, infused itself into the minutest details of existence. Most men have inequalities of character, which produce continual discussions, and deprive home of that harmony which is the beau ideal of a household;—for most men have pettinesses, and pettinesses engender bickerings. One will be honest and active, but hard and exacting; another will be good, but headstrong; this one will love his wife, but be uncertain in his wishes; that one, preoccupied by ambition, will acquit himself of his sentiments as a debt; and, if he gives himself up to the vanities of fortune, he destroys the happiness of every day. In short, men of the common herd are essentially incomplete. On the other hand, people of talent are variable as barometers; genius alone is essentially good. Thus, happiness is found only at the extremity of the moral scale. The good blockhead, and the man of genius, alone—the one by feeble-

ness, the other by force, are capable of that constant gentleness, in which the asperities of life are lost. With one it is indifference and passivity; with the other, it is indulgence and continuity of sublime thought, of which he is the interpreter, and which ought to be symbolized in the principle, as well as in the application. They are both simple and naive: but, in the former, it is emptiness; in the latter, depth. Therefore, adroit women are generally disposed to take a blockhead, as the best alternative, to a great man.

Balthazer, although he shared the philosophical principles of the eighteenth century, installed in his house, even up to the year 1801, notwithstanding all risks, a Catholic priest—that he might not disturb the Spanish fanaticism that his wife had imbibed with her mother's milk; and when the Roman Catholic worship was reestablished in France, he accompanied her to mass every Sunday. This attachment never laid aside the forms of passion. He never displayed that authority whose protection women love, but which, in this instance, might resemble pity. Then, by the most ingenious adulation, he treated her as an equal, and let transpire those amiable raileries, that a man permits himself to use toward a beautiful woman, as if to brave her superiority. As to her, the smile of happiness always embellished her lips, and her speech was always full of sweetness. He loved her for herself and for himself, with an ardor, which was a continual eulogy upon the qualities and beauties of a woman. Fidelity, after the effect of social principle, of religion, or of calculation in the husband, seemed involuntary in him, and never lost the sweet flatteries of the first days of love. Duty was the only obligation of marriage they never found it necessary to recognize.

Balthazer Claes found, also, in Mademoiselle Terminck, a constant and complete realization of all his hopes. In her, the heart was always filled without satiety, and the man was always happy. The Spanish blood was not belied in the grand-daughter of Casa Real; it gave her the instinct of that science, which knows how to vary pleasure infinitely; and she had, besides, that boundless devotion, which is the genius of her sex, as it is its beauty. Her love was the blind fanaticism, which would have led her to die, on an indication of his wish; for the delicacy of Balthazer had exalted within her the most generous sentiments of the woman, and inspired an imperious necessity of giving more than she received. This mutual exchange of a happiness, mutually lavished, threw the principle of life visibly out of herself, and spread a growing love over her words, looks and actions. On both sides, gratitude fertilized and varied the life of the heart; so that the certainty of being everything to each other, excluded pettinesses, by aggrandizing the least accessories of existence.

And is not the deformed woman, whom her husband finds beautiful; the lame woman, whom he does not wish otherwise; the aged woman, who appears to him young—the happiest existence in the female world? Human passion cannot go beyond that. Is it not the glory of a woman to make that adored in her, which appeared a defect? To forget that a lame woman is not walking straight, is the fascination of a moment; but to love her because she is lame, is the deification of a defect. Perhaps, we should write in the gospel of woman, *Blessed are the imperfect; to them belongs the kingdom of love!*

And certainly beauty is a misfortune to a woman. This transient flower goes for too much in the sentiment she inspires. Do we not love it, as we marry a rich heiress? But the love which a woman can inspire, who is disinherited of the frail advantages, after which the children of Adam run, is the true love; the passion unknown to the world; mysterious; an ardent embrace of the soul, a sentiment to which the day of disenchantment never comes. This woman has graces, which do not control society, indeed; but she is beautiful to the purpose, and gathers too much glory, in making her imperfections forgotten, not to constantly succeed in doing so. The most celebrated attachments in history, were all inspired by women, in whom the vulgar would have found defects. Cleopatra, Joanna of Naples, Diana of Poitiers, Mademoiselle de Vallière, Madame Pompadour—in short, most of the women whom love has rendered celebrated, were not without imperfections and infirmities; while most women whose beauty is described to us as perfect, have been finally unhappy in their love. This apparent caprice must have its cause. Perhaps, men live by sentiment more than by pleasure; perhaps the charm, wholly physical, of a beautiful woman, has its bounds; while the charm, essentially moral, of a woman of moderate beauty, is infinite. Is not this the moral of the fable of the thousand and one nights? A wife of Henry VIII. who had been ugly, would have defied the axe, and subdued the inconstancy of the master.

By a caprice, sufficiently explicable in a girl of Spanish origin, Madame Claes was ignorant. She knew how to read and write; but, up to the age of twenty, when her parents withdrew her from the convent, she had only read ascetic works. On entering the world, she at first had a thirst for the pleasures of the world, and learned only the vain science of the toilet; but she was so profoundly humiliated by her ignorance, that she dare not mingle in any conversation, and passed for having little talent. Her mystic education had, however, resulted in leaving the sentiments in all their strength, and in not spoiling her natural talent. But stupid and ugly, as an heiress, in the eyes of the

world, she became intellectual and beautiful for her husband! Balthazer tried, during the first years of their marriage, to give her such knowledge as she needed to pass well in the world; but he was, doubtless, too late—she had only the memory of the heart. She forgot nothing which Claes said, relating to themselves. She remembered the smallest circumstance of her happy life; but recalled not, on the morrow, the lesson of the preceding evening. This ignorance would have caused great discord between another husband and wife, but Madame Claes derived from passion a simple wisdom. She loved her husband so piously, so holily, and the desire of preserving his happiness rendered her so adroit, that she seemed always to comprehend him, and rarely allowed those moments when she could not understand him. Besides, when two persons love each other so much, that every day is for them like the first days of their passion, there exists in this fruitful happiness, phenomena, which change all the conditions of life. Is it not, then, like an infancy, unconscious of everything but laughter, joy, and pleasure? When life is very active; when its fires are very warm, man neither thinks nor discusses; he lets himself be borne on the current without regarding the shores.

But never did a woman understand, better than Madame Claes, her womanly sphere. She had the Flemish submission, which rendered the domestic hearth so attractive, and to which her Spanish pride gave a more exalted relish. She was, to strangers, imposing, and knew how to command respect by a look, in which flashed out all the feeling of her worth and her nobility; but before Claes, she trembled—for she had ended by putting him so high and so near God, in reporting to him every action of her life, and her least thoughts, that her love was not without a tinge of respectful fear, which gave it poignancy. She assumed, with pride, all the Flemish habits, and made it her ambition to render domestic life perfectly happy; to preserve the smallest details of the house in classic neatness; to possess only things of an absolute excellence; to maintain her table in the most delicate details, and to keep all her housekeeping in harmony with the life of the heart.

They had two boys and two girls. The oldest, named Margaret, was born in the year 1796. The youngest child was a boy of three years old, and named Lucien Balthazer. The maternal sentiment in Madame Claes, was almost equal to her love for her husband; and there took place in her soul, especially in the last part of her life, a horrible conflict between these two powerful sentiments—for one became in some degree the enemy of the other. The tears and terrors, impressed on her countenance at the moment when this recital commences, were

caused by the fear of having already sacrificed her children to her husband.

In the year 1805, the brother of Madame Claes died, without leaving any children. The old Spanish law was opposed to his sister's succeeding to the territorial possessions, which belonged to the titles of the house. But he left her by will a legacy of about sixty thousand ducats, which the heirs of the title did not dispute. Although the sentiment which united her to Balthazer Claes was such, that no idea of interest was ever attached to it, Josephine experienced a sort of contentment at possessing a fortune equal to that of her husband; and was happy to be able to offer him something, in her turn, after having so nobly received everything from him. Chance, therefore, brought about that this marriage, in which calculators saw only folly, should become, as a matter of interest, an excellent thing in the eyes of the world. The employment of this fortune was difficult to determine. The house of Claes was so rich—furnished in pictures and other valuable works of art—that it seemed difficult to add anything worthy of those already found there. The taste of the family had accumulated treasures. One generation had fancied fine pictures, and the necessity of completing the collection that was begun, had rendered taste for painting hereditary. The hundred pictures which ornamented the gallery that led from the rear-quarter to the reception-rooms in front, had required three centuries of patient research; and there were many of equal value in the ante-chambers. There were celebrated pieces by Rubens, Remisdael, Van Dyck, Zerburg, Gerard Dow, Teniers, Mèris, Paul Potter, Wou-vernans, Rembrandt, and Holbein. The Italian and French pictures were less in number, but all authentic and capital. Another generation had had a fancy for services of Japan and Chinese porcelain; this one had a passion for furniture, that one for plate. In short, each of the Claes had had his mania—one of the most striking traits of the Flemish character. The father of Balthazer, one of the old Tulipomaniacs, the last wreck of the Holland Society, had left one of the richest collections of bulbs that was known. Besides this rich inheritance, which represented an enormous capital—and which magnificently furnished this old mansion, simple on the outside and like a shell, in the interior **pearled and decked with the richest colors**—Balthazer Claes possessed a country-house in the plain of Orchies. The retinue of his house was based upon his revenues; and twelve hundred ducats a year put his expenses on a level with those of the richest persons of the city. This circumstance necessarily made Monsieur and Madame Claes reflect upon the effects of the civil code, which, by ordering an equal division of fortunes, would infallibly destroy the house of

Claes and its old museum, and leave each of the children almost poor. They therefore determined to place the fortune which Madame Claes inherited, in such a way as to give each of the children a position similar to that of the father. Balthazer resolved, therefore, not to change his retinue; and warily counselled his wife to purchase the woods of Waignes, a little injured by the wars which had taken place, but which, well taken care of, two years hence, would become of immense value. The inheritance of Madame Claes was made use of, therefore, to make this beautiful and wise purchase.

The high society of Douai, which M. Claes frequented, had so well appreciated the fine character of his wife, that, by a species of tacit convention, she was exempted from the duties to which provincial people so strongly cling. She went rarely into the world; but the world came to her. She received company every Wednesday, and gave three grand dinners a month. Every one felt that she was most at ease in her own house, where, besides, her love of her husband retained her, and the education of her children claimed her care. She passed part of the year in the country, and the winter season in the city. Such, up to the year 1809, was the conduct of this household. The life of these two beings, secretly full of love and joy, was exteriorly like all others. The passion of Balthazer Claes for his wife, and which his wife knew how to perpetuate, seemed, as he observed himself, to employ his innate constancy in the culture of happiness, which was of more value than that of tulips, toward which he inclined from his infancy; and dispensed him from the necessity of having a mania, as his ancestors had had. But at the end of this year, the mind and the manners of Balthazer underwent sad alterations, which began so naturally, that at first Madame Claes did not think it necessary to ask the cause. Her womanly delicacy and her habits of submission, had always led her to wait for the confidence of Balthazer, which was guaranteed to her by an affection so true, that it gave no room for jealousy. Although certain to obtain a reply when she allowed herself a curious question, she always preserved, from her first impressions in life, the fear of a refusal. Besides, the moral malady of her husband had phases, and arrived only by shades, progressively stronger, to that intolerable violence which at length destroyed the happiness of his household. However he was occupied, he remained, nevertheless, during many months, conversable and affectionate. The change in his character only manifested itself by frequent abstractions. Madame Claes, for a long time, hoped to learn from her husband the secret of his labors. Perhaps, he wished not to avow it, until the moment in which it ap-

proached useful results; for most men have a pride which compels them to conceal their conflicts, and to show themselves only when victorious. Perhaps, on the day of triumph domestic happiness would come back, so much more glowing, that Balthazer would perceive the gap in his life of love, to which his heart could not be an accomplice. She knew him sufficiently to know, that he would not pardon himself for having rendered his Pepita less happy, during many months. The poor wife was therefore silent, and experienced a kind of joy in suffering by him and for him. Had not her passion a tinge of that Spanish piety which never separates faith from love? She waited for the return of affection, saying, every evening, "It will come to-morrow;" and treating her happiness as an absentee.

She conceived her last child in the midst of these secret troubles. Horrible revelation of a future grief! In that circumstance her womanly pride, wounded for the first time, caused her to sound the depth of the unknown abyss. From that moment the situation of Balthazer grew worse. This man, who, not long ago, plunged incessantly in domestic joys—played for whole hours with his children, rolled with them upon the carpet of the parlor, or in the alleys of the garden, and seemed unable to live, except under the black eyes of his Pepita—did not perceive the indisposition of his wife; forgot to live in his family; forgot himself. The longer Madame Claes delayed to ask him the subject of his occupations, the less she dared do it: at the idea of it, her blood boiled, and her voice failed. When she was seriously alarmed, she thought she had ceased to please her husband. This fear occupied her—put her into despair, excited her imagination, and was the beginning of melancholy hours and sad reveries. She justified Balthazer at the expense of finding herself old and ugly. Then she glanced at a generous explanation, although humiliating to her, imagining the labor with which he preserved a negative fidelity; and she wished to yield to him his independence, by leaving him to establish for himself one of those secret divorces;—a means of happiness, which many families appear to enjoy. Nevertheless, before saying adieu to conjugal life, she tried to read the depths of that closed heart. In short, she saw Balthazer become indifferent to all which he had loved, neglect his tulips in flower, and think no more of his children. Without doubt he delivered himself to some passion beyond the heart, but which, according to women, does not the less dry up the heart. Love was asleep, not fled; that was a consolation; but the misfortune remained the same.

The continuity of this state of things, was explained by the word *hope*, the secret of all these conjugal situations. At the moment

the poor woman arrived at a degree of despair, which lent her courage to interrogate her husband; and precisely then she found some sweet moments, during which Balthazer proved to her, that if he was the victim of some diabolical thoughts, they sometimes permitted him to come back to himself. During these moments, in which heaven was more bright to her, she was too eager to enjoy her happiness, to trouble him by importunities. Then, when she was emboldened to question Balthazer—at the moment even, when she was going to speak, he would perhaps escape, by quitting her roughly, or falling into the abyss of meditation, from which nothing could draw him.

Soon the reaction of the moral upon the physical began its ravages; at first imperceptibly, but, nevertheless, seized by the eye of a loving woman, who followed the secret thought of her husband, in its bad manifestation. Sometimes she had difficulty in retaining her tears, in seeing him, after dinner, plunge into an easy-chair, at the corner of the fire, dull and pensive; his eyes fixed upon the brown panels, without perceiving the silence around him. She observed with terror the insensible changes, which degraded that face, that love had made so sublime to her. Every day, the life of the soul seemed retiring inward, and the physical frame remained more and more without expression. Sometimes the eyes took a glassy color; it seemed as if sight turned inward. Sometimes when the children were in bed, and after some hours of silence and solitude, the poor Pepita ventured to question; "My friend, do you suffer?" Balthazer did not reply; or, if he replied, he came back to himself with a start, like a man roused from sleep, and uttered a dry, hollow "no!" which fell, like a weight, upon the heart of his trembling wife.

Although she hid from her friends the strange situation in which she found herself, she was obliged to speak of him. The whole city spoke of the derangement of M. Claes; as, in many similar circumstances, society had taken him for a subject of its investigation, and knew many details unknown to Madame Claes. Notwithstanding the silence of politeness, some friends testified to her such lively inquietude, that she was obliged to justify the singularities of her husband.

M. Balthazer had, she said, undertaken a great work, which absorbed him; but of which, the success would be a subject of glory to his family and his country.

This mysterious explanation flattered too much the ambition of the city, where, more than in any other, reigned the love of country and the desire of its glory, not to produce a reaction in favor of M. Claes. The suppositions of his wife were, up to a certain point, sufficiently well founded. Many work-

men. of different professions, had for a long time labored in the loft in front of the house, where Balthazer resorted in the morning, and after having made his retreat there more and more protracted, to which he insensibly accustomed his wife and family, he finally came to dwell there for whole days. But, unheard of grief! Madame Claes learned, through the humiliating confidence of her good friends—astonished at her ignorance—that her husband was continually buying in Paris, philosophical instruments, precious materials, books, machines, and was ruining himself in seeking for the Philosopher's Stone! Her thoughtful friends added, that it became her to think of her children, of her own future: it would be criminal not to employ her influence to turn her husband from the fatal way in which he was going. Although Madame Claes resumed the magnificent bearing of the great lady, to impose silence on this absurd discourse, she was seized with terror in spite of her apparent assurance. She resolved to quit her part of self-denial: and soon brought about one of those situations, during which a woman is upon the foot of equality with her husband; and with less of trembling fear, she dared demand of Balthazer the reason of his change, and the motive of his constant retreat. The Fleming knit his eyebrows, and replied: "My dear, thou couldst comprehend nothing of it."

One day Josephine insisted farther, complaining, with sweetness, of not sharing in all the thoughts of him whose life she shared. "Well, since it interests thee so much," said he, taking his wife upon his knee, and gently playing with her black hair, "I will tell thee that I have become a chemist, and am the happiest man in the world!"

Two years after the winter when M. Claes became a chemist, his house had changed its aspect. Whether people were shocked at the perpetual abstraction of the learned man, or thought that they should disturb him; or whether secret anxieties had rendered Madame Claes less agreeable, only her most intimate friends continued to visit her. Balthazer took no part in society; but shut himself up in his laboratory, during whole days, never appearing in the bosom of his family until the hour of dinner. The second year, he ceased to pass the summer season at his country-house, which his wife did not wish to inhabit alone. Sometimes he went out to walk, and did not return till the next day, leaving Madame Claes during a whole night the prey to mortal inquietudes; when, after having made fruitless search for him in a city, whose gates were closed at night, according to the custom of fortified places; she could not send in pursuit of him into the country, and could no longer mingle a hope with the anguish of expectation, but was forced to suffer until next day. On these occasions, Balthazer had simply forgotten the

hour of closing the gates, and arrived on the morrow, wholly unconscious of the tortures that his abstractions imposed upon his family. The happiness of seeing him again, was to his wife a crisis as dangerous as apprehension could be; but she was silent, she dared not question him; for when she ventured to do it, he replied with an air of surprise; "Well! what! cannot one walk?" The passions know not how to deceive us; and Madame Claes's inquietudes justified, therefore, the common reports, to which she had desired to give the lie. Her youth had habituated her to perceive, beforehand, the polite pity of the world, and not to undergo it. She, therefore, shut herself up more strictly in the inclosure of her house, until her last friends deserted her.

Disorder in dress, always so degrading to a man of high rank, became such in Balthazer, that, among her different causes of chagrin, this was not one the least sensible; and severely afflicted a woman habituated to the exquisite neatness of Flanders. In concert with Lemulquinier, valet de chambre of her husband, Josephine remedied, for some time, the daily devastations in his clothing. But it was necessary to give this up; for, the very day in which, unknown to Balthazer, new clothes had been substituted for those which were stained, torn, or defaced with holes, he made rags of them.

Thus this woman, who had been so happy, during fifteen years, and whose jealousy had never been moved; found herself, suddenly, nothing in that heart, where not long ago she had reigned. Of Spanish origin, the feelings of a Spanish woman discovered to her a rival in science, which ravished from her her husband. The torrents of jealousy that deluged her heart, only renewed her love. But what could be done against a science! How combat this incessant, tyrannical, and increasing power! How kill an invisible rival? How could a woman, whose power is limited by nature, struggle with an Idea, whose enjoyments are infinite, and whose attractions are always new? What can be attempted against the coquetting of ideas, which spring again more beautiful and fresh from difficulties themselves, and bear a man so far away from the world, that he forgets his dearest affections?

In short, one day, notwithstanding the severe orders which Balthazer had given, his wife determined to make an effort to join him in his work; to shut herself up with him in his retreat; there to combat, face to face, her rival, by assisting her husband during the long hours which he lavished upon his mistress. She wished to glide secretly into that workshop of seduction, and acquire the right to remain there always. But, in attempting to share with Lemulquinier the right of entering the laboratory, she would not risk making him witness of the quar-

rel which might ensue; and she waited for a day when her husband was alone. For some days she studied the movements of the valet de chambre, with an impatience full of hatred. Did he know all which she desired to learn, all which her husband hid from her, and all which she dared not ask him? She found Lemulquinier a greater favorite than herself—his wife! Trembling, and almost happy, she went to the door of the loft; but for the first time in her life she knew the anger of Balthazer. Hardly had she entered the door, when he rushed upon her, and seizing her, rudely threw her back upon the stairs, over which she rolled from top to bottom. "God be praised!" cried Balthazer, as he raised her up, "thou art alive!"

His glass mask was broken into shivers upon Madame Claes, who saw her husband pale, wan, and frightened.

"My dear, have I not forbidden you to come here?" said he, seating himself upon the stairs, like a man exhausted; "the saints have preserved thee from death. By what chance were my eyes fixed upon the door? We were near perishing!"

"Would that I had perished!" she exclaimed.

"My experiment is destroyed," said he. "I can hardly pardon thee the grief, which this cruel mischance has caused me. *I was going to decompose azote.* Go, return to thy affairs!" and with these words Balthazer entered his laboratory.

"*I was going to decompose azote,*" said the poor wife, as she went back to her chamber, where she burst into tears.

The phrase was unintelligible to her. Men, habituated by their education to understand everything, know not how horrible it is for a woman, to be unable to comprehend the thoughts of him she loves. More indulgent than we are, these divine creatures do not tell us, when we do not understand the language of their souls; they fear to make us feel the superiority of their sentiments; and hide their griefs with as much joy, as they conceal their unknown pleasures; but more ambitious in love than we are, they wish to espouse more than the heart of man—even all his thought. To know nothing of the science which occupied her husband, engendered, in Madame Claes, a vexation more violent than could be caused by the beauty of a rival. The struggle of a woman with a woman, leaves to her who loves the most, the advantage of loving best. But *this* vexation causes inability, and humiliates all the sentiments which aid us to live. She did not understand; she was in a situation which separated her from her husband. In short.—last keenest torture!—he was often between life and death; he ran into dangers, at once far from her, and yet near to her; in which she could not share—which she could not even know. It was a hell! a moral prison,

without issue, without hope. Madame Claes wished, at least, to know the attractions of this science; and she set herself to study, in secret, books of chemistry. The family became a cloister, and broke entirely with society. Such were the successive transitions, by which misfortune took possession of the House of Claes, before it was brought to the species of civil death, by which it was struck at the time when the history commences.

But this violent situation was complicated. Madame Claes, like all impassioned women, was of unheard-of generosity. Those who love truly, know how small a thing money is in comparison with sentiment. Nevertheless, she learned, not without cruel emotion, that her husband owed a sum of three hundred thousand francs, mortgaged upon his property. The authenticity of the contracts sanctioned the iniquities, the reports, the conjectures of the city. Madame Claes, justly alarmed, was forced, proud as she was, to question the notary of her husband, and thus to make known to him the secrets of her grief; or, at least, leave him to divine them; and to hear, in fine, this humiliating question: "What! has M. Claes told you nothing of it?"

Happily, the notary of M. Claes was almost a relation to him. The grandfather of M. Claes, had married a Pierquin of D'Auvers, of the same family as the Pierquins of Douai. After this marriage, the former, although strangers to the Claes, called them cousins. M. Pierquin, a young man of twenty-six years, who had just succeeded to the office of his father, was the only person who had access to the Claes House. Madame Claes had, for many months, lived in such complete solitude, that the notary was obliged to confirm to her the news of the disasters already known to the city. He told her that, probably, her husband owed considerable sums to the house which furnished him with chemical products; for, after having inquired respecting the fortune and consideration, which M. Claes enjoyed, this house had accepted all his commissions, and paid them off, without the least inquietude with respect to his credit.

Madame Claes charged M. Pierquin to demand a memorandum of the things furnished to her husband. Two months after, M. M. Protez & Chiffreville, manufacturers of chemical products, sent in an account, which amounted to one hundred thousand francs. Madame Claes and Pierquin, studied this invoice with increasing surprise: so many articles, expressed scientifically or commercially, were, to them, unintelligible. They were frightened to see in this account metals and diamonds of all kinds, but in small quantities. The amount of the debt was easily explained by the multiplicity of the articles; by the precaution, which the transportation of certain precious substances and machines



required; by the exorbitant price of many products, which were obtained with difficulty, and which their rarity rendered dear: in short, by the value of the philosophical and chymical instruments, made according to the directions of M. Claes. The notary had taken, in the interest of his cousin, the notes upon M. M. Portez & Chiffreville; and the probity of these merchants was assured, by the morality of their transactions with M. Claes, to whom they often imparted the results obtained by the chemists of Paris, in order that he might avoid the expense of some experiments.

Madame Claes begged the notary, to hide from the society of Douai these excessive expenses—which would be considered as madness. But M. Pierquin replied, "That already, not to weaken the consideration which M. Claes enjoyed, he had retarded, to the last moment, his own obligations, which the importance of the sums, lent in confidence to his client, had rendered necessary." He unveiled the extent of the wound, by telling his cousin, that if she could not find means to prevent her husband from spending his fortune so madly—in six months his patrimonial estate would be swallowed up by mortgages, which surpassed it in value. "As for him," he added, "the observations which he had made to his cousin, with all respectfulness due to a man so justly considered, had not had the least influence. Once for all, M. Claes had replied to him—'That he worked for the glory and fortune of the family.'"

Thus, to all the tortures of heart, which Madame Claes had supported during two years, was added a frightful, incessant fear, which rendered the future terrible. Women have presentiments, whose justness is wonderful. Why, in general, do they tremble, more than they hope, when there is a question concerning the interests of life? Why have they faith only for the great ideas of the religious future? Why do they divine, so skilfully, the catastrophes of fortune, and the crises of our destinies? Perhaps, the sentiment which unites them to the man they love, makes them admirably weigh his strength, estimate his faculties, know his tastes, passions, vices, virtues; and the perpetual study of these causes, in the presence of those with whom they constantly find themselves, gives them, without doubt, the fatal power of foreseeing effects, in every possible situation. That which they see of the present, enables them to judge of the future with a skilfulness, naturally explained by the perfection of the nervous system, which allows them to seize the highest diagnostics of thought and sentiment. Everything within them, vibrates in unison with great moral commotions; and then, they either feel or see. Although separated from her husband two years, Madame Claes had

a presentiment of the loss of all her fortune. She had appreciated the reflective ardor, the unalterable constancy of Balthazar. If it was true, that he sought to make gold, he would throw, with perfect indifference, his last morsel of bread into the crucible. But what did he seek?

Up to this time, the maternal sentiment and conjugal love, were so perfectly mingled in the heart of this woman, that her children, equally beloved by her and her husband, were never interposed between them. But, suddenly, she was, for a time, more the mother than the wife, although she had been oftener the wife than the mother. Still, however disposed she might be, to sacrifice her own fortune—and even her children's—to the happiness of him who had chosen her, loved her, adored her; to whom she was still the only woman he had in the world—the remorse, which the comparative feebleness of her maternal sentiment caused, threw her into horrible alternations. Thus, as a woman, she suffered in her heart; as a mother, she suffered in her children; and, as a Christian, she suffered for all. She was silent, and repressed these cruel storms of the soul. Her husband, the only arbiter of the fate of the family, was the raaster, and regulated, at his will, its destiny; for which he became accountable to God. Moreover, was she able to reproach him for employing her fortune, after the disinterestedness of which he had given proof, during ten years of marriage? Could she judge of his design? But her conscience agreed with the sentiment and the law, that said to her, "Parents are the depositories of the fortune—and have no right to alienate the material happiness of their children." Without answering these high questions, she loved better to close her eyes, following the example of people, who refuse to see the abyss, to the bottom of which they know they must fall.

After six months, her husband had not money enough for the expenses of his house. She caused to be sent secretly to Paris, the rich diamond ornaments which her brother had given her on the day of her marriage; and introduced into her family the strictest economy. She sent away the governess of her children, and even Lucien's nurse. Formerly, the luxury of carriages was unknown to the burghers, at once so humble in their manners, so proud in their feelings. Nothing, therefore, had been provided in the Claes House for that modern invention. M. Claes was obliged to have his stable and coach-house in a building opposite to his own; and his preoccupations did not permit him any longer to superintend that part of the household business, which belongs essentially to the man. Madame Claes, therefore, suppressed this burdensome expense of equipage, and of servants, which their isolated situation rendered useless. But she did not

try to color her reforms by pretexts. The change of her retinue needed not to be justified in a country where, as in Holland, who ever expended all his income, passed for a fool. But, as her eldest daughter, Margaret, was now about sixteen years old, she appeared to wish to make for her a good alliance, and to place her in the world as was fitting to a daughter allied to the Molinas, to Van Ostram Temninck, and to Casa Real.

Some days previous to that on which this history commences, the money for the diamonds was exhausted. In short, that same day, at three o'clock, in conducting her children to vespers, Madame Claes had met M. Pierquin, who was going to see her, and who accompanied her to St. Peters, discoursing, in a low voice, upon her situation.

"My cousin," said he, before entering into the church, "I could not, without failing in the friendship which attaches me to your family, conceal from you the peril in which you are, and beg you to confer with your husband upon it. Who is able, if not yourself, to arrest him on the brink of the abyss to which you are hastening? The revenues on the mortgaged estates are not sufficient to pay the interest on the sums borrowed. Thus you are this day without any income. If you cut down the wood you possess, it will take from you the only chance which remains to you in future. M. Claes is, at this moment, indebted to the house of Protez & Chiffreville, of Paris, in the sum of thirty thousand francs. With what can you pay it, and with what will you live? What will become of you if M. Claes continues to demand glasses, voltaic piles, and other baubles? All his fortune, at least his house and movables, are swallowed up in gas and carbon. When he was asked, to-day, to mortgage his house, do you know what was his reply? 'The devil! the devil!' Showing the first trace of reason which he had given for three years."

Madame Claes pressed sadly the arm of M. Pierquin, raised her eyes to heaven, and said: "Let us keep it secret."

Notwithstanding her piety, the poor woman, annihilated by these words, as by a thunderbolt, could not pray. She sunk upon a chair between her children, opened her prayer-book, and turned not a leaf. She had fallen into a contemplation, as absorbing as that of her husband. Spanish honor, Flemish probity, resounded through her interior being, with a voice as powerful as the pipes of an organ. The ruin of her husband was consummated then! Between them and the honor of her father, she must no longer hesitate. The prospect of an approaching struggle between herself and her husband, terrified her; for he was, in her eyes, so great, so imposing, that his voice agitated her like the idea of divine majesty. She must give up this constant submission, in which she had sacredly acted the wife. The interests of

her children obliged her to combat the tastes of a man whom she idolized. Would it not be necessary to lead him back to positive questions, when he wished to be hovering in the high region of science? to draw him violently from a smiling future; to plunge him into that present materiality which appears most hideous to artists and great men? To her, Balthazer Claes was a giant in science; a man big with glory; for he could not have forgotten her, but for the richest hopes. Then, he was so profoundly sensible; for she had heard him speak with so much talent upon subjects of all kinds, that he must be sincere in saying that he worked for the glory and fortune of his family. His love for his wife and children was not only immense, it was infinite. These sentiments he had not the power to abolish; they were, perhaps, enlarging and reproducing themselves under another form. She, so noble, so generous, and so fearful, must make resound incessantly in the ears of this great man, the word money, and the sound of money; must show him the wounds of poverty; must make him listen to the sounds of distress; when he wished only to hear the melodious voice of renown! Perhaps the affection which he had for her would be diminished by this! If she had not had children, she would have courageously, and with pleasure, embraced the new destiny her husband had made for her. Women, educated in opulence, feel keenly the void which its sadly material enjoyments cover; and when their hearts, more fatigued than withered, have experienced the happiness which a constant change of true sentiments gives, they recoil not before a mediocrity of fortune, which belongs to the being by whom they know themselves beloved. Their ideas, their pleasures, are subject to the caprice of that life, beyond their own, and all that they fear is to lose it.

At that moment, therefore, her children separated her from her true life, as much as Balthazer Claes was separated from herself by science. Thus, when she came back from vespers, she threw herself into her chair, and sent them away, imploring from them the most profound silence. She then sent to ask her husband to come and see her; but although Lemulquinier, his old valet de chambre, had insisted in drawing him from his laboratory, he had remained there. Madame Claes, therefore, had had time for reflection, and had continued dreaming without paying any attention to the time, the day, or the hour. The thought of owing thirty thousand francs, and of not being able to pay them, awoke all the sorrows of the sad past, and pointed to the present and the future. This accumulation of interests, ideas, sensations, overpowered her, and she wept.

When she saw Balthazer enter, whose countenance at this moment appeared to her more terrible, more absorbed, more wander-

ing than ever; and when he did not reply to her address, she remained, at first, as if petrified by the immovability of his look, so blank and void, and by all the devouring ideas which distilled from his bald forehead; and under the stroke of this sudden impression she desired to die. But when she had heard his voice, negligently expressing a scientific desire at the moment when she felt her heart crushed, her courage returned; she resolved to struggle with the terrible power which had ravished from her a lover—which had torn from her children a father—from her house a fortune—and happiness from all. Nevertheless, she could not repress the constant trepidation which agitated her; for, in all her life, she had not encountered a scene so solemn. Did it not contain her future? and was not the whole past summed up in it?

The weak, the timid, or those whose vivacity of sensation exaggerates the smallest difficulties of life, and men who are seized with involuntary tremblings before the arbiters of their own destiny, can all conceive the thousand thoughts that whirled in the head of this woman; and the feelings that weighed upon her, even to suffocation, as her husband walked slowly toward the window opening into the garden.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ABSOLUTE.

Most women know the anguish of the inward deliberations against which Madame Claes was debating. And even they, whose hearts have never been more violently moved than when declaring to their husbands some excess of expense, some debt contracted at the milliner's, will comprehend how great were the beatings of that bursting heart. A beautiful woman gracefully throws herself at the feet of her husband, and finds resources in the attitudes of grief; but the thought of physical defects, augmented the fears of Madame Claes. When she saw Balthazer go out, her first movement was to rush toward him; but a cruel thought repressed her impulse. Would she not appear ridiculous to a man who, no longer subject to the fascinations of love, would see her as she was? She would willingly have lost everything—children and fortune too, rather than lessen her power as a woman. She wished to avoid every evil chance in an hour so solemn, and called loudly, "Balthazer!"

He returned, mechanically, and coughed; but, without attending to his wife, he came to spit into one of the little square boxes, which were placed at equal distances along the wainscoting, as was the usual custom of Holland and Belgium. This man, who thought of no one, never forgot the spit-boxes, so inveterate was his habit. To poor Josephine, incapable of accounting for this

caprice, the constant care which her husband took of the furniture, always caused unheard of pain; but at that moment, it was so violent that it affected her beyond bounds, and made her cry out in a tone of impatience, in which all her feelings betrayed themselves wounded:

"But, sir, I spoke to you."

"What does that mean?" replied he, turning himself quickly, and casting upon his wife a look of returning life, which was to her like a clap of thunder.

"Pardon me, my friend," said she, turning pale. She wished to rise, and extend to him her hand, but she felt without strength. "I am dying!" said she, in a voice interrupted by sobs.

At this sight, Balthazer, like all abstracted people, exhibited strong reaction, and divined, as it were, the whole secret. He immediately took Madame Claes in his arms, opened the door of the little ante-chamber, and ran rapidly up the old wooden stairs. He gave the door, leading to the common vestibule of their apartments, a kick; but his wife's chamber was locked. He put her gently upon an arm-chair, and exclaimed, "My God! where is the key?"

"Thanks, my dear," said she, opening her eyes; "it is the first time, for a long while, that I have found myself so near your heart."

"Good God! where is the key? Where are the servants?"

Josephine made a sign to take the key, hanging to a ribbon near her pocket. Balthazer opened the door, carried his wife to a couch, and went out to prevent the frightened servants from coming up, giving them orders to serve the dinner promptly: then he came eagerly back to his wife.

"What is the matter, my dear life?" said he, seating himself near her, and taking her hand, which he kissed.

"Nothing now," replied she; "I suffer no more. I only wish I had the power of God, to put at thy feet all the gold of the earth."

"Why the gold?" demanded he, drawing her to him, pressing her to his heart, and again kissing her brow. "Dost thou not give me the greatest riches, in loving me as thou lovest me, dear and precious creature?"

"Oh! my Claes! why wilt thou not dissipate all the anguish of our lives, as thou now chapest, by thy voice, sorrow from my heart? Yet, I see it: thou art always the same! But we are ruined, Balthazer?"

"Ruined!" resumed he, smiling, and caressing the hand of his wife: while holding her to his bosom, he said, in a sweet voice, which for a long time she had not heard, "But to-morrow, my angel! our fortune will be, perhaps, without bounds. To-day, in seeking for the most important secrets, I believe I have found the means of chrysal-

lizing carbon, the genuine substance of the diamond. Some future day thou wilt pardon my abstractions in what I am about, I know. Have I not been rude to thee now? But, be indulgent to a man who never ceases to think of thee— whose labors are full of thee— of all of us."

"Enough! enough!" said she; "we will converse about this in the evening, my love. I have suffered from too much grief, and now I suffer from too much joy."

Indeed, she had not expected to see that face animated by a sentiment as tender to her as ever;—to hear that voice, always so sweet;—in short, to find all which she believed she had lost.

"This evening," resumed he, "I wish it much; we will then converse. If I should be absorbed by some meditation, recall to me this promise. This evening I wish to put by my calculations—my labors; and plunge into all the joys of the family—the pleasures of the heart. Peppita, I have need of them—I thrust for them."

"Wilt thou tell me what thou art seeking, Balthazar?"

"But, my poor child, thou wilt understand nothing," said he.

"Thou believest so? Ha! my friend; for four months, I have studied chemistry, to be able to converse with thee. I have read Fourier, Lavoisier, Caput, Nollet, Rodele, Berthollet, Gay Lussac, Spatanzani, Leuchtenhock, Galyana, Volta, and all the books relating to the science which thou art cultivating. Come! thou must tell me all thy secrets."

"Oh! thou art an angel," said Balthazar, "to lay out thy knees to his wife, and sacrificing years of emotion, the sight of which made her start; "we shall comprehend each other in every thing, then."

"Ah!" said she; "I would thou couldst see the way with a dagger at thy throat, to hear that voice from thy mouth, and to see thee thus."

She looked the same as her daughter at the same hour, and she smiled sweetly now and then.

"What do you wish, Margaret?" said she.

"My dear mother, M. Pierquin has come. He returns to us, and some men will be necessary, and you ought to give us in the evening."

Madame Claes drew from her pocket a bunch of white keys, and gave them to her daughter, repeating six or six the words she had memorized at the anti-chamber, and saying, "My daughter, these you will find the diamond anti-chamber," and then returned to her chamber.

"My dear Balthazar," said she, "since we have come back to the world, you if no wholly new" with a sweet look, "we bring some of me the best of things from dress. My little Pierquin is this go like of these very clothes. See these shirts, I have the mantle a sulphureous one, which

borders with yellow all these holes? Go quickly; renew thy youth. I will go and send Lemulquinier, as soon as I have changed my own dress."

Balthazar wished to pass into his chamber by the door of communication; but he had forgotten that it was fastened on the other side. He went out through the ante-chamber.

"Margaret, put the linen upon the safe, and come and dress me. I do not wish for Martha," said Madame Claes to her daughter.

Balthazar had observed Margaret; and, turning toward her with a joyous movement, said, "Good morning, my child; thou art very pretty to-day, in that muslin robe, and with that rose-colored belt;" then he kissed her brow and pressed her hand.

"Mamma, papa has just embraced me," said Margaret; "and he appeared very joyous—very happy."

"My child, your father is a very great man. It is now three years since he has labored for the glory and the fortune of his family; and he believes he has seen the end of his researches. This day is a beautiful festival for us all."

"My dear mamma," replied Margaret, "our people were so sad, to see him as he has been, that we shall not be alone in our joy. Oh, put on another belt; this is too much faded."

"Very well; but be quick; for I wish to go and speak to M. Pierquin. Where is he?" said Madame Claes.

"In the parlor. He is amusing himself by making Lucca jump."

"Where are Garcia and Felicia?" I hear them in the garden. Go down and walk a moment, and then look off the largest part of her has lately seen back this year; he will be able today to seek at them when he goes from the mine. The ladies ought to go up to your father, with everything he needs for his travel."

When Margaret was gone, Madame Claes cast a glance at her daughter at the garden, and saw them ascending it, looking at one of those great, white insects, shining and sticking with gold, which she called a diamond.

"Be quick, my daughters," said she, "locking the window, which she had kept to let her chamber. That she knocked gently at the door of communication, it issued from it, but her husband had no more regard for missing. He opened it, and she said to him, "I would never be seeing his dress in company; it will be given in my name with M. Pierquin. You will tell the same."

She descended so quickly that a stranger would not have recognized her, still as a lady would.

"Good morning, M. Pierquin," said she, opening the door of the parlor. The

notary hastened to give her his arm ; but she never took any but her husband's ; she therefore thanked her cousin with a smile, and said to him : " You have come, perhaps, for the thirty thousand francs ? "

" Yes, madam ; on going home, I received a letter of account from the house of Protez & Chiffreville, who draw upon M. Claes six bills of exchange, each for five thousand francs. "

" Well : do not speak to Balthazer to-day. Dine with us ; and if he chance to ask you why you came, find some plausible pretence, I pray you. Give me the letter ; I will speak to him myself of this affair. All will go well, " resumed she, seeing the astonishment of the notary. " Within some months, my husband will probably reimburse the sums which he has borrowed. "

On hearing this spoken in a low voice, the notary looked at Margaret, who came back from the garden, followed by Gabriel and Felicia, and said : " I have never seen Mademoiselle Margaret so pretty as she is at this moment. "

Madame Claes, who was seated in her arm-chair, and had taken upon her lap the little Lucien, raised her head, and looked at her daughter and at the notary, affecting an indifferent air.

M. Pierquin was of small stature, neither large nor thin ; of a figure vulgarly handsome ; and which expressed a sadness, more morose than melancholy ; a thoughtfulness, more indeterminate than pensive. He passed for a misanthrope ; but he was too selfish—too great an eater—to make real this separation from the world. His look, habitually vacant—his attitude of indifference—his affected silence—seemed to speak of depth ; but covered, in reality, the emptiness and nothingness of a notary, exclusively occupied with worldly interests ; and who found himself still young enough to be envious. To ally himself to the house of Claes, would have caused in him a devotedness, without bounds, if he had not had some sentiments of avarice lying concealed. He pretended to be generous ; but he knew how to calculate. Thus, without rendering a reason, even to himself, of his changes of manner, his attentions were peremptory, hard and capricious, and like all men of business, while M. Claes seemed to be ruined ; but they became affected, smooth, and almost servile, when he expected a happy issue to the labors of his cousin. Sometimes he looked upon Margaret Claes as a child, to whom it was impossible for a simple notary of a province to approach ; and sometimes he considered her a poor girl, too happy if he deigned to make her his wife. He was a provincial, and a Fleming ; he was not wanting in devotedness, nor in goodness ;—but he had a downright selfishness, which rendered his qualities incomplete ; and absurdities, which injured his appearance.

At that moment, Madame Claes remembered the abrupt tone with which the notary had spoken to her at the door of the church of St. Peters, and remarked the revolution which her reply made in his manners. She divined the depths of his thoughts ; and, with a sharp look, she essayed to read the soul of her daughter, to know if she thought of her cousin ; but she saw, in her, only perfect indifference.

After some moments, during which the conversation turned upon the talk of the city, the master of the house descended from his chamber, where, a moment before, his wife heard, with inexpressible pleasure, his boots creaking upon the inlaid floor. His step, resembling that of an athletic man, announced a complete metamorphosis ; and the interest which his appearance caused to Madame Claes was so extreme, that she could hardly restrain a start when he descended the stairs. Balthazer soon appeared, in a costume then in fashion ; he wore boots *à revers*, well blacked, above which appeared white silk stockings ; breeches of blue kersymere, with gold buttons ; a white embroidered waistcoat, and a blue frock-coat. He had shaved, combed his hair, perfumed his head, cut his nails, and washed his hands, with so much care, that it seemed inconceivable to those who had recently seen him. Instead of an old man, almost mad, his children, his wife, and the notary, saw a man about forty years old, whose affable and polished figure was full of attractions. Fatigue and suttlery, which were traced upon his wasted features, and even the adherence of his skin to the bones, had a sort of grace.

" Good-morning ! M. Pierquin, " said Balthazer Claes ; who, having again become a father and a husband, took his youngest boy from the lap of his wife, throwing him rapidly up and down alternately : " See this little one ! " said he to the notary ; " does not such a pretty creature make you envy the husband ? Believe me, my dear, the pleasures of a family console one for everything. "

" Brr ! " said he, throwing Lucien up. " Hunch ! " cried he, putting him on the floor. " Brr ! hunch ! "

The child laughed heartily at the pleasantness of the rapid motion, from the floor to the ceiling, and from the ceiling to the floor. The mother turned away her eyes to hide her emotion, caused by a play so simple. To her it was a whole domestic revolution.

" Let me see how you can walk ; " said Balthazer, putting his son upon the floor, and throwing himself into an arm-chair. " Thou art a darling, " said the father, embracing him ; " thou art a Claes ; thou walkest very straight. "

" Well ! Gabriel, how does Father Moril-

lon do?" said he to his eldest son, taking him by the ear; "dost thou defend thyself valiantly against themes? Dost thou bite hard on the mathematics?" Then he rose, went to Pierquin, and said, with that affectionate courtesy which characterized him, "My dear sir, you have, perhaps, something to say to me." He took him by the arm, turned toward the garden, and added, "Come, see my tulips!" Madame Claes looked at her husband as he went out, and could not contain her joy at seeing him so young—so affable—so like himself! She rose, took her daughter in her arms, embraced her, and said, "My dear Margaret, I love you better to-day than commonly!"

"It is a long time since I have seen my father so amiable," replied Margaret.

Lemulquinier came to announce that dinner was served. Madame Claes, to avoid having Pierquin offer his arm, took that of Balthazer, and the family passed on to the dining-hall.

This room, whose ceiling was composed of apparent beams, ornamented with pictures, washed and refreshed every year, was garnished with high dressers of oak, upon the shelves of which were seen the most curious pieces of patrimonial plate. The partitions of the wall were tapestried with violet-colored leather, upon which were drawn hunting scenes in lines of gold. Above the dressers were carefully disposed, feathers of curious birds, and rare shells. The chairs had not been changed since the fifteenth century; they were square, with twisted columns and small backs, ornamented with fringe cloth—a fashion so general, that Raphael illustrated it in his picture called the "Madonna Seggiola." The wood had become black, but the gold-nails shone as if they had been new, and the cloths, carefully renewed, were of a brilliant and beautiful red. In short, Flanders, with Spanish innovations, was visible in everything.

Upon the table, the decanter and flagons had that respectable air which was given them by the round, antique sweep. The glasses were those old high glasses, upon one foot, which are seen in all pictures of the Dutch and Flemish school. The plates, dishes, and pitchers—freestone, ornamented with colored figures, in the style of Bernard Palissy—were brought from the English manufactory of Wedgewood. The silver was massive, with square sides, richly embossed—truly a family silver, whose pieces were all different, in carved work—the fashion and the form attesting the commencement and the progress of the fortunes of the Claes House. The napkins were fringed in the Spanish mode. As to the linen, every one must know that, at the Claes House, the point of honor consisted in having the most magnificent. This table-linen and silver were destined for common

use in the family; for the house in front, where they gave their festivals, had its particular luxury, whose wonders, reserved for gala days, impressed on them that solemnity which exists longer when things are disenchanting, as we may say, by being habitually used. In the rear-quarter everything was marked with a patriarchal simplicity. In short, more delicious than all, a vine ran on the outside, along the windows, so that the leaves bordered them in every part.

"You remain faithful to traditions, madam," said Pierquin, in receiving a plate of that thyme-soup in which the Flemish and Dutch cooks put little balls of meat, rolled and mingled with slices of toasted bread; "I see the Sunday pottage in use among our fathers. Your house, and that of my uncle des Racquet, are the only places where we find this soup, historical in the Low Countries. Ah, pardon me! old M. Savaron des Savarus is still proud to have it served to him; but, everywhere else, the old Flemish fashion is gone. Now, furniture is made *à la Grecque*: we perceive, everywhere, casques, bucklers, lances, and bundles of arms. Every one is pulling down his house, selling his furniture, re-casting his silver, or exchanging it for a porcelain of Sevres, which is worth neither the old Saxon nor the Chinese. Oh! I am Flemish in soul. My heart bleeds to see braziers' ware bought for the price of wood or metal—our beautiful furniture incrustated with brass or tin; but society wishes for change of skin, I believe. There are no processes of art which are not lost. In truth, when it is necessary that everything should go quick, nothing can be conscientiously done. In my last journey to Paris, they carried me to see the pictures exhibited at the Louvre. On my word of honor, they were canvases without manner—without depth—upon which the painters seemed afraid to put their colors; and they wished, they said, to crush our old school! Think of that!"

"Our old painters," replied Balthazer, "studied the different combinations and resistances of colors, and subjected them to the action of the sun and rain. But you are right: at this day, the materials and resources of art are less cultivated than ever."

Madame Claes did not hear this conversation; for, hearing the notary say that porcelain services were in fashion, she immediately conceived the bright idea of selling the heavy silver, which she inherited from her brother; hoping thus to be able to pay the thirty thousand francs owed by her husband.

"Ah! ah!" said Balthazer, "do they occupy themselves with my labors at Douai?"

"Yes," replied Pierquin; "every one asks how you spend so much money. Yesterday I heard the first president deplore, that a man like you should seek the philosopher's

stone; but I allowed myself to reply, that you are too well educated, not to know that it was to measure yourself with the impossible; too Christian, to expect to obtain it over God; and, like all the Claes, too good a calculator to exchange your money for powder. Nevertheless, I will own to you, that I have partaken the regrets which your retreat from society causes. You truly no longer belong to our city. In truth, madam, you would be ravished, if you could have heard the eulogies which every one is pleased to make of you and M. Claes."

"You have acted like a good relation, in putting down the imputations, of which the least evil would be that of rendering me ridiculous," replied Balthazer. "Ah, the Douaisians believe me ruined! Well, my dear Pierquin, in two months I will celebrate the anniversary of my marriage, by a festival, whose magnificence shall restore to me the esteem that our dear compatriots always accord to money."

Madame Claes colored highly. For two years that anniversary had been forgotten. Like those madmen, who have moments during which their faults shine with an unusual lustre, Balthazer had never been so spiritual in his tenderness. He was full of attention to his children, and his conversation was graceful and attractive, spirited and appropriate. This return to paternity, absent for so long a time, was certainly the most delightful festival he could give to his wife; to whom his word, his look, had resumed that constant sympathy of expression which is felt from heart to heart, and proves a delicate identity of feeling.

Did not old Lemulquinier appear young again—going and coming with an unaccustomed cheerfulness, caused by the accomplishment of his secret hopes? For the change produced so suddenly in the manners of his master, was still more significant to him than to Madame Claes. Where she saw happiness, he saw fortune. In aiding Balthazer in his labors, he had espoused his madness. Whether he had seized the extent of his researches, in the exclamations which escaped from the chemist as his designs enlarged under his hand, or whether that innate propensity to imitation had made him adopt the ideas of him in whose atmosphere he lived, Lemulquinier had conceived for his master a superstitious sentiment, mingled with terror, admiration, and selfishness.

The laboratory was to him what a lottery office is to the people;—organized hope. Every evening he went to bed, saying, tomorrow, perhaps, we shall swim in gold, and in the morning he awoke with a faith always alive. His name indicated an origin all Flemish. Formerly, bodies of people were known by a surname, drawn from their profession, their country, their physical conformation, or from their moral qualities; and that

surname became the name of the family, which was founded at the time of their enfranchisement. In Flanders, the dealers in linen thread were named Mulquiniers, and such, without doubt, was the profession of the man, who, among the ancestors of the old valet, passed from the situation of a serf to that of a burgher; and now, unknown misfortunes had reduced the grandson of the old Mulquinier to the situation of a serf, rather than a servant on wages. The history of Flanders, of its thread, and its commerce, was summed up, therefore, in the old domestic, sometimes called, for euphony, Lemulquinier.

His character and physiognomy did not want originality. His face, of triangular form, was large, high, and pitted with the small pox; which gave him a fantastic appearance, leaving upon him a multitude of white and shining spots. Lean and tall, he had a grave, mysterious step. His little, squint eyes, were yellow as the smooth wig upon his head. His exterior was, therefore, in harmony with the sentiments of curiosity he excited. His duty of preparer initiated him into the secrets of his master; and the silence he observed about them invested them with a charm.

The inhabitants of the rue de Paris looked at him as he passed, with an interest mingled with fear, for he had Sybillic responses, and was always great with treasures. Proud of being necessary to his master, he exercised over his fellow-servants a sort of shuffling authority, by which he was enabled to make them serve him, and obtained from them concessions, which rendered him half master of the house. Unlike most Flemish domestics, who are extremely attached to the house, he had affection only for Balthazer; and whether some chagrin afflicted Madame Claes, or any favorable event occurred in the family, he ate his bread and butter, and drank his beer with an habitual indifference.

Dinner over, Madame Claes proposed taking coffee in the garden, before the forest of tulips which ornamented its midst. The earthen pots in which the tulips grew, whose names were engraved upon slates, had been buried and disposed in such a manner, as to form a pyramid, at the summit of which arose a tulip, which Balthazer alone possessed. This flower, named Tulipa Claesina, united the seven colors, and the long indentures seemed gilded upon the edges. The father of Balthazer, who had many times refused ten thousand florins for it, took such precautions that no one could obtain a single seed. He kept it in his parlor, and often passed whole days contemplating it. The stem was enormous, very straight, firm, and of a beautiful green. All the proportions of the plant were found in harmony with the corolla, whose colors were distinguished for that plain brilliancy which formerly gave such value to these fascinating flowers.

"See here! thirty or forty thousand francs in tulips," said the notary, looking attentively at his cousin, and the forest of a thousand colors. Madame Claes was too enthusiastic in view of these flowers, which the rays of the setting sun made to resemble precious stones, to understand perfectly the sense of the notary's observation.

"Of what use is it?" resumed the notary, speaking to Balthazer; "you ought to sell them."

"Bah! have I then need of money?" asked Balthazer, making the gesture of a man to whom forty thousand francs seemed a small sum. There was a moment of silence, during which the children made many exclamations.

"See, mamma! that one! Oh! this is charming! What is the name of this?"

"What an abyss for human reason?" cried Balthazer, raising his hands, and joining them in a despairing manner. "A combination of hydrogen and oxygen in the same medium, and with the same principle, makes all these colors, rising in different proportions, each of which constitutes a different result!"

His wife heard the terms of this proposition, which was too rapidly announced for her to understand it entirely; then Balthazer recollected that she had studied his favorite science, and said to her, making a mysterious sign, "Thou shouldst comprehend that thou dost not yet know what I wish to say!" and he appeared to fall into those meditations which were habitual to him.

"I believe it," said M. Pierquin, taking a cup of coffee from the hands of Margaret. "Drive away nature, and it will come back in a gallop," added he, in a low tone, addressing Madame Claes. "You will have the goodness to speak to him yourself, for the devil would not draw him from his contemplations. There he is till to-morrow."

He bade adieu to Madame Claes, who feigned not to hear him; saluted the little Lucien, whom she had in her arms; and, after having made a profound obeisance, retired. When the door of the entrance was heard to close, Balthazer gently put his arms round his wife, and dissipated the inquietude which his pretended reverie had given her, by saying, "I knew how to send him away."

Madame Claes turned her head toward her husband, without being ashamed to show the tears which bathed her eyes; for they were sweet. Then she rested her forehead upon his shoulder, and suffered Lucien to glide from her lap to the ground. "Let us return to the parlor," said she, after a pause. All the afternoon Balthazer was gay, almost to madness. He invented a thousand plays for the children, and played so well on his own account, that he did not perceive two or three fits of musing which came over his wife. Toward half-past nine, when Lucien was put to bed, and Margaret, after having

assisted her sister Felicia to undress, came back into the parlor; she found her mother seated in the great arm-chair, and her father conversing with her, holding her hand. Fearing that she might disturb her parents, she appeared to wish to retire, without speaking to them. Madame Claes perceived it, and said to her, "Come, Margaret; come, my dear child;" and drawing her toward her, and kissing her forehead, she added, "carry your books into your chamber, and go to bed early."

"Good evening, my dear daughter," said Balthazer. Margaret embraced her father, and went out.

Claes and his wife remained some moments alone, watching the last tints of twilight, as they were dying away in the foliage of the garden. When it was almost night, Balthazer said to his wife, in a moving voice, "Let us go up."

A long time before, English manners had consecrated the chamber of a wife as a sacred place; and that of a Flemish lady was impenetrable. The good housekeepers of that country did not make an allocation of virtue, but it was a habit contracted from infancy; a domestic superstition, which rendered a bed-chamber a delicious sanctuary, where were breathed tender sentiments—here simplicity was united with all that is most sweet and sacred in social life.

In the peculiar circumstances of Madame Claes, any woman would have wished to assemble round her all the elegances of life; but she had done it with exquisite taste, knowing how much influence the aspect of things around us exercises over the feelings. To a pretty woman, these would have been luxuries. To her they were necessities. She fully comprehended the importance of the proverb, "We make ourselves beautiful;" a maxim which ruled all the actions of Napoleon's first wife, often rendering her false. But Madame Claes was always natural and true.

Although Balthazer was well acquainted with the chamber of his wife, his forgetfulness of material things had been so complete, that in entering it, he experienced a gentle tremor, as if he saw it for the first time. The pompous gaiety of a triumphant woman, shone forth in the splendid colors of the tulips, which were placed along the passage in large China vases, skillfully disposed in the luxury of lights, whose effects might be compared to those of the most brilliant fireworks. The light of the wax tapers gave a harmonious brilliancy to the cloth of gridelin silk, whose monotony was relieved by the reflection from the gold, moderately distributed upon some objects; and by various tints of the flowers, which resembled sheaves of precious stones. He was the secret of these decorations—he alone. Josephine could not say more eloquently to Balthazer, that



he was always the principle of her joys, and of her griefs. The aspect of this chamber put his soul into a delightful state; it banished all sad ideas, and left only the sentiment of happiness, pure and equable. The stuff of the hangings came from China, and emitted the sweet odor, which penetrates, without fatiguing the body. In short, the window curtains, carefully drawn, expressed a desire for solitude; a jealous intention to keep out every sound and word, and to shut in the regard of her reconquered husband. Adorned by her beautiful black hair, perfectly soft, and falling on each side of her brow, like the wings of a raven; enveloped in a robe, which came up to her throat, and was ornamented with a long pelerina, trimmed with lace, Madame Claes went to draw a curtain in the tapestry, which should shut out all noise from without. Then she threw upon her husband, who was seated near the chimney, one of those smiles, by which an intellectual woman, whose soul sometimes comes forth to embellish her form, knows how to express irresistible hopes. The great charm of woman consists, in a constant appeal to the generosity of man; in a graceful declaration of meekness, by which she at once elevates him, and awakens the most magnificent sentiments. The avowal of weakness carries with it a magic influence. When the rings of the curtain had glided along the rod, she turned toward her husband, as if she wished to conceal at this moment the defects of her person, by supporting her hand upon a chair, in order to appear more gracefully; but it was an appeal for his assistance. Balthazer, lost a moment in the contemplation of that olive colored head, which, relieved by the deep gray tapestry, attracted and satisfied the eye, rose to take his wife in his arms, and place her upon her chair; this was just what she wanted.

"Hast thou not promised," said she, taking his hand, "to initiate me into the secret of thy researches? Admit, my friend, that I am worthy of knowing it, since I have had the courage to study a science, condemned by the Church, in order to comprehend thee. I am curious; hide nothing from me. Also, tell me, why thou risest in the morning so uneasy, when I have left thee so happy the evening before?"

"Is it to hear me talk of chemistry, that thou hast dressed thyself with so many attractions?" said he.

"Ah! my dear friend! to receive a confidence, which will let me deeper into thy heart, is it not the greatest of pleasures? Is it not a condition of the soul, which comprehends and engenders every felicity of life? Thy love comes back to me pure and entire. I wish to know what idea has been powerful enough to deprive me of it for so long a time. Yes; I am more jealous of a

thought than of all women together. Love is immense, but not infinite; science has unlimited depths, into which I would not see you go alone. I detest everything that can come between us. If thou obtainest the glory which thou art pursuing, I should be miserable, for I alone ought to be the principle of your felicity!"

"No! it is not an idea, my beloved, that has thrown me into this beautiful path, but a man;" said Balthazer.

"A man!" cried she, with terror.

"Dost thou not remember, Pepita, a Polish officer who lodged with us in 1809?" said he.

"Yes, I remember him—he is one of the few men who have struck me. I remember those two eyes, which were like tongues of fire; those two hollows over his projecting eyebrows; his large bold head, his turned-up mustaches, his angular, wasted figure, and especially the frightful calmness of his step! If there had been a place at the inn, he certainly should not have lodged here."

"He was a Polish gentleman, named Wiere Chownia," replied Balthazer. "When, in the evening, you had left us in the parlor, we, by chance, began to talk of chemistry. He was arrested by poverty in the study of that science, and had become a soldier. I believe it was on occasion of a glass of sweetened water, that we found one another to be adepts; for, when I told Lemulquinier to bring me some *marais* of sugar, the captain made a gesture of surprise. 'You have studied chemistry,' said he. 'With Lavoisier,' I replied. 'You are very happy in being free and rich!' cried he; and he heaved one of those sighs which reveal a hell of griefs, shut up in the heart, or hidden in the brain; in short, it was something burning, concentrated, which words cannot express. He accompanied his thought with a look which congealed me; then, after a pause, he told me, that after the last misfortune of Poland, he took refuge in Sweden; and there, had sought for consolation in the study of chemistry, to which he always felt an irresistible call. 'Ah! well!' said he, 'I see that you have observed, like me, that gum-arabic, sugar and starch, made into powder, gives a substance absolutely similar, and in analysis, the same result.' He made another pause, and, after having examined me with a scrutinizing eye, he said to me, confidentially, and in a low voice, some solemn words, of which, to this day, the general import remains in my memory. But he accompanied them with a power of sound, of warm affection, a force of gesture, that stirred my inmost being; and struck my understanding, as the hammer strikes the iron upon the anvil. You shall hear an abridgement of the words, which were, to me, like the coal with which God touched the lips of Isaiah; for my studies with Lavoisier, enabled me to feel all their power.

“Monsieur,” said he, “the comparison of these three substances, in appearance so distinct, led me to think, that all productions of nature must have the same principle. The labors of modern chemists have proved the truth of this law, in the greatest number of natural effects.

“Chemistry divides creation into two portions: organic and inorganic nature. In comprehending all creations, vegetable and animal, in which is shown an organization more or less perfect; or, to be more exact, a greater or less *mobility*, which determines in them more or less sensation—organic nature is certainly the most important part of our world. Now, analysis has reduced all products of this nature, to four simple bodies; the three gases, azote, hydrogen, and oxygen; and another simple body, not metallic, yet solid, viz: carbon. On the contrary, inorganic nature, little varied, destitute of motion, of sensation, and to which we must refuse the gift of growth—that Linnæus has freely, but erroneously granted to it—counts fifty-three simple bodies, whose different combinations form all its products. Is it probable, that means can be more numerous, where there are fewer results? The opinion of old masters is, that these fifty-three bodies have a common principle, formerly modified by the action of a power, now extinct, but which human genius ought to revive. Well! suppose for a moment, that the activity of this power should be awakened, we should have a simple chemistry! Organic and inorganic nature repose probably upon four principles, and if we should come to decompose azote, which we ought to consider a negation, we shall have no more than three. We see ourselves already near the grand number three of the ancients, and the alchemists of the middle age; whom we are in the wrong to laugh at. Modern chemistry has not yet attained to it, yet it is both much and little. This much, because the chemist has habituated himself not to recoil before any difficulty, and chance has served it well; thus, the tear of pure carbon, the diamond, did it not appear the last substance which it was possible to create? The ancient alchemists, who believed gold decomposable, and consequently to be made, recoiled at the idea of producing the diamond: we have, however, found out its nature. But I said I am for going farther. Experiment has demonstrated to me, that the mysterious *Ternaire*, with which people have occupied themselves from time immemorial, will not be found in actual analysis, which wants direction toward a fixed point. For instance: sow the seeds of a water-cress (to take a substance out of organic nature) in flower of sulphur, (to take a medium equally simple;) water the seeds with distilled water, so as not to let any principle, not ascertained, penetrate into the products of germination. The seeds germinate

and push into a known medium, to nourish themselves only by the principles known by analysis. Cut several times the stems of the plant, in order to procure a quantity large enough to obtain some large cinders by burning them; and thus, be able to operate upon a certain mass. Well, in analyzing these cinders, you will find salic acid, alumine, phosphate, and carbonate of calcium; the carbonate of magnesium, the sulphate and carbonate of potassium, and oxide of iron; as if the water-cress had grown from the earth on the borders of water.

“But these substances do not exist in sulphur, which served for the soil of the plant, nor in the water employed to water it; and as they were not in the air, we are not able to explain their presence in the plants, except in supposing an element common to bodies contained in the cress, and to those with which it was surrounded. Thus, the air, the distilled water, the flower of sulphur, and the substances which the analysis of the cress gives;—that is to say, the potash, the chalk, the magnesia, the alumine, &c. must have a common principle. From this undeniable experiment, cried he, I have deduced the existence of the Absolute; a substance common to all creations, modified by one force only. Such is the sound, clear statement of the problem, offered by the absolute, and which seems to me solvable.

“Here you encounter the mysterious *Ternaire*, before which, in all time, humanity has knelt; the first matter—the medium—the result. You will find this terrible number three, in everything human. It governs religion, the sciences, the laws. Here, said he, ‘war and poverty arrested my labors. You are a scholar of Lavoisier, you are rich, and master of your time. I can therefore impart to you my conjectures. This is the end, of which my personal experiments have made me catch a glimpse. One matter must be the principle common to negative and possible electricity. Discover the proofs which establish these two truths, and you will have the supreme reason of all the effects of nature.

“Oh! monsieur, when we read that!” said he, striking his forehead, “the last word of creation, foreknowing the ABSOLUTE! Is it *living*, to be dragged into the movements of masses of men, who, at a fixed time, rush upon each other, without knowing what they do? My present life is exactly the inverse of a dream. My body goes, comes, acts—is found in the midst of fire, cannons, men; traverses Europe at the will of a power, which I obey, while I despise it. My soul has no consciousness of these acts: *that* remains fixed, plunged into one idea—swallowed up by this idea—it searches for the ABSOLUTE, for that principle by which seeds, absolutely alike, put into the same medium, yield, one white, another yellow calices; a

phenomenon we see repeated in silk worms, which—nourished by the same leaves, and constituted without apparent differences—make, one yellow, another white silk. It is even repeated in man himself, who often has legitimate children, entirely unlike father or mother. Does not the logical deduction from all these facts imply, moreover, the reason of all the effects of nature? What conforms more to our ideas of God, than the belief, that he made all things by the most simple means? The Pythagorean adoration of the number *one*, from which goes out all the numbers, and which represent one matter; for the number *two*, the first aggregation, and the type of all the others; for the number *three*, which, from all time represented God; that is to say, substance, force, and product; does it not sum up, traditionally, the confused knowledge of the Absolute? Shall, Becker, Paracelsus, Agrippa, and the great seekers after occult causes, have for their word of order the *Trimegiste*, that is to say the great *Ternaire*; and the ignorant, habituated to condemn alchemy, transcendental chemistry, doubtless are ignorant that we are busy to justify the impassioned researches of those great men! The Absolute found, I should then be united with motion. Ah! while I am nourished with powder, and command men to die, uselessly enough, my old master heaps discovery upon discovery; he flies toward the Absolute! But I! I shall die like a dog in the corner of a battery.

"When this unhappy great man had recovered a little calmness, he said to me, with a sort of touching brotherliness, 'If I should succeed in one experiment, I will bequeath it to you before I die.'

"My Pepita," said Balthazer, pressing the hand of his wife, "tears of rage rolled over the cheeks of this man; while he threw into my soul the fire of that reasoning which Lavoisier had already timidly begun, without daring to give himself up to it."

"How!" cried Madame Claes, who could not refrain from interrupting her husband, "this man, in passing one night under our roof, has robbed us of thy affections; and destroyed, by a single phrase, by a single word, the happiness of a family! Oh! my dear Balthazer, did he make the sign of the cross? didst thou examine him well? The tempter alone could have that yellow eye, whence darted such fire. Yes; the demon alone could so have fastened himself upon thy memory! Since that day, thou hast been neither father, nor husband, nor head of a family!"

"What!" said Balthazer, rising, and throwing a piercing look at his wife: "thou blamest thy lover, for elevating himself above other men, that he may be able to throw at thy feet the divine purple of glory, as a small offering for the treasures of thy heart? But knowest thou, not yet, what I

have done these three years past?—the steps of the giant, my Pepita!" said he, with animation.

His countenance appeared, to his wife, more glowing under the fire of genius than it had been under the fire of love; and she wept in listening to him.

"I have combined chlorine and azote. I have decomposed many bodies, until now considered as simples. I have found new metals,—Hold!" said he, seeing the tears of his wife, "I have decomposed tears! Tears contain a little phosphate of chalk, a little chloride of soda, some mucous and some water!"

He continued to speak, without seeing the terrible convulsions which agitated his wife; for he had mounted upon Science, which had carried him away upon her unfolded wings, far from the material world. "This analysis, my dear, is one of the best proofs of the system of the Absolute. All life implies combustion. According to more or less activity of fire, life is more or less persistent. Thus, the destruction of minerals is indefinitely retarded, because the combustion in them is virtual, latent, or insensible; but vegetables, refreshed incessantly by the combination from which results humanity, live indefinitely; and there exist many vegetables, which are contemporaneous with the last deluge. But all the time that nature is perfecting a preparation, and, with an unknown design, has thrown into it sensation, instinct or intelligence—three marked degrees in the organic system—these three organisms acquire a combination, whose activity is in exact ratio with the result obtained. Man, who represents the highest point of intelligence, and who offers us the only preparation, from which results a powerful half creative—*thought*; is among the zoological creations, that one in which combustion is met with, in its most intense degree; and whose powerful effects are in some sort revealed by the phosphates, the sulphates, and the carbonates, which his body furnishes in analysis. Might not these substances be traces, which the action of the electric fluid, the principle of all fecundation, leaves upon him? Would not electricity manifest itself in him by a greater variety of combinations, than in all other animals? Should he not have faculties more grand than all other creatures, in order to absorb the strongest portions of the principles of the absolute?—and would it not assimilate them, in order to compound into a more perfect machine, his strength and his ideas? I believe it. Man is a crucible. Thus an idiot, in my opinion, would be he, whose brain would contain less phosphate than any other product of electro-magnetism. The madman would be he, whose brain contained too much; an ordinary man would be he, whose brain contained too little; the

man of genius would be he, whose brain would be saturated with it in a suitable degree. The man who loves much, the porter, the dancer, the great eater, are those who displace the force resulting from their electric apparatus. Thus our sentiments—"

"Enough! Balthazer, thou terrifiest me! Thou committest sacrilege! What! my love, should be—"

"Of the ethereal matter which is disengaged," said M. Claes, "and which doubtless is the word of the Absolute. Think, then, if I—I the first!—if I find—if I find—if I FIND it!"

This idea killed him—turned his brain. In saying these words, in three different tones, his countenance mounted, by degrees, to the expression of inspiration. "I make metals, I make diamonds, I repeat nature."

"And wilt thou be happier for it?" cried she, with despair. "Cursed science! cursed demon! Thou forgettest, Claes, that thou committest the sin of which Satan was guilty! Thou encroachest on God!—Oh! ch! God! He defies Him," said she, wringing her hands. "Claes, God disposes of one power which thou wilt never have."

At this argument, which seemed to annul his science, he observed, regarding his wife trembling—"What is that?"

"The force of motion," she replied. "Behold! what I have learned from the books thou hast obliged me to read. Analyze flowers, fruits, wines of Malaga!—thou wilt discover in them certainly all the principles. They came, like those of thy cross, in a medium which seemed to be a stranger to them. Thou canst find them in nature also; but, in collecting them, canst thou make these flowers, these fruits, this wine of Malaga? Canst thou have the effect of the sun? canst thou have the air of Spain?"

"I would create them if I should find the coercive force," said Balthazer.

"Nothing will stop him!" cried Pepita, in a despairing voice. "Oh! my love! I have lost him, he is dead!" She burst into tears, and her eyes, animated by grief, and the sanctity of the sentiments which shone in them, were more beautiful than ever.

"Yes," resumed she, sobbing, "thou art dead to everything. I see the genius of art is more powerful in thee than thyself; and its vigorous wings have carried thee too high, for thee ever again to descend, and be the simple, sweet companion of a poor woman. What happiness can I offer thee now?—oh! I could wish, in order to console myself, to believe that God created thee to manifest his works and sing his praises; that he incloses, in thy bosom, an irresistible force which masters thee! But no, God is good; he would leave in thy heart some thoughts for the wife who adores thee; for the children whom thou shouldst protect. Yes, yes; the demon only could help thee to walk in

the midst of these abysses without issue—amid this darkness, where thou art not enlightened by faith from on high, but by a horrible belief in thine own faculties. Otherwise, thou wouldst perceive that thou hast devoured nine hundred thousand francs in the last three years! Oh! render me justice!—thou, mine earthly god! I reproach thee not. If we were alone, without dependents, I would bring thee, on my knees, all my fortune, and say to thee—Take it, throw it into thy furnace, turn it into smoke; and would laugh to see it fly away. If thou wert poor, I would go and beg without shame, to procure the necessary carbon to feed thy furnace. In short, if, by precipitating myself into it, I could help thee to find thy execrable Absolute, Claes, I would throw myself into it with joy, since thou placest thy glory and thy delight in this so dearly bought secret. But our children, Claes, our children! what will become of them, if thou dost not soon guess this secret of hell? Do you know why Pierquin came here to-day? He came to demand of thee thirty thousand francs, which are owing;—and there is no way of paying them. Thy possessions are no longer mine. I told him thou hadst these thirty thousand francs, in order to spare thee the embarrassment, his questions would have put thee to; and to pay this sum, I have thought of selling our old plate." She saw her husband's eyebrows moistened with tears, and threw herself despairingly at his feet, raising toward him her supplicating hands. "My friend!" cried she, "cease one moment thy researches; let us economize the money necessary to resume thy labors by-and-by. If thou canst not entirely give up thy pursuit, oh! I judge it not, my friend. I will blow thy furnaces if thou wishest; but do not reduce our children to poverty, our children to misery! Thou canst love them no more, since science has devoured thy heart; but bequeath them not a life of misery, instead of the happiness thou owest them. The maternal sentiment has been too often the most feeble in my heart. Yes; I have often wished I had not been a mother, in order to be able to unite myself more intimately to thy soul—to thy life. Therefore, to stifle my remorse, I must plead before thee the cause of thy children rather than my own!"

Her hair was dishevelled, and floated over her shoulders; her eyes darted a thousand sentiments like so many arrows. *She triumphed over her rival.* Balthazer raised her, carried her to the sofa, and knelt before her.

"I have then caused thee sorrow!" said he, with the accent of a man just awakened from a painful dream.

"Poor Claes! and thou wilt do so still, in spite of thyself!" she replied, passing her hand through his hair. "But rise; come,

seat thyself beside me," she added, all joyous, and raising him to his place upon the sofa. "I forget all the past, if thou hast come back to me. Come, my friend, everything can be repaired, and thou wilt not separate any more from thy wife? Is it not so? Wilt thou say yes? Let me use the feminine influence, so necessary to the happiness of unfortunate artists;—of suffering great men. Thou shalt neglect me—thou shalt turn away from me, if thou desirest, but thou must allow me to contradict thee a little for thy good. I will never abuse the power thou shalt concede to me! Be great and celebrated, but be happy also. Do not prefer chemistry to us all! Listen: we will be complaisant to science—we will allow her to divide thy heart with ourselves; but be just—give us truly the moiety, and say, is not my disinterestedness sublime?"

She made him smile; for with that wondrous art which women possess, she had brought the highest question into that domain of pleasantry, of which woman is mistress. Although she appeared to smile, her heart was violently contracted, and it resumed, with difficulty, its habitually equal and sweet motion; but seeing rekindled in the eyes of Balthazer, the expression which charmed her, and was her glory; revealing to her the full action of her ancient power, which she had believed lost, she said to him, smiling: "Believe me, Balthazer, nature has made us to feel; and, although thou wouldst have us electrical machines; thy gases, thy ethereal substances, will never explain the gift which we possess of seeing into the future."

"Yes," he replied, "by the affinities. The power of vision, which makes the poet, and the power of deduction, which makes the wise man, are founded upon invisible affinities, intangible and imponderable, which the vulgar range in the class of moral phenomena, but which are physical effects. The prophet sees, and deduces. Unfortunately, this kind of affinity is too rare and too little known, to be submitted to analysis or to observation."

"And this," said she, taking a kiss, to distance the chemistry, which she had unfortunately awakened, "is then an affinity?"

"No, it is a combination; for two substances of the same characteristics do not produce any activity."

"Hush! hush!" said she, "thou wilt kill me with grief. Yes; I cannot support it, dear, to see my rival ever in the transports of thy love."

"But, my dear life, I think only of thee. My labors are for the glory of my family. Thou art at the bottom of all my experiments."

"Let us see: look at me."

This scene had rendered her beautiful as a young woman, and of all her person, her husband saw only her head, above a cloud of muslins and laces.

"You are right," he replied, gazing with

delight, "I have been wrong in leaving thee for science; when I fall again into my abstractions, thou shalt tear me from them. I wish it."

She cast down her eyes, and let him take her hand, her greatest beauty; a hand at once powerful and delicate.

"But I wish more still."

"Thou art so powerfully beautiful, that thou canst obtain everything."

"I wish to destroy thy laboratory; to enchain thy science," said she, darting fire from her eyes.

"Well then! to the devil with chemistry!"

"This moment effaces all my sorrows," resumed she; "now make me suffer if thou canst!"

At hearing these words, tears overcame him.

"Yes, thou art right," said he, "I could see thee only through a veil, and I could hear thee no longer."

"If I alone had been in question," she added, "I would have continued to suffer in silence, without raising my voice before my dear lord; but thy children must be considered. Claes, I assure thee, that if thou continuest to dissipate thy fortune thus, even though thy aim is glorious, the world will call thee to account, and its blame will fall also upon thy friends. But is it not sufficient for thee, a man of aims so high, that thy wife should draw thy attention to a danger thou dost not perceive! But we will say no more of this," said she, throwing upon him a smile, and a look full of coquetry. "This evening, my Claes, we will not be happy by halves."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DEATH OF A MOTHER.

THE morning after an evening so important to this house, Balthazer Claes, from whom, doubtless, Josephine obtained some promise relative to the cessation of his labors, did not go up to his laboratory, but remained with her the whole day. In the morning the family made preparations to go into the country, where they staid about two months; and from whence they came back into the city, to make ready for the festival, by which M. Claes wished, as formerly, to celebrate the anniversary of his marriage. Then Balthazer daily obtained proofs of the derangement, that his labors and his carelessness had brought into his affairs. Far from enlarging the wound by observation, his wife found every palliative. Of the seven domestics which M. Claes had, the day he received company the last time, there remained only Lemulquinier, Josette, the cook, and an old chamber-woman, named Martha, who had not quitted her mistress, since she left the convent. It was impossible to re-

ceive the high society of the city, with so small a number of domestics. But Madame Claes removed the difficulty, by proposing to procure from Paris a cook; to take for a waiter the son of their gardener; and to borrow a domestic from Pierquin. Thus no one would perceive their constrained condition. During the twenty days these preparations lasted, Madame Claes had skillfully beguiled the leisure of her husband. Sometimes she employed him to choose rare flowers, to ornament the grand staircase, the gallery and the rooms; again she sent him to Dunkirk, to procure some of those monstrous fish, the glory of well-furnished tables in the departments of the north. A festival like that which M. Claes gave, was a capital affair, which required a multitude of cares, and an active correspondence. The oysters came from Ostend, the heath-cocks were sent for to Brent, fruits were ordered from Paris. In short, the smallest accessories must not belie their hereditary luxury. Besides, the balls at the Claes House had a sort of celebrity. The capital of the department was at Douai, and this soirée was to open, as it were, the winter season, and give tone to those of the country. Hence, for fifteen years, Balthazer had always labored to distinguish himself in it, and had succeeded so well, that he made it each time the subject of conversation twenty leagues round; and people spoke of the dresses of the guests, of the smallest details, of the novelties they had seen, or the events which had passed there.

These preparations, therefore, prevented M. Claes from dreaming of his search after the Absolute: for, in coming back to domestic ideas, and to social life, he found his self-love as a man, a Fleming, and master of a house; and was again pleased in astonishing the country. He wished to impress a character upon this festival by something new, and he chose, among all the fancies of pomp, the prettiest, the richest, the most transient: this was, to make his house a forest of rare plants, and prepare bouquets of flowers for all the ladies. The other details of the festival corresponded to this unheard-of luxury. Nothing appeared to fail in its effects. But, as it happened, the 29th bulletin, and the particular news of the frightful disasters of the grand army of Russia and Beresina, spread round after dinner. A profound and real sadness took possession of the Douaisians, who, from a patriotic sentiment, unanimously refused to dance. Among the letters that arrived from Poland to Douai, there was one for Balthazer from M. de Wiere Chownia, then at Dresden, where he was dying (he said) from a wound received in one of the last engagements; but wished to bequeath to his host many ideas, which, since their meeting, had occurred to him, relative to the Absolute. This letter plunged M. Claes into a profound reverie, which, in the

eyes of his guests, did honor to his patriotism;—but his wife mistook it not; and to her the festival had a double grief. This soirée, during which the House of Claes threw out its last ray of splendor, had something of gloom and sadness in the midst of so much magnificence;—so many curiosities amassed by six generations, each of which had had its mania; it was a magnificence which the Douaisians admired for the last time.

The queen of that fête was the young Margaret Claes, then sixteen years old, and whom her parents presented to the world. She drew all eyes, by her extreme simplicity, by her candid air, and especially by her countenance, so in harmony with the house. It was, truly, a young Flemish girl; such as the painters of that country have represented: a head perfectly round and full; her chestnut-colored, smooth hair, separated upon her brow into two bands; gray eyes, mingled with green; fine arms, and *embonpoint* which did not injure her beauty; a timid air, but, upon her high and smooth forehead a firmness, which was concealed under an appearance of calm sweetness. Without being sad or melancholy, she had little gayety; reflection, order, the sentiment of duty—the three principal expressions of Flemish character—animated her face; cold at first view, but to which the eye was again attracted by a certain grace in the color, and by a peaceful loftiness which gave the pledge of a constant domestic happiness. By a singularity which physiologists have not explained, she had not any feature of her mother, and offered a living image of her maternal grandmother, a Conynkn, of Bruges: whose portrait, most carefully preserved, attested this resemblance.

Supper gave some life to the festival. If the disasters of the army interdicted the enjoyments of the dance, yet no one thought they ought to exclude the pleasures of the table. Then, gradually, this house, one moment so brilliantly lighted, where were crowded all the distinguished people of Douai, returned to silence. The true patriots, and tired people, went away early; the indifferent remained, with some card-players, and many of the friends of the Claes; but, toward morning, the gallery was deserted, the lights extinguished, from saloon to saloon; and that inner court, just before so noisy, so light, became black and gloomy—a prophetic image of the future that awaited the family.

When M. and Madame Claes retired into their apartment, Balthazer made his wife read the letter of the Pole; she returned it to him with a sad gesture—she foresaw the future. In short, from that day, Balthazer ill disguised the chagrin and ennui which overwhelmed him. In the morning, after breakfast, he played a moment in the parlor, with the little Lucien, or conversed with his two daughters, who were occupied in sew-

ing, embroidery, and making lace; but he soon left these plays and this conversation, of which he appeared to acquit himself as of a duty. When his wife came down stairs, after being dressed, she found him always seated in the arm-chair, looking at Margaret and Felicia, without heeding the noise of their bobbins. When the newspaper came, he read it slowly, like a retired merchant, who does not know how to kill time. Then he rose, contemplated the heavens from the windows, again sat down, and drew toward the fire, dreamily, like a man whom the tyranny of ideas made unconscious of his moments. Madame Claes now vividly regretted her want of education, and of memory. It was difficult for her to sustain, for a long time, an interesting conversation. Besides, perhaps it is impossible for two beings to do so, who have said everything to one another, and who are forced to go, in search of subjects of amusement, beyond the life of the heart, and material life. The life of the heart has its moments of dulness, and wishes for contrasts: material life will not serve, for a long time, to occupy superior minds, habituated to decide promptly; and the world is insupportable to *living* souls. Two solitary beings, who know each other entirely, must seek their amusements in the higher regions of thought; for, it is impossible to oppose anything small to that which is immense; and since, when a man has been accustomed to handle great things, he becomes difficult to amuse; he does not preserve, in the depths of his heart, that principle of candor, and that openness, which renders people of genius so gracefully children. But this infancy of the heart—is it not a human phenomenon very rare to those, whose mission is to see everything, to know everything, to understand everything?

During the first months, Madame Claes extricated herself from this critical position, by surprising efforts, which love or necessity suggested to her. Now, she wished to learn back-gammon, which she had never been able to play; and, by a miracle, conceivable enough, she did learn it: now, she interested Balthazer in the education of the children, whose lessons she directed according to his advice. But these resources exhausted themselves: there came moments, when she found herself, before Balthazer, like Madame Maintenon in the presence of Louis the Fourteenth. But M. Claes suffered from too much power: oppressed by one thought, which mastered him, he dreamed of the pomps of science; its treasures for humanity, its glory for himself; and suffered, as an artist suffers in his struggle with poverty—like Samson, tied to the columns of the temple. But the effect was the same with the two sovereigns; although the intellectual monarch was overwhelmed by his strength, and the other by his feebleness. What could

Pepita do, alone, against this kind of scientific home-sickness?

After having used the means which family preoccupations offered to her, she appealed to the world for its assistance, and gave two cafés a week. At Douai, a café supplied the place of a thé. A café is an assembly where, during an entire evening, the guests drink the exquisite wines and liquors which fill the cellars of that happy country; eat dainties, partake of black coffee, or coffee with milk, touched with ice; while the women sing romances, discuss their toilets, or relate the great nothings of the city. Such are still the pictures of Mieres, or Terburg, except the red plumes upon the gray pointed hats;—except the gaiters, and beautiful costumes of the fourteenth century. But the efforts which made Balthazer play his part well, as the master of a family;—his borrowed affability; the artificial vivacity of his mind: all declared the depth of the evil contended against, by the fatigue to which he was a prey on the morrow. These continual festivals then, were only palliations, which tested the weight of the malady. They were branches which Balthazer encountered in rolling over the precipice, and which retarded his fall, but rendered it not the less heavy.

He never, however, spoke of his old occupations, and expressed no regret in feeling the impossibility to which he had subjected himself, of recommencing his experiments. But his motions were sad, his voice feeble, his dejection that of a convalescent. This ennui appeared even in the manner in which he took the tongs, to build carelessly in the fire some pyramids, with pieces of charcoal. When evening arrived, he experienced visible content. Sleep doubtless freed him from an importunate thought. But in the morning, he rose melancholy, perceiving he had a day to pass through; and he seemed to measure the time he had to consume, like a traveller, contemplating a desert he has to cross. If Madame Claes knew the cause of this languor, she wished to be ignorant to what degree the ravages were extending. She was full of courage against the sufferings of the mind; but without strength against the generousities of the heart. She dared not question Balthazer, when he listened to the conversation of his two daughters, and to the laugh of Lucien, with the air of a man occupied by a secret thought; but she shuddered at seeing him shake off his melancholy, and force himself, through a generous sentiment, to appear gay, that he might not sadden others. These, his coquetries with his daughters, and his plays with Lucien, moistened with tears the eyes of Josephine, who went out to hide the emotions caused in her by that heroism of which a woman knows so well the value, and which breaks her heart; she had then a desire to say to him, "kill me, and do what thou wilt."

His eyes insensibly lost their vivid fire, and took that glassy tint which saddens those of old men. His attentions to his wife, his words, everything in him was struck with heaviness. These symptoms became more and more serious toward the month of April, frightening Madame Claes, to whom the spectacle was intolerable, and who reproached herself a thousand times, while she admired the Flemish faith with which her husband kept his word. One day, when Balthazer seemed more dejected than he had ever been, she hesitated not to sacrifice everything to restore him to life.

"My friend," said she to him, "I release thee from thy oath."

Balthazer looked at her with an astonished air.

"Thou art thinking of thy experiments," resumed she.

He replied with a gesture of frightful vacuity. Far from addressing to him any remonstrance, Madame Claes, who had leisurely sounded the abyss, into which they were going to roll together, took him by the hand, and said to him, smiling—

"Thanks, friend, I am sure of my power. Thou hast sacrificed to me more than thy life, and I will now make a sacrifice to thee. Although I have already sold many of my diamonds, there remains still enough, together with those of my brother, to procure the money necessary for thy labors. I destined these jewels for our daughters; but will not thy glory make them more brilliant? Besides, wilt thou not one day restore them diamonds more beautiful?"

The joy which suddenly illumined the face of her husband, put the climax to her despair; for she saw, with grief, that the passion of this man was stronger than himself. M. Claes had confidence in his work, to walk without trembling, in a way which was to her an abyss; to him, faith; to her, doubt—the heaviest burden. Do not wives suffer always for both? That moment, she was pleased to believe in his success, wishing to justify herself for being his accomplice, in the probable dilapidation of their fortune.

"The love of a life will not suffice to acknowledge thy devotion, Pepita!" said M. Claes, much moved.

Hardly had he uttered these words, when Margaret and Felicia entered, and wished them good morning. Madame Claes cast down her eyes, and remained a moment mute, before her daughters, from whom she had alienated their fortune for the sake of a chimera; but her husband took them upon his knees, and conversed gayly with them, happy to shed around them the gayety that oppressed himself.

From that time, Madame Claes entered into the ardent life of her husband. The future fate of her children, the expectation of their father, were to her two excitements as

powerful as were glory and science to her husband. This unfortunate woman had no longer a calm hour. All the diamonds were sold at Paris by the assistance of the Abbé de Solis, her confessor; and the chemical manufacturers had recommenced sending their products.

Constantly agitated by the demon of science, and that fury for research, which devoured her husband, she lived in a continual expectation; and often remained like one dead for whole days, nailed to her chair by the violence of her desires, which, not finding, like those of Balthazer, a pasture in the laboratory, consumed her soul by acting upon her doubts and her fears. At moments, she reproached herself for her complaisance to a passion, whose end was unattainable, and which M. de Solis condemned. Then she would rise to the window or the inner court, and look with stupor upon the chimney of the laboratory. If smoke escaped from it, she contemplated it with despair; for ideas, the most contradictory, agitated her heart and mind. She saw the fortune of her children evaporate in smoke; but she saved the life of their father. Was it not her first duty to render *him* happy? This last thought calmed her for a moment. She had free access to the laboratory, and could remain there; but she soon found it necessary to relinquish this satisfaction. Her sufferings were too great in seeing Balthazer entirely neglectful of her, and often embarrassed by her presence. She felt impatient jealousies, cruel envyings, which made her desire to blow up the building. She died, as it were, of a thousand unheard of pains.

Lemulquinier became to her a kind of barometer. If she heard him whistle, when he went and came to secure the breakfast and dinner, she divined that the experiments of her husband were fortunate, and that he had hope of an approach to success. If Lemulquinier in the morning was gloomy, she would cast upon him a look of grief: Balthazer was discontented. The mistress and the valet soon comprehended each other, notwithstanding the pride of the one, and the surly submission of the other. Feeble, and without self-defence against the terrible prostrations of thought, this woman sunk under those alternations of hope and despair, and was weighed down with the inquietudes of a loving wife, and the anxieties of a trembling mother. The desolate silence, which formerly froze her heart, she now partook without perceiving the air of gloom which pervaded the house; and whole days rolled away without a smile, without a word in the parlor. Through a sad maternal foresight, she accustomed her daughters to the labors of the house, and endeavored to make them sufficiently skilful in some trade, suitable to women, by which they might be able to live, if they fell into want. Her external calm-



ness concealed frightful agitations. Toward the end of summer, Balthazer had wasted all the money raised from the sale of the diamonds, at Paris, by the assistance of the old Abbé de Solis; and he was, besides, indebted twenty thousand francs to M. M. Protez & Chiffreville.

In August, 1813, about a year after the scene in which this history commences, although M. Claes had made some beautiful experiments, which he unfortunately despised, his efforts had been without results, as to the principal object of his researches. The day in which he had finished a series of his labors, the sense of his inability crushed him. The certainty of having fruitlessly dissipated considerable sums, made him desperate. This was a frightful catastrophe. He quit his loft, descended slowly to the parlor, threw himself into a chair in the midst of his children, and remained there some moments, as if dead, without replying to the questions with which his wife overwhelmed him. His tears gained upon him; he hastened to his apartment, that he might have no witness of his grief. Madame Claes followed him precipitantly into his chamber; where, alone with her, Balthazer gave way to his despair.

The tears of a man—the words of a discouraged artist—the regrets of the father of a family—had a character of terror, of tenderness, that, to Madame Claes, was more painful than all past grief. The victim consoled the executioner. When Balthazer said to her, with a frightful accent of conviction, “I am a miserable man; I trifle with the life of my children—with thine—and to leave you happy, it is necessary that I kill myself,” his words pierced her heart, and her knowledge of the character of her husband, made her fear that he would realize, immediately, this vow of despair. She experienced, at this moment, one of those revolutions which trouble life at its source; and it was so much the more fatal, because she restrained its violent effects, by affecting a deceptive calm.

“My friend,” said she, “I have not consulted Pierquin, whose friendship is not great enough to prevent his feeling pleasure at your ruin; but an old man, who has shown himself a good father to me—the Abbé de Solis, my confessor—he has given me counsel, which will save us from ruin. He has been to see our pictures. The price of those in the gallery will serve to pay all that is due upon the mortgaged property, and all which is owing to Protez & Chiffreville; for there is, doubtless, an account to settle there?”

M. Claes made an affirmative sign, by bowing his head, whose hair had become perfectly white.

“M. de Solis knows M. M. Happe & Duncker, of Amsterdam; they are mad for pic-

tures; and, like all upstarts, desire to make the ostentatious display, which is not allowed in ancient families. They will buy them at their full value; so we shall recover our revenue, and from the sum which we shall have, which will be nearly a hundred thousand ducats, you can take a portion of capital, and continue your experiments. Your two daughters and I will content ourselves with little; by time and economy, we shall supply the vacant frames with other pictures, and thou wilt be happy.”

Balthazer turned his head toward his wife with joy, mingled with fear. Their parts were changed: the wife had become the protector of the husband. But this man, once so tender, and whose heart had been so in unison with his Josephine's, now held her in his arms, without perceiving the horrible convulsions which agitated her heart, and even her hair and lips, with a nervous tremor.

“I dare not tell thee,” said he, “that between me and the *absolute* existed hardly a hair's breadth of distance. To gasify metals, it is only necessary to find a means of submitting them to an intense heat, in a medium where the pressure of the atmosphere will be of no force; in short, in a perfect vacuum.”

Madame Claes could not sustain the egotism of this reply. She expected impassioned thanks for her sacrifices, and found a problem in chemistry! She suddenly quitted her husband, descended to the parlor, and falling into her chair between her two affrighted daughters, burst into tears. Margaret and Felicia, each taking a hand, knelt on each side of her chair, weeping with her, without knowing the cause of her sorrow; and repeating many times, “what is the matter, my mother?”

“Poor children, I am dying! I know it.”

Margaret shuddered. For the first time, she perceived upon her mother's face, that paleness peculiar to dark complexions.

“Martha! Martha!” cried Felicia, “come; mamma needs you.”

The old duenna ran from the kitchen, and seeing the greenish whiteness of that face, so delicately brown, and so strongly colored: “Heavens!” cried she in Spanish, “madamo is dying!”

She went out quickly, and told Josette to heat some water to bathe her feet, and returned to her mistress.

“Do not frighten monsieur; say nothing to him, Martha,” cried Madame Claes. “Poor dear daughters!” added she, pressing Margaret and Felicia to her heart, with a desperate movement; “I wish to live long enough to see you happy and married. Martha, tell Lemulquiner to go for M. de Solis, and beg him, from me, to come here.”

This thunderbolt resounded necessarily to the kitchen. Josette and Martha, both devoted to Madame Claes and her daughters,

were touched, in the only affection they had. These words: "Madame is dying—Monsieur will kill her—make quick a bath for her feet," had wrested many interjections from Josette, who heaped them on Lemulquinier.

Lemulquinier, cold and insensible, sat eating at the corner of the table, before one of the windows; through which the light came from the court into the kitchen, where everything was as neat as the boudoir of a young lady.

"Come, make an end of that," said Josette, looking at the valet de chambre, and mounting a cricket, to take from a shelf a cauldron which glistened like gold; "there is no mother who is able to see, with indifference, a father amuse himself in fricaseeing a fortune like that of monsieur, in order to make a pudding with the bones."

Josette, whose head was dressed in a round cap, hive-shaped, resembling a German nut-cracker, threw upon Lemulquinier a sour look, which the green color of her little blood-shot eyes rendered almost venomous. The old valet shrugged his shoulders, with a movement worthy of Mirabeau in a pet, and slowly replied, "Instead of teasing monsieur, madame ought to give him money. We shall all be rich enough, soon, to swim in gold. There needs only the thickness of a penny, when we shall find——"

"Well, you, who have twenty thousand francs in the bank—why do you not offer them to monsieur? He is your master; and seeing that you are so sure of what he is doing——"

"You know nothing about that; heat your water," said the Fleming, interrupting her.

"I know enough to know," said Josette, "that there were a thousand marks of silver, that you and your master have melted up; and, if you go on at this rate, you will be worth about as much as five pence three farthings, no more."

"And monsieur," said Martha, coming back hastily, "will kill madame, in order to free himself from a wife, who would restrain him from swallowing up everything. He is possessed with a demon, that is plain;—and the least you risk in helping him, Lemulquinier, is your own soul, if you have one; but you have none; for you are like a piece of ice, while everything here is desolation. The girls are weeping like Magdalen's. Run; find M. de Solis."

"I have something to do for monsieur in the laboratory," said the valet. "The quarter d'Esqueretier is too far off; go yourself."

"Look at the monster!" said Martha. "Who will bring the bath for madame's feet? will you let her die? she has blood in her head."

"Lemulquinier," said Margaret, coming from the hall, next the kitchen, "as you return from M. de Solis, will you request M. Pierquin to come here immediately?"

"Now, will you go?" said Josette.

"Mademoiselle, monsieur told me to arrange the laboratory," replied Lemulquinier, turning round to the two women, and looking at them with a despotic air.

"My father," said Margaret to M. Claes, who came down at that moment, "can you not let us send Lemulquinier to the city?"

"Now will you go, Chinese villain?" said Martha, hearing M. Claes put Lemulquinier under the orders of his daughter.

"The valet's want of attention to the house, was the great subject of quarrel between these two women and himself. His coldness had increased the attachment of Josette and the duenna. This struggle, so insignificant in appearance, had much influence upon the future well-being of this family; when, at a later period, it had need of every aid against misfortune.

Balthazer had become so absent, with his new-sprung hopes, that he did not perceive the condition of Josephine. He took Lucien upon his knee, and made him jump mechanically, as he was working out a problem, which he had now the possibility of solving.

He saw the bath carried to his wife; who, not having strength to rise from the couch where she lay, had remained in the parlor. He even looked upon his two daughters, who were occupied with their mother, without inquiring the cause of their anxious care. When Margaret or Felicia wished to speak, Madame Claes implored silence, pointing to Balthazer.

A scene like this, was of a nature to make Margaret think. She found herself placed between her father and mother—old enough, already reasonable enough, to appreciate their conduct. The moment had arrived, in the internal life of this family, in which the children became, either voluntarily or involuntarily, judges of their parents. Madame Claes had comprehended the danger of this situation. From love to her husband, she had endeavored to justify in the eyes of Margaret that, which in the just mind of a girl of sixteen, must appear the fault of her father. Also, the profound respect which Madame Claes testified for Balthazer in this instance, by effacing herself before him, in order not to interrupt his meditations, impressed on his children a sort of terror for the paternal majesty. But this devotion, however contagious it was, increased the admiration which Margaret had for her mother, to whom the daily accidents of life more particularly united her. This sentiment was founded upon a sort of divination of her sufferings, whose cause she must necessarily seek; and no human power could prevent that, sometimes a word, escaping from Martha or Josette, should have revealed to Margaret the cause of the situation in which the house had been during the last four years. Notwithstanding the discretion

of Madame Claes, her daughter had discovered, insensibly, thread by thread, the mysterious web of this domestic drama. She was going to be, in a given time, the active confidant of her mother; and at the catastrophe would be the most formidable of judges. It was the desire of Madame Claes to communicate to her the devotion and love which she herself bore to Balthazer. The firmness and the discretion which she perceived in Margaret, made her tremble at the idea of a possible struggle between her daughter and her husband, when, after her death, Margaret should take her place in the duties of conducting the family. The poor woman trembled more at the consequences of her death than at death itself; and her solicitude for Balthazer was seen in the resolution she finally took. By freeing the property of her husband, she would secure him independence, and prevent all discussion, by separating his interests from those of her children. She wished to see him happy, even to her last moment; and she calculated to transmit all the delicacy of her heart to Margaret, who would continue to act, after her death, the part of an angel of love—to exercise upon the family a tutelary authority and protection. Was not this to make, from the depths of the tomb, her love for those who were dear to her, shine forth? Nevertheless, not wishing to lower the father in the eyes of the daughter, by initiating her before the time, into the terrors with which the scientific passion of Balthazer inspired her; she studied the soul and character of Margaret, to know if she would become, like herself, a mother to her brothers and sisters, and to her father a sweet and tender companion. Thus, the last days of Madame Claes were poisoned by calculation and fears, which she dared not confide to any one. Feeling herself struck, even to life itself, by this last scene, she sent her glance far into the future;—while Balthazer, henceforth disqualified for everything like economy, fortune or domestic sentiments, thought only of finding the *absolute*.

The profound silence which reigned in the parlor, was only interrupted by the monotonous movement of M. Claes's feet, which he continued to move, without perceiving that Lucien had got off his knees. Margaret, seated near her mother, whose pale and discomposed countenance she contemplated, turned from time to time toward her father, astonished at his insensibility. Soon the street door was heard to open and close, and the family saw the Abbé de Solis, supported by his nephew, slowly crossing the court.

"Ha! see M. Emmanuel," said Felicia. "Good young man," said Madame Claes, on perceiving Emmanuel de Solis; "I am glad to see him."

Margaret blushed at hearing this eulogy escape from her mother. Two days be-

fore, this young man had awakened in her heart hitherto unknown sentiments, and quickened in her intellect thoughts till then inactive. During the late visit which the confessor had made to his penitent, there had passed one of those imperceptible events which hold a large place in life; and from which the results became sufficiently important to require the portraits of these two new personages, now introduced into the bosom of the family. Madame Claes had always, from principle, performed her devotions in secret. Her confessor had never come to her house, and was now there for the second time only.

It was difficult not to be seized with compassion and admiration at the aspect of the uncle and nephew. The Abbé de Solis was an octogenarian, with silver hair, whose decrepit countenance seemed to have no life, except in the eyes. His bent back; his withered body; his small legs, one of which was terminated by a horribly deformed foot, enveloped in a sort of velvet bag, offered the spectacle of suffering and decaying nature, governed by an iron will, and the chaste religious spirit which had so long preserved it. This Spanish priest, remarkable for vast knowledge, for true piety, and very extensive learning, had been successively a Dominican, grand penitentiary of Toledo, and vicar-general of the Archbishop of Malines. Before the French revolution, he had been promoted to the highest dignities of the church, by the patronage of Casa Real; but sorrow, caused by the death of the young duke, to whom he had been preceptor, disgusted him with active life, and he consecrated himself entirely to the education of his nephew, who had lost his parents at an early age. Since the conquest of Belgium, he had fixed himself near Madame Claes. From his youth, the Abbé de Solis had professed for Saint Theresa an enthusiasm, that, no less than the inclination of his mind, had led him to the mystic part of Christianity; and finding in Flanders, where Mademoiselle Bourignon and the illuminated writers, or quietists, made the most proselytes, a congregation of Christians given to that belief, he remained there; and so much the more readily, as he was considered a patriarch of the particular communion, which, notwithstanding the censures passed on Fenelon and Madame Gugon, continued to cherish their doctrine. His manners were severe, his life exemplary, and he was believed to have supernatural ecstasies. Though so severe a religion had detached him from the world, the affection which he bore his nephew rendered him careful of his interests. When he moved in any work of charity, the old man levied contributions upon his church, before having recourse to his own fortune; and his patriarchal authority was so well acknowledged, his intentions so pure, his per-

epicacity so rarely in fault, that every one did honor to his demands.

To give an idea of the contrast that existed between the uncle and nephew, we might compare the old man to one of those hollow willows, which vegetate on the border of streams; and the young one to the sweet-briar, loaded with roses, shooting up its straight and elegant stem from a tree, surrounded by the masses which adorn it. Severely educated by his uncle, who kept him as near himself as a matron keeps her young daughter, Emmanuel was full of that delicate sensibility, of that purity and half-melancholy, which are generally transient flowers among young men, and only long-lived in souls nourished by religious principles. The old priest had crushed the expression of voluptuous sentiments in his pupil, and prepared him, by continual labors—by a discipline almost cloistral, for the sufferings of life. This education, which was to deliver Emmanuel new to the world, and only to render him happy, if he was fortunate in his first affections, had clothed him with an angelic purity, which communicated to his person the charm that invests young girls. His expressive face, although regular, was recommended by a great precision in the contour; by a happy disposition of the lines, and by the profound calmness which the peace of the heart gives. All was harmonious—his black hair, his eyes, and his brown arched eyebrows—his white and glowing complexion. His voice was what would be expected from his fine countenance. His feminine motion accorded with the melody of his voice—with the tender clearness of his look. He seemed ignorant of the attraction which the reserve—the melancholy of his attitude, the modesty of his words, and the respectful care which he lavished upon his uncle, excited. Indeed, it was impossible to see him steadying the tottering steps of the old abbé, in order to enable him to avoid wounding his feet, while he conducted him along the road, without recognizing in Emmanuel those generous sentiments which make man a sublime creature. He appeared so great in loving his uncle, without judging him; in obeying him, without ever disputing his order—that every one wished to see a prophecy in the sweet name which his grandmother had given him. When, either at home or in the houses of others, the old man exercised his dominical power, Emmanuel raised his head so nobly, as if he should protest with all his strength, if he found himself attacked by another man; that all persons of any heart were moved, like artists at the aspect of a great work; for beautiful sentiments resound not less strongly in the soul by their *living conception*, than by their maternal realization.

Emmanuel had accompanied his uncle, in the visit which he had made to his penitent,

to examine the pictures in the house of Claes. Margaret, learning through Martha that the Abbé de Solis was in the gallery, and desiring to see that celebrated man, had sought some pretext to satisfy her curiosity, and went there to join her mother. She was entering, gayly enough—affecting the lightness under which young girls know so well how to hide their motives—and saw near the old man, who was clothed with black, crooked, dejected, cadaverous—the fresh and beautiful figure of Emmanuel. Their looks, equally young, equally simple, expressed the same astonishment. They had, doubtless, already seen one another in their dreams. Both cast down their eyes, and afterward raised them by a simultaneous movement, and let the same confusion escape. Margaret took the arm of her mother, spoke to her in a low voice, as if in self-defence, and sheltered herself under the maternal wing; but extending her neck with a swan-like movement, now and then, to look again at Emmanuel, who was still attached, on the other hand, to the arm of his uncle. Although skilfully distributed, so as to show the pictures to advantage, the light in the gallery was feeble, and favored the furtive glances which are the joy of the timid. Doubtless, neither of the young people went so far, even in thought, as the *if*, in which the passion of love begins; but both felt that deep agitation move their hearts, of which the young keep the secret, through modesty or fastidiousness. The first impression, which determines the overflowings of a sensibility long restrained, is followed in young people by the astonishment and half-stupidity caused in children by the first sounds of music—some laugh and think, and others do not laugh until after having thought. But those, whose souls are called to live by poetry or love, listen a long time; and re-demand the melody by a look, where pleasure is already kindled—where curiosity seems unbounded. If we irresistibly love the place, where, in our infancy, we were initiated into the beauties of harmony;—if we remember with delight the musician, and even the instrument; how can we keep ourselves from loving the being who first awakens in us the music of life? The first heart in which we have inspired love, is it not as a country? Emmanuel and Margaret, were to each other this musical voice, which awoke a new sense; this hand which lifted the cloudy veil, and discovered shores bathed by the fires of the south. When Madame Claes arrested the old man before a picture of Guido's, which represented an angel, Margaret advanced her head to see what impression it would make upon Emmanuel; and the young man sought Margaret, in order to compare the mute thought of the canvas, with the living thought of the creature:—involuntary and ravishing flattery, which was

mutually understood and enjoyed! The old abbe greatly praised this fine composition, but the two children were silent. Such was their meeting. The mysterious light of the gallery;—the quiet of the house;—the presence of the parents;—all contributed to engrave beforehand in the heart, the delicate lines of this mystic marriage. When Emmanuel stammered out some phrases, in taking leave of Madame and Mademoiselle Claes, the thousand confused thoughts which had just overflowed the soul of Margaret, became calm; and diffused themselves, like a smooth plain, tinged with a luminous ray. That voice, whose fresh and velvet-like tones spread over the heard-unheard-of enchantments, completed the sudden revelation of which he had been the cause, and of which he was to gather the fruits;—for the man, who is destined to awaken love in a young girl, is often ignorant of his work, and leaves it unfinished. Margaret, confused, inclined her head, and conveyed her adieu in a look, in which was painted a regret at losing the fair and fruitful vision. This adieu was made at the bottom of the old stairs, before the door of the parlor. Entering it, she looked from the window after the old uncle and the nephew, until the street door was closed. Madame Claes was too much occupied with the grave subjects which she had agitated in her conference with her director, to examine the face of her daughter; and, at the instant when M. de Solis and his nephew appeared for the second time, she was too violently troubled to perceive the blush which colored the cheek of Margaret, and revealed the fermentation of the first pleasure received into a virgin heart.

When the old abbot was announced, Margaret had retaken her work, and appeared to give to it so much attention, that she saluted the uncle and nephew without looking at them. M. Claes returned, mechanically, the salute which M. de Solis made to him; and left the parlor, like a man absorbed in his occupation. The pious Dominican seated himself near his penitent; and threw upon her one of those deep looks, by which he sounded souls. It was enough for him to look at M. Claes and his wife, to divine the catastrophe.

"My children," said the mother, "go into the garden. Margaret, show M. Emmanuel your father's tulips."

Margaret, half-ashamed, took Felicia's arm, and looked at the young man; who bushes, and seized the little Lucien, as he went out, to keep himself in countenance. When all four were in the garden, Felicia and Lucien wandered away from Margaret, and left her and young de Solis alone—before the forest of tulips—invariably arranged by Lemulquinier in the same manner.

"Do you love tulips?" asked Margaret, after having remained a moment in profound

silence, without Emmanuel's wishing to break it.

"Mademoiselle, these are fine flowers; but to love them, it would be necessary, doubtless, to have a taste for them—to know and appreciate their beauties. These flowers dazzle me. The habit of labor in the little chamber where I dwell, near my uncle, perhaps, makes me prefer what is more gentle to the sight."

In saying these last words, he contemplated Margaret; but his look, full of confused desires, meant no allusion to the dead whiteness, the calmness, the tender colors, which made that face a flower.

"You, then, labor much?" resumed Margaret, conducting Emmanuel to a wooden bench, with a back painted green; "here," said she, "you will not see the tulips so near; they will fatigue you less. You are right; these colors dazzle and give pain."

"In what do I labor?" said the young man, after a moment of silence, during which he smoothed with his feet the sand of the alley—"I labor upon all sorts of things. My uncle wished to make me a priest."

"Oh!" said Margaret, with naiveté.

"I resisted that; I did not feel it to be my vocation. But it was necessary to have much courage to contradict my uncle. He is so good, and loves me so much; he has lately hired a man, in order to save me from the conscription—a poor orphan!"

"To what do you destine yourself, now?" resumed Margaret; but, suddenly, she added, "pardon me! monsieur; you must think me very curious!"

"Oh! mademoiselle!" said Emmanuel, looking with as much surprise as tenderness; "no one, except my uncle, ever asked me this question. I study to be a professor. What would you do? I am not rich. If I can become principal of some college in Flanders, I shall have wherewith to live modestly; and shall marry some simple woman, whom I shall love much. Such is the life which I have in perspective. Perhaps, it is for *that* I prefer a little daisy, upon which every one treads, in the plain of Orchies, to these fine tulips, full of gold, of purple, of sapphires, of emeralds, which represent a prosperous life—as the daisy represents a sweet and patriarchal life—the life of a poor professor, as I shall be."

"I have always called daisies Margarites," said she.

Emmanuel de Solis blushed excessively; and sought an answer, by tormenting the sand with his feet. Embarrassed in his choice, among all the ideas that came to him, and which he then thought foolish, then utterly confused by the tardiness of his reply, he said, "I dared not pronounce your name ——" He stopped.

"Professor;" replied she, as if musing.

"Oh! but mademoiselle, I shall be a pro-

fessor, for the sake of having a *situation*; but I shall undertake other works, which will enable me to be more generally useful. I have much taste for historical labors."

"Ha!"

That "Ha!" full of secret thoughts, made the young man yet more bashful; and he laughed, saying—"You make me speak of myself, mademoiselle, when I ought to be speaking only of you."

"My mother and your uncle have ended their conversation," said she, looking through the windows into the parlor.

"I find her much changed," said she.

"She suffers without being willing to tell us the cause of her sufferings; and we can only suffer with her," replied Margaret.

Madame Claes had terminated, indeed, a delicate consultation—in which she discussed a case of conscience, which the Abbé de Solis was alone able to decide. Foreseeing complete ruin, she wished to retain, from Balthazer—who cared so little for his affairs—a considerable part of the price of the pictures, which M. de Solis was going to sell in Holland;—in order to conceal and reserve it, for a moment when poverty should weigh upon her family.

After mature deliberation, and having appreciated the condition in which he found his penitent—the old Dominican had approved of this act of prudence. He went away to take measures for the sale, which must be made secretly, in order not to lessen too much the consideration, in which M. Claes was held. The old man sent his nephew, with a letter of recommendation, to Amsterdam; where, enchanted to render service to the house of Claes, Emmanuel succeeded in selling the pictures of the gallery, to the celebrated bankers, Happe & Dunker, for a sum, ostensibly, of eighty-five thousand Dutch ducats; and he sold other pictures for fifteen thousand ducats—the sum to be given to Madame Claes. The pictures were so well known, that it was only necessary, in order to accomplish the business, that Balthazer should answer a letter, which the house of Dunker wrote to him. Emmanuel de Solis was charged, by M. Claes, to receive the money for the pictures; that he might expedite the business secretly; that the village of Douai might not obtain a knowledge of the sale.

Toward the end of September, Balthazer reimbursed all the sums which had been lent to him; redeemed his property, and resumed his labor;—but the house of Claes had been despoiled of its most beautiful ornaments. Blinded by his passions, he testified no regret; and believed so certainly in being able, promptly, to repair this loss, that he even stipulated in the sale the conditions of the redemption. A hundred painted canvases were nothing, in the eyes of Josephine, in comparison with domestic happiness, and

the satisfaction of her husband. Moreover, she filled the gallery with pictures, which had been removed from the reception-rooms, and, in order that the vacancy there should not be perceived, changed the furniture. His debts being paid, Balthazer had above two hundred thousand francs at his disposal, wherewith to recommence his experiments. The Abbé de Solis, and his nephew, were the depositories of the fifteen thousand ducats, which Madame Claes secretly possessed; and, to increase the sum, the abbé sold the ducats—to which the Continental war had given value—and sixteen thousand francs were thus realized, and placed in the cellar of the house inhabited by the Abbé de Solis.

Madame Claes had the sad satisfaction of seeing her husband constantly occupied during eight months. Nevertheless, too much wounded by the rude shock he had given her, she fell into a gradual decline. In the meantime, science so completely devoured Balthazer, that neither the reverses experienced by France; nor the first fall of Napoleon; nor the return of the Bourbons, drew him from his occupations. He was not a husband, a father, nor a citizen. He was only a chemist.

Toward the end of the year 1814, Madame Claes was so ill, that she could not leave her bed. Not wishing to vegetate in her chamber—where she had been happy—and where the remembrance of vanished happiness, would inspire involuntary comparisons with the present—which overwhelmed her—she removed to the parlor. Her physician had favored the wishes of her heart; and she found this room more airy, gay, and suited to her situation, than the chamber had been.

The bed, on which this unfortunate woman was to finish her life, was put up between the chimney and the window, that opened upon the garden. Here it was that she passed her last days; sacredly occupied in perfecting the souls of her daughters, upon whom she desired to radiate the fire of her own. Conjugal love, enfeebled in its manifestations, allowed maternal love to display its force. The mother shone so much the more charmingly from having been so late in manifesting herself. Like all other generous persons, she experienced sublime delicacies of sentiment, which she took for remorse; and believing that she had robbed her daughters of the tenderness due to them, she sought to indemnify them for imaginary wrongs, by endeavoring to please them, and render them happy. Her attentions and care, rendered her more and more delightful to them daily. She wished, in some way, to make them live in her heart; to cover them with her drooping wings; and to love them in one day, for all those, in which she had neglected them. Her sufferings gave to her words and caresses an unctuous softness, which exhaled from her soul. Her eyes ca-

ressed them, before her voice touched their hearts by its tender intonations; and her hand seemed always to shed benedictions on them.

Although, after having resumed its habits of luxury at the time in which this history begins, the house of Claes received no more guests;—although its isolation became more complete;—although Balthazer gave no more festivals on the anniversary of his marriage; the city of Douai was not surprised. At first, the sickness of Madame Claes was a sufficient reason for the changes—while the payment of his debts arrested the course of slander; and afterward, in the political vicissitudes to which Flanders was subjected—the war of a hundred days, and its occupation by foreigners—the chemist was completely forgotten. During these two years, the city was so often upon the point of being taken, and was alternately occupied, either by the French or by the enemy;—there came into it so many strangers; so many country-people took refuge there; so many interests had arisen there; so much of existence was in question; so much movement and misfortune; that each one could think only of himself. The Abbé de Solis and his nephew, and the two brothers Pierquin, were the only persons who visited Madame Claes. The winter of 1814, to 1815, was to her the most painful agony. Her husband came rarely to see her. He remained, after dinner, some hours near her; but as she had not strength to bear a long conversation, he uttered one or two phrases—eternally the same—then sat down, and a frightful silence reigned in the parlor; which was broken only on the days when the Abbé de Solis and his nephew came to pass the evening. On those occasions, while the old abbé played back-gammon with M. Claes, Margaret conversed with Emmanuel, near the bed of her mother; who smiled at their innocent joys, without letting them see how painful, and at the same time pleasant, to her detached and dying soul, was the freshness of her virgin love, overflowing in waves of words upon words. An inflection of voice, which charmed the two children, rent her heart. A glance of intelligence between them, awoke in her the almost dead remembrance of her own young and happy hours, giving to the present all its bitterness. But Margaret and Emmanuel had a delicacy, which made them repress much of the delicious playfulness of love, in order not to pain a grieved woman, whose wounds they instinctively divined.

All sentiments have a life peculiar to themselves—a nature which proceeds from the circumstances in the midst of which they are born; they retain the characteristics of the places where they grow up—the stamp of the ideas which influence their development. There are some passions ardently conceived, which remain ardent, like that

of Madame Claes for her husband. There are some sentiments which always smile, which preserve a morning cheerfulness, and their harvests of enjoyment do not go on without laughter and festivity. But there are also loves—fatally framed in melancholy and encircled by misfortune—whose pleasures are painful, costly, loaded with fears, poisoned by remorse, or full of despair. Love took root in the hearts of Emmanuel and Margaret, unknown to either party; it bloomed under the gloomy vault of the Claes gallery, in the presence of an old severe abbot, in a moment of silence and calm; and this sentiment—grave and discreet, but fruitful in sweet shadows, in secretly-tasted pleasures, like grapes stolen from the corner of a vineyard—preserved even the gray tints which decorated it at its first hours. In not daring to yield itself to any warm demonstration before that bed of pain, the two children increased their enjoyments, unconsciously to themselves, by the concentration which kept it in the depths of their hearts. There were some cares given to the sick one, in which Emmanuel loved to participate; happy to unite himself to Margaret, by making himself, beforehand, the son of her mother; and a melancholy gratitude replaced upon the lips of the young girl the honied language of lovers. The sighs of their hearts, when filled with joy by some exchanged look, were hardly distinguished from the sighs wrested from them by the sight of the mother's pain. Their sweet little moments of indirect confession, of unfinished promises, of repressed expressions, might be compared to roses painted upon a black ground. They both felt an uncertainty, which they would not avow; they knew the sun was over them, but they knew not what wind could chase away the black clouds above their heads; they doubted of the future, and, fearing that they would always be attended by sufferings, remained timidly in the shades of the twilight, without daring to say, "Shall we ever be together all day?"

Nevertheless, the tenderness which Madame Claes testified for her children, nobly concealed what she herself suffered. Her children caused her neither trembling nor terror; they were her consolation, but not her life. She lived by them; she died for Balthazer. However painful was the presence of her husband, who remained whole hours musing, hardly throwing upon her, at long intervals, a uniform look, she forgot her pains only at those moments. The indifference of Balthazer for this dying woman, would have seemed criminal to any stranger who had witnessed it; but Madame Claes and her daughter were accustomed to it; besides, they knew his heart, and pardoned him. If, during the day, Madame Claes underwent any dangerous crisis—if

she found herself more ill—if she appeared near dying—M. Claes was the only one in the house, or in the city, who was ignorant of it. Lennulquinier, his valet, knew it; but neither the daughters, on whom the mother imposed silence, nor the wife apprised the husband of the danger of a creature formerly so ardently beloved. When his step resounded on the gallery, as he came to dinner, Madame Claes was happy; she was about to see him; she collected all her strength to taste that happiness. At the moment he entered, this pale, half-dead woman, colored vividly, and resumed an appearance of health. He would approach her bed, take her hand, and see her under this false aspect. For him only she was well. When he said, "My dear wife, how are you to day?" she would reply, "Better, my friend;" and he would believe, that to-morrow she would rise, reëstablished in health. The abstraction of Balthazer was so great, that he considered the mortal sickness with which his wife was struck, as merely a simple indisposition. Dead to all the world, she was living for him. A complete separation between them was the result of this year. M. Claes slept far from his wife, rose in the morning, and shut himself up in his laboratory, or in his cabinet; and only saw her in presence of his daughter, and of two or three friends who visited her; and thus became weaned from her. These two beings, once accustomed to think together, had no communications—none of those outpourings that make up the life of the heart—except at long intervals; and the moment arrived in which even these rare pleasures ceased. Physical sufferings came to the aid of this poor woman, and helped her to support the void—the separation—which would have killed her, had she been fully alive. Sometimes she felt happy, that he whom she always loved did not witness her sufferings. She contemplated Balthazer during part of the evening; and, knowing him to be happy in his own way, she rejoiced in this happiness, which she had procured for him. That frail enjoyment satisfied her; she demanded no more, if she was loved; she forced herself to believe that she was; she glided over that bed of glass, without daring to lean upon it, lest it should break and plunge her into an abyss of nothingness.

As no event disturbed this calm, and as the sickness, which was slowly destroying Madame Claes, contributed to this internal quiet, by maintaining the conjugal affection in a passive state, it was easy to reach, *in statu quo*, the first days of the year 1816.

Toward the end of the month of February, M. Pierquin struck the blow which was to precipitate into the tomb this angelic woman, whose soul, as the Abbé de Solis said, was almost without sin.

"Madam," said he to her, seizing a moment in which her daughters could not hear the conversation, "M. Claes has charged me to borrow three hundred thousand francs upon his property. Take precautions for your children."

Madame Claes joined her hands, raised her eyes to Heaven, and thanked the notary by an inclination of the head, and a sad smile, by which he was touched deeply. The intelligence he had communicated was the stroke of the poniard, which killed her. She became immediately absorbed in the sad reflections with which it swelled her heart, and fell like a traveller, who, having lost his equilibrium by stepping upon a round stone, rolls to the bottom of the precipice which he had coasted a long time with courage.

When the notary was gone, Madame Claes directed Margaret to bring her the materials for writing. She rallied all the strength she had, and was occupied some moments in writing her will. She stopped many times to look at her daughter. The hour of confession was come. Margaret, in conducting the family since the sickness of her mother, had so well realized her hopes, that the dying woman threw a glance upon the future fortunes of her family without despair, seeing herself revived in this strong and loving angel. Without doubt, these two women had mutual and sad confidences to make; for the daughter's eye met the mother's continually, and tears rolled over the faces of both. Many times, at the moment when Madame Claes rested, Margaret would say, "My mother!" as if about to speak; then would stop, as if suffocated; while her mother, absorbed by her last important thoughts, did not ask the purport of her interrogation. At last, Madame Claes wished to seal her letter; and Margaret, who had held the lamp, was retiring, with her usual delicacy, so as not to see the superscription, when her mother said to her, in a heart-rending tone, "Thou must read it, my child!"

She saw her write these words:—"To my daughter Margaret."

"We will converse when I have rested," added she, putting the letter under the pillow.

Then she sunk down upon her pillow, as if exhausted with the effort she had made, and slept some hours. When she awoke, her two daughters and her two sons were kneeling by her side, and praying fervently. Gabriel and Lucien had just arrived from college brought by Emmanuel de Solis, who, six months before, had been named professor of history and philosophy.

"My children, is it necessary for us to say farewell?" cried she. "You do not abandon me! but he who—" she did not finish.

"Monsieur Emmanuel," said Margaret, "go tell my father that mamma is worse."

The young de Solis hastened to the labor-



story; and having obtained from Lemulquinier, that M. Claes should come to speak with him, the latter replied to the pressing demand of the young man—"I will come."

"My friend," said Madame Claes to Emmanuel, when he came back, "take my two sons and go seek your uncle. It is necessary, I believe, to give me the last sacrament; I wish to receive it from his hands."

Then, being alone with her two daughters, she made a sign to Margaret, who, comprehending her mother, sent away Felicia.

"I have a word to say to you, my dear mother," said Margaret, who was not aware how ill her mother was, and therefore increased the wound made by Pierquin; "for six days I have not had any money for the family expenses, and I owe the domestics six months' wages. I have tried already, twice, to ask my father for money, but dared not; you do not know that the pictures of the gallery and the wine in the cellar are sold."

"He has not told me a word of that," cried Madame Claes. "Oh, my God! you have called me to yourself in time! But, my poor children, what will become of you?"

She prayed fervently;—her eyes dimmed with the tears of repentance.

"Margaret," resumed she, drawing the letter from under her pillow, "here is a letter you will not open nor read, till the moment when you shall be in the greatest distress;—that is to say, in want of bread. My dear Margaret, love your father dearly; but take care of your sister and brothers. Within a few days, perhaps within a few hours, you must be placed at the head of this family. Be economical. If called to oppose the will of your father—and the case may happen—since he has expended large sums in search of a great secret, which, if discovered, must be glorious for him, and yield an immense fortune; and for which he will need money, perhaps, will demand it of you—show all the tenderness of a daughter, and reconcile the interests, of which you will be the only protector, with what you owe to your father—a great man, who sacrifices his happiness, his life, to render his family illustrious. He cannot do wrong, except in form. His intentions will be always noble; he is so excellent; his heart is full of love. You will see him again, good and affectionate to you. I have been obliged to say these words to you, upon the borders of the tomb. If, Margaret, you wish to sweeten the pains of death, you must promise me, my child, to supply my place to your father;—never cause him any sorrow, never reproach him; judge him not. In short, be a sweet mediatrix till his labors terminate, and he becomes again the head of his family."

"I understand you, my dear mother," said Margaret, kissing the inflamed eyes of the dying woman, "and I will do as you wish."

"Do not marry, my beloved," resumed Madame Claes, "until Gabriel is able to succeed you in the care of the family affairs. Your husband, if you marry, will not, perhaps, partake your sentiments; he will bring trouble into the family, and distress your father."

Margaret looked upon her mother, and said: "Have you no other directions to give me upon my marriage?"

"Do not thou hesitate, my dear child?" said her mother, with alarm.

"No," replied she, "I promise to obey you."

"Poor girl; I never sacrificed myself for you," added the mother, shedding hot tears, "and I ask you to sacrifice yourself for all! Happiness makes us selfish. Yes, Margaret, I have been feeble because I was so happy. Be strong; preserve your reason for those who have none. Conduct so toward your brothers and sister, that they may never blame me. Love your father, and do not contradict him—*too much.*"

She reclined her head on her pillow, and added not a word. Her strength had betrayed her. The internal combat, between the wife and the mother, had been too violent. Soon after the clergyman came, preceded by the Abbé de Solis, and the parlor was filled with the domestics. When the ceremony began, Madame Claes, whom her confessor had awakened, looked at all the persons who were kneeling around her, but did not see Balthazar.

That word, which summed up her life and her death, was pronounced with a tone so lamentable, that a horrible shudder ran through the assembly.

In spite of her great age, Martha darted like an arrow, mounted the stairs, and struck rudely at the door of the laboratory.

"Monsieur, madam is dying, and they wait for you to administer the sacrament!" cried she, with the violence of indignation.

"I am coming," replied Balthazar.

Lemulquinier came a moment after, saying that his master was following him. Madame Claes ceased not to look at the door of the parlor, but her husband did not show himself until the ceremony was ended. The Abbé de Solis and the children surrounded the bed of the dying woman. Josephine reddened when her husband entered, and some tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Thou wert going, doubtless, to decompose azote," said she, with an angelic sweetness, which made all present shudder.

"It is done," cried he, with a joyous air. "Azote contains some oxygen, and a substance of the nature of the imponderables, which really is the principle of the—"

A murmur of horror arose, which restored him to his presence of mind.

"But what did they tell me?" resumed

he. "Art thou worse? what has happened?"

"It has happened, monsieur," said the Abbé de Solis, indignantly, in his ear, "that your wife is dying, and that you have killed her."

Without waiting for a reply, the abbé took the arm of Emmanuel and went out, followed by the children, who conducted him even into the court. Balthazer remained thunder-struck; and looking at his wife, dropped some tears.

"That art dying, and I have killed thee! was that what he said?"

"My friend," replied she, "I lived only by thy love, and thou has unconsciously withdrawn my life."

"Leave us," said M. Claes to the children, who were entering at that moment. "Have I ever for an instant ceased to love thee?" he said, seating himself by the pillow of his wife, taking her hand and kissing it.

"My friend, I never reproached you; you have rendered me happy, too happy. I have not been able to bear the comparison of the first days of our marriage, which were overflowing, with these last days, during which thou hast not been thyself, and which have been void. The life of the heart, like the physical life, has its actions; and for six years thou hast been dead to love, to thy family, to everything, which makes our happiness. I will not speak to thee of the felicities which belong to youth;—no, they must cease in the decline of life; but they have fruits which nourish the soul, confidence without bounds, sweet habitudes. Ah! thou hast ravished from me these treasures of our age! I go away in time. We have lived together in another way;—but now thou hidest from me thy thoughts, thy actions. How hast thou come to fear me? Have I ever addressed to thee a word, a look, a gesture of blame? Yet, thou hast sold our last pictures, even the wines from the cellar, and thou art borrowing again upon thy property, without telling me a word. I therefore leave life, disgusted with it. If you committed some faults—if you blindly pursued the impossible, did I not show you enough love to taste the sweetness of sharing your faults, of walking always near you, even in the road of crime? Thou once loved me too much. There is my glory and my grief! My sickness, Claes, has been long. It began on the day, when, in this room, you proved to me that you belonged more to science than to your family. Behold your wife, dying! your fortune consumed! Your fortune and your wife belong to you;—you can dispose of them. But the day in which I shall be no more, my fortune will be our children's, and you cannot take it. What is going then to become of you? Now, I must tell you the truth—the dying see far. Where, hereafter, will be the counterpoise,

which will balance the cursed passion, that you have made a part of your life? If you sacrifice me to it, your children will be light before you; for I owe you the justice to avow, that you have preferred me to everything. Two millions, and six years of labor have been thrown into this gulf, and you have found nothing."

At these words M. Claes put his blanched head into his hands, and concealed his face.

"And you will find nothing but shame for yourself, and misery for your children. Al-ready people name you with derision—" Claes the alchemist, Claes the madman!" For myself, I believe in you; I know you to be great, learned, full of genius; but to the vulgar genius resembles folly. Glory is the sun of the dead. In this life you will be unhappy—like all who are great—and you will ruin your children. I am going without enjoying your renown, which would have consoled me for lost happiness. Well, my dear Balthazer, to render death less bitter, it would be necessary that I should be certain that my children shall have bread!—but nothing, not even you, are able to calm my inquietudes."

"I swear!" said M. Claes.

"Swear not, my friend, lest you should break your oath!" said she, interrupting him. "You owe us your protection; but it has failed us nearly seven years. Science is your life. A great man can have neither wife nor children; he must go alone in the paths of poverty. Your virtues are not those of vulgar people. You belong to the world; you no longer wish to belong to a wife nor to a family;—you dry up the ground around you, as large trees do; and I, poor little plant, who have not been able to raise myself high enough, I expire in the meridian of life. I have waited till this last day to tell you these horrible truths, which I have only discovered by the fires of pain and despair. Spare my children! That this word may resound in your heart, I will say it to you even with my last sigh. Your wife, you see, is dying; you have slowly and gradually despoiled her of her sentiments and her pleasures. Alas! without that cruel care, which you have involuntarily taken, should I have lived so long? But these poor children have not abandoned me. They have watched over my pains, and the mother has continued to subsist. Spare! spare my children!"

"Lemulquinier!" cried Balthazer, with a voice of thunder.

The old valet appeared suddenly.

"Go, destroy everything up above—machines, apparatus—do it with precaution, but break everything. I renounce science!" said he to his wife.

"It is too late!" said she, looking at Lemulquinier. "Margaret!" cried she, feeling herself dying.

Margaret appeared on the threshold of the

door, and uttered a piercing cry on seeing the eyes of her mother growing dim.

"MARGARET!" repeated the dying woman.

That last exclamation contained so powerful an appeal to her daughter—it invested her with so much authority, that it was a whole testament.

The whole family frightened, ran and saw Madame Claes expire—who had exhausted the last strength of her life in her conversation with her husband. Balthazar and Margaret were immovable. She at the pillow, he at the foot of the bed. They could not believe that woman dead, of whom they alone knew all the virtues, and the inexhaustible tenderness! The father and daughter exchanged a look, heavy with thoughts.

The daughter judged the father, and the father trembled to find the daughter an instrument of vengeance!—for, although the recollections of the love with which his wife had filled her life, came back in a crowd to besiege his memory, and give to the last words of the dead a holy authority, which must always make him hear her voice; he doubted of his heart, too feeble against his genius; and he heard the terrible growl of a passion which corrupted the strength of his repentance, and made him fear himself.

When this woman had departed, every one comprehended that the Claes House had had a soul, and, that that soul was no more. Grief was so vivid in the family, that the parlor, where she seemed to live again, remained closed—for no one had the courage to enter it.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DEVOTEDNESS OF YOUTH.

SOCIETY practices none of the virtues which it demands of men; it commits crimes every hour;—but it commits them in words. It prepares bad actions by pleasantry, as it degrades good ones by ridicule. It mocks the sons who weep too much for their fathers; anathematizes those who do not weep enough, and amuses itself with weighing the dead before they are cold.

The evening of the day on which Madame Claes expired, her friends strewed flowers upon her tomb, between two rubbers of whist, and rendered homage to her lovely qualities in searching for hearts or spades. Thus, after a few tearful phrases, which are the *ba, be, bi, bo, bu*, of intellectual grief—pronounced with the same intonations, with neither more nor less of sentiment, in every city in France every hour of the day—every one began to compute the value of her inheritance.

In the first place, M. Pierquin observed to those who conversed of this event, "that the death of that excellent woman was a blessing for her—her husband rendering her

too miserable; but that it was still more so for her children. She would not have known how to refuse her whole fortune to her husband, whom she adored, but now M. Claes could not dispose of it." And each one estimated the inheritance of Madame Claes, by computing her economical plans, and taking the inventory of her jewels and wardrobe, while the afflicted family were still weeping round the funeral bed. Frightful!

With a notary's glance, Pierquin calculated that the *personal property* of Madame Claes, to employ his own expression, could be yet recovered, and might amount to the sum of about fifteen hundred thousand francs, represented either by the forest of Waignes, of which the wood had, after twelve years, acquired an enormous value—taking into the account the large trees and the new growth—or by the property of M. Claes, which was still good to repay his children. Mademoiselle Claes was, therefore, (to continue to speak his gibberish) a girl of four hundred thousand francs. "But, if she does not immediately marry," added he, "some one will emancipate her, and permit the forest of Waignes to be sold, to discharge what is due to the minors, and employ it in such a way that her father cannot touch it: M. Claes will ruin his children."

Every one conjectured what young persons there were in the province worthy of the hand of Mademoiselle Claes, but none did the notary the honor to mention him. When he found so many reasons for rejecting every one who was mentioned as worthy of Margaret, the interlocutors looked at each other and smiled, and took delight in prolonging this provincial malice. Pierquin had already seen in the death of Madame Claes, an event favorable to his pretensions, and had already cut in pieces the body for his own profit. "That good woman," said he, as he went home to bed, "was as proud as a peacock, and would never have given me her daughter. Ha! ha! why should I not manoeuvre, in such a manner, as to marry her? Father Claes is a man drunk with carbon; one, who takes no care of his children. If I ask him for his daughter in marriage, after having convinced Margaret of the urgent necessity of her marrying, in order to save the fortunes of her brothers and sisters, he will be well content to disembarass himself of a child who is able to vex him."

He went to sleep, thinking of the matrimonial charms of the contract, and meditating upon all the advantages which the affair offered him; and the guaranties which there were for his happiness, in the person of her whom he was to make his wife. It was difficult to find in the whole province, a young person more delicately beautiful, or better educated than Margaret Claes. Her modesty, her grace could only be compared to the

lovely flower, of which Emmanuel dared not pronounce the name in her presence;—fearing he should thus discover to her the secret of his heart. Her feelings were proud, her principles religious; she would be a chaste wife;—and not only the vanity of M. Pierquin, of which all men have more or less in the choice of a wife, was flattered, but his pride also, by the immense consideration which her family—doubly noble—enjoyed in Flanders, and in which her husband must share.

The next day, M. Pierquin drew from his pocket-book some notes of a thousand francs, and offered them to M. Claes, in a most friendly manner, to prevent his being troubled with pecuniary cares, while plunged in grief. Touched by this delicate attention, (so he reasoned) Balthazer would, doubtless, make a eulogy to his daughter upon the heart and person of the notary. It was not so. M. Claes and his daughter received this action in all simplicity, and their sufferings were too exclusive for them to think of Pierquin. Indeed, Balthazer's despair was so great, that the world, disposed to blame his conduct, pardoned him—less in the name of science, which might excuse him, than on account of regrets which could not repair the evil; for the world pays itself for what it gives, without examining the alloy. To the world, grief is a theatrical show, a sort of enjoyment which disposes it to absolve every one, even a criminal; for in its avidity of emotion, it acquits, without discrimination, both him who makes it laugh, and him who makes it weep, without demanding an account of the means.

Margaret was sixteen years old, when her father placed in her hands the government of the house, where her authority was piously recognized by her sister and two brothers, whom Madame Claes, in her last sickness, had enjoined to obey their elder sister. The mourning-dress heightened the delicate whiteness of her complexion; and her sadness put in stronger relief her sweetness and patience. From the first, she was prodigal of proofs of that feminine courage—of that constant serenity, which those angels must have, who are commissioned to spread peace, by touching suffering hearts with their pinions. But, if she habituated herself, by a premature understanding of her duties, to hide her griefs, they were only the more vivid. Her calm exterior was at discord with the depth of her emotions, and she was destined to know, at an early age, those terrible explosions of feeling, which will not suffer the heart always to retain them in secret; for her father kept her constantly pressed between the generosity natural to young souls, and the voice of imperious necessity. The calculation, in which she was involved the very next day after her mother's death, threw her also into the serious interests of life, at a

period, when young girls think only of its pleasures;—dreadful education of suffering, which is never wanting to angelic natures!

As the love which is based upon money and variety, forms the most obstinate of passions, Pierquin wished immediately to circumvent the heiress. A few days after the first putting on of mourning, he sought occasion to speak to Margaret; and began his operations with a skilfulness, calculated to fascinate her, had not love thrown into her soul a clearness of vision, which prevented her being caught by appearances, so much more favorable to sentimental deceptions, than, in this circumstance, Pierquin displayed the goodness which was proper to him—the goodness of a notary, who believed himself in love, when he saved a few crowns. Strong in feigned relationship, in the constant habit, which he had of transacting the business, and of sharing the secrets of the family; presuming upon the esteem and friendship of the father, and the use to be made of the carelessness of a learned man, who had formed no fixed project for the establishment of his daughters, and not supposing that Margaret could have a predilection for another, he allowed himself to enter upon a pursuit, in which no passion played, except by alliance with calculations most odious to the young mind, and which he knew not how to disguise; for it was *he*, who showed himself artless—it was *she*, who used discrimination in this instance, precisely because she believed, that he acted against a defenceless girl, and forgot the privileges of weakness.

"My dear cousin," said he to Margaret, with whom he was walking in the alleys of the garden, "you know my heart, and you know how much I am inclined to respect the painful feelings which affect you at this moment. I have a soul too full of sensibility for a notary; I see only by the heart, and am obliged constantly to employ myself with the interests of others, when I wish to give myself up to the sweet emotions, which are the happiness of life. Thus, I suffer much in being obliged to speak to you of projects discordant with the state of your heart—but it is necessary. I have thought much of you for some days; and I have just learnt, that, by a singular fatality, your fortune, and that of your brothers and sister, are in danger. Do you wish to save your family from complete ruin?"

"What will it be necessary to do?" said she, half-frightened by his words.

"To marry!" replied Pierquin.

"I will not marry!" cried she.

"You will marry," resumed the notary, "when you have reflected maturely upon the critical situation in which you are."

"How can my marriage save us—"

"This is what I expected of you, cousin," said he, interrupting her. "Marriage emancipates you!"

"How will it emancipate me?" asked Margaret.

"It puts you *in possession*, my dear little cousin!" said he, with an air of triumph. "If you marry, you take your fourth part of your mother's fortune; and, to give it to you, will it not be necessary to settle the whole estate; and will it not be necessary, in order to settle it, to sell the forest of Waignies? This done, the whole value of the inheritance will be ascertained, and your father will be obliged, as guardian, to place the parts belonging to your brothers and sister, where chemistry cannot touch it."

"In the contrary case, what will happen?" demanded she.

"Your father," said the notary, "will administer upon your property. If he should wish to make gold of it, he would be able to sell the wood of Waignies, and leave you as naked as the little St. Johns. The forest of Waignies is worth, at this moment, nearly fourteen hundred thousand francs. But if, the day after to-morrow, your father cuts it down, your thirteen hundred acres would not be worth three hundred thousand francs. Will it not be better to avoid the almost certain danger, by making the occasion of dividing it happen immediately, by your marriage? Then you will save all the cuttings of the forest, which your father would dispose of, at any rate, to your prejudice. At this moment, while chemistry sleeps, he will necessarily place the value of the settlements upon his ledger. The funds are at thirty-nine. These children will have nearly five thousand livres of interest, upon the fifty thousand francs; and, seeing that he cannot dispose of the capital belonging to the minors—when your brothers and sister come of age, their fortunes will be doubled. While, otherwise, (my faith—see how your father has curtailed the fortune of your mother!) you will save the deficit by an inventory;—if he is behindhand in his accounts, you will take a mortgage on his property, and by that, save something."

"Fie!" said Margaret; "this would be an outrage upon my father. The last words of my mother have not been pronounced so long a time, that I cannot recall them. My father is incapable of robbing his children," added she, shedding tears of grief. "You misunderstand him, Monsieur Pierquin!"

"But, if your father, my dear cousin, returns to chemistry again, he—"

"Will ruin us! you would say."

"Oh! completely ruin you! Believe me, Margaret," said he, taking her hand, which he put upon his heart, "I should forget my duty, if I did not insist. Your interest only—"

"Monsieur," said Margaret, with a cold air, withdrawing her hand from him, "the interests of my family, well understood, do not require me to marry. So my mother judged."

"Cousin!" cried he, with the conviction of a man of money, who saw a fortune lost, "you will destroy yourself; you will throw into the water, the inheritance of your mother. Well, I will have the devotion of the excessive friendship I bear you! For you know not how much I love you! I have adored you, from the day I saw you, at the last ball given by your father—you were then ravishing. You can confide in the voice of the heart, when it speaks of interest, my dear Margaret!" He made a pause. "Yes, we will invoke a family council, and we will emancipate you, without consulting you."

"But what is this being emancipated?"

"It is, to enjoy one's rights."

"If I can be emancipated without being married, why do you wish me to marry?—and with whom?"

Pierquin tried to look at his cousin with a tender air; but this expression contrasted so strongly with the rigidity of his money-getting eyes, that Margaret thought she perceived calculation in the unlooked-for tenderness.

"You may marry any one whom you please—in the city!" resumed he. "A husband is indispensable, even as a matter of business. You will often be in the presence of your father; and alone, can you resist him?—"

"Yes, monsieur, I know how to defend my brothers and my sister, when it is time."

"Pest! gossip!" said Pierquin to himself. "No! you will not be able to resist him!" resumed he, in a loud voice.

"Let us quit this subject," said Margaret.

"Adieu, cousin; I shall endeavor to serve you, notwithstanding. I will prove how much I love you, by protecting you, in spite of yourself, against a misfortune, which every one in the city foresees."

"I thank you for the interest you feel for me; but I entreat you, neither to propose, nor undertake anything, that will cause the least chagrin to my father," said Margaret, decidedly.

Margaret remained thoughtful, when Pierquin went away;—comparing his metallic voice, his manners, which had only the suppleness of springs; his looks, which expressed more servility than sweetness, with the melodious mute poetry, with which Emmanuel knew how to clothe his sentiments. In whatever we do, whatever we say, there exists a wonderful magnetism, whose effects can never be mistaken. The sound of the voice, the look, the impassioned gesture of the lover, by a skillful actor, can be so imitated, that an inexperienced girl may be deceived—but, if this young girl has near her a soul, which vibrates in unison with her own, will she not soon recognize the tone of the true lover!

Emmanuel, like Margaret, found himself at this moment under clouds, which, from their first meeting, had formed a sombre atmosphere over their heads, and which robbed them of the blue heaven of love. He

had that idolatry for his chosen, which hopelessness renders so sweet and so mysterious in its pious manifestations. Placed, socially, far from Mademoiselle Claes by his fortune, and having only a noble name to offer her, he saw no chance of being accepted for her husband. He had waited for the encouragements which Margaret could not give, under the failing eyes of her dying mother; and, equally pure, not a word of love had yet passed between them. Their joys had been the joys which the unfortunate are obliged to taste alone. They had trembled separately, although agitated by a ray from the same hopes. They seemed to fear one matter themselves, in feeling already too much united to each other. Emmanuel trembled, if he touched the hand of the sovereign, for whom he had made a sanctuary in his heart; for the slightest contact developed in him an overpowering happiness, and he could no longer master his unchained emotions. But, although they had granted each other not the slightest of the innocent or serious testimonies, permitted to the most timid lovers, they were, nevertheless, so timidly lodged in the heart of each other, that both knew the other ready to make the greatest sacrifices;—the only pleasures they were able to taste. After the death of Madame Claes, their secret was suffocated for a time under mourning weeds. The dark tints of the sphere in which they lived, had become black, and its brightness extinguished in tears. Margaret's reserve changed almost to coldness; for she was bound by the oath required by her mother, and instead of becoming more free than before, she became more rigid. Emmanuel had espoused the grief of his beloved, and comprehended that the least vow of love, the most simple requisition, would be a crime against the laws of the heart. This great love became, therefore, more sweet than it had ever been. These two tender souls, always yielding the same sound, but separated by grief, as they had been by the timidity of youth; and by respect for the sufferings of the dying, still kept one another to the magnificent language of the eyes,—to the mute eloquence of devoted actions,—the sublime harmonies of youth,—the first steps of young love. Emmanuel came every morning to learn the news of M. Claes, and Margaret; but he never penetrated to the dining-hall, except when he brought a letter from Gabriel, or when M. Claes requested him to enter. Then, the first glance thrown upon the young girl, told her of a thousand sympathetic thoughts. He suffered from the discretion, that imposed upon him ceremonies; but he shared her sadness, and spread the dew of his tears on the heart of his friend, by a look of disinterested love, which no reserved thought adulterated. This good young man lived so much in the present, he attached himself so much to a happiness, which he believed fugitive,

that Margaret sometimes reproached herself, for not generously extending to him her hand, and saying, "are we not friends?"

Pierquin continued his attentions, with the thoughtless patience of the insensible. He judged of Margaret according to the ordinary rules, employed by the multitude, in their appreciation of women. He believed, that the words *marriage, liberty, fortune*, which he had thrown into her ear, would germinate in her soul, and cause a desire, from which he should profit, to spring up there; and imagined that her coldness was dissimulation. But, although he overwhelmed her with attentions, he ill concealed the despotic manners of a man, habituated to decide the highest questions, relative to the life of families. To console her, he uttered some of the common places, familiar to people of his profession, and which take from grief its holiness; and he abandoned this feigned melancholy at the door, where he resumed his double shoes and his umbrella. He made use of the tone, which his long familiarity authorized him to take, as a means of putting himself more into the heart of the family, in order to decide Margaret in favor of a marriage that he proclaimed beforehand, throughout the city. True, devoted, respectful love, formed, therefore, a striking contrast with a love so egotistical and calculating. All was homogeneous in these two men. The one feigned a passion, and armed himself with even the smallest advantages, in order to be able to wed Margaret; the other concealed his love, and trembled to let his devotion be perceived.

A little while after the death of her mother, and on the same day, Margaret had an opportunity to compare the only two men of whom she could judge;—for, so great had been the solitude to which she had been condemned, that she had seen little of the world; and, in the situation in which circumstances had placed her, she had access to no one, who could think of demanding her in marriage. One day, after breakfast;—it was one of the first fine days of the month of April, Emmanuel arrived, just as M. Claes was going out. Balthazer could not support the aspect of his house, and generally spent part of the day in walking along the ramparts. Emmanuel made a motion to follow M. Claes, then he hesitated—seemed to summon up all the force within him—looked at Margaret, and remained. Margaret, supposing the professor wished to speak to her, proposed to him to come into the garden. She sent her sister Felicia to Martha, who was working in the ante-chamber on the first story, and went to seat herself upon a bench, in sight of her sister and the old duenna.

"M. Claes is as much absorbed by sorrow, as he was by his learned researches," said the young man, seeing Balthazer walking slowly through the court. "Every one in

the city pities him. He goes like a man, who has no longer his ideas—he steps without motive—looks without seeing.”

“Every grief has its own expression,” said Margaret, restraining her tears. “What do you wish to say to me?” resumed she, after a pause, with cold dignity.

“Mademoiselle,” replied Emmanuel, with a moved voice, “have I a right to speak to you as I am going to do? You will only see, I trust, my desire to be useful to you; let me believe, that a professor can be interested in his pupils, to the point of disquieting himself concerning their future prospects. Your brother Gabriel is now more than fifteen years old, and on the fifth form in the college, and it is certainly necessary to direct his studies, in such a manner, as will best prepare him for his future career. Your father is the person to decide this question, and, if he does not think of it, will it not be a misfortune to Gabriel? But, will it not mortify your father to be told that he has forgotten his sons? In this conjuncture, cannot you consult your brother upon his tastes, and let him make a choice of his future line of life for himself?—so, that if, hereafter, your father should wish to make him a magistrate, an administrator, or a military man, he may have the knowledge requisite for such employment? I believe neither you nor M. Claes wishes to leave him idle.”

“Oh no,” said Margaret; “I thank you, Monsieur Emmanuel. You are right. My mother, in teaching us to make lace; and, with so much care, teaching us to draw, sew, embroider, and touch the piano, said to us often, that we knew not what might happen in life. Gabriel must have personal worth, and a complete education. But what is the most suitable career a man can take?”

“Mademoiselle,” said Emmanuel, trembling with happiness, “Gabriel has the most aptitude for the mathematics, of any of his class. If he wishes to enter the Polytechnic school, I believe he would easily acquire the knowledge necessary for any business. On leaving the school, he will have the power to choose what shall be most to his taste, without having prejudged the future; and you will have gained time. Men, who leave that school with honor, are well received everywhere. It furnishes administrators, learned men, manufacturers, bankers, engineers, generals and marines. There is, therefore, nothing extraordinary, in seeing a rich young man, or, of a good family, admitted there. If Gabriel decides upon that—I will ask of you—will you grant it to me?—say yes!”

“What do you wish?”

“To be his tutor,” said he, trembling.

Margaret looked at M. de Solis, took his hand, and said, “Yes!” She then made a pause, and added, with a voice full of emotion, “How much I appreciate the delicacy

which makes you offer, precisely what I can accept from you. In what you have just said, I see you have been thinking of us. I thank you.”

Although these words were said simply, Emmanuel turned his head to hide the emotion which filled his eyes, at the consciousness of having pleased Margaret.

“I will bring them both,” said he, when he became a little calm. “To-morrow is the day they take leave.”

He rose; saluted Margaret, who followed him to the door, and when he was in the court, he saw her still in the door of the dining room, from which she made him a friendly sign.

It was after dinner, the same day, that the notary came to visit M. Claes, and he sat between him and his cousin, Margaret;—precisely upon the bench where Emmanuel had been seated.

“My dear cousin,” said he to M. Claes, “I have come this evening to speak to you on business. Forty-three days have elapsed since the decease of your wife.”

“I have never counted them,” said Balthazar, wiping away a tear, which the legal word *decease* drew from him.

“Oh, monsieur!” said Margaret, looking at the notary, “how could you—”

“But, my cousin, we are obliged to compute the times, which are fixed by law. The question is precisely on account of you and your co-heirs. M. Claes, having only minor children, is bound to make an inventory within the forty-five days that follow the decease of his wife, in order to prove the value of the common stock; for it is necessary to know whether it be good or bad, in order to accept it, or hold himself to the pure and simple rights of the minors.”

Margaret rose.

“Remain, my cousin,” said Pierquin. “It is business which concerns you, as well as your father. You know how much I share your sorrows; but it is necessary, to-day, to employ even yourself upon the details, without which, you all will find yourselves in a bad plight. I do, at this moment, my duty as a family notary.”

“He is right,” said M. Claes.

“The adjournment expires within two days,” resumed the notary; “I must, therefore, proceed to-morrow upon the work of the inventory, for the attorney has no heart; he is not troubled with sentiment; he puts his paw upon us at all times. So, every day from ten till four o’clock, my clerk and I will come with an appraizer. When we have finished in the city, we will go into the country. As to the forest of Waignies, we are going to talk about it, and, that settled, we will pass on to other forests. You will have to invoke a family council for the purpose of naming an under-guardian. M. Conynck, of Bruges, is your nearest relation; but he

has become a Belgian! You ought, my cousin, to write to him on the subject. You should know if the good man is going to fix himself in France, where he possesses fine estates; and you can, perhaps, make him decide to come with his daughter to inhabit French Flanders. If he refuses, I will see to forming the council according to the degrees of relationship."

"Of what use is an inventory?" asked Margaret.

"To prove the rights, the value. When everything is well established, the family council of the minors will take——"

"Pierquin," said M. Claes, who rose from the bench, "proceed to whatever you deem necessary for the preservation of the rights of my children; but let us avoid the sorrow of seeing sold what belonged to my dear——"

He did not finish, and said these words with an air so noble, and with a voice so penetrating, that Margaret took his hand and kissed it.

"To-morrow," said Pierquin——

"Come to breakfast," said Balthazer. But immediately gathering his recollections together, he cried—"But according to my marriage contract, which was made under the customs of Hainault, I exempted my wife from the inventory, to prevent her being tormented by it, and probably I am not held to it."

Oh! what happiness!" said Margaret; "it will save you so much pain."

"Well, I will examine your contract to-morrow," replied the notary, a little discomposed.

"You did not know of it, then?" said Margaret to him.

The conversation was interrupted; for the notary felt too much embarrassed to remain, after his cousin's observation.

"The devil is in it!" said he to himself, as he went through the court. "This absent man finds his memory, just at the moment it was necessary to take precautions against him! The children will be robbed;—that is as certain as that two and two make four. But, to speak of business to girls of nineteen, who are made up of sentiment! I have racked my brain to save these children's property, by regular proceedings;—and, behold! I have injured myself with Margaret; who goes and asks her father why I wish to proceed to an inventory, which she believed useless?—and M. Claes will tell her, that notaries have a mania for doing these things; that we are notaries before we are relations, cousins, or friends. In short, the blockhead——"

He went out, shutting the gate violently, and railing against clients, who ruined themselves by sensibility.

Balthazer was right. There was no need of an inventory. Nothing, therefore, was fixed upon, as to the relations of the father

with the children. Many months fled away without any change in the Claes House. Gabriel, conducted skilfully by M. de Solia, who was now his preceptor, worked diligently, learning foreign languages, and preparing for the Polytechnic school. Felicia and Margaret lived in absolute retirement; going into the country, during the summer, both from habit and ceremony. M. Claes, occupied himself with no business; and paid his debts, by borrowing considerable sums upon his property.

About the middle of the year 1817, his grief, slowly diminishing, left him alone, and without any defence against the heavy monotony of life. At first he struggled courageously against science, which gradually awoke in him; and he covenanted with himself, not to think of chemistry. But he could not but think of it. At first he did not employ himself in it actively, but theoretically. Constant study, however, caused the passion to rise, which became exacting. He then considered, whether he had bound himself not to continue his researches, and remembered that his wife did not wish for his oath. Although he had resolved within himself not to pursue the solution of his problem; could he not change his determination when he had a glimpse of success? He was already fifty-nine years old. At that age, the idea which governed him, contracted that sharp fixedness in which monomania begins. Moreover, circumstances conspired against his loyalty. The peace which all Europe enjoyed, permitted the circulation of scientific discoveries and ideas, acquired during the wars by learned men of different countries, between which there had been no relations for twenty years.

In the progress of science, M. Claes had found that chemistry had directed itself—unconsciously to chemists—toward the objects of his researches. People applied themselves to this noble science, thinking, as he did, that light, heat, electricity, galvanism and magnetism, might be different effects of one and the same cause; and that the difference which existed between bodies as yet reported simples, might be produced by different proportions of a common principle. The fear of seeing another find the reduction of metals, and the constituent principle of electricity,—two discoveries which led to the solution of the chemical *absolute*—augmented what the inhabitants of Douai called his madness, and raised his desires to a paroxysm, which impassioned persons, who are absorbed in science, or who have experienced the tyranny of ideas, will understand. Thus Balthazer was soon carried away by a passion so much the more violent, for having slept so long a time.

Margaret, who saw the disposition of soul, through which her father passed, opened her parlor. By living there, she revived the



ad remembrance of the death of her mother, and succeeded in awakening the regrets of her father, and retarding his fall into the gulf, in which, nevertheless, he was fated to sink. She wished also to try the effect of society, and thus force Balthazer from his abstraction. The first result of this plan was, that many considerable offers were made for her, which occupied her father's attention; but she declared, that she would not marry before she had attained her twenty-fifth year. In spite, however, of the efforts of his daughter—in spite of his own violent combats, Balthazer, at the beginning of winter, resumed secretly his labors. It was difficult to conceal such occupations from serious women.

One day Martha, while dressing Margaret, said to her, "Mademoiselle, we are lost! That monster, Lemulquinier, who is the devil disguised, for I have never seen him make the sign of the cross, has gone back again into the loft. Behold!—monsieur, your father, embarked for hell! Pray Heaven, he may not kill you, as he killed poor dear madame."

"This is not possible!" said Margaret.  
"Come, see the proof of their traffic."

Mademoiselle Claes ran to her window, and perceived, in truth, a light smoke going out from the pipe of the laboratory.

"I am twenty-one, within a few months," thought she, "and I shall have to oppose this disposition of our fortune."

In yielding himself to his passion, she considered that Balthazer would necessarily have less respect for the interest of his children, than he had had for that of his wife. The barriers were not so high; his conscience was more hardened; his passion stronger; and he was moving on in his career of glory, of labor, of hope and of poverty, with the fury of a man full of conviction. He believed in the result;—he worked night and day, with an enthusiasm that frightened his daughters, who were ignorant how little men are fatigued with the labors that please them.

As soon as her father had recommenced his experiments, Margaret retrenched all the superfluities of the table, and her parsimony became worthy of a miser. She was admirably seconded by Josette and Martha. M. Claes did not perceive this reform, which reduced them to the absolute necessaries of life. At first he did not breakfast, and sometimes did not descend from his laboratory even for dinner. He went to bed, a few hours after dinner, having remained a while in the parlor with his two daughters, without speaking a word to them. When he retired, they wished him a good evening; and he would let himself be kissed on each cheek mechanically. Such conduct would have caused the greatest misfortunes, if Margaret had not been prepared to exercise the authority of a mother; and been fortified by a sweet passion, against the misfortune of pos-

sessing an entire freedom from parental control.

Pierquin had ceased visiting his cousins, judging that their ruin was complete. The country property of Balthazer, which produced six thousand francs, and was worth about two hundred thousand crowns, was already oppressed by a mortgage of three hundred thousand francs; for, before he recommenced his chemistry, he had borrowed considerable sums; and his revenue was exactly sufficient to pay the interest. But, with the improvidence natural to a man devoted to one idea, he abandoned his rents to Margaret, to supply the expenses of the house, and the notary calculated, that three years would be sufficient to finish the business; when the officers of justice would devour what Balthazer should not have consumed. The coldness of Margaret, had produced in Pierquin a state of indifference, almost hostile; and, that he might claim the right to renounce the hand of his cousin, if she became too poor, he spoke of the Claes with an air of compassion. "They are ruined people! I have done all I could to save them. But what would you have? Mademoiselle Claes has refused all the legal combinations, which can preserve them from poverty."

Emmanuel had been made head master of the college, through the influence of his uncle and his own merit, which rendered him worthy of the office. He came every evening to see the young girls, who called the duenna into the parlor, as soon as their father had retired. A gentle knock at the door always announced the young de Solis at an early hour.

For three months, encouraged by the mute gratitude with which Margaret received his attentions, he was all himself. The radiations of his pure soul were like brilliant diamonds without spot; and Margaret could appreciate their strength, by seeing how inexhaustible was their source. She wondered to see the flowers unfold, one by one; nor realized, that her breath called forth their perfume. But every day Emmanuel realized another of his hopes, and every day shone forth new lights, which, dispersing the clouds, enlightened their heaven, and gave fresh colors to the fruitful riches of the enchanting regions of love, buried hitherto in shadows. When more at his ease, he could better display the excellences of his heart, till now discreetly concealed. That expensive gaiety, that simplicity, produced by a life of study; the treasures of a delicate mind, which the world had not injured; in short, all the innocent joyousness which becomes so well a young lover, manifested themselves without a shadow. His soul and Margaret's understood each other. They went together into the depths of their hearts, and found the same thoughts, pearls of the same effulgence! sweet and fresh harmonies, like those which are under the sea, and which fascinate divers.

They made themselves known to each other, by those exchanges of thought and feeling;—by that reciprocal curiosity, which, in both, took the most delightful forms of sentiment. All this was without false shame, but not without mutual coquetries. The two hours which Emmanuel passed, every evening, with these young ladies and Martha, made the life of anguish and of resignation which she led, acceptable to Margaret. Emmanuel, in the testimonies of affection, had that natural grace which is most attractive; that sweet and fine spirit, which adorns uniformity of sentiment, as carvings relieve the monotony of a precious stone, by making all its fires play; he had all the wonderful powers, of which loving hearts alone have the secret, and which render woman faithful to the artist's hand, under which they are born again; and he had the voice, which never repeated a phrase, without refreshing it by new modulations! Love is not only a sentiment, it is also an art. Some simple word, a precaution, the inest trifle, reveals to a woman the great and sublime artist, who can touch her heart without withering it. And the deeper Emmanuel went, the more charming were the expressions of his love.

"I have come before Pierquin," said he one evening, to Margaret. "He is coming to tell you bad news; I prefer you should learn it from me. Your father has sold your forest to some speculators, who have resold it in lots. The trees are cut down, the timber carried away. M. Claes received three hundred thousand francs ready money, with which he has paid his debts in Paris; and in order to extinguish them entirely, he has even been obliged to make an assignment of one hundred thousand crowns, which remained to be paid by the purchasers."

Here M. Pierquin entered.

"Ha! well! my dear cousin!" said he, "you are ruined. I predicted it to you, but you would not listen to me. Your father has a good appetite. He has, for the first mouthful, swallowed your woods! Your undergardian, M. Conynck, is at Amsterdam, settling his fortune, and M. Claes has seized the moment to strike his blow! It is not well! I have just written to the good Conynck; but before he arrives, all will be squandered! You must see your father. The process will not be long, but it will be a dishonoring one, which M. Conynck cannot dispense with entering upon! Law requires it! See the fruit of your obstinacy! Will you now acknowledge how prudent I was—how I was devoted to your interest?"

"I bring you good news, mademoiselle," said M. de Solis, with his sweet voice; "Gabriel is received into the Polytechnic school. The difficulties which arose to prevent his admission, are removed."

Margaret thanked her friend with a smile, and said, "My domestic labors will have an

object now!—my economies, a destination. Martha, we must employ ourselves to-morrow, in preparing Gabriel's clothes. My poor Felicia, we must work hard," said she, kissing her forehead.

"My cousin, Gabriel, has taken a wise part," said the notary, measuring the provision, "for he will need to make a fortune. But, my dear cousin, he must exert himself to save the honor of his family. Will you listen to me this time?"

"No!" said she, "if you speak still of marriage."

"But what can you do?"

"I, my cousin?—nothing."

"In the meantime, are you of age?"

"Within a few days. Have you," said Margaret, "anything to propose, that will embrace our interests, with what we owe to our father and the honor of the family?"

"Cousin, we can do nothing without your uncle; I will come again when he returns."

"Adieu, monsieur," said Margaret.

"Becoming poorer, she becomes more prudent," thought the notary. "Adieu, mademoiselle," resumed Pierquin. "Monsieur Professor, I am your servant." He went out without paying any attention, either to Felicia or Martha.

"After two days study of the code, I have consulted an old advocate friend of your uncle's," said Emmanuel, with a trembling voice, "and I will go, if you will authorize me, to-morrow to Amsterdam. Listen to me, dear Margaret!"

He said this word for the first time. She thanked him by a look of affection, by a smile, and an inclination of the head. He stopped, pointing to Felicia and Martha.

"Speak before my sister," said Margaret. "She does not require this discussion, to be resigned to our privations and labor; she is so sweet and so courageous! But she must know how much courage is necessary for us."

The two sisters embraced, as if to give new strength to their union before misfortune.

"Leave us, Martha!"

"Dear Margaret," resumed Emmanuel, the inflexions of his voice evincing the happiness he felt, in winning the smallest rights of affection. "I will ascertain the names and dwelling of the purchasers, who owe the two hundred thousand francs remaining due upon the value of the prostrate wood; and to-morrow, if you consent to it, and approve of acting in the name of M. Conynck, which he will not disapprove, I will put a protest into his hands. Within six days, your uncle will have returned; he will convoke a family council, and will make Gabriel free, who is eighteen years old. You and your brother, being authorized to exercise your rights, will demand your share in the price of the woods. Your father cannot refuse you the two hundred thousand francs, stop.

ped by the protest. As to the other two hundred thousand, which will be due, you will obtain a mortgage obligation, which will rest upon the house you inhabit. M. Conynck will reclaim the securities for the three hundred thousand francs, which come back to Mademoiselle Felicia, and to Lucien. In this situation, your father will be forced to leave the mortgage upon the property in the plains of Orchies, already oppressed by one hundred thousand crowns; and the law gives a retro-active priority to the titles, held in the interests of the minors. All will be saved. The hands of M. Claes will henceforth be tied, for your lands are inalienable; and he will not be able to borrow upon his own, which are pledged for sums superior to their value. The business will be done *en famille*, without scandal, without lawsuit; and your father will have to go prudently into his researches, if he does not even cease to do anything."

"Yes," said Margaret; "but where will be our revenue? The hundred thousand francs, mortgaged upon this house, will produce nothing, since we live in it; and as the product of the property, which my father possesses in the plain of Orchies, pays the interest of the three hundred thousand francs due to some strangers, on what shall we live?"

"At first," said M. de Solis, "by placing in the public funds, the fifty thousand francs which will be Gabriel's share, you will have, after the actual assessments, more than four thousand livres of rent, which will be enough for his maintenance at Paris. He cannot dispose of either of the sums inscribed upon his father's house, or of the funds of his rents; therefore, you need not fear that he will mispend a penny, and you will have one care less. Then, will there not remain to you fifty thousand francs?"

"My father will demand them," said she, with terror, "and I shall not know how to refuse him."

"Well, dear Margaret, you will be still able to save them, by robbing yourself of them. Place them upon the ledger in the name of your brother. This sum will give you twelve or thirteen thousand livres of interest, upon which you will live. The minors not being able to alienate anything without the advice of a family council, you will gain three years quiet. At that time your father will have solved his problem, or probably will renounce it, and Gabriel will become of age, and will restore to you the funds, in order to establish the settlements between you four."

Margaret made him explain again, the distributions of the law, all of which she could not at first comprehend. It was certainly a new scene, that of two lovers studying a code which Emmanuel had mastered, in order to teach his mistress the laws governing the property of minors, and of which

she had soon caught the spirit, thanks to the natural penetration of women, which love sharpened.

The next day Gabriel came home. When M. de Solis restored him to his father, he told him of his admission into the Polytechnic school. The father thanked him by a gesture of the hand, and said:

"I am very easy about him; Gabriel will then be a learned man."

"Oh, my brother!" said Margaret, seeing Balthazar go again to his laboratory; "work well—spend no money. Do all that is necessary to do, but be economical. When you go into Paris, go to our relations, to our friends, so as not to contract any of the tastes which ruin young people. Your board will amount to nearly a thousand crowns. There will remain to you a thousand francs for your little pleasures: that ought to be enough."

"I will answer for him," said M. de Solis, striking him on the shoulder.

A month after, M. Conynck, in concert with Margaret, had obtained all the securities necessary; for the plans, so wisely conceived by M. de Solis, he entirely approved and executed, in presence of the law, and before his cousin, whose probity was severe upon questions of honor. Balthazar, ashamed of the sale to which he had consented, at a time when he was tormented by his creditors, submitted to everything which was required of him. Satisfied in being able to repair the damage he had almost involuntarily done to his children, he signed all the deeds with the absence of mind common to a learned man. He was completely improvident, like the negroes, who sell their women in the morning for a taste of brandy, and weep for them in the evening. He threw not a glance upon the approaching future. He inquired not what would be his resources, when he should have melted his last crown. He pursued his labors, continued his purchases, without knowing that he was the titular possessor of his house and property; and that it would be impossible, thanks to the severity of the laws, for him to procure a penny upon the property, of which he was, in some sort, the judiciary guardian.

The year 1818 expired without any unfortunate event. The two young girls paid the necessary expenses of Lucien's education, and of the family, from the eighteen thousand francs of interest, placed in Gabriel's name, and which he punctually sent semi-annually. M. de Solis lost his uncle in the month of December, of this year.

One morning Margaret learned from Martha, that her father had sold his collection of tulips, the furniture from the front of the house, and all the plate. She was obliged to redeem some necessary covers for the service of the table, and caused them to be marked with her cipher. Until this time, she kept silent concerning the depredations

of Balthazer; but that day, after dinner, she prayed Felicia to leave her alone with her father; and when he was seated, as usual, at the corner of the parlor chimney, Margaret said to him:

"My dear father, you are the master here, and may sell everything, even your children. Yes, we must obey you in all, without a murmur; but I am forced to make you observe, that we are without money, so that we hardly have anything to live on this year; and, that Felicia and I shall have to work night and day, to pay Lucien's board, with the price of the lace robe, which we have undertaken. I conjure you, my good father, to discontinue your labors."

"You are right, my child; in six weeks all will be finished; I shall have found *the absolute*, or it is not to be found. You will have riches by the million."

"But leave us for the moment a morsel of bread," replied Margaret.

"Is there no bread here?" said M. Claes, with an alarmed air: "no bread in the Claes House, with our property!"

"You have demolished the forest of Waig-nies; the land is not free, and can produce nothing. As to the farms of Orchies, the revenue is not sufficient to pay the interest of the sums you have borrowed."

"On what do we live, then," said he.

She showed her needle, and added: "Gabriel's rents aid us, but they are not enough. I could make the two ends of the year meet, if you did not overwhelm us with bills which I did not expect, for you never tell me of your purchases in the city. When I believe I have enough for my quarter's expenses, and my little arrangements are made, there arrive bills for soda, potassium, zinc, sulphur, and I know not what."

"My dear child, be patient six weeks. After that I will conduct wisely, and you shall see wonders, my little Margaret."

"It is time, that you should think of your affairs. You have sold everything: Pictures, tulips, plate. There is nothing left. At least, do not contract new debts."

"I do not wish to contract more," said the old man.

"More?" cried she. "Have you any then?"

"Nothing: mere trifles;" replied he, kissing her, and blushing.

Margaret felt herself, for the first time, humbled by the debasement of her father; and suffered so much, she dared not interrogate him. A month after this scene, a banker of the city came, to present a note of a thousand francs endorsed by M. Claes. Margaret entreated him to wait during the day, justifying her regret at not having been forewarned of this payment. The banker averred, that the Protez & Chiffreville house had nine others for the same sum, due from month to month!

"All is said," cried Margaret, "the hour is come."

She sent to seek her father, and walked the parlor with agitated steps, speaking to herself. "To raise a hundred thousand francs," said she, "or see our father in prison! What shall I do?"

Balthazer did not come down. Weary with waiting, Margaret went up to the laboratory. On entering, she saw her father in the middle of an immense room, which was strongly lighted, and garnished with machines and dusty glasses. Books were scattered about, and tables loaded with bundles of products, numbered. Everywhere the disorder, which betrays the preoccupation of the learned man, shocked her Flemish habits. This collection of retorts, metals, chrystallizations, fantastically colored; of specimens hanging upon the walls, or thrown upon the stoves, was crowned by the figure of Balthazer, without a coat, his arms naked, like those of a laborer, his breast open, covered with white hairs, like his beard. His horribly fixed eyes were bent upon a pneumatic machine, whose receiver was covered with a globe, formed by the doubling of two convex glasses, whose interior was full of alcohol, and which remitted the rays of the sun, streaming into one of the compartments of the window of the loft. The receiver of the pneumatic machine, whose platform was isolated, communicated with the wire of a voltaic pile. Lemulquinier, who was occupied in moving the platform of this machine, which was raised upon a movable axle, in order that it might always keep the convex glass in a direction perpendicular to the rays of the sun, raised his face, all black, and said, "Ha! mademoiselle, do not approach!"

The aspect of her father, who, almost kneeling before his machine, received perpendicularly the rays of the sun, and whose spread hair resembled silver threads;—his unequal brow—his face contracted, by a frightful attention—the singularity of the objects with which he was surrounded—the obscurity of many parts of the vast loft, filled with most unaccountable machines—all contributed to strike Margaret, who said to herself, with terror, "My father is mad!"

"Send away Lemulquinier," said she.

"No, no, my child, I want him. I want the effect of a fine experiment, of which others have not dreamed. See; three days we have waited for a ray of the sun. I have the means of submitting metals in a perfect vacuum, to concentrated solar fires, and the electric current alone. See; in a moment the most energetic action, which a chemist is able to produce, is going to explode, and I only——"

"Ah! my dear father, instead of vaporizing gold, you ought rather to pay your notes."

"Wait, wait!"

"M. Mauktus is come, my father. He must have ten thousand francs at four o'clock."

"Yes, yes! all in time! I have signed these little bonuses for this month—it is true. I believed that I should have found the *Absolute*. My God! if I had the July sun, my experiment would be done!"

He seized hold of his hair—seated himself upon an old broken seat, and a few tears rolled from his eyes.

"Monsieur is right! It is all the fault of this beggarly sun, which is too weak: let him go—the cursed idler!" exclaimed Lemulquinier.

The master and valet paid no more attention to Margaret.

"Leave us, Lemulquinier," said she.

"Ha! I have a new experiment!" cried M. Claes.

"My father! forget your experiments," said the daughter to him, when they were alone. "You have a hundred thousand francs to pay to-day, and we do not possess a penny. Quit your laboratory—your honor is in question. What will become of you, when you are in prison? Would you sully your white hairs, and the name of Claes, by a bankruptcy? No! I will oppose it. I will have strength to combat your folly; for it will be frightful to see you, in your old age, without bread! Open your eyes upon your position—have, at least, some reason!"

"Folly!" cried Balthazer, rising up, and fixing his luminous eyes upon his daughter. He crossed his arms upon his breast, and repeated the word *folly*, so majestically, that Margaret trembled.

"Ha! thy mother would not have said that word! She was not ignorant of the importance of my researches. She studied science to comprehend me. She knew that I worked for the human race; that I had nothing personal—nothing sordid in me. Love, I see, is a greater sentiment than filial affection. Yes; love is the greatest of all sentiments. *'Have reason!'* continued he, striking his beard. Am I without it—am I not myself? We are poor, my daughter! Well, I chose it to be so. I am your father. Obey me, and I will make you rich when I please. Your fortune!—It is a trifle in comparison with what I seek. When I have found a solvent of carbon, I shall fill your parlor with diamonds. You can well wait, while I am consuming myself by such gigantic efforts."

"My father! I have no right to ask you to account for the four millions you have ingulged in this loft, without any result. I will not speak to you of my mother, whom you have killed. I will only say, that, if I had a husband, I should love him as much as my mother loved you, and I should sacrifice everything, as she sacrificed everything to you. I have followed her orders, and

given myself to you entirely; and I have proved it to you, by not marrying—merely, that you might not be obliged to yield up to me your accounts as guardian. Let that pass, and let us think of the present. I came here to represent the necessity, which you yourself have created. There is nothing left here to seize, except the portrait of our grandfather, Van Claes. I come therefore, in the name of my mother, who found herself too feeble to defend her children against their father, and who ordered me to resist you;—I come in the name of my brothers and sister;—I come, my father, in the name of all the Claes, to command you to leave your experiments, and to make a fortune for yourself before you pursue them. If you arm yourself with your paternity, and make us feel that you will kill us; I have on my side your ancestors and your honor, which speak louder than chemistry. Families are of more importance than science. I have only been too much your daughter."

"And now you wish to be my executioner?" said he with a feeble voice.

Margaret escaped, in order not to abdicate the character she had undertaken; but she thought she heard the voice of her mother, saying to her, "Do not contradict your father too much,—love him dearly."

"Mademoiselle has made fine work up there," said Lemulquinier, in descending to the kitchen to breakfast. "We were going to put our hand upon the secret; we only wanted one little ray of the July sun: for monsieur—Oh, what a man! He is almost clothed with the power of God! There is no doubt of it," said he, to Josette; "we shall soon know the principle of everything; and she came only to cry about those foolish notes?"

"Ha? well! pay them from your wages," said Martha—"these notes!"

"Is there no butter to put upon my bread?" said Lemulquinier to Josette.

"Where is the money to buy it with?" replied she tartly. "You mean old monster, if you make gold in your devil's kitchen, why do you not make a little butter? That will not be so difficult, and you can sell it at the market, for what will make the pot boil. We eat dry bread! The two ladies content themselves with bread and walnuts! You would be better nourished than your master? Mademoiselle wishes to spend only one hundred francs per month, for all the family. We shall soon make no more than a dinner. If you wish for sweet dishes, you have your furnace, where you fricassee pearls—make roast chickens in it."

Lemulquinier took his bread, and went out.

"He will go and buy something with his own money," said Martha; "so much the better—that will be so much economy. He is a miser—the Chinese!"

"It is necessary to take him by famine," said Josette. "See! for eight days he has not rubbed a thing. I do all the work—he is always up there. He should pay me for that by regaling me with some herrings—I will gladly take away from him what he brings."

"Ah!" said Martha, "I hear Mademoiselle weeping. Her old sorcerer of a father will swallow up the house, without saying a Christian word; for he is a true sorcerer. My country would already have burned him alive; but here, they have no more religion than the Moors of Africa."

It was true, that Mademoiselle Claes, choking with sobs, traversed the gallery. She gained her chamber, looked for her mother's letter, and read as follows:

"My Child:—If God permits it, my spirit will be in thy heart, when thou readest these lines, the last which I shall trace. They are full of love for my dear little ones, who remain, abandoned to a demon, which I have not known how to resist; and which will then have charned away your bread, as it has devoured my life, and even my love. Thou knowest, my beloved, if I have loved thy father! I die, loving him less, since I take against him those precautions, which I could not avow, living. Yes; I will keep, in the depths of my coffin, a last resource for the day, in which you will be at the lowest degree of misfortune. If you are reduced to indigence, or it is necessary to your honor, my child, you will find at the house of M. de Solis, if he is alive, or at the house of his nephew, our good Emmanuel, one hundred and sixty thousand francs, which will enable you to live. If nothing can damp your father's passion;—if his children are not a barrier, stronger to him than my happiness has been, and he stops not in his criminal course, you must quit him; *you* must live, at least! I could not abandon him; I owed *myself* to him. But, Margaret, save the family. I absolve thee for all thou shalt do to defend Gabriel, Lucien, and Felicia. Take courage;—be the tutelary angel of the Claes;—be firm. I dare not say, be without pity; but, in order to repair the ill already done, it will be necessary to preserve some fortune, and thou mayest consider thyself as being on the eve of poverty;—for nothing will arrest the fury of the passion, which has ravished from me everything. Thus, my daughter, thy very heart must make thee forget thy heart. Thy dissimulation, if it is necessary to deceive thy father, will be glorious. Thy actions, however blamable some of them may appear, will all be heroic;—done to protect thy family. Had not the virtuous M. de Solis told me this, (and never was conscience more pure or more clear-sighted,) I should not have had strength to say these words to thee, even dying. Nevertheless, be always

respectful and good in this horrible struggle. Resist in love—refuse with sweetness. You will then divine my unknown tears, and griefs, which will not shine forth till I am dead. Embrace, in my name, my dear children;—at this moment you become their protector. May God and his saints be with thee.

JOSEPHINE."

To this letter was added an acknowledgment of M. M. de Solis, uncle and nephew, engaging to replace the deposit, made in their hands by Madame Claes, to whichever of her children should present to them this letter.

"Martha," cried Margaret, to the duenna, who came up promptly, "go to M. Emmanuel, and beg him to come to me on business, pressing and important——"

"Noble and discreet creature! he has never said anything," thought she, "to me, whose fatigues he knew so well, and whose sorrows he wished to share."

Emmanuel came, before Martha returned. "You have had secrets from me," said she to him, showing him the letter.

Emmanuel bowed his head: "Margaret, you are, then, very unfortunate," he said, letting fall some tears.

"Oh, yes! be my support;—*you*, whom my mother has named here," pointing to the letter, "*our good Emmanuel*."

"My life was yours from the first day in which I saw you in the gallery," replied he, weeping with joy and grief; "but I knew not—I dared not hope—that you would one day accept my life. If you know me well, you must know that my word is sacred. Pardon me this perfect obedience to the will of your mother. It was not mine to judge her intentions."

"You have saved us," said she, interrupting him, and taking his arm as she descended into the parlor.

Mademoiselle Claes then learned the origin of the sum of which Emmanuel was the depository, and told him the sad situation in which she found herself with her father.

"It is necessary to go and pay the notes," said Emmanuel, "if they are all at the house of M. Mauktus. You will gain the interest. I will remit to you the sixteen thousand francs that remain. My poor uncle left me a similar sum in ducats, which it is easy to transport here secretly."

"Yes!" said she; "bring them to-night, while my father sleeps. We will conceal them somewhere. If he knows that I have money, perhaps he will do me violence! Oh, Emmanuel! to distress a father!" said she, weeping, and supporting her brow upon the heart of the young man. This gracious and sad movement, by which Margaret sought protection, was the first lively expression of a love, always enveloped in melancholy, always contained in a sphere of

grief; but their full hearts at last overflowed, and it was under the weight of misery.

"What shall I do?—what will become of me? He sees nothing; he cares neither for us, nor for himself. I know not how he lives in that loft, whose air is so burning."

"Who can have patience with a man, who, like King Richard, cries out, 'My kingdom for a horse!'" said Emmanuel. "He will always be merciless, and you must be as much so as he. Pay the notes. Give him, if you wish to do so, your own fortune; but that of your sister, that of your brothers, is neither yours nor his."

"Give him my fortune!" said she, pressing the hand of Emmanuel, and throwing upon him a look of fire; "you counsel me to this? you!—while that Pierquin told a thousand falsehoods to make me preserve it?"

"Ah! perhaps I am selfish, in my own way," said he. "Sometimes I wish you without fortune; it seems to me you would then be nearer to me. Sometimes I wish to see you rich—happy; and I find that there is meanness in believing myself separated by the poor magnificence of fortune."

"Beloved! we must not speak of ourselves—"

"*Ourselves!*" repeated he. Then, after a pause—"The evil is great, but it is not irreparable."

"It must be repaired by us alone," said Margaret, "for the Claes family has no more a chief; he is no more a father or a man,—no longer has any notion of justice or injustice. For him, so great, so generous, so upright!—for him to spend, notwithstanding the law, the property of children of whom he is the defender!—Into what an abyss he has fallen! My God! what is he searching for there?"

"Unfortunately, my dear Margaret, if he is wrong as chief of a family, he is right scientifically. A twentieth part of the men in Europe will admire him, although all the rest may tax him with folly. But you can, without scruple, refuse him the fortunes of the children; for a discovery has always been a losing concern. If he must meet the solution of his problem, he will find it without so much expense, and perhaps at the moment in which he despairs."

"My poor mother is happy," said Margaret; "she would have suffered death a thousand times before dying; she perished in her first attack upon the science;—but the combat is not ended."

"There is an end," resumed M. Emmanuel. "When you have nothing, M. Claes will not find credit, and will stop."

"Then he will stop to-day," cried Margaret; "for we are without resource."

M. de Solis went to redeem the notes, and came back to bring the receipt to Margaret.

Balthazer descended some moments before dinner, contrary to his habit. For the

first time, for two years, his daughter perceived in his countenance signs of deep sadness. He was again a father. Reason banished science. He looked into the court and into the garden; and, when he was certain that he was alone with his daughter, he came toward her, with an air full of melancholy and shame.

"My child," said he, taking her hand and pressing her to his heart with extreme tenderness," pardon thy old father! Yes! Margaret, I have been wrong; thou alone art right. I have not found much. I am a ruined man. I will go away. I do not wish to sell Van Claes. He died for liberty; I shall die for science. You venerate him; you will hate me."

"Hate my father! no!" said she, throwing herself upon his bosom; "we love you! Is it not so, Felicia?" said she to her sister, who entered at that moment.

"What is the matter, my dear father?" said the young girl, taking his hand.

"I have ruined you!" said Balthazer.

"Ha! our brother will be a fortune to us," said Felicia. "Lucien is always the first in his class."

"Hold! my father," resumed Margaret, placing Balthazer, by a movement full of grace, before the chimney, from which she took some papers: "See! these notes are paid; but you must endorse no more. There will be nothing more to pay—"

Balthazer stopped, mute with surprise: "Thou hast money, then?" said he, in a whisper, to Margaret.

The word suffocated her; there was so much of the delirium of joy and hope in the face of her father, who looked round him as if to discover gold.

"My father!" said she, with an accent of grief, "I have my fortune."

"Give it to me!" said he, with a rapturous gesture; "I will return it to you a hundred fold."

"Yes, I shall give it to you," said Margaret, contemplating her father, who did not comprehend the sense which his daughter put upon her words; for she intended to reserve it, to support him some future day.

"Ha! my dear child!" said he, "thou hast saved my life. I have imagined a last experiment, after which there will be nothing possible. If, this time, I do not find it, I must renounce the search for the *absolute*. Come to my arms; come, my dearest child! I wish to make thee the happiest woman upon earth. Thou tenderest to me happiness, glory! thou procurest me the power of loading you with treasure. I will overwhelm you with joy, with riches."

He kissed her brow, took her hands, pressed them, testified his joy by caresses, which appeared almost servile. During dinner, Balthazer saw only her. He looked at her with eagerness, with attention, with the viva-

city which a lover displays to his mistress. If she made a movement, he sought to divine her desire, and rose to serve her. He made her ashamed, by giving to his attentions a sort of youthfulness, which contrasted with his anticipated old age. But to these cajoleries, she opposed the picture of actual distress, either by a word of doubt, or by the look which she threw upon the empty shelves of the dressers in the dining-hall.

"Go," said he to her; "In six months I will fill them with gold. Thou shalt be like a queen. Bah! all nature will belong to us. We shall be above all, and by thy means, my Margaret—Margaretta," resumed he, smiling, "thy name is a prophecy; Margaretta means a pearl; Sterne has said this somewhere. Hast thou ever read Sterne? he would amuse thee."

"The pearl, they say, is the fruit of a disease," resumed she, "and we have already suffered enough."

"Be not sad; thou wilt be the happiest of all whom thou lovest; for thou wilt be powerful, wilt be rich."

"Mademoiselle has so good a heart!" said Lemulquinier, over whose face painfully skimmed a grimace, which he meant for a smile.

During the rest of the evening, Balthazer displayed to his two daughters, all the graces of his character, and the charms of his conversation. He was seducing as a serpent; his words—his looks—spread round him like a magnetic fluid; he made them acknowledge, in their hearts, the power of his genius—that sweet spirit which fascinated their mother.

When M. de Solis came, he found them, after a long time, again reunited. Notwithstanding his reserve, the young professor was subdued by the illusion of this scene; for the conversation, the manners of Balthazer, had an irresistible attraction. Although plunged in the abyss of thought, and incessantly occupied in observing the moral world, men of science, nevertheless, observe the smallest details in the sphere in which they live. They know, and they forget. They prejudice the future, but prophesy for themselves alone. They know of an event before it is manifested; but they have said nothing of it. If, in the silence of meditation, they have made use of their power to recognize that which passes around them, it is enough for them to have divined it. Work hurries them away, and they almost always apply falsely the knowledge they have acquired of the things of life. Sometimes, when they awake from their social apathy; or, when they fall from the moral into the exterior world, they come back with a rich memory, and are strangers to nothing. Thus, Balthazer, who joined perspicacity of heart to perspicacity of brain, knew all that had passed with his daughter; he knew, or had

guessed, the smallest events of the mysterious love which united her to Emmanuel. He now proved it to them, and sanctioned their affection, by partaking it. It was the sweetest flattery which a father could bestow, and the two lovers knew not how to resist it. This evening was delirious, from the contrast it formed with the sorrows which assailed the lives of these two children.

After having, as it were, overwhelmed them with his knowledge, and bathed them with tenderness, Balthazer retired. Then, M. de Solis, who had maintained a constrained expression, relieved himself of three thousand ducats of gold, which he had kept in his pocket, in the fear that they would be perceived. He now put them upon Margaret's work-table, who covered it with the linen she was mending, while he went to seek the rest of the sum. When he came back, Felicia was gone to bed; it was eleven o'clock. Martha, who waited to undress her mistress, was occupied with Felicia.

"Where shall I hide it?" said Margaret, who could not resist the pleasure of handling the ducats. This childish action undid her.

"I will raise up this marble column," said Emmanuel; "it has a hollow foot, and you can slip the rolls in there, and the devil will not go to seek them in such a place."

At the moment Margaret was making the last journey from the work-table to the column, she uttered a piercing cry, and let the rolls fall; the pieces of paper broke, and the ducats were scattered over the floor. Her father was at the door of the parlor, and showed his head, with a look of frightful eagerness.

"What are you doing there?" said he, looking alternately at his daughter, whom fear had nailed to the floor, and at M. de Solis, who had risen hastily, but whose attitude, near the column, was significant enough. The crash of gold upon the floor was horrible, and its scattering was prophetic. "I was not deceived," said Balthazer; "I heard the sound of gold."

He was not less moved than the two young people, whose hearts beat so much in unison, that their movements accorded like two strokes of a pendulum. A profound silence suddenly reigned in the parlor.

"I thank you, Monsieur de Solis," said Margaret; throwing upon him a glance, which signified, "aid me to save this sum."

"What is this gold?" resumed Balthazer, darting a bright and frightful look upon his daughter and upon Emmanuel.

"This gold is monsieur's, who has the goodness to lend it to me, to honor our engagement," replied she.

M. de Solis blushed, and made a movement to go.

"Monsieur," said Balthazer, arresting him by the arm, "do not go away from my thanks."

"Monsieur, you owe me nothing. This



gold belongs to Mademoiselle Margaret, who borrowed it upon her property," replied he, looking at his mistress, who thanked him by an imperceptible glance.

"I will not suffer that," cried M. Claes. He seized a pen and sheet of paper, from the table where Felicia had been writing. "How much is there?"

Passion had rendered Balthazer more crafty than the most adroit manager of an joint stock company. The sum was to be for him. Margaret and M. de Solis hesitated.

"Count it," said he.

"There are six thousand ducats," replied Emmanuel.

"Twenty thousand francs," resumed M. Claes.

The glance that Margaret threw upon her lover gave him courage.

"Monsieur," said he, trembling, "your engagement is without value. Pardon me, this is purely a technical expression. I have lent this morning to Mademoiselle, one hundred thousand francs, to redeem some notes, which you were not in a situation to pay. You can, therefore, give me no guarantee. These hundred and sixty thousand francs are your daughter's, who can dispose of them as she pleases; but I lent them to her only upon the promise which she made me, of subscribing a contract, by which I could take my securities upon her share of the naked lands of Waignies."

Margaret turned her head, that the tears which filled her eyes might not be seen. She knew the purity of heart which distinguished Emmanuel. Educated by his uncle in the practice of the most severe religious virtue, he had especially a horror of falsehood. After having offered his heart and his life to Margaret, he was making her now the sacrifice of his conscience.

"Adieu! monsieur," said Balthazer; "I should have believed you had more confidence in the man who would see you with the eyes of a father."

Exchanging with Margaret a look of pity, Emmanuel was conducted out by Martha, who closed the street door after him.

The moment the father and the daughter were alone, M. Claes said to her, "Thou lovest me;—is it not so?"

"Take no round-about ways, my father; you want this money;—you shall not have it."

She began to pick up the ducats; her father silently helped her to gather them, and verify the sum which had been scattered. Margaret let him do it without testifying any suspicion. The six thousand ducats were again put in a pile. Balthazer said, with a desperate air, "Margaret, this gold is necessary to me."

"It will be a theft in you to take it," said she, coldly. "Listen, my father!" she resumed; "it would be better for us, if you

should kill us all at one blow, than to make us suffer a thousand deaths every day. Thus, let us see which ought to yield, you or we."

"You will then have assassinated your father!" said he.

"We shall have avenged our mother," returned she, pointing to the place where Madame Claes died.

"My daughter, if thou knewest what is in question, thou would'st not say such words. Listen: I am going to explain the problem. But thou wilt not comprehend me!" he cried, in despair. "In short, believe once in thy father. Yes, I know, I gave pain to your mother, and have wasted my fortune—to use the words of the ignorant—and dilapidated yours; that you all work for what you denominate madness; but, my angel! my beloved! my love! my Margaret! listen to me still. If I do not succeed, I will give myself to thee—I will obey thee, as thou oughtest to obey me. I will do thy will—give up to thee the conducting of my fortune. I will no longer be the guardian of my children. I will rob myself of all authority. I swear it, by thy mother!" said he, shedding tears.

Margaret turned her head that she might not see that face in tears; and M. Claes threw himself upon his knees before his daughter, believing that she was going to yield.

"Margaret! Margaret! give, give! What are seventy thousand francs, to avoid eternal remorse? Behold, I shall die; this will kill me. Listen to me, my word will be sacred. If I miscarry, I renounce my labors. I will quit Flanders, France, even, if thou requirest it; and I will work like a laborer, in order to repay my fortune, sous by sous, and bring back to my children that which science shall have taken from them."

Margaret wished to raise her father; but he persisted to remain upon his knees, and added, weeping,

"Be, for one last time, tender and devoted! If I do not succeed, I will grant that thou hast reason for thy hardness. Thou shalt name me an old fool;—thou shalt call me a bad father. In short, thou shalt say to me, that I am ignorant! And for me, when I shall hear these words in silence, I will kiss thy hands; thou shalt beat me, if thou wilt, and when thou strikest me, I will bless thee as the best of daughters, and remember that thou hast given me—thy blood."

"If it were a question about my blood, only," cried she, "I would yield it; but can I let my sister and brother be killed by science? No! cease, cease!" said she, drying her tears, and repulsing the caressing hands of her father.

"Sixty thousand francs;—and for three months!" said he, rising in a rage. "I need no more than that. But my daughter, my daughter;—to put yourself between glory,

between riches and me! Be cursed!" added he. "Thou art neither a daughter nor a woman; thou hast no heart; thou wilt never be a mother nor a wife! Let me take it! say? my dear little one, my cherished child, I will adore thee!"

He advanced his hand toward the girl with a look of atrocious energy.

"I am without defence against force; but God and Claes see you!" said Margaret, pointing to the portrait.

"Well! try to live, covered by the blood of thy father!" cried Balthazer, casting upon her a terrible look. He rose, contemplated the parlor, and went slowly out. When he reached the door, he turned, as a beggar would have done, and interrogated his daughter by a gesture, to which Margaret replied in the negative.

"Adieu! my daughter," said he, with gentleness. "Endeavor to live happy."

When he had disappeared, Margaret remained in a stupor, which isolated her from the earth;—she was no more in the parlor; she felt her body no longer. She had wings, and flew into spaces of the moral world, where all is immense; where thoughts reconcile distances and times; where some divine hand raises the veil extended over the future. It seemed to her that whole days passed away, between each of the steps of her father, as he mounted the stairs. A thrill of horror ran through her, the moment she heard him enter his chamber. Guided by a presentiment, which spread a pang through her soul, clear as a flash of lightning; she flew up stairs without a light, without noise, with the velocity of an arrow, and saw her father point a pistol to his forehead. "Take all!" she cried, rushing toward him.

She fell upon a chair. Balthazer, seeing her pale, wept as an old man weeps—he became a child; he kissed her on her brow, and spoke to her words without connection. He was ready to leap with joy, and began to caress her.

"Enough! enough! my father," said she. "Think of your promise. If you do not succeed, you will obey me."

"Yes."

"Oh! my mother!" said she, turning toward the chamber of Madame Claes, "you would have given all;—is it not so?"

"Sleep in peace," said Balthazer. "Thou art a good daughter."

"Sleep!" said she. "I no longer have the nights of my youth. You have made me old, my father, as you slowly broke the heart of my mother."

"Poor child! I would encourage thee, by explaining the magnificent experiment, which I have imagined;—and, then thou wouldst comprehend."

"I comprehend only our ruin," said she, as he went out.

The next morning, M. de Solis brought Lucien; for it was the day to take leave.

"Well?" said he, approaching Margaret with sadness.

"I have yielded," replied she.

"My dear life," said he, with a look of melancholy joy, "if you had resisted, I should have admired you; but in your weakness, I adore you."

"But, dearest, what remains to us?"

"Leave that to me," cried the young man, with a radiant air.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE EXCITED FATHER.

SOME months flowed on, in perfect tranquillity. M. de Solis made Margaret understand, that her poor savings would never constitute a fortune; and advised her to live comfortably, by taking, to maintain the family decently, what remained to her of the sum deposited. During this time, Margaret was delivered to the anxieties which had formerly agitated her mother in similar circumstances. Incredulous as she had been, she began to hope in the genius of her father; for, by an inexplicable phenomenon, many people have hope without faith. Hope is a desire, faith is a certainty. She said to herself, "If my father succeeds, we shall be happy." Claes and Lemulquinier, alone said, "We shall succeed." Unfortunately, day by day, her father's countenance saddened. When he came to dinner, he sometimes dared not look at his daughter, and sometimes, also, he threw upon her a look of triumph. Margaret employed her evenings in making M. de Solis explain to her many legal difficulties. She overwhelmed her father with questions upon their family relations. In short, she was finishing her masculine education, and evidently preparing to execute a plan, which she meditated, if Balthazer failed again in his battle with the unknown.

In the beginning of the month of July, her father passed all one day, seated upon the bench of his garden, plunged in sad meditation. He looked many times at the ground, stripped of tulips, at the window of his wife's chamber; he trembled, doubtless, to think of all which her struggles had cost her; for his motions attested that his thoughts were now apart from science. Some time before dinner, Margaret took her work, and seated herself by him.

"Well, my father, you have not succeeded?"

"No, my child."

"Ah," said Margaret, with a sweet voice, "I will not reproach you. We are equally guilty. I claim only the execution of your word. You are a Claes; it must be sacred. Your children surround you with love and

respect. But to-day you belong to me. But do not be troubled; my reign will be gentle, and I will even labor to end it soon. I shall take Martha, and depart from you about a month, but to occupy myself for you; for," said she, kissing his brow, "you are now my child. To-morrow, Felicia will take charge of the family. The poor child is not sixteen yet. She will not know how to resist you; be generous;—do not ask of her a single sou;—for she will only have what is strictly required for the expenses of the family. Have courage; and renounce for two or three years, your labors and your thoughts. The problem will ripen. I shall amass the money necessary to resolve it. Well: your queen—is she not merciful? tell me."

"All, then, is not lost?" said the old man.

"No; if you are faithful to your word."

"I will obey you, my daughter:" said M. Claes, with deep emotion.

Next day, M. Conynck, of Cambrai, came to see his grand-niece. He came in a travelling carriage, and wished to remain at the house of his cousin, the time necessary for Margaret and Martha to make their preparations. M. Claes received his cousin with affability, but he was visibly sad and humbled. The old Conynck guessed the thoughts of Balthazer, and at breakfast, said to him with great frankness; "I have some of your pictures, cousin; for I have a taste for fine pictures. It is a ruinous passion, but we all have our follies."

"Dear uncle!" said Margaret.

"You pass for being ruined, cousin, but a Claes has always some treasures here," striking his brow; "and here—is it not so?" pointing to his heart. "So, I count upon you! I have in my purse some crowns, that I place at your service."

"Ha!" cried Balthazer, "I will yield you treasures."

"The only treasures we possess in Flanders, cousin, are patience and labor," replied M. Conynck, severely. "Our ancestor has these two words engraven on his brow," said he, pointing to the portrait of President Van Claes.

Margaret embraced her father—bade him farewell—gave her directions to Josette and Felicia, and departed by post for Paris. Her grand-uncle was a widower, who had only one daughter, twelve years old, and possessed an immense fortune. It was not, therefore, impossible that he would marry—so the inhabitants of Douai reported that Mademoiselle Claes was to marry her grand-uncle.

The noise of this rich marriage reached Pierquin, the notary to the Claes House. It made great changes in that excellent calculator. For two years, the society had been divided into two battle fields. The noblesse had formed a first circle, and the citizens a second, naturally very hostile to the first.

This sudden separation had taken place throughout France, and the quarrels of these two adverse parties went on increasing, and were the principal cause that the revolution of July, 1830, was adopted in the province. Between these two societies, one of which was ultra monarchical, and the other ultra liberal, the functionaries found themselves admitted into either world, according to their previous importance. But, at the moment of the fall of legitimate power, they were neutral. At the commencement of the struggle between the noblesse and the citizens, the royalist cafés contracted a surprising splendor, and so brilliantly rivalled the cafés of the liberals, that this kind of gastronomic festival, they say, cost the life of many persons, who seemed, like ill-cast mortars, not able to resist their attractions.

The two societies naturally became exclusive in purifying themselves; and, although very rich for a provincial, Pierquin was excluded from the aristocratic circles, and fell into those of the citizens. His self-love had much to suffer from the successive checks that he received, in seeing himself gradually rejected by people with whom he lately associated. He had attained the last epoch of his life, in which men, who intend to marry, can still marry a young person. But the party, to which he could pretend by birth, was the citizens'; and his ambition urged him to remain in high life, to which a fine alliance might introduce him. The isolation in which M. Claes lived, had rendered his family strangers to this social movement; and, although he belonged to the old aristocracy of the province, it was probable that his abstractions had hindered him from imbibing the antipathies created by the new class of persons. However poor she might be, a daughter of the Claes House would bring to her husband that fortune of vanity which upstarts desire. Pierquin, therefore, came back to the Claes, with a secret intention to make all necessary sacrifices to accomplish a marriage, which formerly realized all his ambition. He sought the company of Balthazer and Felicia, during the absence of Margaret; but he recognized, slowly, a formidable rival in M. de Solis. The inheritance of the dead abbé was said to be considerable; and, to the eyes of a man who cast upon figures all things of life, the young heir appeared more powerful by his money, than by the seductions of the heart, about which Pierquin never disquieted himself. This fortune rendered to the name of de Solis all its value. Gold and splendid descent were like two lights, which shone on one another, each redoubling the brilliancy of the other. The sincere affection which the young professor testified for Felicia, whom he treated as a sister, excited the emulation of the notary. He tried to eclipse Emmanuel, by mingling fashionable jargon and ex-

pressions of superficial gallantry, with the thoughtful air—the unpremeditated eulogies which belonged so naturally to Emmanuel. In saying he was disenchanted from the world, he turned his eyes toward Felicia, in a way to make her believe that she only could reconcile him to life. Felicia, to whom, for the first time, a man addressed compliments, listened to a language so sweet although it was falsehood. She took emptiness for depth; and, in the need which oppressed her, of fixing the vague sentiments with which her heart was full, she occupied herself with her cousin. Jealous, unknown to herself, perhaps, of the tender attentions which Emmanuel poured out upon her sister; she doubtless wished to see herself, like her, the object of the regards, the thoughts, and the care of man.

Pierquin easily unravelled the preference which Felicia granted him over Emmanuel, and it was to him a reason for persisting in his efforts; so that he involved himself more than he had wished. Emmanuel watched the commencement of this passion; false, perhaps, in the notary, simple in Felicia; whose future happiness he wished to protect. There followed between the cousins some sweet chit-chat, some words in a low voice, behind Emmanuel—in short, some of those little nothings, which give to a look, or a word, an expression whose insidious sweetness may cause innocent errors.

By means of this intercourse between Pierquin and Felicia, the former tried to penetrate the secret of the journey undertaken by Margaret—in short, to find out if there was a question of marriage, and whether he must renounce his hopes. But, in spite of his great finesse, neither Balthazer nor Felicia would give him any light;—because they knew nothing of Margaret's project, who, in taking power, seemed to have followed its maxim of being silent about her plans.

The sullen sadness of Balthazer, and his dejection, rendered the evenings difficult to pass. Although Emmanuel had succeeded in making him play at back-gammon, he was abstracted; and the most part of the time, this man, so great by his intelligence, seemed stupid. Having failed in his hopes—humiliated, by having devoured three fortunes—a gambler, without money—he bent under the weight of his ruin, and the burden of hopes not destroyed, but deferred. This man of genius, cramped by necessity, and condemning himself, offered a spectacle truly tragic, by which the most insensible man must be touched. Pierquin himself contemplated, not without a sentiment of respect, this lion in his cage, whose eyes, full of ebbing power, were become calm by the force of sadness, dimmed by the excess of light; whose look demanded an alms, which his mouth dared not beg. Sometimes a light passed

over his withered face, which was reanimated by the conception of some new experiment. Then, if in contemplating the parlor, his eyes were arrested at the place where his wife had expired, some light tears rolled like burning lava in the eyes which thought had made immense, and his head fell upon his bosom. He had heaved up the world like a Titan, and the world returned more heavy than before upon his breast. This gigantic grief, borne with so much manliness, acted upon Pierquin and M. de Solis; who sometimes felt sufficiently moved, to offer him the sum necessary to carry on his experiments. So communicative are the convictions of genius! Both understood how Madame Claes and Margaret had been able to throw millions into the gulf. But reason quickly arrested these impulses of the heart, and they relieved themselves of their emotions, by offering consolations, which made more poignant still the pains of the thunder-struck Titan.

M. Claes did not speak of his absent daughter, and seemed not to be disquieted by the silence which she kept, in not writing to him nor Felicia; but when M. de Solis or Pierquin asked him the news, he seemed disagreeably affected. Did he imagine that Margaret was acting against him? Did he find himself humiliated by having resigned the majestic rights of paternity to his child? Many thoughts, many inexpressible feelings, probably clouded his soul during the mute disgrace in which Margaret enveloped him. However great, great men have their littlenesses, by which they are allied to humanity. By a double misfortune, they suffer for their superiority, and for their defects. Perhaps, Balthazer had to familiarize himself with the pains of wounded vanity. The life which he led, and the evenings during which these four persons found themselves together, while Margaret was absent, were therefore impressed with sadness, and filled with vague apprehensions. They were days as unfruitful as desert lands, where, nevertheless, there bloomed some flowers—rare consolations! The atmosphere seemed murky in the absence of Margaret, who had become the soul, the hope, the strength of this family.

Two months passed thus, during which Balthazer waited patiently for his daughter, when Margaret was brought back to Douai by her uncle, who remained at the house instead of returning to Cambrai, doubtless to support some important measure meditated by his niece. There happened a little family festival the day Margaret returned. The notary and M. de Solis had been invited to dinner, by Felicia and Balthazer. When the travelling carriage stopped before the gate of the mansion, these four persons ran out to receive the travellers with great demonstrations of joy. Margaret appeared

so happy to see again the paternal hearth, that her eyes filled with tears, as she crossed the court to go into the parlor. The father embraced her, but his caresses were not without mental reservation. She blushed like a guilty wife, who does not know how to deceive. But her looks resumed their clearness when she looked upon M. de Solis, from whom she seemed to draw strength to finish the enterprise which she had secretly undertaken. During the dinner, in spite of the joy which animated all faces and words, the father and daughter examined one another with distrust and curiosity. Balthazer asked Margaret no questions about her journey to Paris, probably from a feeling of paternal dignity. M. de Solis imitated this reserve; but Pierquin, who was in the habit of knowing all the family secrets, concealing his curiosity under a false good-humor, said to Margaret: "Well, cousin, you have seen Paris, the theatres——"

"I have seen nothing in Paris," replied she; "I did not go there for amusement; the days passed sadly to me; I was so impatient to see Douai again."

"If I had not troubled myself," said M. Conynck, "she would not have seen the opera; and, after all, she was weary there."

The evening passed painfully. All were endeavoring to express that forced gayety, under which is hidden real anxieties; and when they smiled, they smiled sadly. Margaret and Balthazer were a prey to gloomy and cruel apprehensions, which re-acted upon their hearts. The more the evening advanced, the more the countenance of the father and daughter altered. Sometimes Margaret tried to smile; but her gestures, her looks, the sound of her voice, betrayed lively inquietude. M. Conynck and M. de Solis, seemed to understand the secret movements which agitated this noble girl, and appeared to encourage her by expressive glances. Balthazer was wounded to see himself left out of a plan that concerned him; and, separating himself gradually from his children and friends, relapsed into silence. Margaret was doubtless going to make known what she had decided upon for him. To a great man—to a father—this situation was intolerable. Arrived at an age in which people generally conceal nothing from their children, he became more and more grave, thoughtful, and chagrined, at seeing the moment of his civil death approach. This evening completed one of those crises of inward life, which can be explained only by images. Clouds and thunder had gathered in the heavens, while people were smiling in the field. All were warm, felt the approaching tempest, raised the head, and continued their route. M. Conynck first went to bed, and was conducted to his chamber by Balthazer. During his absence, Pierquin and M. de Solis went away. Mar-

garet bid an affectionate adieu to the notary. She said nothing to Emmanuel; but pressed his hand, and cast upon him a hurried look. She then sent away Felicia; and, when M. Claes came back, he found his daughter alone.

"My good father!" said she to him, with a trembling voice, "in the serious circumstances in which we are, it has been necessary for me to leave home; but, after much anxiety and having surmounted great difficulties, I come back, with some chance of saving us all. Thanks to your name and the influence of our uncle, together with the protection of M. de Solis, we have obtained for you the place of Receiver of Finance in Bretagne. It is worth eight thousand francs a year, as my uncle makes the calculation. Here is your nomination," said she, drawing a letter from her bag. "Your stay here, during our years of privation and sacrifice, would be intolerable. Our father must remain in a situation, at least equal to that in which he has always been. I shall ask for none of your income. You can employ it as seems good to you. I will only entreat you to remember, that we have not one penny of rent, and that we shall all live upon what Gabriel will give us of his income. The city will know nothing of our cloistral life. If you were at home, you would be an obstacle to the plan, by which my sister and I intend to restore a competency. Is it an abuse of the authority which you have given me, to put you in a position to make again your own fortune? In a year or two, if you wish, you can be Receiver General."

"So, Margaret," said Balthazer, gently, "you drive me from home."

"I do not deserve the reproach," replied his daughter, compressing the tremulous movement of her heart. "You will come back to us, as soon as you are able to live in your native city, in the style you ought to appear in there. Besides, my father, have I not your word?" resumed she, calmly. "You must obey me. My uncle is waiting to accompany you to Bretagne, that you may not make your journey alone."

"I will not go!" cried Balthazer, rising. "I need no assistance from any one to re-establish my fortune, and to pay that which I owe my children."

"This will be the best method," resumed Margaret, without emotion. "I beg you to reflect upon our relative situation. I will explain, in one word: if you remain in this house, your children must leave it."

"Margaret!" exclaimed Balthazer.

"Besides," she continued, without noticing her father's irritation, "it will be necessary to inform the minister of your refusal, if you do not accept this lucrative place. Notwithstanding our exertions, we should not have obtained it for you, if some notes

of a thousand francs had not been adroitly put, by my uncle, into a lady's hand-box."

"Are you going to quit me?" said he.

"You must go from us, or we must fly from you," said she. "If I were your only child, I would imitate my mother, without murmuring against my fate; but my sister and my brothers shall not perish with hunger and despair, around you! I have promised it to her who died there!" said she, pointing to the place where her mother's death-bed stood. "We have long concealed our grief from you, and suffered in silence. Now our strength is spent. We are not on the brink of an abyss, my father;—we are at the bottom of it. In order to get out, we must not only have courage, but it is also necessary that we should not be incessantly baffled by the caprices of a passion—"

"My dear children," cried Balthazer, seizing the hand of Margaret, "I will work for you, I—"

"See! here are the means!" replied Margaret, extending to him the ministerial letter.

"But, my darling, the means you offer are too slow; they will make me lose the fruit of two years' labor, and the enormous sum which my laboratory represents. There," said he, pointing to the loft, "are all our resources."

Margaret rose, and walked toward the door, saying, "My father, you will choose."

"Ha! my daughter, you are very hard," cried he, seating himself in the arm-chair, and suffering her to depart.

The next morning, Margaret heard, from Lemulquinier, that M. Claes was gone out. This simple announcement made her turn so pale, that the valet said to her, "Be tranquil, mademoiselle: monsieur said that he should return at eleven o'clock to breakfast. He did not go to bed last night. At two, this morning, he was still standing in the parlor, looking from the window at the roof of the laboratory. I waited in the kitchen: I saw him weep—he is afflicted. See, this famous month of July, in which the sun is so able to enrich us, if you would only—"

"Enough," said Margaret, guessing all the thoughts which had assailed her father.

Balthazer exhibited that phenomenon, which is exhibited by all sedentary people. His life seemed to depend upon the places with which he was identified. His thought was married to his laboratory and his house, and they seemed as indispensable to him as is the purse to the gambler, for whom working days are all lost days. In his laboratory were his hopes; *there* was the only atmosphere in which his lungs could take the vital air. That affinity which men have for places and for things, so powerful to feeble natures, becomes almost tyrannical with people of science and study. To remove from his house, was to Balthazer to renounce science—to renounce his problem; it was to die!

Margaret was a prey to extreme agitation, till breakfast time. The scene in which Balthazer had attempted to kill himself, came back on her memory, and she feared some tragic catastrophe, in the desperate conjuncture in which her father found himself. She went, and came, out and into the parlor—starting every time she heard the door-bell ring. At last Balthazer returned; and while he was crossing the court, Margaret studied his countenance with iniquitude, but saw there only the expression of stormy grief. When he entered the parlor, she stepped forward to wish him good morning. He pressed her affectionately to his heart, kissed her brow, and said to her, "I have been to obtain my passport, my daughter."

The sound of his voice, the resigned look, every movement of her father, crushed the heart of the poor girl, who turned her head away, that he might not see her tears; but she could not repress them, and went into the garden, where she wept unrestrained.

During the breakfast, Balthazer appeared cheerful, like a man who had decided on the part he ought to act. He introduced the subject, by saying, "So we are going to Bretagne? My uncle, I have always desired to see that country."

"They live cheap there," replied the old uncle.

"Is my father going away?" said Felicia.

At that moment M. de Solis entered, who brought in Lucien.

"You will leave Lucien with us to-day," said Balthazer, drawing his son toward him. "I am going away to-morrow, and must bid him farewell."

Emmanuel looked at Margaret, who bent her head. It was a gloomy day, in which every one was sad, with repressed thoughts and tears. It was not to be an absence, it was an exile; and all instinctively felt how humiliating it must be to a father, of the age of Balthazer, publicly to confess his disasters, by accepting a place and leaving his family. He alone was as great as Margaret was firm, and appeared to accept nobly this penance for the faults which the excess of his genius had caused him to commit.

When the evening was over, and the father and daughter were alone; Balthazer, who, the whole day, had been as tender and affectionate as in the happy days of his patriarchal life, extended to Margaret his hand, and said, with a sort of tenderness, mingled with despair, "Art thou content with thy father, my daughter?"

"You are worthy of *him*," said she, pointing to the portrait of Van Claes.

"The next morning, Balthazer, followed by Lemulquinier, went up to the laboratory, as if to take leave of the hopes he had caressed, and which revived at the sight of the operations he had commenced.

The master and the valet threw on each other a look, full of melancholy, on entering the loft which they were going to quit, perhaps, for ever. Balthazer contemplated the machines, over which his thoughts had so long hovered; to each one was linked the remembrance of some research, or some experiment. With a sad air, he ordered his valet to let the gases and dangerous acids evaporate; to separate all the substances which could possibly produce explosion; and as he took these preparations, he expressed bitter regrets, like a condemned man going to the scaffold.

Stopping before a case in which were plunged the two threads of a voltaic pile, "Here is an experiment, whose result I should watch," said he. "If it had succeeded—frightful thought! my children would not have driven from their house, a father, who could pour out pearls at their feet.—Here is a combination of carbon and sulphur," added he, speaking to himself, "in which the carbon plays the part of the electro-positive body; the crystallization must commence at the negative pole, and in the case of decomposition, would crystallize itself here."

"Ha! it would crystallize there," said Lemulquinier, contemplating his master with admiration.

"But," resumed Balthazer, after a pause, "the combination is submitted to the influence of this pile, which is feeble enough to act—"

"If monsieur wishes, I will augment the effect—"

"No, no; it is necessary to leave it as it is. Repose is an essential condition to the crystallization of—"

"In good faith, it is necessary it should take its own time, this crystallization!" cried the valet de chambre.

"If the temperature is low, the sulphur of carbon will crystallize," said Balthazer, continuing to express, by flashes, the separated thoughts of a meditation, complete in his understanding; "but if the action of the pile operates in certain ways, of which I am ignorant, (it will be necessary to watch that,) it is possible—, but of what am I thinking? I must not act the chemist any more. I must go and carry on the Receiver's office in Bretagne."

M. Claes went out precipitately, and descended to take a last breakfast with his family, with whom were seated Pierquin and M. de Solis. Balthazer, hastening to forget his scientific agony, said adieu to his children, and mounted the travelling carriage with his uncle. All the family accompanied him to the door. When Margaret had embraced him there, with a desperate energy, and he had replied to her in a whisper, saying, "Thou art a good girl, and do not mean any harm," she rushed across the

court, hastened to the parlor, and kneeling on the spot where her mother died, offered an ardent prayer to God for strength to accomplish the difficult work of her new life. She was strengthened by an inward voice, which threw into her heart the applauses of angels, and the acknowledgments of her mother. When her sister, her brother, Emmanuel and Pierquin returned, after watching the carriage, till it was out of sight, the notary exclaimed:

"Now, mademoiselle, what are you going to do?"

"To save the house," said she, with simplicity. "We possess nearly three hundred acres of Waignies. My intention is to have them cleared and divided into three farms; to construct the buildings necessary to their improvement, and let them; and I believe that, after some years, with much economy and patience, each of us—pointing to her sister and brother, "will have a farm of four hundred and some acres, which will one day be worth fifteen thousand francs rent. My brother Gabriel, for his part, will keep this house and that which he possesses on the ledger. Then we shall be able to restore to our father his fortune, free from all obligations, by consecrating our incomes to the discharge of his debts."

"But, my dear cousin," said the notary, stupefied by this statement of affairs, and with the cool reason of Margaret, "there will be more than two hundred thousand francs necessary in order to clear your lands, build your farm-houses, and purchase your stocks of cattle. Where will you get this sum?"

"There begins my embarrassment," said she, looking attentively at the notary and M. de Solis. "I dare not ask it of my uncle, who already has given security for my father."

"You have friends," cried the notary, suddenly, seeing that the ladies Claes were still girls of more than four hundred thousand francs.

Emmanuel looked at Margaret with earnestness; but unfortunately for Pierquin, who was a notary in the midst of his enthusiasm, he resumed thus: "I myself offer you these two hundred thousand francs!"

Emmanuel and Margaret consulted each other by a look, which was a ray of light to Pierquin. Felicia blushed excessively, so happy was she to find her cousin as generous as she wished. She looked at her sister, who suddenly guessed that, during her absence, the poor girl had allowed herself to be taken in by some common gallantries of Pierquin.

"You shall only pay me six per cent interest," said he. "You shall reimburse me when you wish, giving me in the mean while a mortgage on your lands. But, be tranquil; you will have only the disbursements to pay

for all your contracts; I will find you good farmers, and will transact your business gratuitously, like a good relation."

Emmanuel made a sign to Margaret, to induce her to refuse him; but she was too much occupied in studying the changes, which varied the countenance of her sister, to perceive it. After a pause, looking at the notary with an ironical air, she said, of herself, to the great joy of M. de Solis, "You are a very good relation. I expected no less from you. But six per cent. interest would retard our freedom too long. I shall wait till my brother is of age, and then we will eel his income."

Pierquin bit his lips, and Emmanuel smiled.

"Felicia, my dear child, carry Lucien back to college. Martha will accompany you," continued Margaret, pointing to her brother. "Lucien, my darling, be very good, do not tear your clothes; we cannot often give you new ones. Go, and study well."

Felicia went out with her brother. "My cousin," said Margaret, to Pierquin, "and you, Monsieur de Solis, you doubtless came to see my father during my absence. I thank you for this proof of friendship. You will do no less for two poor girls, who will have need of counsel, and will understand me on this subject. When I am in the city, I shall receive you always with the greatest pleasure; but when Felicia is alone with Josette and Martha, I need not say, she must see no one—be he an old friend, or the most devoted of our relations. In the circumstances in which we are placed, our conduct must be of irrefragable severity; and we must for a long time devote ourselves to labor and solitude."

Silence reigned during some moments. Emmanuel, lost in contemplation of the talent of Margaret, seemed mute, and Pierquin knew not what to say. He took leave of his cousin, experiencing a movement of rage against himself, for he suddenly divined that Margaret loved Emmanuel, and that he had acted like a fool himself.

"Ha! here, Pierquin, my friend," said he, apostrophizing himself in the street, "a man who should tell thee thou art an ass, would be right. Blockhead that I am! I have twelve thousand livres income, besides my office, counting the inheritance of my uncle des Racquets, of whom I am the only heir; and which will some day double my fortune. It was infamous in me to ask interest of Mademoiselle Claes. I am sure, that both of them must now be laughing at me. I must think no more of Margaret! No; and after all, Felicia is a sweet, good little creature, who will suit me better. Margaret has an iron character. She would wish to rule me, and she would rule me. Come, come, show yourself generous for once; be not so much of a notary. I cannot shake off that harness,

I fear! I will fall in love with Felicia, and I know I can make her love me. Pitchforks! She will have a farm of four hundred and thirty acres, which, in a given time, will be worth twelve or fourteen thousand livres of rent; for the lands of Waignies are good. When my uncle of Racquets dies, poor man, I will sell my office, and be a man of *for-ty thousand li-vres of ren-t*. My wife, a Claes, and I allied to considerable families! Faith, we shall see if the Count de Villes—the Magal-heser, the Saveron de Savorus refuse to come to the house of a PIERQUIN-CLAES-MOLINA-NOURBO! I shall be mayor of Douai; I shall have the cross; I shall be deputy; I shall arrive at everything! Ha! Pierquin, my boy, hold there! do no more fooleries! My word of honor, Felicia—Mademoiselle Felicia Claes, she loves thee!"

When the two lovers were alone, Emmanuel extended his hand to Margaret, who gave him hers. They rose by a simultaneous movement, and went toward the garden; but in the middle of the parlor, the lover could not repress his joy; and with a voice, trembling with emotion, he said to Margaret, "I have three hundred thousand francs for you."

"How!" cried she, "my mother! no—how is this?"

"Oh, my Margaret! is not what is mine, also yours?"

"Dear Emmanuel!" said she, pressing his hand.

Then, instead of going into the garden, she threw herself into a chair.

"Is it not for me to thank you," said he, "since you accept it?"

"This moment," said she, "my best beloved! effaces much grief, and brings near me a happy future. Yes, I accept thy fortune," resumed she, suffering the smile of an angel to wander over her lips; "and I know the means of making it my own."

She looked at the portrait of Van Claes, as if to call upon a witness; and the young man, who followed the eye of Margaret, did not see her draw a ring from her finger, until the moment in which he heard these words:

"In the midst of our deepest miseries, happiness may be found. My father, by his obliviousness, leaves me the free disposition of myself. Take this ring Emmanuel. My mother cherished thee; she would have chosen thee."

Tears came to his eyes. He turned pale, fell on his knees, and said to Margaret, as he gave her a ring, which he always wore, "See! here is the wedding ring of my mother! My Margaret! and shall I have no other pledge than this?" said he, kissing the ring.

She bent forward her brow to the lips of Emmanuel.



"Alas! my poor friend," said she, all emotion; "are we not doing something wrong? for we must wait a long time."

"My uncle used to say," said Emmanuel, "that adoration was the bread of patience. He spoke of the Christian, who loved God. I love thee even so."

They remained dreaming some moments in the sweetest exaltation. It was the sincere and calm effusion of a sentiment, which, like a fountain too full, overflowed in incessant little waves. The events, which were to separate them for a time, were a subject for melancholy, which rendered their happiness more vivid, although it mingled with it something of the acuteness of grief.

Felicia came back too quick for them. Emmanuel, taught by the beautiful tact, which divines the wish of those we love, left the two sisters together, after having exchanged with Margaret a look, in which she could see all that this discretion cost him; for it expressed how eager he was for the happiness so long desired, and which had just been consecrated by the betrothment of the heart.

"Come here, little sister," said Margaret, taking Felicia round the neck.

They wandered into the garden, and seated themselves upon that bench, to which every generation of this family had confided their words of love, their sighs of grief, their meditations, and their projects. In spite of the joyous and amiable smile of her sister, Felicia felt an emotion, which resembled fear. Margaret took her hand and felt her tremble.

"Mademoiselle Felicia," said she, in a low voice in her ear, "I read in your soul, that Pierquin came often during my absence; he came every evening; he said to you sweet words; and you listened to him."

Felicia blushed.

"Do not excuse thyself, my darling," resumed Margaret: "It is so natural to love! Perhaps thy lovely soul will somewhat change the nature of thy cousin. He is egotistical, interested; but he is an honest man, and perhaps his very defects may serve thy happiness. He will love thee, as the prettiest of his possessions; thou wilt be a part of his business. Pardon me that word, my love. Thou wilt correct his bad habits, which he has acquired by thinking always only of interest, and will teach him the *affairs of the heart*."

Felicia could only embrace her sister.

"Besides," resumed Margaret, "he has a fortune; his family is the highest and most ancient of the citizens. But do you believe I would oppose your happiness, if you wished to seek it in a humble condition?"

Felicia let escape the words, "Dear sister."

"Oh, yes! thou canst confide in me," said Margaret.

What is more natural, than for us to tell one another our secrets?

These words, so full of soul, excited one of those delicious conversations, in which young girls say everything. When Margaret, whom love had made expert, had ascertained the situation of Felicia's heart, she finished by saying to her, "Well, my dear child, we will assure ourselves that thy cousin loves thee truly, and then——"

"Leave me to do that," replied Felicia, smiling: "I have my models."

"Nonsense," said Margaret, kissing her.

Although Pierquin belonged to that class of men, who see in marriage some obligation; the execution of social laws, and a means for the transmission of property; and, although it was indifferent to him, whether he espoused Felicia or Margaret, if both had the same name and the same dowry—he perceived, nevertheless, that both were, to use his own expression, *romantic* and *sentimental* girls, (two adjectives of which people, without heart, make use to ridicule the gifts which nature sows with a sparing hand, across the furrows of humanity.) The notary knew the proverb, "it is necessary to howl with the wolves." The next day, he came to see Margaret, and took her mysteriously into the little garden, to begin the declaration of his sentiments, since this was a part of the primitive contract, which must precede the notarial.

"Dear cousin," said he to her, "we have not always been of the same opinion, on the means taken to bring our affairs to a happy conclusion; but you must acknowledge, that I have always been guided by a great desire of being useful to you. Well, yesterday I spoiled my offers through a fatal habit, which the notary spirit gives: do you understand? My heart was not an accomplice in my folly. I have loved you well; but we have a certain perspicacity—we people, and I have perceived, that I did not please you; it is my fault! Another has been more adroit. Well, I come to avow to you honestly, that I have a real love for your sister Felicia. Treat me like a brother; draw from my purse; take it even! The more you take the more you will prove my friendship. I am all yours, *without interest*, do you understand? neither for twelve nor one per cent. Let me be found worthy of Felicia, and I am content. Pardon my defects; they have come by the practice of business. My heart is good;—I would throw myself into the Scorp, sooner than not render my wife happy."

"This is well, cousin," said Margaret; "but my sister depends upon herself and on her father."

"I know that, my dear cousin," said the notary; "but you are the mother of the family, and I have nothing more at heart, than to render you the judge of me."

Margaret accepted the assistance of the notary, only in what concerned his profession, in order not to compromise her dignity, as a woman, either for herself or for her sister; nor forestall the determinations of her father.

The very same day, she confided Felicia to the care of Josette and Martha, who were devoted body and soul to their young mistress, and assisted her in all her plans of economy; and herself departed for Waignies, where she began her operations, which were wisely directed by Pierquin;—for his devotion having been ciphered out, as an excellent speculation, his cares and his pains were, in some sort, a deposit in the funds, of which he no longer wished to be sparing. In the first place, he attempted to save Margaret the trouble of clearing and laboring the lands, destined for the farms.

He found three young sons of rich farmers, who desired to establish themselves; he induced them, by the prospect which the riches of the lands offered, and succeeded in making them take, on lease, the three farms. Meantime, receiving the farms one year, rent free, they engaged to give six thousand francs rent the second year, twelve thousand for the third, and fifteen thousand during the remainder of the lease; and to dig fosses, ditches, make plantations, and purchase cattle. While the farm-houses were building, the farmers cleared the lands. In twenty months after Balthazer departed, Margaret had almost reestablished the fortunes of her brother and sister. Two hundred thousand francs were enough to pay for all the buildings.

Neither assistance nor counsel were wanting to this courageous girl, whose conduct excited the admiration of the city. Margaret watched over the whole with that good sense, activity, and constancy, which women know how to display, when they are animated by a great sentiment. In the third year she could consecrate forty-five thousand francs of the income, which these farms yielded; and, after that, the rents of her brother; and, the produce of the paternal property, to the payment of the capital mortgages, and the reparation of the waste which the passion of Balthazer had made in the mansion. The redemption went on rapidly afterward, by the decrease of interest. Emmanuel de Solis offered, besides, to Margaret, one hundred thousand francs, which remained over his inheritance from his uncle, and which he had not employed, together with a thousand francs of his own savings; so that, from the first year of her administration, she could pay a considerable amount of debts. This life of courage, of privation, and devotedness, did not fail during five years. But, all besides was success and prosperity, under the guardianship and influence of Margaret. Gabriel, who had

become Engineer for bridges and causeways,—and, assisted by his uncle Conyck, was making a rapid fortune, by the enterprise of a canal—had, besides, learned to please his cousin, Mademoiselle Conyck, whom her father adored, and who was one of the richest heiresses in Flanders. In 1823 the property of M. Claes had become free, and the house in the rue de Paris had almost repaired all its losses of furniture.

Now, M. Pierquin asked, of Balthazer, positively the hand of Felicia; and M. de Solis solicited that of Margaret; and at the beginning of the month of January, 1824, Margaret and M. Conyck departed, in search of the exiled father, whose return all warmly desired, and who had given in his resignation, that he might return to the bosom of his family, whose happiness he must sanction.

In the absence of Margaret—who had often expressed her regret, that she could not fill the empty frames in the gallery and reception-rooms, by the day on which her father should take possession of his house again—M. Pierquin and M. de Solis laid a plan, with Felicia, to prepare a surprise; which would make the younger sister, in some sort, a participator in the restoration of the Claes House. They both purchased for Felicia, many beautiful pictures, with which they offered to decorate the gallery. M. Conyck had the same idea. Desirous to testify to Margaret, the satisfaction he had received from her noble conduct, and her devotedness to fulfill the dying orders of her mother, he had taken measures, that one-fiftieth of his finest pictures, and some of those which Balthazer had formerly sold to him, should be brought back to Douai; so that the Claes gallery was almost entirely replenished.

Margaret had been many times before to see her father, accompanied by her sister, or by Lucien. Every time, she had found him more changed; but, since her last visit, old age had manifested itself in Balthazer by frightful symptoms, to which the parsimony with which he lived doubtless contributed. He had employed the greatest part of his income in making experiments, that always disappointed his hopes. Though he was only sixty-five years old, he appeared like an octogenarian. His eyes were sunk deep in their orbits; his eyebrows were white; only a few hairs hung about his neck; he let his beard grow, and cut it only with scissors, when compelled to it. He was bent, like some old vine-dresser. The disorder of his dress had resumed a character of poverty, which decrepitude rendered hideous. Although one thought animated his grave countenance, whose features were hidden under its wrinkles;—the fixedness of his look, a despairing air, a constant inquietude, engraved upon it the diagnostic of insanity.

Sometimes, there appeared in it a hope, which gave him the expression of monomania;—sometimes, the impatience of not guessing a secret, which presented itself to him, like a random fire, gave an expression of fury;—then, suddenly a brilliant laugh betrayed madness. For the most part, the most complete dejection summed up all his passion in the cold melancholy of an idiot. However fugitive and imperceptible these expressions were to strangers, they were, unfortunately, too apparent to those, who knew a Claes sublime in goodness, great in heart, beautiful in countenance, of which there existed only rare vestiges in Balthazer.

Old Lemulquinier, worn, like his master, by constant labor, had not, like him, to undergo the fatigues of thought. So that his face exhibited a singular mixture of iniquity, and admiration of his master, whom he easily misunderstood. Indeed, though he heard his least word with respect, and followed his least movement with a sort of tenderness, he had the carefulness of a mother, who watches over her child; and he would often assume the air of a protector, because he did really protect, as to the vulgar necessities of life, of which Balthazer never thought. These two old men, enveloped in one idea, confiding in the reality of their hope, agitated by the same breath,—the one representing the envelope, and the other the soul of their common existence, formed a spectacle at once horrible and affecting.

When Margaret and M. Conynck arrived, they found M. Claes established at an inn: for his successor had already taken possession of his place. Notwithstanding the abstractions of science, his heart was moved with a desire to see his country, his house, his family. Then, the letter of his daughter having announced to him some happy events, he dreamed of crowning his career by a series of experiments, which must lead him at last to the discovery of his problem; and he waited for Margaret with excessive impatience.

His daughter threw herself into the arms of her father, and wept with joy. This time she came to seek the recompense of her painful life; the pardon of her domestic glory; for she felt criminal, as great men do, who outrage liberty to save their country. But, in contemplating her father, she trembled to recognize the change which, since her last visit, had taken place in him. M. Conynck partook of the secret terror of his niece, and insisted on taking his cousin immediately to Douai, whose influence might bring back his reason and health, by restoring his cheerfulness.

After the first effusions of the heart were over, which were more vivid on the part of Balthazer than Margaret could have expected, his attentions to her were singular. He testified his regret at receiving them in the

ordinary chamber of an inn; he inquired into her tastes; and asked what she wished for her repast, with solicitude and eagerness. He had, in short, the manners of a guilty man, who wishes to assure himself of his judge. Margaret knew her father so well, that she divined the motive of his tenderness, by supposing he had contracted in the city some debts, which he wished to pay before his departure. She had observed her father for so long a time, that she could see the naked human heart. Balthazer was degraded; the sense of his abasement, and the isolation, in which science had placed him, made him timid as a child, in all questions foreign to his favorite occupation. His eldest daughter was imposing to him. He remembered her past devotedness, the strength which she had displayed; the power he had permitted her to assume, the fortune she disposed of;—and the indefinable sentiments, which had seized upon him from the day in which he abdicated his already compromised paternity, had constantly increased.

M. Conynck seemed to be nothing in his eyes; he saw only his daughter, thought only of her; appearing to fear her, as some weak husbands fear the superiority of the wives who have subjugated them. When he raised his eyes to her, Margaret perceived there, with grief, an expression of fear, like that of a child who feels itself in fault. She knew not how to reconcile the majestic and terrible expression of that brow, devastated by science and labor, with the puerile smile, the naïve serenity, painted upon the lips and countenance of Balthazer. She was wounded by the contrast of this grandeur, and these littlenesses; and determined to employ her influence, to make her father reassume all his dignity for the solemn day, in which he was going to return to the bosom of his family; and as a first step, she seized a moment, when they were alone, to say in his ear, "Do you owe anything in the city?"

Balthazer blushed, and answered with an embarrassed air, "I do not know. Lemulquinier will tell you; for he knows more of my affairs than I do myself."

Margaret rang for the valet, and when he came in, she almost involuntarily studied the faces of the two old men.

"Does monsieur want anything?" demanded Lemulquinier.

Margaret, who was proud and full of nobleness, had a tightening of the heart, at perceiving the tone and manner of the valet, who had established an unbecoming familiarity between her father and himself.

"My father could not make up an account of what he owes here, without your assistance," said Margaret.

"Monsieur owes," replied the valet—  
At these words Balthazer made a sign of intelligence to his servant, which surprised and humbled Margaret.

"Tell me all my father owes," said she.

"Monsieur owes a thousand crowns to an apothecary, who sells groceries, and who has furnished us with caustic, potash, lead, zinc, &c."

"Is this all?" said Margaret.

Balthazer reiterated an affirmative sign to Lemulquinier, who, fascinated by his master, said, "Yes, mademoiselle."

"Well," resumed she, "I will go and pay them."

Balthazer embraced his daughter, saying, "You are an angel to me, my child." He now breathed more easily, and looked upon her with an eye less sad. But, notwithstanding this joy, Margaret perceived upon his countenance a profound inquietude; and judged, that these thousand crowns constituted only the dribbling debts of the laboratory.

"Be frank, my father," said she, taking his hand, and seating herself upon his knee.

"Do you not owe something more? Confess to me everything, and come back to the house without preserving a principle of fear, in the midst of the general joy."

"My dear Margaret," said he, taking her hand, and kissing it, with a grace which seemed a reminiscence of his youth, "you will chide."

"No," said she.

"True?" replied he, with an expression of childish joy: "I will therefore tell thee. Thou wilt pay?"

"Yes," said she, repressing her tears.

"Well, I owe—Oh, I dare not—"

"But tell me, my father."

"It is considerable," resumed he.

She joined her hands with a movement of despair.

"I owe thirty thousand francs to M. M. Protez & Chiffreville."

"Thirty thousand francs!" said she; "that is all my savings. But," added she, "I have the pleasure of offering them to you," kissing his brow with respect.

He rose, took her in his arms, and ran round and round his chamber, leaping like a child. Then he put her upon a chair, crying, "My dear child, thou art a treasure of love. The Chiffrevilles have written me three menacing letters, and wish to prosecute me—me, who have made their fortunes."

"My father," said Margaret, with an accent of despair, "will you always seek—"

"Always," said he, with a smile of madness; "and I shall find. If thou knewest where we were—"

"Whom do you mean by *we*?"

"I spoke of Lemulquinier—he has ended with understanding me. He aids me much, poor boy; he is so devoted to me."

M. Conynck interrupted the conversation by entering; for Margaret made a sign to her father to be silent, fearing that he would

lose consideration in the eyes of their uncle. She was frightened at the ravages which abstraction had made in his great intellect, all absorbed in the search of a problem, perhaps insolvable. Balthazer, who saw and thought of nothing but his furnaces, had not divined that his fortune was redeemed.

The next day, they departed for Flanders; and the journey was long enough for Margaret to acquire some confused light upon the situation, in which she found her father and Lemulquinier. She asked herself, whether the valet had gained over his master that ascendancy, which people without education, know how to take over great minds, to whom they feel themselves necessary? or, whether the master had contracted for his valet that species of affection which is born of habit, like that which an artisan has for his tool, the Arab for his courser? Margaret watched for some facts in order to decide; proposing to herself to withdraw Balthazer from so humiliating a yoke, if it were real. In passing through Paris, she remained there some days, to discharge her father's debts, and to entreat the chemical factors to send nothing to Douai, without warning her beforehand of the demands M. Claes made upon them. She then persuaded her father to change his costume, and resume the habits of the toilet, suitable to a man of his rank. This restoration of his body gave to Balthazer a sort of physical dignity, which augured well for a change of ideas. Soon his daughter, happy, beforehand, in all the surprises which awaited her father in his own house, departed for Douai.

Three leagues from the city, Balthazer found his daughter, Felicia, on horseback, escorted by her two brothers, Emmanuel, Pierquin, and all the most intimate friends of the three families. The traveller was necessarily diverted from his habitual thoughts. The sight of Flanders acted upon his head; and, when he perceived the joyous train that was formed of his family and friends, he experienced emotions so vivid, that his eyes became humid, his voice trembled, and he embraced his children so passionately, without the power of tearing himself from them, that the spectators of the scene were moved to tears. When he saw the house he turned pale, and leaped from the carriage with the agility of a young man. He breathed the air of the court with delight, and looked at every detail with exquisite pleasure. He straightened himself up, and his countenance became young. When he entered into the parlor, mingled joy and grief swelled his head, as he saw the old flambeaux of silver which he had sold, replaced; and, that all the disasters which had occurred to the room were repaired, and all the furniture reinstated. A splendid breakfast was served in the dining-hall, the dressers having been filled again with curiosities of

silver, of equal value, at least, to those which formerly ornamented them. Although this family repast lasted a long time, it hardly sufficed for the recitals which Balthazer required from each of his children; for the shock impressed on his moral nature by his return, made him espouse the happiness of his family, of which he showed himself truly the father. His manners resumed their ancient nobleness, and, in the first moments, he enjoyed entirely the possession, without demanding an account of the means, by which he recovered all he had lost. His joy was entire and full. The breakfast being finished, the four children, the father, and Pierquin, the notary, passed into the parlor; where Balthazer saw, not without inquietude, some stamped papers which a clerk had placed upon a table, before which he stood, ready to assist his patron. The children seated themselves, and Balthazer, astonished, remained standing before the chimney.

"This," said Pierquin, "is the account of the guardianship which M. Claes rendered to his children; although it is not very amusing," added he, laughing in the manner of notaries, who take generally a pleasant tone, when speaking of the most serious business, "it is absolutely necessary that you should hear it."

Although the circumstances justified this speech—yet M. Claes, whose conscience recalled to him his past life, accepted it as a reproach, and contracted his eyebrows. The clerk commenced reading, and then the astonishment of Balthazer went on increasing in proportion as this tale was unfolded. There it was established at first, that the fortune of his wife amounted at the moment of her decease, to about sixteen hundred thousand francs; and the conclusion of this rendering of accounts, furnished clearly to each of the children, an entire share; as a good and careful father would have managed it. It resulted in his house being free from all mortgages, himself at home, with his country property equally unembarrassed. When the several acts were signed, Pierquin presented him with the receipts for the sums which he had formerly borrowed, and the replevy of the inscriptions (titles) which weighed upon his property. In that moment, Balthazer—who recovered at once the honor of a man, the life of a father, and the consideration of a citizen—fell into a chair and sought Margaret, who, by one of the sublime delicacies of woman, had absented herself during the reading, to see if all her directions had been attended to, relative to the coming festival. Each member of the family comprehended the thought of the old man as his tearful eyes demanded his daughter, whom all saw at that moment, with the eyes of the soul, as an angel of strength and light. Lucien went to seek her. Balthazer

heard her advancing steps, and ran to press her to his heart.

"My father!" said she, at the foot of the stairs, where they met; "I beg you will not diminish, in anything, your holy authority. Thank me before all your family, for having accomplished your intentions; and thus be the only author of the good which has been accomplished."

Balthazer raised his eyes to heaven, looked at his daughter, crossed his arms; and, after a pause, during which his countenance resumed an expression which his children had not seen there for ten years, said impressively, "Art thou not there, Pepita, to admire our child?"

He embraced Margaret with fervor, without being able to pronounce another word, and returned into the parlor. "My children," said he, with a nobleness of manner, which had made him in former times the most imposing of men, "we all owe our thanks and acknowledgments to my daughter Margaret, for the wisdom and courage with which she has fulfilled my intentions, and executed my plans; when too much absorbed by my labors, I put into her hands the reins of our domestic administration."

"Ha! now we will go read the contracts of marriage," said Pierquin, looking at the clock.

The friends of the family, who had been invited to the festival, given in honor of M. Claes's return and the marriage celebrations, now began to arrive successively. The servants lighted the apartments, and soon a splendid and imposing circle of distinguished guests filled the reception-rooms. The three families, who were united for the happiness of their children, rivalled each other in splendor. Rich presents for the brides were spread upon the tables. The gold gleamed and sparkled, as the clothes were unfolded; the cashmere shawls and profusion of jewels, excited as true joy in those who gave, as in those who received the gifts; and the value of the magnificent donations was forgotten, while the eye rested on the child-like joy that illumined the faces of all present. The parents only, on such occasions, were seated, while the members of the family stood before them at a distance. On the left side of the parlor, next to the garden, were placed Gabriel Claes and Mademoiselle Conynck; next to them, M. de Solis and Margaret; then her sister and Pierquin. A few steps from these three couples, Balthazer and M. Conynck, the only persons who were seated, took each his place in an arm-chair, near the notary who supplied the place of Pierquin. Lucien stood behind his father; then twenty elegantly-dressed men and women, all chosen from among the nearest relatives of the Pierquin, Conynck, and Claes Houses;—the mayor of Douai, who was to perform the marriage rite, the twelve wit-

nesses, taken from the devoted friends of the three families, one of whom was the first president, all, even to the curate of St. Peter, were standing, and formed an imposing circle.

Such homage was rendered by all this assembly to paternity; which, in this instance, shone with a royal majesty, and impressed on the scene an antique coloring. It was the only moment, for fifteen years, that Balthazer had forgot the Absolute. M. Piussalier, the notary, went to ask Margaret and her sister, if all the persons invited to the signature and dinner had arrived. Upon their answering in the affirmative, he took up the contract of marriage between Margaret and M. de Solis; when suddenly the door of the parlor opened, and Lemulquinier rushed in, his face flaming with joy.

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"

Balthazer threw upon Margaret a look of despair; made her a sign, and led her into the garden. Immediately the whole assembly were alarmed.

"I dared not tell thee, my child," said he; "but since thou hast done so much for me, thou wilt save me in this last misfortune. Lemulquinier lent me, for my last experiment, which did not succeed, thirty thousand francs, the fruit of his economy. The unfortunate man comes, doubtless, to demand it; understanding that I had become rich. Give it to him immediately. Ah, my angel! thou owest to him thy father; for he alone consoled me in my disasters; he alone still has faith in me. Certainly, without him I should have died."

"Monsieur! Monsieur! A diamond!"—cried Lemulquinier.

M. Claes sprang into the hall, on perceiving a diamond in the hand of his valet, who said to him, in a low voice, "I have been to the laboratory."

The chemist, who now forgot everything, threw a look upon the old Fleming, which could only be translated by the words, "Thou hast been to the laboratory!"

"And," said the valet, "I have found this, there in the case, communicating with the voltaic pile, which we left in train to do its own work! and it did it, monsieur!" added he, pointing to the white diamond, of an octagon form, and whose brilliancy attracted the astonished gaze of the whole assembly.

"My children, my friends," said Balthazer, "pardon my old servant! pardon me! This goes near to make me mad. A chance of five years has produced, without me, a discovery, which I have sought six years! How was this diamond made? I know nothing about it. Yes, I went away, leaving sulphur and carbon under the influence of the voltaic pile, whose action ought to have been watched every day. Well, during my absence, the power of God has shone forth in the laboratory, without my having been able to verify the progressive

effects of my experiment, well understood. Is it not frightful! Cursed exile, cursed chance! Alas! if I had watched this long, this slow, this sudden—I know not what to call it—chrysalization, transformation—in short this miracle! Well, my children would be still richer. Although this is not the solution, which I seek; at least the first rays of my glory are upon my country; and this moment, in which our affections are satisfied and made to glow with happiness, is warmed by the sun of science also."

Every one kept silent before this man; for these words without order, which were wrung from him by grief, were too genuine not to be sublime. Suddenly, he compressed his despair in the bottom of his heart; threw upon the assembly a majestic look, which shone into their souls; and taking the diamond, offered it to Margaret, with these words, "It belongs to thee, my angel!" He then dismissed Lemulquinier, and said to the notary, "Goose!"

This word excited in the assembly, a shivering, such as Talma, in certain characters, raised in attentive crowds. Balthazer sat down, saying, in a low voice, "I must be only a father to-day."

Margaret heard him; and, stepping forward, seized the hand of her father, kissing it respectfully.

"There never was a man so great," said Emmanuel, when his bride returned to him, "never was there a man so powerful;—any other would have become mad."

The three contracts being read and signed, every one eagerly questioned Balthazer upon the manner in which he had formed the diamond; but he was unable to answer for so strange an accident. He pointed to his loft with a gesture of fury.

"Yes! the frightful power which can overturn the globe, and which, perhaps, has made metals—diamonds!" cried he, "was manifested there, during my absence, by chance!"

"This chance is, doubtless, very natural," said one of those people who wish to explain everything. "The good man has forgotten some real diamond, and it is so much saved from those which he burned."

"Let us forget it," said Balthazer to his friends: "I pray you, let us not speak of it to-day."

Margaret took the arm of her father, and passed into the front rooms of the house, where a sumptuous feast awaited them. When he entered into the gallery, in the train of his guests, he saw it was refurnished with the pictures, and filled with the rarest flowers.

"The pictures!" cried he, "the pictures! some of them our old ones!"

He stopped, his brow darkened, he had one moment of sadness—feeling in some measure the weight of his fault.

"All this is yours, my father," said Margaret, guessing the sentiments which agitated the soul of Balthazer.

"Angel, whom celestial spirits must applaud; how many times wilt thou give life to thy father!" cried he.

"Do not preserve any longer a cloud upon your brow, nor the least sad thought in your heart," replied she, "and you will recompense me above my hopes. I am thinking of Lemulquinier, my dear father;—the few words you said to me, make me esteem him; I confess I have judged him harshly. Think no more of what you owe him; he shall remain near you as a humble friend. Emmanuel, from his own savings, possesses almost sixty thousand francs. We will give them to Lemulquinier; for, after having served you so well, this man must be happy the rest of his life. Do not disquiet yourself about us. M. de Solis and I will live a calm and quiet life—a life without pomp. We shall not need the sum till you can repay us!"

"Ah! my daughter, you never abandon me: you are always the Providence of your father."

Entering the reception-rooms, Balthazer found the furniture restored, and as magnificent as formerly. Soon the guests descended to the dining-hall, on the ground floor, and on each stair of the grand staircase, they found flowering trees and shrubs.

Some plate, wonderfully wrought, which Gabriel presented to his father, attracted the eyes, as much as the surprising luxury of the table—unequaled, even among the most distinguished people of a city, whose luxury was traditionally fashionable. The domestics of M. Conynck and M. Pierquin assisted in serving the sumptuous repast; and, seeing himself at the head of this table, surrounded by friends and relatives, whose countenances beamed with vivid and sincere joy, Balthazer, behind whom stood Lemulquinier, was penetrated with an emotion so deep, that every one was silent, as people always are, in great joy and great grief.

"Dear children, you have killed the fatted calf for the return of your prodigal father!" said he.

This word, by which he did himself justice, and which, perhaps, prevented others from pronouncing something, still more severe, was said so nobly, that every eye filled with tears. But this was the last expression of sadness; and the joy of all present soon took that noisy and animated character, which distinguishes family festivities.

After dinner, the principal inhabitants of the city arrived to the ball, which was opened, and corresponded to the classic splendors of a day, which commemorated the restoration of a noble house.

The three marriages being consummated, festivals, balls, repasts, succeeded for many months; keeping M. Claes in a round of

worldly amusements. His eldest son went to establish himself on the estates that he possessed near Cambria, belonging to M. Conynck, who could not be separated from his daughter. Madame Pierquin also left the paternal mansion, to do the honors of the hotel, which Pierquin had built, and where he wished to live nobly; for his commission was sold, and his uncle de Raquets having died, had left him the fortune he had slowly acquired by industry and economy. Lucien soon went to Paris to finish his education, and M. and Madame de Solis alone remained with their father; who relinquished to them half the Claes House, he himself lodging in the second front story.

Margaret continued to watch over the happiness of her father, and was aided, in this severe task, by Emmanuel. This noble daughter received, from the hand of love, the most enviable crown;—that which happiness weaves, and constancy keeps brilliant. Indeed, never did a couple present a better image of that complete felicity, avowed, pure, of which every affectionate woman dreams. The union of these two, who had been so courageous in the trials of life, and who had loved so sacredly, excited, in the city, respectful admiration. M. de Solis, a long time Inspector-general of the University, gave up his employment, that he might better enjoy this happiness, and remained at Douai; where every one yielded such homage to his talents and character, that he was chosen, beforehand, one of the Electors of the College, when he should be old enough for the deputation. Margaret, who had shown herself so strong in adversity, became, in happiness, a sweet and lovely woman.

M. Claes, during this year, was, doubtless, seriously occupied; but, although he made some not very costly experiments, for which his revenue was sufficient, he appeared to neglect his laboratory. Margaret, who resumed the old habits of the Claes House, gave, every month, for the sake of her father, a family festival, in which the Pierquins and Conynck assisted; and she received the highest society in the city, one day every week, at a café, that became one of the most celebrated in Flanders. Although often abstracted, M. Claes assisted at all these assemblies, and practiced all the polite and gentle virtues, to gratify his daughter; so that his children began to hope that he had renounced his search after the Absolute. So passed three years.

In 1828, an event favorable to M. de Solis, called him into Spain. Although there had been, between the property of the house of Solis and himself, three numerous families, Emmanuel had become—by means of barrenness, yellow-fever, old age, and other caprices of fortune—the heir of its titles and entailed riches; and, by a chance not unlikely, except in books, the house of Solis had ac-

quired the countship of Nourho, of which the Claes had been formerly dispossessed. Margaret was unwilling that her husband should go without her; as business might detain him a long time in Spain. She had, besides, some curiosity to see the chateau Casa Real, where her mother had passed her infancy; and the city of Grenada, which was the patrimonial cradle of the family of Solis. Therefore, confiding the care of the house to the devoted Martha, Josette, and Lemulquinier, who was in the habit of conducting it for Balthazer, she determined to go with her husband. They proposed to Balthazer to accompany them; but he declined, ostensibly, on account of his age: but, for a long time, he had meditated some experiments, which he believed must realize his hopes; and the real cause of his refusal was his wish to complete these during their absence.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ABSOLUTE FOUND.

M. AND MADAME DE SOLIS remained in Spain longer than they wished; and Margaret, while there, had an infant. About the middle of the year 1830, they reached Cadix, where they intended to embark, and return to France through Italy; but they received a letter from Felicia, containing sad news.

In eighteen months, M. Claes had become again completely ruined, and Gabriel and M. Pierquin were obliged to remit to Lemulquinier a monthly sum, to help out the expenses of the house. Josette and Martha were dead; the coachman, the cook, and the other servants were sent away; the house, furniture, and equipages were sold. Although Lemulquinier kept the habits of his master profoundly secret, it was believed that the thousand francs, given by Gabriel Claes and Pierquin, were employed in experiments. The small quantity of provisions purchased at the market by the valet, led people to suppose, that the two old men were content with the bare necessities of life. In fine, to prevent them from selling the paternal mansion, Gabriel and Pierquin paid the interest of the sums that the old man had, unknown to them, borrowed upon the real estate.

The children had now no influence over Balthazer, who, at seventy years of age, displayed extraordinary energy in accomplishing his own will, were it ever so absurd. Margaret, alone, could perhaps resume the empire over him, which she had formerly possessed. Felicia entreated her sister to hasten home, for she feared her father had signed some notes on demand; and Gabriel, M. Conynck and Pierquin, frightened at the continuance of a madness, which had devoured seven millions without revolt, had decided to pay no more debts of M. Claes.

This letter changed the arrangements for

the journey, and Margaret took the shortest road to Douai. Her savings and her new fortune enabled her to liquidate once more her father's debts; but she wished to do more—she wished to obey her mother, and save Balthazer from descending to the tomb dishonored. It was certain she alone could exercise sufficient ascendancy over her father to prevent the continuance of this work of ruin, at an age when people ought no longer to expect profitable labors, from their weakened faculties. But she desired not to imitate the children of Sophocles, but to govern without crushing her father, in case that he did approach the scientific end, for which he had sacrificed so much.

M. and Madame de Solis reached Flan- ders toward the last of September, 1830, and arrived at Douai in the morning. Margaret stopped at the house in the rue de Paris, and found it shut. She rang violently, but no one replied. Then a merchant stepped out of his shop, drawn by the noise which the carriages of M. de Solis and his suite made. Many persons were at their windows, to enjoy the spectacle afforded by the return of a family beloved throughout the city; and attracted also by a vague curiosity, excited by the expectation of events, which the arrival of Margaret might cause in the Claes House. The merchant told the valet of M. de Solis, that the old M. Claes went out about an hour ago, and that probably Lemulquinier was walking with his master upon the ramparts. Margaret sent for a blacksmith to open the door, that she might avoid any scene with her father, if, as Felicia's letter had suggested, he should refuse to admit her to his house. During this time, M. de Solis went to seek the old man, and announce to him the arrival of his daughter; while he sent his valet to inform M. and Madame Pierquin.

The door was immediately opened. Madame de Solis entered the parlor and had her baggage put there. She shuddered with terror at seeing the walls as naked as if fire had passed over them. The admirable sculptures of Van Huysium and the portrait of the president had been sold, as she learned, to Lord Spenser. The dining-hall was empty: she found nothing there but two straw chairs and one common table, upon which Margaret beheld with terror two plates, two bowls, two silver covers; and on one plate were the remains of a salt herring, of which, doubtless, M. Claes and his valet had partaken. She flew through the house; every room offered a desolate, naked spectacle, parallel to those in the parlor and dining-hall. The Idea of the Absolute had passed over everything like a conflagration. All the furniture in her father's chamber was a bed, a chair, a table, upon which was an ordinary brass candlestick, with the remains of a miserable candle. In fine, the nakedness was there so com-



plete that he had not even left curtains to his windows. The smallest things of any value in the house, even to the kitchen furniture, had been sold.

Induced by that curiosity which does not abandon us, even in misfortune, Margaret went into Lemulquinier's room;—it was as naked as that of his master, and in the half-open drawer of the table she saw an acknowledgment, (from the *Mont de Piété*) which attested that the valet had put his watch in pawn some days before. She ran to the laboratory, and found that room full of instruments of science, as in time past. She opened her own apartment: *her father had respected everything there.* At the first glance which she threw upon this room, she burst into tears, and pardoned him everything. In the midst of his devastating fury, he had been arrested by the paternal sentiment, mingled with the gratitude he owed to this beloved child. This proof of tenderness, received at this moment, when despair was at its height, caused one of those moral reactions, against which the coldest hearts are without strength to contend. She descended to the parlor, and awaited the arrival of her father, with an anxiety which doubt frightfully augmented. How was she to receive him—destroyed, decrepit, suffering, enfeebled by fastings, which he underwent through pride? But would he have his reason? Tears rolled unconsciously from her eyes in finding again this sanctuary devastated. The associations of a whole life—her efforts, her useless precautions, her infancy, her happy and her unhappy mother, all, even to the sight of her little Joseph, who smiled at this spectacle of desolation, composed for her a poem of heart-rending melancholy. But, although she foresaw the misfortunes, she anticipated not the development which was to crown the life of her father—that life at once so great and so miserable.

The situation in which she found M. Claes was a secret to no one; and, to the shame of men, there were not to be met in Douai, two generous hearts to render honor to his perseverance, as a man of genius. From all the first society, Balthazer was banished, as a bad father, who had consumed four fortunes, and searched for the Philosopher's Stone in the nineteenth century;—that enlightened century—that incredulous century; that century—what shall we not say in its praise—that century, in which, as in all others, talent expires under an indifference, as brutal as was that of the times in which Dante, Cervantes, Tasso, and many others died;—for the people comprehend, even more tardily than kings, the creations of genius. These opinions had imperceptibly filtered from the first society to the citizens, and from the citizens to the lowest of the people. The septuagenarian and chemist excited, therefore, a profound sentiment of pity

among all educated people; and a jocose curiosity in the lower orders of society: two gross expressions of contempt, and of that *vae victis!* with which the many overwhelm unfortunate great men. Many persons coming to see the house, were shown the loft, where so much gold and carbon had been consumed. When Balthazer passed, he was pointed at with the finger. Often a word of raillery or pity escaped the lips of a man or child, but Lemulquinier took care to translate it to him as a eulogy, and he could deceive him with impunity; for, although the eyes of Balthazer preserved the sublime light, which the habit of great thoughts concentrated there—his sense of hearing was enfeebled. To many grossly-superstitious country people, the old man was a sorcerer. The great house of Claes was now called in the suburbs, and in the country, the house of the devil! There was nothing, even to the figure of Lemulquinier, that did not confirm the ridiculous opinions, which prevailed about his master. When the poor old slave went to the market, for the provisions necessary for their subsistence, and which he took from among the cheapest, he obtained nothing, without receiving some insult in the way of merry-making; and was fortunate, if the merchants were not so superstitious as to refuse to sell him his meagre pittance, for fear they should be damned for coming in contact with an imp of hell! The feelings of all the city, therefore, were generally hostile to the old man, and his companion. The disorder of their dresses increased this feeling; for they went dressed like those shamefaced, poor gentlemen, who preserve a decent exterior, and hesitate to ask charity. Sooner or later the two old men were likely to be insulted grossly; and Pierquin, who felt how much a public insult would dishonor the family, always sent two or three of his servants, who followed them at a distance, in order to protect them.

By one of those fatalities, not to be explained, Balthazer and Lemulquinier had gone out early that morning, and deceiving the secret watch of M. and Madame Pierquin, had found their way to the city. On the return from their walk, they sat down in the sun, upon a bench in St. James's Place, where some children were passing on their way to school, or college. Perceiving from a distance the two defenceless old men, whose faces were cheered by the sun, the children began to talk with them. The talk of children soon arrives to laughter, and from laughter to quizzings, of which they know not all the cruelty. Seven or eight of the first who arrived, withdrew to a distance, but stood so as to be able to examine the two old men. Their stifled laughs attracted the attention of Lemulquinier.

"Do you see that old man who has a head like a knee?" said one.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Well, he was born a gentleman."

"Papa says he makes gold," says another.

Then the smallest one of the band, who had his basket full of provisions, and was eating a buttered tart, advanced with simplicity toward the bench, and said to Lemulquinier: "Is it true, sir, that you make pearls and diamonds?"

"Yes, Milesian!" replied Lemulquinier, smiling. Then, striking him on the cheek, he added, "we will give you some, when you grow very learned."

"Ha! give me some then," was the general exclamation. All the children ran and surrounded the two old chemists, like a cloud of birds. Balthazer was absorbed in meditation, from which the uproar among the boys roused him with such a gesture of astonishment, as excited a general laugh.

"Come, boys, respect a great man," said Lemulquinier.

"Hurra! hurra!" cried the boys, "you are two sorcerers."

"Yes, sorcerers! sorcerers! old sorcerers! Sorcerers! sorcerers!" they repeated.

Lemulquinier started upon his feet, and with his cane threatened the boys, who were running to pick up mud and stones. A laborer, who breakfasted near the spot, having seen Lemulquinier raise his cane to drive away the children, thought he struck them; and encouraged their rudeness, by the terrible words—"Down with the sorcerers!"

The boys, seeing they were sustained, launched their missiles, which struck the old man at the very moment when M. de Solis appeared, accompanied with Pierquin's domestics. They did not arrive soon enough, however, to prevent the boys from covering Balthazer and Lemulquinier with mud. The blow was struck. Balthazer, whose faculties had been till then preserved by the mildness peculiar to learned men, in whom the preoccupation, with one discovery, annihilates passion, divined the secret of this scene; and his decrepit body could not sustain the frightful reaction which he experienced. He fell, struck by paralysis, into the arms of his valet, who carried him home upon a handbarrow, accompanied by his two sons-in-law and their servants. No power could prevent the populace of Douai from escorting the old man to the gate of his house, where they found Felicia and her children, Lucien, Margaret and Gabriel;—who, informed of his sister's arrival, had come from Cambrai with his wife.

It was a frightful spectacle to them, to see the entrance of this old man, who struggled more against the fear of seeing his children penetrate the secret of his poverty, than against death. Immediately a bed was prepared in the parlor, and every aid was afforded, which his situation required. Toward the close of the day, some hopes were

entertained of preserving him. The paralysis, however, though skilfully combated, left him in a state bordering upon infancy. When, by degrees, the disease yielded in some parts, it remained fixed upon the tongue, which it had especially affected; perhaps, because anger had carried to it all his strength, at the moment when he wished to address the boys.

This scene had kindled universal indignation in the city. By a law, still unrecognized, which directs the affections of the mass, the event of it brought back all hearts to M. Claes. In a moment, he became a great man; he excited admiration; and obtained all that estimation which they had so long refused him. Every one spoke of his patience, his perseverance, his courage, his genius. The magistrates wished to punish those who had participated in abusing him. But the evil was done. The Claes family were the first to demand that the affair should be lulled to rest.

Margaret had ordered the furniture of the parlor to be replaced, and the naked walls to be hung with silk. Some days after the alarming event above mentioned, the old father recovered his faculties; and found himself surrounded by elegance and comfort, and everything necessary to render his life happy. He was made to understand that Margaret had come, at the very moment when she entered the parlor. Balthazer blushed when he saw her, and his eyes filled; but no tears fell. He was able to press with his cold fingers the hand of his daughter, and in that pressure was conveyed all that he had not power to utter. There was something holy and solemn, in the adieu of the intellect that yet lived, and of the heart, that gratitude had reanimated; for the giant, exhausted by his fruitless attempts, wearied by his struggle with a gigantic problem, and in despair, perhaps, at the oblivion which awaited his memory, was soon to cease to live. His children surrounded him with feelings of respect, and his eyes were reanimated by the proof of their riches and wealth, and by the touching picture which his beautiful family presented to him. He was uniformly affectionate in his looks; and by them he was able to manifest his sentiments; for his eyes suddenly contracted such a variety of expression, that they were a language of light—easy to be understood.

Margaret paid her father's debts, and in a few days restored to the Claes House its recent splendor, which put to flight all ideas of its decay. She, however, never quitted the pillow of her father, whose thoughts she divined, and whose most trifling wishes she accomplished.

Some months were passed in the alternations of sickness and convalescence, peculiar to old men, struggling between life and death. Every morning his children went to him, and remained all day in the parlor—

dining before his bed—and they never left him, save when he was asleep. The amusement most pleasing to him, among all which they sought for his entertainment, was hearing read the daily papers, which political events then rendered very interesting. M. Claes always listened attentively to M. de Solis, who always sat quite near to him, and read very loud.

Toward the beginning of the year 1831, Balthazar passed an extremely critical night, during which M. Pierquin, the physician, was called by the watcher, who was frightened at the sudden change observable in the sick man. Indeed, the physician had requested that he should be watched; for he feared that he would expire under the efforts of this internal crisis, which filled him with agonizing pain. The old man seemed to yield himself to the movements of an incredible force, which essayed to break the bonds of the paralysis. He desired to speak, and moved his tongue, but was without the power to utter a sound; his flaming eyes projected with thought; his contracted features expressed unheard-of pain; his fingers moved despairingly, and the cold sweat dropped from his brow.

In the morning, the children came to embrace him with that affection which the fear of near death makes flow more lavishly from every heart. But he did not testify the satis-

faction these proofs of tenderness habitually gave him. Emmanuel, at a sign from M. Pierquin, hastened to unseal the daily paper, to see if reading it would soothe the internal anguish under which Balthazar labored. In unfolding it, he was struck with the word *Absolute*, and read, in a low voice to Margaret, in which a lawsuit was spoken of, relative to the sale a celebrated Polish mathematician had made, of the *secret of the Absolute*.

Although Emmanuel read low, and Margaret entreated him to pass over the article, Balthazar heard it. Suddenly, the dying man raised himself upon his wrists, and threw upon his frightened children a look which struck them like a glance of lightning. The hair which fell over his neck, moved;—his wrinkles trembled;—his face was animated by a spirit of fire;—a breath passed over his features that rendered them sublime! He raised one hand, contracted by rage, and cried out with a trumpet voice, the great word of Archimedes—*EUREKA!* (I have found it.)

He fell back upon his bed, with the dull sound of a lifeless corpse, and died with a frightful groan! Even to the moment, when the physician closed his convulsed eyes, they expressed the regret, that he was not able to bequeath to science the secret, from which the veil was tardily torn by the rough fingers of death!

3

THE END.



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FAIRFIELD, Conn., October 2, 1843.

"MY DEAR SIR—I have taken all but two of the 16 numbers of Alison's history, and have read half of it. It is so filled with tedious and useless details as greatly to impair its value. The period it embraces, is one of the most interesting in the annals of the human race, and all the important facts are given with fidelity. But the vast compilation of facts, which are neither interesting nor instructive, prevents its very general perusal.

"I was much gratified to find by the *New World* of September 23d, that "Edward S. Gould, Esq." had abridged the work, reducing it to one octavo volume. I will suspend my future attention to the copy which I now have, and await the arrival of the abridgement. A dollar is stated to be the price. I enclose that sum, and wish you would have the goodness to procure the volume for me, and send it by the first opportunity.

Very truly yours,

E. M. SHERMAN."

The capitals and italics in the foregoing letter are, of course, our own. We are proud to place the name of the venerated writer first among the purchasers of our work—a name dear to all lovers of learning and true patriots. Mr. Sherman's lofty standing and character are too well known to need the record of our pen; but as he is among the great men of a former generation, and has never mingled in the political contests of the day, there may be those who are not aware that he is the most eminent member of the bar in Connecticut, and for many years held the office of judge in the highest court of that State. Approval from such a source is highly gratifying, and counterbalances the false abuse of a thousand such interested parties as Harper and Brothers.

NEW-YORK, October, 1843.

J. WINCHESTER, 30 Ann-street.

"Books for the People," published by J. Winchester, 30 Ann street, New-York.

# THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

A Novel.

BY EUGENE SUE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY  
HENRY C. DEMING.

We do not hesitate to pronounce this work to be among the most extraordinary romances of modern times. Its publication in Paris produced a greater sensation than any other work ever issued in the French metropolis. The novel certainly excites the most intense and startling interest. As the tale proceeds, the reader is introduced to every diversity of scene, from the most harrowing to the most touching—to every variety of character, from the most degraded to the most spiritual. The taste for the horrible, and the taste for the refined, will find in it a source of gratification. A powerful intellect is displayed in the plot; and no one can foresee from the commencement what is to be the end. The moral bearing of the work is unexceptionable. Indeed, the chief design of the author appears to be to illustrate the unhappy condition of the lower classes in France, and to effect its melioration by means of ASSOCIATION, which rapidly-spreading doctrine he advocates with a powerful pen. Lessons of charity, forgiveness and mercy are inculcated in the most eloquent manner.

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No. 58.

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Life in Dalecarlia:

THE  
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TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM HOWITT.

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TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM HOWITT.

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NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS,  
No. 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1845.

1859. Feb. 22,

signed

President Walker.

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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A FEW words may be requisite to explain why the name of Mary Howitt does not stand on the title-page of this, as of all the preceding volumes of this series of translations from Miss Bremer. It is simply the effect of unavoidable circumstances. The new volume arrived by post from the authoress at a time when Mrs. Howitt's engagements made it impossible for her to execute the translation within the necessary period, that of simultaneous appearance with the original in Sweden. Under these circumstances, I have thrown aside my own engagements for the time to effect this object. It would have given me pleasure to have still placed the name of Mrs. Howitt on the title-page if it could have been fairly done. As it was her own original and zealous wish to introduce these charming works to the British public, it has given me the greatest pleasure to promote this object by every means in my power, not merely by risking the first publication of them when declined by the most eminent publishers, but by

carefully collating the translations with the originals, putting them through the press, and, when circumstances made it necessary, even translating too. With the exception, however, of "The Neighbours," the second volume of which I was under the necessity of translating while the first was going through the press, no whole volume has been translated by me till this. The bulk of this rapid and excellent execution, of what the Quarterly Review calls "an infusion of a new and better life into our literature," is the meritorious work of Mary Howitt; and I can only express my regret, that present circumstances have made this temporary exception and explanation necessary. As the works of a lady, the translation seems to belong more properly to a lady, and the names of Fredrika Bremer and Mary Howitt harmonize morally and intellectually in a beautiful and affectionate unity, which I trust may not soon again be broken.

W. H.

*Lower Clapton, April 16th, 1845.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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In the following story, the Authoress has committed several minor offences against time and space. The only apology that she has to offer is, that she perpetrated them knowingly and purposely.

THE AUTHORESS.



# LIFE IN DALECARLIA.

## MAY-DAY EVE.

"God and the people! how long you are, my girls!" exclaimed Mrs. Ingeborg Nordevall, as, dressed to go out, she appeared at the door of a room where two young ladies seemed to be in haste preparing themselves for an excursion. She held a branch of newly budded birch in her hand; and, as she made a menacing gesture with it, she added jocularly, "I will teach you, you butter-imps, to lag behind in the Valborgsmass\* pilgrimage! Don't you see how it flames already on the hill-tops? Siri is already in the court, with Olof and Lasse, and Godelius is fallen asleep in waiting of you. If you don't make haste I'll—"

"We are ready—we come!" answered two young, glad voices; and Valborg and Brigitta hastened to accompany the caller, a handsome and stately lady, of some thirty years of age, with a very melodious voice. She resembled one of Ruben's handsome women, if you imagine these dressed in northern furs.

On the stairs was heard, from the garden, a childish, tittering laughter, and something which was between a grumbling and a grunting.

"Now, there is some mischief on foot," said Brigitta. "Heaven help my poor curate! I hear his sweet voice, and I hear Siri's laughter. She has certainly played him some prank: I must really think how I am to protect his back from her."

And it was actually the back of the curate Godelius that now seemed to be in danger, for it twisted itself into the most extraordinary curves, while he growled all the time in wonder at what was amiss with him. The fifteen-year old Siri shook with laughter, and two young gentlemen seemed to have great difficulty to prevent themselves bearing her company.

"What in all the world is the matter with thee, dear Godelius!" inquired Brigitta, in agitation; while she seized her lover by the arm, and shook it.

"That I do not rightly know," said he, with a troubled air; "but, as I sat there on the spring-board and ruminated, I felt all at once a sensation as if a snake were running along my backbone. I dread a paralytic stroke—some injury in the spinal marrow—uh—u—u! I feel it yet. It was too abominable!"

One of the young gentlemen, whom Mrs. Ingeborg called by the name of Olof, gave her, smiling, an explanation of the affair; which was, that Siri, as the curate sat on the spring-board, with his head stretched stiffly forward,

and that on a tolerably long neck, stole softly behind him, and let a little smooth stone drop between his back and his clothes, at which the curate sprang up in terror.

"Such childishness!" said Mrs. Ingeborg, shaking her head at Siri. "But let us now go to Ostnorsberg, I see that the neighbours have already assembled there."

"Yes, let us go," said Brigitta; "and if thou only keep thyself warm. Godelius, thou wilt find that there is not the least danger to thy spinal marrow, and that thou merely dreamed."

"Dreamed! Nonsense, people don't dream like that—I felt it distinctly."

"To Ostnorsberg!" interrupted Brigitta, "and we will dispute about Latin on the way."

"Hast thou made such rapid progress in the ancient languages since we last met, my cousin!" demanded Olof, smiling.

"Ah," replied Brigitta, modestly, "it is only in the Latin that my knowledge is a little uncommon."

"To Ostnorsberg! we must not linger!" again exclaimed Mrs. Ingeborg; and towards Ostnorsberg now directed itself the little troop which issued from Mora Parsonage, followed by a Dalkarl and a Kulla,\* who carried baskets of wine and provisions.

"But you must promise me," said Mrs. Ingeborg to her young companions, "not to look round before we have arrived on the height. I wish you at once to see the eye of Dalarna† in all its glory. He that looks round before I give permission, I doom—not to become a pillar of salt—but to—"

"No penal dooms, my sweet mother!" interrupted the young Mr. Olof, taking his mother's hand and kissing it; "we obey you so gladly, and threats may provoke opposition or the like evil spirits. Are not all goblins, and ghosts, and witches abroad this evening? Is it not against them that people, ever since the day of paganism, have kindled fires this evening! Or how! I have been so long away hence, that I have almost forgotten our old sagas."

"Let us attack the curate," said Mrs. Ingeborg, "for he knows every thing from the time of the pagans; and will tell us the origin of this custom, one of the few which still universally prevail in our dales, and, as I believe, in most of the provinces of Sweden."

Modestly lecturing, in a deep bass voice, thus pronounced the curate:—

"This custom is so old that we have neither a perfect account of its origin nor of its significance. But it is supposed that it originated

\* A peasant and peasantess of Dalarna, literally the Dale, but well known to us as Dalecarlia.

† The name given to the lake Silja.

\* May-day eve.

in a sacrificial pagan festival, and that has given occasion to the belief that at this feast even living children were sacrificed; and that, in order to exorcise or propitiate the evil natures, who, the people believed, at the opening of spring, commenced their rambles over wood and field—partly flying, partly riding; and whom we now call by the names of goblins, witches, fairies, etc. It was believed, also, that at this season giants issued from the earth and the mountains, to seek intercourse with the children of men. Fires were frequently kindled upon the sepulchral mounds, and before them offerings made even to the good powers, especially to those who dispense fruitful seasons. Probably, scarcely any one now believes seriously in such superstition, yet still, as formerly, they kindle fires on the hills on this evening; and it is still regarded as a bad omen if any extraordinary or foul shape of man or beast shows itself at the fire.\*

"And now, as formerly, resound the shepherd's horns and pipes\* from the mountains," exclaimed Mrs. Ingeborg. "God and the people! how charmingly they sound! Now they blow from the hill of Elfdal—but no one must look round him yet, recollect that."

"Does the curate, then, not believe at all in goblins and demony?" asked the mischievous Siri, with assumed gravity.

"No, not at all; but on Frej and Freya, who, above all other divinities, are worshipped in Dalarna, I believe, because the god of the year's growth and the goddess of love remain always powerful here. On them I believe, but not on goblins, for—ey! ey! ey!"

"What now, Godelius?" demanded Brigitta; "art thou bewitched! Why, wilt thou thus go and pay homage to the heathen deities?"

"Yes, they are much better than Christian imps!" exclaimed the irritated curate; who when he would have taken his handkerchief out his coat-pocket, found a rose-bush (N. B. without roses) planted there, and pricked himself sharply on the thorns. Brigitta was obliged to release him from the bush, and then pursued with it the "Christian imp," which, by its half-smothered laugh, was discovered to be Siri; but, light as a hind, she sprang out of the reach of the avenger's rose-bush.

In the meantime Olof walked by his step-mother's side. It was a chill evening, this last of April, and snow-flakes flew at intervals down out of the thin clouds; which nevertheless, did not prevent the stars from glancing forth all the more clearly. The loud, but mellowed tones of the shepherd's horn, that resounded through the country both far and near, the uncertain, strange, red-flaming fire, which began to light up heaven and earth, the marvellous sagas of the olden time which arose in the memory, all contributed to awake a certain romantic sensation, as well in the young man as in the older woman, and both seemed to find a pleasure in enjoying this moment in silence together.

On Ostnor's hill a multitude of people was collected; mostly peasantry belonging to the parish of Mora, in their sober but picturesque

\* Lurar, a peculiar kind of very long, straight, wooden pipes.

costume. A group of several persons, whose dress distinguished them as belonging to the gentry, stood also on the hill, not far from a great, but yet unkindled pile of fagots. This group turned their eyes towards the road which leads to the Mora parsonage, and the little joyous Prostinna\* of Sollerön exclaimed:—

"See! there have we at length the Great Mother in Dalom,† with her suite! She gives her arm to a young man—no doubt, her step-son, young Mr. Olof, who is since returned from his foreign tour with the young Count U—. He is said to be an excellent young man. I am quite delighted that I shall see him. And what a happiness it must be to him to see father and mother again, after an absence of four or five years! What a pity that the father is not at home!"

"But he is expected home from the Diet every day," said the captain from Noreberg, "and so we shall probably hear him preach soon, and that is something to hear."

"If we only do not hear also that he will soon leave us," said the great prost from Sollerön. "I have heard that he is to be made bishop of the diocese; and then——"

"I can well believe that they want to have him," said an old Dalman, who overheard the conversation; "but I cannot believe that Gustaff Nordevall will leave us here in Mora, where we love him, ay, as if he were our own father. No, that I cannot believe."

"And if I know our Great Mother in Dalom, truly," said the prostinna from Sollerön, "she will rather be prostinna in Mora, than arch-bishopess in Upsala itself, grand as she then would be."

"Yes, she is a rare lady," said the Dalman; "she farms the glebe like a first-rate man, and, towards the sick and unhappy, she is a real mother. When the disturber took my cow in autumn, she gave me another in its place, out of her own farm-yard, that my children might not be without milk, as she said. God bless her!"

"And not enough that she manages the husbandry of the pastoral lands, that the professor may wholly devote himself to the duties of his congregation, and to his learned labours," continued the prostinna; "she plants trees, she cultivates flowers, she superintends the spinning and weaving; she has time for everything; and everything goes on with her like play. This comes from her knowing how to estimate able people, and to make them so devoted to her that they would go through fire for her."

\* Prost and Prostinna will be retained in this translation. The Prost is a sort of rural dean, but as we have no such title as rural deaness, the frequent use of it would be doubly awkward from its strangeness and its length. The words have been translated by Mrs. Howitt provost and provostess, but that is not strictly correct, as the provost is a civil officer.

† So was called in former times a stately prostinna, in Lek and, called also Zehrozynthia, married to the rector Uno Trillus, and the mother of the line of the Troils. She died, says the biography of the Clergy of Westerns, in the year 1637, lamented by the whole Dal country, which honoured her, for her noble person and good heart, with the title of "Sormoer i Dalom," the great mother in Dalom. The offic that mi iser commenderd her funeral-sermon with a lament which he heard on the way from a countryman in Grenaf: "Shall I not weep for the great mother in Dalom is dead?" Her memory still lives in honour in the district, and the title of respect is usually inherited by the most stately an I rented prostinna there.

‡ The Bear, which the Dal people do not like of name.



"It is now said," added the captain, "that she will also have a wedding in the house."

"Wedding!" exclaimed the prostinna. "For the curate Godelius and his Brigitta perhaps, who have been betrothed these seven years?"

"Oh, no! they may possibly be betrothed for seven years more, before he gets anything; and she has nothing. No, a wedding between the young Mr. Olof, and the professor's niece, the lovely Valborg, who has been for sometime in the house, and who is said to possess a neat little fortune."

"Olof is yet so very young," said diffidently the prostinna Martina; "he cannot be more than three-and-twenty, and I fancy Valborg is about as old. No, it were better that he wait for the prostinna's niece, little Siri, who is not either without property——"

"Siri!" exclaimed the prostinna from Sollerön; "that wood-sprite! Wait for her! Yes, wait may one. She is now rather a wild cat than a human creature; and if she ever turn out a good housewife, then . . . She has now been near upon a year with the Nordevalls, and they have not yet been able to bring her into any order. No; give me Valborg. That is the crown of young ladies: handsome as a princess, and domestic, and still as . . . all young maidens should be."

"Yes; you think a great deal of Valborg," said the prostinna Martina, half displeased; "and handsome she certainly is, and excellent, too—that I believe. I have only this against her, that she is so perfect and so unapproachable. I have thrown away at least half a score of courtesies upon her. She never says anything to me. Little Siri is . . . an imp, if you will; but she has something extraordinary—something captivating about her. She can be sweet as one of God's angels sometimes, that I have seen. And you should hear her play on the flute, when she believes herself alone. And a brave spirit is she too, not afraid of any thing. You should have seen her last winter, when she was sledging down a hill, with half-a-dozen little peasant children upon it; and a great girl who stood behind sprang off, and thereby gave the sledge a push which sent it in an oblique direction, and in full speed exactly towards a pond. You should have seen with what presence of mind the courageous girl rolled off the children to the right and left, into the snow, only to speed on towards the pond herself, where she indeed plunged headlong in, but quickly helped herself again upon the ice, and then shouted to the alarmed children, 'Here I am, hurrah!' Another time she was not the less brave and admit, when a furious bull had tossed on his horns a little seven-year-old girl, and stooped his horns to toss her again. Siri, who saw it, sprang forward, though she was alone, and with a stout stake struck the bull, between the horns, at the same time crying to the child, 'Run, girl, run!' The little girl did not require that said twice. She sprang away, while the bull, stupefied by the blow, stood motionless. When Siri saw that the child was rescued, she cast away the stake, and ran too, and came safe off. You must admit that these things testify to no ordinary degree of magnanimity and courage. But you always talk of Valborg and Valborg. Well, well! They say young Mr. Olof is a right

handsome young man; I may, perhaps, come to talk as much of young Olof, too."

At this threat, to which the husband listened smiling, there arose a movement amongst the people. The prostinna of Mora appeared on the hill, amid greetings from right and left.

"Up on the height!" shouted she to her companions. "Now, children, look around you;" and a universal "oh!" of admiration followed her words; for there lay now before them Silja—the Eye of Dalarna—with Sollerön for its pupil, clear as a mirror between the dark heights, lit up by a hundred fires from the hills in Leksand to the hills in Elfdal. It was a glorious scene. Mora church, with its copper roof, and its lofty spire, shone in the fire-light on its green point of land between the river and the lake; and the pyramids of the north, the ever-verdant pines, which clothe the hills of Dalarna and now stood in full bloom, reared their red-gleaming tops amid the deep blue heaven. But blacker than ever fell the night into the clefts and abysses beneath them.

Young Olof's eyes also sparkled as he contemplated the spectacle, and listened to his step-mother, who named to him the most remarkable hills, while she pointed them out with her staff. "There," said she, "hast thou Wasahill, Hyckje-fell, and Gopshus mountain, where a great giant is said to dwell—all in Elfdal. There thou seest the fires in Orsa. Here, over against us, have we Lekberg, where music is heard, and where peal mysterious bells; and here, here obliquely across the lake . . ."

"Middagsberg! is that not?" interposed Olof; "I know it again by its pyramidal form and its height. I have heard one of my friends talk of it who once strove for many hours to reach its summit. The mountain in shape is not unlike Vesuvius."

"But instead of a burning crater it has on its top a silver-clear spring," continued Mrs. Ingeborg. "There hast thou Sollerön, with its white church, and there beyond hast thou Björkhill and the other mountains in Leksand. See, now, they kindle more fires in Rättvik, and the lurar resound thence. Is it not glorious here in Dalarna, Olof! and hast thou ever in other lands seen its equal?"

"Nowhere in the whole world," answered Olof; "especially when we call to mind the great reminiscences which here have their home! Glorious must it have been here in former days when the bells of Mora pealed defiance to the foe, and the people streamed from the surrounding parishes over the hills, over the lake, in their long wooden skates, with bows and spears, and gathered here, and drove back or took captive their enemies."

"Yes, that was indeed glorious, but better is it now," said Mrs. Ingeborg, "for now dwell Peace and Freedom together in our dales. But see! there thou hast a memorial from those times of contest!—yon little white building on the other side of the lake. It is the cellar of Utmedland, where the great Gustavus was concealed. To-morrow we will visit it."

"Oh, that will be charming!" said Olof. "But what fire is that which burns down below there by the river's bank? It has chosen a most modest position amongst its comrades, the other Valborgsmass fires."

"That is a wretched jest," said Mrs. Ingeborg. "That fire is kindled upon the headland, where, formerly, witches were burnt, and where three piles stood over against the church, so that all the people from Mora and the surrounding parishes could see the 'hideous spectacle,' as the Rev. J. Moreus calls it, in his account of them."

"Oh, it is there or thereabouts where the species of willow, *salix daphnoides*, grows. How I long to see it! To-morrow I must seek for it."

"Yes, I have heard that it grows there on the shore and the island," said Mrs. Ingeborg; "but we must now go to our neighbours." And with hearty apologies for the delay, Mrs. Ingeborg now betook herself to her friends from Sollerön and Noreberg, and introduced to them her newly-arrived stepson, whose handsome person, and easy, somewhat proud bearing, but most polite manners, made an agreeable and lively impression, especially on the prostinna Martina, who declared to her prost that her heart stood in great jeopardy.

Lieutenant Lasse, Brigitta's brother, who had come with his sister a fortnight before to Mora, was also introduced. The young people collected around Mrs. Ingeborg, for she loved the young, and it was her delight to endeavour to entertain them.

They now brought to her a torch of pine-wood, with the request that she would kindle the fire upon Ostnorsberg, and the "Great Mother in Dalom" complied with the desire; and there quickly arose a lofty and roaring flame from a pile of fagots and pitch-casks, and shouts and cries in manifold tones rose with it high into the welkin. The men, and especially the young ones, dragged great boughs and limbs of trees out of the wood, and flung them upon the fire; the snow-flakes accompanied them, and hissed in the flame, which seemed rather enlivened than damped by them.

Scarcely had the fire on the Ostnorsberg blazed up, when, on the top of Middagsberg a flame was seen, which at first seemed to dance to and fro fantastically, but at length grew into a great fire, and mounted higher and shone more brilliantly than all the fires in the neighbourhood.

"God and the people!" exclaimed Mrs. Ingeborg, "who kindles such a fire on Middagsberg! Such a thing I never recollect to have seen. It must be the king of the mountain himself."

"Yes, it is he—it is he!" exclaimed Siri, clapping her hands, and looking quite wildly in the light of the flaming fire.

"Siri—Siri!" said Mrs. Ingeborg softly, and in an admonitory tone. Brigitta and Valborg gave each other a glance. Siri withdrew, mixed among the peasantry, offered snuff to old men and old women, took snuff with them out of a little box of birch bark, and danced about with the little children.

Mrs. Ingeborg also now turned to the peasantry, greeted them, and shook hands with them.

"Now comes the Dalkarl travelling," said she, with a glance at the river, and using the customary expression of the country for the arrival of the spring flood.

Much was said of the excavations made by

the river in the sand, of danger to the Mora church, which the channel of the flood continually encroached upon. They talked, too, of the prospects of the year's crops, and old husbandmen shook their heads doubtfully, and pointed to the fires on the mountains, which directed themselves towards the north, an omen of a cold spring.

But Mrs. Ingeborg never credited unfavourable forebodings, and consoled them even now with her favourite quotation in suchlike troubles,—

"Yet lives the ancient Frey!"

And Dal people, who knew that the "Great Mother in Dalom" intimated something good, felt themselves consoled, for her word was a king's word with the people of Mora.

When she returned to her company, the people continued to converse amongst themselves in that singular dialect peculiar to the Dal people, which is not understood by other Swedes, but which is asserted by late philologists to be Icelandic, the language in which the most primitive northern tongue yet lives.

People now began to dive into the provision baskets, and to think of refreshments. The prostinnas from Mora and Sollerön treated the people liberally with a splendid ale brewed from the corn of Rättvik, for the corn of Rättvik is the best in Dalarna. When the routine of entertainment came to the young people, several voices called for Siri, but Siri was not there. "She had gone into the wood," said some of the people, and Olof and Brigitta instantly set off to seek her. They had called several times, but without receiving any answer, when they suddenly perceived a strong rustling amongst the boughs of the trees, and saw hastening away a tall man, who plunged into the concealment of the wood. A moment afterwards, Siri, laughing, came springing out of a close thicket, where she seemed to have been hiding herself from them.

"Don't leap and laugh so, Siri," said Brigitta, half angry; "it makes you look so like a magpie; and witches, it is said, can change themselves into magpies. And you ought not to go so alone into the wood. We have just now seen a great fellow, who slunk away, and who came from the very direction where you were, you little leapfrog."

"That was most likely one of the giants that the curate talked of—perhaps the king of the mountain, himself," said Siri, lightly, and hastened on before them to the fire, which burnt between the ruddy gleaming birches.

Brigitta shook her head and said, "There is something wrong about her. Ever since the time that I was a fish, and she was mountain-kidnapped,\* she is strongly—"

"Thou a fish, and she mountain-kidnapped!" exclaimed Olof, smiling; "that sounds right merry and odd."

"Yes; but it is far less merry and more strange than it sounds," replied Brigitta. "But I shall tell thee of that another time, for now they call us to come yonder."

Refreshments and gaiety were now in full

\* From the old notion of people being carried off by spirits into the mountains.

play around the Valborgsmass fire. With great stakes and poles the Mora peasants roused up the fire, while, all the time more fuel was thrown on, songs were sung and fiddles screamed; and, at Mrs. Ingeborg's motion, all formed themselves into a great circle, and slowly moved round the fire, singing,—

"Heigh, to dance it merrily!  
As our neighbours so do we;  
All we take into the ring,  
All around shall gaily spring;  
The barrel it is tited."

That was the crowning scene of the evening. Mrs. Ingeborg with her own and the family from Solleron, left the fire immediately after, and set out on the way towards Mora. The peasants grew fewer and fewer, and trooped off in different flocks, each home to his family. But scarcely had their fires grown dim, when another light illuminated the tops of the mountains, and chased away the night. All now became silent in the Dales; sleep spread his wings over weary men; and the frost-frog fung his cold mantle over the earth, and quenched the glowing coals in the ashes of the Valborgsmass fires.

### THE FIRST OF MAY.

It was morning, and the sun, warm and bright, kissed away night and frost from the forehead of the earth; and the earth, the ancient, holy earth, as the Edda-song calls her, lay there in glory, with her silent strength rising out of the deep: her ruddy, verdurous woods, her plains of deepening green, her resounding waters, her swelling spring-full life. A pair of beautiful, thoughtful human eyes, contemplated the spectacle of the morning. Mrs. Ingeborg stood at the window of her chamber, in the parsonage of Mora, and inhaled the fresh morning air, and let her glance now rest upon the young rye, which stood trembling in the morning wind; now upon the clear waters of the Dalefl\* and the Silja, which embraced the peninsula where the church and the parsonage lay; now upon the dark pine-woods, with their delicate, red, fresh bursting flowers; now on the far blue hills,—a constant line of beauty in the landscape of Dalarna. There lay much in this glance. Enjoyment of the beauty of earth, thankful joy in it; and yet a pensive yearning after something still more distant, something "beyond the mountains," some fullness and glory, which is never found but in the visions of the future, or in the lost. She was lovely, was Mrs. Ingeborg, as she stood with her dark-brown hair braided over her lightly-arched brow, and simply fastened up behind, in her fresh, light dress, which in wide folds surrounded her somewhat full but noble form. She was beautiful, especially from the expression of soulful goodness, which was the grand feature of her ace.

"To-night we will be here!" said she, half aloud to herself, and pressed a letter to her lips. She looked again through the window. Her looks grew suddenly radiant, as at some delightful object, then followed a short but passionate

sigh, a movement of the hand to the heart, as if a pang were felt there; a rapid paleness chased the colour from her cheek; Mrs. Ingeborg closed the window, and went into another room. A moment afterwards her musical voice was heard giving orders in the house; servant men and maids were put in motion, and all was life and fresh activity in consequence.

Turn we to the object which called up these varying emotions of pleasure and disquiet, and behold a young girl with a white kropa on her head (that is, a sort of head-dress between a bonnet and a cap, which resembles the "Flax" of the Dal women, and which is universally worn by the young girls in Dalarna. She has a quantity of plants in her apron, and comes with a light step along the road from the river past the church, and up towards the parsonage. It is Siri. Just now she rowed alone in a little boat over the river, and seems to be returning home from an early morning ramble.

In a room of the Mora parsonage we find Brigitta, and with her the young Mr. Olof, who is in great activity unpacking a couple of boxes of books, but all the while evidently absorbed by the conversation that was going on between him and his friend and relative Brigitta, who was at the same time arranging a large coffeetray, and talking with Olof about all the world, and now lastly of his home and family.

"Is not aunt quite divine?" asked she.

"My mother! Yes, she is as charming now as she was ten years ago, when she became my mother; and I made a resolve not to endure her. Oh, how well do I recollect that! I was then a stubborn boy of thirteen, and had made a compact with myself never to obey any woman, and above all, she who was to become my stepmother; and whom I had yet not seen. I determined to be most thoroughly refractory and haughty towards her. And so I actually was when she came into the house; but, behold, she had not been a week there before, to be short, I adored her, obeyed her slightest beck, sought to guess her wishes, and was half distracted when I imagined that I saw in her eye a severe glance. Yes, she acquired the most absolute power over me,—I cannot tell rightly how. But so did she over my father, and over the whole house. My father had been a widower many years; and his temper at that time was not good. I had always been rather afraid of him; for our dispositions did not seem to accord. Home was gloomy and heavy; but with my stepmother came the sun and gladness into it. My father became happy, all became joyous; and my happiest time began. My parents then lived at Westeras. When they, five years ago, removed to Mora, I was obliged to part from them, and proceed to Upsala to study, and then followed my foreign travel, which was very interesting. But oh, it is most beautiful to be at home again!"

"Yes, and to find in the storehouse at home both old and new," said Brigitta. "What do you think of Walborg!"

"What can I yet think of her? She is a very handsome statue."

"And of Siri!"

"Oh, why, she is really very wild,—a regular madcap. And it becomes her a great deal worse now than it did five years ago when I

\* The river.

saw her last with the generalska, her mother, at Silverdal. She was then a spoiled, wild young creature, but had a peculiarly captivating manner. I shall never forget how, one evening late, after her mother was gone to bed, she stole out into the court, and played and danced there with a kitten quite alone. I see still how the small white feet flew, like beams of light on the dark, damp ground, while she threw up small stones and caught them again, or let the kitten make evolutions over her head. She made me think of the elfin queen, who, the sagas say, dances on summer nights, small, delicate, white, with golden locks. I played, nevertheless, the part of a stern Mentor, for I went out into the court, and compelled the little dancer to betake herself to the house, and to her bed again. She was then very angry with me; but we afterwards became very good friends, and called each other brother and sister. She was then ten years old, and was brought up in the most extraordinary manner. The general had allowed her to grow up like a boy, and amused himself with teaching her to ride on horseback, swim, etc., as becomes boys; and her own inclination favoured this. After his death, the generalska sought at once to change the maiden's habits; but she was obliged to desist from the vain endeavour, which exasperated her temper. I have heard that she was locked in, and kept without food for whole days, to bring her to submission and quietness; but as this did not succeed, she was let out, and became more free and wild than ever. This sort of life ought not, however, now to continue any longer. She will soon be sixteen years of age, and has been already nearly a year here in the house. How can my father bear with this her wild disposition?"

"He shakes his head at it," said Brigitta; "but at the bottom, I believe, that he likes the girl, and is amused by her. When she came into the house, he remained at home but for a few months, and was then obliged to proceed to the Diet."

"And my mother, what does she think—what does she say?"

"Ah, that is the worst of it. That is something that I cannot understand. My aunt has power over all people; but over Siri she has it not. What do you think of this, that she has never yet been able to persuade her to accompany her to church? That is something very strange between them, but good it is not. She does not obey my aunt; and indeed she obeys nobody. She follows her own will, and that is not exactly bad neither, when she does not take it into her head to play Godelius tricks; for, next to roaming about in wood and field, her dearest joy is to play with little children, dress them, to relate legends to them; and to tame and tend animals. All the servants love her as the very apple of their eye; and she is much more with them than with any of us. Valborg cannot endure her at all; my curate regards her as little short of a witch, who would almost deserve to be just a trifle burnt, but I —"

"Well, and you, Brigitta?"

"I like her; and if I were a man, why, I should most likely be in love with her."

"With her? Are you mad? She is not, per-

haps, without a certain wild grace; but then she is not the least handsome; rather plain; no striking feature; a potato nose; no colour; a pale weather-beaten complexion."

"Ah! the men with their beauty first and last! I tell thee, Olof, that Siri, without a feature, and without colour or complexion, has a beauty, which is more beautiful than the Grecian loveliness. She has expression, and mien, which are not simply enchanting, but something more. And then there is over the maiden, over both her body and her soul, a freshness, a fragrance, a dew, if I may say so, that is more delicious than all the most beautiful of forms and colours. Yes, yes, thou mark me! if some fine day thou dost not become smitten with the madcap with the potato nose."

Olof laughed aloud; the door flew open in the same moment, and Siri walked in with torn clothes, her light hair in great disorder, but fresh and smiling as the morning, as with beaming eyes she extended to Olof a shrubby plant with misty-blue stems, and fine golden catkins on the naked twigs.

No sooner did the young botanist cast his eyes on it, than he started up, seized it hastily, and kissed it, exclaiming, "Salix Daphnoides!"

Siri flung herself on a trunk, and laughed heartily.

"Now, I think you are all mad together!" exclaimed Brigitta; "and it is not very pleasant for a reasonable mortal to live with mad folks; for, although I was a fish once, I have always behaved myself like a human creature, and never given myself up to eat or to kiss weeds."

"Weeds! is this a weed?" exclaimed the enraptured botanist. "It is the rarest plant in the whole world; for in the whole world it is found nowhere but here at Mora; and with its beautiful dewy-blue stem, and its flowers on the bare twigs, grows only in the sand here by Mora! I should have already sought after it this morning, if I had not first overslept, and then over-gossiped myself. Where have you found this lovely branch, Siri? But you have hurt yourself! You have struck yourself in the eye!"

"Ah! that is nothing. The twig struck me when I was trying to break it off. Perhaps, it was to revenge itself; or, perhaps, it is the doing of one of the witches; for it is from the headland by the river, where they were burnt."

And as Olof went into another and lighter apartment, in order to contemplate and examine his willow branch and its blossoms, Siri continued half lying upon the trunk, and with her cheek resting on her crossed arms, to talk to Brigitta. "Only think! as I broke off the branch I saw one of the black-burnt stakes of the pile protrude out of the sand! Only think, if the witches had crept out of the earth with it! Hu!" and Siri laughed. "It was indeed horrible," continued she, more seriously. "that there, by the lovely river, stood formerly three piles, and on them, once on a St. Bartholomew's Day, they burnt seventeen human beings. But nearly the whole witch troop went bravely to their death, only two lamented and bewailed themselves."

"Thou great God! Why were they burnt?" exclaimed Brigitta, with horror, but little acquainted with the history of the place.

"Because they rode to Blakulla," answered Siri, again, with her ringing laugh; "and," continued she, in a half whisper, "because they had been with Satan! When the witches entered into his service, they each received a horn, a rake, and a needle. When they stuck the needle into a wall, it opened, so that they could drive through with horse and carriage, and, though it cracked loudly, no one in the house could hear it; and when the witch was gone away the wall closed again so closely that no one could discern that it had ever been open. But when the witches came into a room, they said to the children in it, 'Come now, ye devil's brats, and follow me to the banquet.' And the children could not withstand, for out of the horn came a splendour that nearly blinded them. Then the witch took the children and proceeded to other dwellings, where she collected more, for, if she had not a sufficient number with her when she came to Satan, she was received with curses, and often with blows too, and was commanded to take herself off quickly, and bring more children. When now the witch had collected a multitude of children, she set herself upon the hag-steed, which was usually a cow, and so rode backwards through the air with them, and turned herself the back foremost. And as they went, she cried, 'So we ride up, and so we ride down, on to the devil.' Is not that funny?" and Siri laughed merrily, especially as Brigitta answered.—

"I cannot exactly say. Well, and how did it go on then?"

"Oh," continued Siri, "then they went farther, and on the journey they entered barns, and the witch held her bag under the sheaves, saying, 'Ear draw ear! and straw draw straw!' and then the ears came flying by heaps into the bag, but the straw was left lying behind. On the way the witch rested on the church roof sometimes, to wait for her companions, and when they came then they bragged one against another of the number of children they brought with them, and they placed the children on the roof, where they looked like little jackdaws. In the meantime the witches went into the steeple, and scraped the metal from the bells. When they again set out, they rode through a blue cloud, and scattered out into it the metal scraped from the bells, saying, 'Let my soul never come nearer to God than these particles of metal to the bell!' When they arrived at Blakulla, the children saw a house that shone like clear gold. And then the witches entered, and each bowed the knee before Satan, and called him, 'Lord and Great Prince!' Then the witch conducted the children before Satan, one at once, and said, 'Behold, Great Father, what handsome devil's children I have with me!' Satan demanded of the children, whether they would serve him, and most of them answered 'Yes.' For though Satan was always bound with a great chain, yet he looked so magnificent, and all around him looked so grand, that it was almost impossible for them to say anything but 'Yes.' Then Satan promised to stand by them, and that they should have joy and pleasure so long as they lived. He then marked them, by biting them on the forehead at the root of the hair, or in the little finger, and a pin was dipped in the blood, with which the

child's name was written in a great book, and the child received from Satan a silver six-dollar. If, however, the child should talk of it, or should confess where it had been, then the six-dollar changed itself into a wooden spoon, or a chip, or a splinter of wood. When the child got this fastening-penny, the witch was glad, and said to the child, 'Hereafter thou shalt always be mine, and if thou dost hold thy tongue, thou shalt always accompany me to the feast.' On that the witches began to dress food, to roast, to bake, and to brew, to make sausages, to distil brandy, and to set out a splendid banquet, where all went merrily, and Satan played under the table with his tail, which he struck upon the floor. When the feast and dance were ended the master of the ceremonies announced, at the command of Satan, where they next should assemble, or hold their conventicle—for so the feast was called. And so the witches brought the children home again, each to its own place. The children also got fine horns, in Blakulla, and learned to curse memory and sense, heaven and earth, all crops in the field, and all birds, except the magpie. New names also they received in Blakulla, as, 'Ugly Slut,' 'God's death,' 'Murrain-take-thee!' Is that not beautiful?" And Siri lifted up her head, and laughed again heartily.\*

"Beautiful! no, that can I not find it!" said Brigitta. "A more hideous history I scarcely remember to have heard. Dear Siri! where did you get it?"

"From . . . a magpie!" answered Siri, nodding archly. "And the magpie has promised also, some fine day, to take me to Blakulla. For I would fain fly through the air, amongst the blue clouds, and see how it is up there."

"Heaven preserve thee, girl, how thou talkest! Olof!" continued Brigitta, addressing the

\* What Siri here relates is found, for the most part, in an imperfect manuscript which has been printed by C. G. Kröningskörd, with "Proceedings in the Matter of Witchcraft in Dalarna, in the years 1668 and 1673." The senator Lorentz Creutz, and other much-respected men, sat in a commission, which held a court of inquiry over this "Disturbance," and a bloody one it was, for not less than forty-seven persons were put to death within the district of Falun, between the year 1668 and the 15th of April, 1671. In 1673, this singular disease broke out again in Dalarna, and with it the absurd treatment which seemed to augment its contagion. But the Countess Catherina Cliniotta de la Gardie, born Taube, espoused the cause of the unhappy, bewildered people, and succeeded in putting an end to the persecution; and with that the disease itself, by degrees, ceased. Yet in our own day is observed, now and then, a slight return of it; for when the imagination of the Dal people is kindled, it readily becomes gloomy, and teems with monsters. But different means are now resorted to against it than fire and stake. Some time ago there was at Sollerön a young girl, who said that she was every night conveyed to Blakulla. The parents, honest but simple people, were extremely troubled at this. They watched over their daughter; they bound her with cords on her bed, but all in vain. Weeping, she related in the morning that she had been again in Blakulla. The distressed parents finally went with her to the priest on the island, and implored him, with tears in their eyes, to rescue their daughter out of the claws of Satan. After the priest had several times conversed with the girl, he said to her one day, "I know a means, and a certain means, to help thee, but it will cost me much. Yet, as no other means seems availing, we must make use of that." With much solemnity he caused the girl to seat herself on a very comfortable chair in the middle of the room, took Cornelius Nepos from the book-shelf, and began to read a chapter. Before this was finished the girl slept soundly. When she awoke, the priest announced to her that she was cured, and—she was!

young man who was now re-entering. "What are these histories of witches and rides to Blakulla, here in Dalarna, that Siri talks of? Does she invent them, or have they some foundation?"

"Foundation have they so far, that such histories and a bloody tribunal to annihilate them raged here in Dalarna, especially in the parishes around the Silja," said Olof. "Many people, both old and young, were accused of dealings with the Evil One."

"Yes," interposed Siri, "and amongst them was a young woman who protested that she was innocent, but said she 'did not desire to live.' And she was handed over to the 'Doom of God.' 'Doom of God!' How wild and awful that sounds!" And Siri slightly shuddered, and turned pale, while, as if for herself, she softly ejaculated, "God's doom!"

"Look at her now!" whispered Brigitta; but the admonition was not needed, for Olof never turned his observant glances from the charming self-willed young maiden, who seemed affected by a deep emotion.

"There is much that is mysterious in this world," said Siri, thoughtfully; "and it seems to me that all that is mysterious is entertaining, and I would fain see and make trial of all."

"Even to journey to Blakulla!" said Olof.

"Yes, that above all things!" exclaimed Siri; "I would right gladly see Satan!"

"By no means a recommendable acquaintanceship, my little sister," said Olof, laughing.

"Think, if he should bite thee in the forehead!" said Brigitta.

"Ah," replied Siri, "I should take good care of myself; I should not go so near him. Besides, he is bound with a chain. The witches saw stoutly at it to get it off, but so soon as the link is nearly asunder, and ready to open, there come angels and solder it together again; so that it becomes as thick as before. But I must now feed my animals and then I will ride out. Will you go with me? I will lead you all round the world."

"Only not to Blakulla!" said Brigitta, "for thither I certainly will not accompany thee."

With a hearty laugh, Siri left the room, but dropped, in going, certain moss-branches, which Olof gathered up.

"That is Siri's trash, as Valborg and others in the house call it," said Brigitta. "She goes continually out, collects mosses, and stones, and birds' eggs, and dead butterflies, and flies too, I believe, and other curious things, which she finds out in the woods and fields, and stows them in her room, till it looks like a regular lumber room."

"Hum! that lumber room I shall make free to look into," said Olof.

A minute after he heard a clear and sonorous whistle in the court, and saw Siri standing on the steps of one of the wings of the buildings, surrounded by a crowd of beautiful creatures, which partly fluttered round her head and partly thronged around her feet in order to receive from her corn, bread, and caresses. Amongst the wingless creatures Olof observed a handsome elk calf, with little bells attached to its growing horns, and he learned that its mother had been shot at a bear-hunt in the winter, and that the young one, instead of attempting to fly, would follow the men. Its mother's mur-

derers. The elk-calf was brought to Mora, where Siri became its protectress, and the animal soon followed her with the fidelity and affection of a dog. And Durathor, as the elk-calf was called, after one of the stags that, according to the Edda, pasture on the top of Ygdrasil, was secured from annoyance in the court, but followed no one but Siri. Now he licked her hand, and gazed at her with a strange affection in his clear brown eyes.

While Olof helps Siri to feed her animals we will, for a moment, follow Brigitta. We may do this with all confidence. Her forehead is to us a guarantee for her prudence, and in the whole of her little, round, lively figure, there is so thorough an expression of good-humour and cheerfulness, that we do not wonder that her friends consider it to be quite unnatural if they find her *ennuye* for ten minutes together. Her small, arch eyes, her good-natured, gladsome countenance, promise, moreover, to put us into good humour. And that which still more captivates us with Brigitta, and what we have ascertained from good authority, is that, with the most joyous disposition, she has yet an actual enthusiasm for the tragic sublime, and a great susceptibility to every thing poetical, but *never* writes verses.

We stop with her now before a tall, thin gentleman, who, with a very abstracted air, sits sunk in a Greek text. Up to him marches Brigitta with a stage step, and says, solemnly,

"Salutem doctoribus venerabilibus! Comment vous portez vous diesen morgen?"

At which the abstracted figure wakens up, looks at her, smiles, and says,—

"What language, pray, may that be?"

"Does not your high-learnedness understand Babelish—a language as old as the world! How do you do, mio caro? Comment! Cross looks! Backibus non comfortable!"

"Speak Swedish, and give me a kiss!" burst out the curate with his deepest bass voice, and the mildest look in his light blue eyes. But Brigitta answered with a flood of Babelish so confounded, that the curate began to protest vehemently against such a hodge-podge, and the mingling of the noble Latin therein. A hearty laugh dispersed the Babylonish jargon, and conciliation was made in Swedish, and in that silent language which is customary amongst the betrothed, and which must be a primal language, for it is understood and spoken throughout all nature. After this Brigitta left her curate, obviously enlivened, in order to request of Valborg, who was conducting the inner daily economy of the house, his favourite dish at dinner, namely, pancakes.

The curate Gudelius was a learned man, especially in the ancient languages and in the life of the olden time, but rather prone to fall, as it were, out of time and place in the present daily life; wherefore, by way of counterpoise, he held fast by a female fellow-traveller, who in this region was quite at home, and who, moreover, was much attached to him. It was impossible to be otherwise when you knew him intimately. Friends and superiors had given him indeed much friendship, but had passed him over in promotions, so that, at nearly forty years of age, he was still a poor assistant schoolmaster. During the summer he lived at Mora, to accus-

tom himself to the office of preaching, but had no near prospect of getting into a house of his own. He was too gentle and philanthropic to let bitterness spring up in his heart on this account, but the phantoms of ill health had instead sprung up in his frame, or in his imagination, and these haunted him to a degree that gave way only to Brigitta's Latin, or her sportive schemes and merry grimaces.

Brigitta went in the meantime and sought out Valborg, and found her brother Lasse, who was tacking about and making reconnoitings around the handsome but cold woman, who, still and grave, went to and fro with her bunch of keys followed by the cook, and delivered out articles of house-keeping. When Lieutenant Lasse's offers of little services were declined, and his little endeavours at conversation terminated abortively, he hummed to himself a favourite air out of an old opera,—

"How short and sad is this life's dull day!  
Let us sweeten it, then, with pleasure."

"Good morning, brother Lasse," interposed Brigitta. "Already in full activity, I see. Handsome girl, Valborg. How go matters!"

"Handsome, handsome as Venus, but haughty as Juno! Well, well, there's no harm done in making a trial. But are you quite sure that she is an actual human being, that she has flesh and blood like the rest of us!"

"That I should imagine, but cannot assert it. I am trying to find her just now to beg her to give us pancakes for dinner."

"Pancakes! charming! Valborg and pancakes to dinner! what a prospect! I will go with thee to help thee to soften her hard heart,

"How short and sad were this life's dull day  
Were it not brightened with pleasure!  
I then, for my part, will sport it away  
In friendship and love, and of folly a measure!"

Mrs. Ingeborg had, for the afternoon of this first of May, invited her neighbours from Sollerön and Noreberg, and proposed to make an excursion with the young people into the neighbourhood, in order to permit Olof to see some of its most remarkable beauties, and then to lead him to Tomtegard by Utmedland, where the well-known cellar should be visited.

There was no little pleasure, and no little chat, in the capacious Mora car,\* as the "Great Mother in Dalom" sat there in the midst of all the young people, heartily rejoicing in their joy. Olof and Siri rode alongside or before, and thus they sallied forth into the neighbourhood.

Hill above hill, and dale within dale, are what have given to the province of Dalarna its name; and to Dalarna we must go if we would see a nature still in noble innocence, a people still in that patriarchal state which ever more and more disappears from the earth, and which possesses features of so great and touching a beauty.

As the Dalelf runs through Dalarna, a great and bright thought through a solemn and troublesome life, so runs the life-pulse of religion through the laborious existence of the Dal people, and centuries have passed over them without leaving any rust. They are still in manners, in appearance, in costume, and constitution of mind, the same as they were in the days of Engelbrecht and Wasa. Labour and prayer have preserved their health and youthful vigor. Low-

\* A char-à-bancs.

ly are the dwellings of the people. They stoop their necks at the doors of their huts, but never have they bowed them to the yoke of the oppressor. Great historical transactions have consecrated this ground, the native ground of Swedish liberty, yet you behold no monuments, no memorial inscriptions. Here, also, is simplicity. They show you a cellar, a barn, a verdant and knolly eminence, on the banks of the Dalelf, and tell you, "Here Gustavus Wasa concealed himself from his pursuers, here he thrashed for his day's wages, here he addressed the people of Mora for the deliverance of Sweden." And before your thoughts there stands forth the most magnificent romance that history possesses; and the glorious recollections which no monuments preserve, no boastful cicerone proclaims, seem to whisper to you from the woods, from the mountains and dales, from the vigorous forms of the people, from the river, which itself, from its cradle on the rocky ridge of Idre and to the East sea, with the hundred brooks that stream into its bosom, with its splendid cataracts, its deep, beautiful, and placid water, its windings and its branches, its growing strength, its final lordly expanse at Elfkärlaby, before it pours its life into the ocean, is a living image of this heroic poem.

Such were the thoughts which arose in Olof's soul during his ride to-day. We describe it no further, but halt at the near village of Utmedland, where the party descended from the vehicle, and betook themselves on foot to the cellar of Tomtegard, which lies in a meadow on the shore of the Silja Lake.

The hut which once arched it over has long ago fallen down; but there is now erected over it a saloon of wood, simple, and totally unadorned. Within this had now some good spirit—the Tomte\* of the place, said Mrs. Ingeborg—decked a table with a diversity of refreshments, which were hailed with a universal acclamation of pleasure. But Olof would descend immediately into the cellar, and Siri, who had expected it, and had brought tinder with her, instantly lit a candle, and, lifting up a trap-door in the floor, went nimbly before down the small, steep, and broken stone steps which led down into the cellar. The walls of the saloon are totally covered over with names, which visitors have written, scratched, yes, even carved out with great care and labour; names highly remarkable to—their owners. In the little room under the earth you can read no names on the black walls, it is empty, silent, and solitary as the grave; but there lives in it a great memory, the memory of a hero, who was concealed in its dark vault, with his misfortunes, his great plans, with Sweden's future welfare in his heart. What feelings, what thoughts had there not lived within these subterranean walls! Not the smallest ray of daylight can penetrate into it; but, each holding a light, stood there now Olof and Siri, and when they had looked round them on the black walls, the roof, the floor, they looked at each other, and their eyes sparkled, and they smiled at each other, inspired by the same thoughts.

When they had returned again up into the

\* The sprito or goblin; hence the name of the place, Tomtegard, might be supposed to be derived as if it were Goblin Court, though really named after its possessor in the time of Gustavus, Tomte-Matts Larsson.

saloon, they heard Mrs. Ingeborg relating how the Danes sought after Gustavus during his abode here, in Tomtegard, and how he was compelled to hide himself in the cellar, and how Tomt-Matts Larsson's wife turned a great brewing tub over the cellar hole, so that it was not discovered by the enemy. It was with a little pride that Mrs. Ingeborg observed, that Gustavus Wasa had three times to thank, for the saving of his life, the address and patriotism of the Dal woman. As they thus conversed and refreshed themselves, the peasant women of Mora came hastening over the meadow, and collected around the cellar with a childlike curiosity, which you often see in the Dal people. Amongst these were young girls with their hair bound with red riband, and wreathed round the head according to the custom of the country, so that they seemed to be adorned with garlands of flowers. All these Mrs. Ingeborg invited to a dance at the Mora parsonage; and in boats which she had caused to come from Mora, they now rowed back over the chrystal clear Silja, while the sun in its descent cast golden mantles over the giant shapes of the mountains. Middagsberg, from this circumstance, stood forth in transcendent magnificence, for they saw from the lake one of its sides bright with the full splendour of the sun, while the other stood dark and solemn. Siri had become perfectly solemn also, and turned not her eyes from the majestic mountain.

They rowed up the river, and landed at the so-called Klockgropen, a verdant mound on the banks of the river. The party stood upon it for a brief space, and recalled to their minds what had taken place here in past times. Here it was that "on a holiday during Christmas, just as the men of Mora came out of Church, Lord Gustavus ascended to address the assembled multitude. The low noon sun stood right over the directly south-lying Esunds, or Middagsberg, and spread a dazzling light over the snowy region. A fresh north wind was blowing, which the Mora men regarded as a good omen. They gathered around Gustavus, contemplating attentively the young and manly gentleman of whose unmerited persecutions they had already heard so much. With his strong and sonorous voice he began thus to address them: 'I see with much joy your great assembly, but with equally great sorrow do I contemplate the situation of us all.' Here he continued to describe to the people the unhappy situation of Sweden under the oppression of Denmark, and concluded with these words: 'The Dalmen have in all times been brave and undaunted when the weal of your country was concerned, and therefore are you renowned in our chronicles, and all the inhabitants of Sweden turn now their eyes upon you, for they are accustomed to look on you as the firm defence and protection of our native land. I will willingly accompany you, and will for you spare neither my hand nor my blood, for more the tyrant has not left me. And then shall he understand that Swedish men are faithful and brave, and that they may be governed by law, but not by the yoke.'\*

This little patriotically minded party, who

here now, more than three hundred years afterwards, celebrated the memory of the hero, drank a skål to him and to the liberty which his valiant deeds achieved, and then in gladness and lightness of heart they took the way up towards the parsonage.

Already the Nyckell harp\* hummed in the court of Mora when the party arrived there. It was the melancholy but dance-inspiring Oraspolska, which went on "to the unintermitting bass," and soon whirled pair after pair humming round after its certain tact. There was a time, but that is long ago, when Charles XI. danced in the court of Mora, and whirled in the polska with the maids of Mora. That would we gladly have beheld. Now whirled here Lieutenant Lasse, already in full and vehement suit for his cousin, the lovely but insensible Valborg.

Siri danced chiefly with the children, played and romped with them. At once Olof seemed again to see the girl of ten years old, as she delighted him with her dance in the summer night. She was now, indeed, palpably taller, but the fine, elastic form was still childlike, and undeveloped; the hair had its former golden lustre, which, like a sunbeam, was woven into it; her eyes shone with the same lively deep blue, her feet flew as lightly and swiftly from the ground. Olof could not avoid again thinking of the elf-queen whom the sagas describe as "slender and small, graceful as a lily, and with a voice alluring and delicious." He gazed on Siri with sincere pleasure. Yet again he looked on Valborg, and gave her far the preference over Siri in point of beauty and maidenly bearing. This comparison grew stronger later in the evening, and especially to the advantage of Valborg, as he saw her assisting actively with the supper, which was served in the hall with open doors, and observing her caring for all, while, at the same time, he beheld Siri in the balcony of the portico, with the greatest nonchalance smoking a cigar in a flaming style, and drinking punch with the prost of Solleröa and the curate, and all the time talking and laughing loudly with them. Scarcely could he believe that it was the same Siri whose eyes gleamed so brightly towards him in the cellar at Utmedland, who just now in the dance brought to his imagination spirits of light and the elf queen. She seemed to him now, in the whirling tobacco-smoke, and with the cigar in her mouth, metamorphosed into an imp of darkness, and he felt an irresistible impulse to tell her how ugly he now found her. Nordid he resist it, but stood close behind Siri, and whispered to her his humble opinion. He got for answer a puff of tobacco smoke, and the assurance that she did not trouble herself at all as to what he thought or liked.

"Oh yes, indeed, that is just the right one to fall in love with!" thought Olof; "she is hideous! Ugh! my sensible Brigitta must have been a little crazy." And he turned with an admiring glance towards the white-dressed Valborg, who offered him a plate of Dalarna's most constant and delicious luxury, groats and milk.

\* Fryxell: Narratives from the History of Sweden, in course of translation into English by Madame von Schoultz. Bentley, London.

\* A peculiar kind of musical instrument, with various keys.



The dance held on till ten o'clock, and immediately after that hour all dispersed. Mrs. Ingeborg seemed to be particularly anxious that all should go early to rest, and assiduously urged them to do so. Olof made some little opposition, for gladly, he assured her, would he sit up and talk with her the whole night. Nevertheless he fell asleep the moment he got into bed, and all the house was speedily at rest, like himself, in the arms of slumber. One alone waked, and that was Mrs. Ingeborg.

In the light May night she stood by the window, and read again the billet which she had read in the morning, and the contents of which were these:—

“Beloved wife,

“To-morrow evening, but probably not before it is quite late, shall I again be with thee! Say nothing of my coming to the young people, let all in the house go early to rest. I have a childish desire, thus coming, to see thee only, to be welcomed alone by thee. I would not have the secret communicated to any one or any thing. If I be late in the night, I would not see light in any window but thine. The little light from thy room, how it will beam upon me! nay, into me, into my soul, into my heart! My wife! Weary, disgusted, embittered by the petty-mindedness and selfishness of man, torn to pieces by fruitless contention and abortive endeavours, where the most honest desires are stranded on coldness and indifference, vexed with the world and vexed with myself, thus, my Ingeborg, do I return to thee, to lay my head on thy bosom, and let thee breathe away the cloud from my soul, to pray thee to lay thy warm hand upon my breast. Oh, I have such a heaven, and yet I dare to complain! My little woman must chastise me. But if thou rightly knew in what a state of mind I am at the thought of being soon with thee, and of staying with thee, assuredly thou wouldst not then be displeased with thy  
GUSTAF.

“P. S. I think it will never be evening to-day.”

It breathed warm out of these lines on the heart of Mrs. Ingeborg, and it was probably the cause that she breathed warmly upon them again, for she raised them to her lips, while her eyes sparkled with a dewy brilliancy.

She seemed already to have arranged every thing for her husband's reception, and called to her aid all kindly household gods to enable her to embrace him like a heaven full of love. Once more she cast around her an anxious, searching glance in the fresh and pleasant room; she gave a look at the little repast which she had set out in the next room, and which should refresh the tired one. She disposed afresh the new night-gown and slippers which, during his absence, she had prepared for him; and, finally, she gave a glance in the mirror at herself, at the light, fresh muslin gown, at the little lace cap that, like a white cloud, rested on her brown hair. Mrs. Ingeborg was one of those ladies who still, after a ten years' marriage, always seek by a fine and noble manner to charm their husbands, and, therefore, never have broken the spell of their fancy: that flower or that spice of all the unions between human beings. But Gustaf Nordevall was also one of those men

who make this a precious obligation or rather a pleasure. And thus waited and listened Mrs. Ingeborg, with a feeling that made the heart beat, and the blood alternately tinge and forsake the cheek. At every little sound without she sprang up. What is not expressed in the manner, the aspect with which a wife awaits her husband, with which she hears his step on the threshold of the house, his hand on the latch of the door! A whole history may be read in that moment.

We knew a young peasant-wife who had lost her husband, and who spoke of their married life with tears, saying, “Certainly there might be between us, as there will be occasionally between married people, a jarring word; but see! never had I to be afraid when I heard him ‘lift the latch of the door!’”

How many wives are there who cannot say that! Ah! in such moments we have seen cheeks grow pale, eyes grow confused, and as it were, yellow! Yet we know wives, who, at this electric shock, tremble—but with joy.

The clock was on the stroke of eleven at night when, unmistakably, there was heard the approach of a carriage, and it stopped at the gate of the parsonage of Mora. Mrs. Ingeborg sprang forth into the portico, and embraced—her husband.

### THE MARRIED PAIR.

Time had sped on, and still the married pair sat on the easy sofa. His head was rested against her shoulder, and that lofty but bitter expression which gave to his countenance a peculiar keenness and a singular interest, was now softened and brightened into a still and love-overflowing smile.

A legend in the national poem of Finland, Kalevala, speaks of a mother who had lost her son, and who found him again, but torn into a thousand pieces, at the bottom of the river of death. But she collected the scattered fragments, she gathered the dismembered son into her bosom, and rocked him there, and sang him whole again. Who that has suffered and striven upon earth, and does not recognise the meaning and the truth of this saga! Ah!

“Rock, thou cradle of love, rock on!  
Sound, O song! with the words of healing;  
Quiet the hearts that for strife beat alone;  
Sleep, O earth! with thy restless feeling;  
Rock, thou cradle of love, rock on!  
Sleep ye, dark Memory's rancorous train;  
Awake, all ye lovely and glorious dreams,  
Heralds of truth, in the slumberer's brain;  
Float ye his future down love's sweet streams,  
By hope all immortal steer'd on to the main.  
Climb, thou thought! seek the noon-tide sun;  
Battle, O strength! to thy dear north appealing,  
For freedom and light unto every one.  
But, above all, o'er earth's troublous feeling,  
Sound, O song! with thy words of healing:  
Rock, thou cradle of love, rock on!”

And thus had Mrs. Ingeborg rocked care to rest, thus had her sensible, sweet words sung serenity and peace into her husband's soul. He had related to her his endeavours, his exertions, the right he had sought to win, the injustice he had endured; and she had listened with heart and soul, had comprehended, sympathised, grown indignant at his opposers, rejoiced at his

propositions, at his labours—yes, even at the apparently fruitless ones; for who knows not that "what is sown in the snow comes up in the thaw!" and, by degrees, she had turned his mind to the vernal side of life. She had talked of the peaceful, and, to him, beloved labour which he could now calmly prosecute in the spiritual vineyard of his congregation, of the important scientific work to which he could in tranquillity return, and of the conquests which his good intentions must ultimately achieve through this means. She understood how to inspire courage and hope; and thus she had succeeded in laying to rest every bitter sentiment in her husband's soul, and in chasing every cloud from his brow. And he rested, and listened to all that she told him of her regrets, her joys, of the spring, of Mora, of home, and of that life which they should now enjoy together. One only object in this picture stood as a temporary cloud. When the professor inquired of his wife about Siri, and how she went on, Mrs. Ingeborg, deeply sighing, answered,—

"Ah, Gustaf! I fear that we shall never make any thing of the girl. I fear either that she is irremediably made wild by her unfortunate bringing up, or that I do not know how to guide and educate her."

"Patience, patience only, my little woman!" now, in his turn, said the professor, consolingly. "You calculate too little on the family influence in the long run. If this discipline of love be what it ought to be, it will exert a silent power which no member of it will be able ultimately to resist. Yes, it reduces even hostile powers to its service, and converts the hand, with which hell endeavours to set on fire the house, into a cheering flame upon the hearth of home. I am not at all uneasy about Siri; she will become tamed without knowing it herself, and no very severe bridle will be necessary for this purpose. I am fond of life and fire in the young, and if a girl be good for any thing, she will be able to melt ice six yards around her. And such a girl is, or will be, our little Siri. Valborg's coldness and closeness are really far more dangerous. We must endeavour to melt this ice by a suitable fire. But that is not so easy a matter. Much rather would I have to do with that wild fire. Can we but manage to give that its proper direction and proper fuel, then it will become a blessing. Now is the time that Siri should be prepared for confirmation, and I shall find it a pleasure this summer to instruct her myself!"

"Ah, that would be certainly good, if the girl were not so self-willed, and thou—thou, my own Gustaf—wert not so easily irritated."

"I know it; but I know also that thy voice—yes, thy very presence—can tranquillize my mind when it is ready to boil up. Be present during my reading hours with Siri, if thou wilt; or give me an amulet, a lock of thy hair; or some word written by thy hand, which I will carry in my bosom, in order to counteract the outbursts of temper. But, now that I am at home again, I believe that I shall be gentle as a lamb. I cannot conceive of anything that can strongly irritate me; and, least of all, a young maiden of a nature as rich as Siri's really is, and whom I am, moreover, fond of. Thou shalt see that we shall some time have joy in the girl. That shall we, too, as I hope, in my

son. I am heartily glad to have him here at home. He has for many years lived more for the head than for the heart, and I fear that the education of the latter has been made but of secondary consideration. But with that thou shalt assist both him and me. I am of that author's opinion who says, 'There is but one high school, and it is that in which the heart is educated.'"

Nordevall had raised himself up as he spoke, and now it was his wife who leaned her head against him, listening in silence, and then said:

"Ah, how dear it is to me again to hear thy voice, again to feel the wing of thy protecting and strengthening spirit over me! Ah, how full and beautiful life now feels! He who could die now . . . thus here . . . to pass over from earth into heaven! that were too much; that were a life, a death without a night; . . . and the night which comes . . . will come one day."

She uttered the last words with a dreamy but half-prophetic tone.

"But now it is morning," exclaimed Nordevall; "see, the sun rises! My little woman, we have gossiped the night away."

"Yes, now it is morning," said Mrs. Ingeborg, and raised herself; "and now that my sun is again here I will be hopeful and courageous: I shall be young again, at least in soul, for the body . . . Gustaf, I have become old during thy absence. Longing for thee has laid its additional heavy weight on my five-and-thirty years; I have got a great wrinkle by the eye . . ."

"Is that possible?" said Nordevall: "just let me see it: ay, actually a wrinkle!" and he kissed it: so tenderly had he never kissed, as lover, the polished eye-lids.

"Thanks; thou," said she, affectionately smiling, thou hast consecrated my old age."

"To a still lovelier youth! I love the wrinkle!" And he kissed it again.

A golden vernal sun now broke into the room and cast his quivering beams upon the pair, as if to bless them.

Oh, how beautiful to love purely and deeply! how divine is this true love! even the solitary mortal who, turned towards the quiet sun of thought, congratulates himself on being withdrawn from all the tempests of the heart, and on having found in his tranquil world a peace, a sufficiency, from which men can take nothing away, and to which they can add little—even he, at the sight of beings who live, enjoy, and suffer in each other, involuntarily feels his heart grow warm, and, perhaps, with a tear in his eye, exclaims, "Oh, how beautiful to love! how divine is true love!" Consorts, brothers and sisters, friends, loving as God loves, beautiful and blessed is your lot! the only one which enjoys on earth the promise of "everlasting dwellings" in the land, where love itself is the sun—the sun that never goes down.

#### HOME AT MORA.

THE members of a family ought occasionally to be separated for a time. It produces in many cases a salutary renovation, and the meetings again are, when affection lies at the bottom, so

\* V. Ung: "Walks in the Fatherland."

rich, so joyous, a new spring. We do not go so far as the song, when it says—

“With the same and the same we grow crabbed and dull,  
Tis change that our nature makes beautiful;  
With the fairest of maids I should wrangle and fly,  
And should weary of living, forgot she to die.”

But to the half-way, that is, as far as the two first lines, there we go entirely.

Under the May-life which arose in the home of Mora, in the first days after the return of the house-father, every sense bloomed; even the shut-up Valborg seemed to awaken to life and sympathy. Olof was happy in the feeling of now being nearer to his father than ever; and Brigitta was quite confused in the head with joy, and danced about with her uncle, her aunt, her curate, and with any one she could lay hands on. Siri alone partook not in the general joy. She seemed to become more shy than ever, fled the happy family, lived out in wood and field—they seldom knew where; and a species of wild melancholy frequently threw its shade over her young countenance, and gave a dark expression to her glance. She was rarely seen at home, except at meal-times, and this distressed Mrs. Ingeborg, for she saw how often the professor's eyes sought for the young girl, although he said nothing; and the exhortations of others to be more at home produced no effect. Two evenings in the week, however, usually brought the whole family together into a familiar circle, and these were they which Mrs. Ingeborg had called the spinning-room evenings. Here collected all the female members of the family, each with her wheel, in the great hall, where the fire was kindled on the hearth; and around this fire placed themselves the women, and span and span. And soon did they spin unto them the gentlemen, for it went merrily with the spinning-wheels; songs were sung, stories were told, riddles were propounded and guessed. Mrs. Ingeborg had an inexhaustible treasury of such things, and amused herself as she sat in the midst of the spinners, or walked to and fro in the hall, with puzzling their brains with all the wonders and things that she “saw at the king's court,” a form of riddle that she often employed. Mrs. Ingeborg was herself commonly very joyous on these evenings, and enlivened every body, and would not willingly allow any one to keep back their contribution to the general good, whether of story, song, or enigma. Siri generally sung some little sprightly air, and distinguished herself besides by her zeal in the solving of riddles, which much amused her. This also amused Olof, and reminded him of the olden times in the north, when riddles and the most subtle questions were the dearest pleasure of the wise; when even the gods descended from their luminous abodes, in order to contend in such trials with the giants of earth; and Odin gave himself no rest till he had in such contest measured himself against, and triumphed over, the cunning giant Vafthrudner. Olof had now, in his recollections of travel, invaluable contributions of pleasure to confer on the spinning-room. He and Lieutenant Lasse were always present; they attempted also to spin in company, but the threads were so often broken, or they made the wheels spin round so unmercifully, that the ladies begged to be permitted to dispense with this species of contribution from the gentlemen.

Later in the evening came commonly also the professor. His arrival amongst them at all times inspired a higher vivacity, a more living interest; and even in the spinning-room it was the same; whether he was there merely in the capacity of spectator and listener, or, as was often the case, he himself paid his tribute to the general good in the shape of a story.

A few days after Olof's return, it was the spinning-meeting at home, and all were assembled in the great hall of the house. Mrs. Ingeborg had propounded some difficult enigmas, which Olof and Siri had vied in guessing; Valborg had sung a song; the curate had mimicked hautboys and speaking-trumpets; Lieutenant Lasse had represented a steam-vessel getting into motion, by which sundry spinning-wheels were thrown into great jeopardy; and Brigitta had related various anecdotes about the Old Woman, a personage who does and says a multitude of things in Sweden; as for example:—

“I will see that,” said the old woman, and bought a raven to see whether it would live two hundred years.

“Thanks to our Lord, now I help myself,” said the old woman, when she alighted on her feet again.

“Yes,” said the old woman, “it was something with a ravel, and if it were not an admiral, why then it must have been a corporal.”

“If no if had come between, then had the old woman bitten the bear,” &c.

All had given their mite towards the evening's entertainment, and the professor had laughed, and to the bottom of his heart enjoyed his home-life. Warmed and exhilarated, he responded to the importunities of the young, that he should tell something, with the following characteristic incidents from the life of the Dal peasantry.

“A father went one winter's evening with his two daughters, over the ice on Lake Silja. In the twilight they lost their way and came upon a weak ice, which broke under their feet. It continued to break with their endeavours to hold themselves fast, and to get upon it again. One only of the daughters was fortunate enough to support herself by a somewhat firmer piece of ice; and on her shoulder the other sister seized, in the agonies of death, and drew herself up by her.

“‘Leave go, Margaret,’ said the first, ‘or I must sink; it is with the greatest difficulty that I can maintain my own hold.’

“But the young girl, in her death agony, did not leave go, but held fast as before.

“Then heard the sinking one the sinking father's solemn voice—

“‘Hear'st thou not, Margaret, what Anna says?’

“And on the instant as the girl heard the word she quitted her hold on her sister, and suffered herself to sink into the deep with her father.

“The sister succeeded in rescuing herself; but often did she afterwards come to me, in search of consolation for the pangs of her conscience, for she ascribed to herself the death of Margaret.

“A father rowed with his young son upon the

Silja; there arose a storm; their little boat was upset, and cast far from them; but a board floated near them, and father and son took hold on it, but it was not able to bear up both, and when the son saw that, he said, 'God bless thee, my father, live for my mother and my brothers and sisters;' and so let himself sink to the bottom.

"In the dreadful year of famine here, 1838, there came one day to me a Dalman from another parish, and said to me—

"Sell me a few tons of straw."

"The man was one of those great, stalwart figures, which you seldom see, except here; yet he had evidently suffered from want of food. He had drawn his hat with its broad brim deep over his face.

"I cannot sell thee straw," said I, at his entreaty; 'I have not more than I shall need for myself, and the poor of my own parish.

"Sell but *one* ton," implored he.

"Not even that can I," I replied; 'that which I have left I must carefully preserve for myself and my people.'

"Half a ton, then," persisted the Dalman, pressingly.

"It grieves me," I said, 'but not even a single half ton can I spare thee.'

"The huge fellow took a step nearer to me, said not a word, but lifted his hat above his brow, and gazed fixedly upon me; he let me see that he wept.

"The sight of this anguish I could not sustain. 'Come with me,' said I, 'thou shalt have what thou wilt.'

"He followed me, and got the straw that he wanted.

"If this were for *myself*," said he, 'I should not probably have been here; for, if we men suffer and endure want, it is no more than our sins deserve, and we can and ought to bear; but the poor animals—what can they have done amiss?'

"And now for a little love-story!

"A young farmer loved, at the same time, two young women, and, though strange enough, loved both with as nearly as possible the same affection, and they both of them warmly returned his passion. But one of them showed for him an almost boundless devotion: and, perhaps, this might be the cause, that at once, with a more determined sentiment, he turned towards the other; but she answered him, 'I will not be married amid the sighs of any unhappy one, and it is now thy duty to wed Kerstin. To me thou wilt ever remain dear, but now must we part.'

"What a field would there have been here for the French romantic! What agony, ravings, explosions, and explications without end! Here had been sacrifices and poisonings, and, at last, three corpses. But how simply did the genius of the Dal people resolve this knotty point!

"The young man obeyed the exhortations of the serious damsel—obeyed that of duty—he married Kerstin; and, as they were both truly good and excellent people, they were happy together. They had lived happily together for four years, and had three children, when the wife died. But as she lay on her death-bed

she said to her husband, 'I would ask one thing of thee, and that is, that thou, after my death, wilt marry Anna, who was once, and is still, dear to thee, and who, I know, still loves thee, and that thou makest no other the mother of my children.'

"The husband mourned sincerely for his wife; but, when the customary period of mourning had expired, it was not difficult for him to endeavour to fulfil her last prayer. He went to the still unmarried, the still-beloved Anna, and told her the wish of his late wife, and his own. And she answered, 'Thou art still as dear to me as formerly, and willingly would I be thy wife, but I fear for thy children. I fear that I could not be to them such a mother that I could answer it to my conscience and to the dead, and that would make thee dissatisfied with me.'

"And by that reply Anna stood fast, spite of all the arguments of love and reason that were employed to move her.

"Quite distracted came the young man one day to me, and implored my counsel, and begged me to talk with the girl, and to endeavour to persuade her to become his wife.

"To seek to persuade her I cannot promise thee," I said, 'for in so solemn an affair a woman should make her resolve in freedom; but speak with her I will, and tell her what I think and advise in the matter.' I sent to the young woman, talked with her of her future duties, and succeeded in pacifying her all too sensitive conscience. Soon afterwards I had the pleasure of uniting the two lovers.

"A few years afterwards I came on an official journey into the district where they resided. It was a dark autumn evening, and cold and dull without. But when I entered their room, the fire blazed cheerily, and in its light on the floor played four children, full of pleasure. Husband and wife arose to meet the enterer, but, when they recognised me again, they became deeply moved, and began to weep. 'Ask her, ask her,' said the husband, and pointed to the wife, 'whether she be not satisfied with me!' But I did not ask her; I saw warm and happy tears already speaking."

"That was a charming story, that last," exclaimed Brigitta, when the professor had finished.

"And thou, Siri," asked he, "which dost thou like the best?"

Blushing and shy answered Siri, "That about the Dalma and his cattle."

"That was right, my own girl," exclaimed the professor, and kissed her forehead.

"I wonder how you like groats and milk!" said Mrs. Ingeborg, as she entered, followed by her maid, who brought in dishes and bowls.

"Best of every thing in the world, next to thee," said her husband joyfully, and Olof was ready to chime in, for the spinning-room suppers were also great suppers in the house, and concluded by all assembling round a large, steaming groat-dish, which, in Olof's opinion, put the crown on the charms of the evening. To Olof it seemed that his home was the best home in the world.

For the rest, there was much in his home which called into thoughtful exercise his penetrating and observant spirit; and enigmas here met him, more difficult to solve than all those

marvels which Mrs. Ingeborg saw "at the King's Court." She herself was amongst them, for Olof observed often in her, moments of sadness, that came and passed away again without any apparent cause, and expressions fell from her at times which seemed to indicate some hidden cause of disquiet. But the perfect happiness she enjoyed in her domestic life with her husband, her open disposition, her daily fresh spirit and activity, her sincere benevolence towards all who surrounded her, and which made both people and creatures thrive under her care, her enjoyment of life and nature, appeared to make such a secret impossible. Olof hesitated to seek explanations of her gloomy moods of mind, which she, in fact, carefully concealed from her husband, and which never cast a severe shade over her temper, further than that she had an organic affection of the heart, which she had had many years, but which only at times was troublesome, but never, so it was said, dangerous.

The father was a soul open as the day; his merits and his failings were obvious to all. Warm, striving, and sagacious, strong in will and power, it was impossible for him to live without restless exertion and onward aspiration. His impetuosity sometimes led him into error; but his Christian goodness led him always to acknowledge and pray forgiveness of the wrong. He was one of those men with whom life is never perfectly free from clouds, but whose absence leaves an immeasurable void.

Olof's best friend in the house for society and conversation was Brigitta. With her he gladly talked of his stepmother, Brigitta's "charming aunt;" with her he wondered whether Siri would ever become a rational creature; whether Valborg could become a real human being; whether she could fall in love, and so on. With her he spoke of his own future, his approaching sojourn in Fahlun, where, in the school of mining, he should study fundamentally the science of mining, in the hope some day of becoming a great master of mines in the country. Before her he liked also to let the light of his knowledge shine on various subjects, and to relate to her his success in various ways. Olof was one of those young men, who, favoured by fortune and mankind, and who had something of that pleasant confidence in himself which people not seldom have at three-and-twenty, but, with greater wisdom, do not often possess at three-and-forty.

The family at Mora had many friends, but none more intimate, and none dearer than the prost and prostinna of Solerön and their children. Few weeks seldom went by without the two households passing a day together, either at Mora or at Solerön. Some few weeks only in autumn and spring was this intercourse interrupted, during the time that the Silja neither bears nor breaks up.

One day the great prost and the little prostinna were at Mora. It was evening, and the young people danced in the saloon, while the older ones conversed in the drawing-room. Two gentlemen, friends of the professor, travelling from Stockholm, increased the party. The conversation fell on marriage, and one of the travellers praised the single state for its tran-

quillity and undisturbed quiet. The professor, again, was zealous for marriage, and rather ill-liberally, since he insisted that only in marriage, he always assumed it to be happy, could human beings attain their full development, their highest ennoblement. He grew quite warm upon it, and concluded with these words: "People suppose commonly that the first period of married life is the happiest, but that is not the case, that I know, and so does my wife too. I am a thousand times happier with her now, and am a thousand times more attached to her now, than I was ten years ago, when we were first married; and I am certain that ten years hence I shall like her still better, for true affection goes on always increasing. It has, like our Lord's grace, no bounds and no grave. Yes, if it were now said to me, 'Thou art free; go freely over the whole world, and choose thee a wife,' I should go instantly to her, and say, 'Will thou have me?'"

"Dalarna," said the advocate of celibacy, warmed by the professor's zeal, "Delarna must be a good soil for marriage. Even amongst the peasantry, even in the low huts, I seem to have observed a more happy relationship between married people than is common in the world. It is animating to think that so great a happiness as that which you describe married life to be can be enjoyed alike by high and low, by the educated, and, in an intellectual point of view, the uneducated."

"Yes.—hum,—" said the professor; "but a perfect equality can I not, however, admit in this respect. Education creates a distinction, and to the advantage of those who possess it. An expanded view of life and its objects, multiplied subjects for thought, for interest, for conversation, make life richer, and give nourishment to attachment. That cannot be helped; as a great burning-glass collects a richer amount of rays into its focus than a lesser one, produces a greater heat, kindles a greater fire. For my own part I should not be half so happy with my wife, if I could not talk with her on all subjects which possess an interest for me, and if she did not as well, through her education as through her natural endowments, help me to thoughts and views which I should not, of myself, arrive at. And often when I have pored and pondered, with a single word she has hit the nail on the head, and made all light before me. Therefore it is that she is also my dearest, my most indispensable society, an actual half of my life. And in that you may see why the education I allude to is of so high a value, especially for persons whose life is not occupied by much material labour, and for married people in good external circumstances. That through this, indeed, they may spiritually live for each other; may become continually more necessary to each other, and the change from the lover into the friend, which all married people must pass through, may be an ascending and not descending metamorphosis. For the love which cannot be converted into friendship is of very little worth."

While the professor was thus speaking, Mrs. Ingeborg had gone out into an adjoining room, and stood by a window, with a view of the adjacent church. The beautiful spire glowed in the evening sun, the melodious bells of Mora

rung out six. Silent tears rolled down Mrs. Ingeborg's cheeks, while her eyes rested on the broad-spreading trees of the churchyard. Two of her children, dead in their early childhood, rested there, and her still tears seemed to call in question the fervent words of her husband on the happiness of their married life. Yet it was not so; but the maternal feeling at this moment asserted its right, and when awhile after the professor stood by her side, and said, in tender uneasiness, "What, now, my Ingeborg!" she merely whispered, with a glance at the churchyard, "The children!"

Nordevall stood silent, respecting her feelings, but said soon after, as he laid his hand upon hers, "But He who gave, and He who took away, can give again."

"Nay, nay," said Mrs. Ingeborg, almost vehemently, "I do not deserve it."

Mrs. Ingeborg let fall occasionally such an expression, and it invariably annoyed her husband, for he seemed to see in it a morbid imagination; and he now answered somewhat impatiently:

"No one deserves God's goodness: but that thou shouldst deserve it less than any one else I will not hear of; that is a spectre of the brain, self-inflicted pain, which ought not——"

"I do not complain!" mildly interrupted Mrs. Ingeborg; "if I have no child, yet I have thee and thy affection, which are more to me than all the world, and make every thing else superfluous."

An expression like this delighted Nordevall, and he said gladly:

"And, if we have no mutual child, yet we have foster children, which shall be to us as our own. Come, and let us see them dance. Siri dances, as I imagine to myself, an elf queen. The girl has altogether a peculiar charm, which——"

"But where is Siri?"

"Siri was nowhere amongst the young people; Siri was nowhere to be found in the house; Siri had not, people said, been seen since directly after mid-day. For the first time the professor expressed displeasure with her. "She is, in fact, never at home!" said he.

"I will become a fish again," said Brigitta, "if some fine day Siri be not mountain-smitten, so that we never see her any more. It is a misery with Siri."

### SIRI.

"I wonder where she can be!" said Olof to Brigitta, as their enquiring glances met in the court.

"Yes, that may the wind know!" answered Brigitta; "that she is never where she ought to be, that I know. Now is my uncle angry, and in that humour he is by no means gentle, I can assure you, and my poor aunt is so anxious.

"I say, my girl, has thou seen Siri?" said Brigitta to a farm-servant maid in the court, who answered:—

"I saw her a few hours ago riding towards Morkarleby side."

"Let us go towards the side, perhaps we shall meet her," said Olof to Brigitta. And

they went; and while they contemplated the beautiful waters of the Silja and the Dalelf, and the wood-clothed mountains on the shore, Olof fell again into his thoughts and plans for the future. Foremost amongst these stood his desire to become in time possessor of iron-works in Dalarna. "What a life might we not live there!" exclaimed he, "and what subjects should we not have for activity and fortune! The fabrication of iron—Sweden's greatest wealth; the work of its refinement; the care of the labourers in the works; whose condition it would be a happiness to make happy; intercourse with nature, which alone is a world sufficient to live in; and then family life which in its enchanting dales——"

"Family life!" exclaimed Brigitta wagishly, "nay, only hear the sweet lad; he thinks of his papa and his mamma, and perhaps on his little cousins, too. That is actually quite touching!"

"What's the matter! Ah! yes, yes! But I did not think only on that family life," said Olof laughing and blushing.

"On what family life, then?" asked Brigitta, with an innocent tone, but mischievously twinkling eyes.

"Oh!.....for example on my own.....when I.....shall get married!"

"For example! Well the wife, for example, seems already in view. Is that it?"

"Not at all!" said Olof, laughing, "but I think she may possibly come. Ah! see, there we have Siri!"

And it was Siri who came riding towards them, with the fiery Brunhilda, quite warm, and herself with an expression of wild exultation in her countenance. The lappets of her kroka flapped, like a pair of wings about her shoulders, in the wind. As soon as she saw Olof and Brigitta, she stopped, sprang from the horse, which she allowed to go loose, and bounded towards them, where they sat not far from the road, on a verdant hill.

"That was a glorious ride!" she exclaimed, as she flung herself down on the ground, near them. "Olof, you must ride on Brunhilda; one flies as on the wings of the wind on her."

"Ah!" said Brigitta, "and if thou hadst a little less passion for wind and blowing weather, and a little more for sitting still, it would not be amiss. But don't lie there now upon the cold ground, whilst thou art so heated, Siri!"

"The ground is not cold!" said Siri, "it has a warm heart, warmer than mankind has; I wish that I lay there!" added she, and kissed the earth; and pressed it to her burning cheeks.

"The earth's heart!" said Brigitta; "dear Siri, what nonsense is that?"

"Not such nonsense, either!" said Olof; "the earth may actually be said to have a warm heart, for, according to all probability, its interior is red hot. The deeper we penetrate into the earth, the higher rises the temperature. In Fahlum copper-mines, for instance, at about two hundred fathoms deep, it is so warm that the people work there without upper garments in the coldest weather in winter. But what does my little sister know of the earth's warm heart?"

"Ah, I know a great deal, I!" said Siri nodding archly.

"Yes, since thou wert mountain-kidnapped," said Brigitta, "thou hast been abominably knowing about the earth and the mountains, and their interiors, and hast got such ideas about how glorious it would be there too—it is positively frightful. But now, Siri, don't continue lying there, my little, sweet, naughty, most precious silly girl! Come hither to me, and let me wrap my shawl about thee, or I shall be both angry and——"

But before Brigitta had finished the sentence Siri was already by her, and nestled with the grace of a dove, and a childlike affection at her side, and laid her head against her shoulder.

While Olof went in his botanical researches to some distance from them, Brigitta, began in a sisterly, or rather motherly manner, to impress upon Siri how wrong it was of her to be so much away, now that she was so much wanted at home, and her uncle would so gladly see them all assembled there around him.

"Ah," replied Siri, "just because you are assembled and happy together, just for that reason must I be away! It stifles me there at home, amongst all the others....and where yet I am so lonesome; have no one who is fond of me. Nor can I either like them; I feel myself among them so ill at ease, so unhappy. People have always told me that I am odd, that I shall never become rational, and that, perhaps, I am a changeling, which they called me, as a child. But what wouldst thou? I cannot be different." And hot tears started from Siri's eyes.

"Perhaps, my sweet girl," said Brigitta, mildly, "perhaps mightest thou yet be a little different, if thou wouldst; and perhaps thou wouldst indeed become so, if thou wast——"

"Where, where!" demanded Siri, excited, and looking up.

"More with us, with my aunt!"

"Oh! no, Brigitta!" said Siri, shaking thoughtfully her head, "with her and me it does not go on well; that I know in myself, though I cannot tell why. No, no, it will never go on well."

"Oh, yes, but it certainly will go on well!" asserted Brigitta; "it cannot be otherwise; don't be irrational, Siri! Who must not be proud of my aunt, if they come rightly to know her, and live more with her? She is an angel of goodness. And that thou wilt come also one day to understand, and that thou wouldst have done already, if thou wert but as thou ought to be, at home, and not like a wild bird, always flying about in the woods. And my uncle if thou knew what a man that is, how wouldst thou like him, too! And that thou wilt soon come to do, for thou wilt soon begin to read with him for confirmation."

"Ah," exclaimed Siri, with terror, "that is the worst of all, that is terrible!"

"What sayst thou, Siri! To read before uncle Nordevall, to hear him explain the word of God, would be, indeed, both the greatest honour and joy that I could imagine for myself."

"Yes, thou!" said Siri, and hid her face in the folds of Brigitta's shawl, "but I....I am afraid of him. His glance, his voice, all confound me. And, then, how will it be when I am alone with him; when he shall stand before me as a teacher and high-priest, and perhaps, de-

mand of me that I shall believe things which I cannot at all understand....as I know many of them would be....and that appear so dark and strange. But, mind that I cannot do, and I will not allow it to happen, nor will bind myself to any thing. Free, free will I be, as a bird in the wood, and if they capture me, then——! Dost thou remember the little ox-eye,\* which thou spoke of, which was so tame and glad when he could hop and fly about in the room; but which when they shut him up in the cage, struggled and dashed himself against the wires, till he fell dead!....so would it be with me; for I would rather die than....ah! it is a sad time that is coming!"

"Mercy on us! Don't do so, dear Siri. Thou art no little ox-eye, that I know, but a human creature. And be thou a human creature, and no irrational bird of the woods; and what thou now sayest has neither rhyme nor reason in it. Thou wilt see that it is a good, a most excellent time that is coming!"

Yet Brigitta could not help feeling a secret anxiety, when she called to mind her uncle's impetuous disposition, and the strange, irrational mood of the young maiden, who now, almost trembling, clung to her.

"I seem," said Siri, "as if I should become mad, with all that. Only think, if I should run away altogether; think if I should ride off to Blakulla!" And Siri looked at Brigitta and laughed heartily.

"That wilt thou not do!" said Brigitta, seriously. "Thou wouldst not wish to give us such a sorrow."

"Sorrow?" cried Siri, "could any one lament for me? Nay, that I cannot believe! And if you should be for a little while uneasy, you would, at the same time, be glad to be rid of me. No one cares for me. None but *one*," she added softly, and turned her eyes full of tears, with a dark fire in her glance, towards Middagsberg, whose summit was now diademed with a golden garland of clouds.

Brunhilda now neighed, and Siri sprang up. "Shall we go on, my fleet Bruna?" said she, caressing the horse, and before Olof, who now sprang forward, could come to her assistance, she had swung herself up into the saddle, waved her hand gracefully to them, and galloped off towards the Mora parsonage.

"That is a strange girl!" said Olof, following her with his eyes: "riding becomes her right bravely; but tell me now at once, Brigitta, what is the meaning of all the singular and mysterious expressions which I hear thrown out respecting Middagsberg, and the King of the Mountain, and Siri's mountain adventure, and your sea adventure, or your fish-state, as you call it. May I at once be permitted to know what all this is for an affair!"

"Yes, it is a marvellous affair, thou may'st believe me," said Brigitta; "an affair which I myself have not yet rightly got to the bottom of, and which, I still fear, is not yet played out. Hu! I really feel a shudder upon me when I think of it. It is not so agreeable, you may believe, to have become a fish, when one had been born a human creature, and to have lain and struggled in a net! And what Siri became

\* Parus Major.

at the same time, that our Lord alone knows; but——” And Brigitta compressed her lips, and shook her head.

“But tell it, tell it, then!” exclaimed Olof.

“Thou knowest,” Brigitta proceeded, speaking, however, in a softer voice, and looking a little paler than usual: “thou knowest, that last year, in September, I came here for the first time on a visit, for a few weeks. Siri had then been at Mora about a month, where she came on the death of her mother, the generala. During these weeks, we paid a visit at the parsonage of Sollerön. Middagsberg lay right opposite to it, perhaps a quarter of a mile off,\* on the other side of the lake, and sundry small islands lay between. The mountain we had much to do with, and much to talk about, for it was a weather-signal for us, and looked very different in different kinds of weather, and at different periods of the day, but always magnificent. We called it the Giant, and Siri, especially, had her fancies about it, and her amusement in it. On evenings, Siri and I were accustomed to row out when the weather was calm; and when we got out upon the lake Siri played on her flute, and her playing is the most delicious that I ever heard. She has tones that go right through the heart. One evening we rowed to the Mora side with our little boat. I pulled the oars, and Siri played on her flute, till I downright wept. Air, and lake, and shore—all was so calm; so still, as if nature herself listened to her. It became, in the meantime, late in the evening; and as the lake mist began to arise, we put round to row homewards. At once we heard a rushing noise in the lake, and perceived distinctly the sound of something which breathed loudly, swimming after our boat! What it was, it was impossible to discern through the twilight and the fog; but something dark and uncouth there was, which I saw emerge from the water, and draw ever nearer to us. Siri dropped the flute, took an oar, and we began to row with all our power. But nearer and nearer we seemed to hear the rush of the swimming lake-monster which pursued us. We were now not far from one of the islands, and hoped to make our escape, when, all at once, the boat refused to move on. We rowed, and rowed, but it would not stir from the spot. I will not positively attempt to determine whether it was the water-grass, or one of the lake-goblins, which wound itself around our oars, and drew them fast down to our boat, and held us fast;—it is possible that it was the water-grass, but at the moment I believed fully and firmly that it was a spirit, and that it was Neck himself who, in the shape of a black horse, pursued us to carry us away. †

“In my agony I cried for help, and I heard instantly a voice, or a tone answer me from the Middagsberg side. But now was the black fiend quite upon us, and the boat fixed as aground. Siri stood courageously with an oar in her hand, ready for combat. Then saw I a horse's foot, or a devil's claw, raise itself from

the water, and lay itself upon the edge of our boat. At the same instant, it upset, and I saw nothing more, but heard Siri's voice shouting ‘Brigitta!’ in a tone that went through my soul, at the moment that I sunk down into the water.”

Brigitta was silent for awhile, like one paralysed by the recollection.

“And thou lost consciousness?” asked Olof.

“It was as if I slept,” continued Brigitta, “I cannot remember the least pain that I had; but when I came to myself again I felt quite ill, and found myself lying in a little fisherman's hut, on one of the islands near Solerön; whence the fisherman, who heard my cry, had rowed out to our assistance. The moment that I recovered the least portion of my consciousness, I called out for Siri, and asked after her. But Siri was away, and no one knew any thing of her.”

“But the people who had rescued thee?”

“They had seen not the slightest glimpse of her. When they reached our boat, there it lay overturned; and when they righted it they found just under it a wicker fish trap, and in it they saw lying a huge, huge fish, and that fish—was I, who, God knows how, had got my head into it; and was now drawn up in it, and then upon the land, and then into the fisherman's hut, altogether exactly like a poor wretch of a fish.”

“And Siri!”

“Yes, Siri was away, and could not be found that evening, nor in the night, nor on the following day either, although every possible exertion was made to discover her. My uncle himself was out the whole night with people and torches, seeking and calling to her; for Siri can swim bravely, and is thus apparently more of a fish than I; and it was, therefore, probable that she would swim to land somewhere. But nowhere could she be found. It was a dreadful night. My aunt was beside herself. Never have I seen her so pale! I can still see her the whole night; she ran and hurried along the strand, with a torch in her hand, and regardless of the storm which blew, and crying only, ‘Siri! Siri!’ so heartrendingly, and seeming as if she could rush into the very lake, and seek her in the depth of the waves.

“Thus the night went over. By day they dragged the lake, but in vain, as thou mayest now well believe. She was, as it were, vanished out of the world. But in the afternoon they found in the region of Middagsberg one of her small shoes. Ah! the beautiful object! How my aunt did kiss it! For it was, indeed, a token that Siri lived. But I could not help thinking of a story that I had lately read in the newspapers, of a young girl, in Smoland, I think, who one day was absent from her home; and when they had long sought for her they found in the mountains, first one of her shoes, and then the other, and then her handkerchief, and, finally, herself, in a mountain cave, lying quite still, with her head upon a stone, and seeming to sleep softly. But when they drew near her they saw that she slept the sleep of death. Yes, she was dead! but never could they discover by what means this had come to pass. And now I thought incessantly how they would find Siri in a mountain cave, with

\* Swedish; nearly seven English miles make one Swedish.

† According to the popular belief in Sweden. Neck changes himself sometimes into a black horse, and in this shape he has carried off, it is said, brides as they have returned from the church, over some lake or stream.



her sweet flaxen locks, resting her head on a stone, and sleeping the sleep of death; and it seemed to me so sad—so sad! Yes, ever since that time, my eyes have been a third less than they were before, so much were they swollen up with downright weeping.

"Well, amid this hunting and anxiety, it had struck ten o'clock at night. We were now altogether in the hall, and my uncle talked to my aunt, and sought to calm her, for she was as if she had not the right use of her reason, but exclaimed continually, 'Siri! Siri! my child!' when beheld, at once Siri stood at the door, quite pale, in the moonlight, with her light locks, and said, 'Here am I!' We believed at first that we saw a spirit, but it was actually the living Siri, and no apparition. And what a joy it was! See then, now the tale is ended."

"How! ended? Just now should the most important part appear. How had Siri been rescued? Where had she—"

"If thou shouldst ask the whole night, thou wouldst still get no other answer than, I don't know. Siri never could or would give any satisfactory explanation of this extraordinary disappearance. All that she said was that, as the boat capsized, she struck her temple against the edge of the boat, and lost all consciousness, and that when she regained her senses she found herself lying at the foot of Middagsberg; and as soon as she felt herself strong enough she had betaken herself to some huts on the shore, and thence, by the assistance of the people, had come home to us. By this unsatisfactory relation she stood, and no other could be got from her, although my uncle interrogated her most closely. On the temple she had, indeed, a large contusion, so that her fall against the edge of the boat was sufficiently probable; but, for the rest, it was clearly enough seen that the whole of the account did not hang well together. But never has she given any other, and when the rest of us have asked her about the affair, she has only talked nonsense about it, or has told us legends of the giant in the Middagsberg, and of his palace, and all its splendour there which she saw, and more of the like sort, which sound like tales of enchantment."

"Hum! that is very strange!"

"Yes, is it not? Can one not seriously begin to have faith in the old sagas of mountain spells and sorcery?"

"Hum! I am rather disposed to believe that my little sister is somewhat artful, and I have a good mind to examine her in the matter a trifle. And that supposed monster which followed you on the lake, have you got no clue to it! that was, probably, a horse; I can imagine that."

"Yes, so people said; a horse which grazed on some one of the islands, and had got a passion for leaping into boats—a very odd taste for a horse, I take it. And, besides, the whole of this transaction is so extraordinary, that I really know not what to believe about it; and the worst of it all is, that Siri, spite of her jests about the matter, is yet seriously changed since that time. She is often restless, and, as she never was before, and speaks sometimes seriously in a very extraordinary way. It is,

moreover, as if she had taken a kind of longing after death, a love for the dwellers of the interior of the earth and the mountains, which is to me incomprehensible; for although I was a fish, I never fell in love with the bottom of the lake, God be praised! and long not at all after it. Siri has always had a little of the night-moth about her, and is fond of getting into reveries with the moon and the stars, and, I fancy, with bats; but since this occurrence she has been more addicted to it than ever. God knows how it will ultimately terminate with her. In the meantime I am most anxious, and feel sad forebodings; and I cannot help liking the wild young thing."

"Yes," said Olof, after a silence, "I know not whether they be good or evil spirits that exercise their spell upon her, but I confess that she interests even me, and I would gladly become of some service to her—become to her—"

"Only not a lover," said Brigitta, with her arch look; "for a union between you, I believe, is not written in heaven."

"Ah! what!" said Olof, somewhat vexed; "why should we always be thinking of love and weddings? It would be just as likely that I should fall in love with a cloudshape, or with some fantastic legendary heroine, as with Siri. I would merely be to her a brotherly friend, and if she were to take a little liking to me, I do not believe that it would do her any harm."

Olof looked a little proud and a little wounded, and Brigitta coughed a little. And now they were before the parsonage, in the court of which they observed the game of the widower to be in full action, but the curate sitting solitary upon a spring-board, and looking melancholy as he felt his own pulse.

"I must go and grimace a little to him," said Brigitta, "and wake him up with a little Latin." And she gazed tenderly on her curate, and addressed him with much pathos,—

"O amicus meus carissimus! Tornera dinum nasus versus dinam serva humilissima, och säg om dinum tankibus cara colera kringum hennebus!"

"What gibberish! that is horrible to hear!" exclaimed the curate, and shuddered.

"Prosit!" said Brigitta; "can I not speak Latin then?"

"The whole difference which any clever man can perceive between thy Latin and mine is, that few people understand thine and every body understands mine. It is clear, then, that mine is the most intelligible, and that I speak plainer and better than thou. Is not that a logical sentence? or what?—thou art silent, Thou acknowledgest thyself, then, excelled in Latin and in logic.—Good. Expect me next in mathematics, thou."

The curate laughed shortly and hoarsely, but looked like the mildest sunshine, and became thereafter quite blithe—yes, so much so that he even participated in the play of the widower, where his long legs gave him a great advantage, so that he never failed to catch his bride, which much amused him. Siri was in her element, and wanted always to run as widow, taking good care not to catch any one, in order that she might be able to run all the more. Even Valborg ran: and, excited and

warmed by it, looked extremely handsome. Lieutenant Lasse took up, and had hid, with sighs, in his bosom a little silk handkerchief, which she lost in the play.

Mrs. Ingeborg sat by her husband's side in the portico, and watched the sport of the young people. She saw a happy smile on his countenance, and it reflected itself in hers.

The scene was a glad one, but a few days afterwards there was seen another, which we might term

### DIVISIONS.

ARE they, indeed, uncommon in the homes of earth, these divisions which separate heart and mind, and allow a species of spiritual draught to spring up in home, a winterwind which penetrates through every loosened joining, drives comfort out of every corner of the house, and makes the Penates tremble! Ah! few are the homes which they do not visit for a longer or shorter time; and the feelings which most embitter the mind, the impressions which most take from life all colour, are found nowhere so much as there. But frequently these dissensions are not so perilous as they seem. There passes through the world an invisible cement, which is constantly effectual in healing injuries and fractures. It works in us, it works in others—it works in circumstances great and small; and when we most certainly expect that all will go to pieces, behold! it is healed, and often better and sounder than before. Therefore, *to love* and *to wait* are an excellent philosophy of life in house and home. The good, but silent example belongs also to the same.

In the house at Mora a fresh and serious attempt had been made to mould Siri to more quietness, as well as to industry and womanly occupations, and this had put her into a wretched temper, and called forth a spirit of opposition, which showed itself particularly towards Mrs. Ingeborg.

One day Siri met her motherly counsel in such a manner as made her turn pale, and lay her hand on her heart, as Siri left the room in ill humour. A moment afterwards Olof opened the door of Siri's room, and went in. He found her busied with her mosses and stones, which she arranged into grottoes and groves, and filled them with figures of men and animals, which here lived in golden peace in a paradise, where Siri, in her imagination, loved to place herself. When Olof entered, she went towards him, extended to him a little box of birch-bark, saying,—

"Wilt thou have a pinch of snuff? Life is sometimes so wearisome that one must endeavour to cheer oneself as well as one can."

"No, I thank you, no snuff for me," said Olof, smiling; "I am come here not to receive, but to bestow a pinch myself."\*

Siri, laughing, asked, "of what kind?" and Olof answered, "Spanish." But when he now abandoned the tone of raillery, and began with all seriousness to represent to Siri the impropriety of her conduct, she was about hastily to quit the room, but Olof was at the door before

\* This alludes to a common term in Sweden, "to give one snuff," which means to take the person to task a little.—*Trans.*

her, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. Siri was now compelled to remain and listen to him, whether she would or not. And long she listened in gloomy silence, and with drawn-together eyebrows. But under Olof's brotherly admonition, at once severe and tender, by degrees her knotted-up temper gave way, and she began passionately to weep. Olof did not allow himself to be softened by this, but proceeded all the more seriously—the more earnestly—to talk to her of her duties, the object of her life as human being and as woman, and of her relationship as a child in this house where she was received with affection. Olof was himself quite moved by his own eloquence; and at once Siri arose, and extended towards him her clasped hands, exclaiming, "Oh, say no more! I see it all—I have been wrong. Oh, if some one had but talked with me thus! But I have been a neglected child, often treated more like a wild creature than a human being, and I have become so. But do not abandon—do not cast me off! have patience with me, and I will endeavour to improve. Be my friend, and do not let them demand too much of me. I am—I am—not happy!"

And with these words, Siri's head rested on Olof's bosom. He pressed her with brotherly affection to his heart, wiped away her tears, and spoke to her gentle and encouraging words. He felt himself so delightfully elevated, felt such a fraternal warmth towards the young maiden, who now, as it were, surrendered herself to his guidance, his protection, and firmly in his heart he resolved to be a friend and protector to her. Glad enough, however, was he in his soul that Brigitta was not the witness in this scene, and made her commentaries upon it.

For some days after this, was Siri most amiable in her appearance. Friendly and gentle, she did whatever she was requested; she sewed with Brigitta; attended Valborg in household affairs; she was at home during the time that the family were together, but at the same time glad, she was not. She was paler than usual; and her eyes stood often full of tears. One evening—but to this we will appropriate a separate chapter.

### TONES.—FOREBODINGS

WHITSUNTIDE approached, which this year fell in the beginning of June. Now was the time when the peasantry say, that God's angels fly up and down between heaven and earth; now approached the morning,—the morning of Whitsuntide, when they believe, as on Easter morning, that the sun dances in the heaven, and the children watch it through smoked glass, and cry to one another, "See! now it begins to dance!" The time when countless flowers glance, like beaming eyes towards the clouds; when

"Each thing living  
Seems to see God,  
And in His light rejoices."

Olof wandered in the beautiful May evening, along the river strand towards Orasidae; and enjoyed in full draught, not less spiritually than physically, the glorious life of nature. Small

pasture-lands gleamed emerald-green between the dark pinewoods lengthwise up the mountain sides; for the mountains, which in this district consist mostly of a soft sand-stone, are frequently cultivated by spots up to the very tops, and the Dal harvest's destroying angel, frost, commits less ravage on the heights than in the bosom of the valleys. The river ran so clearly blue between the green fields, and the pride of the Dal meadows, the campanula patula, began already on its long stalks to open its beautifully tinted flowers. Olof gazed on the river's playful windings, on the distant mountain veiled in an azure mystic shadow, and he thought on Siri; for that landscape, with its changing physiognomy, was to him as an image of the charming, enigmatical maiden, who continued more and more to occupy his mind. His heart was now softened towards her, for he called to mind her late acquiescence and her tears. As he thus went on and thought, he began to hear delicious notes of a flute. They played one of those northern melodies, in which a sad seriousness is pervaded by, I know not what, touching, innocent joy, and every close has a moriendo, in which the tone does not seem to terminate, but to disappear like a spirit in space, which goes to continue its song upon another shore. Deeply was Olof's soul now smitten by these notes, and by this holy still life—the life of Dalarna—which he seemed to drink in from them. The young man became warmed and elevated in spirit; and it seemed to him as if some deep and beautiful secret of existence was about in this moment to be revealed to him.

He knew well that the siren who called forth these tones was no other than Siri; and he followed them in order to discover her. He soon descried her, where she lay in the soft grass, by a verdant sepulchral mount near the river bank. Wild rosebushes, which in certain districts so richly adorn the margin of the Dale, budded around her, and the elk Durathor shook, as he lay at her feet, his little bells, as he already at a distance heard some one approaching. Siri, too, looked up; she blushed a little at Olof's presence, and greeted him in a friendly manner. She looked gentle, but not joyous.

"That was beautiful which you just now played!" said Olof.

"Did you think so?" said she; "then I will play more for you." She played again some melodious measures, and then said, "Do you know what these are?"

"No."

"That is the song that the river-sprite by Husby sings at night, as he sits on the rock in the water-fall, above the mill. The words are:

"And I hope, and I hope, that my Redeemer liveth!"

"Ah! how gladly would I hear him when he sings this!"

"And he actually sits there at night and sings?" said Olof, smiling, while he seated himself on a little hillock opposite to Siri.

"Yes, so they say," answered Siri, hesitatingly. "I know well that others say that it is all superstition; but then, much must be superstition which is right beautiful, and which sounds like truth."

"For example! Tell me something more about these things," said Olof, familiarly.

"For example; about the cairn-people," continued Siri. "Do you know what dwells in the cairn here? They are the cairn-people, for the sepulchral mount is a spirit-house. And when we, on a summer evening, lay ourselves down beside such a mount, we hear the music within. They are the cairn-people who play on their harps, and sing laments over their captivity; and call on men for salvation. If you promise it them, then they play blithely the whole night through. But if you answer them, 'You have no Redeemer!' then do they dash their harps to pieces, amid lamentations, and remain silent in the cairn. And, do you know, that in the springs live maidens, who are very beautiful, but who are captives; and beneath their silver roof long for the day of judgment, for then shall they be free. They are dumb, and look very sorrowful, and roll slowly their eyes, and shed large tears. Yes, in all streams and lakes, in mountain and wood, are these beings found, who are captive, and who seek after release. Ah, Olof! how do I pity all these; and gladly would I liberate them. I have often felt, and feel it again at the present time, how hard it is to be in thralldom; and only think, to be so all life long!" And Siri stooped her face into her hands and wept.

"But, my sweet child," represented Olof, "all these beings over whom you grieve are the offspring of phantasy. They do not exist!"

"Yes, so many people say," answered Siri; "but I know, nevertheless, that in some way or other, they do exist, although I cannot explain how. Often when I am out alone, by day or by night, I think that I will talk to all around me, and that all shall talk to me, and that I will get to understand about it. . . . Yes, I cannot tell what hinders, but it seems to me often as if I am bound, and need a deliverance; then should I understand every thing, and be good and happy. Ah, Olof! my mind is often very strangely affected; and when I see, then, any thing in nature which suffers, or which is ruined, which dies, then do I long to be able to help it; and it distresses me that I cannot."

"God knows, my little sister, whence you have got all these melancholy phantasies of nature. I think that all in nature is glorious and perfect."

"Yes, sometimes it does seem so! But I have seen deeper into it, and there is much that is evil and repulsive. I have seen how all is devoured,—all destroys itself in rotation; how the beasts persecute each other; and what barbarities men hourly and daily practise upon them. Ah, Olof! all is not good in nature! But, can you tell me, Olof whether the beast has a soul.—I mean a soul that outlives the body?"

"How! No! that I cannot; but I wish you would talk with my father about it, for he is a learned man, and has thought deeply on many subjects. And, now that I think of it, to-morrow is Sunday, and my father preaches; shall we go to church and hear him?"

"To church!" said Siri, her countenance clouding. "Into that old, gloomy house, and amongst so many people! Why not rather be under God's free heaven, now that it is so beautiful! The church fills me with awe."

"But go there, however, to-morrow,—do it for my sake!" implored Olof, warmly.

"For thy sake! Well, then—yes! But, Olof, promise to speak with them at home, that they do not imprison me at the embroidery-frame and with books. I am so young yet. Let me have my freedom yet a little while."

Both look and tone with which Siri spoke were so sincere.

But Olof made answer:—"Promise me, that you will as much as possible endeavour to oblige them at home, and I will manage so that you shall get as much freedom as possible. We will in the summer roam the country together, and you shall be my guide, Siri; and we will make longer excursions by land and water, and be very happy together."

"Ah! that would be charming!" exclaimed Siri, beaming with delight. "Ah! how happy that would be! And thou, Durathor!" continued she playfully to the elk which laid its head upon her knee. "thou shalt accompany us, thou little fool. Won't that be delightful, then? Hast thou a soul, Durathor! Canst thou tell me whether thou hast a soul that does not die? Yes, thou hast; I see it in thy beautiful eyes. Thou shalt one day enter paradise, and feed on the tree of life by the living water. And thou shalt have little gold bells on thy horns."

"Promise no more that you can make good, sister mine!" said Olof, smiling.

Siri was now glad as a child, and playful again; and as she went homeward with Olof, she showed him flowers and grasses that he had wished for, and he told her their botanical names. Once she held him back, saying, "Take care, tread not on that grass; there the elves have danced!" And she showed him a ring of azure-green grass, which was strongly distinguished from the rest of the grassy sward. Olof showed her that this grass was called *Sesleria cerulea*; and had also in Sweden the botanical name of elf-dance-grass.

"In paradise," said Siri, "I always fancy that the elves who dance on summer nights in the grass, and all animals, and all men are happy, and live in peace together. Does it not stand so in the Bible, Olof! that it was thus in the world before the serpent beguiled Eve to taste the apple! Ah! that she should have suffered herself to be so beguiled, and that it should have done so much mischief!"

"Yes," said Olof, "it was a most unfortunate transaction!" and both the young people laughed, in innocent levity, as people indeed do, when they at the very moment have no actual experience at all of the "unfortunate transaction."

In the best understanding with each other, came Olof and Siri home with Durathor.

Olof thought much of Siri this evening; and his thoughts were after this fashion.

"What an extraordinary blending is there in this maiden of childlike simplicity and deep thought; what singular presentiments and questions in the heart of this childlike being, of this half-wild life! Will Siri ever become like other ladies, sedate, domestic! And if not—what will she be! But Siri is yet so young. Young

girls have often romantic sentiments and cogitations, which vanish as they grow older, and are married. Yes, love will, perhaps, be the agent which shall develop the woman in her; which shall collect the flickering, scattered sparks, into a beautiful flame, for—for him who shall win her heart; for him who can lead her by tenderness and prudence. This wild Undine may one day be changed into the truest and most loveable woman, and—when the right husband comes!" Olof smiled in self-complacent thoughts. Siri's recent compliance and cordiality towards him had given him occasion to trust much in his influence upon her. She had not even smoked a single cigar since the evening that he had told her that it made her ugly. She desired to be handsome in his eyes,—that was clear as the sun!

"But our good Olof is, indeed, a somewhat self-complacent and conceited gentleman," may some reader or readeress here think; and may, therefore, feel disposed to withdraw from him the whole of her or his favour.

But this they could not do if they knew as we do, how many both great and little follies men grow out of while they go on deeper into life, or up into its better individuality; yes, how even one and another folly may be found in a person without injury to his worth—at least in a more liberal survey. But if they know that, or will believe us, and have not all too superficially fixed their attention on certain indications of the young man's disposition, they will, notwithstanding these, yet follow with pleasure its further development. But we return to our story, and betake ourselves to church.

## THE CHURCH.

THE bells of Mora rung. Its bells are widely celebrated, for they are all three tuned in harmony, and their sound has a singular beauty and fullness. They chimed now for divine service.

It is a noble spectacle which the Silja presents on its shores on Sundays. Leksand, Rättvick, and Mora are three parishes, which, in a circle of forest-clad mountains, enclose the "Eye of Dalarna," and which, with the parish of Orsa, with a population of between 30,000 and 40,000 souls, constitute the quintessence of Dalarna. But Mora is itself the mother parish. Churches, large white towers and spires, rise from the shores of the lake, and gleam in the far distance amid the blue waves and green meadows.

On Sundays, you see fleets of long and narrow boats, with from nine to ten pairs of oars each, and filled with from forty to fifty persons, glide rapidly over the lake, from the populous villages to the churches. Frequently you may see some twenty boats at once approach the shore. The costumes of the people are ornamental and fine, and evidence an almost pedantic care in make and arrangement. In Leksand, yellow colours predominate, in Rättvick red, in Mora black and white. But the head-dresses of the women, and the linen on their arms and around their necks, are universally of the most dazzling whiteness. Their round faces please pre-eminently by their freshness, fair complex-

\* Siri's sportive talk reminds us of Luther's saying to his dog, as it once was growling, "Knuere nicht Hänchen; auch du wirst in der Auferstehung ein goldenes Schwänzlein bekommen!"—Don't grumble, little Hans, for in the resurrection thou, too, shalt get a little golden tail!"

ion, blue, glad eyes, white teeth, and an expression of unruffled good humour. Amongst the men, you behold muscular forms, and not unfrequently noble heads adorned with a rich growth of hair, which, parted on the forehead and crown of the head, falls down over the neck in those rich, natural locks, with which romance so proudly embellishes its heroes, but which we can recollect to have really seen nowhere but amongst the peasants of Dalarna. For the rest, the people of different parishes in Dalarna are not merely distinguished from each other by their costume, but also by their physiognomies, dispositions, and occupations, which, in each parish, have their characterising peculiarities.

They assemble themselves publicly for the celebration of Sunday; and the poorest receive loans of clothes in which to go decently to the house of God. Thither you see whole households betaking themselves, from the old man on his crutches to the very infant at the breast, whom the mother or the father carries on the arm, in the softest, whitest little cloak of lamb-skin.

Wife and child, great and small, you frequently behold with large bouquets of a species of garlic, called butter garlic, in their hands, which is greatly liked in these districts, and with which the children in particular are entertained during divine service.

It is fine to see the throng of these thousands of people on the shore, in whose gay and diversified costumes yet prevails a keeping agreeable to the eye, in whose forms you behold health and vigour; and it is delightful to observe how, in this crowd, amongst such swarms of people stepping in and out of boats, you hear no oath, not a cross word, do not see a single unfriendly glance. Imagine not, however, that you have here a people cut out for idyls, a troop of shepherds and shepherdesses. You see at once that you have before you a strong and brave people, worthy to be the descendants of the ancient Scythians. The plough and the battle-axe, which, according to the saga "of burning gold," fell from heaven into the land of their ancestors, are still at the present day the symbols of their life and character. More gifted with understanding than phantasy, and fanatic only for freedom, the Dal people are, above all, ever ready to exchange the plough for the sword, and distinguish themselves by a strength and hardihood which, in combat, easily advance into severity and even into fury.

But their life is hard. For them ripen no melting fruits; none of the comforts of improvement sweeten and ameliorate their lives. In contest with a severe climate, with a thankless soil, they secure with difficulty their crops, and mix not seldom their bread with the bark of the pine-tree. Cut off from the rest of the world, except by travels abroad, during which, however, they congregate together, and on which they incessantly long after their homes. Closely shut up in their valleys, they would stiffen in soul and sense if they had not families and religion. With sincere affection they bend themselves down to their children, and with deep faith they look up to heaven. Even into the dogmatism of religion they love to penetrate; and many a subtle dogma, which to the educated,

but so multifariously dissipated men of the world, appears incomprehensible, is grasped by their simple and profoundly penetrating minds with equal ease and clearness. To their pastors they are devoted with child-like affection, when these do not show themselves unworthy of such attachment; and they are proud of their churches, and contribute freely to their support and embellishment. "You expend a great deal on your churches; I wonder that you find the means for it," said a traveller to a Dalman, as he contemplated the church of Mora, and its new and glittering copper roof. "We expend all the less on our own houses," replied the Dalman, gravely. And so it is. The huts which shelter this vigorous and large-limbed people are, perhaps, smaller and more insignificant than any others in Sweden.

The people of Mora are distinguished in appearance from the peasantry of the other parishes by a grave bearing, a darker, more determined physiognomy, and keener eyes. You hesitate, perhaps, at times, to address a solemn-looking Mora-man; but, when he answers, you are enraptured by the pensive, musical melody of his speech. A certain child-like innocence makes itself felt in his tones, and the familiar *thou*, with which he commonly addresses you, does the heart good, and transports it into more pious and simple times. Every parish in Dalarna prosecutes its own distinct branch of industry, independent of its agriculture. In Mora, the people are well known for their mathematic and arithmetical capacity, and they manufacture clocks which are dispersed over the whole kingdom. On the eastern shore of the parish, lying along the Silja, there is a little watchmaker's shop in every second peasant's hut; on the western, joiner's work is made. The women, as indeed throughout all Dalarna, have distinguished themselves even by their skill in handicraft arts. The most ingenious fabrics of horsehair, the finest and most beautiful watchchains and necklaces of hair, come out of their large and coarse hands. But I fear we shall never get to church!

The family of the parsonage of Mora had watched from the strand the approaching boats loaded with church-going people, which were a great multitude; for not less than ten bridal couples are to be united this Sunday in the church of Mora. Amongst the people who were assembled on the strand, Mrs. Ingeborg observed a young peasant woman, who wept bitterly, and she hastened to her, and inquired what was the occasion of her sorrow: The young woman related, with silent grief, that she had been a widow some months, and had now, as the rowers at Bytesholmarné exchanged oars, let fall into the lake her wedding-ring, the sole memorial that she possessed of her husband, and of their short but happy marriage, and that she had no hope whatever of ever getting it again, for the part of the lake into which it had fallen was "a bottomless deep."\*

Mrs. Ingeborg consoled the young widow by her cordial sympathy, and by inviting her to din-

\* Regarding the excessive depth of the Silja, there are many traditions amongst the peasantry of Dalarna. One of those relates, that the spirit of the lake was once heard crying, "If you will know my depth, you must measure my length!"

ner at the parsonage, where every Sunday some farmers and their wives were invited to the professor's hospitable board.

But now the harmonious bells of Mora pealed out in full concert, and the great bridal-procession, which had already arranged itself before the parsonage, now began its march towards the church, headed by our long curate. Immediately after him walked the married men, two and two, all in blue dresses. Then came the bridegrooms, one after the other, in blue coats, yellow buckskin lower garments, and white stockings, with a fine white handkerchief hanging down, with tassels at the corners, fastened on the sleeve of the right arm. After the bridegrooms came the bridesmaids, great and small, all in green dresses, and their heads encircled with beads and ribands. After them, the assistants of the brides, that is, married women who were nearly related to them, and who were to attend on the brides. Then came the brides walking one after the other. Of these, there were two crown-brides, or "grannbrudar," and the other eight were green-brides, "gronbrojdi," in the language of Dalarna. The two first-named were two dowried daughters of farmers; had black bombasin gowns, with short sleeves and white cuffs. Their dresses were, as usual, adorned with a variety of finery; coloured scarfs and fine depending ribands. The neck and bosom were covered with a necklace of many-coloured glass-beads, silver chains, with attached silver rix-dollars or medals. On their heads, they bore each her gilt silver tiara, with a garland, and a perpendicular wand of half-a-yard high, covered with patches of bright-coloured and variegated cloth, so disposed as to represent flowers. Farther, they wore fine, yellow, embroidered gloves, and a muff, whence hung down a number of neckerchiefs of different colours. Red stockings and ordinary shoes, with high heels, completed the costume.

The costume of the "green-brides,"—equally honourable but less showy than that of the "crown-brides"—consisted of a light-green jacket of the ordinary cut, a petticoat of brilliant chalon, and a coloured apron. On the neck they wore, like the crown-brides, many silver chains, and on the head, the usual cap for the married woman, of fine Dutch linen, and upon that the unmarried woman's triangular head-dress. According to a primitive custom, which is yet retained, although without a tinge of superstition, every bride and bridegroom carried a silver penny in the left stocking. Some soldiers in full uniform closed the procession.

At the church-gate they were met by the beadle of the church, who cleared the way into it for the entering procession, and gave the sign for the commencement of the singing. All the people standing sung the psalm 339 of the Swedish psalm-book :

"Blest is the man who feareth God," &c.

The congregation on this day consisted of several thousand persons. The seats and aisles of the church were all full, and a great multitude of great and little children were tripping along the aisles, or were fed by their mothers to keep them quiet, or slept soundly on their knees. And ever as the service proceeded, went the old verger with slow steps and a fierce

look through the aisles, sending long peering glances on all sides, and poking his wand under the nose of first one and then another sleeping old woman; whereupon it—that is the nose—started in terror aloft into the air, giving to one or another suspiciously drooping heads a little knock. But the young and stout men who slept, he permitted to—sleep in peace.

Olof, who sat so that he could see Siri, looked at her from time to time, and observed with pleasure that she appeared cheerful and attentive.

The powerful and beautiful singing for which these congregations are so well known, and which resounds with a force that renders the organ superfluous, and perfectly drowns it where it is to be found, made an obvious impression upon her. And when she heard these words read from the altar :—

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

"Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Then glanced Siri, involuntarily, at Olof, with flashing, inquiring eyes, full of anticipation.

But when the professor's expressive and energetic discourse, issuing from the very depths of his soul, sounded from the pulpit, when he thanked God, who had sent His sun and His gospel equally to light up and warm the most secluded valleys, as well as the most cultivated heights, then it grew warm in the youth's as well as in the maiden's heart, and their beaming, tearful glances sought not each other but the Invisible One.

The bridal couples, who sat in the choir, near the altar, had each a psalm-book in rich bindings, from which the bride and bridegroom read in common. During prayers they advanced and knelt by the altar. The blessing was pronounced over them all at once, as they knelt each under their bridal canopy. It was a beautiful and solemn sight. After divine service the bridal pairs returned in the same order to the parsonage, and there rested awhile, and were hospitably entertained by Mrs. Ingeborg.

The rest of the people dispersed themselves along the shore, and refreshed themselves from the provisions they had brought with them. Little boys went round, carrying baskets of little brown cakes, which they offered with the concise exclamation, "Buy!" The sun shone; the scene was lively and glad, though of a quiet fashion.

Siri went to Olof, and asked him the meaning of the epistle read before the altar; and Olof referred her to his father. It had, indeed, been the intention of Olof, through to-day's service, and through the impression which his father's talent for preaching seldom failed to create, to turn the heart of Siri towards him, and warm it towards the relation of teacher and pupil which was now soon to take place between them, and which she so much dreaded. Now, however,

when Oloff bade her speak with his father, she shook her head, and withdrew.

In the afternoon Siri accompanied the young farmer's widow, who had lost her wedding-ring, across the lake, and made her show her the place where it fell in. In the meantime, Olof had a long conversation with his mother and Brigitta, concerning Siri, in which they discussed the plan which it was necessary to pursue, in order effectually to promote her development. They concluded on adopting mild and prudent measures, and Olof calculated more and more certainly on his influence over her, than he would venture to avow.

Some time after this the professor began with Siri their reading and conversation hours, which she anticipated with so much terror; and it was with a mixture of trembling and defiance that she now submitted herself to a course of teaching which she regarded as a compulsion and a fetter to her free spirit. But this feeling speedily vanished and gave place to one of a totally different kind. Nordevall was not one of those Watchers of Zion, whom you could call a "Watcher of the Tomb," who forbade questions and inquiries; he was a man of the resurrection, who kept pace with the development of his time, and when he found men possessed of wrong opinions, he was only concerned to bring them to better and juster ones. But while he set no bounds to the freedom of the understanding, he demanded rigorously the purity of mind, the seriousness of purpose, which alone open the innermost realms of life to their glance. He knew that human reason—this inquirer of divine origin—can trace out, if it cannot invent eternal ideas, immortal conceptions, and he was disposed to consider, with a celebrated father of the church, that the words, "Seek and ye shall find," were pre-eminently addressed to those who in the paths of thought seek eternal truth.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;" were the gospel, the words of the Master, which he often pronounced to young inquirers, inspiringly; "if," added he, "you continue his genuine disciples."

And now he permitted without fear the inquiring and thirsty spirit of his young disciple, freely to sweep soaringly round through all the regions of life, and there stir up a whole ocean of questions and doubts. Certain of his power to administer to her that light which for her should restore to harmony this yet chaotic world; he himself experienced, through the life-overflowing maiden, a salutary, quickening, and invigorating impulse.

Siri again, who felt her mind rather enfranchised than bound by her instruction and instructor, who discovered new traits and objects of interest open before her, penetrated with avidity into this new life, and, as it were, plunged herself into this world.

But true is the proverb that "a fool can ask more questions than ten wise men can answer;" and that "the castle of truth is not taken by storm;" and Siri's self-willed and impatient disposition became often as trying to herself as to her teacher. The mode in which truth grows clear in the human mind; the graduation which belongs to all development; the unequal progress which is inseparable therefrom; these

became all too consuming for the young maiden's slight stock of patience. That which she did not get immediately, she believed that she should never get; and when a beam of light which she once saw was again hidden by a cloud, then she despaired, and became rebellious against her instructor and against the whole world.

It was under an attack of this state of mind that Valborg one day found her weeping on the turf under a lime-tree in the garden. Valborg inquired why she wept, and Siri answered, "Because it seems to me that it is wearisome to live. Much better were it to die, than should one be away from all vexation. It is not pleasant to live, and I do not see the use of it."

"But we must still live though," said Valborg, with the somewhat bitter resignation that certain poor mortals betray whose life, by long stagnation, has grown, as it were, ossified.

"Oh! that is intolerable!" said Siri, beside herself; wrung her hands, and bit into them. Valborg cast upon her a proud and contemptuous glance, and went away.

But Siri's instructor was calm under all the changes of mood in her soul, and this calm combined with his tenderness and continuous guidance, operated by degrees beneficially upon her. She acquired a sort of silent enthusiastic desire for the holy sacrament, which should complete her initiation into a profounder life. She imagined that clearness and peace must then enter her soul, and she prayed secretly in childish ignorance to receive it, and then die.

Olof's society, and the long excursions they made together, were to her a salutary dissipation, and the instructions in natural history that he gave her interested her greatly; but then she questioned and questioned, always driving to the origin of things; and when her young teacher gave her the uttermost reply which science is yet able to give, she was astonished that here in the most familiar forms of nature she was met, or stopped by—a mystery. Hence arose fresh queries, new forebodings and disquiets, which Siri could not then anticipate, only carried within them the seeds of a higher, deeper repose.

In the meantime her life was rich, and beneath the alternations of storm and sunshine through which she continually passed, her heart was drawn by degrees nearer to her paternal teacher, the professor, and that was a great delight to him, for the young maiden became continually more dear and precious to him, and her gloom and coldness had been an actual affliction to him.

Singular, however, was it that the young damsel never seemed to find herself quite at ease in that home where so much esteem and tenderness were shown her; and notwithstanding her recent greater approximation towards the professor, there appeared to be an invisible, inscrutable obstacle, which stood separately between her and the parental hearts which desired nothing better than to clasp her to themselves as a beloved child.

Olof in vain pondered upon this, upon what it could be: and the same did he also regarding the gloomy moods of mind which often fell upon Siri in the midst of her most joyous moments,

and the enigmatical words which fell from her. She continued to him, as to all others, close shut up, in this respect, and Olof began with and ended in riddles.

### FOLLIES AND ENIGMAS.

BRIGITTA had remarked, that ever since a certain time, Siri was in the habit of rowing out every morning early upon the Silja, accompanied by a peasant girl of the village, of twelve years old; and when she one morning asked Siri "Whither she rowed out so early?" she answered, "To Bytesholmarné, to fish."

"And what fish dost thou catch there?" demanded Brigitta; "I never remember to have eaten any fish that thou hast caught."

"I angle for gold fish!" said Siri, smiling; "and they are difficult to catch."

"Gold fish! Those I must see!" exclaimed Brigitta. "I will accompany thee out."

"Oh, no!" said Siri, blushing; "that is not worth the while; it is not amusing to witness, and besides thou art frightened on the lake."

"Yes, but now I will, at all events, see what gold fish is found in the Silja, and how thou pullest them up; and I shall go with thee."

It was of little use opposing what Brigitta set herself determinedly about. She went.

But the voyage was not particularly attractive to Brigitta, for it blew a little on the lake, and the mischievous Siri could not omit secretly helping the waves to rock the boat, to Brigitta's great terror, who on this held herself fast by the edge of the boat, and exclaimed,

"See there, in Heaven's name, shall we now become fishes again! Sit thee still, then, Siri! Wilt thou make the boat inevitably upset! Little, naughty, sweet, good-for-nothing Siri, sit still, I tell thee, or—I say nothing, but this will I say, that when I am silent and turn pale, then I am *very* angry."

But when Siri now saw Brigitta get very angry, she flung herself down upon her knees, kissed, and embraced her; but then the little boat only rocked the more, and Brigitta shrieked and scolded Siri, till Siri cried from excessive laughter. It became still worse when they reached the nearest Bytesholm, and then, instead of lying to at the little fishing-village there, the young peasant-girl stopped at a distance from the shore at a deep place, and Siri began quite calmly and seriously to undress in the boat. Brigitta at this stared in wild astonishment. At length she said,

"It is certain that thou hast a most extraordinary way of fishing. What wilt thou do now! what is to come of this! Dost thou really think that I shall sit here and see thee drown thyself! Don't move from the spot where thou now art, if thou dost not mean me to shriek so that all the parish of Mora shall be in uproar."

Siri during this monologue had nearly died with laughter, but at once she grew serious, and said, "Silence now!" with so determined a tone, and stood at the same time so still, that Brigitta was quite astonished; but, in the next instant, Siri plunged head-foremost into the depth of the billows. Brigitta did not shriek,

but made a movement as if she would follow her, but the young peasant-girl said quite calmly, "Ah! then, she will come up again immediately. She has done this now three weeks; it is after the wedding-ring of Martin's Stina that she goes down."

"How, my heavenly God! that, then, is the gold-fishing! Ah, the girl!" burst forth from Brigitta, at once joyful and terrified. And now a white arm emerged from the waves, and, immediately afterwards, Siri's flaxen head. She smiled at Brigitta, drew a deep breath, and laid in the boat her gathering from the bottom of the lake, a handful of mud with some shining stones amongst them, but—no ring. Spite of Brigitta's prayers, Siri plunged down twice more, and when she came up the third time, behold! there gleamed clear gold out of the black mud, and Brigitta and Siri exclaimed at once,

"The gold-fish! the gold-fish!"

The wedding-ring which Siri had, with indefatigable perseverance, dived after now for the space of three weeks, was at length found.

"God be praised!" exclaimed Brigitta—"now one can breathe again. Get thee dressed now, Siri! Thou art quite blue with cold and with holding thy breath. Thou goest on the most hideous undertakings, and ought never to be left to thyself. Thou wilt never rest till, by one means or another, thou hast made an end of thyself."

But Brigitta was so kind to Siri all the time that she was scolding her, and Siri was so glad at the recovery of the ring, and at the delight which it would give poor Martin's Stina, that the voyage back was as calm and happy as the row out had been uneasy. And Siri now betook herself onward to the young widow.

In the meantime Brigitta went to her brother to relate to him the morning's occurrence, and when she saw his eyes flash at the intelligence, she exclaimed,

"Lasse, thou art my own brother—thou hast thy heart in the right place, although it hangs a little loosely sometimes. Now only don't go and fall in love with Siri, that I enjoin thee, for then would really too many follies be the result of it; that may fairly be dispensed with. See! thy waistcoat is torn; I will take and mend it. But what is this! Whence hast thou got this little silk handkerchief? I believe—yes, really, is it not Valborg's!"

"She dropped it in the widow-play the other evening," said Lasse, somewhat blushing and apologising.

"Lasse! Lasse!" said Brigitta, shaking her head, "thou wilt never be wise. Three months ago it was Josephine Silversko's scarf, which you carried like a blue riband under your waistcoat, and now it is—"

"Ah!" said Lieutenant Lasse, "this is something so very different."

"So very different! yes, for this is a handkerchief and not a scarf—that I see well enough; and such a nice little handkerchief into the bargain—such good chequered lutstring! Valborg certainly would not lose it for a good deal, and I shall, therefore, honestly restore it to her. She is an orderly person, is Valborg."

"Person! Brigitta, thou talkest very little—"



"Why, yes, is she not a person! what is she, then? You think, most likely, that I ought to call her a goddess; but as I know that she is a poor sinful mortal like us all, but a very orderly girl, she shall, the very first opportunity, get her handkerchief again."

"Brigitta, thou art quite savage! Hast thou then actually no feeling for me, thy own brother?"

"No, not the least, when it comes to the restoration of goods that my dear brother has stolen, but a great deal for thy having whole waistcoats. Now I take it with me to repair it, and Valborg's handkerchief to give it to her again."

"Well, she will get to know, however, that I wore it upon my heart."

"Under thy waistcoat, thou shouldst say; yes, but she shall likewise know, that just before there rested there a certain scarf."

"No, Brigitta, no!"

"Yes, Lasse, yes! Don't imagine that thou shalt make young girls believe that it is more an affair of the heart with thee than it is. I am much too fond of thee to allow thee to have sundry heavy sins concerning scarfs and shawls which rest, and yet shall come to rest there. Thank thy good fortune, my dear brother, that thou hast a sister who manages better for thee than thou dost for thyself. The waistcoat thou shalt have back in a quarter of an hour. Now I will go and cast an eye on my curate, and see whether he is to be found within time and space. It is horrible what a deal I have to see after. I wonder that I don't become confused;" and Brigitta laughed and nodded at her brother as she left the room, and the lieutenant sighed, and consoled himself, and hummed—

*"How sad and short were this life of ours,  
Were it not brightened with pleasure."*

Lieutenant Lasse was one of those people of whom a joyous levity makes agreeable men of society, later, alas! often converts into rakes, and sometimes into betrayers. Pity, eternal pity, that any thing so agreeable and gay should often terminate so wearisomely! And Lieutenant Lasse had so good a heart, that it would have been greatly to be regretted if it had gone so with him; and, therefore, Heaven had given him a wise sister, to whom he was sincerely attached, and whom he would not willingly do any thing to offend. For the rest, he resembled her in appearance, but was plainer, was pitted with small-pox, had light hair, the whitest teeth, and a good-tempered, jovial expression, which made an agreeable impression.

Not without a little confusion did he see Valborg later in the day; but as Valborg was just as coldly polite and just as tranquil as before, Lieutenant Lasse soon recovered from his embarrassment, and, uncertain whether Brigitta had betrayed his little secret or not, he quickly joked, sighed, and laughed as lightly as before.

The professor, perfectly enchanted with Siri's fishing up of the widow's ring, said warmly to his wife, "The girl is nothing common! A glorious nature! Thou wilt see that one day we shall have joy in her. My little woman, she must have her freedom. All people should not be cast in one mould. It is a good spirit which directs the maiden."

"Mayest thou be right," said Mrs. Ingeborg, with glistening, tearful eyes.

"If we could but," continued Nordevall, "make her a little less shy, a little more sociable with us. She has something for me infinitely refreshing, and it grieves me deeply that I cannot win her confidence, as I could wish. But with time and patience that may yet succeed."

In the evening of this day raged a fierce north wind, and masses of grey, rugged clouds swept over the heavens, and concealed the mountain-tops. To counteract the unfriendliness of the weather, Mrs. Ingeborg called the young people together to tea, patchwork, and games, and as the young people of Sollerön were just now at Mora, the invitation was responded to with much delight.

While the patchwork went on, riddles were told and guessed. Mrs. Ingeborg asked, "Who is the great one who careers over the earth, who swallows up mountain and wood, and makes the sun dim, who is afraid of the blast, but not of man?"

And it was quickly answered that the "great one" was the mist.

Again Mrs. Ingeborg asked,

"What is that which is better than God and worse than Satan, and which the dead eat, and which if the living were to eat, they would die?"

This riddle demanded long consideration, but was ultimately answered triumphantly; \* and there was a general cry for "more riddles."

"You are quite too acute this evening," said Mrs. Ingeborg; "I must hit upon some more difficult ones for you. Listen to this: what wonderful thing was that which I saw at the king's court, which turned its feet up towards the sun, and its head . . . ." But here Mrs. Ingeborg stopped short, while she seemed struck with astonishment at something that passed outside of the house, and which she saw from the window by which she stood. She gasped for breath, put her hand to her heart, and hastily left the room. Siri gazed also eagerly out of the window. Olof followed with his eyes her looks, but saw nothing distinctly except a tall stranger who passed slowly along the highway in front of the parsonage, and disappeared behind the adjoining buildings. But scarcely had Olof caught sight of the darkly clad stranger, when, with a cry of surprise, he sprang rapidly out of the room, so that the silk-enshreds flew in confusion around.

"Heaven bless us! heaven bless us!" exclaimed the workers, and, "What marvellous thing was that which Olof caught sight of!" and they also gazed curiously out of the window, and saw—nothing.

"It might have been Neck himself," exclaimed Olof, as, ten minutes later, he entered quite out of breath. "I fancied that I recognised most perfectly an acquaintance passing by, and I sprang out in order to detain him; but he had vanished, and I cannot conceive where he is gone so speedily."

"What he? what acquaintance?" was demanded on all sides.

"Oh!" said Olof, "merely a wonder that I saw at the king's court, or, more properly, by

\* The answer, of course, is "Nothing."—T.A.

Stygg Force.\* But I ought already to have related that adventure to you, for it is nearly the only one of interest that I met with on my three years' tour."

"An adventure! an adventure! Oh relate! relate!" exclaimed the young people.

"Let me look at thee, Olof," said Brigitta; "thou must be an actual lion, ay, a tiger, or something more extraordinary, since thou hast had interesting adventures on thy travels. King Solomon was certainly wrong when he said that there is nothing new under the sun. And thy adventure! take care now that it shall be perfectly memorable. We listen with all our ears."

And Olof commenced:

"About six weeks ago, on my journey hither, I was at Osmundsberg, near Boda Chapel, in Rättvick, and stopped there awhile to botanise, and seek petrifications, which I knew to be found there. I was desirous also to see the so-called 'Flog,' or 'dragon-fire,' which shews itself there on certain nights. I made also an excursion to the Stygg Force: I hope you all know what the Stygg Force is!"

"Why yes, pretty well."

"Well, that is good, for it is not easy to describe. First and foremost, it is no force at all, for the water is in quantity inconsiderable; but it is still a thoroughly dreadful place, in a wild wood, whither you arrive only by most dangerous paths and ways; and a more desolate savage scenery, more perpendicular precipices and cliffs, you rarely meet with. In the centre of the widest chasm there projects a small and steep rock, like a crooked back, and terminates abruptly in the midst of the abyss; and it is related that a steward of the country there, who was tired of his life, rode one evening full speed out upon this rock, with the intention of going headlong over it; but just as the horse came upon the extreme verge of the gulf, thirty fathom deep, it wheeled suddenly round and galloped back, bearing with it its astonished rider.

"To the left of the fall is a kind of grotto, as if it were burnt into or hewn out of the mountain, which is called the Witch Cave; and it is said that formerly it was the resort of witches or robbers."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Brigitta; "it begins to sound famously. I am all anticipation of splendid and horrible things: I get quite warm."

"There is also," continued Olof, smiling at Brigitta's enthusiasm, "a lofty sharp sand-ridge, called the Goat's Back."

"Goat's Back! that does not sound so well," interposed Brigitta; "don't go and tumble from the Goat's Back. That sounds unromantic."

"And on the sides of the Goat's Back there grows a plant of the class Gynandria, of which I was determined to have a specimen."

"O sad! there we have it: our hero tumbles from the Goat's Back."

"No, he did not tumble; he went carefully, or, more properly, crept carefully down, and then crept carefully up again with an *Epipactis atrorubens*, as the banner of victory in his hand."

"Well, God be praised!"

"I then wandered towards the side where the witch-cavern was."

"That sounds nobly!"

"There aloft shoots forth a small crag, which is called Red-tail."

"Red-tail! admirable! If thou hangest thyself on Red-tail, well, I will never again—"

"And when I had gained the summit, I descried a little uncommon species of fern, which grew a few fathoms below me, on the end—"

"Of the Red-tail, perhaps."

"Precisely: of the Red-tail. This I could not let alone, and so began clambering down the steep on hands and knees."

"Eh! Eh! Eh! that will never do."

"No, it did not do remarkably well: stones gave way under my feet, and small bushes that I laid hold on tore up by the roots. Thus I steered my way some yards downwards, and began to see the moment when I should hang myself aloft on the Red-tail, and for ever forfeit Brigitta's favour, or at full speed plunge headlong into the abyss. But just as I felt myself on the way thither, an arm was extended from the mountain, a hand grasped my neck, or rather my coat-collar; and almost in the same instant I found myself transported into a kind of grotto in the mountain, and standing full opposite to a figure, which might well have been the genius of Stygg Force, so strange and fantastic did he look."

"Ah, charming! quite charming! That could not be better."

"When the astonishment of the first moment was over, I could not refrain from contemplating my deliverer, thinking of Walter Scott's Balfour of Burley, and other gloomy figures in his romances. He was tall and slender, thin, and wore a black, coarse, but tasteful dress; his hair, dark and sprinkled with grey, lay in disorder on his brow; his countenance was of a sallow brown, and plain, if you will, yet interesting, through a trace of suffering which seemed there to have committed its ravages, and to have made it old before its time, for he could not be much above forty years of age. There was something dejected, a desolation in that countenance, and you seemed to see in him the ruin of some great creation. The eyes were strange, and I hardly knew whether handsome or ugly, but their glance was wild; and above all there was something about this man which did not inspire you with confidence. I should not exactly have chosen him for a travelling companion, although the meeting with him in the mountain was to me thoroughly welcome. He addressed me, not in Swedish, but in German, and with a voice which was at once melodious and gloomy. He was a traveller, by birth a Tyrolese, was familiar with mineralogy, and was here, like myself, from curiosity. When he had conducted me out of the Witch Cavern by a more convenient path than that by which I had descended, we botanised awhile together, while he asked me sundry questions regarding my home and my circumstances in life. In the meantime I obtained no knowledge of him, except

\* But we strongly suspect that Olof, for Brigitta's sake, has improvised a Red-tail. We have indeed seen the Goat's Back, but no Red-tail, by Stygg Force.

\* Cataract, as still used in Cumberland, &c.

that his name was Angermann, and that he was now on a journey to Norway. I invited him to Mora, and he promised to call upon me if his time would permit. He was a singularly interesting man, also, to talk with, and I regretted very much to be obliged to part from him; but our paths lay in diverse directions, he said, and did not seem to be solicitous for my company.

"See then, dear Brigitta, just so much and so little was there of this adventure; and a moment ago I fancied that I saw this very man, the Tyrolese, my rescuer at Stygg Force, go past here; and I cannot at this instant believe that it was not he, nor conceive how he vanished. Fancy if he were really the spirit of the Stygg Force, and no Tyrolese, after all! What do you think?"

"He may be just what he pleases," said Brigitta, "so that he only comes here, and that I may get to see him; for curious he must be, and I am very fond of the curious."

"Could my mother be ill?" asked Olof of Brigitta; "she left us so hastily."

"I fancy she is not very well," answered Brigitta, "and that occurs sometimes: it is her spasm of the heart that seizes her, and then she requires to be awhile quite alone. When the attack is over, she comes back, and is best pleased that no one should notice it or inquire about it."

They talked yet awhile longer of Olof's adventure, and of the mysterious wanderer, and then Lasse and Brigitta set the games a-going. Later in the evening came also Mrs. Ingeborg, and enlivened them by her participation; and the spirit of the Stygg Force was forgotten altogether in "weaving homespun" and "borrowing fire."

In the night raged a furious storm: the casements in the parsonage rattled unceasingly; the Silja roared wildly; but in the midst of the night and the tempest were heard the delicious tones of a flute, as if they floated on the wings of the wind. Siri, the singular maiden, was out in the stormy night; but that was not unusual with her, and they now suffered it to pass.

## EXCURSIONS.

We begin these excursions ourselves, by flying over several weeks, during which the family life at the parsonage of Mora flowed on calm and fresh, as the river along its shore. Midsummer was past—July was come. This is the time of relaxation for the clergy of this district, for at this season the peasant with his household proceeds to the cattle or Sater booths, frequently six or seven Swedish miles from their villages. In the deep forests, where they find fresh pastures for their beasts, where they churn their butter, make their cheese, and commonly remain till the termination of the month of August. From the commencement of the month of July, you meet on the roads the fitting families, with cattle and house utensils. The father of the family drives the wagon, upon which blooming children peep forth from amid pails and work-tools. The wife generally goes alongside, keeping an eye on the cow or

cows. Occasionally you meet a solitary, busily knitting old woman, wandering along light and briskly, as if age were to her no burden, surrounded by sundry goats, which follow her like faithful dogs: she, too, is nomadic—she, too, wanders forth to the cattle-booths! If she stop and talk friendly with you for awhile, the goats gather caressingly around her. And soon do you observe, out of the dark and vast pine-woods which clothe the heights, light azure columns of smoke here and there ascending: there is the fitting family, there is the solitary old woman with her goats; they have arrived at the Sater hut, and have kindled fire on its hearth; and the travellers from the great world, who from a distance behold these peaceful indications of those, often to them, inaccessible dwellings, heave perhaps a sigh of longing for such secluded home, for this nomadic life, where the pure air which the body continually breathes streams also into the soul—where the daily, simple, and fresh cares shut out the sorrow "which devours the heart."\*

But, while the peasantry ride and roam abroad, the gentry do not sit still. The clergy, and the few gentlemen who besides them have small crown locations,† here and there in Dalarna, generally visit each other during this season, or travel to make themselves acquainted with districts still new to them in their beautiful province. And now it is in its full beauty, with its waters, its mountains, its valleys, at once consonant and varying, like Rousseau's tricordium. The sward is interwoven with Linnéa, and winter-green, the star-wort, and the pine-flower, all white flowers, which love the shade of the pine-woods, fill them with fragrance, and bloom in modest beauty at the feet of the ancient giants of the forest. Nowhere are found more flowery meadows, nowhere are gathered finer strawberries; and along the warmest valleys winds the Dalefl, cool and clear, in countless meanderings, now with stooping pines on lofty Mjellgar,‡ now with wild roses and Spirea Ulmaria in the low grassy lands on its banks.

The family at Mora had long projected a pleasure excursion to Eldfal, which none of its members had yet seen, but of whose wild beauty they had often heard. And as in the middle of July the weather began to be very steady and beautiful, they now resolved to devote a few days to the little expedition. The young people felicitated themselves indescribably on the prospect of seeing this beautiful wild region, its porphyry quarry, its porphyry works, and on coming to the spot "where the highway terminates," and the wild, pathless woods commence, which stretch away to the very frontiers of Norway. Siri was enchanted at the idea of making the journey with Olof on horse-back, and therefore the more freely to be able to traverse the country. The professor rejoiced in the gladness of the young people, and

\* Expression in Odin's great hymn.

† Estates belonging to the crown, and in possession of the functionaries for the time being.

‡ Mjellgar are sand-banks which are produced by falls of earth, which annually occur on the banks of the river, and which carry with them great pieces of land and trees into its depths. On these there arise sometimes, as at Lek-sand, the most picturesque shapes of ruins, broken arches, columns, walls, pyramids, caves, &c.

Mrs. Ingeborg, besides this, to have the pleasure of greeting Miss Lotta, one of the acquaintances of her youth, who had a little estate in Elfdal, where she dwelt, and whither she had invited the whole Mora family, because in all this district there was not a single inn. But Miss Lotta was hospitality itself, and rivalled in this respect another house in Elfdal, which we do not here name, but most gratefully remember. Brigitta also congratulated herself that she should see Miss Lotta.

"But who is this Miss Lotta?" demanded Olof, somewhat impatiently, who seemed for several days to hear nothing talked of but Miss Lotta, "and what is there so extraordinary about her; and why do people rejoice so much in the prospect of seeing her!"

It was the evening preceding their setting out, that Olof thus inquired, as the family was assembled in the porch, to enjoy the cool and delicious evening air. Mrs. Ingeborg, who, after having well packed the provision basket, was pleasantly reposing in the midst of her domestic group, answered gladly:

"Who is Miss Lotta! a perfectly simple human being, who had the courage to go her own way through life, and by her own vigour has shaped her own destiny. I will relate to you shortly

#### MISS LOTTA'S HISTORY.

"Miss Lotta was of an old noble line. She had lost her father; but she had a mother, a sister, seven uncles, and seven aunts. The whole of the family lived in the town of W—.

"She had also had a brother, who, according to the law of inheritance still in force in Sweden, had, after the father's death, taken twice as much out of the estate as his sisters, which he afterward squandered away, and more too, for having made away with all his own, he began to live on the little property of his mother and sisters—he was guardian to the latter—and would have concluded by ruining them entirely, if death had not prevented him. Out of the fragments of the former property the mother built a fresh a little abode for herself and her two daughters.

"Miss Lotta's sister was handsome, and possessed talents which she continually used. She played on the guitar, cultivated her talent of singing, and painted flowers; was called amongst the relations 'the talented,' and was looked upon as one that must make a great fortune in the world. Miss Lotta, again, had received from nature a strong body, a tolerably ugly countenance, a warm heart, and mustaches, whence amongst the relations she was jestingly called the major, but still more frequently in earnest, 'poor Lotta;' Lotta had neither talents nor attraction, and it was thought there was no sort of fortune that she could make in the world. But Lotta herself did not view the matter in so melancholy a light. Already in her very early years she said to herself, 'I can never become a fine or agreeable lady, but I will be an able manager of the house.' But this was not so easy, for Lotta's mother lived on a small income, which just, and no more, enabled her to make a shift to exist with her two daughters, and Lotta found at home no scope for her spirit of activity. Besides, as the mother was much thought

of in society, and her sister was a handsome and accomplished girl, they were much invited to the coffee and tea parties amongst the relations, and our poor Major must then accompany them, and have to sit overlooked in the dance, and silently swallow her cups of coffee and tea, and her sighs with them. Our poor Major was ready to fall into a fixed idea about herself, and sat perfectly melancholy and dejected, while sister Emily sung and painted flowers, and exerted her talents the day through.

"One fine morning, Miss Lotta went to her mother and said:

"Mother, I will no longer sit and consume thy already too scanty bread. I can no longer remain unoccupied without danger of falling into stupidity or follies. I am great and strong; I am above twenty years of age. I will now out and work, I will serve others till I have earned enough thereby to rent or purchase a little farm, which I will cultivate myself, and on which I will support myself."

"Her mother thought at first that her daughter was gone mad; but she thought upon the matter, talked further with her daughter, and then found that she was in her senses, and she said—for she was a good and sensible lady: 'I have always wished that my children should decide their own course in life when they had arrived at sufficient discretion. Do as thou wilt, Lotta; poverty, not of your own occasioning, is no disgrace; but if one can work oneself out of it, that is an honour. I am only afraid of our connexions; what will they say!'

"And amongst the connexions there arose an uproar. The seven aunts rapped on their snuff-boxes and said, 'What scheme is this! can she not sit still and live humbly, as so many others, and spin or embroider, and manage her mother's little housekeeping, and occasionally amuse herself at our coffee-parties! People ought not to go out of their family connexions and their allotted position in life; people ought to abide with their own kindred. When a person can live so comfortably and so tranquilly as she does, why should they go and cast themselves upon the world! Others sit in their stillness and live humbly; why cannot she do as others do!'

"And the seven uncles shook their heads and said, 'She would rent a farm and herself manage it and its concerns! There will come nothing but folly, and embarrassment, and ruin out of it, we must by all the means in our power dissuade her from it.'

"But Miss Lotta became every day only the more determined in her mind. She made inquiries for a situation as housekeeper in some great household in the country.

"And amongst the relations was a poor invalid youth, whom no one of the family would willingly receive into their houses, because he was afflicted with a severe, incurable, and yet at the same time not fatal complaint; and one day as Miss Lotta found the boy bitterly weeping over his fate, that he should be such a burden to people, and suffer so much, and yet could not die, she said to him:

"Don't weep, Theodore! I am now going out into the world into service, that I may earn me money; but in some few years I shall pur-

chase me with it a cottage and a garden on the banks of the Dalelf, and then thou shalt come and live with me, and thou shalt bathe in the clear, fresh river water, and be strengthened by it. And thou shalt help me to cultivate my garden, and we will live happily together. Be of good courage, Theodore, and wait only; I shall not disappoint thee.'

"And our young lady went out into the world, and served as housekeeper in a great house where there was much to do, but where the salary was large. At the same time she purchased flax, and had it spun and woven, and then sold the webs, and by this means, in a few years accumulated a handsome little capital. Our young lady had, what is called the 'getting-on genius;' and of the various geniuses in the world, that is not the worst, especially when it is directed by a good and honest heart.

"Eight years had gone over, when Miss Lotta saw again her native town; yet everything there continued exactly the same. The mother went about as before to coffee and tea parties. 'The talented' exerted her talents constantly—practised music, painted flowers, and waited for the great good fortune that was to come. The seven aunts took snuff, and the seven uncles all shook their wise heads, and took on strangely about Lotta's 'absurd undertaking.' And still lived the invalid Theodore, and thought on the clear waters of the Dalelf, and upon Aunt Lotta's promise. And Lotta was now in the town, and greeted her mother and the relatives, and announced to them that she had purchased a farm in Elfdal, where she meant to carry on a little business, and that she would take the invalid Theodore to her.

"There was some amazement amongst the relatives, but yet they went magnanimously to work in the matter, and subscribed amongst them a sum of money for a sort of provision for the boy, whom they would now have no further trouble with.

"The next year Miss Lotta sent to her mother an extraordinarily fine cheese and a gigantic salmon, from the Domnare Force on the Dalelf, and wrote that all went well with her, that she found a deal of work to do, but for that she thanked God. Theodore bathed in the river, and was thereby signally strengthened in his bodily power, and felt himself so happy in his mind that he no longer complained of his ailment, which no longer hindered him from being a useful and a happy man. While Miss Lotta looked after the farm and the housekeeping, he carried on almost entirely the little business, which greatly interested him, and which was very successful. Miss Lotta concluded her letter with imploring her mother, sister, and the whole of the family to come and see their happy 'major.'

"The mother let a tear of joy fall over the good fortune of her daughter and her disposition, and congratulated herself on her wisdom in never having set herself against her daughter's reasonable wishes, and invited the whole of the relations to a participation of the cheese, the salmon, and the letter.

"The aunts took snuff, and said, 'Only to think that it should have succeeded so bravely with Lotta! our warnings were not, then, without effect. Delicious cheese!'

"And the seven uncles nodded altogether, and said, 'See! that is the way that all ladies should do. They ought to be such, and it then would be much better here in the world. A matchless salmon!'

"It is now five or six years since Miss Lotta located herself on her farm in Elfdal, and—but we shall see her to-morrow evening, and we can then judge better how she flourishes in her undertaking."

"Ah! I am enchanted with Miss Lotta!" exclaimed Olof; "I long to see her, and to express to her my respect and admiration."

"God grant that I remain faithful to my curate!" said Brigitta; "for I find myself on the highway to fall in love with the major. I like vigorous people, and always assert that it is only the want of real strength that occasions the greatest part of the misery in the world."

"Ah, gracious heaven!" said Lieutenant Lasse, "if she only had not moustaches, I would immediately pay my addresses to her—but I must confess that I am a little afraid of them."

"I tell you what; you only see in them a reflection of your own—you see your double!" said Brigitta, laughing. "I should have no objection to Miss Lotta as a sister-in-law."

"God and the people!" said Mrs. Ingeborg, "think, if we should make up a wedding on our little journey! But as in the morning we must rise before the cock puts his shoes on, had we not better now betake ourselves to the feather islands!'"

The motion was adopted without putting it to the vote.

But it did not stand written in the stars that Lieutenant Lasse should see Miss Lotta. By a slip on the steps this same evening he sprained his foot extremely, and was obliged to bathe and nurse it, and give up the journey, and bear the curate company, who stayed at home at Mora—not because he took no interest in the excursion, but, on the contrary, the greatest in fishing, and thought that now, during the absence of his betrothed, most thoroughly to satisfy this passion both night and day; and he promised to take Lieutenant Lasse in his boat, but Lieutenant Lasse looked on this to be a very meagre satisfaction, and sang, with deep sighs—

"How short and sad is this life of ours!"

Siri, on the morning of the journey, was much occupied with Durathor, who would insist on accompanying her; and being restrained from it, struggled with a maiden of the farm till they both rolled over in the grass, at which the spectators were obliged to laugh outright. Lieutenant Lasse promised to write an elegy on this event, which he would have set to music, and published under the title of 'Les adieux de Siri et de Durathor, Elégie harmonique par Lasse Doloroso.'

The way from Mora to Elfdal was first by a ferry over the river to the point of land where formerly the witch-fires stood, and where now the "Salix Daphnoides" had shed its golden-yellow catkins, but had clothed itself with tender, green, and beautifully polished leaves; then beyond it a few miles through deep sand and an ugly forest tract. But they soon entered the picturesquely-beautiful Elfdal, and pur-

sued almost unvaryingly the banks of the Dalf—now ascending, now descending between lofty, wood-crowned hills, which, like shaggy giants, approached the travellers with threatening looks and gestures, but stood or passed by in the proud tranquillity of superior power. Thus was it with Suttur-skär, with Gopshus, Hyeckje, and Wäsa-berg, &c. The thunder-charged clouds which rolled themselves up over the heights, the rapidly closing, rapidly opening views into the infinite distance, the play of brilliant lights and shades in the great but closely congregated scenery, the alternately idyllean amenity, and the wildness, even to savageness, of these regions, all combined to make a great—a vivid impression upon the travellers. On this road you see forests, which appear to have stood from the foundation of the world. Trees fall in them, lie, and rot, because no hand troubles itself to make use of them; nay, the Dalmen often fell the most magnificent ones merely to procure a little fresh bark to mix with the fodder of their cattle, and then leave them recklessly to decay. So vast is here the wealth of, so great the indifference to, that which other provinces purchase with solid gold. But this gold does not penetrate into the primeval parts of Dalarna.

The cataracts of Dalarna, which may be said to ensure the innocence of the country, prevent, also, its connexion with the world of commerce, and seem to say, "Retain thy poverty and thy wealth, and with both thy peace." Fires often ravage vast tracts of these forests, even to the mountain-tops, and they let them burn till they go out of themselves—they can do nothing to quench them; and thus you see whole tracts converted to ashes, or, rather, to *dead woods*. The trees remain standing with bole and branches, but not a single green leaf is left upon them, not the slightest tint of grass protrudes from the ash-strewn earth, no bird, no insect, moves its wing amongst the burnt trees; all ground, wood, mountain, is blank and ash-grey as far as the eye can reach—all is dead: it is as if a curse had passed over it. Sometimes you have on the right of the road one of these dead forests, while on the left all flourishes in verdant beauty: and between the pines of giant altitude, standing on fresh green slopes, you look down on the river in its deep channel, which becomes in this valley a sportive stream, alternately foaming over the stony bottom, where the water sprite is said to sit and watch for mischief, alternately embracing in its bosom small light green umbrageous islands, while forest brooks, white with spray, descend roaring from the rocks, like gamesome boys, and fling themselves into its arms.

Olof rode by the side of Siri, and much occupied with her, and Siri sometimes turned towards Olof with an expression like this: "The most glorious morning! how freshly it sighs in the forest!" and the dark eyelashes, the fresh lips, glittered as with dew. Sometimes she sung a little snatch of a song. It seemed to Olof as if the morning, in its living freshness, sat on the horse with her. He could not but think of Brigitta's words, "There is over the girl a freshness and a dew."

Upon the whole, the charm which Siri possessed and imparted resulted much from the

fact, that every utterance of her emotions was destitute of art and study: she had much of that direct impulse which, in the objects of nature, breathes so freshly on our senses. Her early education, free from all restraint, or rather her want of education, had, with its disadvantages, also had the great benefit of exempting her from the mental stays which press together the rest of us poor children of chamber-discipline and coercion, and render our breathing short and our motions constrained. Yet, probably, this education of nature could not have led to any thing very attractive, had not Siri been a character endowed with a native grace. We have seen other young girls brought up in golden freedom, and they have horrified us by the swing of their arms and their long strides. It is a difficult affair, this education! we thank God that we have no daughters, but do not love the young girls the less, as the noblest soil that the earth possesses. Ah! if the best of seed were only scattered into it!

Upon a verdant declivity, by a silver clear, murmuring brook of delicious water, the mid-day meal was spread from the provision baskets brought with them. No one who has not tried it can conceive how delightful it is to eat in the free air, and on the earth's green mat. But for this you must have glad hearts and good appetites; and these the Mora family had, and therefore they had a joyous and excellent noon-day meal; and this was not at all disturbed by a little unbidden sprinkling of thunder-rain. For, first and foremost, this caused a lively springing up and flying to the shade of some great pines; and then it presented a splendid spectacle of clouds, which displayed itself in the heavens, and gave Olof opportunity to deliver a little lecture, which interested every one, on the classification of clouds, which, first observed and named by the learned Quaker, Howard, was then universally adopted in science. This could not be effected without a little Latin; and Brigitta, who, as we already knew, was a genius in languages, talked soon quite fluently of "stratus, cumulus, and cirrus," and the rest were delighted to learn, to know, and to name in Swedish, the bank-cloud, also the night-cloud, because this form of cloud is common at night; the "high-cloud" and the "feather-cloud." They began, too, during the rain, and the succeeding clearing up, to notice how these cloud-shapes merged one into the other; and Olof must explain to them the laws which regulated these phenomena, and the names which the cloud-shapes acquired during their transfiguration. Mrs. Ingeborg was extremely interested by this, for the clouds and their phantasmagoria, their richly pictorial and changing life had always had a great attraction for her, often of a prophetic nature. She was fond of reading them, as people formerly read the stars, and was not free from a degree of superstition regarding them: she had now got names for their forms, and with well-sounding, that is, expressive names for things, much is achieved.

The whole day, during the journey, they gazed up at the clouds, and made observations on "stratus, cumulus, and cirrus." Brigitta complained that she got by this an altogether wrong bearing of the head and neck, the con-

sequences of which no one could tell; and in order to counteract this, Olof directed her attention to the species of lichen which with its crimson covering make the stones by the high-ways of Dalarna so splendid, and the powder of which is so sweet, and like violet-root, when it is rubbed with the hand. And Brigitta admitted, that the head and the eye of man seemed to be purposely constructed to discover all the wonders in heaven and in the earth.

Towards evening, yet at an early hour, the travellers arrived at Miss Lotta's little farm. She stood in the porch to receive her guests; and on her countenance was such a beaming of intellectual peace and good-will, that no one saw or thought of her moustaches. N.B. Lieutenant Lasse was not there. Olof almost thought that Miss Lotta was handsome.

Miss Lotta received and entertained her guests in the Dalman and Dalwoman fashion; that is to say, heartily and richly. Siri attached herself immediately to the invalid and talked and laughed quickly with him, so that Miss Lotta opened large but joyful eyes, for the boy or youth was usually shy with strangers. He awakened an interest in them all by his soulful eyes, his suffering, patient expression, which now readily lit up into a cheerful smile.

When they had powerfully refreshed and strengthened themselves with the best that the Dal could produce, they wandered forth to see Miss Lotta's little property, and all her arrangements on it; while she afterwards, sitting in her porch, looking towards the river, talked to the professor and his wife, about her life in this valley; her labours and her enjoyments, her joy in Theodore; told her plans for the future, which were, to receive a number of young people in the condition of Theodore, whom she could care for, employ, and conduct to the enjoyment of life. The younger guests wandered up a lofty, adjacent porphyry hill, from thence to observe the sunset. Here on the summit they found stones, in which Olof's practised eye discovered crystals, agates, red and brown jaspers, which are not infrequently found in the mountains of Elfdal, which have all of them porphyry in their interior. Here Brigitta called on her friends to sing something, and Olof responded to her wish by the old Dal song so beautiful in tone,

"In the beautiful summer when earth is glad,  
By the two broad rivers of Dala," &c.

Valborg sung then a song about the moon which a Dalwoman had composed; and which young girls sing so willing and so well. But as Brigitta complained that they sung "such melancholy airs," and asked for "merrier ones," Siri sung out fresh and clear, so that the wood resounded:

"Through cave and mine  
I seek the ore's deep fountain;  
Ancient splendours shine  
In the heart o' th' mountain;  
Round my thoughts they twine,  
Deep my soul compelling.  
There then shall my bed be;  
What there is will I see—  
There shall be my dwelling!"\*

A slight shudder passed through Olof when Siri sang the last lines with the force of inspiration, and, at the same time, stamped on the

hill with her little foot, and he looked with a feeling of admiration on the young maiden as she stood there on the mountain, so light and yet vigorous, with a glance of fire in the dark blue eyes, and her light locks glistening in the evening sun.

"Siri," said he, "thou art born to be the wife of a miner!"

Siri shook her head, and answered, "Not a miner's, but a mine-king's, who shall lead me into the depths of the mountain, and cause me to reign there with him. Then shall I do nothing for whole days but sing, talk with the dwarfs, guess their riddles, pluck diamonds out of the rocks, and wander through magnificent halls. Ay, that would be glorious!"

"If it were but possible," replied Olof, smiling; "but I prophesy that if thou once go down into the heart of a mountain, that is, into one of our mines, thou wilt quickly long to be out of it, and upon the earth again."

Siri was silent, shook her head, and an expression of sadness rapidly cast a shade over her countenance.

The next day Miss Lotta's little bath-house in the river was enjoyed, and then they strolled about on foot in the valley. Olof and Siri were joyous, and almost as frolicsome as children. It happened that Olof felt at one moment a sudden pain in his hand, and said in jest, that he was bitten by Neck. This is what the peasantry are wont to say of any sudden pain felt in a limb, of the cause of which they are ignorant.

Siri said immediately, "I know a spell against a Neck-bite, so that it shall do no harm."

"Oh, indeed!" said Olof, "I become more and more convinced that at the bottom thou hast something of the witch about thee. It is fortunate that thou didst not live in the sixteenth century. Well, wilt thou try thy art upon me?"

"Yes," said Siri, "but thou must promise not to accuse me to the consistorium, and not to laugh, but to look me steadfastly in the eyes."

"These are difficult conditions to fulfil, but I promise to try."

Siri then took Olof's hand between hers, looked him awhile fixedly and seriously in the eyes, stooped then over his hand, and said:

"Neck and Tofve, how long wilt thou fly!  
I bind thee under land, under strand!  
Thou shalt stand in God's hand!"

With this the conjuration was at an end, but Olof stood a good while after in deep thought, and as it were bewitched.

In the meantime, unobserved of him and Siri, a pair of eyes, with night-black, threatening glance, watched them secretly from the wood. These eyes were those of Valborg.

In the evening Olof said to Brigitta—

"It is certain that Siri has a strange power in her eyes. There is something in them which reminds one of what the people in the country here call 'hugsa' or 'haxa.'"

"And what is that?" asked Brigitta.

"Why, they assert that there are persons who, through the power of the eyes, can so enchant a thing or person, that it goes beside itself, becomes rigid, or falls into a swoon.

\* The Miner, by E. G. Gei er.

Thus they can enchant, or 'hugsa' people, beasts, or lifeless things; for instance, a clock or a mill, so that they shall stand; a brook, that it shall cease to run. Pliny relates, that such female enchanters existed amongst the tribes from whom we are descended, the Scythians, and were called 'Bithyæ.' I could not help thinking of this to-day as Siri pronounced over me her charm against the Neck-bite, not that the repetition of the words did so very much good, but it is extraordinary, almost awful, to see how beautiful her eyes are sometimes."

"My dear friend," said Brigitta, "take care that those eyes do not cast a spell upon thee in earnest; Siri is a dangerous girl, ay, more dangerous than—"

"Ah! be quitte easy on my account, my best Brigitta," interposed Olof, somewhat offended; "she may be as dangerous as she will, yet she is not dangerous to me, that I assure you. I merely study Siri—I study her as I examine a curiosity, a natural phenomenon."

"Yes, for example, a new species of granite, or some stratus or cumulus!" said Brigitta, by way of joke.

"Yes, just so," replied Olof, smiling, but yet a little offended that Brigitta could suppose Siri dangerous to him, the most widely-travelled and world-experienced young man, and who, moreover, was her chosen Mentor, who ought to be supposed rather dangerous to her, and to whom she ought to look up with both love and respect. Olof would not at all listen to a secret voice in his heart, which, like Brigitta, whispered that even for him there might be danger on foot.

And night came and threw her veil over the thoughts and impressions of the day.

The next day the journey was continued leisurely to Osbyn, where the road terminated. They went on foot through long stretches of the wild, picturesque way, and made acquaintance with the inhabitants of the valley. The people of Elfdal are no longer Dal people; they resemble in appearance rather gipsies: their eyes are brown and sparkling, their complexion dark, their features ignoble. Here you see beggars and rags; in their wretched abodes dirt and slovenliness abound. But their speech is, notwithstanding, melodious and sweet; and the character of nature around them is beautiful, although stern. Hills and pine-woods prevail. The deciduous trees are small and scrubby.

The travellers visited the porphyry works, where patience seems to be polished equally with the brittle, hard stone: and where the workmen grow prematurely old, from the sharp dust of the splendid masterpieces of their art, which they prepare.

In the afternoon they arrived at Osbyn. Here the river sweeps in a wide crescent round the beautifully situated village with its fertile fields, and on the other side rises a noble amphitheatre of pine forests; here and there divided by a foaming mountain cataract which precipitates itself into the river.

Farther than this place the carriage could not advance. Our travellers proceeded on foot through the tolerably large village, and beyond it, to where in a meadow, lies a little chapel of

wood, wild and solitary, where some few times in the year divine service is performed: simple and almost rude is it within: reindeer's horns serve for candlesticks and candelabras.

Mrs. Ingeborg, who was weary, desired to remain at the chapel, while the young people wandered farther onwards to seek the road's "utter termination;" and her husband staid with her. They sat down on the steps of the chapel, and they had speedily a group of people from the village assembled around them, guessing and wondering about the stately priest and his handsome wife, for very rarely do travellers come so far up into Dalarna.

The professor amused himself with talking to the people about past times, when Gustavus Wasa, having failed in his attempt to arouse the parishes round the Silja, with a half-despairing heart, fled up into this district over the mountains, and through the solitary forests which separate East and West Dalarna; by night sleeping in the lonely sheds which the people here and there erect for the shelter of the wayfarer, and so followed the western Dalf up to its very course, through the boundless and snow-filled woods. Still more and more desolate became the country; still wilder rushed the river, roaring over its rocky bed; still more thinly scattered, and more wretched, became the dwellings of men on its banks. Already stood Gustavus at the foot of the northern ridge, which should presently separate him from his unhappy native land. Then did he turn himself round, and saw coming through the woods of Lima the swift snow-skaters, who were sent after him from Mora, to persuade him to return, and to put himself at the head of the peasantry, who since they received intelligence of the Blood-bath of Stockholm, breathed only war and revenge. Here the fate of Gustavus also took its turn. The professor talked also with the husbandmen who assembled in crowds around him, of the learned and brave Commissioner\* and Daniel Buscovius of Elfdal, who, in the year 1644, at the head of the men of Elfdal and Mora, surrounded the enemy at Serna, and conquered in a peaceful manner the whole of this parish for Sweden; and how "Our Daniel," as the people then called him, the day after the victory, celebrated divine service in the chapel at Serna, and christened a great number of children, of whom some of them were so old, that they snatched at the ritual and tore some of its leaves; and the professor found with pleasure, that the memory of the learned and gallant minister still lived amongst the Elfdal people. He then put to them sundry questions regarding their knowledge of religion, and was in return examined also by them, and was asked whether he were not the "president of the clergy," that is, the "grand-papa,† himself in Upsala!"

In the meantime, the young people strolled around the peninsula, and on towards Sernaside, where the river flows still wider, and where the sun descended towards the far blue chain of hills. This July evening was one of peculiar and wonderful beauty. A secret, suffering-fraught life seemed to tremble through nature. It was still, calm, yet huge thunder-

\* A clergyman in ordinary, subordinate of the rector.

† A slang term, meaning the archbishop.



clouds lay gloomily over the country, and between them the sun threw long and burning glances over the earth, and into the river's softly trembling waters; strange lights and shadows arose amongst the hills; beams of light broke gleaming paths through the dark masses of vapour; the veil lifted itself, and abysses opened themselves, beautiful, glittering . . . thus does it move, thus does it live in the mystic regions whither love conducts, the earthly as well as the heavenly, in its fairy hours.

Olof and Siri, who were rapid walkers, had quickly left Brigitta and Valborg far behind. They went on, attracted by the extraordinary beauty of the way and the scenery, without thinking any further of the road's termination. At length, however, they were obliged to think of turning again, but concluded first to wait for Valborg and Brigitta on the banks of the river. Here they stood, gazing on the magnificent spectacle of the sunset, when Siri suddenly exclaimed, "Olof!" and with the speed of lightning, sprang forward and pushed him aside. Olof felt himself at the same moment involved in a cloud of dust, he knew not how; he heard a crashing and a rushing down, and turning, he saw Siri flung prostrate beneath a pine-tree, which had given way and plunged down the steep sand-bank, above the shore, and whose fall she had diverted from Olof to herself by her interposition. A part only of its boughs had now whizzed over Olof's head; but Siri lay beneath the boughs and bled freely from a deep cut in the neck.

But she lay there only for a moment; in the next instant she had liberated herself and stood now before Olof, at once joyous and anxious, exclaiming, "Olof! are you unhurt? yes, you are; God be praised."

"But you, Siri, you bleed! and that for my sake!" exclaimed Olof, and caught her in his arms, terrified and greatly agitated.

"Oh, it is merely a scratch!" said Siri, putting her hand to her neck, "I will bathe it in the river, and it will be quickly well. Don't be anxious—I am so glad."

But this was a dangerous moment for Olof, for as he now held the smiling, bleeding, beaming girl in his arms, there breathed upon him, he knew not what fragrance of young, loving, fascinating life, which penetrated his heart, his mind, and diffused itself through all the blood in his veins.

The hallowing, strange fire which the northern sagas tell us surrounded the lovely daughters of the giants, flamed up within him, and enveloped his soul. Affected, enchanted, agitated, he stood and stooped over his young deliverer, as if to suck up the blood which ran for his sake, and he drew her still closer and closer to his bosom. But like as a serpent, Siri escaped from his embrace, sprang down to the water, dipped therein a handkerchief, and washed and bathed with it her neck.

Olof followed, and contemplated her in silence. He could not speak, scarcely think. An ocean of feelings tempest in his heart. Siri seemed to him enchanting; he would fain be the water which streamed in pearly drops between her fingers; the handkerchief which she wrapped round her neck. He did not know

himself what was passing within him. He stood on the verge of one of these passions which are all the more violent and dangerous, because they are based only on a blind fascination. And as he now thought that the charming girl bled for him, had ventured her life for him, his heart beat more violently; and proud as a god—ah no!—as a weak man—he exclaimed to himself, "She loves me! she loves me!"

"Thou studiest some phenomenon of nature; I suppose some cumulus or stratus! lum?" he now heard Brigitta say, who, softly and unobserved, had approached, while Valborg, still and pale, paused at some paces farther back.

"But heavens!" continued Brigitta, terrified as she observed Siri, "what is this for a spectacle again? what is this? what has happened?" have you fought, or been torn by bears? or—"

Siri at this began to laugh so gaily and heartily, and then related the little transaction so simply and easily, that Olof became both astonished and almost vexed. For him the world had become wholly changed within ten minutes.

"But goodness preserve me!" continued Brigitta, "one cannot lose sight of Siri without her falling into breakneck adventures and deadly dangers: some time ago thou wert drawn down into the depths of the earth, so that we believed thou wert both dead and buried; then thou descended to the bottom of the lake, so that I believed thou wouldst never come up again; and now thou pullest the wood down upon thee: what will be the end of it! If thou art not carried off to Blakulla, it will be more by chance than grace. And if certain people would think less of studying the curious and natural phenomena, and more of taking care of a poor, silly girl, it would certainly be much more to the purpose."

Brigitta's talent for scolding and rallying had always a very refreshing effect on Olof, and at this crisis came over him like a dash of cold water, and brought him again to full consciousness, especially when she proceeded still more gaily, "I wanted just to introduce to you a phenomenon myself, which I discovered, altogether *sui generis*; a phenomenon which boiled chocolate seven years on the Kattrygg, in the southern suburb of Stockholm. Now, where are you stopping, mother?"

A gipsy-like woman, with burning, brown eyes, on this advanced from the bushes, and was presented by Brigitta as this same phenomenon. Her remarkableness, however, on further inquiry, reduced itself to this; that during a longer wandering than ordinary from Dalarna, she had entered the service of a lady in the southern suburb of Stockholm, in the Kattrygg quarter, and there for seven years had helped her to prepare chocolate; and she had now offered herself to the travellers to make inquiries after her former mistress.

Followed by the talkative old woman, the young people now turned back to join the rest of the travelling party. They found the professor somewhat out of patience with their long delay, and urgent for their setting out on their return.

Speedily were they once more on horseback

and in the carriages; and then Brigitta quickly gave her aunt somewhat to guess. "What is that, for a wonder, which she had seen in the king's court, which for seven years boiled chocolate in the Kattrygg in Stockholm, and now cooks groats in Elfdal? And, also, what was that for a wonder above all wonders, which goes down into mountain and lake, and pulls the woods down upon it, and after that travels gaily on the highway?" And when it was discovered that the latter enigma's word was Siri, and the professor learned what she had done for Olof, he was so enraptured that he caused the carriage to stop, called Siri thither, lifted her from her horse, and upon his knee, and embraced and blessed her with fatherly affection. Mrs. Ingeborg gazed on the scene with tears of joy in her eyes. Olof felt a strong temptation to embrace his father; but Siri, almost frightened and somewhat annoyed, seemed only anxious to get out of the carriage and upon her horse again.

"That is a glorious girl!" then exclaimed the professor warmly; "she can melt ice, not six, but twelve yards round her. If she were my own child I could hardly be more fond of her."

"It is strange," said the professor, after a while, "how chance plays its vagaries in the world, and connects things and persons together, who yet have no connexion at all with each other. Siri, for instance, reminds me involuntarily sometimes of a person, a man of whom I saw much in my youth, for we studied at the same university, and who interested me much, a certain Julius Wolff, who has now been dead these many years. There is something in her eyes, in her glance, so like his; and, what is extraordinary, the little birthmark by her left eye, which she has, he had too."

"This man," continued the professor, sunk in his recollections, "was a singular character, or rather nature, for character was just what he wanted. He was a richly gifted, interesting, yet fantastic fellow, demoniac, captivating, but dangerous, for he had violent passions, which lacked order and consistency. 'The gods, that is to say the *ordexers*,' says the ancient Herodotus; but this man had made disorder and irregularity his god, and valued life only in its moments of passion and excitement. At bottom he had a warm heart, and exerted a powerful influence over men, and often over animals, which he was much attached to, just as Siri also is, through a sort of magnetic attraction, which is peculiar to certain natures. Pride and ambition brought him to ruin; he allied himself with a miserable, but daring adventurer, committed a heinous crime against society, and evacuated the kingdom, and died a fugitive. It was a thousand pities of the man; and, when I think of him and his many splendid endowments, and of the want of principle which plunged him into destruction, I am ready to say with Brigitta, 'It is want of real strength which causes most of the evils in the world.'"

It was so silent in the carriage, as the professor closed this monologue, that you might have fancied that his hearers slept. If so it was, they were soon awakened most unpleasantly, for, in a smart descent that the carriage

made down a hill, both of the back springs broke, and the body of the carriage sat itself down comfortably on the hinder wheels.

But for the travellers that was by no means comfortable, but now all the more annoying, as they were here far from any place whence they could procure help, and on this hilly road they could not continue the journey in the carriage, though the springs were bound up with ropes. Besides it was past ten at night, and the cloudy sky made it unusually dark. After some consultation, it was determined that the professor's servant should take on the carriage to the porphyry works, about three quarters of a Swedish mile from the spot where they were, and that a peasant lad that was with them, and who was quite at home in the country, should conduct the travellers to a hut in the forest near a porphyry quarry not far off, where they would pass the night. In the morning the carriage, after being repaired at the porphyry works, should come for them.

With this they were all satisfied, and, carrying with them what was necessary for the night, the party began their progress into the forest. They had not proceeded more than half an hour before they came to a sort of barn, which lay solitarily amongst stupendous mountain-precipices and stone-quarries. Here they entered, and, as most of the party were tired, they quickly spread out their cloaks and prepared their couches for the night as comfortably as they could, but not without a deal of lively talk and laughter.

When Siri had laid herself down, the professor went softly up to her and spread his cloak over her, to protect her from the night-chill; Siri perceived it, seized the fatherly hand, and imprinted a warm kiss upon it. This first caress that he had received from the beloved but shy maid, affected him tenderly, and with a warm and happy heart he went to share his son's hard bed. Soon all became silent in the shed, and the pine-trees of the forest seemed to murmur only over sleepers.

But there was *one* there who did not sleep, and that was Mrs. Ingeborg. Painful feelings, and perhaps some bodily suffering, kept her awake. Silently she sat up and listened to the calm breathing of the sleepers, to the gentle murmur of the forest over and around her. But they did not soothe her to rest; all the more feverishly burnt her blood, all the more violently beat her heart. No longer able to remain within, she softly arose and went out.

Before her lay an open vale, and she went gently forwards, glancing around her on the porphyry quarry, where lay huge blocks scattered about, and which in the obscurity of the night assumed fantastic and threatening shapes of the northern saga's misshapen giants and dragons. It was an electrical summer night, and thunder rolled dully amongst the black clouds. The moon was up, and the almanack may say what it pleases, but it shines quite visibly in the nights of July, especially in the latter half of the month, and did so especially this night, gleaming valiantly from between the dark clouds.

The forest was silent as before the creation of man, and sent forth an aroma such as only the northern pine-forests do. The fragrance

of the south is faint compared to this fresh, delicious, wild breath of the northern forest.

Still night shudders passed over Mrs. Ingeborg; the freshness of the wood breathed strongly on her senses. Life arose before her with its nocturnal shadows, its sorrows, and its dead, in a lofty, melancholy beauty; the care of her own heart, as it were, dissolved into it, and as the moonbeams through the night, passed through her soul faith in the power, the goodness which can see all, hear and reconcile all. Still lighter and freer advanced she onward; but at once she stopped, struck by the ghastly spectacle which met her eye. Before her, at the distance of about thirty paces, lay one of the dead woods of which we have spoken. The moon, which now shone brightly, lit up the dark grey, burnt shapes, and sighs of death seemed to murmur therefrom. It was like a ghost scene from the desert, and Mrs. Ingeborg was strangely impressed by it, but still more strangely and sadly when she saw distinctly a black shadow glide onward amongst the dead trees. She recognised the form of a man, and this form—she seemed also to recognise it; and a thousand memories—terrible memories—arose herewith as arising from their grave. The figure stood, seemed to gaze towards the place where she stood; it went like cold steel through her heart—it its pulse ceased. Again the dark form moved; it withdrew, and vanished, like a shadow in the dead forest.

"Was it only a shadow, a creation of my fever-infected fantasy!" demanded of herself Mrs. Ingeborg, as she turned towards the lodging for the night, her brow and bosom bathed with a cold dew, which was neither that of the cloud nor the ground.

Morning came, and with it the carriage, and all became life and activity; but the life was not truly glad. Mrs. Ingeborg was evidently not well, although she sought to conceal it, and her husband was uneasy about her. This depressed the spirits of all, and the return was by far not so pleasant as the journey out. Siri rode constantly near the carriage, and Olof got little opportunity of talking with her. Brigitta's observations and the forms of the clouds above awoke some degree of cheerfulness in the party. All appeared to be very glad to find themselves again at Mora, especially Brigitta, who greeted her curate with a cordiality which excluded all confusion of tongues. But when she expected to hear him complain of her absence, she had only to listen to praises of the fishery; and she lamented her unhappiness—unheard-of fate!—in being compelled to be jealous of pikes and perchés.

But a great sorrow awaited Siri; for her elk, Durathor, was dead at her return to Mora, and, as it seemed, entirely from grief for her. From the moment of her departure he had refused to eat, and to-day at noon they had found him dead; and Siri wept so bitterly over him that Lieutenant Lasse altogether forgot to speak of his "Elegie harmonique."

Towards Olof was Siri now quite changed. He found her, ever since the lonely and strange evening in Elfuld, distant, and, as it were, shy before him; she evidently avoided him, and this mysterious conduct wounded him cruelly,

and fanned the darkly flaming fire in his heart. He lost his sleep and serenity of mind, and burned with desire of an explanation with her. A few evenings after the return to Mora, awhile after the sun had gone down and the shadows of night had already begun to stretch themselves over the earth, the wind carried to the parsonage at Mora well-known and soft tones of the flute.

Impelled by an irresistible feeling, Olof went towards the place whence they seemed to come. It was from the other side of Mora Church, and thither Olof proceeded with hasty steps; but the notes had ceased long before he arrived upon the headland, where the church stands between tall trees. Olof went up towards the churchyard. The iron gate on that side stood ajar, and Olof was just about to enter, when an ice-cold hand was laid on his; and like the angel of death, as pale and as solemn, advanced Valborg from the other side of the wall, and pointed in silence towards the church. In the screen of its shadow sat on a tombstone a man, and on her knees before him, in his arms, and reposing on his bosom, lay in the full devotedness of love a young maiden. Her face was not visible, but the light hair, the whole shape, the dress, all betrayed, what Valborg also whispered—"Siri!"

For a moment Olof started, in the next he would rush forward, but was withheld by Lieutenant Lasse, and was led away by him almost by force, and in a state of mind closely bordering on madness.

## THE TRIBUNAL.

THE light burnt dimly in the professor's room, when the family found itself assembled there late at night. It might be seen in its members that some important consultation had been on foot; but now all were silent. Mrs. Ingeborg sat beside her husband, and her countenance had an almost deathly paleness, while her glance, full of anguish, was fixed on the door. Nordevald seemed to have wrestled with himself for self-possession: his voice was calm, a resolute expression lay in his manner, but the bitter expression of his features had now a trace of deep pain, which a consoling hope strove in vain to chase away.

Poor Brigitta's little eyes were red and swollen, as if with much weeping. Valborg's were dry; she sat pale and apparently indifferent. Olof stood by a window, with his head leaned on, and his face shaded by, his hand; there passed through his soul a deeper bitterness than he was willing to betray to any one. The rest had their eyes directed towards the door.

And now there were heard before it light and quick steps. The door opened, and Siri entered with an aspect which testified a state of mind which, if disquiet, was still defiant.

"My uncle has requested that I should come hither," said she, and gazed round her; and added, with a constrained smile, "but it looks within here so strange and solemn—quite like a tribunal."

"It is even so," said the professor; "but," continued he—and the warm and open heart ascended into his look and tone—"but I would

not have had thee called before it, if I did not hope—yes, if I were not convinced in my soul, that thou, my child, canst not merely explain thyself, but also justify thyself against the charges that are brought against thee."

"What charges?" asked Siri, with an effort to appear untroubled, which at the same time her seeking for a support contradicted.

"Thou hast," continued the professor, with the same soft, mild, but deeply penetrating tone, "thou hast this evening, late, been seen in the churchyard with a stranger, a man; thou hast been seen in his arms, and that tells that it is not the first time that thou hast secretly given him meeting. Is it so?"

"Who is it that says this?" demanded Siri, and looking menacingly around.

"It matters not *who*," answered Nordevall; "I tell thee *what* is said, and I demand of thee at once, is it true?"

After a moment's reflection, Siri replied with an effort, but resolutely, "Yes!"

A sensation, like a shudder of the soul, went through the company.

"Who is this man?" demanded Nordevall.

"I cannot tell that," said Siri.

"Why dost thou go clandestinely to meet this man?" demanded the professor; and his voice now grew stern, and his questions became continually more rapid and vehement.

Siri said, "Neither to this question can I give any answer."

"Why dost thou make a mystery of this matter?"

"Because—I must do it!"

"And why?"

Siri was silent.

"And wherefore *must* thou? Answer, girl!"

"I can, I *will* not!"

"Siri!" (menacingly) — "Siri!" (tenderly) "that I had not expected of my sacrament child!"

Siri was silent, but passed her hand over her brow.

"Siri," said the professor, "wouldst thou be alone with me?"

"No, no! I could say nothing but what I have now said."

"Thou confessest thyself, then, guilty!"

"No—I am innocent!"

"Innocent? Tell us something that can attest it."

"I cannot."

"Innocent!" continued the professor, with angry voice; "innocence which meets a strange man clandestinely, which hides itself from connexions and friends, and obstinately refuses to explain itself to them, such innocence I make very little account of."

"And yet, yet I am innocent—God knows that I am!" exclaimed Siri, with an expression of truth, which caused a ray of hope to shine into the hearts of those who loved her.

"Dost thou love this man?" demanded again Nordevall.

With a tone gentle, but springing from the bottom of her heart, Siri answered, "Yes!"

"And he loves thee?"

"Yes, but not—not as . . ."

"Can he then not come honourably to thy connexions, and avow it?" burst forth the professor. "Has he done something disgraceful,

that he thus conceals himself? That insidiously and in darkness he wishes to allure to himself her whom he loves, and does not fear for her reputation, for her good!"

"I cannot and I will not answer!" said Siri, wringing her hands and looking miserable; "but," added she, "do not believe evil of him, and do not think evil of me! He is unhappy, and—I am so likewise."

"Girl! girl!" said the professor, "this looks very ill for thee." He was silent awhile, and all the rest were silent also. At length he resumed:

"Wilt thou promise never again to see this man—at least never to see him in hiding-places and in secret?"

Siri was silent. The professor was obliged to repeat his question. At length Siri answered,

"No, I cannot promise that."

"Not!"

"No!"

"And if I command thee on this point!"

"No, not if all the kings in the world commanded me! In storm, in rain, in cold, in night, in the depth of the earth, in hell itself, or wherever he calls me, I will meet him, though disgrace and death itself should be my lot!"

"Oh my God!" said Mrs. Ingeborg, and pressed her hands against her heart.

"Unhappy child!" thundered the professor, springing up, "dost thou know what thou sayest? Art thou so fallen, so irrecoverably fallen? Wilt thou defy God, since thou profanest the resting-place of the dead? And knowest thou not, therefore, that thou art unworthy to continue in this house; that thou must be cast out of this home, which received thee; that thou art unworthy to remain one night beneath the same roof with those whom thou so cruelly hast deceived?"

"I will go—away," said Siri, with a low voice, but with a look, an expression so touching and full of desolation, that it cut her judge to the heart.

"Yes, thou mayest go!" exclaimed vehemently the professor, "if thou wilt persist in thy defiance; thou mayest go out of my house, but in the porch shalt thou trample upon me as thou now tramplest on me at this moment as father and instructor. In the porch of my house I will cast myself at thy feet, and conjure thee to take pity on thy own soul and on mine, which will never find rest, here or hereafter, if thou art lost. Go, yes, go! But thou shalt go no whither where I will not follow thee. If thou art not afraid of night or tempest, in order to reach hell, neither am I either to snatch thee thence. From me shalt thou never have rest till thou givest me back the peace which thou hast ravished from my heart and my house. Ungrateful one, go! and return curses for the blessings thou hast received."

He pushed her from him, and turned to go out; but Siri sunk hastily at his knees, and embracing them, exclaimed, as she bathed them with tears,

"Oh do not cast me off! I am not going; I will not go. Cast me not off! Think me not ungrateful; think me not criminal: I am neither. Look at me, my foster-father, my teacher! Do I then look like so worthless, so abandoned a creature? Believe me, I am only un-

happy, and one day thou shalt understand it, and if not here upon earth, yet hereafter in God's light! Wilt thou not believe me, and you all who have been so kind to me?" And Siri arose and extended her hands beseechingly towards those in the room.

Again turning to the professor, she continued: "Hast thou not seen, my instructor, during our hours of being together, that I am attached to truth; that thy doctrine was dear to me; and that something dwelt in me which was not reprobate? Canst thou believe that this was false? Thou wert fond of me then, and now—it is impossible that I can all at once have become unworthy to be 'thy little Siri, thy own girl!'"

These names of endearment, which the professor had often in tenderness given Siri, now affected him: he turned himself away. In a while he said more mildly, but with a voice which betrayed the excitement of his feelings, "Siri! I will believe that thou art innocent, at least that thou dost not voluntarily deceive us. But *thou art deceived*; of that I am certain. And that thou obstinately persistest in taking thy own fate into thy hands, in spite of the affection and prayers of those whom God has given thee for parents, in spite of all that is right and decorous—that is criminal, and deserving of punishment."

Siri bowed her head, and was silent.

"Dost thou persist in what thou hast declared to be thy resolution?" asked once more the professor.

"Yes, I must do it," she replied.

"Then I must tell thee," continued he, "that I cannot permit thee to go to the Lord's table before thou hast cleared thyself from the darkness that rests upon thee, or through confession and repentance hast rendered thyself worthy of forgiveness."

This seemed painful to Siri. Silent, but imploringly, she stretched her clasped-together hands towards her stern teacher, and then hid in them her countenance.

"And if thou forfeitest our confidence," continued the professor, sternly, "and as I am before God and man answerable for thee, so—I tell thee beforehand, that thou shalt hereafter be—watched."

Siri arose hastily: "And who shall watch me? who shall be my gaoler?" demanded she, bitterly, and the spirit of defiance again seemed to swell her bosom.

"I," said Olof, stepping forward, "I, if my father will allow it."

"Be it so," said the professor: "thou shalt be responsible to me for her."

Siri turned slowly her eyes upon Olof, but he met steadily her dark glance.

"Olof is then my keeper," she resumed, "and I am his captive! But my judge is none but God alone! Mark now," added she, with a smile whose wildness approached the bounds of madness—"now is it with me as with the maiden whom they placed under 'God's judgment.' Like her, I am innocent, but I desire to live no longer!"

And with this word she sprang hastily out of the room. Olof followed her.

At about a hundred paces from the parsonage of Mora lies the Silja. A green field, thin-

ly planted with young trees, stretches down to the shore; and over this green field now hastened Siri, with flying locks, on towards the lake; she ran as if she would fling herself into the cool deep, but on its margin she was caught in the arms of some one who held her back: she looked round—it was Olof.

"Is it thou—my keeper?" said she, bitterly; "thou art watchful over thy thrall. Let me go—I hate thee!"

"I know it—I know now that thou dost not love me; but that thou hatest me is hard."

There was something in Olof's tone so noble, and so deep a sorrow, that even at this moment it made an impression on Siri. More mildly, but petulantly, she demanded,

"Why dost thou constitute thyself my gaoler?"

"Because," he answered, "that thou mayest always know that thou hast near thee—a friend; some one who will always love thee, though thou lovest another."

"Thou wilt be my friend and my watcher at the same time," said Siri; "and if I deceive thee?"

"That thou shalt not," said Olof, with firm and open gaze upon her; "I do not know how it is, Siri, but I cannot believe evil of thee. There is an innocence upon thy brow, and in thy look, which cannot deceive. What cause may induce thee to act as thou dost, I cannot understand; but one thing I know, and that is that I will protect thee, and therefore have I desired to keep watch over thee."

"Therefore! Olof, thou art a noble man! I will not deceive thee."

"Yet thou hast already done it," thought Olof, "or, rather, I have deceived myself when I believed—Ah, folly, folly!" And Olof repressed in his eyes a tear. His first love, his glad dream, his youthful imagination, were indeed crushed; but the stars of heaven never beamed above a purer youthful soul than was Olof's at this moment.

"My head burns, beats so!" said Siri, as she knelt down on the shore: "take water in thy hand, Olof, and throw it on my forehead."

He did so.

"Ah, that is beautiful!" said Siri; "it is as if thou threw moonlight, mild, tranquillising moonlight over me. It is thy friendship, Olof, which makes the water so soothing and delicious. Thanks, good Olof!"

"Yes, my friendship is moonshine, but another's love is sunshine," thought Olof, still somewhat bitterly.

"Olof," said Siri, solemnly, when she had recovered herself, and as she arose, "to-morrow<sup>7</sup> night—hearest thou?—to-morrow night I must see him again!"

Olof felt as if stung by a serpent.

"Must!" exclaimed Siri, "mark thou that: the happiness of my life and another's depend upon it. I must see and speak with him, but for the last time for a long while. On Tingnäs I will meet him: I have promised it. You may prevent it, if you keep me confined, but then—I shall go mad!"

"I will accompany thee," said Olof, stoutly.

"But thou—thou must not—"

\* A headland overgrown with pine-trees, where the Dalelf discharges itself into the Silja.

"I understand," interrupted Olof, "I must not come near, not hear—good! I promise for this time to stand at a distance, so long as I . . . have thee in sight, but if I lose sight of thee, then—"

"Thou shalt see me. I will neither fly nor hide myself from thee. Would to God that I could but tell thee all, shew thee all that is in my heart!"

There was an expression of truth and innocence in these words of Siri, which at this moment took away all doubt and all uncertainty out of Olof's heart. He threw his arm, in brotherly affection, about Siri's waist, she leaned her head on his shoulder. He who had seen them thus wander gently up towards the parsonage, so young, so handsome, so united, could little have augured that they now felt themselves separated for ever.

Olof accompanied Siri up to her room, and was on the point of leaving her, when the door flew hastily open, and Mrs. Ingeborg entered, evidently in a most agitated state of mind. She went to Siri and clasped her almost violently in her arms, saying—

"Girl, girl, for God's sake, for thine and for my sake, reflect, reflect! Thy mother—thy mother once acted as frowardly as this: believed herself innocent and strong as thou dost, and did—what she had cause bitterly to repent of her whole life! Thy mother—God forgive me! I hardly know what I say, but if thou wilt not kill me, then, do not make thyself wretched!"

Siri tore herself out of the arms which convulsively enclosed her, and stood still some paces distant from Mrs. Ingeborg, pale and rigid, fixing upon her a dark, inquiring glance.

"Hast thou not one word—not one kind word—not one single, single word of comfort to give me?" asked Mrs. Ingeborg, with a heart-breaking expression.

Siri was silent; she was as if transformed to marble.

"Oh, my God!" said Mrs. Ingeborg, gazed awhile imploringly in agonised inquiry at the dumb and rigid girl, wrung her hands in silence, and—went.

"Siri! thou art dreadful!" said Olof, with amazement and almost terror he regarded her.

"I stand before the judgment-seat of God," said Siri, slowly, "and no one besides Him has a right to judge me. Leave me now, Olof. To-morrow night, at this hour, I will await thee on the shore."

And with this she turned away. Olof, too, departed with his soul in the wildest uproar, with a secret rage at the power which he felt that the strange girl exerted over him. As he descended the stairs, and passed the door of his step-mother, he felt powerfully drawn to go in; to see her and to speak a few words with her. He opened the door softly. She sat there alone, still with the deepest pain visible on her countenance, and her hands pressed against her bosom.

Olof went forward, fell on his knees before her, and said—

"My mother, speak—speak with me! I cannot see thee thus!"

Mrs. Ingeborg took his head between her hands, looked him long in the full, warm eyes,

and said finally, "O! if Heaven has denied me a daughter, yet it has given me a son!" She kissed the youth's forehead, looked again long into his eyes penetratingly, as if she looked into his very soul. Thereupon she clasped his head silently to her, and said, "We must have patience, my son, we must bear it! It cannot be otherwise. Thou shalt help me."

And by his mother's heart there came a stillness over the youth's soul. He became at once patient and strengthened in his mind. He felt that he was understood by her. They said no more, but beautiful and consoling was the moment for both.

The next night there glid a little boat over the waves of the Silja from Mora, and in the direction of Tingenas headland, which, with its dark pine-trees, shot darkly out into the transparent, moonlit lake. Silent were the strokes of the oars which clove its calm mirror; silent and pale were the two young people who sat in the boat, opposite to each other, with down-cast, dark glances.

An hour afterwards glid the same boat over the lake back towards Mora; and the two young people who sat therein, were, as before, silent and pale, like shadows in the ancient Hades, when they were conveyed over the silent surface of the Styx to their judgment.

## SUNDRIES.

The day after Siri lay in a burning fever. She fell into a short but violent sickness, which made her friends alarmed for her life, but assembled them in affection around her bed. During a few days she was delirious, and frequently during that time exclaimed, "I stand beneath God's judgment!" But there was sometimes a calm and touching joy in her expression which more than any thing called forth a persuasion of her innocence, and flung an auspicious veil over what had recently passed. To this was added, that Siri, during this illness, and when the danger of it was gone by, was altered in mind. She was now mild, affectionate, and grateful for the smallest service, the slightest evidence of tenderness. Never had she been more amiable; and, in consequence, all excitement involuntarily subsided; all gentle sympathies were quickened; but gladness was gone from the house.

"I cannot comprehend how it is with me," said Brigitta, one day. "I feel so odd, so dejected. My soul lies actually topsy-turvy. I must raise my spirits with a little wrangling with my curate. But the mischief of it is, that when he looks at me with his honourable, innocent eyes, I fall out of all my conceits. Whence shall we get a little steel and pepper into one, in this miserable world! And thou too, Lasse, lookest quite tender, like boiled stock-fish,\* or like over-soaked salmon."

But now came the curate, hastening with an unusually excited and lively smile, and approaching Brigitta, she said—

"Well, it is rather *à propos* to look like a fresh winter, when the whole house is in trou-

\* A peculiar dish in Sweden, where the fish is buried some time in ashes before it is boiled.

ble and care! I can no longer endure this world, Godelius! I am thinking of quitting it. I have come to the conclusion to go into a nunnery. I will be Saint Brigitta the second!"

"Then thou must have eight children first, my little Brittgen!" said the curate, smiling humorously.

"No, that is unworthy," burst out Brigitta. "thus to ridicule the feelings of a human being! And who bade thee call me Brittgen? Brittgen is not my name at all; I do not choose to be called Brittgen, and least of all will I be thy Brittgen! Dost thou hear? I break off with thee, Godelius. I will be a nun; I will go into a convent. Yes, positively!"

"Nay, what sort of a humour is my little old woman in to-day?"

"Old woman! Am I an old woman? If thou talkest nonsense to me thus—yes, there will occur something dreadful. But I will not quarrel with thee now. I will go into a nunnery!"

"That shalt thou do, my heart's child," said the curate, with the greatest composure, "if thou wilt only first read me this letter, and tell me what I ought to do."

And he put into Brigitta's hand a letter, the contents of which were, that he was appointed to the situation of lecturer on Greek and Hebrew in the Gymnasium at Westeras,\* and a request was added that he would this autumn enter upon it.

When Brigitta had read the letter, she raised her hands, and cried—

"And thou askest me what thou shalt do? God grant that thou be quite right in thy senses! Is that a thing to question, about? Accept it, say I; lay hold of it with hand and foot; lay hold of it with all the might thou hast; I will help thee. Thou, a lector in Westeras! And I, I will be thy assistant, thy deputy teacher; I shall be quite as clever and as versed in Greek and Hebrew as I am in Latin. Ah! we shall be a professorship together!" And Brigitta danced round in rapture with her tall curate, who, struggling to release himself, observed—

"But thou wilt really go into a nunnery!"

"Ah, but I shall consider about it awhile. Just now I have no time to think of it. Now I must think of thy lectureship, thy removal, and settling, and—"

"And of our wedding!" added the curate, smiling very roguishly.

"Yes, and of our wedding—next spring; for before I shall not marry. Now don't look so dissatisfied, my little old man; I will tell thee all my reasons; but now I am so glad, that I'm not very clear either about them or myself. Just now I was as sad as a raven, and now I am as merry as a lark. And so oughtest thou to be too. Good gracious, what a long face! Is it a lark that looks in this fashion? Defend me from such a lark physiognomy! Well, now, God be praised! it clears up! Ah, Godelius, how good is our Lord!"

"That He is, that He is! But thou, Brigitta, thou art abominable. Why wilt thou not marry this autumn, and go with me?"

"Oh, that I will tell thee, my little, dear old fellow! It is because I—thou seest that I cast

down my eyes—because I am wanted here in the house. Aunt wants me, Siri wants me, and I don't want to leave them now that—"

"But I—I want thee, too, Brigitta; and thou art my faithfully betrothed wife, and it stands in the Bible, a woman shall leave all and be near her husband."

"Ah! that the learned should quote Scripture wrong way first. In this manner which thou sayest it does not stand in the Bible, but it stands that 'a man shall leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife.' That is how it stands. Be so kind as to open at the second chapter of the first book of Moses. But listen to me, Godelius, and be kind and reasonable. It does not stand well here in the house, that thou canst see as well as I; and I have a feeling that, sooner or later, there will be here some great unhappiness. I cannot leave my charming aunt and my little Siri—the naughty girl!—in the gloom and the disorder in which they now are. I must first see that it becomes clear for them, and help towards it all that I can. But in the meantime I will sew and put in order a heap of things for our establishment, and at spring—yes, by then I feel persuaded that in one way or another, it will have become clear and tranquil in this house, and then I can quit it with a good conscience. In the meantime I will accompany thee to Westeras this autumn, for I am fain to see how it goes with thee there, and I think of haranguing the bishop and consistorium, and perhaps the whole corpus of the Gymnasium, if the spirit falls upon me, because they have chosen thee, and that they may properly understand what a man thou art, and what a jewel of a wife thou hast got. And then I must see about thy lodgings for the winter, and then we will look out rooms for us at spring. Ah, Godelius! only a little dwelling of three rooms—for thy old mother shall have one of them, or otherwise we should have sufficient with two—three rooms and a kitchen, on the sunny side, and a little garden, be it ever so little, where thou canst sit and smoke thy pipe in the fresh air, under green trees, and where I can have a few flowers and a few green herbs for our house-keeping."

"Listen, Brigitta!" exclaimed the curate, with sudden inspiration; "listen to what I say! We wed this autumn, and—we take Siri with us to our new abode. She needs to go hence, and when she is away, all will become calm again in the house. So that is best for all."

Brigitta stood quite astonished. "It is certain," said she, at length, "that thou sometimes hast ideas, which I fancy thou gettest from the moon, or rather from the sun, for they are perfectly luminous. And the more I think upon this plan, the brighter does it beam into me, as the very best and wisest that we can hit upon. And because thou hast thus thought of Siri, I must really kiss thee! Certainly it will be tight work to get every thing so soon into order; and if all be not in order, why something may remain in disorder, and yet it shall be done, for the matter is and shall be excellent. Agreed, my dear old fellow—if Siri consent, then it may be as thou wilt."

The curate made a great leap, and looked—not exactly like a lark, but like the happiest man under the sun. In the meantime, it was

\* Corresponding with professor at a college.

settled between him and Brigitta, that as soon as Siri should be perfectly well, the proposition should be communicated to her and the family.

When Siri was on the path of convalescence, joy began again to lift his wings in the home at Mora, stimulated thereto by Brigitta and her brother, who of late, during Siri's illness, and as Valborg scarcely ever left her room, had altogether lost his good spirits, so that he even had ceased to sing his favourite air in pleasure and trouble. But scarcely was the danger over, and Valborg again visible amongst the others, when Lieutenant Lasse put on his sister's shawl and nightcap, reclined himself in the corner of the sofa, and said whiningly :

"I don't know how it is with me; I feel so strange. Most gracious Valborg! attend a little to me; I am certainly dangerously ill—have got either a galloping consumption, or—an ague!" And here the feigned invalid was seized with an explosion of laughter, which he again protested was a very dangerous symptom, might proceed from the laughing-sickness, and implored that Valborg would devote to him great attention and good nursing. But Valborg smiled, prescribed some medicines, which Lieutenant Lasse declared altogether inappropriate, and left him without the least sympathy.

And true it is, that nothing in Lieutenant Lasse called forth this feeling, and least of all his love, which was a sort of spectacle with which he entertained himself and others. He proclaimed it with puns, with fiddle, and dance, and the most pathetic *pas de Basques*, and you could not avoid laughing heartily; and Valborg was probably somewhat amused by this, but not at all touched by a sentiment which had evidently nothing very serious in it.

Whilst Lieutenant Lasse danced and sighed, and the rest laughed, Olof went about silent and gloomy, roved up and down through fields and woods, sought petrefactions, and read Plutarch to strengthen and steel his soul. And if he found himself too sad, and too bitter at heart, he sought for peace by his mother's heart, pressed her hand to his brow and to his bosom. Never had she been to him so dear and precious as now.

But Mrs. Ingeborg was herself now no longer what she had been before. Her fresh, living activity was gone. Either she seemed driven as by a goading disquiet, or lost herself in heavy and gloomy reveries.

One afternoon she stood by the window of the drawing-room, looking towards the Silja, and noticed a large, black cloud, which came up over it, and seemed to stretch towards Mora a pair of gigantic arms, and dark forebodings rose still more powerfully in her soul. At this moment she felt herself gently embraced by her husband, who asked tenderly :

"What is it which makes my little woman look so melancholy, and which takes away her fresh tranquillity? The girl! is it not so! but my Ingeborg ought not to allow her spirits to be depressed in this manner. Have we not agreed in what manner to treat this matter, and that we will no longer dwell anxiously upon the past! and does not Siri's state of mind now promise us all good for the future!"

"Ah, Gustaf!" replied Mrs. Ingeborg, "I

know not how it is, but now I cannot hope; since that terrible day it seems as though a heavy stone lay upon my heart. Dost thou see the cloud which advances towards us so menacingly! Since a certain time, I see always such a cloud above us, and a foreboding of misfortune never quits me."

"And if a cloud ascends above us, yes, and descends too, what is there so terrible in it! Have we not passed through much together; many a heavy day, many a bitter sorrow, and do we not stand here, heart to heart, as on our wedding-day! Cloud! my courageous, free-spirited woman ought not now, more than formerly, to allow herself to be terrified at a cloud. Let us only be glad and cheerful-hearted, and trouble not ourselves about a threatening cloud, and we shall see it will pass over."

Mrs. Ingeborg was silent. There was a violent conflict within her bosom; but her husband remarked it not, for neither in his was it calm. In a while he said :

"It has grieved me, grieved me deeply about the girl, I must confess. I was fond of her—and I had confidence in her, and she has deceived me; she like so many others. This experience was painful. I have so frequently put faith in people, and so often been deceived, that, had it not been for our Lord's grace, my mind would, perhaps, have become embittered; but, in His goodness, He gave me a friend, a human soul on which I can rest; in whose purity and love I bathe my spirit into freshness again, when it has been wounded by life and the world. O, Ingeborg, my wife, my beloved one, if thou knew what it is with a temper like mine, with an experience like mine, to know and feel itself to possess a friend in whom nothing false, no deception, is to be found; to be able to go to her, and lay his soul in her hand, his heart in her heart, and to know that he commits them to his better self; a friend in whom he reposes as securely as in the bosom of God! O! it is a heaven, to be able to say to some one, 'Let the whole world deceive me, thou wilt not deceive me.'"

With infinite warmth and affection, Nordevall pressed his wife to his bosom. A burning tear fell upon his hand. There was something in this tear which caused him to look into her face, and with terror he saw there an expression of devouring anguish.

"Ingeborg!" said he, hastily, "thou art ill!"

"Yes," said she, "my spasm of the heart!"

"Come and let us go out into the fresh air," said Nordevall; "thou hast sat too long in the house, with thy unquiet thoughts, I ought to have thought of it. Come now, my little woman, and let us look at the harvest together, and you told me some time ago, that you would shew me a new piece of ploughing, which you had begun; let me see that to-day."

Mrs. Ingeborg smiled faintly, and, more to give her husband pleasure, than in the hope of any diversion of mind to herself, she accompanied him to the tillage-field.

On the way, the professor talked of Olof's approaching journey to Fahlun, where he was to remain the winter over; and proposed to his wife, that they should all accompany him thither, and stay there a few weeks, in order to see Olof comfortably settled down, and to



pay their respects to their friends there, and in the country around.

This proposal gave Mrs. Ingeborg much pleasure, for she saw in it a beneficial dissipation for all; and this journey, which was to take place at the end of October, became a vivid topic of conversation to them.

In the meantime they passed the fields where the golden rye was piled up into ricks by the active harvest men. Gladly and in a friendly manner did these salute their beloved pastor and his wife, and Mrs. Ingeborg felt a pleasure in seeing the vigorous, good people, and the unusually good harvest.

At length they arrived at the new piece of cultivation. Here the ploughshare tore up the grassy sward in long furrows, and turned up its earth side, which smelt as sweet and fresh, as only the fresh moist mould can do; and when Mrs. Ingeborg pointed out, and more exactly staked out the noble potato-field, which should shortly bloom here, she became quite animated in her countenance, and scarcely noticed the light summer rain which fell smartly on the field, while she and the professor stood under a thick pine-tree. The rain speedily was over.

"Where now is the threatening cloud which so lately frightened thee?" asked Nordevall.

Mrs. Ingeborg looked towards the lake, but the cloud had disappeared, and a glittering rainbow arched itself over the hills, and mirrored itself in the waters of the Silja. The sun shone out and warmed the damp, fragrant soil at the feet of the pair.

And for this time the cloud was gone by.

We will now glance into Siri's sick room, and we find there late and early, night and day, Valborg, who has made herself her nurse, and has shewn herself to be an excellent one.

In all circumstances, where human beings come into closer intercourse with each other, there arises a private romance, in which changes spring up for good or for evil, tending to closer union or to alienation, and all according as life's spirits of light, or spirits of darkness, have acquired a mastery over the senses. Between Siri and Valborg took place what we will here relate.

Immediately on Siri's falling ill, Valborg drew herself nearer to her, and watched with secret distress the advance of the sickness. One night, when the crisis had already passed, and the danger was over, Valborg watched by Siri's bed without being conscious that she herself was the object of her observation.

"Thou art very handsome, Valborg!" said Siri, at once, when Valborg thought she slept, "it is a pleasure to look at thee! and thou art so very good, who art so careful of a poor rejected creature, like me."

Valborg blushed, but said nothing. A little time after, Siri felt a kiss and a hot tear on the hand which hung languidly over the side of the bed, and she heard Valborg say:

"Siri, forgive me!"

And this from the proud Valborg! Siri raised herself in amazement in the bed, saying, "What! what, indeed, have I to forgive thee?"

"It was I who first witnessed thy meetings

with the strange man; I who gave information; I who accused thee."

Siri was silent for a while, and then said, quietly,

"Thou thought thou didst right! Thou believed me to be wicked!"

"Yes; but now—now, I do not believe it any longer. Canst thou, *canst* thou pardon me?"

"Ah, with my whole heart!"

Valborg sunk into Siri's extended arms; and a silent union was cemented; and two hearts hitherto closed to each other, now opened to each other their life-springs.

"Sparks flew out of the home of fire, and fell into the home of cold; then warmth gave life to frost," says the most ancient of all the northern mythes of the origin of life, and as the sea lives in the drops of water, so stood forth in the life of the two young maidens, the truth of the ancient saga of the giants.

During Siri's convalescence, it was Valborg who read aloud to her, who prepared for her the dishes which are at this time so delicious to taste, so pleasant to present. For any tint of health on Siri's cheeks, there sprung up a joy in Valborg's heart, and gave to her manner a life, and expression of feeling and grace, which all, and even Olof remarked, when he talked with her of the object of both their cares.

When Siri was just able to go out, she was supported on Valborg's arm; their growing intimacy was noticed by all in the house. Lieutenant Lasse called them "the inseparables." Brigitta said she was jealous of Valborg, and on the highway to grow melancholy about it, if she had only had time for it. But, in part, her brother was now constantly about her, singing,

How sad and short is this life of ours,  
Let us sweeten it then with pleasure;

and in part, she had now taken up Valborg's usual avocations within the house; and it gave her much to think upon, and much to do. She now discovered that it was by no means easy to fill Valborg's place; and that Valborg, beneath her quiet, almost unobserved activity, had an extraordinary capacity for embracing, and ordering every thing—and that as wisely, as carefully. The strong habit of observation of others had developed in her an actual talent for setting every thing right. She was like the concealed wheel in the clock. But people think very little of this—they look at the hands. Yet Mrs. Ingeborg had long done justice to Valborg's still merit, and now Brigitta said, "This Valborg, depend upon it, will very soon eclipse us all. Some fine day she will come flying as a butterfly out of the chrysalis. I see now that she has wings, though they lie still folded up."

But in Siri, too, there took place at this period a great change. It was as if the woman at once had awakened in her. The childish girl had vanished, as it were, during the early part of her illness. She was more quiet, milder, more grateful, and a certain sadness, a propensity, even in playful moments, to let fall tears, a look, an expression, a smile of love for all who surrounded her; besides a graceful development of the external form; all this

made her interesting in a high degree, and for Olof more dangerous than ever, if he had seen her much. But he saw her as seldom as possible, and was generally on short excursions into the country.

The plan of the curate and Brigitta, on which they so much felicitated themselves, for Siri's removal with them to Westeras, was stranded at once against her positive wish to remain there in the home, and in the circumstances in which she found herself. On the contrary, she expressed a lively joy in the prospect of the projected journey to Fahlun; and she talked often of her desire to descend into the great and celebrated copper-mine at Fahlun.

Brigitta shook her head at this longing, and the curate pulled a longer face than ever, as the hope of his wedding and settling down to housekeeping this autumn disappeared. But Brigitta consoled him with the prospect of their aw approaching journey, and with,

"The spring doth come, the trees burst out," &c.

Having arranged to meet the Mora family at Fahlun, at the end of October, Brigitta departed with her curate and her brother from Mora to Westeras in the early days of September. Brigitta, who prepared to harangue the bishop in Westeras in Babelish, composed and read over her speech on the way; and Lieutenant Jasse helped her with it in order to counteract the "dreadful melancholy," which the separation from Valborg occasioned him, and which he foresaw would accompany him to the grave, or to—Westeras!

When the lively brother and sister were gone, there fell on the home of Mora a quiet which now became more beneficial than all gaiety. Siri gave no further cause of uneasiness. She was no longer out late in the evenings or at night, but, on the contrary, she was much out in the day-time with Valborg. The hours of discourse with her paternal teacher became to her continually dearer; while he daily became more pleased with her, and affection towards her again warmed his heart. Not a word more was spoken in the family of what had disturbed its peace. All seemed disposed to comfort and cheer one another. The angel of peace spread his wings over the home of Mora, and in their shadow Mrs. Ingeborg again awaked to her former glad life, and to her activity for all and every thing about her.

And the autumn came on, and the days darkened, and the fires were lit in the houses. Like sable troops of mourners passed the heavy grey clouds over the earth, and land and water assumed the dark blue colour which is peculiar to the northern landscape when the sun is absent. Autumn in the north has a still, deep melancholy; but the ever-green pine and fir-woods which crown its mountains and heights, and murmur with equal freshness whether the summer tribes and birds sport in them, or their beard flies before the northern storm, while the ravens croak in the clouds. These forests take away every thing pale, every thing weak and hypochondriacal from sadness, and give it a stamp of elevation and of profound seriousness. The ancient Vala\* breathes under the veil of sorrow. And thus

come days, glorious days, when the pine black-birds sing in the frosty transparency of the mornings, when the piled clouds stand in purple and gold above the dark green heights, when the air is light and elastic, light as a flying bird, and the body and the mind of man is winged with it—days when the sun shines in his purest splendour over the many-coloured earth, where the leaf grows yellow, and the bunches of the mountain-ash glow; when the northern lights flame in the evening, then is it glorious in the north.

One splendid September day, sat Valborg and Siri, resting in a wood together after a long ramble. They had conversed about their childhood, their parents; and their communications had not been glad, although Siri's relations of her enterprises and adventures had occasioned many a hearty laugh. Valborg's disclosures could call forth nothing of the kind. A more joyless, wearisome life than hers it were scarcely possible to conceive; and the mental thralldom in which her youth passed may explain, in a great measure, her reserved and cold manner. Her parents had married purely for worldly considerations, without attachment or serious reflection on the union into which they entered; and their life became a succession of little bitternesses and great provocations. The daughter born in this home enjoyed no sunshine of affection on her cradle. Her egotistical and exacting parents gave her no warmth, but demanded from her obedience, and a strict fulfilling of her duties towards them. Often did there pass through Valborg's soul, the query, whether a marriage of this sort, however sanctioned by the forms of society and the church, was not one of the greatest of sins against our Lord's rule on the earth. But she suppressed this query, as all others, in proud bitterness. Disposed by nature to reserve, she became changed by her education, as it were, to a mummy. Thus she had lived without living, till the deaths of her parents, which followed rapidly one upon the other, loosened her chains, and conducted her into a more beautiful sphere of existence; but two-and-twenty years' habit in combination with a disposition, not by nature very accessible, had engrained, as it were, a petrefaction into her disposition, and some violent shocks must take place before it open itself to milder influences.

The two young girls had been silent awhile, when Siri all at once exclaimed,

"Valborg! thou hast certainly never been in love! Thou art too calm, too sensible!"

A low tremulous "ah!" from the lips of Valborg answered Siri's question; and a glance from her large, beautiful eyes seemed to open up an abyss of concealed fire. Siri was struck with astonishment at this expression in Valborg's glance; and when she saw the suddenly flushing colour at once fade from her cheeks, then a new light broke upon Siri. Affectionately she embraced Valborg, and whispered, "Valborg! thou lovest—thou lovest Olof. I have heard thee of nights when thou slept utter his name!"

Siri felt Valborg tremble; she felt her cold lips upon her cheek. But not a word said Valborg—she sat pale and speechless.

\* A fortune-teller in the old northern mythology.

"Have I wounded thee?" whispered Siri.  
 "Oh, don't be vexed!"

Valborg made an attempt to speak. A bitter shade of pain passed over her usually so tranquil aspect. At length she said with emphasis,

"Siri! promise me, righteously, that *he* never comes to know what thou imaginest. Never! no, never shall he know what I feel."

"But, Valborg, he also is attached to thee!"

"No, he is not! I have never been, and never shall be, loved by any one. A spell is upon my life, which dooms me to solitude and silence; an iron hand grasps my soul. O Siri! thou who captivatest all hearts, thou who playest in the sunshine of human favour, thou who, when thou wilt, callest forth smiles and tears, thou canst not know, canst not understand how it feels to be so sealed up. To know yourself doomed never to be understood, never loved; and that because one is not amiable, because one is dumb, because the life of the heart and the heart's tongue are bound by hard hands!" And Valborg wept bitterly. Siri had never seen her thus. And how eloquent did she now become in order to console Valborg; to describe all her superior advantages, her beauty, her nobleness of mind, and how amiable she was, and how amiable she would appear if she only confided thoroughly in her power, and how, already, that which was in her was discerned, and how even Olof—

But here Valborg interrupted her, saying,

"Oh, Siri, do not talk of that! I neither can nor will make a fool of myself. If I were a flint, or a cloud-shape, or . . . thy shoe-string, I should be of far more value to Olof than I now am. I cannot be so blind, nor thou either, as not to see that his heart, his love, belong alone to thee."

Siri was silent awhile, and then said,

"The heart can change; and his *must* change, for he wishes it, and I wish it too."

"I have never felt attachment for any one besides, in the whole world!" said Valborg, whose heart, once awakened, seemed to press for utterance. "Ever since we were children and played together, on the estate of my parents, have I been fascinated by him; and every time that I have seen him, again have I become more deeply fascinated by him. And now, as I see him expand into manhood, so rich in endowment, so handsome! Ah! how poor, how contracted have I felt myself beside him, and . . . beside thee. Yes, I have been bitter against thee, and hated thee for the bitterness that I felt. But since thou hast been dear to me, all is so changed. I think that now I could willingly see you happy together."

"But *now*," said Siri, "that is more than ever impossible; and—Valborg! I feel a persuasion that Olof will yet love thee, and that thou wilt be happy with him."

"No, no," said Valborg, shaking her head, "and I shall learn to bear his indifference, and I fancy that this will be easier to me hereafter. But, Siri, we speak no more on this subject—promise me that; and let no one—no one, suspect what thou now knowest! I will not be pitied by any one, and least of all by him; rather would I sink alive into the earth. But thou, Siri, how is it possible that thou—dost not love Olof!"

"I love him," said Siri, "but it is not with the passion of love, from all that I can conceive of this feeling. Perhaps I should have done, if my feelings and thoughts had not been absorbed by another object: the giant in the Mid-dagsberg—thou knowest."

"Siri, how canst thou jest on this subject, and that at this moment!"

"Pardon me, I meant no ill. I am so thoughtless!"

"I have given thee my heart's innermost secret, Siri, and thou—thou wilt not give me thine!"

Siri turned rapidly pale, and said,

"It is not my own, Valborg, or in truth it should already have been thine; but the weal, perhaps the life of another depends upon its continuing a secret, and a solemn oath binds me."

"Good," said Valborg, breaking off; "then we will speak no more of it. Let us now go to our patients."

And the two young doctresses continued their walk to the remote dwellings, whither the care of the official doctor seldom arrives.

In the evening, when Siri was alone in her little room, she took out a note-book which contained several loose papers. Many a quiet morning and evening had she already wet these leaves with her tears, and thus did she now as she read the following

#### NOTES.

SIXTEEN years ago there lay a certain prisoner condemned to death in the Smedjegard.\* A friend paid him a secret visit; it was the evening before his execution. He was already conducted into the cell where the condemned are placed previous to execution; it lies close to the chapel of Smedjegard. But what a chapel! Neglect and an unchristian mind could not have made it worse. The room of the condemned man was no better; it was filthy, naked, and hideous. A huge picture hung there—Christ upon the cross—from the worthlessness of the painter, a ghastly shape. Did the Merciful One desire that from His cross only horror should go forth to the sinner who looks up to Him for consolation? I looked round, to see whether there were any thing in the room which might awaken the mind, and call up a pious sorrow or a sentiment of solace—something which might make an elevating and salutary impression upon him who had here to prepare for his final and violent exit. But no, there was nothing! The clergyman who was present in accordance with his duty, a man of well-meaning mind but of weak endowments, had been able to awaken in the prisoner who lay there no remorse, and no better desires. The prisoner thought of nothing less than of dying; he was young and tall, and strong as a giant; he thought of grappling with the hangman, and making his escape. The friend who now visited him was to assist him in this enterprise. With a few wild, daring fellows, he was to follow to the place of execution, and there await the hour. The criminal and his friend, as criminal as himself, but more favoured by fortune—for he had been

\* The Newgate of Stockholm.

happy enough to escape the hands of justice—now concerted the whole scheme.

It was late in the evening. The next morning, in the early dawn, the prisoner was led out of the gaol, followed by an innumerable throng of spectators: he carried his head high, looked boldly round on the people, and said "they should see a merry dance."

The friend, accompanied by his men, followed, well disguised, in the midst of the multitude. It was a beautiful October day; the sun was bright and clear, and deep blue played the water, and the trees on the shores shone in autumnal splendour, and the Skårgård\* lay in the morning light with its rocks and its fir-woods so fresh and fragrant; and all this was beheld as the procession advanced along the endless Göth Street; and the friend of the condemned man thought, "If it were now I who for the last time looked on this glorious earth—if it were I who now went to be hanged!"

When he was a little boy, and drove with his mother from their villa in the suburbs of Stockholm into the city, through the Skans Gate, there was a place upon the road, at some distance outside of the gate, where he always gazed into the wood on the right hand, at once with curiosity and a terrified glance; for there, in the wood, gleamed forth three tall white chimneys, over the tops of the trees—"chimneys," his mother called them, but he knew well that they stood upon the gallows, and that they were posts on which malefactors were hanged; and when the boy saw them he became filled with awe, and shuddered; and never did he see Swedish bank-notes with their inscription, "He who forges imitations of these notes will be hanged," without thinking of the white pillars in the wood. Farther on in life he was to gaze on them more nearly.

The procession of death issued from Göth Street: the name of the street is derived from that of the first criminal who passed along it to execution. In the street is a public-house, into which the culprit is taken to drink a glass of strengthening drink on the way. It was the case now, and the condemned one did not drink feigningly. The procession then again set forward. A little without the gate of Skans the way bends to the left, and so reaches an open place in the wood, and here at once presented itself a white rotunda, with three lofty white pillars, and cross-beams and hooks, and at the entrance an iron door, on which some one, in devilish mockery, had written in large letters, "Göth's Villa." And here, through the iron door into the villa, passed the condemned one with the hangman, and vanished from all eyes, while the people stood in dense crowds on all the hills around. But nearer and nearer drew the friend with his men, awaiting the moment.

At once there was heard an uproar before the villa, blows, wild curses, cries. The guard stormed in, all became silent, and—the prisoner came not out! As quickly, again, his friend caught sight of him, but it was above the wall! Then fled he as if chased by the Furies.

He fled from his home and his country, and lived in strange lands for many years a life of

adventure, now in the army, now on the boards of the theatre, now in the depths of the mine, whichever was most to his fancy.

But a tender tie bound him to his native land; and when he had caused a report of his death to be spread, he wrote to her whom he had passionately loved, and loved still, to tell her that he lived and should live for her; but he received no answer. Years passed over, and he was in act to return to his native land to seek her out, when a traveller from the place of her abode gave him the intelligence that she, his wife, was become the wife of another. On the shore where he stood, the outcast of his country turned round. For ten years he drove to and fro as before, but more wretched than before. Then was he drawn vehemently homewards. He was a father: in the land of his birth his daughter grew up. The thought swelled in his bosom, delicious as powerful: he must see her, lay her head on his bosom, hear her call him father! As with a band of iron this desire drew him to his native soil; it drew him in defiance of chains and death. He went, and again saw and kissed the earth where his cradle had stood, but where he never can find his grave.

In Stockholm he again passed along the road which he had traversed sixteen years before; he again beheld the deep-blue waters, the trees, the Skårgård. As he went the bells of the city rang solemnly and peacefully—it was Sunday. He again saw the white rotunda, with the mocking inscription: still and hushed was it now there; the sun shone down upon it, and the grass grew green and joyous, and the dandelions nodded yellow and friendly in the breeze, by the steps whose ascent had been trodden by so many feet heavy with death.

Recent traces of an execution appeared at some little distance, and on the fresh, newly laid turf bloomed red flowers. Even to the grave of the malefactor affection finds its way!

There stood a cottage by the way-side, not far off: a shoemaker lived in it, and his thirteen years' old boy, who opened the gate, answered frankly and honestly the questions of the wanderer concerning the execution of a couple of wretched murderers, which had lately taken place there in the wood.

People talk of the criminal's hardihood. Oh, stuff!

Sick at heart, with an abhorrence of man and society, he marched on.

And he wandered away towards Dalarna to seek his child, the angel of innocence, who should reconcile him to humanity and to life!

In Dalarna, near the mines of Öster-Silfberg, she was said to dwell. But she was no longer in this district. For two months she had been in Mora with her—O my God!

He tarried a day in this neighbourhood, detained by memory. It was here, here in the vicinity of the now-abandoned silver mines, that she, the formerly beloved one, had dwelt and bloomed, beautiful as the wild rose. Here was it that they became acquainted with each other—here that they wandered together in the still summer evenings and nights, while the fiery-hued phalæne noiselessly flitted around them, and the *Silene noctiflora* opened for them.

\* Rocks and islands on the coast of Sweden.

its fragrant chalices; they also drank from a chalice—it was that of love—young, first, potent, and impetuous love.

Her brother-in-law and guardian was opposed to their love, and especially to the lover, whose already-involved circumstances he was somewhat aware of. He forbade him his house. But for him was his wife, Ingeborg's enthusiastic sister, and she fell into the plans with which love and a desire of revenge inspired him. These also were favoured by the pride of the loved one irritated by the despotic proceedings of the brother-in-law. They agreed upon a secret marriage, which should first be made known when certain circumstances permitted it, and when necessity could effect what now was denied. But what he meant by this, he only properly understood, not the innocent, confiding woman, who committed her fate to his hands. That fate he would conquer and make a happy one, whilst he believed himself, through his genius and address, able to command the laws of society, or to set himself above them.

At the baths of Sätther, he managed to win over a young, enthusiastic clergyman, a stranger to the place, to his plan, which he represented to him in the delusive light in which he himself saw it.

The general went a journey. Every thing favoured the lovers' objects. The priestly ceremony removed all scruples from the mind of the ladies, who had little knowledge of juridical circumstances. Besides, he understood how to make them perfectly satisfied.

One summer evening the lovers met at the ancient chapel near these mines. With lilacs from a grave in the churchyard, he adorned his bride, and thus led her into the chapel, where the priest already awaited them, and united them in the name of the Most High. A more beautiful or pure-hearted bride never stood there before the altar.

As they issued from the church black thunder-clouds rolled over the heavens, and darkened them. But he heeded them not. Amid the roar of the thunder and the flashes of the lightning he pressed the loved one to his heart, and earthly love celebrated his triumph amid the clangour of heaven's hosannas.

That was life!

There is a hue of death on the sulphur-green water which fills these deserted mines, around which stand rugged mountain precipices. The whole country around is a hideous morass. There, amid stone-fields and water-spouts, the chapel has stood from the Catholic times, in which *she* once stood so beautiful; but that chapel has now been abandoned for many years, open to man and beast. A horrible story of murder is connected with these mines, with this black and decaying house of prayer, and its spirit seems to brood wildly over the country. A pale, sorrowful apparition also wanders there, the apparition of a powerful love, a great but brief felicity. It seeks here its former paradise, and finds only graves, and desolation.

Still stood the lilac bushes green in the churchyard, but their flowers had long ago withered. . . . Fool! not to have reflected when he broke them for a bride's garland, that they

bloomed on a grave! . . . He entered once more that open-standing house of prayer. It was more dilapidated, the walls leaned more than before; the wind passed more freely through the shattered leaden casements. The altar before which *she* and he had stood sixteen years before was ready to tumble, and the hideous pictures above it seemed to desire to fall upon him. Some leaves from the psalm-books lay strewed over the floor, and he took up one of them, in the hope of finding a word of consolation or hope, and read:

.. "Eeen Böön, när nagor wil begifwa sigh i Ahtenskap."

"A prayer for those who are about to enter into matrimony."

There is often a mockery in life, which must be a scourge in the hand of some wicked spirit.

A half-open chest stood in the porch of the chapel; he opened it. There lay within it a mutilated image of stone.

All was dark and ugly; and dark was the mind of the wanderer when he issued forth. He went on to Mora! . . .

By the Middagsberg, in a deserted hut at the foot of the mountain, he took up his abode. *They* were not then at Mora; *they* were at Sollerön, *she* and her child. Here will he, as a fisherman, make excursions, and visit the islands. He cherished a fancy, in viking fashion, of falling in with his maiden! . . .

And he found again his daughter, his child; pressed her to his bosom; and it yet glows with love, with joy and pain in this remembrance. An accident or . . . why not! God's goodness threw her into his arms. He was out upon the lake, heard a cry for help, and rowed towards the quarter whence it came. He saw a capsized boat and a young girl who was on the point of sinking; she was senseless, and blood was visible on her temples. He took her into his boat, and rowed her to his dwelling. Her appearance, her age, a mark by the left eye, a feeling that went through his whole blood, all told him that she whom he had rescued was—his own flesh and blood, his child! When he led her into his dwelling, and had recalled her to consciousness, he learned her name. She was his daughter! What scenes now followed! What a drama within a few hours, and within four wretched, narrow walls! He made himself known to her; read her her mother's letter which announced her birth, which spoke of the mark by the left eye, which the child had like its father, and he shewed her that by his eye, and she—must believe him. Terrified and astonished stood the enchanting maiden there at first, but he quickly acquired a power over her mind, and the child's love drew fire from his. A strange life arose within her, full at once of light and darkness. But out of the light into darkness and night her father speedily conducted her, when he enjoined her the strictest silence, yes, commanded her to swear it, and made her understand that life or death, both for himself and others, depended upon it. Her mother's name she did not get to know. He would spare the mother—yet. He has something to say to her, some trial to put her to, before he shall have formed his resolve respecting her.

A night and a day he retained his child with

him. Then were they obliged to part, but . . . they will meet again! . . .

Twice since then has he seen his child again. A noble nature! Pure as the new-fallen snow, and warm as the heaven of the south. An open, living soul! every word how intelligible, every glance how it kindles! What a delight to form this spirit, to warm yourself at its heart! That ought to be the happiness of her father, but . . . but he must away, and labour for his bread! King Magnus Smek ordained the copper mine for an asylum for criminals "who have not committed crimes too enormous." The wanderer has then a sort of royal permission to reside there.

In spring I shall return to Mora.

In the Copper Mine, January.

Here, one hundred and eighteen fathom deep in the bowels of the earth, in the hard, glittering mine, where all is rigid, cold, immovable—here beats an unquiet, glowing heart. It yearns to be hence—yearns towards Mora—towards the lovely strand where beats another heart, a young, warm heart, the dearest that I possess in the world. In the mines of the Tyrol I was much better. Now I have seen Paradise, and long after it, and suffer. When will the spring arrive? Then shall I be rich—then can I luxuriate, for a time, in freedom. My child, out of the depths of the earth ascends a blessing for thee!

Mora, April.

Again at the foot of the Middagsberg—again near the light-locked maiden, all that I love! and near *her* who has almost awaked my hate! Since a certain time I feel myself changed. I know not what thirst of revenge stirs in my bosom. Why shall *she* be happy while I suffer so immeasurably! She, indeed, is the cause of the worst portion of my condition. Burning, bitter feelings!

The bells of Mora! The bells of Mora! Oh their sound is beautiful! They have made me weep, and my gall seethes less bitterly. But melancholy lies upon me, dark and heavy as the eternal night! My beloved child! if thou lay on my heart, if I could see thy blue eyes, kiss thy golden locks, then should I feel better. But in vain do I stretch my arms towards thee—thou comest not, canst not come!

It grows dark; clouds veil the heavens; the lake swells and roars restlessly, and the still and dusky shores seem to be drawn nearer to each other. This people say, is the case when tempestuous weather is coming. Thus do loving spirits draw near each other when misfortune or danger threatens, and seek to defend each other, to hope or to die together. But who approaches me? Whom have I thus to see to in the whole wide world!

How the strand of Mora seems to creep towards mine in the unquiet evening. I see clearly the church, the green trees, and now the house where my daughter dwells. It comes nearer—nearer. Eternal powers of love! Is that not a miracle, the work of the spirit of my child!

No, it is the work of the powers of mockery and scorn! They wish to allow me to see the treasure, in order then to bear it away. But—

Yet this night *will* I press my child to my heart!

My arm knit itself convulsively; but her head rested upon it, and it became relaxed. I looked into her heavenly eyes, and the hell in my bosom grew cool. Her love, her affectionate disposition, made me soft and mild.

May,

Again and again I have seen *her*. Oh! but there is a bitterness in this pleasure, a poverty in this affluence, a thorn in this rose of gladness that I cannot endure. For we must positively separate again and what—what shall be the end of it! What shall the dove of innocence do near the criminal! He can only disturb her peace—perhaps, in the eye of the world, spot her white wings.

She has talked about *her*; she reports her to be still beautiful—beautiful and happy! There comes at times over me a desire to cause this beauty to turn pale, to entomb this happiness, and—that were easy for me.

I went in the stormy evening up towards her home, in the hope of catching a glimpse of her. I saw her, the lovely woman, my —. More wildly flowed my blood after it! I was obliged to conceal myself then, but I will shew myself again.

"Not yet! not yet!" Thus ring the bells of Mora, and implore for her. Well then—not yet! But I must forth—forth and wander!

June.

I wander whole days through; I make myself weary, weary, but that brings no sleep at night. This want of sleep is fearfully consuming. How weary I am of seeing the sun ascend in his beauty.

Is it possible, then, that one single transaction, in which lay no actually criminal desire, can originate such misery! So do I ask myself sometimes; and then comes over me a wondering, a doubt, whether it can actually be so; but it is all over with me on earth—with *me*, so splendidly endowed, so evidently called to play a great and brilliant part. It seems to me that it must be a miserable dream, from which I must awake when I have fully slept out my sleep; and I then endeavour to sleep, but an invisible, gnawing worm keeps me for ever awake; and when I chance to sleep a moment, and then awake, I behold myself as before, a lost wanderer, fleeing before the sword of the judge.

This morning I rowed out on the river: the morning was blowy and cool, but my blood burnt hotly after the sleepless night. I rowed through a rapid: it looked perilous, but I fear not to drown. One bitterness may be as good as another, nay, better, for it brings an end with it. But there stood before my mind my shining Siri; I longed to see her again, and felt compelled to live. Wandering long amongst the mountains, in the endless pine-forests, I felt myself pressed to the earth. The sun hid himself behind the veil of clouds, like a pale, joyless countenance. I had no other watch. How slowly passed the time. I went into a peasant's hut in the wood, and got a little milk and bread; slumbered then on a flowery slope near

the river, and awoke refreshed, and singularly strengthened in soul and body. Thanks, thou verdant, friendly shore!

Ah, that the done could but be undone! But how shall that be! How shall the crime be extirpated, the stain be washed out! The done is done; what has occurred has occurred; neither the powers of earth nor of heaven can change that, and that is—the curse!

What caused my misery! A false conception of society, a passion for riches, for honour—love to—the faithless. When she became mine, I wished to become rich and powerful, that I might enjoy her society in peace. The means were not lawful, that I knew, but—I proposed afterwards to become the benefactor of society, and—

“The way to hell,” says some one, “is paved with good intentions;” and this way was mine.

My soul is a tossed sea, and I do not know myself: sometimes I am pious, sometimes embittered and wild; sometimes I will pardon all, sometimes I thirst terribly for vengeance; and thus my soul labours and raves, without arriving at any conclusion, or at any repose or order. One hour destroys what another builds up, and all is uncertainty and torment.

Happy, happy are the children of these valleys! they sons and daughters of toil! They know nothing of the soul's misery. Fresh and great is their life, like the river by which they dwell. I have watched their labours the day through, and at evening, when I have approached their huts, I have heard soft and strong voices within them blended in the singing of hymns. How worthless do I feel myself beside these people!

July.

To-day I came to a lake whose shore was black with pinewoods; it was the lake of Ore. Gloomy, but smooth as a mirror, it lay beneath the cloudy sky, between its desolate, wild banks. The melancholy picture pleased me. Then shone forth the sun, and lit up a little towerless church upon an island in the lake. I saw the peasantry flocking around it, and recollected that it was Sunday. I went thither, and on the way sung for my inward rest a little song, which many years before I heard a young boy of Dalarna sing to a wild, graceful air:

“And now, as I came through the seven-mile wood,  
I heard how the bells were ringing.

“And tell me, ye ringers, ye ringer-men,  
For whom ye are ringing this ringing!”

“And we do ring for a red-gold rose,  
Which here shall repose in earth's bosom!”

And thus a young bridegroom learns that they are burying his bride, to whom he is returning after his long wandering.

When I arrived at the churchyard, I saw men and women follow a coffin to the grave. I asked who it was that they were about to marry to the earth! I thought of the young bride who was taken from her lover to be betrothed to the earth; and they replied, “A young peasant maiden from —.” They said that she had lived and died like one of God's angels; that in her last moments she spoke the most beautiful words to her parents and her brothers and sisters.

As I listened to this relation, and gazed on a few white flowers of the trefoil at my feet, which bowed their little heads gracefully under the weight of rain-drops, there came a peace over my soul. Now thundered the mould hollowly on the coffin, and the clergyman began, “Dust thou art—” But scarcely had the second shovelful of mould been flung into the grave, when there was heard a heavy fall upon the coffin, and a cry, “Let me die with thee!” It was the younger sister of the dead who had cast herself into the grave, and lay there embracing the coffin. She was borne senseless up again.

And yet this maiden had read neither romances nor tragedies!

By a ferry to-day I saw a peasant youth, nineteen years of age, who, from want of care in ringing the church bells, had got one foot and leg broken, and that so badly, that the surgeons thought it unavoidable that the leg must be taken off. In the meantime this was delayed as long as possible. The youth was most tenderly nursed at the parsonage; his youth and healthful vigour assisted the doctor; the broken pieces of bone grew together again, and the youth could now, after four months, again walk, and was in a fair way to be perfectly restored. “But hast thou not had terrible pains—hast thou not suffered cruel torments!” I asked. “I have so sincerely thanked God that I could have my leg again,” was all his answer. From all his suffering he had only learned “sincerely to thank God.”

In the Serna Forest, July.

I have now seen the mountain where porphyry and the giants dwell. I have been in the country where quicksilver may be hammered in winter. I have seen Finnmark's\* solitary dwellings; lived with the remains in Sweden of that strong, but gloomy people whose most current adage is, “Happy is he that dies in his third night!”†

And I have said the same. I have wandered in the desert, in those gloomy, solitary regions, where nature is unrestrained, and men are few and nearly savage. I have wrestled with nature's giants, often with hunger. I will now hence. Yet, desert, have thou thanks! Thou hast refreshed my soul and strengthened my body. Thanks to you also, flowery shores, fresh waters, turf thick strewn with berries, and beautiful dales! You have given me moments of refreshment, seconds of enjoyment. But what I need ye could not give—neither *forgetfulness* nor *hope*!

What do I seek! What does the thunder-cloud seek, when it advances against the wind through the clear sky! It will discharge its lightnings, its destroying fire, out of its own bosom. It follows an inward necessity! . . .

Mora.

I stood on the Bell-hill by the river, and gazed on the mountain on the other side. Thunder-rain had fallen during the day. Now all was still, but heavy clouds covered the heavens and hung upon the tops of the hills.

\* Many parishes in Dalarna have a so-called Finnmark; that is, a remote, little cultivated tract, where the descendants of the Finns live isolated within their own community.  
† Finnish proverb.

It became more and more dark. At once I saw white ghostlike shapes, softly raise themselves amid the dark mountains: Here I saw an elk chased by hounds; there troops of human spirits with outstretched arms fly up the mountains as if striving to reach heaven; and part were caught up and vanished amongst the clouds, and part were left behind and sank back into the black abyss. Pale wild forms also presented themselves, and then were lost in the passes of the mountains.

Thus did this spectral scene continue, and my eyes also to follow this phantasmagoria—of vapour—as I well knew, but which now made itself into an hieroglyphic language for my soul. And now glid forth a boat from under the Lekberg, and in the boat sat two people. They sat beside each other and seemed bent on an excursion of pleasure. A wind came which broke the boat in pieces, and separated the two, who were turned into confused masses. But these were changed again, and one of them assumed the shape of a dragon, and from the other issued a female form, beautiful, transparent, and of inexpressible maiden grace. And the maiden descended softly towards the dragon which lay immovable, with its head erected towards her. As if drawn by enchantment, she approached nearer and nearer to him; her head bowed itself as with love, her knees bent as if worshipping before the dragon. In a few minutes she had disappeared in his jaws—her bust alone was still seen above his head, but in a distorted attitude as if dying. . . .

Now advanced from behind him a cloud resembling a bier; and on the bier lay a shape as it were that of a young girl. It advanced in an oblique direction up the mountain, and when it arrived higher up, then the corpse raised itself slowly. It was again the former maidenly figure, but she now bore on her thoughtfully depressed brow a crown, and her bier was changed into a chariot which swans drew up amongst the clouds, where she finally vanished.

The dragon lay on the same spot as before, but was also changed. Swollen, and without form he lay there, like a nameless monster. Later in the night, when the spectral apparition had ceased in the mountains, when the dim troops of spirits had retired to rest, this shape lay still there, against the dark hill. It seemed to me to lie also on my heart. Then heard I Siri's flute, and I hastened to meet her.

She has disarmed me, at least for a time. She has talked of their virtue, their kindness to her. Could the mother be innocent, and merely deceived? And why should I crush this home where my child love has and is taken care of—the only home that she has in the world?

If I should now sacrifice myself; disappear in order to procure peace to all!

But—I will and I will not. . . .

All is to me so uncertain. . . .

Here these scattered notes terminated. They were enclosed in the following letter:

“Beloved Child!

“The hand of necessity seizes on our fate, separating us, and . . . thou wishest it, wish-

est that I should fly, conceal myself. I fly therefore, I give way—till a future period! . . .

“These papers I leave with thee, that they may speak to thee of thy father. Long have I thought of writing to thee, to give thee some account of myself, of my fate, but—I have not been able. I had not sufficient interest in the task. Calmness and self-possession too are wanting. But something thou oughtest to know respecting me. I would not wound thy tenderness—and I need thy angel glance into my heart. Canst thou, when I unveil it, still glance therein with affection, then shall I believe that grace and joy may yet be found for me.

“What thou wilt here receive, are—fragments of a broken spirit, a lacerated life, begun in the hour when thy gentle form drew nearer to me, and I felt the necessity of collecting myself before it. They have been conceived in hours when without amusement or employment, the mind was devoured by disquiet and torturing thoughts, and I sought to free myself from them by written outpourings.

“Foul crimes, revolting matters have I here laid open before thee, thou full of innocence! Turn not thyself away, my child! Are the wickednesses of the world the less because we turn our eyes away from them? Ah! learn thou to see all with a steady and unbewildered gaze. Thus only wilt thou come to understand what truly is the question upon earth; thus only wilt thou be able to be truly compassionate. Well for thee is it that thou art a woman, and that thy place on the earth is amongst the lowly. That there lies upon thee no heavier responsibility.

“Gladly would I have stayed longer with thee, gladly, now that I must leave thee, would I have given thee somewhat which might have been of value to thee for life. Ah! to have given life is little—what do I say! It is a cruelty, it is a crime, if we do not give more.

“Oh! a thought; by which the soul might grow strong and great, through youth, through age, through pleasure and pain, the very deepest, even reaching into the highest heaven, which could warm thee in life, in death, and convert thy days, thy life into a still day of creation—could I give thee *that*, oh! then had I been to thee a proper father, a father who gave thee a life in life. Then had I freed thee from the grave of dust-fibres into which everyday affairs with their petty strivings, petty enjoyments, and petty cares, will endeavour to spin thy soul. Then, methinks, would one glad thought be able to visit my death-bed. There have been moments when such thoughts were not strange to me. They visit me sometimes still, but as apparitions revisit the dwellings where they formerly lived, and from which they have been removed by death. I, myself, am merely the ghost of what I was. The fibres of strength become more and more attenuated; bitter thoughts have disrupted them. I seek frequently the light which I formerly had, and find it not. It grows ever darker within me! Yet will God, perhaps, give me still a ray, a spark—for thy sake. Full of errors has my life been, yet I have traversed regions, and seen manifestations which have not been opened to many.



"Men! my child, if thou canst avoid it, do not attach thyself to any of them in much affection or admiration. They do not deserve it. One only was worthy of it, but his feet tread no longer the earth. Love them, as God loves them, out of charity, and desire them from them no other love.

"Thy mother—do not be severe to her, my daughter! She may be innocent, and only deceived. We shall find that out one day. In the meantime, stand like an angel by her side, as thou hast stood by mine. She may need it.

"Farewell! beloved, adored child! . . . My heart becomes soft—oh! that I should thus leave thee.

"When thou comest to Fahlun, and goest one day into the church, and hearest prayers read for those 'who work in the deep and dangerous places of the earth,' then, my child, do thou also pray for

"Thy Father."

### THE GREAT COPPER-MINE.

AUTUMN was on its transition into winter. Strong night-frost had already covered the Silja with a thin coat of ice, and the peasants said of the restless lake, "She goes to rest!—she betakes herself to repose." The ground is now as hard as stone; the forest-clothed mountains stand darker than they did before, with the snow-fields in their black embrace. Now ascend the giants of frost out of the abyss to wrestle with mankind, and mankind combat with them, and—become invigorated by it, as by all contest with mighty powers, when they will not succumb to them.

The last of October which was fixed for the journey of the Mora family to Fahlun, came in with a cold morning. The ground was white with night-frost, and the trees stood powdered with snow, and magnificent; the air was calm, and roseate clouds lay, like a thin veil on the heavens, and immersed themselves in Silja's ice of one night old.

Thus did it look towards the rising of the sun as Siri gazed through the window on the side towards the lake, and a moment afterwards exclaimed,

"Valborg, Valborg, come and see!"

And Valborg came and saw, and said softly, "Heavens! what is it?"

They saw a procession of many travellers slowly advance over the Silja. They saw carriages, horses, and people, but they did not appear like realities, but had a wild aspect of shapes of shadow.

"That is what people call a 'Hågring,'" said Siri, "and more than once have I seen such a spectacle here on the lake, but never any thing exactly like this.\* I am always awestruck by

\* Hågrings are a common phenomenon on the lakes in Dalarna, particularly on frosty mornings in winter, and represent, now ships under sail, now splendid buildings, now armies, or advancing processions such as Siri saw. The Dalman, who reluctantly speaks of the evil powers, which he however believes in, does not willingly speak of the Hågrings, even when he sees them; but takes special care when in winter he drives over the ice, not to follow the shadowy travellers that he sees proceeding over the icy lake. A clergyman in Mora one morning pointed out a splendid Hågring to a Dalman, and said,

these appearances, although I know that they betide nothing. Canst thou tell me whether this represents a funeral or a wedding? If it be a wedding, it is a presage for thee; if a funeral, it is for me."

"Siri, thou oughtest not to talk in that manner! A funeral procession for thee!"

"See, see!" cried Siri; "it advances towards the church of Sollerön! The little white church! Always do I become so peaceful at heart when I look upon it. I would gladly lie in the churchyard there, and thou and the maidens of Sollerön should scatter flowers on my grave. But the bells of Mora should ring for me. The bells of Mora are so beautiful!"

"My dear Siri! thou dost not know what pain thou givest me to hear thee talk thus!" said Valborg, almost angrily; "thou knowest not how empty the world must be for me if thou wert gone! Ah! it is only since I have become attached to thee, that it has seemed to me pleasant to live. And I have thought that we might become happier and happier together. And now wilt thou die?"

"No, then I will live!" exclaimed Siri, and clasped Valborg in a passionate embrace. "Valborg! what thou sayest makes me happy. We will hereafter live like sisters together, and will go together in the funeral or the bridal procession. Is it not so?"

"Yes," said Valborg, and smiled and kissed the cheeks so recently pale, but which now bloomed forth richly under these caresses, "we will never part!"

"Think," continued Siri merrily, "think, if we should both marry on the same day! But no, that may not be, but thou shalt marry, and I will come to thee and thy husband. He shall be my friend and brother, and I will play with thy children, and lead them out into wood and field. Ah! we will be indescribably happy together!"

The shadowy procession advanced on and on, while the young maidens extended their rose-dreams out into the future; it resembled far more a funeral than a marriage train. Finally, it disappeared behind the church. In the meantime the morning had lost its beauty; the rosy clouds had changed to gray, and a thick frost-fog shrouded heaven and earth.

But Mrs. Ingeborg's sonorous voice was heard in the court joyously arranging matters for the journey; and the young damsels hastened to make themselves ready for it, as it took place immediately after breakfast. Under such circumstances it does not seldom happen that there is in the house a perplexity, a calling and scolding, a noise and banging, which converts the day of departure into a genuine day of torment. But Mrs. Ingeborg's harmonious mind here displayed its power, for so well, so lightly, so fresh and joyously did she manage with her people, that difficulty seemed to be a play, and labour a pleasure.

"If there be removals in the kingdom of heaven, they happen in this fashion," said Olof, charmed by his stepmother's manners, and the lively, and at the same time orderly movement in the house. Ten o'clock in the forenoon saw them in the carriages, and, as if it were to give

"Do you see that?" The Dalman contemplated the spectacle for a moment, and said "Yes, I see it!" turned him round and went.

his blessing to the journey, the sun broke the fog and shone upon the travellers.

And the "Great Mother in Dalom" cast an affectionate glance on her beloved Mora, and with cordial words and smiles bade good-bye to the servants who stood assembled round the carriage. She drove alone with her husband in their own carriage. Valborg and Siri drove in one that was borrowed of the prost of Solle-rön, and the fate of which was to be lent almost constantly all round the village, so that the glad-some prostinna sometimes wondered how it continued to hold together. This admirable vehicle was driven by Olof. The carriages rolled thundering forth over the frozen ground, on the way toward Rättvik, parallel with the banks of the Silja.

"What dost thou gaze upon so much there!" asked Valborg of Siri.

"On the Middagsberg!" answered she. "See how it flings off its mantle of mist, and wraps itself in one of gold;—see how proud and solitarily it stands forth, with a crown of piled cloud upon its head, and reigns over all the mountains around in silent majesty! Farewell, thou beautiful and wonderful mountain—farewell!"

"I really believe, Siri," said Valborg, "that thou art more attached to that mountain than to any human being."

"Not exactly the mountain, but the spirit of the mountain," replied Siri, smiling indeed but sadly.

The journey led to Rättvik, and thence to Leksand, in the parsonage of which latter parish the travellers were received with open arms and hospitable board; and the universally beloved Mrs. Ingeborg from Mora was fêted and every where welcomed as the "Great Mother in Dalom;" and never had had more merry jokes and charming riddles for her friends.

At Leksand the travellers left behind the Silja and its romantic shores. Their road to Fahlun lay through a tract, the ugliness and desolation of which are scarcely to be imagined. Here you find the stony Dalarna, and in Dalarna you find the ugly as well as the beautiful in extremes. Yet is the former in a far less proportion than the latter.

It was on an afternoon that this part of the journey was performed. The weather was cloudy, but not cold; and the gray atmosphere rendered the wilderness still more gloomy. About a mile from Fahlun, the country became more agreeable: green fields showed themselves by the way; presently were seen at a distance white, thick clouds of smoke, slowly to curl up from the earth, and ascend towards the clouds. They were the smokes from the ore-roasting fires of the great copper-mine of Fahlun, which continually envelop the town, which give the houses a dark hue; and often, particularly in winter, make the air so thick, that you cannot see your way three steps before you. The smoke gives the town a sombre colouring, and may be perceived for some miles distant, according as the wind is.

With an excited curiosity, blended with astonishment, sat Valborg and Siri, as the carriage rolled along the contracting road, through the so-called Mine Street, down towards Fahlun, which road much resembled a road to the

bottomless-pit. Walls and hills of dark brown slag were piled up on each side of the road; on each hand other roads opened views into cross streets, and of hills all of slag. It is a town of burnt metal, through which you advance; the ways are black with it; all that you see is black with it, and whichever way you turn, you seem to behold a kingdom of darkness. Yellow-green water falls here and there through the dead city; and before you, where the way terminates, sulphur-coloured flames ascend. By the sound of the carriages you might fancy yourselves driving over an excavated surface; and this is the fact, for the copper-mines extend beneath you. It is so wild that it is very amusing, if you be in good spirits. A hypochondriac ought not to travel hither. Now you see the town look forth out of its veil of roasting vapour, with its two lofty church towers against a back-ground of dark green hills. On the left hand of the town, that is, towards the copper-mine, the acrid smoke has destroyed all the wood and all verdure; the hill lies naked, with its grinding-stones and its water spouts; bents only of a species of grass with singed summits, grow amongst the bare stones, spotted here with the black Fahlun lichen. Nothing more deformed and desolate can possibly be imagined. But on the other side of the city, the hills are green and wooded, and have amongst them enchanting country-houses by beautiful romantic lakes; and within the town you find straight streets, cheerful, well-built houses, and to the sulphureous fume you soon accustom yourself, so that you scarcely perceive it when the wind does not blow direct from the mine into the town.

Our travellers put up at an inn at one end of the town, and not far from the mine. And who stood here in the gateway to receive them, but Brigitta and her curate (from this time we must call him Lector), and Lieutenant Lasse, who raised a triad of welcomes, in which bass, tenor, and soprano, were united in the most cordial harmony.

Brigitta had made all arrangements in the inn for the expected guests, and in the large saloon in the upper story, stood ready a great coffee-tray with various kinds of biscuits, and around it the little company speedily saw themselves joyfully assembled.

Here Brigitta related how she and "the dear old soul" had made their way to Westeras; and how they had taken rooms till spring, and then how they meant to settle themselves. As they determined to incur no debt in this settling, and as they had next to nothing to set up house with, so their establishment should be on the most economical scale; and to begin with, they would live in uncarpeted rooms, in the new-built wooden house which they had selected for their home. But all these plans, and all this frugality, with all the arrangements regarding food and furniture, etc., had in Brigitta's mouth something so amusing and curious, that there was soon no one in the company who was not in a regular uproar of laughter. The lector lay with half his body bent over the coffee-table, and so that you could not see his face, but his body shook visibly. He fell after this into a strong perspiration, and he remarked himself, that after this explosion, and another

that remains hereafter to be mentioned, he found himself in a much healthier state both of body and mind.

During the most lively merriment and circulation of coffee, Siri went to a window and looked inquiringly out. Beyond and over the low houses on the opposite side of the street, the walls and hills of the mining-town raised themselves; and farther off, from amongst the black, conglomerated masses, arose coloured flames, which blazed wild and variably, and sent crackling bouquets of sparks and fire against the leaden-gray heaven. These flames arose from the ovens where the copper was roasted. They seemed as if they wished to show her the way to the mine. Softly she descended the steps and out of the house, spoke in the court with a little boy, who, at her desire, promised to conduct her to the mine, and she hastened swiftly forward on the way thither.

It was already near six o'clock in the evening, and deep twilight. Light as a hind, Siri hastened along the black streets through the mine-town, and looked round, ever and anon, in fear, as if she dreaded pursuit. Not a single mortal was to be seen in the gloomy way, but a wild din of falling water and roaring flames followed her as she advanced and left the huts and slag-hills behind her. It was not extraordinary that the young maiden's countenance was pale, as she pursued her way thus alone into the strange and gloomy environs; more extraordinary appeared the beautiful but anxious joy which beamed in her face, while wandering through the kingdom of death, she hastened forwards towards the mouth of the mine. And she had arrived where the subterranean giant opened his abyss, like an enormous mouth, which for ages had cast up treasures of noble metal, and at the same time, these hills, these streets, this city of slag, which now surrounds its orifice. In the twilight of the evening Siri could not see across this gulf, the so-called "Stöten," the copper-mine's huge mouth lying open to the day, nor did she now think upon it. Her heart drew her down into the dark and mysterious abyss, and she leaned herself over the low fence with which the opening of the mine is surrounded, and gazed inquisitively down. But she discerned merely an immeasurable gulf, and out of its depths she heard the thunder of blasting, and the hollow echoes repeating these reports; she heard stones fall, and felt the earth tremble beneath her feet. Dizzy and almost without thought, she stared down into the dark abyss, when, all at once, she caught sight of a little light glimmering there below; presently she descried more, and they moved along in a horizontal direction. It was some time before Siri could distinguish that these figures were men, with burning torches in their hands, who were coming up out of the mine's inner, or still deeper regions.\* With excited attention, she now noticed carefully the objects which the torches by degrees made visible. Amongst these was a hut, and not far from it a little

green bush. At this sight she was glad, and felt herself almost at home down there. She now saw how the torch-bearers, slowly going one after the other, began to ascend by a zig-zag flight of steps, which led to a door in the mine, through which they successively disappeared. The clock struck six. It was the hour at which those labourers who do not work through the night, come up to go home. Led by the boy, Siri now betook herself along the margin of the opening of the mine, to a little wooden building which stood close by it. Its doors stood open, and within burnt a great fire, blazing against her from a huge hearth. Here was the descent to the mine, and here she entered; and after a while, saw the workmen with black dresses, and torches in their hands, come up out of the dark staircase.

We return now to the inn, to the gay coffee-party, which long continued to make themselves merry. But Olof and Valborg had noticed Siri's departure, and as she delayed to return, Valborg went to seek her. But she sought her in vain in the house, and then with a secret disquiet in her heart, went down into the court, and met Olof at the gate, who was inquiring after Siri. Valborg said that she had been seeking, but could not find her. They then began to inquire of the servants, and heard that a young lady, some time before, had left the inn, and taken the way to the mine; and quickly were Olof and Valborg, arm-in-arm, silently but rapidly hastening the same way.

"It is very wild, here!" said Valborg, once, as they passed through the mine-town.

"Are you afraid?" asked Olof, and pressed her arm closer to his side.

"Oh no, not I! but Siri has passed this way alone."

"Valborg, I think you are very fond of her."

"Yes, more than I can express."

"Ah! continue always to be fond of her. Be to her a guiding friend and sister. She needs it. Some time, perhaps, may I be a brother to her, but now—that is difficult for me. But I shall part from her more calmly, since I know that she has you."

Valborg made no reply, and they had not gone many steps before they saw the light figure of a female, which went softly between the black heaps. Siri had always light, cheerful articles of dress, and by this, as well as by the quick, elastic movement, they concluded that the light form was Siri, and went to meet her. But the figure seemed disconcerted by this, escaped to the right and to the left, and finally made an abrupt turn and disappeared by a side-way in the slag-town.

"Pardon me! wait here a moment!" said Olof, while he hastily quitted Valborg and made after the flying one.

Siri, for it was she, when she saw herself pursued, fled all the faster. Terror winged her feet. Other feelings gave wings to Olof's.

Oh! how does it happen, that which flies us—when it is a beloved object—becomes to us so inexpressibly dear, dearer than ever, that we will offer up all to overtake and hold it fast! thus was it now with Olof. He felt, moreover, a burning terror, lest Siri, in her thoughtless flight, should precipitate herself into some channel, filled with water which here and

\* What Siri here saw takes place four-and-forty fathoms deep, that is, at the bottom of the "Stöten," which opening, in a great measure, has been made by fallings-in. On the sides of the great shaft are the openings and doors, through which the people descend into the hidden abysses of the mine.

there intersected the town. With the speed of lightning he pursued her, and within a few minutes he had overtaken and recognised her, and with a warmth, a tenderness, which at this moment altogether overpowered him, he held fast the trembling girl, while he uttered her name aloud.

They were not far from a hut. A volume of wild, crackling flames blazed forth from it, and shone upon them. But wilder still was the angry fire which lightened from Siri's dark eyes, as she turned her head toward Olof; but as her eyes met his, their expression was instantly changed.

Coolly and collectedly, she said, "Olof, is that thou? God be praised, I feared it was some one else; may I take thy arm?"

"Why dost thou expose thyself in this manner?" said Olof, angrily. "It is wrong, it is unwarrantably done, both to myself and to us." Her coldness caused a feeling as of icy steel to pass through his bosom.

"Pardon me! don't be angry!" said Siri, almost humbly to Olof and to Valborg, who now overtook them. "I come from the 'Stöten.' I was taken with a sudden desire to find it out myself, and did not understand that it was dangerous. But the little boy who conducted me related stories to me which terrified me when I saw you at a distance without recognising you. I was just now on the way home."

Valborg and Olof said nothing. They were displeased with Siri, and in silence they approached the inn. But when they there found the whole family inquiring after them, they said merely that they had visited the neighbourhood of the mine. Siri thanked them for their thus sparing her with glances of the most grateful expression, and with many graceful and child-like demonstrations of affection. Olof was obliged to go out. He felt himself at once too much vexed, and too much pleased with her.

A kind of feverish fire burned in Siri's eyes this evening. She laughed, played, threw out a thousand schemes for herself, which heartily amused the professor. But her merriment was rather overstrained than natural.

Brigitta rather grumbled, and said:—

"Now we shall have a running and a racing to the mine that will be quite intolerable; and Siri will go quite off her head through it, if she be not that already. She will most likely fall in love with the mountain-king, or the copper-king down there; that I expect, and some fine day she will be mountain-kidnapped in earnest, and never come up again into the light of day."

"But thou, Brigitta, shalt come down there, to my wedding!" said Siri, giddily, "and I will make a feast for thee, and treat thee to a roasting-smoke soup, and ore roast, and a copper cake; which shall be quite delicious."

"Many thanks! thou mayst be so good as to eat thy detestable copper dishes thyself. And as to coming down into the mine, that shall never happen with my consent so long as I live."

"But I hope it will happen, though," said the professor, smiling, "for on Monday, that is to say, the day after to-morrow, we propose to descend into the mine, and mean to survey it thoroughly; and I hope thou wilt not then run away from us. Thou too, wilt see the mine, Ingeborg!"

"Yes, certainly, dear Gustaf," said Mrs. Ingeborg. "I quite congratulate myself on the prospect."

"Yes, but I would fain see him that can persuade me to descend into the mine!" said Brigitta, with a determined countenance. "No, I shall not go thither, for I will not go down into it, no, not for all the butter there is in the world."

"Oh!" said the professor; "Godelius shall persuade thee."

"That he had better let alone," said Brigitta, "for then I would break with him. I won't once see the nasty mine. I have heard of people who lost their reason merely by looking down into mines, and my small wits I would willingly retain as long as possible. Nay, my best and dearest uncle, let me remain comfortably above ground; that will be the best for me and all the rest, for I should neither be agreeable nor at ease down there, that I know very well of myself."

"Oh, thou wilt probably think better of it, for we are many against thee!" said the professor, jocosely. "And hear only, Brigitta, all that thou art likely to lose, if thou persist in thy obstinacy: just listen to what I have been reading." And out of Hammerström's book, "On the Curiosities of the Great Coppermine," which lay on the table, the professor read aloud the following particulars:—

"From the Diary of Carolus Ogerius of the year 1634.

"We were astounded when we arrived at the opening of the mine. With what colours shall we sketch the picture of so extraordinary and wonderful a scene. In the ground yawns a hideously wide and deep abyss, which is surrounded by posts and rails, so that no one may hurry forward carelessly to the limit of the gulf, and, in terror at such an extraordinary depth, grow dizzy and fall headlong in; and although you support yourselves against these rails, yet it still grows dark, and wavers before your eyes when you cast them downwards; and when at length you venture to gaze down steadfastly, you then perceive men like birds, or rather like ants, that crawl to and fro, for so small do they appear. Wherever you turn your eyes you behold things each so strange in themselves when compared one with another; all these mingled together, warmth and ice, light and darkness, so that you might imagine old Chaos were come again. If you carefully notice, you see all the various colours of copper, brass, vitriol and sulphur; pallid, green, red, golden; all the escutcheons of the gods painted, as it were, by Eolus, and you may even assert that the very rainbows themselves are there prepared and stored up."

"Hearest thou, Brigitta," said the professor, "thou shalt see how and where the rainbows are manufactured!"

But Brigitta was prevented replying by the entrance of two gentlemen; and the professor sprung up and embraced two good old friends—the mine-steward, Falk, and mine-proprietor, Björk, who came from their residences in the country into the town on purpose to meet him and his family.

The former was a man of about forty, with keen eyes and strong eye-brows, lively, reso-

late, sinewy, full of mettle in tone and character, a vigorous and brisk nature, who seemed made to break in pieces the mountains, and by strength and hardihood to triumph over all obstacles. The other was a noble, but feebler man, who had experienced many troubles, and had suffered himself to be depressed by them. Both contended often with each other, yet were fond of being together. Both had a great regard for our professor, and bade him heartily welcome to "Jernbåra-land," the land prolific of iron.

During supper the conversation was upon Dalarna and its people, and many things were related which served to characterise it. The professor and Mrs. Ingeborg had observed it more from the sunny point of love, and spoke accordingly. The mine-steward, again, rather from that of vigorous exertion, and as a trait characteristic of the spirit of the Dalmen,—he considered himself to understand less that of the Dalwomen; and of the manner in which it was necessary to act towards this people, he related the following anecdote:

"Colonel Vegesack was, in the Finnish war in 1809, the leader of a life-battalion, which was composed of Dalmen. One day he had to attack with them a fort, and addressed them in that bold and lively strain which never fails to kindle the spirit of men naturally gallant. The Dalmen made the onset with the greatest bravery; but met with an equally vigorous resistance, and were repulsed with loss. Vegesack again collected his people, and addressed them in this manner:

"Listen, my lads! This time we have failed, but you will not allow yourselves, I am sure, to be beaten by the Russians to-day. Nay, if you are of the same mind as I am, we will give them a good trouncing for having fancied that they could trounce us. Follow me! Let us grapple with them, and I will answer for it that in less than an hour you shall have both fort and cannon in your hands. Forwards, march!"

"But not a man of the whole troop stirred.

"The colonel looked round him with stern glances. 'Ah, yes!' said he, slowly. 'I see how it is. But I will tell you how it shall be. Once more I will give the word to advance, and the first man who shows a symptom of disobedience, I will shoot him on the spot. You know all your duty, and I know mine. Forwards, march!'

"But the troop did not stir.

"The colonel seized his pistol, levelled it at a man in the front rank, and fired. He fell dead. Once more the colonel gave the word, 'Forwards, march!' All obeyed.

"The assault, which was made with a tempestuous fury, was crowned with success. The fort was carried with all its cannon, and prisoners were made far more numerous than were the assailants. The victory was complete.

"But in the hearts of the refractory and revengeful Dalmen rankled bitterness and revenge against him who had put to death their bold comrade, and who had led them by force into the contest. They conspired amongst themselves for vengeance, and for death to their stern leader. He was made aware of it, called his people together, and addressed them thus:

"I hear that you harbour ill-will towards me, because I shot one of your comrades, and that

you think of revenging him. Very well, you shall have opportunity for it. You know that there commonly stand two sentinels by my tent. To-night I will dismiss them, and for a fortnight I will sleep there by night, alone, and without sentinels. But on the table by my bed there shall lie a brace of loaded pistols. Any of you that have a mind to come and fight with me are welcome.'

"The Dalmen listened to this address gloomily and in silence.

"For fourteen nights the colonel slept without a guard in the midst of his excited troop. No one disturbed his sleep; and after this challenge, his men followed him wherever he wished, and were devoted to the death to him."

The answer was then related, that a certain Dalman gave Armfelt, when he received at Tuna a troop of three thousand Dalmen, who had volunteered to march from Dalarna, and save the king and country in war.

A man stepped out of the ranks, and said to Armfelt, "Thou canst see plain enough that thou leadest good people, but what sort of officers wilt thou give us?" Armfelt replied, that he would give them upright and brave men as leaders; to which the Dalman made answer,

"Yes, that will certainly be most advisable; for, if we notice any one who does not stand by us like an honourable man, a ball shall strike him before he can strike our enemies."

With such anecdotes and discourse, the evening sped rapidly away. It was late when the two friends took leave, but not without having arranged a longer future visit of the Mora family to them at their country homes.

The next day was Sunday, and the Mora family betook themselves to the old copper-mine church. After the sermon, and when the clergyman read the customary prayers, he paused a moment, and then proceeded with a more emphatic expression,—

"We thank Thee, merciful God, for the rich treasures and abundant blessings which Thou hast graciously conferred on this place out of the bowels of the earth, and out of the flinty rocks; and we pray Thee, that Thou wilt continue to give, to bless, and to preserve to us these precious treasures; and give us grace to use these Thy blessings with thankfulness, and to the honour of Thy name. Preserve, O God! all those who labour in the deep and perilous regions of the earth from injury, and danger, and all evil, and give them grace to keep Thee perpetually before their eyes, to commit themselves, body and soul, into Thy hands; to consider always the dangers which hang over them, and thus be well prepared, should any violence befall them, to depart hence in blessedness, through Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen!"

For centuries has this prayer been read in the mining districts of Dalarna, but never yet, perhaps, had these words so penetrated a heart as at this moment. Valborg saw Siri tremble, as she sunk upon her knees, but did not comprehend the deep emotion of her mind.

When the service was ended, and our travellers advanced to take a closer view of the church, they were shown a grave, to which was attached a touching example of the faithful memory of love.

In the year 1719, there was found while delving in the Mardskinn mine, eighty-two fathoms deep, the body of a young man perfectly well preserved, but changed into a sort of petrification. It was borne up into the fresh air, on the surface, and a great crowd of people collected to witness this singular phenomenon. Amongst these was a poor old woman, who, as soon as she caught sight of the corpse, exclaimed, "That is he! That is Matts Israelson!" Then it was called to mind that, in the year 1670, there had been a falling-in in the Mardskinn mine, and that at this time a miner, by name Matts Israelson, had disappeared. The people were soon convinced that this was the same man, who had now been discovered after he had lain buried under the earthfall, at the bottom of the mine, for nearly fifty years. The old woman had recognised the true-loved bridegroom of her youth, and besought that she might be allowed to bury his remains.

"Affection never faileth!" said Nordevall, looked on the silent grave, and pressed his wife's hand.

In the evening of this day, the Mora family was invited to a dance by one of the most wealthy mine-proprietors in the town. Lieutenant Lasse danced long beforehand in his thoughts, and played, with great emphasis, on the piano-forte in the great saloon of the inn. "*les plaisirs de Fahlun, grande valse composée par J. W. Flaggé.*" And now issued from their room the young ladies, dressed for the evening festivity; and Lieutenant Lasse quitted "*les plaisirs de Fahlun,*" to compliment his sister and cousins, and make his observations on their toilets. These were very favourable for Valborg and Siri, but not so much so for Brigitta, whose head, especially, Lieutenant Lasse found too rotund, too much like the globe of the earth. She ought to have some flowers, or at least a bow of ribands, thought Lieutenant Lasse.

Brigitta could not do otherwise than agree with him; but then she had no bow, and so she must do without it.

"Ah! a bow of riband I can probably help her to; for this evening thou canst have one of me," said Lieutenant Lasse, somewhat embarrassed, and hastened out.

"A bow of riband!" exclaimed Brigitta, "where has he got a bow of riband? that is not all right: we shall find that he has taken it from some one. Of this I must, assuredly, have some explanation. See, there he comes, and—a splendid bow of riband! From whom hast thou got this, Lasse—that is to say, from whom hast thou taken it? Is it from Mimi Osterdal, of Westeras, with whom thou wert figuring away so at the dean's? I fancy thou blusheat a little. It is very well, then, that thou hast still a little conscience left; and quite proper is it that I know whose bow it is. Thanks, Lasse dear! thou canst make thyself sure that thou wilt never get it again."

"It fell from her in dancing," said Lieutenant Lasse, excusing himself, and somewhat embarrassed.

"Yes, and thou took it and pressed it to thy heart—is it not so? The blessed courtesy-practisers! the blessed cavaliers who make fools of the young girls, and steal their bows, and make them believe that they steal their hearts

too—and then trouble yourselves just as little about one as the other! really they ought to be put in prison. In the meantime, however, I myself will give Mimi her bow again—after I have enjoyed the use of it for an evening or two; and she shall know how—"

"Nay, by no means—"

"Yes, by all means she shall certainly know it, and we will both of us have a good laugh over it. Mimi Osterdal is a sensible girl. Dost thou not think that she would much rather have her bow than thy heart? such a beautiful bow, at least half a yard of good riband in it—I will answer for it that she will be right glad to get it again. I only wonder whose scarf, or whose handkerchief, or whose bow, thou wilt appropriate here in the town. Heaven help me, what trouble and what an office I have in this world, to take care that all my brother's inclinations that my little sisters-in-law may get their articles of apparel again. I wish sincerely that the right sister-in-law would at once come and put all this to rights. But I shall have my eyes upon thee, Lasse, this evening, that thou mayst be assured of."

Lieutenant Lasse cast from him a little embarrassment at Brigitta's lecture in the presence of Valborg with a hearty laugh, and flung himself with a sort of wildness afresh on "*les plaisirs de Fahlun.*" Valborg and Brigitta began waltzing together, the new lector danced solo after them; but now came Mrs. Ingeborg, and called them to go to the actual ball.

Of this we will merely say that Lieutenant Lasse, who divided himself amongst three young and handsome ladies, and that Brigitta often followed with criticising eyes her three fresh "*little sisters-in-law,*" as well as "*the divided heart,*" as Lieutenant Lasse was this evening called at the ball, in consequence of his divided but lively courtesies.

Valborg distinguished herself by her beautiful dancing, and Olof danced more than once with her. Siri sat still, would not dance, excused herself by a pain in her foot, looked pale, but friendly and clever, and sat much beside her foster-father, sometimes turning on him a sweet but inquiring glance, which seemed to say, "Art thou in good humour with thy Siri?"

Brigitta was constantly in the dance, was gay and merry, and became a great favourite with the company.

So much for "*les plaisirs de Fahlun.*"

## DESCENT INTO THE MINE.

THE next day the mine was to be visited. Already early in the morning Lieutenant Lasse hailed the three young ladies with the following song:—

Up, brothers! let your torches glow,  
Where duty calls us let us go.  
Our way, though dark, is light to keep,  
Though down into the deep.

No matter though our path lies through  
The yawning shaft, our watch is true.  
No matter though that path is long,  
The longer is our song.

The mountain opens as we go,  
With gladsome hopes we march below—  
Below a better world to find  
Than that we leave behind.

That better world is all our own,  
Whose wealth transcends all treasures known.  
A thousand years has flowed its ore,  
And shall a thousand more.

The world above is great and sheen,  
But here the mine itself is green,  
And in itself a wealth doth hold  
Exhausted and untold.

Such joy the earth can ne'er impart  
As when we see the copper start—  
Mid smoke and dust behold it shine  
Forth bursting from the mine.\*

This brave mine song, which has several verses besides those here quoted, and which once, both day and night, sounded, and still often sounds in the depths of the copper-mine, charmed Siri extremely, and speedily she sung in emulation with Lieutenant Lasse,

Up, brothers! let your torches glow.

The words of the song contributed to kindle her previously excited fancy about the "world's eighth wonder," as the Fahlun copper-mine has been styled. Her eyes flamed with desire to explore every individual room and spot in it which she had heard named, and amongst which she recollected these—the Jewel, the Crown, the Copper Dragon, the Black Knight, Odin, Lake, the Snake of Midgard, the Imperial Apple, the North Star, the Silver Region, the King's Hall, the Prince of Peace, &c. Especially was her curiosity excited about this Copper Dragon, which she looked upon as the genius of the copper-mine, and represented to her imagination as magnificently terrible. Before the ardent mind of the young maiden played images great and wonderful, which the ancient northern sages had accustomed her to see in her imaginations of the fantastic halls of the mine king.

Brigitta, in the meantime, stood fast by her resolve not to go down into the mine,—no, not even once to look down into it. She sat down to write letters, and let the others go, at the same time zealously impressing it upon them, and especially on the lector and Siri, to take good care of themselves. All the rest were in extremely high spirits, and full of curiosity. Mrs. Ingeborg went as to a joyous festivity, and nothing but jokes and merry words were heard on the way through the dingy mine-town, and amid the smoke of ore-roasting fires from the ovens of earth by the road, which resembled gigantic loaves of bread. Through this smoke, however, no one passed with impunity, for the noses of some and the eyes of others ran tremendously; and others, again, were almost suffocated with coughing, for the wind blew the smoke now directly across the way, and it seized on the chest of the lector and made him turn quite melancholy.

"God grant that such a smoke may never fail!" said Queen Christina, when she visited Fahlun, and a fear was expressed lest the roasting smoke might annoy her.

Professor Nordevall reminded the lector of this, but the lector expressed a great contempt for Queen Christina and her taste, and Lieutenant Lasse regarded the mine-town and the roasting smoke as belonging to "lés déplaïrs de Fahlun," and he pondered on composing a waltz on this subject, with a strong smoke

effect, which he would dedicate to Brigitta. He did not doubt but that it would make the people cough excessively. Abbé Vogler had, indeed, imitated thunder on the piano so perfectly that the milk was turned sour by it in the dairy.

Into the mine-house—a handsome building, with a tower and a clock, situated about fifty paces from the great opening of the mine, and just opposite to the descent to it—the travellers went to clothe themselves in the mine costume, which is used by all who visit the mine. This costume consists of a black blouse, with ornaments on the shoulders, a leathern belt, which buckled round the waist, and a felt hat with broad brim. Thus equipped, people are supposed to be proof against smoke and soot in the mine, as well as the moisture which drops in the passages.

"God and the people! what figures you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Ingeborg, as she saw Valborg and Siri; "but I reckon I look no better myself." And they laughed heartily as they contemplated one another.

Conducted by two guides, in similar dresses, who appeared to be of the race of the giants, the mine-explorers now quitted the mine-house, and passed over the paved level to the little building at the brink of the mine, called the landing-room, because there the descent begins. There, in a great fire-place, burns a fire, which is called "the Eternal," because it has burnt there from time immemorial; no one remembers when it was kindled, and no one the day when it was put out. Thus through the unnumbered centuries during which the mine has been worked, has this fire also burned on its brink. Even at a time when the mine had again for the most part fallen in, and there was no one any longer working there, even then the people of the mine would not allow the fire in the landing-room to go out. It seems to be regarded as the living principle of the mine.

At this fire the guides kindled their torches, made of long pine-shoots, held together by a ring. All the other persons had, Mrs. Ingeborg as well, their burning torches in their hands: Lieutenant Lasse sung—

"Up, brothers! let your torches glow!"

And now the descent began by a dark staircase, which, with broad steps, went winding down in a spiral course forty-four fathoms deep.

On the way down into the mine, the principal guide named several places: as, the New Landing Bottom, the Lower Firehearth, the Radical Blow Attempt, the Lybecker's Haunted-Room, Tilas, Ubi Sunt, and the Farmer's Porch, where formerly the farmers had a sort of stable for the horses that they took down into the mine to work. And here our wanderers saw daylight through a door in the mine, and through this they came out into the "Stöten," saw above their heads the blue heaven, and themselves in the midst of the giant chasm; the width of which is one hundred and twenty fathoms from north to south, and from east to west eighty-six. Here they surveyed the strata of different metals and kinds of stones, which, in great layers, marbled with colours of red, gold, and green, projected from the sides of the mine crater; and Olof explained to them the names

\* Song of the labourers of the great copper mine of Kralingsvärd.

of the different ores and species of stone. Siri, in the meantime, gazed at the little smith's shop in the middle of the "Stöten," which she had described the evening before, and on the green raspberry-bush near it, which in the middle of the hard rock stood so fresh and friendly.

When they had surveyed the "Stöten," and felt the winter-cold wind which, from never-melting masses of ice, breathed from Ambrus Shaft, they again entered the mine, in order to make a nearer acquaintance with its interior.

There have been learned men who have traced up the origin of the copper-mine of Fahlun to Tubal Cain himself, a master "of all kinds of iron and copper work," as related in the first book of Moses. Certain it is, that its working loses itself in the ages of sagas, when the artistical race of dwarfs were believed to work at their forges in our mountains, and the people of the south glanced towards the north as towards a land of treasures and of giants. More than 1200 people have formerly been employed at once in this subterranean world, which, in its enormous labyrinth of passages, shafts, caverns, and halls, represents an excavated netherworld, the ideal of a mine-king's palace. It is said to demand more than eight days to go through all its rooms, as far as the territory of Terra Nova, and the region of *Whereto!* which extends two hundred fathoms deep below the bottom of the mine. The various and picturesque names of these rooms and halls, gathered out of all periods of history out of the kingdoms of both fancy and reality, contribute to give to the place a romantic interest for the imagination. Almost all the kings and queens of Sweden have paid visits to this mine. Charles IX., whose heart seemed to have much the nature and character of a mountain, except for the tender woman, his first beloved wife, in honour of whom he founded and named the towns, "Mariefred" and "Mariestad"—Charles IX. was extremely attached to this mining country, was often residing there, and called the mine "Sweden's Fortune," and desired that the great room there might be called the Room of God's Gifts. His great son, Gustavus Adolphus, also exclaimed, as he stood in one of the rooms of the mine where the bright copper ore beamed from walls, roof, and floor, "Where is the monarch who has such a palace as that in which we now are!"

But, notwithstanding all this, Siri did not find here the palace, the magnificent underworld, of which she had dreamed to herself, and whose names, the Jewel, the Crown, the Sceptre, etc., seemed to promise. There were perpetually the same dark, vaulted passages, the same great empty halls and domes, excavations and shafts, or sinkings,\* out of which eternal night seemed to stare upon you. There was everywhere the same damp, cold air, the same dripping and dripping from above, and which rendered the floor slippery. The sides of the mine glittered, indeed, when the torches shone upon them, or when they were struck against them, and sent forth showers of sparks; and the stalactites glimmered also as they hung above on

the arched roofs; but it was a chill and colourless gleam, which left soul and sense cold. In the passages, the miners frequently were met with torches in their hands, in their black dresses, with solemn, pale, grimy countenances, and slow and heavy steps. The life in the mine did not seem to be joyous, and at every glance Siri's eyes grew darker, and her heart more oppressed.

She would not have been astonished if she now had been told that the most melancholy of mortal ailments, insanity, was one of the most prevalent amongst the labourers of this subterranean kingdom.

After the party near Adolphus Frederick's shaft had seen "The Royal Crown," formerly one of the richest workings in the mine, but now as black and empty as all the rest, they passed through the Cooper's Attempt, by Prince Oscar's Way, to the Fisherman; thence by the sinkings of Grönsiken, Kråfflon, and Gösen, and Louise-Ulric's shaft, to the Lobster-band.

"Here is the Lobster!" said the guide, as he paused before the opening into a stupendous rotunda. "Here formerly ran a small bridge, or band, with a handrail, along the wall, so that you might go round within it; but the roof has fallen in, and buried a great part of this, so that you cannot now advance many paces into the interior. But the room is magnificent! I have caused torches to be carried to the excavations above, which open into this room, so that the ladies and gentlemen may get a full view of the vaulted roof. See! there, above us, where the three torches shine, that is the cutting through to the 'Abbornen' and 'Gösen.' It is more than twenty fathoms up thither; and here, in the abyss below us, where we see the light shine, that is Kråfflon's bottom, which lies fifteen fathoms deep."

"And the narrow bridge to the left, which seems to hover in the abyss, is it dangerous to go upon?" asked Mrs. Ingeborg.

"Oh, no!" replied the guide: "at all events, you can advance a few paces;" and he advanced a few steps upon the bridge, and swung his torch in order to illumine it. Mrs. Ingeborg did the same, as she stepped forward into the opening of the rotunda. The strong blazing-up light chased the darkness rapidly away, as the lightning-flash cleaves the cloud, and at the same time lit up the tall, darkly-clad figure of a man who stood alone on the narrow bridge, at the edge of the fallen-in earth, and had his pale countenance turned towards the enterers. At this sight, Mrs. Ingeborg uttered a faint cry of horror, staggered, and fell senseless to the ground. But the dark figure was again hidden in the gloom from which he had for a moment emerged.

In the meantime, Brigitta remained in the inn, and wrote letters full of narratives and commissions to her best friends in Stockholm. In this she was interrupted by the mine-steward, Falk, who came to inquire after his Mora friends. When he learned that they were in all probability to be found in the mine, he said,

"Then I came a little too late. My intention was, in fact, to dissuade them from a visit to the mine, at least for a few days. On Friday, when I was down there, I heard certain sighs and shuddering which I did not like; for when

\* A sinking in the mines is a greater or less delving downwards, on account of ore being found and dug out there.



that old heathen, the copper-giant, sighs and shakes himself, then is he not safely to be trusted."

"Lord, then, my great God and Father!" exclaimed Brigitta, as she pushed the table vehemently from her, and rose up, "How can you tell me this now? It is now too late; they are lost, lost! Ah, the abominable mine! they will all perish together! my curate, my lector, my kind and honourable Godelius! my divine aunt! uncle! Siri! And Lasse, poor boy! Ah, my God! I will run downa there! I will move heaven and earth! I will go myself into the depths of the earth, provided I may be able to bring them up thence alive!"

"Heaven help me! calm yourself, my gracious lady!" exclaimed the mine-steward, at once startled and amused at Brigitta's zeal; "it is not so dangerous, really not dangerous at all; for, since Friday, nothing more has been heard in the mine, and that which was heard was next to nothing. Before any thing serious takes place, people are sure to hear other prognostics of it; and it was merely my extreme caution which—but I will accompany you to the mine. The old copper-man and I are old acquaintances, and I understand his meaning. I am not frightened at him!"

And quickly were Brigitta and the steward in full speed on the way to the "abominable mine," which Brigitta never would see.

"Be calm, then, my gracious lady!" said the mine-steward, admonishingly, as they proceeded, "and do not hurry, so that we tumble, or get consumptive. I do assure you that there is now no danger on foot. For several years has every thing been quiet in the mine; at least no fall of any consequence has taken place, no, not since the great fall of 1833. But that was really extraordinary. It was on a Friday, in the month of February, when crackings, sighs, and shodderings, were heard in the mine, and people saw well that something serious would be the result of it. Therefore all the workmen were ordered up out of the mine, and on Saturday there was not left in it a single soul. But as all continued quiet in the mine, no fall taking place, and nothing further than some cracks being heard, on Sunday two workmen stole down into it, in order to convey their ore nearer to the shaft, by which it should be drawn up, and with this they continued busy till quite in the night. But exactly on this night, the night between Sunday and Monday, the vast fall took place, which filled a great part of the mine again. I lived then in the mine-house, close to the mine, and it cracked and thundered beneath it, as if the interior rivers of the earth were in uproar. The doors in the house burst open, the windows shook, and some of them were broken to pieces; and the same thing occurred in other parts of the town. Many people did not sleep a wink during the night. But they who had the worst of it were the two workmen who had descended into the mine. When they heard the fall begin, they attempted to hasten up, but found the ladders crushed above them, and saw masses of rock plunging down around them. They then sought to descend into the regions where they fancied that the danger would be less; but also, in this direction, they found the ladders dashed to pieces. Then they were compelled to flee

into a trial-excavation; that is, into an excavation which has no outlet, but stands like a cell in the mine, called Ocean, near Adolphus's horizontal shaft, and here they remained the whole night without light, for their torches burnt out; and, meantime, it thundered and raged in the mine as if hell itself were broken loose. At length, on the morrow, the tumult had ceased, and then the people above on the brink of the mine heard the cry of distress through Adolphus's shaft, and they let down casks; and thus happily succeeded in drawing up the two men, more dead than alive; the one was half raving, and both were very ill for a long time after . . ."

"Ah, dear heaven! those are indeed frightful stories which you have just related!" interrupted Brigitta in her anguish of heart, "and that just at the present time, when . . . why, dear bless me! who is that? is not that my adjunct who is coming there, running up to us through the dross-town? is it his ghost, or is it he himself!"

Saying this, Brigitta sprang towards the adjunct and the adjunct towards Brigitta, and both met together in a thick *rust*\*-smoke, which lay over the road. Brigitta, however, took no notice of it, but exclaimed—

"Is it you! are you alive? have you kept all your limbs, body, and soul together safe and sound? why do you come here so alone? where are the rest? are they alive, or are they all dead? why don't you speak! speak, speak, speak, I say!"

"Apstshaw!" was the first sound which was heard from the lips of the adjunct. "I come . . . apstshaw! in order to . . . apstshaw—apstshaw!"

"God help you and us all!" sighed Brigitta. "Only say whether they are alive, or all dead!"

"They are alive! apstshaw! apstshaw!"

"All—uninjured!"

"Yes, yes! apstshaw! that confounded smoke! apstshaw! I shall choke—I shall choke! apstshaw! apstshaw! apstshaw! a—a . . ."

"Then pray do get out of the smoke, Godelius!" exclaimed Brigitta, who then also began to sneeze, "or else we shall both choke, and the comedy will turn into a tragedy. Yes, that's right! here we can breathe freely! Now tell me, are you quite sure that they are all alive, and that no pit has fallen in?"

"Yes, I am quite sure!" assured the adjunct.

"And they have all come out again safe and sound, from out of that leviathan's jaw, and are again upon God's green earth!"

"Yes; but . . . aunt has fallen into a swoon at the bottom of the mine, and is now suffering a little from the effects of it. I am, therefore, come to request you to go to her; for no one understands so well how to go about with her as you . . ."

"Ah, my dear heavenly aunt!—what has she been seized with!—That abominable mine!—I wish it were in Blaakulla!"

"Yes, yes, and the *rust*-smoke along with it!—I am in such a perspiration in a . . ."

"Ah, that will do you a deal of good, my lit-

\* The Swedish word *rust* signifies a layer of ore, with wood and coal, in order to expel by means of fire the foul particles from it.

the old man! Ah! thank heaven! now then we are at last out of the nuisance."

Brigitta found Madame Ingeborg in the miners'-hall. Siri had been conducted into the miner's-court, a beautiful room resembling a gallery with different likenesses. She had just been bled, and had also recovered from the swoon, but yet not to perfect consciousness. With wild staring looks she asked:

"Where am I?"

"You are in the room of the miner's-court," answered her husband; "you are with your own family."

"In the chamber of the miner's-court!" said Madame Ingeborg, raising herself up, and apparently trying to recollect herself, "in the miner's-court! Is it not here where the criminals are tried? Am I brought here to be tried?"

"Ingeborg! recollect yourself. Look at me; don't you know me again?"

"Yes, you are my Gustavus!" said she with a heavenly smile, "my only friend, you shall defend me. But hush! (*whispering.*) Who is that standing there?"

And Madame Ingeborg's eyes fixed themselves with a timorous glance on a full-length portrait of Gustavus IX., in that dark dress, with those harsh features, that rigid, immovable expression, and that singularly trimmed hair, which forms a cross on the forehead, just as they are found every where on the portraits of that king.

On the name of the picture being mentioned to Madame Ingeborg, she said:

"Oh, indeed! I took it for some other person. Tell me . . . tell me, did any one of you see down at the bottom of the mine . . . on the bridge over the precipice, a dark-looking man? Did nobody see him?"

"No!"

Nobody had seen him. (The leader and Madame Ingeborg, who stood in front of the opening, had most probably screened the figure from the rest.)

"It was a delusion," thought the professor; "the black depth turned you dizzy, and caused you to perceive realities in mere shade forms. Such things are not of rare occurrence."

Madame Ingeborg was silent.

"Yes, it is very strange," said she, after a while; "and here in this place it is very strange, too; but I dare say I am a strange being also."

"Aunt ought to sleep—should try to get a little sleep," said Brigitta, then pressing herself forwards; "Don't you think so, dear uncle! We will lead aunt into the adjoining little room, and then I will relate to her the drollest stories that I know, or I will also set myself opposite to her, and continue yawning until she either falls asleep or laughing; and both will be very salutary to her."

Madame Ingeborg was obliged to smile, and the adjunct . . . that is, the lecturer, cast a glance at Brigitta, and said:

"Yes, yes, she gets some famous ideas into her head, that she does."

It was done as Brigitta proposed. Madame Ingeborg, who had now almost come to perfect consciousness, was conducted by her into an adjoining little private-room in the judgment-hall, and there Brigitta remained alone with her in order to be able to carry on her somnif-

erous arts undisturbed. The rest remained in the hall, and the young people amused themselves for a time with the contemplation of the portraits of the Wasa-kings, and different presidents of the College for Miners and Metallurgists who graced the room, and who, with wise and sharp visages, seemed to look down upon the young folks who were contemplating them. Olof, who kept himself silent and gloomy for a long time, revived again with the contemplation of the beautiful collection of minerals, which were preserved in a glass case in the room, and was soon busy in pointing out and explaining to his friends various curiosities. Such is the nature of youth; the fresh water springs up under a pressure—and it is well that it is so.

But the professor stood there silent at a window, and looked out of the room. A leaden, heavy cloud, had overcast the sky, and lay gloomily over the opening of the mine over the black dross-town around it, and over the naked, desolate mountains on the right hand. And it seemed to him as if the cloud, of which his wife had shortly before been speaking, had now been realized, and impended, pregnant with inauspiciousness, over their heads. He had not seen the cause of her fainting in the mine; no defined object, no distinct image hovered threateningly before him; but he felt himself oppressed by a burning uneasiness, by inauspicious forebodings, for which he could not clearly account, and which he in vain endeavoured to combat.

In this state of mind it was very agreeable to him, that his two friends, Falk and Björk, came to him. He sent the young people back to the inn, in order to dine there, and stayed with the two friends. He himself, after a while, led the conversation to the thought which now occupied his mind, to the *disaster*, and the share which the accidental fate of a man and his own guilt have in it. Melancholy Björk laid the blame almost exclusively on fate, and was inclined to say, with Solomon the Wise; "It happeneth unto the righteous as unto the wicked."

"Fate!" exclaimed the governor, "I know of nought more empty than that word, and no power more impotent than this, namely—if strength of will rests in the breast to wrestle with it. By patience and perseverance every thing may be overcome; that is a doctrine which the copper-mine preaches here, in rivalry with the great man who at this place took fate into his power and forced it to his side, into his service, after he had long been haunted by his caprices, and had been obliged to experience its hardest blows. Contemplate Gustavus Wasa in his period of misfortune, see him a captive, deprived of his father and friends by the massacre of Stockholm, and afterwards of all his property; see him a fugitive in his own fatherland, wandering about in the disguise of a peasant in the valleys, solitary, pursued by tyrants; compelled to hide himself soon under a cut down fir-tree; soon under the earth; under bridges; in straw, and even there wounded by the spears of the enemy; see him despised, betrayed, continually threatened with destruction; and with all this perpetually rising up again with the same thought, the same mind, the same purpose; namely, of collecting Swedish people for Sweden's deliverance. See him combating with the pusillanimity or coldness of

men, never to be weary in warning them; and finally, see how he gains the people's ears, wins the people's hearts; see how they join him, and devote themselves to him as his life-guards, and attendants in life and death! Hither to Fablung it was, where with his four hundred men he marched from Mora; here it was, where he first became the conqueror of his enemies; where he, for the first time, raised the banner of Sweden's liberty; here it was where he commenced his career of victory, which did not stop until he had made his father-land free, and raised himself upon its throne by the free choice of the people. See, that is a conflict with fate which clearly shows of what signification is its power. No, not here in this country, before the men of the copper-mine, is it proper to speak of the power of fate; here we ought to speak of the power of the will!"

"That's all very fine and glorious! and we may read all that in Swedish history by Geijer and Strinholm, and in that by Fryxal; indeed, we have often talked about it already," said Björk, not in the least strengthened by the patriotic outbreak of his friend; "but I am of opinion that our history is a little in want of examples to the contrary as that of any other country. I mean to say that we can also show forth more than one martyr of purpose and noble efforts, whose endeavours terminated in a total failure of success. Virtue, good-will, and perseverance, may be equally great with two persons; but the one triumphs over adversity, the other sinks under it; that is, the one has luck, the other ill-luck: that's the great difference between them; and when that manifests itself sooner or later in a man's life, it does not at all alter the circumstances. Engelbrecht, for instance, was an equally, if not nobler man than Gustavus Wasa; he struggled for the same cause and in the same manner, and he fell by the hand of an assassin before he had completed his work."

"But he had, at all events, laid the foundation for the superstructure which was afterwards reared," said Nordevall. "As for the rest you are right. You are right in this respect, that earthly fortune does not always engage in the service of justice, that *blind fate is a power upon earth*. But above it stands *Providence*, with justice for its balance, with eternity in his hand, and continues where its power ceases, and finishes what is left unfinished. The power of earthly fate extends as far as death; the doctrines of religion, which have opened to us the path beyond this earthly one, have also shown us the prize of victory on yonder side, both for man himself as well as for the good cause of his warfare. And no man is so strong as he who lives and fights in this consciousness. Hence Gustavus Adolphus the Great is a far more pleasing and nobler pattern to me, than Gustavus Wasa. It is indeed a glorious picture to behold, how he with prayer and sword, and with his war-song: 'Fear not, thou little flock!' goes forth with his little band against half a world, contending for the liberty of faith. And the joyous spirit of heroism, which ever caused him to be foremost, and in which he answered: 'The Lord God omnipotent ever liveth and reigneth!' whenever he was entreated to spare his life; see, that is a

spirit which I admire. It is a pleasure to see how even derision—a weapon so dreaded by many—becomes itself turned into ridicule before his gravity. What sport was not made in Austria of his design; how did they not mock and laugh about him at the court of Vienna, where they applied the epithet to him of the 'Snow-king,' and so forth. But the Snow-king went forward, and grew and increased until his avalanche made the imperial city and crown tremble. He died in the very midst of his victorious career, and in this way succumbed to his earthly destiny; but, was the victory on that account any less perfect? He himself was removed from the power of earthly fate, and the protestant world honours him to this very day, as their deliverer. The fault with us is, that when we judge of a life and its efforts, we generally take a too low standard of measurement."

"You are quite right, my brother," said the governor; "but you must not deny old king Gösta the hope which you commend in his grandson. Of him too, we know that he built his house upon a stronger foundation than his own strength, just as he has expressed it in his own hymn:

'Oh, Swedes, on God implicitly rely,  
And evermore pray to him fervently!'"

"Brother Nordevall, compose me this hymn, and then I will endeavour to prevail upon the miners to sing it during their morning worship. That will strengthen them in a more salutary manner than the brandy-potation, of which they are so excessively fond."

In the room adjoining, Madame Ingeborg had just said to Brigitta:

"Open the door a little, Brigitta. I hear Gustavus's voice, and that voice is dearer to me than the finest music. Hush! Now I can apprehend his words too."

The visit of the physician interrupted the conversation of the friends. He found Madame Ingeborg better, but still in an excited state. He prescribed several soothing medicines, and with it the utmost external and internal quietness.

In consequence hereof, it was determined that she should quietly remain over-night in the miner's hall, and the professor with her. Madame Ingeborg herself was very well satisfied with this resolution. When the young people, however, on their return from the inn, were informed that they were to return to it again for the night, they were quite confounded, and each one said: "May not I remain here!"

"No, not one of you," said Madame Ingeborg, pleasantly, "nobody except my husband. My night will perhaps be uneasy, and this night I will not disturb or trouble any one else, excepting him. A pretty proof of affection!" added she, with a sorrowful but love-replete smile, to which her husband responded with a cordial—"That's just as it should be!"

But Siri mockingly bent her knee before Madame Ingeborg's couch, laid her head on her feet, and said:

"Let me stay here for the night!" The voice with which she entreated had a something in it irresistible. The professor said:

"Let the girl stay here with us, Ingeborg! I'll take all the responsibility upon myself."

And so it was decided. Not long afterwards they all took leave of one another for the night, as they were anxious to let Madame Ingeborg get to rest as soon as possible. Olof lingered a little longer than the rest, for he wished to bid Siri good-night, or more correctly—though he would not himself concede it—to see her for a moment alone, and obtain a kind word, a pleasant look from her. Ah! the poor heart, in which love dwells, is as the source of Iceland, in whose depth invisible flames are boiling. In the middle of winter, out of the midst of the snow, its water-spouts spring forth with volcanic power. And though they spill their tears on hard rocks and cold snow, and hurl their stones, yet pay they no regard to it—they still continue to spout and to boil.

Siri was not in the room just at the moment; he saw somebody, who stood there as if waiting for some one. Who was it? Ah! he had no occasion to inquire. The first motion in his heart had, more than her light form, proclaimed Siri. He stood still. Wild and painful was the tempest in his breast. She, too, moved not, and he only heard her voice, penetrating, as it were, into his breast, as she said:

"Olof, are you angry with me?"

Olof made no reply. A momentary change was going on within him. Siri's mysterious demeanour, all that he had suffered for her sake, interposed like a dark body between them, just at the very moment when she approached him so meekly, so penitently, and hardened him against her. A desire for revenge was working in his heart. When generous hearts come to such-like feelings, it is sinful of them.

Again he heard the mild voice:

"Olof! you are angry with me. I am not surprised at it; notwithstanding, I have a favour to ask of you."

Siri went up to him, handed him a sealed letter, and said:

"Take this letter, and—take care of it. Take care of it, as if the keeper of the most precious treasure. But on some future day, when I shall give you permission, or, when—I am dead, then break its seal; read it, and when you have read it—burn it; let no one then know what it contained. For therein is recorded—my secret. I have written every thing down. But no living soul shall know it except you. But you, Olof, shall one day know, that she whom you have protected, towards whom you have been so generous, so kind, was not unworthy of it. I now resign into your hands that which is of more importance to me than my life, and—feel no scruples in doing so. So great is my faith in you and your honour, I know that you will act strictly in conformity with my request."

Olof took the letter, but continued silent. This seemed to pain Siri. She gazed on him, mournfully inquiringly with her beautiful, remarkable eyes, with her touching feature about her lips, and said:

"Olof! I have so joyfully looked forward to this moment, from whenceforth I should no longer stand before you wrapp'd in darkness. . . . Soon we must part, and heaven knows, how and for how long! It would be a comfort to me, could I believe that you, of whom I shall

ever think as of my best friend, also think friendly of me and entertain the like feelings towards me. You once, when we used to play together, called me *sister*. This name is so dear to me. Oh! can you not give me this name again, and that in earnest? Olof, cannot and will you not receive me again, and love me as a brother, now and ever? It seems to me as if then my way would go on lighter; I believe that life would then be easier to—us both!"

There was a something so simple, so earnest and cordial at the same time, in Siri's manner and expression, that Olof became, as it were, penetrated by a new, fresh feeling. It dropped like a soothing dew on the wild glow in his soul, where love and disaffection were in conflict together. He felt himself again changed; and when now he once more pressed the young maiden to his heart, as a beloved sister, and her head lingered again on his breast, so mild, so full of confidence, just as the first time it was done in pain and cordiality, his heart raised itself up anew; he felt himself strong over his own weakness, and renewed the vow of being her brother and friend.

With a hearty "God bless you, my sister!" he inclined over her—and hastened away. Siri looked after him. Her eyes sparkled in a suffusion of tears, but joyously, as when one has seen something noble and beautiful.

She then went softly into the room, and after bidding her foster-parents good-night, withdrew into the smaller chamber, where she was to pass the night, on the sofa. The only window in that room went to the mining-place; and timorously and full of misgivings she dwelt near it.

The two married people were in the large room. Madame Ingeborg, owing to a considerable rush of blood to the heart, could not endure a lying posture, and therefore sat up in a large easy chair. Now everything around her was still and silent. The night-lamp burnt with a steady, but dull reflection, and beside his wife sat the professor, watching over her with the eye of faithful affection. Notwithstanding, Madame Ingeborg got not a moment of repose.

Ever and again she fearfully raised her eye towards the portrait of Charles IX. as if in him she had seen the precursor of a chastising judge, some avenging fatality. And yet that dreaded king was himself almost a touching example of the power of a punishing Nemesis. He who made so many hearts tremble, nay perish, in tormenting fear of death, who caused so many heads to fall under the axe of the executioner, he the inexorable, the mighty in will and power, he stood in his old age before the imperial states of Sweden, and could do nought but point at his sore-stricken head, and stammer: "God's judgment! . . . God's judgment! . . ."

#### THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

AND night came. With half-consumed disk the moon advanced from the clouds and shone over the gigantic jaws of the mine, over the black masses of slag, with the peculiar dusky

fight which marks its wane. All rested and was still in the town, which lay behind the mine-house, but down in the mine this night the work was going on, and the dull reports of blasting were heard from time to time out of the depths of the earth.

Mrs. Ingeborg, who was under the influence of a sleeping-draught, which yet was unable to give her rest, awoke at every sound of such explosion; and stretched out her hands avertingly, as if against some secret, threatening danger. Her husband watched her with uneasiness, and was within himself highly annoyed at this sleeping place for the night, which had been selected without reflecting on its unquiet vicinity to the mine. He himself had freed his mind by the conversation with his friends from its gloomy impression. He was again strong and full of consolatory feeling, as usual, and wished only to be able to impart his own tranquillity to the beloved being whom he saw to be the prey of depressing pain.

When he saw that this did not pass away, when she continued to be tormented by gloomy dreams, in a sort of uneasy trance, he kissed her eye-lids and said,—

"Ingeborg, awake! Speak to me; let us converse with each other. Come and walk awhile with me in the room; rest will be better than this sleep."

"Who calls me! Who says speak!" asked Mrs. Ingeborg, as she gazed confusedly around. "O Gustaf, is it thou! Thanks for having awoke me. My soul was in hell. Yes, thou art right; I must speak, now or never."

"What wilt thou, what dost thou mean! Why dost thou talk so wildly!"

"They were beautiful words—divine words, Gustaf, which thou spoke in the evening just past, of victory in death or beyond it; of the power which is stronger than misfortune—than fate!.....Nay, do not look thus at me! I am sane and collected, and know what I say and what I mean. Fate urges, conscience admonishes, God commands, and thou who givest me strength, thou art my judge!"

And Mrs. Ingeborg fell hastily upon her knees before her husband.

"Ingeborg! my wife! what dost thou?" exclaimed Nordevall, and sought to raise her.

"Let me be!" said she, fiercely and gloomily. "I am where I ought to be, where I ought to have been long ago. Hear me, I am a criminal!"

Nordevall sat down and covered his face with his hands, he could not look at her.

"I am guilty," she continued resolutely, "in having for ten years concealed from thee my life's grand misfortune and most momentous secret; in having concealed from thee that, before I became acquainted with thee, I had been married to another man, and that Siri, is my daughter!" Mrs. Ingeborg paused for a moment and bowed her forehead upon her husband's knee. He sat motionless; she continued,

"I was at Siri's age when I was loved by a man of rich but dangerous endowments. He at once captivated me, and won over to his interest my sister. But my brother-in-law set himself vehemently against our connection and sought by force to separate us; but obstinacy

and love counteracted him. He, whom I loved, persuaded me to a secret union, and a priest of his acquaintance married us one evening in the chapel of Sölberg, in the neighbourhood of my sister's residence. An approaching change in his circumstances, he said, would quickly place him in a condition to proclaim our union and demand me as his wife.

"Ah, this band knit in blind enthusiasm was cut fearfully asunder. He to whom I had united myself, was soon after involved in a crime and fled the kingdom. My situation was horrible. The secret of my marriage was obliged to be disclosed to my brother-in-law. He was at first furious, but afterwards he took compassion on me, and promised me his help on my oath never to reveal my marriage, which I then discovered with amazement was not valid by the laws of Sweden. My sister and brother-in-law travelled out of the kingdom with me, and on our return Siri passed for their daughter, but mine she was, and at the same time I was obliged to consent to leave her in strange hands, and separate from her; I must do this in order to watch over my reputation and my unhappy secret; must do it also for her sake, because the innocent child's brow ought not to be branded with a tainted name. I wrote, however, to her father, whose place of abode was then known to me, and announced to him the birth of his daughter. From him I received no reply, but through my sister and brother-in-law the account of his death; and his perfect silence for five years after, left me now no doubt of the fact. Long had his image darkened in my soul. His crime. We do not long continue to love what we blush for. O! Gustaf! canst thou understand that when I first became acquainted with thee, when I learned to love thee with the approbation of all my better self, of my mind matured by unhappiness and affliction, canst thou understand that the very love, the reverence thou infused into me, bound my tongue, when thou soughtest my hand, so that I did not confess to thee the secret of my past life. Ah! I would not sink in thy regard; I had not fortitude to discover my union with an—infamous person. A sense of duty and conscience admonished me to speak. Love and pride said, no. I sought to tranquilize myself with the thought that my confession could serve no purpose but to make us unhappy, and that no good could result from it to any one; for my child was happy with her foster parents, and was tenderly beloved, especially by the general, who never would have consented to part with her. Canst thou understand how these thoughts, the fear of forfeiting thy affection, thy confidence, the fear of thy anger against me has now, for ten years, caused me on this head to remain silent before thee, whilst the feeling of my fault towards thee and my child, occasioned me inexpressible anguish. But now—at this moment, I feel no more fear. Something higher is upon me, something which tells me that my hour of death is not far off; and till then, at least, must I stand clear before thee, with my offence, that in the grave I may have peace, and that beyond it I may be able to meet thee without a lie upon my forehead. Gustaf! for some time I have seen a form which made the blood stagnate in my

veins. I saw it once hasten past on the highway before the court at Mora; once in the woods in Elfdal, but the countenance I did not then see, and persuaded myself that my imagination deceived me. But yesterday in the mine, on the narrow bridge over the abyss, I saw again the same figure, and now saw the countenance, and could no longer doubt—it was he, it was Siri's father, it was.... Julius Wolff!"

"Julius Wolff! the scoundrel!" exclaimed Nordevall with anger and pain.

"The unhappy one, yes! And now Gustaf, listen to me. Either what I have seen is an apparition, and it comes to call me away from thee, or Julius Wolff lives, and I am a perjured woman! But O my God! in the depth of this darkness I see a ray of light! If he lives then may Siri be innocent, and the stranger with whom she was seen, be her father. First in this moment have I acquired this foreboding, this consolation, and—I need it. Gustaf! Now thou knowest all! I have not a word to add in my own excuse, except my love for thee. Many a time has the confession lain upon my lips, but—thou wert so happy in thy confidence in me, and—I was silent. Judge me. Here, at thy feet, I will lie till thou pardon or reject me."

Nordevall's countenance was solemn and pale, as he turned it towards the penitent, and solemn but tender was the voice with which he said:—

"Ten years truth and affection speak for thee, and—my own sense of failing. My warmth of temper, my severity have terrified thee. Poor Ingeborg! How many a pang had been spared, how many a happiness had been won, if—if thou hadst laid thy daughter on my heart! O if man—but the past is no longer ours—ours alone is the present. Rise up my wife, and forgive my faults, as I forgive thee thy only fault towards me. May God forgive us both!"

Husband and wife arose, and as they stood in each other's arms, heart to heart, then came the strength of affection over them. Ten years love and truth, all the sweet, all the bitter remembrance of what they had lived through, suffered and enjoyed together, arose like angels out of the waves of the past, and cast light upon light, flame upon flame into life. It became glowing therewith. Never had they loved each other more intensely, never so felt the immortality of their union.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Ingeborg, "is it then this moment that I feared—that I have avoided for ten years! Where is fear, where is danger now!"

"Here!" replied a hollow and sepulchral voice; and from the shadow at the bottom of the hall stood forth a form; it was the same which Mrs. Ingeborg had seen in the Lobster cavern of the mine. He was even now clad in the black mine dress, and his hair was flung back from the pale and suffering-ploughed countenance.

Mrs. Ingeborg sent forth a cry and seized convulsively her husband's arm.

"Silence!" said the dark form, "wretchedness is here, but—it shall not strike you! I have heard enough to recognize the innocence

of Ingeborg; that she did not get the letter from me which I wrote to her under cover to her sister; for I wished to be dead to all, but—not to her! Yet what should she with a dishonoured man? And now, that I have seen my daughter; that I have given her again parents and her natural right, that I have liberated her from unworthy suspicions, and her mother from . . . her dread of ghosts, now will my rôle upon earth quickly be played out. It now remains to free you from—myself. And that shall now be done. Cherish my noble child! Her happiness I shall one day demand at your hands. Farewell, Nordevall! Remember that it is the 'scoundrel,' who confers on thee, the wife, and the daughter, to whom he had a right, and who flies in order not to disturb, thy happiness!" And with a look, in which pride and bitter anguish were combined, the dark man hastily quitted the room, and went with rapid steps over the esplanade, towards the mine, and into the landing-room.

But it was not easy for him to escape from the light-haired girl, who, like a moon-beam, flew across the esplanade in his track, and who here embraced him with the force of the spirit, which renders the softest arms strong as an iron band.

"Thou shalt not leave me!" said she. "Into the bowels of the earth I will follow thee."

"My child!" exclaimed he, with painful emotion, "my child! Is it thou! Oh! thus then can I once more press thee to my heart, before we separate for ever."

"We do not part;" said she, "never! I will go and take leave of them within. I will kiss their feet; but then I belong to—I will follow thee alone!"

"Ah! that cannot be!" answered he. "Tonight, I must sink down in the mine, but early in the morning, I wander forth into the wide world, and have in it neither a home nor an asylum to offer thee, where thou couldst rest thy head."

"Have I not thy heart, father!" answered she; "and have we not both of us the earth, and the heavens for a roof over us! Oh! believe me, with thee in the wilderness I shall be happier than with others in peace, and abundance. Do not fear for me; I am strong and accustomed to live with nature, both in its good and its evil days, and love it. Father! let me accompany thee! Let me partake thy necessity and thy bread. For thee I will work, for thee could I beg, if our need became great, even as I beg of thee at this moment. Do not think that they will deny me! I will always be glad. I will sing for thee when thou art sorrowful; and when thou art cold, I will warm thee with my love, and at my heart. With thee I will wander round the whole world. And long shall it be before want shall overtake us. See! what in one year I have saved from the pocket-money which I received. See, Father! It is all thine!" And Siri pulled forth, with beaming eyes, her little hoard of money.

"Oh!" said he, with an expression of bitter joy, "it is truly a treasure to possess thee, child, and thy love, and these . . . have I forfeited. Thou dear, thou beloved child, have thanks. But what I have said must yet stand.

We must part. I will it. Remain in thy home; remain with thy mother. Give her the affection of a child. My feeling regarding her was right. She was deceived, but not criminal. Make her happy, and—forget not thy father. Pray for him! Poor child! Now passes a tempest through thy life. The young tree shall bend . . . but it shall lift itself again more vigorously, and heaven shall be clear above its head. Live, my child, to atone for thy father's offence, live for that more beautiful order of things, about which he dreamed without understanding its foundation; live to alleviate the distresses of earth!

"Listen!" and the enthusiastic man, who kindled more and more as he spoke, stood at once before the young maiden, almost with a prophetic dignity, illumined, like her, by the flames of "the eternal fire," and speaking as in fragmental lightning; "Listen to me! I will give thee a keepsake! Here, on the margin of the nether world, I will announce to thee a supernatural doctrine. Let it burn in thy heart like an eternal fire; let it light thee through the short life of earth; through all the mists of life and nature. Child! thy vocation is high and glorious! be thy lot upon earth ever so lowly, be thy dwelling ever so narrow. Neither sin nor crime bind thee; now is thy path free. let it be worthy of thy destiny! Listen! Above in the world, they will talk to thee of the powers and operations of nature; of wisdom in the arrangements displayed in the revolutions of life and death, in the laws of war and devastation, which hound the tribes of animals against each other, and make one race the murderers of the rest. They will show thee in disorder the order of the Creator, and in nature an eternal, ruminating, self-destroying, self-reproducing creature, the final destiny of which is—death and putrefaction. But I will impart to thee a deeper doctrine, a doctrine that is proclaimed by the sagas and songs of thy fatherland, regarding the life of nature, of the creature, and regarding the vocation of man. What say the ancient sagas? How in them speak the people of the hills and the streams, of the mountains and the woods? when the light of revelation breaks in upon the north, and pervades the deep, and loses the tongues of the life of nature? Listen! they sigh for redemption; for a more free and beautiful existence; and they call upon men to release them, to release the world into which captivity, into which the infection of misery came through them. They call, they warn them again to elevate them to the "glorious freedom of God's children;" to the glory unto which they were created. O child! be never deaf to these voices, nature's soft and spiritual voices, which sigh in all that is dying, that is miserable, in all that is falling asunder, and which admonish thee to a divine work. And therefore . . . Men will say to thee, "Be pure before the eye of day; be pure before the gaze of the world!" But I say to thee, "Be pure before the eye of night; be pure in the most concealed of thy sentiments, in thy imagination!" They have their living fibres deeply fixed in the life of nature. Thus thou sinkest or risest along with them. Live in nature, but as a bird of paradise, without soiling thy wings in the dust.

Thou wilt then elevate it to the original paradise!

"I dedicate thee to a life in which daily joys and daily sorrows will be counted of little value, but where the smallest of them will serve the Most High. I consecrate thee to a work of peace and beauty; thy days to a still *Creation's day!* Live for a new heaven and a new earth! . . .

"Happy art thou to be born in a country where deep spiritual voices still resound through life. My child! be a blessing to thy native land! There stand the sepulchral mounds which cover the bones of thy forefathers; there are the primeval mountains, the springs, which preserve the sagas from the most ancient times, when the spirit of man was equally deep as now in its clearest conception. In this nature wert thou born; there shalt thou live and labour. Go! . . . but in humility . . . work out for thyself a glory! Nature shall one day be glorified in its sacred splendour! . . .

"This is thy father's testament! his last commission, his last words to thee. A ray has God given me before the last night. He has given me thee. But now is my sun gone down. Now, my child! . . . my only joy . . . my daughter . . . farewell!"

And he clasped her passionately in his arms, and pressed kisses full of blessings on her brow, hair, eyes, and lips. Then he hastily left her, kindled his torch at the "eternal fire," and disappeared down the mine steps.

Stupified stood Siri there; the springs of life seemed, as it were, to stand still within her, still but listening to the voice of a mighty spirit. But when she saw her father disappear in the dark deep, then flew a light over her pale countenance, her eyes flashed with life and resolve, and she—followed him, as the fascinated follows the fascinator's eye, as even the strong magnet, as love follows the trace of the beloved, whom it fears to lose for ever. Thus silent as a spirit, light as a child, she followed in her father's track, from descent to descent, from place to place, pursuing the guiding torch, but at as great a distance as possible.

He advanced slowly, and as if sunk in thought: the torch burnt dimly in his hand. At the path called the *Crown Prince's Path*, where the steeper steps commence, he went down to the excavation of the *Coppersnake*, in which he turned aside. Now he went forward towards the copper-dragon's sinking. Every where Siri followed silently and resolutely. They were now seventy-five fathoms deep. At the brink of the copper-dragon's sinking, he suddenly stopped, as if recollecting himself. He seemed to have proceeded as in a dream, and not rightly to know where he was. He looked round and swung his torch to get more light; it flamed forth and lit up the dark labyrinth, but also shone upon the light-haired maiden, where she stood in the night-black jaws of the Copper-snake. The eyes of the father and daughter met. She extended her arms towards him, and sprang forward. Then fell the torch, wildly whirling in the air; sparks streamed up out of the abyss, but the abyss swallowed up the torch and the sparks; Siri heard the sound of a heavy falling body, and . . . all was silent and black . . .

And never did a blacker night envelope a human being, than that which here plunged down over the young girl. She had seen the gulf swallow her father, and the same fate menaced herself. But of herself she thought not; she thought on her father. She dropped on her knees, and feeling before her with her hands, she crept forward towards the spot where she saw him disappear. Soon the ground failed beneath her hands, and they were stretched over an abyss. But in the bottom of this she saw a faint light glimmer, and she stared fixedly upon it. At once it flamed more strongly up, and showed a rock which descended in a winding direction from the place where Siri stood, down to the bottom of the sinking just where the burning torch lay. This was the copper-dragon's tail, and rapidly did the young maiden hasten down along it, with an agonized and throbbing heart.

Arrived at the bottom of the copper dragon, she took up the torch and trimmed it. Its light discovered, lying some paces from her, a body. The countenance was turned upwards, and Siri recognised again her father. His eyes appeared to be glazed; he lay stiff and motionless, as one dead. Siri laid a hand upon his heart. It still beat. She called him by name; he answered not, and gave no signs of life. It was with a feeling of the deepest agony of soul that she raised herself, and looked round for help. Ah! here she stood alone in the hard bowels of the mine, and through its stupendous labyrinth of passages and ways, she had no guiding clue. But she knew that the miners were at work in the mine this night, and that people were therefore in it at that time; and with the torch in her hand, she began to wander and explore, marking exactly the way she went, in order to be able to find it again, and from time to time raising a cry for help, which rebounded again from the walls of the mine, or lost itself in the empty passages and arched ways. Sometimes she stood and listened, and heard—only the eternal fall of the water-drops; then wandered she again forward, and the crystals glimmered cold and wildly against her, as she passed along, like demoniac eyes out of the rock. Cold drops fell upon her brow. At once she felt a warm breath upon her hand; she looked at it. It was the flame from the torch, which the draught of air drove downwards, the torch was nearly burnt out. Still stranger, still more dangerous became her wandering; the pulse throbbed wildly in her temples; still more hasty, but more unsteady became her steps. And now she was compelled to stop, for the path was broken abruptly off by a great, black gulf. She looked down, there appeared no bottom; there appeared no light. She looked up. The vaulted roof of the mine was gone, and over her head was only an immeasurable, black, and empty space. Siri stared fixedly forward, and madness came over her. It was a moment when the vacuum above and beneath her, drew into it her very soul; when horror iced the springs of life; when she felt and thought *nothing*. But unconsciously her bewildered eyes were fixed on an object which descended directly from on high into the gulf, and moved itself gently, and twinkled, and twinkled in the light

of the torch. It was a cord, a line, and Siri's eyes mechanically followed this line downwards till it disappeared in the depth. But out of the depth arose now a distant song, and faintly but distinctly, she heard the words of the miner's song:—

"Up brothers! let your torches glow  
Where duty calls us, let us go,  
Our way is dark, but light to keep,  
Though down into the deep."

Siri's consciousness returned. It became clear to her, that she now stood in a shaft for the raising of ore, and that the people below, whose song she heard, must also bear her cries. And she cried, but still the song continued; she called again and again, and the song ceased. They listened to her down in the mine. She repeated her cry; and now the line moved; in a moment she saw a light glimmer in the depth, and soar softly upwards still nearer and nearer to her.

"Siri! Siri! let me embrace my child!" cried Mrs. Ingeborg, in the hall of the mine-court, evidently combating with death. Her husband opened the door of the little room adjoining, but it was empty. The window which was not high from the ground was open. Siri was away.

"It is just!" said Mrs. Ingeborg, with an expression of deep dejection; "it is no more than just. I abandoned her cradle, and she abandons my death-bed . . . it is only right. O! my heart, my heart!"

"Be calm, be composed," implored her husband, affectionately. "Lean against me! I am near thee! and thy child, she is also mine. Trust me, I will find her again; I will one day restore her to thy arms."

"Oh, thou dear comforter, thou true one. Yes, I will rest on thee, and on God's mercy! in life thou wert my joy; in death thou art my support. Gustaf! a prayer! Let me rest in Mora earth, in the grave where thou wilt one day rest by my side. Thanks for all thy love! . . . it becomes so dark before my eyes . . . I see thee no longer . . . but I shall see thee again . . . Lay thy hand upon my head, and read over me the blessing; . . . that I may hear thy voice in . . . the last!"

He did so. His voice did not tremble then, but when he saw the eyes glaze, whose last look of affection was fixed on him, then his knees shook, and he sunk upon them, and laid his head against the heart of his wife, which now had ceased to beat.

There it still lay, and burnt hotly, when that heart had already grown cold beneath the hand of death, as the morning sun broke into the room, and shone on the married pair. He first raised it, when a small piece of paper was presented to him, on which the following lines were written with a trembling hand:—

"A dying person desires the sacrament. Foster-father, come with the peace of God, prays out of the depths of the earth,

THINE, SIS.

Then Nordevall raised himself; wiped the cold perspiration from his brow, and followed the guide who had brought the message, and



who carried what was requisite for the holy office. When he came out into the open air, into the glad sunshine, he stood still, looked around him, and seemed to listen. His eyes were dim, and his look not such as before. He seemed to have become many years older. Silent, and with uncertain, but still firmer and firmer steps, he followed his conductor down into the mine. The guide related as they went:—

“He fell from the copper-snake down into the sinking of the copper-dragon; that is, about twelve fathoms deep; so that it is not to be wondered at, if he broke his skull; for the doctor says that it is the skull itself that is fractured, and that he cannot have many hours to live. Still he speaks, and is quite sensible. We attempted to carry him up, but he could not bear it, and so we were obliged to convey him into the king's hall, and leave him there. There he now lies, and there is with him a young, fine lady, who seems to be his daughter, and who laments and weeps so, that it is enough to cut one to the heart to see. It was her voice which first called the people to where he lay. But how she came down there, in the coal-black night, that knows the Lord alone. See, now we are in the *Duke of Dalarna*, and there, before us, we have the *King's-hall*.”

A strong but melancholy light streamed upon Nordevall as he entered the king's hall, one of the largest rooms in the mine. The servants of the mine stood there, with blazing torches in their hands, surrounding, at some distance, a group, upon which all eyes were fixed. It was a man, who lay outstretched upon the earth, evidently seized on, but not disfigured by the hand of death, and a young woman who knelt by his side, and to whom his looks and words were directed. Amongst these words were heard the following—“I did not wish it . . . could not wish it when I saw thee . . . but an invisible hand . . . the judgment of God . . . plunged me down.”

When Nordevall entered, the glances of the dying man were turned on him with a cold and bitter expression, and he said,—

“What has Gustaf Nordevall to do with Julius Wolf? what seeks the happy with the unhappy?”

“It is an unhappy one who here comes to his brother,” replied Nordevall, quietly and gloomily. Inocently did I deprive thee of the joy of thy life . . . innocently hast thou crushed me. I came from . . . my wife's deathbed.”

Julius Wolf almost raised himself up at this word.

“Is she dead?” he exclaimed; “then . . . then I have killed her! this yet was wanting . . . now is my measure full. Priest, depart from me!” continued he, wildly; “what wilt thou with me! leave me! I need thee not! I know my sin and my doom.”

Nordevall drew nearer.

“Dost thou know, also, God's power! hast thou measured the depths of his mercy?” said he, with a voice and look which seemed not to belong to the earth.

Wolf had sunk back—his countenance changed. Speechlessly he raised his clasped hands, and fixed on Nordevall an inquiring, thirsting glance.

Nordevall bent down to him, fell on his knees at his side, in order to be able to speak softly to him, and hear his answer. His countenance, full of seriousness and compassion, shone in the meantime more and more. And when he raised himself, he stood like an apostle of love and consolation before the repentant man, and imparted to him what life has of deepest and best.

The mine people sang:

“Oh, Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world.”

A breath of that peace which the world cannot give came like a bright light over the countenance of the dying man. The young maiden's tears flowed no longer. The sting and pain of death were swallowed up in a divine life, a heavenly anticipation.

The clergyman read the blessing over father and daughter.

Soon afterwards rested the daughter's warm lips on those of the father, which were become cold for ever.

“Blessed are they that sleep!” said Nordevall, as, supporting his weary head, he contemplated the peace in the features of the departed; then bending himself still lower, he embraced the half unconscious maiden, and raised himself with her.



#### A GLANCE FORWARD INTO TIME.

“Up she beholdeth,  
Once more arise  
Earth out of ocean,  
Gloriously green,  
Cataracts fall,  
And there soars the eagle.”

Thus sang in the mist-veiled times of old, the northern seeress, the wise Vala, of the arising of the world from its last contest. And, God be praised! the resurrection of which she sings, this renovation, this growing green afresh, this giving of new wings to life, that we also see—we who still dwell in “the shadows of the earth”—in many a glorious revelation in the life of nature, of the heart, of thought, and of society. It is to us a hint and an augury.

We sketch here, with hasty outlines, merely a little picture of this in the history of the man and the child whom we lately left overwhelmed by the shadows of sorrow and of death. As they attached themselves to each other at this moment, so continued they to do so more and more affectionately in the future. She became an angel through him. His heart, his life, his home, grew again green through her. A more beautiful relation than that between this father and this daughter cannot be conceived. At a later day, when he rested in the earth of Mora, by the side of the beloved departed wife, whom he never ceased in silence to yearn after, Siri kissed the mould upon their grave, and left Mora to follow a happy husband and wife, Olof and Valborg, to their home at the iron-works at Westanfors. As a beloved and affectionate sister she lives here with them. She tends the sick in the iron-works and on the estate; she takes charge of orphan children, and by these means has a wide extended and beneficial so-

tivity. This intercourse with nature, with her relatives and their children, quiet thoughts and feelings, which, on invisible wings, conduct her through life, make her happy in the noblest sense. Always lively, always glad, it is as if a secret fire in her heart prevented her growing cold or weary, and kept back old age from her brow. So does she advance on her way. Light is her wandering on earth. The living, affectionate glance is never diverted from its goal beyond it. And as she thus wanders as

one of those "who pass through the vale of sorrow and make them wells," her flute is often heard resounding through the woods with the self-same beautiful tones—tones of the hymn of deliverance of the spirits of nature, which she heard in her earliest youth—or her clear, sweet voice sings a "God's peace" over Dalearna, in the cordial words of the ancient Dal song, in which a grateful heart here unites :

God strengthen and gladden the people who dwell  
By river, on hill, and in Daleom :

THE END

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# SELF-CONTROL.

## CHAPTER I.

It was on a still evening in June that Laura Montreville left her father's cottage, in the little village of Glenalbert, to begin a solitary ramble. Her countenance was mournful, and her step languid; for her health had suffered from confinement, and her spirits were exhausted by long attendance on the death-bed of her mother. That labor of duty had been lessened by no extrinsic circumstance; for Lady Harriet Montreville was a peevish and refractory patient; her disorder had been tedious as well as hopeless; and the humble establishment of a half-pay officer furnished no one who could lighten to Laura the burden of constant attendance. But Laura had in herself that which softens all difficulty and beguiles all fatigue, an active mind, a strong sense of duty, and the habit of meeting and overcoming adverse circumstances.

Captain Montreville was of a family ancient and respectable, but so far from affluent, that, at the death of his father, he found his wealth, as a younger son, to consist only of five hundred pounds, besides the emoluments arising from a lieutenancy in a regiment of foot. Nature had given him a fine person and pleasing address; and to the national opinions of a Scottish mother he was indebted for an education, of which the liberality suited better with his birth than with his fortunes. He was in London, negotiating for the purchase of a company, when he accidentally met with Lady Harriet Bircham. Her person was showy, and her manners had the glare, even more than the polish, of high life. She had a lively imagination, and some wit; had read a little, and knew how to show that little to advantage. The fine person of Montreville soon awakened the only sensibility of which Lady Harriet was possessed; and her preference was sufficiently visible in every step of its progress. To be distinguished by a lady of such rank and attractions, raised in Montreville all the vanity of three-and-twenty; and, seen through that medium, Lady Harriet's charms were magnified to perfections. Montreville soon was, or fancied himself, desperately in love. He sued, and was accepted with a frankness, to which some stiff advocates for female decorum might give the harsh name of forwardness. Montreville was in love, and he was pleased to call it the candor of a noble mind.

As his regiment was at this time under orders for the West Indies, Lady Harriet prevailed on him to exchange to half-pay; and her fortune being only five thousand pounds, economy, no less than the fondness for solitude natural to young men in love, induced him to retire to the country with his bride, who had reasons of her own for wishing to quit London. He had been educated in Scotland, and he re-

membered its wild scenery with the enthusiasm of a man of taste and a painter. He settled, therefore, in the village of Glenalbert, near Perth; and, to relieve his conscience from the load of utter idleness at twenty-three, began the superintendence of a little farm. Here the ease and vivacity of Lady Harriet made her for a while the delight of her new acquaintance. She understood all the arts of courtesy; and, happy herself, was for a while content to practice them. The store of anecdote, which she had accumulated in her intercourse with the great, passed with her country neighbors for knowledge of the world. To Scottish ears, the accent of the higher ranks of English conveys an idea of smartness, as well as of gentility; and Lady Harriet became a universal favorite.

Those who succeed best in amusing strangers are not, it has been remarked, the most pleasing in domestic life; they are not even always the most entertaining. Lady Harriet's spirits had ebbs, which commonly took place during her tête-à-têtes with Captain Montreville. Outward attractions, real or imaginary, are the natural food of passion; but sound principles must win confidence, and kindness of heart engage affection. Poor Montreville soon gave a mournful assent to these truths; for Lady Harriet had no principles, and her heart was a mere "pulsation on the left side." Her passion for her husband soon declined; and her more permanent appetite for admiration finding but scanty food in a solitary village, her days passed in secret discontent or open murmurings. The narrowness of her finances made her feel the necessity of economy, though it could not immediately instruct her in the art of it; and Montreville, driven from domestic habits by the turmoil of a household, bustling without usefulness, and parsimonious without frugality, was on the point of returning to his profession, or of seeking relief in such dissipation as he had means of obtaining, when the birth of a daughter gave a new turn to all his hopes and wishes.

"I should not wish the girl to be a beauty," said he to his friend, the village pastor. "A pretty face is of no use but to blind a lover," and he sighed as he recollected his own blindness. Yet he was delighted to see that Laura grew every day more lovely. "Wit only makes a woman troublesome," said he; but before Laura was old enough to show the uncommon acuteness of her understanding, he had quite forgotten that he ever applied the remark to her. To amuse her infancy, became his chosen recreation; to instruct her youth, was afterward his favorite employment. Lady Harriet, too, early began to seek food for her vanity in the superior endowments of her child, and she forthwith determined that Laura should be a paragon. To perfect her on Nature's plan, never entered the head of this judicious matron; she preferred a plan of her own, and

scorned to be indebted to the assistance of Nature for any part of the perfect structure which she resolved to rear. The temper of Laura, uniformly calm and placid, was by nature slightly inclined to obstinacy. Lady Harriet had predetermined that her daughter should be a model of yielding softness. Laura's spirits were inexhaustible; Lady Harriet thought nothing so interesting as a pensive beauty. Laura was both a reasonable and a reasoning creature; her mother chose that she should use the latter faculty in every instance, except where maternal authority or opinion was concerned. Innumerable difficulties, therefore, opposed Lady Harriet's system; and, as violent measures ever occur first to those who are destitute of other resources, she had recourse to so many blows, disgraces, and deprivations, as must have effectually ruined the temper and dispositions of her pupil, if Laura had not soon learned to look upon the ungoverned anger of her mother as a disease, to which she owed pity and concealment. This lesson was taught her partly by the example of her father, partly by the admonitions of Mrs. Douglas, wife to the clergyman of the parish.

This lady was in every respect Lady Harriet's opposite. Of sound sense rather than of brilliant abilities; reserved in her manners, gentle in her temper, pious, humble, and upright, she spent her life in the diligent and unostentatious discharge of Christian and feminine duty; beloved without effort to engage the love; respected without care to secure the praise of man. She had always treated the little Laura with more than common tenderness; and the child, unused to the fascinations of feminine kindness, repaid her attention with the utmost enthusiasm of love and veneration. With her she passed every moment allowed her for recreation; to her she applied in every little difficulty; from her she solicited every childish indulgence. The influence of this excellent woman increased with Laura's age, till her approbation became essential to the peace of her young friend, who instinctively sought to read, in the expressive countenance of Mrs. Douglas, an opinion of all her words and actions. Mrs. Douglas, ever watchful for the good of all who approached her, used every effort to render this attachment as useful as it was delightful. She gradually laid the foundation of the most valuable qualities in the mind of Laura; by degrees teaching her to know and to love the Author of her being; to adore him as the bestower of all her innocent pleasures; to seek his favor, or to tremble at his disapprobation, in every hour of her life. Lady Harriet had been educated among those who despised or neglected the peculiar tenets of the Christian faith; she never thought of them, therefore, except as giving scope to lively argument. On Mrs. Douglas's own mind they had their proper effect; and she convinced Laura that they were not subjects for cavil, but for humble and thankful acceptance.

In as far as the religious character can be traced to causes merely natural, it may be formed by those who obtain over a mind of sensibility and reflection the influence which affection bestows, provided that they be themselves duly impressed with the inportance, the

harmony, the excellence, of what they teach. Laura early saw the Christian doctrines, precepts, and promises warm the heart, and guide the conduct, and animate the hopes, of her whom she loved best. Sympathy and imitation, the strongest tendencies of infancy, first formed the disposition which reason afterward strengthened into principle; and Laura grew up a pious Christian.

It is the fashion of the age to account for every striking feature of a character from education or external circumstance. Those who are fond of such speculations may trace, if they can, the self-denying habits of Laura, to the eagerness with which her enthusiastic mind imbibed the stories of self-devoting patriots and martyrs, and may find, in one lesson of her preceptress, the tint which colored her future days. The child had been reading a narrative of the triumphant death of one of the first reformers; and, full of the emulation which the tale of heroic virtue inspires, exclaimed, her eyes flashing through their tears, her little form erect with noble daring, "Let them persecute me, and I will be a martyr." "You may be so now, to-day, every day," returned Mrs. Douglas. "It was not at the stake that these holy men began their self-denial. They had before taken up their cross daily; and whenever, from a regard to duty, you resign any thing that is pleasing or valuable to you, you are for the time a little martyr."

In a solitary village, remote from her equals in age and rank, Laura necessarily lived much alone; and in solitude she acquired a grave and contemplative turn of mind. Far from the scenes of dissipation and frivolity, conversant with the grand and the sublime in nature, her sentiments assumed a corresponding elevation. She had heard that there was vice in the world; she knew that there was virtue in it; and, little acquainted with other minds, deeply studious of her own, she concluded that all mankind were, like herself, engaged in a constant endeavor after excellence; that success in this struggle was at once virtue and happiness, while failure included misery as well as guilt. The habit of self-examination, early formed, and steadily maintained, made even venial trespass appear the worst of evils; while, in the labors of duty and the pleasures of devotion, she found joys which sometimes rose to rapture.

The capricious unkindness of her mother gave constant exercise to her fortitude and forbearance; while the principle of charity, no less than the feelings of benevolence, led to frequent efforts of self-denial. The latter virtue became daily more necessary, for mismanagement had now brought her mother's fortune almost to a close; and Captain Montreville, while he felt that he was injuring his child, could not prevail on himself to withhold from Lady Harriet the control of what he considered as her own, especially as her health was such as to afford a plea for indulgence.

Laura had reached her sixteenth year, when Mr. Douglas was induced, by a larger benefice, to remove to a parish almost twenty miles distant from Glenalbert; and parting with her early friend was the severest sorrow that Laura had ever yet known. Captain Montreville promised that his daughter should often visit

the new parsonage; but Lady Harriet's increasing illness long prevented the performance of his promise. After a confinement of many months, she died, and was lamented by her husband with that sort of sorrow which it usually costs a man to part with an object which he is accustomed to see, when he knows that he shall see it no more.

For the first time since her mother's funeral, Captain Montreville prevailed on his daughter to take a solitary walk. Slowly she ascended the hill that overlooked the village, and stopping near its brow, looked back toward the church-yard, to observe a brown hillock that marked the spot where her mother slept. Tears filled her eyes, as, passing over long intervals of unkindness, she recollected some casual proof of maternal love; and they fell fast as she remembered, that for that love she could now make no return. She turned to proceed; and the moist eye sparkled with pleasure, the faded cheek glowed with more than the flush of health, when she beheld springing toward her the elegant, the accomplished Colonel Hargrave. Forgotten was languor, forgotten was sorrow; for Laura was just seventeen, and Colonel Hargrave was the most ardent, the most favored of lovers. His person was symmetry itself; his manners had all the fascination that vivacity and intelligence, joined to the highest polish, can bestow. His love for Laura suited with the impetuosity of his character; and for more than a year he had labored with assiduity and success to inspire a passion corresponding to his own. Yet it was not Hargrave whom Laura loved; for the being on whom she doted had no resemblance to him, except in externals. It was a creature of her imagination, pure as her own heart, yet impassioned as the wildest dreams of fiction; intensely susceptible of pleasure, and keenly alive to pain, yet ever ready to sacrifice the one and to despise the other. This ideal being, clothed with the fine form, and adorned with the insinuating manners, and animated with the infectious love of Hargrave, what heart of woman could resist? Laura's was completely captivated.

Hargrave, charmed with her consummate loveliness, pleased with her cheerful good sense, and fascinated with her matchless simplicity, at first sought her society without thought but of present gratification, till he was no longer master of himself. He possessed an ample fortune, besides the near prospect of a title; and nothing was further from his thoughts than to make the poor, unknown Laura a sharer in these advantages. But Hargrave was not yet a villain, and he shuddered at the thought of seduction. "I will see her only *once* more," said he, "and then tear myself from her forever." "Only this once," said he, while day after day he continued to visit her; to watch with delight, and to cherish with eager solicitude the tenderness which, amid his daily increasing reserve, his practiced eye could distinguish. The passion which we do not conquer will in time reconcile us to any means that can aid its gratification. "To leave her now would be dishonorable—it would be barbarous," was his answer to his remonstrating conscience, as he marked the glow of her complexion at his approach, the tremor of her hand at his pressure. "I can not, in-

deed, make her my wife. The woman whom I marry must assist in supporting the rank which she is to fill. But Laura is not made for high life. Short commerce with the world would destroy half her witchery. Love will compensate to us for every privation. I will hide her and myself from a censorious world: she loves solitude; and, with her, solitude will be delightful." He forgot that solitude is delightful to the innocent alone.

Meantime the artless Laura saw, in his highly colored pictures of happy love, only scenes of domestic peace and literary leisure; and, judging of his feelings by her own, dreamed not of aught that would have disgraced the loves of angels. Tedious weeks of absence had intervened since their last meeting; and Hargrave's resolution was taken. To live without her was impossible; and he was determined to try whether he had overrated the strength of her affection when he ventured to hope that to it she would sacrifice her all. To meet her thus unexpectedly filled him with joy; and the heart of Laura throbbed quick as he expressed his rapture. Never had his professions been so ardent; and, softened by sorrow and by absence, never had Laura felt such seducing tenderness as now stole upon her. Unable to speak, and unconscious of her path, she listened with silent rapture to the glowing language of her lover, till his entreaties wrung from her a reluctant confession of her preference. Unmindful of the feeling of humiliation that makes the moment of such a confession of all others the least favorable to a lover's boldness, Hargrave poured forth the most vehement expressions of passion; while, shrinking into herself, Laura now first observed that the shades of evening were closing fast, while their lonely path led through a wood that climbed the rocky hill.

She stopped. "I must return," said she; "my father will be anxious for me at this hour."

"Talk not now of returning," cried Hargrave, impetuously; "trust yourself to a heart that adores you. Reward all my lingering pains, and let this happy hour begin a life of love and rapture."

Laura, wholly unconscious of his meaning, looked up in his face with an innocent smile: "I have often taxed you with raving," said she; "now, I am sure, you must admit the charge."

"Do not sport with me, loveliest," cried Hargrave, "nor waste these precious moments in cold delay. Leave forms to the frozen hearts that wait them, and be from this hour mine, wholly and forever."

Laura threw a tearful glance at her mourning habit. "Is this like bridal attire!" said she: "would you bring your nuptial festivities into the house of death, and mingle the sound of your marriage vow with my mother's dying groans?"

"Can this simplicity be affected?" thought Hargrave. "Is it that she will not understand me?" He examined her countenance. All there was candor and unsuspecting love. Her arm rested on his with confiding pressure; and for a moment Hargrave faltered in his purpose. The next, he imagined that he had gone too far to recede; and, clasping her to his breast with all the vehemence of passion, he urged his suit in language yet more unequivocal. No words

can express her feelings, when, the veil thus rudely torn from her eyes, she saw her pure, her magnanimous Hargrave—the god of her idolatry—degraded to a sensualist, a seducer. Casting on him a look of mingled horror, dismay, and anguish, she exclaimed, “Are you so base!” and, freeing herself, with convulsive struggle, from his grasp, sunk, without sense or motion, to the ground.

As he gazed on the death-pale face of Laura, and raised her lifeless form from the earth, compassion, which so often survives principle, overpowered all Hargrave’s impetuous feelings; and they were succeeded by the chill of horror, as the dreadful idea occurred to him that she was gone forever. In vain he chafed her cold hands, tried to warm her to life in his bosom, bared hers to the evening breeze, and distractedly called for help; while, with agony which every moment increased, he remembered that no human help was near. No sign of returning life appeared. At last he recollected that, in their walks, they had at some distance crossed a little stream, and, starting up with renovated hope, he ran to it with the speed of lightning; but the way, which was so short as he passed it before, now seemed lengthened without end. At last he reached it; and filling his hat with water, returned with his utmost speed. He darted forward till he found himself at the verge of the wood, and then first perceived that he had mistaken the path. As he retraced his steps, a thousand times he cursed his precipitancy, in not having with more caution ascertained the sentiments of his mistress ere he permitted his licentious purpose to be seen. After a search, prolonged by his own frantic impatience, he arrived at the spot where he left her; but no Laura was there. He called wildly on her name; he was answered by the mountain echo alone. After seeking her long, a hope arose that she had been able to reach the village; and thither he determined to return, that, should his hope prove groundless, he might at least procure assistance in his search.

As he approached the little garden that surrounded Captain Montreville’s cottage, he with joy perceived a light in the window of Laura’s apartment; and never, in the most cheerful scenes, had he beheld her with such delight as he did now, when every gesture seemed the expression of unutterable anguish. He drew nearer, and saw despair painted on her every feature; and he felt how tender was the love that could thus mourn his degeneracy, and its own blighted hopes. If she could thus feel for his guilt, the thought irresistibly pressed on his mind, with what bitterness would she feel her own! Seduction, he perceived, would with her be a work of time and difficulty; while, could he determine to make her his wife, he was secure of her utmost gratitude and tenderness. The known honor, too, of Captain Montreville made the seduction of his daughter rather a dangerous exploit; and Colonel Hargrave knew that, in spite of the license of the times, should he destroy the daughter’s honor and the father’s life, he would no longer be received, even in the most fashionable circles, with the cordiality which he could at present command. The dignified beauty of Laura would grace a coronet,

and more than excuse the weakness which raised her to that distinction: his wife would be admired and followed, while all her affections would be his alone. In fancy he presented her, glittering with splendor, or majestic in unbordered loveliness, to his companions; saw the gaze of admiration follow wherever she turned; and that thought determined him. He would go next morning, and in form commence honorable lover, by laying his pretensions before Captain Montreville. Should Laura have acquainted her father with the adventures of the evening, he might feel some little awkwardness in his first visit; but she might perhaps have kept his secret; and, at all events, his generous intentions would repair his offense. Satisfied with himself, he retired to rest, and enjoyed a repose that visited not the pillow of the innocent Laura.

## CHAPTER II.

SCARCELY had Hargrave quitted Laura, when her senses began to return, and with them an indefinite feeling of danger and alarm. The blood gushing from her mouth and nostrils, she quickly revived to a full sense of her situation, and instinctively endeavored to quit a spot now so dark and lonely. Terror gave her strength to proceed. Every path in her native woods was familiar to her; she darted through them with what speed she could command; and, reckless of all danger but that from which she fled, she leaped from the projecting rocks, or gradually descended from the more fearful declivities, by clinging to the trees which burst from the fissures; till, exhausted with fatigue, she reached the valley, and entered the garden that surrounded her home. Here, supported no longer by the sense of danger, her spirits utterly failed her, and she threw herself on the ground, without a wish but to die.

From this state she was roused by the voice of her father, who, on the outside of the fence, was inquiring of one of the villagers whether she had been seen. Wishing, she scarcely knew why, to escape all human eyes, she rose, and, without meeting Captain Montreville, gained her own apartment. As she closed her door, and felt for a moment the sense of security which every one experiences in the chamber which he calls his own, “Oh,” cried she, “that I could thus shut out the base world forever!”

There was in Laura’s chamber one spot which had, in her eyes, something of holy, for it was hallowed by the regular devotions of her life. On it she had first breathed her first infant prayer. There shone on her the eastern sun, as she offered her morning tribute of praise. There first fell the shades of evening that invited her to implore the protection of her God. On that spot she had so often sought consolation, so often found her chief delight, that it was associated in her mind with images of hope and comfort; and, springing toward it, she now almost unconsciously dropped upon her knees. While she poured forth her soul in prayer, her anguish softened into resignation; and with the bitter tears of disappointment those of gratitude mingled, while she thanked Him who, though he had visited her with affliction, had preserved her from guilt.

She rose composed, though wretched; resigned, though hopeless; and when summoned to supper, had sufficient recollection to command her voice, while she excused herself on the plea of a violent headache. Left to herself, she passed the sleepless night, now in framing excuses for her lover, now in tormenting reflection on her mistaken estimate of his character; and in bitter regrets that what seemed so excellent should be marred with so foul a stain. But Laura's thoughts were so habitually the prelude to action, that, even in the severest conflict of her powers, she was not likely to remain long in a state of ineffective meditation. "What ought I now to do?" was a question which, from childhood, Laura had every hour habitually asked herself; and the irresistible force of the habit of many years brought the same question to her mind when she rose with the dawn.

With a heavy heart, she was obliged to confess that delicacy no less than prudence must forbid all intercourse with Hargrave. But he had for some time been a constant visitor at the cottage, till excluded by the increasing illness of Lady Harriet. He might now renew his visits, and how was it possible to prevent this? Should she refuse to see him, her father must be made acquainted with the cause of such a refusal; and she could not doubt that the consequences would be such as she shuddered to think of. She groaned aloud as the horrid possibility occurred to her, that her father might avenge her wrongs at the expense of his virtue and his life; become for her sake a murderer, or fall by a murderer's hand. She instantly resolved to conceal forever the insult she had received; and to this resolution she determined that all other circumstances should bend. Yet, should she receive Colonel Hargrave as formerly, what might he not have the audacity to infer! How could she make him fully sensible of her indignant feelings, yet act such a part as might deceive the penetration of her father! Act a part!—deceive her father! Laura's thoughts were usually clear and distinct; and there was something in this distinct idea of evasion and deceit that sickened her very soul. This was the first system of concealment which had ever darkened her fair and candid mind; and she wept bitterly when she convinced herself, that from such conduct there was no escape.

She sat lost in these distressing reflections, till the clock struck the hour of breakfast; then, recollecting that she must not suffer her appearance to betray her, she ran to her glass, and with more interest than she had perhaps ever before felt in the employment, proceeded to dress her countenance to advantage. She bathed her swollen eyes, shaded them with the natural ringlets of her dark hair, rubbed her wan cheeks till their color returned, and then entered the parlor with an overacted gayety which surprised Captain Montreville. "I scarcely expected," said he, "to see you so very animated, after being so ill as to go to rest last night, for the first time in your life, without your father's blessing."

Laura, instantly sensible of her mistake, coloring, stammered something of the cheering influence of the morning air; and then meditated

on a proper medium, in which her demeanor sunk into so long a silence, that Captain Montreville could not have failed to remark it, had not his attention been diverted by the arrival of the newspaper, which he continued to study till breakfast was ended, when Laura gladly retired to her room.

Though the understanding of Laura was above her years, she had not escaped a mistake common to the youth of both sexes, when smarting under a recent disappointment in love—the mistake of supposing that all the interest of life is, with respect to them, at an end, and that their days must thenceforth bring only a dull routine of duties without excitement, and of toils without hope. But the leading principle of Laura's life was capable of giving usefulness even to her errors; and the gloom of the wilderness, through which her path seemed to lie, only brightened, by contrast, the splendor that lay beyond. "The world," thought she, "has now nothing to offer that I covet, and little to threaten that I fear. What, then, remains but to do my duty, unawed by its threatenings, unbribed by its joys! Ere this cloud darkened all my earthly prospects, I was not untaught, though I had too much forgotten the lesson, that it was not for pastime I was sent hither. I am here as a soldier, who strives in an enemy's land; as one who must run—must wrestle—must strain every nerve—exert every power, nor once shrink from the struggle till the prize is my own. Nor do I live for myself alone. I have a friend to gratify—the poor to relieve—the sorrowful to console—a father's age to comfort—a God to serve. And shall selfish feeling disincline me to such duties as these? No, with more than seeming cheerfulness, I will perform them all. I will thank Heaven for exempting me from the far heavier task of honoring and obeying a profligate."

A profligate! Must she apply such a name to Hargrave! The enthusiasm of the moment expired at the word, and the glow of virtuous resolution faded to the paleness of despondence and pain.

From a long and melancholy reverie, Laura was awakened by the sound of the garden gate; and she perceived that it was entered by Colonel Hargrave. Instinctively she was retreating from the window, when she saw him joined by her father; and, trembling lest candor was about to confess, or inadvertence to betray, what she so much wished to conceal, she continued with breathless anxiety to watch their conference.

Though Colonel Hargrave was certainly one of the best bred men in the kingdom, and, of consequence, entirely free from the awkwardness of *mauvaise honte*, it must be confessed that he entered the presence of the father of Laura with rather less than his accustomed ease; but the cordial salutation of Captain Montreville banishing all fear that the lady had been too communicative, our lover proceeded, without any remaining embarrassment, to unfold the purpose of his visit. Nor could any one have conjectured, from the courtly condescension of the great man, that he conceived he was bestowing a benefit; nor from the manly frankness of the other, that he considered himself as receiving a favor. Not but that the colonel

was in full possession of the pleasures of conscientious generosity and condescension. So complete, indeed, was his self-approbation, that he doubted not but his present magnanimous resolve would efface from the mind of Laura all resentment for his offense. Her displeasure he thought would be very short-lived, if he were able to convince her that his fault was not premeditated. This he conceived to be an ample excuse, because he chose to consider the insult he had offered, apart from the base propensities, the unbridled selfishness, which it indicated. As Laura had so well concealed his indiscretion, he was too good a politician himself to expose it; and he proceeded to make such offers in regard to settlements as suited the liberality of his character.

Captain Montreville listened with undisguised satisfaction to proposals apparently so advantageous to his beloved child; but, while he expressed his entire approbation of the colonel's suit, regard to feminine decorum made him add, "that he was determined to put no constraint on the inclinations of his daughter." The colonel felt a strong conviction that no constraint would be necessary; nevertheless, turning a neat period, importing his willingness to resign his love, rather than interfere with the happiness of Miss Montreville, he closed the conference by entreating that the captain would give him an immediate opportunity of learning his fate from the lips of the fair Laura herself.

Laura had continued to follow them with her eyes, till they entered the house together; and the next minute Captain Montreville knocked at her door.

"If your headache is not quite gone," said he, with a significant smile, "I will venture to recommend a physician. Colonel Hargrave is waiting to prescribe for you; and you may repay him in kind, for he tells me he has a case for your consideration."

Laura was on the point of protesting against any communication with Colonel Hargrave; but instantly recollecting the explanation which would be necessary, "I will go to him this instant," she exclaimed, with an eagerness that astonished her father.

"Surely you will first smooth these reddish locks of yours," said he, fondly stroking her dark auburn hair. "I fear so much haste may make the colonel vain."

Laura colored violently; for, amid all her fears of a discovery, she found place for a strong feeling of resentment, at the easy security of forgiveness that seemed intimated by a visit so immediately succeeding the offense. Having employed the few moments she passed at her toilet in collecting her thoughts, she descended to the parlor, fully resolved to give no countenance to the hopes her lover might have built on her supposed weakness.

The colonel was alone; and, as she opened the door, eagerly advanced toward her. "My adored Laura," cried he, "this condescension—! Had he stayed to read the pale but resolute countenance of his "adored" Laura, he would have spared his thanks for her condescension.

She interrupted him. "Colonel Hargrave," said she, with imposing seriousness, "I have a request to make to you. Perhaps the peace of my life depends upon your compliance."

"Ah, Laura! what request can I refuse, where I have so much to ask!"

"Promise me that you will never make known to my father—that you will take every means to conceal from him the—" she hesitated, "the—our meeting last night," she added, rejoiced to have found a palliative expression for her meaning.

"Oh! dearest Laura! forget it; think of it no more."

"Promise—promise solemnly. If, indeed," added she, shuddering, while an expression of sudden anguish crossed her features, "if, indeed, promises can weigh with such a one as you."

"For pity's sake, speak not such cutting words as those."

"Colonel Hargrave, will you give me your promise?"

"I do promise—solemnly promise. Say but that you forgive me."

"I thank you, sir, for so far insuring the safety of my dear father, since he might have risked his life to avenge the wrongs of his child. You can not be surprised if I now wish to close our acquaintance as speedily as may be consistent with the concealment so unfortunately necessary."

Impatient to conclude an interview which tasked her fortitude to the utmost, Laura was about to retire. Hargrave seized her hand. "Surely, Laura, you will not leave me thus. You can not refuse forgiveness to a fault caused by intemperate passion alone. The only atonement in my power, I now come to offer; my hand—my fortune—my future rank."

The native spirit and wounded delicacy of Laura flashed from her eyes, while she replied: "I fear, sir, I shall not be suitably grateful for your generosity, while I recollect the alternative you would have preferred."

This was the first time that Laura had ever appeared to her lover other than the tender, timid girl. From this character she seemed to have started at once into the high-spirited, the dignified woman; and, with a truly masculine passion for variety, Hargrave thought he had never seen her half so fascinating. "My angelic Laura," cried he, as he knelt before her, "lovelier in your cruelty, suffer me to prove to you my repentance—my reverence, my adoration; suffer me to prove them to the world, by uniting our fates forever."

"It is fit the guilty should kneel," said Laura, turning away, "but not to their fellow-mortals. Rise, sir; this homage to me is but mockery."

"Say, then, that you forgive me; say that you will accept the tenderness, the duty, of my future life."

"What! rather than control your passions, will you now stoop to receive, as your wife, her whom so lately you thought vile enough for the lowest degradation? Impossible! yours I can never be. Our views, our principles, are opposite as light and darkness. How shall I call Heaven to witness the prostitution of its own ordinances? How shall I ask the blessings of my Maker on my union with a being at enmity with him!"

"Good heavens, Laura! will you sacrifice to a punctilio—to a fit of Calvinistic enthusiasm, the peace of my life, the peace of your own!



You have owned that you love me—I have seen it, delighted seen it, a thousand times—and will you now desert me forever!"

"I do not act upon punctilio," returned Laura, calmly; "I believe I am no enthusiast. What *have* been my sentiments is now of no importance; to unite myself with vice would be deliberate wickedness—to hope for happiness from such a union would be desperate folly."

"Dearest Laura, bound by your charms, allured by your example, my reformation would be certain, my virtue secure."

"Oh, hope it not! Familiar with my form, my only hold on your regard, you would neglect, forsake, despise me; and who should say that my punishment was not just!"

"And will you, then," cried Hargrave, in an agony, "will you, then, cast me off forever! Will you drive me forever from your heart!"

"I have no choice—leave me—forget me—seek some woman less fastidious; or rather endeavor, by your virtues, to deserve one superior far. Then honored, beloved, as a husband, as a father—" The fortitude of Laura failed before the picture of her fancy, and she was unable to proceed. Determined to conceal her weakness from Hargrave, she broke from him, and hurried toward the door; but, melting into tenderness at the thought that this interview was perhaps the last, she turned. "Oh, Hargrave," she cried, clasping her hands as in supplication, "have pity on yourself—have pity on me; forsake the fatal path on which you have entered, that, though forever torn from you here, I may yet meet you in a better world!"

She then darted from the room, leaving her lover in dumb amazement at the conclusion of an interview so different from his expectations. For the resentment of Laura he had been prepared; but upon her determined refusal he had never calculated, and scarcely could he now admit its reality. Could he give her credit for the professed motive of her rejection! Colonel Hargrave had nothing in himself which made it natural for him to suppose passion sacrificed to reason and principle. Had he, then, deceived himself—had she never really loved him! The suggestion was too mortifying to be admitted. Had resentment given rise to her determination! She had spoken from the first with calmness—at last with tenderness. Was all this but a scene of coquetry, designed to enhance her favors! The simple, the noble, the candid Laura guilty of coquetry! Impossible!

While these thoughts darted with confused rapidity through his mind, one idea alone was distinct and permanent—Laura had rejected him. This thought was torture. Strong resentment mingled with his anguish; and to inflict on the innocent cause of it pangs answering to those he felt, would have afforded to Hargrave the highest gratification. Though his passion for Laura was the most ardent of which he was capable, its effects, for the present, more resembled those of the bitterest hatred. That she loved him, he would not allow himself to doubt; and, therefore, he concluded that neglect would inflict the surest, as well as the most painful, wound. Swearing that he would make her feel it at her heart's core, he left the cottage, strode to the village inn, surlily ordered his horses, and, in a humor com-

pounded of revenge, impatient passion, and wounded pride, returned to his quarters at —. His scheme of revenge had all the success that such schemes usually have or deserve; and while, for one whole week, he deigned not, by visit or letter, to notice his mistress, the real suffering which he inflicted did not exactly fall on her for whom he intended the pain.

### CHAPTER III.

To an interview which he presumed would be as delightful as interesting, Captain Montreville chose to give no interruption; and therefore he had walked out to superintend his hay-making; but after staying abroad for two hours, which he judged to be a reasonable length for a tête-à-tête, he returned, and was a little surprised to find that the colonel was gone. Though he entertained not a doubt of the issue of the conference, he had some curiosity to know the particulars, and summoned Laura to communicate them.

"Well, my love," said he, as the conscious Laura shut the parlor door, "is Colonel Hargrave gone!"

"Long ago, sir."

"I thought he would have waited my return." Laura made no answer.

"When are we to see him again!"

Laura did not know.

"Well, well," said Captain Montreville, a little impatiently, "since the colonel is gone without talking to me, I must just hear from you what it is you have both determined on."

Laura trembled in every limb. "I knew," said she, without venturing to lift her eye, "that you would never sacrifice your child to rank or fortune; and therefore I had no hesitation in refusing Colonel Hargrave."

Captain Montreville started back with astonishment. "Refused Colonel Hargrave!" cried he; "impossible! you can not be in earnest."

Laura, with much truth, assured him that she never in her life had been more serious.

Captain Montreville was thunderstruck. Surprise for a few moments kept him silent. At last, recovering himself, "Why, Laura," said he, "what objection could you possibly make to Hargrave! he is young, handsome, accomplished, and has shown such generosity in his choice of you—"

"Generosity, sir!" repeated Laura.

"Yes; it was generous in Colonel Hargrave, who might pretend to the first woman in the kingdom, to think of offering to share his fortune and his rank with you, who have neither."

Laura's sentiments on this subject did not exactly coincide with her father's, but she remained silent while he continued, "I think I have a right to hear your objections, for I am entirely at a loss to guess them. I don't, indeed, know a fault Hargrave has, except, perhaps, a few gallantries; which most girls of your age think a very pardonable error."

A sickness, as of death, seized Laura; but she answered steadily, "Indeed, sir, the colonel's views are so different from mine—his dispositions so very unlike—so opposite, that nothing but unhappiness could possibly result

from such a union. *But,*" added she, forcing a languid smile, "we shall, if you please, discuss all this to-morrow; for, indeed, to-day I am unable to defend my own cause with you. I have been indisposed all day."

Captain Montreville looked at Laura, and, in the alarm which her unusual paleness excited, lost all sense of the disappointment she had just caused him. He threw his arm tenderly round her—supported her to her own apartment—begged she would try to rest—ran to seek a cordial for his darling; and then, fearing that the dread of his displeasure should add to her disorder, hastened back to assure her that, though her happiness was his dearest concern, he never meant to interfere with her judgment of the means by which it was to be promoted.

Tears of affectionate gratitude burst from the eyes of Laura. "My dear, kind father," she cried, "let me love—let me please you; and I ask no other earthly happiness."

Captain Montreville then left her to rest; and, quite exhausted with illness, fatigue, and sorrow, she slept soundly for many hours.

The captain spent most of the evening in ruminating on the occurrence of the day; nor did his meditations at all diminish his surprise at his daughter's unaccountable rejection of his favorite. He recollected many instances in which he thought he had perceived her partiality to the colonel; he perplexed himself in vain to reconcile them with her present behavior. He was compelled at last to defer his conclusions till Laura herself should solve the difficulty. The subject was, indeed, so vexatious to him, that he longed to have his curiosity satisfied, in order finally to dismiss the affair from his mind.

Laura had long been accustomed, when assailed by any adverse circumstance, whether more trivial or more important, to seize the first opportunity of calmly considering how far she had herself contributed to the disaster; and, as nothing is more hostile to good humor than an ill-defined feeling of self-reproach, the habit was no less useful to the regulation of our heroine's temper than to her improvement in the rarer virtues of prudence and candor. Her first waking hour, except that which was uniformly dedicated to a more sacred purpose, she now employed in strict and impartial self-examination. She endeavored to call to mind every part of her behavior to Colonel Hargrave, lest her own conduct might have seemed to countenance his presumption. But in vain. She could not recollect a word, a look, even a thought, which might have encouraged his profligacy. "Yet why should I wonder," she exclaimed, "if he expected that temptation might seduce, or weakness betray me, since he knew me fallible, and of the Power by which I am upheld he thought not?"

Satisfied of the purity of her conduct, she next proceeded to examine its prudence; but here she found little reason for self-gratulation. Her conscience, indeed, completely acquitted her of levity or forwardness, but charges of imprudence she could not easily parry. Why had she admitted a preference for a man whose moral character was so little known to her? Where slept her discretion, while she suffered that preference to strengthen into passion? Why had she indulged in dreams of ideal per-

fection? Why had she looked for consistent virtue in a breast where she had not ascertained that piety resided? Had she allowed herself time for consideration, would she have forgotten that religion was the only foundation strong enough to support the self-denying, the purifying virtues? These prudent reflections came, in part, too late; for to love Laura was persuaded she must henceforth be a stranger. But to her friendships she conceived that they might be applicable; and she determined to make them useful in her future intercourse with her own sex; to whom, perhaps, they may be applied even with more justice than to the other.

The mind of Laura had been early stored with just and rational sentiments. These were the bullion; but it was necessary that experience should give the stamp that was to make them current in the ordinary business of life. Had she called prudence to her aid, in the first stage of her acquaintance with the insinuating Hargrave, what anguish would she not have spared herself! But if the higher wisdom be to foresee and prevent misfortune, the next degree is to make the best of it when unavoidable; and Laura resolved that this praise, at least, should be hers. Fortified by this resolution, she quitted her apartment, busied herself in her domestic affairs, met her father almost with cheerfulness; and, when he renewed the subject of their last conversation, repeated, with such composure, her conviction of the dissimilarity of Hargrave's dispositions to her own, that Captain Montreville began to think he had been mistaken in his opinion of her preference. Still, however, he could not account for her rejection of an offer so unobjectionable; and he hinted a suspicion that some of Hargrave's gallantries had been repeated to her, and perhaps with exaggeration. With trembling lips, Laura assured him she had never heard the slightest insinuation against Colonel Hargrave. Though Laura had little of romance in her composition, her father now began to imagine that she allowed herself to cherish the romantic dream that sympathy of souls, and exactly concordant tastes and propensities, were necessary to the happiness of wedded life. But Laura calmly declared that her tastes were not inflexible; and that, had she intended to marry, she should have found it an easy duty to conform them to those of her husband; but that the thought of marriage was shocking to her, and that she trusted no man would ever again think of her as a wife. Montreville, who for once suspected his daughter of a little affection, made no effort to combat this unnatural antipathy, but trusted to time and nature for its cure.

As soon as her father left her, Laura, determined not to be brave by halves, began the painful task of destroying every relic of Hargrave's presence. She banished from her portfolio the designs he had made for her drawings, destroyed the music from which he had accompanied her, and effaced from her books the marks of his pencil. She had amused her solitary hours by drawing, in chalks, a portrait of features indelibly engraven on her recollection, and her fortitude failed her when about to consign it to the flames. "No," she exclaimed,

"I can never part with this. This, at least, I may love unreprieved," and she pressed it in agony to her heart, inwardly vowing that no human being should fill its place. But such thoughts as these could not linger in the reasonable mind of Laura. The next moment she blushed for her weakness; and, casting away its last treasure, averted her eyes till the flames had consumed it to ashes. "Now all is over," she cried, as she threw herself upon a chair and burst into tears. But, quickly wiping them away, she resolved that she would not willfully bind herself to the rack of recollection, and hastened to exert herself in some of her ordinary employments.

Laura was aware that the cottage, where every walk, every shrub, every flower, spoke of Hargrave, was a scene unlikely to aid her purpose of forgetting him; and, therefore, she that evening proposed to her father that they should pay their long-promised visit to Mrs. Douglas. He readily consented. Their journey was fixed for the following week, and Laura occupied herself in preparing for their departure, though with feelings far different from the delight with which, a few days before, she would have anticipated a meeting with her early friend.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Douglas observed, with satisfaction, the improved stature and increasing gracefulness of her young favorite; but she remarked, with painful interest, that the hectic of pleasure which tinged the cheek of Laura at their meeting, faded fast to the hue of almost sickly delicacy. She soon noticed that an expression, as of sudden torture, would sometimes contract, for a moment, the polished forehead of Laura; that it was now succeeded by the smothered sigh, the compressed lip, the hasty motion, which spoke strong mental effort, now subsided into the languor of deep, unconquered melancholy. Such depression Mrs. Douglas could not attribute to the loss of a mother whose treatment furnished more occasions of patience than of gratitude; and she anxiously longed to discover its real cause.

But it was soon evident that this was a secret which Laura had no intention to disclose. A glance from the inquiring eye of Mrs. Douglas at once recalled her to constrained cheerfulness; and the presence of Captain Montreville seemed always to put her entirely upon her guard. While he was in the room, she talked, read aloud, or played with the children, as if determined to be amused; but as soon as he retired, she relapsed, like one wearied with effort, into languor and melancholy, till recalled to herself by the scrutinizing looks of Mrs. Douglas.

Even in their most private conversations, the name of Hargrave never passed her lips. Months, indeed, had elapsed since Laura could have pronounced that name without painful emotion—to utter it now was become almost impossible. She felt that she had no right to publish, while she rejected, his addresses; and she felt an invincible repugnance to expose even his failings, but much more his vices, to

the censure of the respectable Mrs. Douglas. Soon after she first saw Hargrave, she had written to her friend a warm eulogium of his fine person, captivating manners, and elegant accomplishments. Mrs. Douglas, in reply, had desired to hear more of this phoenix; but before Laura again found leisure to write, she was no longer inclined to make Hargrave her subject, and her friend had desisted from fruitless inquiries.

Mrs. Douglas had lately had an opportunity of judging for herself of the colonel's attractions; and so great did they appear to her, that it was with extreme astonishment she heard of his late disappointment from Captain Montreville, who did not feel his daughter's delicacy on the subject. This communication served only to increase her perplexity as to the cause of Laura's depression; yet she felt herself relieved from the apprehension that hopeless love for Hargrave was wasting the health and peace of her dear Laura. Still, however, she continued to watch that expressive countenance, to weigh every word which might tend to unfold the enigma. In vain! Laura studiously avoided all approach to an explanation. Mrs. Douglas's anxiety now increased to a painful extreme. She felt how necessary to female inexperience is the advice of a female—how indispensable to feminine sorrows are the consolations of feminine sympathy; and she resolved that no false delicacy should withhold her from offering such relief as she might have power to bestow.

One morning, after the gentlemen had left them alone together, Mrs. Douglas, meditating on the best means of introducing the subject she had so much at heart, had fallen into a long silence; when, looking up, she perceived that Laura had let fall her work, and was sitting with her eyes fixed, and her arms dropped, in the attitude of one whose thoughts had no connection with present objects. At the heavy sigh with which Mrs. Douglas surveyed her, she started, and was rousing her attention to some indifferent subject, when Mrs. Douglas, kindly taking her hand, said, "My dear child, whatever may be necessary with others, I beseech you to be under no constraint with me. I am far from wishing to intrude into your confidence, but do not add the pain of constraint to anguish which already seems so oppressive."

Large tears stole from under Laura's downcast eyelids; but she spoke not. Mrs. Douglas continued, "If my best advice, my most affectionate sympathy, can be of use to you, I need not say you may command them."

Laura threw herself into the arms of her friend, and for some moments with uncontrolled emotion; but soon composing herself, she replied, "If advice could have profited, if consolation could have reached me, where should I have sought them unless from you, respected friend of my youth; but the warning voice of wisdom comes now too late, and even your sympathy would be bestowed in vain."

"Heaven forbid that my dearest Laura should be beyond the reach of comfort. That is the lot of guilt alone."

"I am grateful to Heaven," said Laura, "that I have been less guilty than imprudent. But, my best friend, let us quit this subject. This

wretchedness can not, shall not, last. Only let me implore you not to notice it to my father. You know not what horrors might be the consequence."

Mrs. Douglas shook her head. "Ah, Laura!" said she, "that path is not the path of safety in which you would elude a father's eye." Laura's glance met that of her friend; and she read suspicion there. The thought was so painful to her, that she was on the point of disclosing all; but she remembered that the reasons which had at first determined her to silence were not altered by any one's suspicions, and she restrained herself. Colonel Hargrave had cruelly wronged and insulted her; she ought, therefore, to be doubly cautious how she injured him. Sympathy, in her case, she felt, would be a dangerous indulgence; and, above all, she shrunk with horror from exposing her lover, or his actions, to detestation or contempt.

"Perhaps the time may come," said she, pursuing her reflections aloud, "when you will be convinced that I am incapable of any clandestine purpose. At present your compassion might be a treacherous balm to me, when my best wisdom must be to forget that I have need of pity."

Mrs. Douglas looked on the open, candid countenance of Laura, and her suspicions vanished in a moment; but they returned when her young friend reiterated her entreaties that she would not hint the subject to her father. Laura was, however, fortified in her resolutions of concealment, by an opinion she had often heard Mrs. Douglas express—that the feelings of disappointed love should by women be kept inviolably secret. She was decisively giving a new turn to the conversation, when it was interrupted by the entrance of the gentlemen; and Mrs. Douglas, a little hurt at the steadiness of her young friend, more than half determined to renew the subject no more.

A letter lay on the table, which the post had brought for Captain Montreville; he read it with visible uneasiness, and immediately left the room. Laura perceived his emotion; and, ever alive to the painful subject nearest her heart, instantly concluded that the letter brought a confession from Hargrave. She heard her father's disordered steps pacing the apartment above, and earnestly longed, yet feared, to join him. Anxiety at length prevailed; and she timidly approached the door of Captain Montreville's chamber. She laid her hand upon the lock; paused again, with failing courage, and was about to retire, when her father opened the door. "Come in, my love," said he, "I wish to speak with you." Laura, trembling, followed him into the room. "I find," said he, "we must shorten our visit to our kind friends here, and travel homeward. I must prepare," continued he, and sighed heavily, "I must prepare for a much longer journey."

Laura's imagination took the alarm; and, forgetting how unlikely it was that Captain Montreville should disclose such a resolution to her, she thought only of his intending to prepare for a journey whence there is no return, before he should stake his life against that of Hargrave. She had not power to speak; but, laying her hand on her father's arm, she cast on him a look of imploring agony. "Do not be alarmed,

my love," said he; "I shall, in a few days, carry your commands to London; but I do not mean to be long absent."

Laura's heart leaped light. "To London, sir!" said she, in a tone of cheerful inquiry.

"Yes, my dear child; I must go, and leave you alone at home—while yet I have a home to shelter you. Had you resembled any other girl of your age, I should have said no more of this; but I will have no concealments from you. Read this letter."

It was from Captain Montreville's agent, and briefly stated that the merchant in whose hands he had lately vested his all, in an annuity on his daughter's life, was dead; and that, owing to some informality in the deed, the heirs refused to make any payment. Having read the letter, Laura continued for some moments to muse on its contents, with her eyes vacantly fixed on the civil expression of concern with which it concluded. "How merciful it is," she exclaimed, "that this blow fell not till my mother was insensible of the stroke!"

"For myself," said Captain Montreville, "I think I could have borne it well; but this was the little independence I thought I had secured for you, dear darling of my heart; and now—" The father's lip quivered, and his eyes filled; but he turned aside, for he could be tender—but would not seem so.

"Dearest father," said Laura, "think not of me. Could you have given me millions, I should still have been dependent on the care of Providence, even for my daily bread. My dependence will now only be a little more perceptible. But perhaps," added she, cheerfully, "something may be done to repair this disaster. Warren's heirs will undoubtedly rectify this mistake, when they find it has been merely accidental. At all events, a journey to London will amuse you; and I shall manage your harvest so actively in your absence!"

Captain Montreville had, from Laura's infancy, been accustomed to witness instances of her fortitude, to see her firm under unmerited chastisement, and patient under bodily suffering; but her composure on this occasion so far surpassed his expectations, that he was inclined to attribute it less to fortitude than to inconsideration. "How light-hearted is youth," thought he, as he quitted her. "This poor child has never seen the harsh features of poverty but when distance softened their deformity, and she now beholds his approach without alarm." He was mistaken. Laura had often taken a near survey of poverty. She had entered the cabins of the very poor—seen infancy squalid, and youth spiritless—manhood exhausted by toil, and age pining without comfort. In fancy she had substituted herself in the place of these victims of want; felt by sympathy their varieties of wretchedness; and she justly considered poverty among the heaviest of human calamities. But she was sensible that her firmness might support her father's spirits, or her weakness serve to aggravate his distress; and she wisely pushed aside the more formidable mischief, which she could not surmount, to attend to the more immediate evil, which she felt it in her power to alleviate.

The moment she was alone, Laura fell on her knees: "Oh! Heavenly Providence," she

cried, "save, if it be thy will, my dear father's age from poverty, though, like my great Master, I should not have where to lay my head." She continued to pray long and fervently, for spirits to cheer her father under his misfortune; and for fortitude to endure her own peculiar sorrow, in her estimation so much more bitter.

Having implored the blessing of Heaven on her exertions, she next began to practice them. She wandered out to court the exhilarating influence of the mountain air; and studiously turning her attention to all that was gay, sought to rouse her spirits for the task which she had assigned them. She was so successful, that she was that evening the life of the little friendly circle. She talked, sung, and recited—she exerted all the wit and vivacity of which she was mistress—she employed powers of humor which she herself had scarcely been conscious of possessing. Her gaiety soon became contagious. Scarcely a trace appeared of the anxious fears of Mrs. Douglas, or the parental uneasiness of Captain Montreville, and fewer still of the death-stroke which disappointed confidence had carried to the peace of poor Laura. But when she retired to the solitude of her chamber, her exhausted spirits found relief in tears. She felt that long to continue her exertion would be impossible; and, in spite of reason, which told of the danger of solitude, anticipated, with pleasure, the moment when total seclusion should leave her free to undisguised wretchedness.

Laura was not yet, however, destined to the hopeless task of combating misplaced affection in entire seclusion. On the following morning she found a stranger at the breakfast table. He seemed a man of information and accomplishments. An enthusiast in landscape, he was come to prosecute his favorite study amid the picturesque magnificence of Highland scenery; and the appearance and manners of a gentleman, furnished him with a sufficient introduction to Highland hospitality. Relieved, by his presence, from the task of entertaining, Laura scarcely listened to the conversation, till the stranger, having risen from table, began to examine a picture which occupied a distinguished place in Mrs. Douglas's parlor. It was the work of Laura, who was no mean proficient. She had early discovered what is called a genius for painting; that is to say, she had exercised much of her native invention and habitual industry on the art. Captain Montreville added to his personal instructions every facility which it was in his power to bestow. Even when her performances had little in them of wonderful but their number, her acquaintance pronounced them wonderful; and they obtained the more useful approbation of a neighboring nobleman, who invited her to copy from any part of his excellent collection. Her progress was now, indeed, marvelous to those who were new to the effects of unremitting industry, guided by models of exquisite skill. Having long and sedulously copied from pieces of acknowledged merit, she next attempted an original; and having with great care composed, and with incredible labor finished her design, she dedicated to Mrs. Douglas the first fruits of her improved talents, in the picture which the stranger was now contemplating. Willing that her young

friend should reap advantage from the criticisms of a judicious artist, Mrs. Douglas encouraged him to speak freely of the beauties and defects of the piece. After remarking that there was some skill in the composition, much interest in the principal figure, and considerable freedom in the touch, he added, "If this be, as I suppose, the work of a young artist, I shall not be surprised that he one day rise both to fame and fortune."

Mrs. Douglas was about to direct his praise to its rightful owner, but Laura silenced her by a look. The stranger's last expression had excited an interest which no other earthly subject could have awakened. Her labors might, it appeared, relieve the wants or increase the comforts of her father's age; and, with a face which glowed with enthusiasm, and eyes which sparkled with renovated hope, she eagerly advanced to question the critic as to the value of her work. In reply he named a price so exceeding her expectations, that her resolution was formed in a moment. She would accompany her father to London, and there try what pecuniary advantage was to be derived from her talent.

On a scheme which was to repair all her father's losses, prudence had not time to pause; and, feeling company a restraint on her pleasure, Laura ran to her apartment, rather to enjoy than to consider her plan. Having spent some time in delightful anticipation of the pleasure which her father would take in the new team and threshing-mill with which she would adorn his farm, and the comfort he would enjoy in the new books and easy sofa with which her labors would furnish his library, she recollected a hundred questions which she wished to ask the stranger, concerning the best means of disposing of her future productions, and she ran down stairs to renew the conversation. But the parlor was empty, the stranger was gone. No matter. No trifler could at this moment have discomposed Laura; and, with steps as light as a heart from which, for a time, all selfish griefs were banished, she crossed the little lawn in search of her father.

The moment she overtook him, locking her arm in his, and looking smilingly up in his face, she began so urgent an entreaty to be admitted as the companion of his journey, that Captain Montreville, with some curiosity, inquired what had excited in her this sudden inclination to travel. Laura blushed and hesitated; for though her plan had, in her own opinion, all the charms which we usually attribute to the new-born children of our fancy, she felt that an air of more prudence and forethought might be necessary to render it equally attractive in the eyes of Captain Montreville. She exerted, however, all the rhetoric she could at that moment command, to give her scheme a plausible appearance. With respect to herself, she was entirely successful; and she ventured to cast a look of triumphant appeal on her father. Captain Montreville, unwilling to refuse the request of his darling, remained silent; but at the detail of her plan, he shook his head. Now, to a projector of eighteen, a shake of the head is, of all gestures, the most offensive; and the smile which usually accompanies it miserably perverts the office of a smile. Tears, half of

sorrow, half of vexation, forced their way to the eyes of Laura; and she walked silently on, without courage to renew the attack, till they were joined by Mrs. Douglas.

Disconcerted by her ill success with her father, Laura felt little inclination to subject her scheme to the animadversions of her friend; but Captain Montreville, expecting an auxiliary, by whose aid he might conquer the weakness of yielding without conviction, called upon Mrs. Douglas, in a manner which showed him secure of her reply, to give her opinion of Laura's proposal. Mrs. Douglas, who had heard, with a degree of horror, of the intention to consign Laura to solitude, in her present state of suppressed dejection, and who considered new scenes and new interests as indispensable to her restoration, interpreting the asking looks of the fair petitioner, surprised Captain Montreville by a decided verdict in her favor. Rapturously thanking her advocate, Laura now renewed her entreaties with such warmth, that her father, not possessed of that facility in refusing which results from practice, gave a half-reluctant acquiescence. The delight which his consent conveyed to Laura, which sparkled in her expressive features, and animated her artless features, converted his half-extorted assent into cordial concurrence; for to the defects of any scheme which gave her pleasure he was habitually blind.

In the course of the evening Captain Montreville announced that, in order to give his daughter time to prepare for her journey, it would be necessary for them to return to Glenalbert on the following morning.

While Mrs. Douglas was assisting Laura to pack up her little wardrobe, she attempted to break her guarded silence on the subject of Hargrave, by saying, "I doubt this same journey of yours will prevent Colonel Hargrave from trying the effects of perseverance, which I used to think the most infallible resort in love, as well as in more serious undertakings."

Laura began a most diligent search for something upon the carpet.

"Poor Hargrave," Mrs. Douglas resumed, "he is a great favorite of mine. I wish he had been more successful."

Laura continued industriously cramming a band-box.

"All these gowns and petticoats will crush your new bonnet to pieces, my dear."

Laura suddenly desisted from her employment, rose, and, turning full toward Mrs. Douglas, said, "It is unkind, it is cruel, thus to urge me, when you know that duty more than inclination keeps me silent."

"Pardon me, my dear Laura," said Mrs. Douglas; "I have no wish to persecute you; but you know I was ignorant that Colonel Hargrave was our interdicted subject."

She then entered on another topic, and Laura, vexed at the partial disclosure she had inadvertently made, uneasy at being the object of constant scrutiny, and hurt at being obliged to thwart the habitual openness of her temper, felt less sorry than relieved as she sprang into the carriage which was to convey her to Glenalbert. So true it is, that concealment is the bane of friendship.

Other interests, too, quickened her desire to

return home. She longed, with a feeling which could not be called hope, though it far exceeded curiosity, to know whether Hargrave had called or written during her absence; and, the moment the chaise stopped, she flew to the table where the letters were deposited to wait their return. There were none for her. She interrupted Nanny's expression of joy at the sight of her mistress, by asking who had called while they were from home. "Nobody but Miss Willie." Laura's eyes filled with tears of bitterness. "I am easily relinquished," thought she; "but it is better that it should be so;" and she dashed away the drops as they rose.

She would fain have vented her feelings in the solitude of her chamber; but this was a father's first return to a widowed home, and she would not leave him to his loneliness. She entered the parlor. Captain Montreville was already there; and, cheerfully welcoming him home, she shook up the cushion of an elbow-chair by the fireside, and invited him to sit. "No, love," said he, gently compelling her, "do you take that seat; it was your mother's." Laura saw his lip quiver, and, suppressing the sob that swelled her bosom, she tenderly withdrew him from the room, led him to the garden, invited his attention to her new-blown carnations, and gradually diverted his regard to such cheerful objects that, had Captain Montreville examined what was passing in his own mind, he must have confessed that he felt the loss of Lady Harriet less as a companion than an antagonist. She was more a customary something which it was unpleasant to miss from its place, than a real want which no substitute could supply. Laura's conversation, on the contrary, amusing without effort, ingenious without constraint, and rational without stiffness, furnished to her father a real and constant source of enjoyment; because, wholly exempt from all desire to shine, she had leisure to direct to the more practicable art of pleasing, those efforts by which so many others vainly attempt to dazzle.

## CHAPTER V.

THE three following days Laura employed in making arrangements for her journey. Desirous to enliven the solitude in which she was about to leave her only attendant, she consigned the care of the cottage, during her absence, to the girl's mother, who was likewise her own nurse; and, cautious of leaving to the temptations of idleness one for whose conduct she felt herself in some sort accountable, she allotted to Nanny the task of making winter clothing for some of the poorest inhabitants of Glenalbert, a task which her journey prevented her from executing herself. Nor were the materials of this little charity subtracted from her father's scanty income, but deducted from comforts exclusively her own.

Though, in the bustle of preparation, scarcely a moment remained unoccupied, Laura could not always forbear from starting at the sound of the knocker, or following with her eyes the form of a horseman winding through the trees. In vain she looked, in vain she listened. The expected stranger came not, the expected voice was unheard. She tried to rejoice at the de-

sertion. "I am glad of it," she would say to herself, while bitter tears were bursting from her eyes. She often reproached herself with the severity of her language at her last interview with Hargrave. She asked herself what right she had to imbitter disappointment by unkindness, or to avenge insult by disdain. Her behavior appeared to her, in the retrospect, ungentle, unfeminine, unchristian. Yet she did not for a moment repent her rejection, nor waver for a moment in her resolution to adhere to it. Her soul sickened at the thought that she had been the object of licentious passion merely; and she loathed to look upon her own lovely form, while she thought it had seduced the senses, but failed to touch the soul, of Hargrave.

Amid these employments and feelings the week had closed, and the Sabbath evening was the last which Laura was to spend at Glenalbert. That evening had long been her chosen season of meditation; the village church-yard, the scene where she loved to "go forth and meditate." The way which led to it, and to it alone, was a shady, green lane, gay with veronica and hare-bell, undefaced by wheels, but marked in the middle with one distinct track, and impressed toward the sides with several straggling, half-formed foot-paths. The church itself stood detached from the village, on a little knoll, on the west side of which the burial-ground sloped toward the woody bank that bounded a brawling mountain stream. Thither Laura stole, when the sun, which had been hid by the rugged hill, again rolling forth from behind it, poured through the long dale his rays upon this rustic cemetery; the only spot in the valley sufficiently elevated to catch his parting beam.

"How long, how deep is the shadow; how glorious in brightness the reverse!" said she, as she seated herself under the shade of the newly-raised grave-stone which marked the place of her mother's rest; and, turning her mind's eye from what seemed a world of darkness, she raised it to scenes of everlasting light. Her fancy, as it soared to regions of bliss without alloy, looked back with something like disgust on the labors which were to prepare her for their enjoyment, and a feeling almost of disappointment and impatience accompanied her recollection that the pilgrimage was, to all appearance, only beginning. But she checked the feeling as it rose, and, in penitence and resignation, raised her eyes to heaven. They rested, as they fell, upon a stone marked with the name and years of one who died in early youth. Laura remembered her well; she was the beauty of Glenalbert; but her lover left her for a richer bride, and her proud spirit sunk beneath the stroke. The village artist had depicted her want of resignation in a rude sculpture of the prophet's lamentation over his withered gourd. "My gourd, too, is withered," said Laura. "Do I well to be angry even unto death? Will the Giver of all good leave me even here without comfort? Shall I refuse to find pleasure in any duties but such as are of my own selection? Because the gratification of one passion—one misplaced passion—is refused, has this world no more to offer? This fair world, which its great Creator has stamped with his power, and stored by his bounty, and ennobled by making

it the temple of his worshipers, the avenue to heaven! Shall I find no balm in the consolations of friendship, the endearments of parental love; no joy in the sweets of benevolence, the stores of knowledge, the miracles of grace! Oh! may I ever fearlessly confide in the fatherly care that snatched me from the precipice when my rash confidence was about to plunge me to my ruin; that opened my eyes on my danger ere retreat was impossible."

The reflections of Laura were disturbed by the noise of some one springing over the fence; and the next moment Hargrave was at her side. Laura uttered neither shriek nor exclamation; but she turned, and, with steps as precipitate as would bear the name of walking, proceeded toward the gate. Hargrave followed her.

"Am I, indeed, so happy as to find you alone!" said he. Laura replied not by word or look. "Suffer me to detain you for a few moments." Laura quickened her pace. "Will you not speak to me, Miss Montreville?" said Hargrave, in a tone of tender reproach. Laura continued to advance. "Stay but one moment," said he, in a voice of supplication. Laura laid her hand upon the gate. Hargrave's patience was exhausted. "By heaven, you *shall* hear me!" he cried; and, throwing his arm round her, compelled her to be seated on the stone bench at the gate.

Laura coldly withdrew herself. "By what right, sir," said she, "do you presume to detain me?"

"By the right of wretchedness, of misery not to be endured. Since I last saw you, I have never known rest or peace. Surely, Laura, you are now sufficiently avenged; surely, your stubborn pride may now condescend to hear me."

"Well, sir," said Laura, without attempting to depart, "what are your commands?"

"Oh, Laura, I can not bear your displeasure; it makes me supremely miserable. If you have any pity, grant me your forgiveness."

"If my forgiveness be of any value to you, I give it to you, I trust, like a Christian, from the heart. Now, then, suffer me to go."

"What! think you it is the frozen forgiveness of duty that will content me? Torn, as I am, by every passion that can drive man to phrensy, think you that I will accept, that I will endure, this heartless, scornful pardon? Laura, you loved me once. I have doted on you, pined for you, and passion, passion only, will I accept or bear from you."

Laura shrank trembling from his violence. "Colonel Hargrave," said she, "if you do not restrain this vehemence, I must, I will be gone. I would fain spare you unnecessary pain; but while you thus agitate yourself, my stay is useless to you, and to me most distressing."

"Say, then, that you accept my vows—that, hopeless of happiness but with me, you bind yourself to me alone, and forever. Speak, heavenly creature, and bless me beyond the fairest dreams of hope."

"Colonel Hargrave," said Laura, "you have my forgiveness. My—what shall I say—my esteem you have cast from you—my best wishes for your happiness shall ever be yours—more I can not give. In pity to yourself, then—in pity to me—renounce one who can never be yours."

Hargrave's eyes flashed fire, while his countenance faded to ghastly paleness. "Yes," he exclaimed, "cold, pitiless, insensible woman—yes, I renounce you. In the haunts of riot, in the roar of intemperance, will I forget that form, that voice—and, when I am lost to fame, to health, to usefulness—my ruin be on your soul."

"Oh! Hargrave," cried the trembling Laura, "talk not so wildly: Heaven will hear my prayers for you. Amid the pursuits of wisdom—amid the attraction of others, you will forget me."

"Forget you! Never. While I have life, I will follow you—supplicate—persecute you. Mine you shall be, though infamy and death ensue. Dare not," said he, grasping her arm, "dare not to seek the protection of another—dare but to give him one smile, and his life shall be the forfeit."

"Alas! alas!" cried Laura, wringing her hands in anguish, "this is real phrensy. Compose yourself, I implore you—there is no other—there never can be."

Her tears recalled Hargrave to something like composure. "Dearest Laura," said he, "I wish to soften—I only terrify you. Fear not, beloved of my soul—speak to me without alarm. I will hear you, if it be possible, with calmness; but say not, oh! say not that you reject me!"

Laura averted her face. "Why prolong this distressing interview?" said she. "You have heard my determination. I know that it is right, and I can not relinquish it."

The triumph of self-conquest gave firmness to her voice; and Hargrave, driven again from composure by her self-command, sprung from her side. "It is well, madam," he cried; "triumph in the destruction of my peace; but think not I will so tamely resign you. No; by Heaven! I will go this moment to your father—I will tell him my offense; and ask if he thinks it deserves such punishment. Let him take my life—I abhor it."

"Is your promise, then, of such small avail?" said Laura, sternly.

"Shall a promise bind me to a life of wretchedness! Shall I regard the feelings of one who takes an inhuman pleasure in my sufferings?"

At this moment Laura's eyes fell on her father, who was entering the little avenue. Hargrave's glance followed hers, and he prepared to join Captain Montreville. In an agony of terror, Laura grasped his arm. "Spare me, spare me," she said, "and do with me what you will." Captain Montreville saw that the walk was occupied; he turned from it, and Laura had again time to breathe. "Say, then," said Hargrave, softened by her emotion, "say that when years of penitence have expiated my offense, you will yet be mine!"

Laura covered her face with her hands. "Let me not hear you—let me not look upon you," said she; "leave me to think, if it be possible," and she poured a silent prayer to Heaven for help in this her sorest trial. The effort composed her, and the majesty of virtue gave dignity to her form and firmness to her voice, while she said, "My father's life is in the hands of Providence—it will still be so, when I have repeated to you, that I dare not trust to principles such as yours the guardianship of this the

infancy of my being. I dare not incur certain guilt to escape contingent evil. I can not make you the companion of this uncertain life, while your conduct is such as to make our eternal separation the object of my dreadful hope."

Hargrave had trusted that the tenderness of Laura would seduce or his ardor overpower her firmness; but he read the expression of her pale, determined countenance, and felt assured that she was lost to him forever. Convinced that all appeal to her feeling would be hopeless, he would deign to make none; but, in a voice made almost inarticulate by the struggle of pride and anguish, he said, "Miss Montreville, your father's life is safe from me—I will not lift my hand against it. That he should take mine is of small importance, either to you or myself. A violent death," continued he, his pale lip quivering with a smile of bitterness, "may perhaps procure me your tardy pity."

From the storm of passion, Laura had shrunk with terror and dismay; but the voice of suppressed anguish struck her to the soul. "Oh! Hargrave," she cried, with tears no longer to be restrained, "you have my tenderest pity—would to Heaven that the purity of your future life would restore to me the happiness of esteeming you!"

Laura's tenderness revived, in a moment, the hopes of Hargrave. "Angel of sweetness," he exclaimed, "mold me to your will—say that, when purified by years of repentance, you will again bless me with your love; and no exertion will be too severe—no virtue too arduous."

"No, this I dare not promise; let a higher motive influence you; for it is not merely the conduct—it is the heart that must have changed, ere I durst expose my feeble virtue to the trial of your example—your authority; ere I durst make it my duty to shut my eyes against your faults, or to see them with the indulgence of love."

"Dearest Laura, one word from you will lure me back to the path of virtue—will you willfully destroy even the wish to return! if for a year—for two years—my conduct should bear the strictest scrutiny—will you not accept this as a proof that my heart is changed—changed in every thing but its love for you? Will you not then receive me?"

Laura had resisted entreaty—had withstood alarm—had conquered strong affection; but the hope of rousing Hargrave to the views, the pursuits, the habits of a Christian, betrayed her caution, and gladdened her heart to rapture. "If for two years," said she, her countenance brightening with delight, "your conduct be such as you describe—if it will bear the inspection of the wise, of the sober-minded, of the pious—as my father's friend, as my own friend, will I welcome you."

Thus suddenly raised from despair, Hargrave seemed at the summit of felicity. Once admitted as her "father's friend, as her own," he was secure of the accomplishment of his wishes. The time that must first elapse appeared to him but a moment; and the labors of duty required of him seemed a smiling dream. Love and joy animated every feature of his fine countenance; he threw himself at the feet of Laura, and rapturously blessed her for her condescension. His ecstasies first made her sensible of the extent



of her concession ; and she feared that she had gone too far. But with her a promise, however inadvertent, was a sacred thing, which she would neither qualify nor retract. She contented herself, therefore, with merely repeating the terms of it, emphatically guarding the conditions. Desirous now to have leisure for reflection, she reminded him that the lateness of the hour made it fit that he should depart ; and, inwardly persuaded that she would not long obdurate refuse him another interview, he obeyed without much opposition.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE lovers were no sooner separated than Hargrave began to repent that he had not more distinctly ascertained the kind and manner of the intercourse which he was to hold with his mistress during the term of his probation ; and though he had little fear that she would be very rigid, he considered this as a point of such importance, that he resolved not to quit Glenalbert without having the matter settled to his satisfaction. For this reason he condescended to accept the accommodations of the little straw-roofed cottage, by courtesy called the inn, where he had already left his horses. Thither he retired accordingly, not without some national misgiving of mind on the subject of Scottish nastiness and its consequences. His apartment, however, though small, was decent ; his bed was clean, his sleep refreshing, and his dreams pleasant ; nor was it till a late hour the following morning that he rose to the homely comfort and cluinsy abundance of a Highland breakfast.

As soon as he had finished his repast, he walked toward Montreville's cottage, ostensibly to pay his respects to the captain, but in reality with the hope of obtaining a private interview with Laura. He entered the garden, where he expected to find Captain Montreville. It was empty. He approached the house. The shutters were barred. He knocked at the door, which was opened by the old woman ; and, on inquiring for Captain Montreville, he was answered, "Wow, sir, him an' Miss Laura's awa' at six o'clock this morning." "Away!" repeated the colonel ; "where are they gone?" "To London, sir ; and I'm sure a lanely time we'll hae till they come hame again." "What stae do they intend making?" "Heth, sir, I dare say that's what they dinna ken themselves." "What is their address?" inquired the colonel. "What's your will, sir?" "Where are they to be found?" "Am'n I tellan you they're in London, sir. I'm sure ye ken whar that is!" "But how are you to send their letters?" "Wow! they never got mony letters but frae England ; and now 'at they're in London, ye ken the folk may gie them into their ain han'." "But suppose you should have occasion to write to them yourself?" said Hargrave, whose small stock of patience wore fast to a close. "Hech, sir, sorrow a scrape can I write. They learn a' thae newfangled things now ; but, trouth, i' my young days, we were na' sae upsettan." Hargrave was in no humor to canvass the merits of the different modes of education ; and mutter-

ing an ejaculation, in which the word *devil* was distinctly audible, he turned away.

Vexed and disappointed, he wandered down the church-yard lane, and reached the spot where he had last seen Laura. He threw himself on the seat which had supported her graceful form, called to mind her consummate loveliness, her ill-repressed tenderness, and most cordially consigned himself to Satan for neglecting to wring from her some further concessions. She was now removed from the solitude where he had reigned without a rival. Hers would be the gaze of every eye, hers the command of every heart. "She may soon choose among numbers," cried he : "she will meet with people of her own humor, and some canting, hypocritical scoundrel will drive me completely from her mind."

By the time he had uttered this prediction and bit his lip half through, he was some steps on his way to order his horses, that he might pursue his fair fugitive, in the hope of extorting from her some less equivocal kind of promise. Fortunately for his reputation for sanity, however, he recollected, before he began his pursuit, that, ere he could overtake her, Laura must have reached Edinburgh, where, without direction, it might be difficult to discover her abode. In this dilemma, he was again obliged to have recourse to the old woman at the cottage ; but she could give him no information. She neither knew how long Captain Montreville purposed remaining in Edinburgh, nor in what part of the town he intended to reside.

Thus baffled in his inquiries, Hargrave was convinced that his pursuit must be ineffectual ; and, in no very placid frame of mind, he changed his destination for Edinburgh to his quarters. He arrived there in time for a late dinner, but his wine was insipid, his companions tiresome ; and he retired early, that, early next morning, he might set out on a visit to Mrs. Douglas, from whom he purposed to learn Captain Montreville's address.

On comparing the suppressed melancholy of Laura, her embarrassment at the mention of Hargrave, and her inadvertent disclosure, with her father's detail of her rejection of the insinuating young soldier, a suspicion not very remote from truth had entered the mind of Mrs. Douglas. She imagined that Captain Montreville had in some way been deceived as to the kind of proposals made to his daughter ; and that Laura had rejected no offers but such as it would have been infamy to accept. Under this conviction, it is not surprising that her reception of the colonel was far from being cordial ; nor that, guessing his correspondence to be rather intended for the young lady than for the old gentleman, she choose to afford no facility to an intercourse which she considered as both dangerous and degrading. To Hargrave's questions, therefore, she answered, that until she should hear from London, she was ignorant of Captain Montreville's address ; and that the time of his return was utterly unknown to her. When the colonel, with the same intention, soon after repeated his visit, she quietly, but steadily, evaded all his inquiries, equally unmoved by his entreaties and by the paroxysms of impatience with which he endured his disappointment.

Hargrave was the only child of a widow; an easy, indolent, good sort of a woman, who would gladly have seen him become every thing that man ought to be, provided she could have accomplished this laudable desire without recourse to such harsh instruments as contradiction and restraint. But of these she disliked the use, as much as her son did the endurance; and thus the young gentleman was educated, or, rather, grew up, without the slightest acquaintance with either. Of consequence, his naturally warm temper became violent, and his constitutionally strong passions ungovernable.

Hargrave was the undoubted heir of a title, and of a fine estate. Of money he had never felt the want, and did not know the value; he was, therefore, so far as money was concerned, generous even to profusion. His abilities were naturally of the highest order. To force him to the improvement of them was an effort above the power of Mrs. Hargrave; but, fortunately for him, ere his habits of mental inaction were irremediable, a tedious illness confined him to recreations in which mind had some share, however small. During the interdiction of bats and balls, he, by accident, stumbled on a volume of "Peregrine Pickle," which he devoured with great eagerness; and his mother, delighted with what she was pleased to call a *turn for reading*, took care that his new appetite should not, any more than the old ones, pine for want of gratification. To direct it to food wholesome and invigorating, would have required unremitting, though gentle labor; and to labor of all kinds Mrs. Hargrave had a practical antipathy. But it was very easy to supply the young man with romances, poetry, and plays; and it was pleasing to mistake their intoxicating effect for the bursts of mental vigor. A taste for works of fiction, once firmly established, never afterward yielded to the attractions of sober truth; and, though his knowledge of history was neither accurate nor extensive, Hargrave could boast an intimate acquaintance with all the plays, with almost all the poetry, and, as far as it is attainable by human diligence, with all the myriads of romances in his mother tongue. He had chosen of his own free will to study the art of playing on the flute—the violin requiring more patience than he had to bestow; and emulation, which failed to incite him to more useful pursuits, induced him to try whether he could not draw as well as his play-fellow, De Courcy.

At the age of seventeen he had entered the army. As he was of good family, of an elegant figure, and furnished by nature with one of the finest countenances she ever formed, his company was courted in the highest circles, and to the ladies he was particularly acceptable. Among such associates, his manners acquired a high polish; and he improved in what is called knowledge of the world; that is, a facility of discovering, and dexterity in managing, the weaknesses of others. One year, one tedious year, his regiment had been quartered in the neighborhood of the retirement where the aforesaid De Courcy was improving his "few paternal acres;" and, partly by his persuasion and example, partly from having little else to do, partly because it was the fashionable sci-

ence of the day, Hargrave had prosecuted the study of chemistry.

Thus have we detailed, and in some measure accounted for, the whole of Colonel Hargrave's accomplishments, excepting only, perhaps, the one in which he most excelled—he danced imitably. For the rest, he had what is called a good heart; that is, he disliked to witness or inflict pain, except from some incitement stronger than advantage to the sufferer. His fine eyes had been seen to fill with tears at a tale of *elegant* distress; he could even compassionate the more vulgar sorrows of cold and hunger to the extent of relieving them, provided always that the relief cost nothing but money. Some casual instances of his feeling, and of his charity, had fallen under the observation of Laura; and upon these, upon the fascination of his manners, and the expression of his countenance, her fervid imagination had grafted every virtue which can exalt or adorn humanity. Gentle reader, excuse the delusion. Laura was only seventeen—Hargrave was the first handsome man of fashion she had ever known, the first who had ever poured into her ear the soothing voice of love.

Unprepared to find, in an obscure village in Scotland, the most perfect model of dignified loveliness, Hargrave became the sudden captive of her charms; and her manner, so void of all design—the energy, the sometimes wild poetic grace of her language—the shrewdness with which she detected, and the simplicity with which she unveiled, the latent motives of action, whether in herself or in others—struck him with all the force of contrast, as he compared them with the molded artificial standard of the day. His interest in her was the strongest he had ever felt, even before it was heightened by a reserve that came too late to repress or conceal the tenderness with which she repaid his passion.

Yet Hargrave was not less insensible to the real charms of Laura's mind, than she was unconscious of the defects in his.

Her benevolence pleased him; for bright eyes look brighter through tears of sympathy, and no smile is so lovely as that which shines on the joys of others. Her modesty charmed him; for every voluptuary can tell what allurements blushes add to beauty. But of her self-denial and humility he made no account. Her piety, never obtruded on his notice, had at first escaped his observation altogether; and, now that it thwarted his favorite pursuit, he considered it merely as a troublesome prejudice. Of all her valuable qualities, her unfauling sweetness of temper was, perhaps, the only one which he valued for its own sake. But her person he idolized. To obtain her no exertion would have appeared too formidable; and remembering the conditions of their future reconciliation, he began, for the first time in his life, to consider his conduct with a view to its moral fitness.

This he found a subject of inextricable difficulty. He was ignorant of the standard by which Laura would judge him. He was willing to believe that, if she were left to herself, it would not be severe; but the words of her promise seemed to imply that his conduct was to be subjected to the scrutiny of less partial censors, and he felt some anxiety to know

who were to be his "wise," "sober-minded," "pious" inspectors. He did not gain, his expenses did not much exceed his income, therefore he could imagine no change in his department necessary to conciliate the "wise." Though, under the name of sociality, he indulged freely in wine, he seldom exceeded to intoxication. Here, again, reform seemed needless. But, that he might give no offense to the "sober-minded," he intended to conduct his gallantries with great discretion; and magnanimously resolved to abstain from the molestation of innocent country-girls and decent maid-servants. Finally, to secure the favor of the "pious," he forthwith made a purchase of Blair's Sermons, and resolved to be seen in church once, at least, every Sunday.

It might be supposed, that when the scale of duty which we trace is low, we should be the more likely to reach the little eminence at which we aspire; but experience shows us, that they who poorly circumscribe the Christian race stop as much short of their humble design, as he does of his nobler purpose, whose glorious goal is perfection. The sequel will show the attainments of Colonel Hargrave in the ways of virtue. In the mean time, his magnet of attraction to Perthshire was gone; he soon began to grow weary of the feeling of restraint occasioned by supposing himself the subject of a system of *espionage*; and to kill the time, and relieve himself from his imaginary shackles, he sought the assistance of the Edinburgh races: determined, that if Laura prolonged her stay in London, he would obtain leave of absence and seek her there.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE gray lights of morning shone mild on Glenalbert, as the carriage, which was conveying Laura to scenes unknown, looked slowly up the hill. With watery eyes she looked back on the quiet beauties of her native valley. She listened to the dashing of its streams, till the murmur died on her ear. Her lowly home soon glided behind the woods; but its early smoke rose peacefully from amid its sheltering oaks, till it blended with the mists of the morning; and Laura gazed on it as on the parting steps of a friend. "Oh, vales!" she exclaimed, "where my childhood sported—mountains that have echoed to my songs of praise, amid your shades may my age find shelter—may your wild flowers bloom on my grave!" Captain Montreville pressed the fair enthusiast to his breast, and smiled. It was a smile of pity; for Montreville's days of enthusiasm were past. It was a smile of pleasure; for we love to look upon the transcript of our early feelings. But whatever it expressed, it was discord with the tone of Laura's mind. It struck cold on her glowing heart; and she carefully avoided uttering a word that might call forth such another, till, bright gleaming in the setting sun, she first beheld romantic Edinburgh. "Is it not glorious!" she cried, tears of wonder and delight glittering in her eyes; and she longed for its reappearance, when the descent of the little eminence which had favored their view excluded the city from their sight.

As the travelers approached the town, Laura, whose attention was riveted by the castle and its rocks, now frowning majestic in the shades of twilight, and by the antique piles that seemed the work of giants, scarcely bestowed a glance on the splendid line of modern buildings along which she was passing; and she was sorry when the carriage turned from the objects of her admiration toward the hotel where Captain Montreville intended to lodge.

Next morning, Laura, eager to renew the pleasure of the evening, proposed a walk; not without some dread of encountering the crowd which she expected to find in such a city. At the season of the year, however, when Laura reached Edinburgh, she had little cause for apprehension. The noble street through which she passed had the appearance of being depopulated by pestilence. The houses were uninhabited, the window shutters were closed, and the grass grew from the crevices of the pavement. The few well-dressed people whom she saw stared upon her with such oppressive curiosity, as gave the uninitiated Laura a serious uneasiness. At first she thought that some peculiarity in her dress occasioned this embarrassing scrutiny. But her dress was simple mourning, and its form the least conspicuous possible. She next imagined that to her rather unusual stature she owed this unenviable notice; and, with a little displeasure, she remarked to her father, that it argued a strange want of delicacy to appear to notice peculiarities of any one's figure; and that, in this respect, the upper ranks seemed more destitute of politeness than their inferiors. Captain Montreville answered, with a smile, that he did not think it was her height which drew such attention. "Well," said she, with great simplicity, "I must endeavor to find food for my vanity in this notice, though it is rather against my doing so, that the women stare more tremendously than the gentlemen."

As they passed the magnificent shops, the windows, gay with every variety of color, constantly attracted Laura's inexperienced eye; and she asked Montreville to accompany her into one where she wished to purchase some necessary trifle. The shopman, observing her attention fixed on a box of artificial flowers, spread them before her, and tried to invite her to purchase, by extolling the cheapness and beauty of his goods. "Here is a charming sprig of myrtle, ma'am; and here is a geranium wreath, the most becoming thing for the hair—only seven shillings each, ma'am." Laura owned the flowers were beautiful. "But I fear," said she, looking compassionately at the man, "you will never be able to sell them all. There are so few people who would give seven shillings for what is of no use whatever." "I am really sorry for that poor young man," said she to her father, when they left the shop. "Tall, robust, in the very flower of his age, how he must feel humbled by being obliged to attend to such trumpery!" "Why is your pity confined to him?" said Montreville. "There were several others in the same situation." "Oh! but they were children, and may do something better by and by. But the tall one, I suppose, is the son of some weak mother, who fears to trust him to fight his country's battles. It is

hard that she should have power to compel him to such degradation; I really felt for him when he twirled those flowers between his finger and thumb, and looked so much in earnest about nothing."

The next thing which drew Laura's attention was a stay-maker's sign. "Do the gentlemen here wear corsets?" said she to Montreville. "Not many of them, I believe," said Montreville. "What makes you inquire?" "Because there is a *man* opposite who makes corsets. It can not surely be for women."

Captain Montreville had only one female acquaintance in Edinburgh, a lady of some fashion, and hearing that she was come to town to remain till after the races, he that forenoon carried Laura to wait upon her. The lady received them most graciously; inquired how long they intended to be in Edinburgh; and, on being answered that they were to leave it in two days, overwhelmed them with regrets that the shortness of their stay precluded her from the pleasure of their company for a longer visit. Laura regretted it too; but, utterly ignorant of the time which must elapse between a fashionable invitation and the consequent visit, she could not help wondering whether the lady was really engaged for each of the four daily meals of two succeeding days.

These days Captain Montreville and his daughter passed in examining this picturesque city—its public libraries, its antique castle, its forsaken palace, and its splendid scenery. But nothing in its singular environs more charmed the eye of Laura than one deserted walk, where, though the noise of multitudes stole softened on the ear, scarcely a trace of human existence was visible, except the ruin of a little chapel which peeped fancifully from the ledge of a rock, and reminded her of the antic gambols of the red-deer on her native hills, when, from the brink of the precipice, they looked fearlessly into the dell below.

From this walk, Captain Montreville conducted his daughter to the top of the fantastic mountain which adorns the immediate neighborhood of Edinburgh, and triumphantly demanded whether she had ever seen such a prospect! But Laura was by no means disposed to let Perthshire yield the palm to Lowland scenery. Here, indeed, the prospect was varied and extensive, but the objects were too various, too distant, too gay—they glared on the eye—the interest was lost. The serpentine corn-ridges, offensive to agricultural skill; the school, with its well frequented Gean-tree; the bright green clover field, seen at intervals through the oak coppice; the church, half hid by its venerable ash-trees; the feathery birch, trembling in the breath of evening; the smoking hamlet, its soft colors blending with those of the rocks that sheltered it; the rill, dashing with fairy anger in the channel which its wintery fury had furrowed—these were the simple objects which had charms for Laura, not to be rivaled by neat inclosures and whitened villas. Yet the scenes before her were delightful, and had not Captain Montreville's appeal recalled the comparison, she would, in the pleasure which they excited, have forgotten the less splendid beauties of Glensibert.

Montreville pointed out the road which led to

England. Laura sent a longing look toward it, as it wound amid woods and villages and gentle swells, and was lost to the eye in a country which smiled rich and inviting from afar. She turned her eyes where the Forth is lost in the boundless ocean, and sighed as she thought of the perils and hardships of them who "go down to the sea in ships." Montreville, unwilling to subject her to the inconveniences of a voyage, had proposed to continue his journey by land, and Laura herself could not think without reluctance of tempting the faithless deep. The scenery, too, which a journey promised to present, glowed in her fervid imagination with more than Nature's beauty. Yet feeling the necessity of rigid economy, and determined not to permit her too indulgent parent to consult her accommodation at the expense of his prudence, it was she who persuaded Montreville to prefer a passage by sea, as the mode of conveyance best suited to his finances.

The next day our travelers embarked for London. The weather was fine, and Laura remained all day upon deck, amused with the novelty of her situation. Till she left her native solitude, she had never even seen the sea, except when, from a mountain top, it seemed far off to mingle with the sky; and to her, the majestic Forth, as it widened into an estuary, seemed itself a "world of waters." But when on one side the land receded from the view, when the great deep lay before her, Laura looked upon it for a moment, and, shuddering, turned away. "It is too mournful," said she, to her father. "Were there but one spot, however small, however dimly descried, which fancy might people with beings like ourselves, I could look with pleasure on the gulf between; but here there is no resting-place. Thus dismal, thus overpowering, methinks eternity would have appeared, had not a haven of rest been made known to us." Compared with the boundless expanse of waters, the little bark in which she was floating seemed "diminished to a point;" and Laura, raising her eyes to the stars, that were beginning to glimmer through the twilight, thought that such a speck was the wide world itself, amid the immeasurable space in which it rolled. This was Laura's hour of prayer, and far less inviting circumstances can recall us to the acts of a settled habit.

Five days they glided smoothly along the coast. On the morning of the sixth, they entered the river, and the same evening reached London. Laura listened with something like dismay to the mingled discord which now burst upon her ear. The thundering of loaded carriages, the wild cries of the sailors, the strange dialect, the ferocious oaths of the populace, seemed but parts of the deafening tumult. When they were seated in the coach which was to convey them from the quay, Laura begged her father to prevail on the driver to wait till the unusual concourse of carts and sledges should pass, and heard with astonishment that the delay would be vain. At last they arrived at the inn where Captain Montreville intended to remain till he could find lodgings; and, to Laura's great surprise, they completed their journey without being jostled by any carriages, or overturned by any wagoner—for aught she knew, without running over any children.

Being shown into a front parlor, Laura seated herself at a window, to contemplate the busy multitudes that thronged the streets; and she could not help contrasting their number and appearance with those of the inhabitants of Edinburgh. There the loitering step, the gay attire, the vacant look, or the inquisitive glance, told that mere amusement was the object of their walk, if indeed it had an object. Here every face was full of business: none stared, none sauntered, or had indeed the power to saunter, the double tide carrying them resistlessly along in one direction or the other. Among all the varieties of feature that passed before her, Laura saw not one familiar countenance; and she involuntarily pressed closer to her father, while she thought that among these myriads she should, but for him, be alone.

Captain Montreville easily found an abode suited to his humble circumstances; and, the day after his arrival, he removed with his daughter to the second floor above a shop in Holborn. The landlady was a widow, a decent, orderly-looking person; the apartments, though far from elegant, were clean and commodious. They consisted of a parlor, two bed-chambers, and a small room, or rather closet, which Laura immediately appropriated as her painting-room. Here she found amusement in arranging the materials of her art, while Captain Montreville walked to the west end of the town, to confer with his agent on the unfortunate cause of his visit to London. He was absent for some hours; and Laura, utterly ignorant of the length of his walk, and of its difficulties to one who had not seen the metropolis for twenty years, began to be uneasy at his stay. He returned at last, fatigued and dispirited, without having seen Mr. Baynard, who was indisposed, and could not admit him. After a silent dinner, he threw himself upon a sofa, and dismissed his daughter, saying that he felt inclined to sleep.

Laura took this opportunity to write to Mrs. Douglas a particular account of her travels. She mentioned with affectionate interest some of her few acquaintances at Glenalbert, and inquired for all the individuals of Mrs. Douglas's family; but the name of Hargrave did not once occur in her letter, though nothing could exceed her curiosity to know how the colonel had borne her departure, of which, afraid of his vehemence, she had, at their last interview, purposely avoided to inform him.

Having finished her letter, Laura, that she might not appear to repress civility, availed herself of her landlady's invitation to "come now and then," as she expressed it, "to have a chat;" and descended to the parlor below. On perceiving that Mrs. Dawkins was busily arranging the tea-equipage, with an air that showed she expected company, Laura would have retreated, but her hostess would not suffer her to go. "No, no, miss," said she, "I expect nobody but my daughter Kate, as is married to Mr. Jones the haberdasher; and you mustn't go, for she can tell you all about Scotland; and it is but natural to think that you'd like to hear about your own country now, when you're in a foreign land, as a body may say."

The good woman had judged well in the bribe she offered to her guest, who immediately consented to join her party; and who, perceiving

that Mrs. Dawkins was industriously spreading innumerable slices of bread and butter, courteously offered to share her toils. Mrs. Dawkins thanked her, and accepted her services, adding, "Indeed, it's very hard as I should have all them there things to do myself, when I have a grown up daughter in the house. But, poor thing, it an't her fault after all, for she never was larnt to do nothing of use."

"That was very unfortunate," said Laura.

"Yes, but it mightn't have been so misfortunate neither, only, you see, I'll tell you how it was. My sister, Mrs. Smith, had a matter of £10,000 left her by her husband, and so she took a fancy, when July was born, as she'd have her called by a grand name; and I'm sure an unlucky name it was for her; for many a fine freak it has put into her head. Well, and so as I was saying, she took July home to herself, and had her larnt to paint, and to make filagree, and play on the piano, and what not; and to be sure we thought she would never do no less than provide for her. But what do you think! why, two years ago she ran away with a young ensign, as had nothing in the varsal world but his pay; and so July came home just as she went; and what was worst of all, she couldn't do no more in the shop nor the day she was born."

"That was hard indeed," said Laura.

"Wasn't it, now! but-one comfort was, I had Kate brought up in another guess-way; for I larnt her plain work and writing, and how to cast accounts; and never let her touch a book, except the prayer-book a Sundays; and see what's the upshot on't. Why, though July's all to nothing the prettiest, nobody has never made an offer for 'er, and Kate's got married to a warm man as any in his line hereabouts, and a man as has a house not ten doors off; and besides, as snug a box in the country as ever you seed—so convenient you've no idear. Why, I dare say, there's a matter of ten stage-coaches pass by the door every day."

To all this family history, Laura listened with great patience, wondering, however, what could induce the narrator to take so much trouble for the information of a stranger.

The conversation, if it deserves the name, was now interrupted by the entrance of a young woman, whom Mrs. Dawkins introduced as her daughter July. Her figure was short, inclining to embonpoint; her face, though rather pretty, round and rosy; and her whole appearance seemed the antipodes of sentiment. She had, however, a book in her hand, on which, after exchanging compliments with Laura, she cast a languishing look, and said, "I have been paying a watery tribute to the sorrows of my fair namesake." Then pointing out the title-page to Laura, she added, "You, I suppose, have often done so."

It was the tragedy of *THE MINISTER*, and Laura, reading the name aloud, said she was not acquainted with it.

"Oh," cried Mrs. Dawkins, "that's the young woman as swears so horribly. No, I dares to say, Miss Montreville never read no such thing. If it an't a shame to be seen in a Christian woman's hands, it is. And if she would read it by herself, it would be nothing; but there she goes ranting about the house like an actress."

cursing all aloud, worse nor the drunken apple-woman at the corner of the street."

"Pray, mamma, forbear," said Miss Julia Dawkins, in a plaintive tone; "it wounds my feelings to hear you. I am sure, if Miss Montreville would read this play, she would own that the expressions which you austere-ly denominate curses give irresistible energy to the language."

"This kind of energy," said Laura, with a smile, "has at least the merit of being very generally attainable." This remark was not in Miss Julia's line. She had, therefore, recourse to her book, and with great variety of grimace, read aloud one of Casimir's impassioned, or, as Laura thought, frantic speeches. The curious contrast of the reader's manner with her appearance, of the affected sentimentality of her air with the robust vulgarity of her figure, struck Laura as so irresistibly ludicrous, that though, of all young ladies, she was the least addicted to tittering, her politeness would have been fairly defeated in the struggle, had it not been re-enforced by the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Jones. The former was a little man, in a snuff-colored coat, and a brown wig, who seemed to be about fifty; the latter was a good-humored, common-place looking woman, of about half that age. Laura was pleased with the cordiality with which Mr. Jones shook his mother-in-law by the hand, saying, "Well, mother, I's brought you Kate pure and hearty again, and the little fellow is fine and well, tho' he be too young to come a-wisting."

As soon as the commotion occasioned by the entrance was over, and Laura formally made acquainted with the lady, Mrs. Dawkins began, "I hopes, Kate, you ha'n't forgot how to tell about your jaunt to Scotland; for this here young lady stayed tea just o' purpose to hear it."

"Oh, that I ha'n't," said Mrs. Jones; "I'm sure I shall remember it the longest day I have to live. Pray, miss," added she, turning to Laura, "was you ever in Glasgow?"

"Never," said Laura; "I have heard that it is a fine city."

"Ay, but I've been there first and last eleven days; and I can say for it, it is really a handsome town, and a mort of good white stone houses in it. For you see, when Mr. Jones married me, he had not been altogether satisfied with his rider, and he tho't as he'd go down to Glasgow himself and do business; and that he'd make it do for his wedding jaunt, and that would be killing two dogs with one stone."

"That was certainly an excellent plan," said Laura.

"Well," continued Mrs. Jones, "when we'd been about a week in Glasgow, we were had to dine one day with Mr. Mactavish, as supplies Mr. Jones with gingham; and he talked about some grand house of one of your Scotch dukes, and said as how we musn't go home without seeing it. So we thought since we had come so far, we might as well see what was to be seen."

"Certainly," said Laura, at the pause which was made to take breath, and receive approbation.

"Well, we went down along the river, which, to say truth, is very pretty, tho' it be not turfed, not kept neat round the hedges, to a place they call Dunbarton; where there is a rock, for all

the world like an ill-made sugar-loaf, with a slice out o' the middle o'n't; and they told us there was a castle on it—but such a castle!"

"Pray, sister," said Miss Julia, "have you an accurate idea of what constitutes a castle? of the keeps, the turrets, the winding stair-cases, and the portcullis?"

"Bless you, my dear," returned the traveler, "ha'n't I seen Windsor Castle? and t'other's no more like it—no more than nothing at all. Howsoever, we slept that night at a very decent sort of an inn; and Mr. Jones thought as we were so comfortable, we had best come back to sleep. So as the duke's house was but thirty miles off, we thought if we set off soon in the morning, we might get back at night. So off we set, and went two stages to breakfast, at a place with one of their outlandish names; and to be sartin, when we got there, we were as hungry as hounds. Well, we calls for hot rolls; and do but think, there wasn't no such thing to be had for love or money."

Mrs. Jones paused to give Laura time for the expression of her pity; but she remained silent, and Mrs. Jones resumed: "Well, they brought us a loaf as old as St. Paul's, and some good enough butter; so, thinks I, I'll make us some good warm toast; for I loves to make the best of a bad bargain. So I bid the waiter bring us the toast-stool; but if you had seen how he stared—why, the poor fellow had never heard of no such thing in his life. Then they showed us a huge mountain, as black as a soot-bag, just opposite the window, and said as we must go up there; but, thinks I, catch us at that; for if we be so bad off here for breakfast, what shall we be there for dinner. So my husband and I were of a mind upon it, to get back to Glasgow as fast as we could; for, though to be sure it cost us a power of money coming down, yet, thinks we, the first loss is the best."

"What would I have given," cried Miss Julia, turning up the whites of her eyes, "to have been permitted to mingle my sighs with the mountain breezes!" Mrs. Jones was accustomed to her sister's nonsense, and she only shrugged her shoulders. But Mrs. Dawkins, provoked that her daughter should be so much more than usually ridiculous before a stranger, said, "Why, child, how can you be so silly; what in the world should you do sighing o' top of a Scotch hill? I dares to say, if you were there you might sigh long enough before you'd find such a comfortable cup of tea as what you have in your hand." Miss Julia disclaimed reply; but turning to our heroine, she addressed her in a tone so amusingly sentimental, that Laura feared to listen to the purport of her speech, lest the manner and the matter united should prove too much for her gravity; and rising, she apologized for retiring, by saying, that she heard her father stir, and that she must attend him.

When two people of very different ages meet tête-à-tête in a room, where there are not thoroughly domesticated—where there are no books, no musical instruments, nor even that great bond of sociability, a fire—it requires no common invention and vivacity to pass an evening with tolerable cheerfulness. The little appearances of discomfort, however, which imperceptibly lower the spirits of others, had generally an op-

posite effect upon those of Laura. Attentive to the comfort of every human being who approached her, she was always the first to discover the existence and cause of the "petty miseries of life;" but, accustomed to consider them merely as calls to exertion, they made not the slightest impression on her spirits or temper. The moment she cast her eyes upon her father, leaning on a table, where stood a pair of candles that but half lighted the room; and on the chimney, where faded fennel occupied the place of a fire, she perceived that all her efforts would be necessary to produce any thing like comfort. She began her operations by enticing her father out of the large vacant room into the small one, where she intended to work. Here she prepared his coffee, gave him an account of the party below stairs, read to him her letter to Mrs. Douglas, and did and said every thing she could imagine to amuse him.

When the efforts to entertain are entirely on one side, it is scarcely in human nature to continue them; and Laura was beginning to feel very blank, when it luckily occurred to her that she had brought her little chess-board from Glenalbert. Away she flew, and in triumph produced this infallible resort. The match was pretty equal. Captain Montreville had more skill, Laura more resource; and she defended herself long and keenly. At last she was within a move of being check-mated; but the move was hers; and the captain, in the heat of victory, overlooked a step by which the fortune of the game would have been reversed. Laura saw it, and eagerly extended her hand to the piece; but recollecting that there is something in the pride of man's nature which abhors to be beaten at chess by a lady, she suddenly desisted, and, sweeping her lily arm across the board, "Nay, now," she cried, with a look of ineffable good-nature, "if you were to complete my defeat after all my hair-breadth 'scapes, you could not be so unreasonable as to expect that I should keep my temper." "And how dare you," said Captain Montreville, in great good-humor with his supposed victory, "deprive me at once of the pleasures of novelty and of triumph!" By the help of this auxiliary the evening passed pleasantly away, and, before another came, Laura had provided for it the cheap luxury of some books from a circulating library.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

FOR the first fortnight after Captain Montreville's arrival in London, almost every forenoon was spent in unavailing attempts to see Mr. Baynard, whose illness, at the end of that time, had increased to such a degree, as left no hope that he could soon be in a condition for attending to business. Harassed by suspense, and weary of waiting for an interview which seemed every day more distant, Captain Montreville resolved to stay no longer for his agent's introduction to Mr. Warren, but to visit the young heir, and himself explain his errand. Having procured Mr. Warren's address from Mr. Baynard's servants, he proceeded to Portland-street, and, knocking at the door of a handsome house, was there informed that Mr. Warren was gone to Brighton, and was not expected to return for three weeks.

Captain Montreville had now no resource but to unfold his demands to Mr. Warren in writing. He did so, stating his claims with all the simple energy of truth; but no answer returned. He fatigued himself and Laura in vain with conjecturing the cause of this silence. He feared that, though dictated by scrupulous politeness, his letter might have given offense. He imagined that it might have miscarried, or that Mr. Warren might have left Brighton before it reached him. All these conjectures were, however, wide of the truth. The letter had given no offense, for it had never been read. It safely reached the person to whom it was addressed, just as he was adding the finishing touch to the graces of a huge silk handkerchief, in which he had enveloped his chin, preparatory to the exhibition of his person, and of an elegant new curricule, upon the Steine. A single glance had convinced him that the letter was unworthy to encroach on this momentous concern; he had thrown it aside, intending to read it when he had nothing else to do, and had seen it no more, till, on his return to London, he unrolled from it his bottle of *esprit de rose* which his valet had wrapped in its folds.

The three wearisome weeks came to an end at last, as well as a fourth, which the attractions of Brighton prevailed on Mr. Warren to add to his stay; and Captain Montreville, making another, almost hopeless, inquiry in Portland-street, was, to his great joy, admitted to the long-desired conference. He found the young man in his night-gown, reclining on a sofa, intently studious of the "Sportsman's Magazine," while he ever and anon refreshed himself for this, his literary toil, by sipping a cup of chocolate. Being courteously invited to partake, the captain began by apologizing for his intrusion, but pleaded that his business was of such a nature as to require a personal interview. At the mention of business, the smile forsook its prescriptive station on the smooth face of Mr. Warren. "Oh, pray pardon me, sir," said he, "my agent manages all my matters; I never meddle with business; I have really no head for it. Here, Du Moulin, give this gentleman Mr. Williams's address."

"Excuse me, sir," said Captain Montreville; "on this occasion I must entreat that you will so far depart from your rule as to permit me to state my business to you in person."

"I assure you, sir," said the beau, rising from his luxurious posture, "I know nothing about business; the very name of it is to me the greatest bore in life; it always reminds me of my old dead uncle. The poor man could never talk of any thing but of bank-stock, the price of the best Archangel tar, and the scarcity of hemp. Often did I wish the hemp had been cheap enough to make him apply a little of it to his own use. But the old cock took wing at last without a halter—he! he! he!"

"I shall endeavor to avoid these offensive subjects," said Captain Montreville, smiling. "The affair in which I wish to interest you is less a case of law than of equity, and therefore I must beg permission to state it to your personal attention, as your agent might not think himself at liberty to do me the justice which I may expect from you."

Mr. Warren at this moment recollected an in-

dispensable engagement, and begged that Captain Montreville would do him the favor to call another time, secretly resolving not to admit him. "I shall not detain you two minutes," said the captain. "I shall in a few words state my request, and leave you to decide upon it when you are more at leisure."

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Warren, with something between a sigh and an ill-suppressed yawn, "if it must be so."

"About eighteen months ago," resumed the captain, "my agent, Mr. Baynard, paid fifteen hundred pounds to your late uncle, as the price of an annuity on my daughter's life. The deed is now found to be informal, and Mr. Williams has refused to make any payment. Mr. Baynard's indisposition has prevented me from seeing him since my arrival in London; but I have no doubt he can produce a discharge for the price of the annuity, in which case, I presume, you will allow the mistake in the deed to be rectified."

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. Warren, who had transferred his thoughts from the subject of conversation to the comparative merits of nankeen pantaloons and leather breeches.

"But, even if Mr. Baynard should have no document to produce," continued Captain Montreville, "may I not hope that you will instruct Mr. Williams to examine whether there are not in Mr. Warren's books traces of the agreement for an annuity of one hundred pounds, in the name of Laura Montreville?" "Sir!" said Warren, whose ears caught the tone of interrogation, though the meaning of the speaker had entirely escaped him. The captain repeated his request. "Oh, certainly I will," said the young man, who would have promised any thing to get rid of the subject. "I hope the matter will be found to stand as you wish. At all events, such a trifling sum can be of no sort of consequence."

"Pardon me, sir," said Captain Montreville, warmly, "to me it is of the greatest. Should this trifle, as you are pleased to call it, be lost to me, my child must, at my death, be left to all the horrors, all the temptations, of want; temptations aggravated a thousand-fold by beauty and inexperience."

His last words awakened something like interest in the drowsy soul of his hearer, who said, with the returning smile of self-complacency, "Beauty, sir, did you say? beauty is what I may call my passion. A pretty girl is always sure of my sympathy and good offices. I shall call for Mr. Williams this very day."

Captain Montreville bit his lip. "Laura Montreville," thought he, "an object of sympathy to such a thing as thou!" He bowed, however, and said, "I hope, sir, you will find, upon examination, that Miss Montreville's claims rest upon your justice," when, laying his address upon the table, he took his leave, with an air, perhaps, a little too stately for one who had come to ask a favor.

He returned home, however, much pleased with having at last met with Warren, and with having, as he imagined, put in train the business on account of which he had performed so long a journey, and suffered so much uneasiness. He found Laura, too, in high spirits. She had just given the finishing touches to a

picture, on which she had been most busily employed ever since her arrival in London. She had studied the composition till her head ached with intensity of thought. She had labored the finishing with care unspeakable, and she now only waited till her work could with safety be moved, to try the success of her project for the attainment of wealth. Of this success she scarcely entertained a doubt. She was sensible, indeed, that the picture had many faults, but not so many as that on which Mrs. Douglas's visitor had fixed so high a price. Since painting the latter, she had improved in skill; and never had she bestowed such pains as on her present work. The stranger had said that the Scipio, in Mrs. Douglas's picture, was interesting. The Leonidas in this was much more so; she could not doubt it, for he resembled Hargrave. She had hoped the resemblance would be apparent to no eye but her own. Her father, however, had noticed it, and Laura had tried to alter the head, but the captain declared she had spoiled it. Laura thought so herself; and, after sketching a hundred regularly handsome countenances, could be satisfied with none which bore not some affinity to her only standard of manly beauty.

To add to the pleasure with which Laura surveyed the completion of her labors, she had that day received a letter from Mrs. Douglas, in which mention was made of Hargrave.

In her first letters to Laura, Mrs. Douglas had entirely avoided this subject. Almost a month Laura had waited, with sickening impatience, for some hint from which she might gather intelligence of Hargrave's motions—in vain. Her friend had been provokingly determined to believe that the subject was disagreeable to her correspondent. Laura at last ventured to add to one of her letters a postscript, in which, without naming the colonel, she inquired whether the — regiment was still at Perth. She blushed as she glanced over this postscript. She thought it had an air of contrivance and design. She was half tempted to destroy the letter; but she could not prevail on herself to make a more direct inquiry, and to forbear making any was almost impossible. An answer had this day arrived; and Laura read no part of it with such interest as that which, with seeming carelessness, informed her that the colonel had been several times at the parsonage, and that Mrs. Douglas understood from report that he was soon to visit London.

Again and again did Laura read this passage, and ponder every word of it with care. "I am playing the fool," said she to herself, and laid the letter aside; took it up again to ascertain some particular expression; again read the paragraph which spoke of Hargrave, and again paused upon his name. She was so employed when her father entered, and she made an instinctive motion to conceal the paper; but the next moment she held it out to him, saying, "This is from Mrs. Douglas." "Well, my love," said the captain, "if there are no secrets in it, read it to me. I delight in Mrs. Douglas's simple, affectionate style." Laura did as she was desired; but when she reached the sentence which began with the name of Hargrave, she blushed, hesitated for a moment, and then, passing it over, began the next paragraph.



Without both caution and self-command, the most upright woman will be guilty of subtleties where love is in question. Men can talk of the object of their affections—they find pleasure in confiding, in describing, in dwelling upon their passion—but the love of women seeks concealment. If she can talk of it, or even of any thing that leads to it, the fever is imaginary, or it is past. "It is very strange," said the captain, when Laura had concluded, "that Mrs. Douglas never mentions Hargrave, when she knows what an interest I take in him." Laura colored crimson, but remained silent. "What do you think can be her reason?" asked the captain. This was a question for which Laura could find no evasion short of actual deceit; and, with an effort far more painful than that from which her little artifice had saved her, her lovely face and neck glowing with confusion, she said, "She does mention—only I—I. Please to read it yourself;" and she pointed it out to her father, who, prepared by her hesitation to expect something very particular, was surprised to find the passage so very unimportant. "Why, Laura," said he, "what was there to prevent you from reading this?" To this question Laura could make no reply; and the captain, after gazing on her for some moments in vain hope of an explanation, dismissed the subject, saying, with a shrug of his shoulders, "Well, well—women are creatures I don't pretend to understand."

Laura had often and deeply reflected upon the propriety of confiding to her father her engagement with Hargrave. Vague as it was, she thought her parent had an indisputable right to be informed of it. Her promise, too, had been conditional, and what judge so proper as her father to watch over the fulfillment of its conditions? What judge so proper as her father to examine the character and to inspect the conduct of the man who might one day become her husband? But amid all the train of delightful visions which this thought conjured up, Laura felt that Hargrave's conduct had been such as she could not endure that her father should remember against his future son. Captain Montreville was now at a distance from Hargrave. Before they could possibly meet, her arguments, or her entreaties, might have so far prevailed over the subsiding passions of her father as to dissuade him from a fashionable vindication of her honor. But what was to restore her lover to his present rank in the captain's regard? What would blot from his recollection the insult offered to his child? Without mention of that insult, her tale must be almost unintelligible; and she was conscious that, if she entered on the subject at all, her father's tenderness, or his authority, might unlock every secret of her breast. The time when her engagement could produce any consequence was distant. Ere it arrived, something unforeseen might possibly remove her difficulties; or, at the worst, she hoped that, before she permitted her father to weigh the fault of Hargrave, she should be able to balance against it the exemplary propriety of his after conduct.

She was not just satisfied with this reasoning; but weaker considerations can dissuade us from what we are strongly disinclined to do; and to unveiling her own partiality, or the un-

worthiness of its object, Laura's disinclination was extreme. She determined, therefore, to put off the evil hour; and withdrew her father's attention from the subject of the letter, by inquiring whether he had seen Warren, and whether he had settled his business satisfactorily? The captain replied, that though it was not absolutely settled, he hoped it was now in a fair way of being so; and informed her of Warren's promise. "Yet," added he, "any one of a thousand trifles may make such an animal forget or neglect the most important concern." "What sort of a man did he seem?" inquired Laura. "Man!" repeated the captain, contemptuously. "Why, child, he is a creature entirely new to you. He talks like a parrot, looks like a woman, dresses like a monkey, and smells like a civet cat. You might have Glenalbert for half a century without seeing such a creature." "I hope he will visit us," said Laura, "that we may not return home without seeing, at least, one of the curiosities of London."

## CHAPTER IX.

THE next day, as Captain Montreville sat reading aloud to his daughter, who was busy with her needle, Mr. Warren was announced.

Laura, who concluded that he had business with her father, rose to retire; but her visitor, intercepting her, took both her hands, saying, "Pray, ma'am, don't let me frighten you away." With a constitutional dislike to familiarity, Laura coolly disengaged herself, and left the room without uttering a syllable; but not before Warren had seen enough of her to determine that, if possible, he should see her again. He was struck with her extraordinary beauty, which was heightened by the little hectic his forwardness had called to her cheek; and he prolonged his visit to an unfashionable length, in the hope of her return. He went over all the topics which he judged proper for the ear of a stranger of his own sex; talked of the weather, the news, the emptiness of the town, of horses, ladies, cock-fights, and boxing-matches. He informed the captain that he had given directions to his agent to examine into the state of the annuity; inquired how long Miss Montreville was to grace London with her presence; and was told that she was to leave it the moment her father could settle the business, on account of which alone he had left Scotland. When it was absolutely necessary to conclude his visit, Mr. Warren begged permission to repeat it, that he might acquaint Captain Montreville with the success of his agent; secretly hoping that Laura would another time be less inaccessible.

Laura meanwhile thought his visit would never have an end. Having wandered into every room to which she had access, and found rest in none of them, she concluded, rather rashly, that she should find more comfort in the one from which his presence excluded her. That disease of the mind in which, by eager anticipation of the future, many are unfitted for present enjoyment, was new to the active spirit of Laura. The happiness of her life (and, spite of the caprices of her mother, it had, upon the

whole, been a happy one) had chiefly arisen from a constant succession of regular but varied pursuits. The methodical sequence of domestic usefulness, and improving study, and healthful exercise, afforded calm yet immediate enjoyment; and the future pleasure which they promised was of that indefinite and progressive kind which provokes no eager desires, no impatient expectation. Laura, therefore, had scarcely ever known what it was to long for the morrow; but on this day, the morrow was anticipated with wishful solicitude—a solicitude which banished from her mind even the thoughts of Hargrave. Never did youthful bridegroom look forward to his nuptial hour with more ardor than did Laura to that which was to begin the realization of her prospects of wealth and independence. The next day was to be devoted to the sale of her picture. Her father was on that day to visit Mr. Baynard, at Richmond, whither he had been hoped for the benefit of a purer air; and she hoped, on his return, to surprise her beloved parent with an unlooked-for treasure. She imagined the satisfaction with which she should spread before him her newly-acquired riches—the pleasure with which she would listen to the praises of her diligence—above all, her fancy dwelt on the delight which she should feel in relieving her father from the pecuniary embarrassment in which she knew him to be involved by a residence in London so much longer than he had been prepared to expect.

That she might add to her intended gift the pleasure of surprise, she was resolved not to mention her plan for to-morrow; and with such objects in contemplation, how could she rest—of what other subject could she speak? She tried to banish it from her mind, that she might not be wholly unentertaining to her father, who, on her account, usually spent his evenings at home. But the task of amusing was so laborious, that she was glad to receive in it even the humble assistance of Miss Julia Dawkins.

This young lady had thought it incumbent on her to assault our heroine with a most violent friendship; a sentiment which often made her sufficiently impertinent, though it was a little kept in check by the calm good sense and natural reserve of Laura. The preposterous affectation of Julia sometimes provoked the smiles, but more frequently the pity, of Laura; for her real good nature could find no pleasure in seeing human beings make themselves ridiculous, and she applied to the cure of Miss Dawkins's foibles the ingenuity which many would have employed to extract amusement from them. She soon found, however, that she was combating a sort of hydra, from which, if she succeeded in lopping off one excrescence, another was instantly ready to sprout. Having no character of her own, Julia was always, as nearly as she was able, the heroine whom the last read novel inclined her to personate. But as those that forsake the guidance of nature are in imminent danger of absurdity, her copies were always caricatures. After reading *Evelina*, she sat with her mouth extended in a perpetual smile, and was so very timid, that she would not for the world have looked at a stranger. When *Camilla* was the model for the day, she became insufferably rattling, infantine, and thoughtless. After perusing the *Gossip's Story*,

she, in imitation of the rational *Louisa*, suddenly waxed very wise—spoke in sentences—despised romance—sewed shifts—and read sermons. But, in the midst of this fit, she, in an evil hour, opened a volume of the *Nouvelle Eloise*, which had before disturbed many wiser heads. The shifts were left unfinished, the sermons thrown aside, and Miss Julia returned with renewed impetus to the sentimental. This afternoon her studies had changed their direction, as Laura instantly guessed by the lively air with which she entered the room, saying that she had brought her netting, and would sit with her for an hour. "But do, my dear," added she, "first show me the picture you have been so busy with; mamma says it is beautiful, for she peeped in at it the other day."

It must be confessed that Laura had no high opinion of Miss Dawkins's skill in painting; but she remembered *Molière's* old woman, and went with great good-will to bring her performance. "Oh, charming!" exclaimed Miss Julia, when it was placed before her; "the figure of the man was quite delightful; it is the very image of that bewitching creature, *Tom Jones*."

"*Tom Jones*!" cried Laura, starting back aghast.

"Yes, my dear," continued Julia; "just such must have been the graceful turn of his limbs—just such his hair, his eyes, those lips, that when they touched her hand, put poor *Sophia* into such a flutter."

The astonishment of Laura now gave way to laughter, while she said, "Really, Miss Dawkins, you must have a strange idea of *Tom Jones*, or I a very extraordinary one of *Leondas*."

"*Leonce*, you mean, in *Delphine*," said Julia. "Oh! he is a delightful creature, too."

"*Delphine*!" repeated Laura, to whom the name was as new as that of the *Spartan* was to her companion. "No, I mean this for the Greek general taking his last leave of his wife."

"And I think," said Captain *Montreville*, approaching the picture, "the suppressed anguish of the matron is admirably expressed, and contrasts well with the scarcely relenting ardor of the hero."

Miss Julia again declared that the picture was charming, and that *Leontine*, as she was pleased to call him, was divinely handsome; but having newly replenished her otherwise empty head with *Fielding's* novel, she could talk of nothing else; and turning to Laura, said, "But why were you so offended, that I compared your *Leontine* to *Tom Jones*? Is he not a favorite of yours?"

"Not particularly so," said Laura.

"Oh, why not? I am sure he is a delightful fellow—so generous—so ardent. Come, confess—should you not like of all things to have such a lover?"

"No, indeed," said Laura, with most unusual energy; for her thoughts almost unconsciously turned to one whose character she found no pleasure in associating with that of *Fielding's* hero.

"And why not?" asked Miss Julia.

"Because," answered Laura, "I could not admire in a lover qualities which would be odious in a husband."

"Oh, goodness!" cried Miss Julia, "do you

think Tom Jones would make an odious husband!"

"The term is a little strong," replied Laura; "but he certainly would not make a pleasant yoke-fellow. What is your opinion, sir!" turning to her father.

"I confess," said the captain. "I should rather have wished him to marry Squire Western's daughter than mine. But still the character is fitted to be popular."

"I think," said Laura, "he is indebted for much of the toleration which he receives to a comparison with the despicable Blifil."

"Certainly," said Montreville; "and it is unfortunate for the morality of the book, that the reader is inclined to excuse the want of religion in the hero, by seeing its language made ridiculous in Thwackum, and villainous in Blifil. Even the excellent Mr. Alworthy excites but feeble interest; and it is not by character which we respect, but by that in which we are interested, that the moral effect on our minds is produced."

"Oh," said Miss Julia, who very imperfectly comprehended the captain's observation, "he might make a charming husband without being religious; and then, he is so warm-hearted—so generous!"

"I shall not dispute that point with you just now," replied Laura, "though my opinion differs materially from yours; but Tom Jones's warmth of heart and generosity do not appear to me of that kind which qualify a man for adorning domestic life. His seems a constitutional warmth, which, in his case, and, I believe, in most others, is the concomitant of a warm temper—a temper as little favorable to gentleness in those who command, as to submission in those who obey. If by generosity you mean the cheerfully relinquishing of something which we really value, it is an abuse of the term to apply it to the profusion with which your favorite squanders his money."

"If it is not generous to part with one's money," said Miss Julia, "I am sure I don't know what is."

"The quiet domestic generosity which is of daily use," replied Laura, "is happily not confined to those who have money to bestow, but may appear in any of a thousand little acts of self-denial."

Julia, whose ideas of generosity, culled from her favorite romances, were on that gigantic kind of scale which makes it unfit for common occasions, and therefore in danger of total extinction, was silent for some moments, and then said, "I am sure you must allow that it was very noble in Jones to resolve to bury in his own miserable bosom his passion for Sophia, after he knew that she felt a mutual flame."

"If I recollect right," said Laura, smiling at the oddity of Julia's phrases, "he broke that resolution; and I fancy the merely *resolving* to do right is a degree of virtue to which even the most profligate attain many times in their lives."

Miss Dawkins by this time more than half suspected her companion of being a Methodist. "You have such strict notions," said she, "that I see Tom Jones would never have done for you."

"No," remarked Captain Montreville, "Sir

Charles Grandison would have suited Laura infinitely better."

"Oh no, papa," said Laura, laughing; "if two such formal personages as Sir Charles and I had met, I am afraid we should never have had the honor of each other's acquaintance."

"Then, of all the gentlemen who are mentioned in novels," said Miss Julia, "tell me who is your favorite! Is it Lord Orville, or Delville, or Valancourt, or Edward, or Mortimer, or Peregrine Pickle, or—" and she ran on till she was quite out of breath, repeating what sounded like a page of the catalogue of a circulating library.

"Really," said Laura, when a pause permitted her to speak, "my acquaintance with these accomplished persons is so limited, that I can scarcely venture to decide; but, I believe, I prefer the hero of Miss Porter's new publication—Thaddeus of Warsaw." Truly generous, and inflexibly upright, his very tenderness has in it something manly and respectable; and the whole combination has an air of nature which interests one as for a real friend." Miss Dawkins had never read the book, and Laura applied to her father for a confirmation of her opinion. "Yes, my dear," said the captain, "your favorite has the same resemblance to a human character which Belvidere Apollo has to a human form. It is so like man that one can not absolutely call it divine, yet so perfect that it is difficult to believe it human."

At this moment, Miss Julia was seized with an uncontrollable desire to read the book, which, she declared, she should not sleep till she had done; and she went to dispatch a servant in quest of it.

Laura followed her down stairs, to ask from Mrs. Dawkins the address of some picture-dealer, to whom she might dispose of her performance. Mrs. Dawkins said she knew of no such person; but directed Laura to a print shop, the master of which was her acquaintance, where she might get the intelligence she wanted.

On the following morning, as soon as Captain Montreville had set out for Richmond, his daughter, sending for a hackney-coach, departed on the most interesting business she had ever undertaken. Her heart fluttered with expectation, her step was buoyant with hope, and she sprang into the carriage with the lightness of a sylph. Stopping at the shop which her landlady recommended, she was there directed to several of the professional people, for whom she was inquiring, and she proceeded to the habitation of the nearest. As she entered the house, Laura changed color, and her breath came quick. She stopped a moment to recover herself, and then followed her conductor into the presence of the connoisseur. Struck with the sight of so elegant a woman, he rose, bowed very low, and supposing that she came to make some addition to her cabinet, threw open the door of his picture-room, and obsequiously hoped that she might find something there worthy of her notice. Laura modestly undeceived him, saying, that she had brought in the carriage which waited for her, a picture which she wished to dispose of. This statement instantly put to flight the servility of her hearer, who, with completely recovered consequence, inquired the name of the artist; and being an-

answered, that the picture was not the work of a professional man, wrinkled his nose into an expression of ineffable contempt, and said: "I make it a rule never to buy any of these things; they are generally such vile daubs. However, to oblige so pretty a lady," added he (softening his contumelious aspect into a leer), "I may look at the thing, and if it be at all tolerable—" "There is no occasion to give you that trouble," said Laura, turning away with an air which again half convinced the man that she must be a person of consequence. He muttered something of "thinking it no trouble;" to which she gave no attention, but hastened to her carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive to the show-room of an Italian.

Laura did not give him time to fall into the mistake of the other, but instantly opened her business; and Mr. Sonini was obligingly running himself to lift the picture from the carriage, when it was brought in by Mrs. Dawkins's maid, whom Laura had requested to attend her. Having placed the picture, the Italian retreated a few paces to examine the effect, and then said, "Ah! I do see—dis is leetle after de manner of Correggio—very pretty—very de indeed." The hopes of Laura rose high at these encouraging words; but suffered instantaneous depression when he continued, with a shake of his head, "But 'tis too new—quite moderne—painted in dis contri. Painter no name—de picture may be all so good as it vil—it never vil sell. Me sorry," added he, reading Laura's look of disappointment, "me sorry displease such bell angela! but can not buy." "I am sorry for it," said Laura, and sighing heavily, she courtesied and withdrew.

Her next attempt was upon a little pert-looking man, in a foreign dress, and spectacles. "Hum," said he, "a picture to sell—well, let us see't. There, that's the light. Hum—a poor thing enough—no keeping—no costume. Well, ma'am, what do you please to ask for this?" "I should be glad, sir, that you would fix a price on it." "Hum—well—let me think—I suppose five guineas will be very fair." At this proposal the blood mounted to the cheeks of Laura; and she raised her eyes to examine whether the proposer really had the confidence to look her in the face. But finding his eyes steadily fixed on her, she transported her suspicions from the honesty of the bidder to the merits of her piece, and mildly answering, "I shall not, I believe, be disposed to part with it at that price," she motioned to the servant to carry it back to the coach.

One trial still remained, and Laura ordered her carriage to an obscure street in the city. She was very politely received by Mr. Collins, a young man who had himself been an artist, but whom bad health had obliged to relinquish a profession which he loved. "This piece has certainly great merit," said he, after examining it, "and most gladly would I have made the purchase; but my little room is at present overstocked, and to own the truth to you, the picture is worth more than my wife and four little ones can afford to venture upon speculation, and such is the purchase of the work, however meritorious, of an unknown artist. But if you were to place it in the Exhibition, I have no doubt that it would speedily find a purchaser."

The prospect which the Exhibition held forth was far too distant to meet the present exigency; for Laura well knew that her father would find almost immediate occasion for the price of her labors; and with a heavy sigh she returned to her carriage.

What now remained but to return home with the subject of so much fruitful toil! Still, however, she determined to make one effort more, and returned to inquire of the print-seller, whether he knew of any other person to whom she could apply. He had before given his whole list, and could make no addition to it. But observing the expression of blank disappointment which overcast her face, he offered, if she would trust him with the picture, to place it where it would be seen by his customers, and expressed a belief that some of them might purchase it. Laura thankfully accepted the offer, and after depositing with him the treasure, which had lost much of its value in her eyes, and naming the price she expected, she returned home; making in her way as many sordid reflections on the vanity and uncertainty of all sublunary pursuits, as ever were made by any young lady in her eighteenth year.

She sat down in her now solitary parlor, suffered dinner to be placed before her and removed, without knowing of what it consisted; and when the servant who brought it disappeared, began, like a true heroine, to vent her disappointment in tears. But soon recollecting, that though she had no joyful surprise awaiting her father's return, she might yet gladden it with a smiling welcome, she started up from her melancholy posture, bathed her eyes, placed the tea equipage, ordered the first fire of the season to displace the faded fennel in the chimney, arranged the apartment in the nicest order, and had just given to every thing the greatest possible appearance of comfort, when her father arrived.

She had need, however, of all her firmness, and of all the elation of conscious self-control, to resist the contagious depression of countenance and manner with which Captain Montreville accosted her. He had good reasons for his melancholy. Mr. Baynard, his early acquaintance, almost the only person known to him in that vast city, had that morning breathed his last. All access to his papers was of course at present impossible; and until a person should be chosen to arrange his affairs, it would be impracticable for Captain Montreville to ascertain whether there existed any voucher for the payment of the price of the annuity. Harassed by his repeated disappointments, and unendowed by nature with the unbending spirit which rises in disaster, he now declared to Laura his resolution to remain in London only till a person was fixed upon for the management of Mr. Baynard's affairs—to lay before him the circumstances of his case—and then to return to Scotland, and trust to a correspondence for concluding the business.

At this moment nothing could have been further from Laura's wish than to quit London. She was unwilling to forfeit her remaining hope that her picture might find a purchaser, and a still stronger interest bound her to the place which was so soon to be the residence of Hargrave. But she saw the prudence of her fa-

ther's determination—she felt the necessity of relinquishing a mode of life so unsuitable to his scanty income, and she cheerfully acquiesced in his proposal of returning home. Still, some time must elapse before their departure; and she indulged a hope, that ere the time expired, the produce of her labors might lighten their pecuniary difficulties.

Captain Montreville retired early; and Laura, wearied out with the toils and the disappointments of the day, gladly resigned herself to the peaceful sleep of innocence.

Laura was indebted partly to nature, but more to her own exertions, for that happy elasticity of spirit which easily casts off lighter evils, while it readily seizes, and fully enjoys, pleasure of moderate intensity, and of frequent attainment. Few of the lesser sorrows of youth can resist the cheering influence of early morn; and the petty miseries which, in the shades of evening, assume portentous size and coloring, diminish wonderfully in the light of the new-risen sun. With recovered spirits and reviving hopes, Laura awoke to joys which the world know not, the joys of pious gratitude—of devout contemplation—of useful employment; and so far was her persevering spirit from failing under the disappointments of the preceding day, that she determined to begin a new picture the moment she was settled at Glenalbert, to compose it with more care, and finish it with greater accuracy than the former; and to try its fate at the Exhibition. She did not think the season of her father's depression a fit one for relating her mortifying adventures, and she found means to amuse him with other topics till he left her, with an intention to call in Portland-street.

He had not been long gone, when Mr. Warren's curricie stopped at the door, and the young gentleman, on being informed that the captain was abroad, inquired for Miss Montreville. After paying his compliments like one secure of a good reception, he began, "How could you be so cruel as to refuse me the pleasure of seeing you the other day? do you know I waited here a devilish long time just on purpose, though I had promised to take the Countess of Bellamer out an airing, and she was off with Jack Villars before I came!"

"I am sorry," said Laura, "that I deprived her ladyship of the pleasure of your company."

"I should not have minded it much, if you had but come at last, though the countess is the prettiest creature in London—curse me if she isn't—the present company always excepted."

"Do you mean the exception for me, or for yourself?" said Laura.

"Oh, now, how can you ask such a question? I am sure you know that you are confoundedly handsome."

Laura gravely surveyed her own face in an opposite looking-glass, and then, with the nonchalance of one who talks of the most indifferent thing in nature, replied, "Yes, I think my features are uncommonly regular."

Warren was a little embarrassed by so unusual an answer to what he intended for a compliment. "The girl," thought he, "must be quite a fool to own that she thinks herself so handsome." However, after some consideration he said, "It is not so much the features, as a certain *je ne sçai quoi*—a certain charm—

one does not know well, what to call it—that makes you look so divine."

"I should suppose," said Laura, "from the subject you have chosen to amuse me, that the charm, whatever it is, has no great connection with intellect."

Warren hesitated; for he began to have some suspicions that she was laughing at him, in spite of the immovable gravity of her countenance. "It—it—isn't—demme, it isn't so much to amuse you; but when I see a pretty woman, I never can help telling her of it—curse me if I can."

"And do you often find that your intelligence has the advantage of novelty?" said Laura, an arch smile beginning to dimple her cheek.

"No, 'pon honor," replied the beau, "the women are getting so insufferably conceited, they leave one nothing new to tell them."

"But some gentlemen," said Laura, "have the happy talent of saying old things so well, that the want of novelty is not felt." The moment the words had passed her lips, she perceived, by the gracious smile which they produced, that Mr. Warren had applied them to himself; and the thought of being guilty of such egregious flattery brought the color to her face. Any explanation, however, would have been actual rudeness; and while the consciousness of her involuntary duplicity kept her silent, her companion enjoyed her confusion; which, together with the compliment, he interpreted in a way most satisfactory to his vanity, and thankfully repaid with a torrent of praises in his very best style.

So little value did Laura affix to his commendations, that she was beginning to find extreme difficulty in suppressing a yawn, when it occurred to her that it might save her father a journey to Portland-street, if she could detain Mr. Warren till he arrived. Having made an observation which has been more frequently made than profited by, that most people prefer talking to listening, she engaged her companion in a description of some of the fashionable places of public resort, none of which she had seen; in which he acquitted himself so much to his own satisfaction, that, before they separated, he was convinced that Laura was one of the most penetrating, judicious women of his acquaintance; and having before remarked, that, with help of a little rouge, and a fashionable riding-habit, she would look better in a curricie than any woman in London, he resolved, that if it depended on him, her residence in town should not be a short one. In this laudable resolution he was confirmed by a consideration of the insolence and extravagance of a certain female, to whose place in his establishment he had some vague idea of advancing Miss Montreville, though there was a stateliness about both her and her father, which he suspected might somewhat interfere with his designs in her favor. Soon after the captain arrived, he took his leave, having no new intelligence to communicate, nor indeed any other purpose in his visit, except that which had been served by his interview with Laura.

As soon as he was gone, Laura went down stairs to beg that Miss Dawkins would accompany her after dinner to the print-shop, to inquire what had been the fate of her picture.

More than one person, she was told, had admired it, and expressed a desire to become the owner; but the price had been a formidable obstacle, and it remained unsold. She strove to hope that another day would bring her better fortune; but another and another came only to renew her disappointment. Almost every evening did Laura, with Mrs. Dawkins or her daughter for an escort, direct her steps to the print-shop, and return from her fruitless walk with fainter and fainter hopes.

### CHAPTER X.

MONTAGUE DE COURCY had dined tête-à-tête with an old uncle from whom he had no expectations, and was returning home to sup quietly with his mother and sister, when his progress was arrested by a group occupying the whole breadth of the pavement, and he heard a female voice, which, though unusually musical, had in it less of entreaty than of command, saying, "Pray, sir, allow us to pass." "Not till I have seen the face that belongs to such a figure," answered one of a party of young men who were rudely obstructing the passage of the lady who had spoken. "With this condition, however, she seemed not to intend compliance; for she had doubled her veil, and pertinaciously resisted the attempts of her persecutor to raise it.

De Courcy had a rooted antipathy to all manner of violence and oppression, especially when exercised against the more defenceless part of the creation; and he no sooner ascertained these circumstances, than, with one thrust of his muscular arm, (which, to say the truth, was more than a match for half a dozen of the puny fry of sloth and intemperance,) he opened a passage for the lady and her companion; steadily retained her tormentors till she made good her retreat; and then, leaving the gentlemen to answer, as they best could, to their own interrogatories of "What do you mean?" and "Who the d—l are you?" he followed the rescued damsel, at whose appearance, considering the place and the hour, he was extremely surprised.

Her height, which certainly rose above the beautiful, perhaps even exceeded the majestic; her figure, though slender, was admirably proportioned, and had all the appropriate roundness of the feminine form; her dress, though simple, and of matronly decency, was not unfashionable; while the dignity of her gait, and the composure of her motion, suited well with the majesty of her stature and mien.

While De Courcy was making these observations, he had offered the lady his arm, which she accepted, and his escort home, which she declined, saying that she would take refuge in a shop, till a coach could be procured. Nor was he less attentive to her companion, although the latter was a little elderly vulgar-looking woman, imperfections which would have utterly disqualified her for the civility of many a polite gentleman.

This person had no sooner recovered the breath of which her supposed danger, and the speed of her escape from it, had deprived her, than she began, with volubility, to comment

upon her adventure. "Well," cried she, "if that was not the most forwardest thing ever I saw. I am sure I have come home alone now of an evening a matter of five hundred times, and never met with no such thing in my life. But it's all along of my being so saving of your money; for I might have took a coach as you'd have had me; but it's no longer ago nor last week, as I come from my tea, at that very Mr. Wilkins', later nor this, and nobody so much as spoke to me; but catch me penny-wise again. Howsoever, it's partlins your own doings; for if you hadn't stayed so long a looking at the pictures in the shop, we shouldn't have met with them there men. Howsoever, Miss Montreville, you did right enough not to let that there jackanapes see your face, otherwise we mightn't have got off from them fellows to-night."

The curiosity of De Courcy thus directed, overcame his habitual dislike to staring, and riveted his eyes on a face, which, once seen, was destined never to be forgotten. Her luxuriant hair (which De Courcy at first thought black, though he afterwards corrected his opinion) was carelessly divided on a forehead, whose spotless whiteness was varied only by the blue of a vein which shone through the transparent skin. As she raised her mild, religious, dark-gray eyes, their silken lashes rested on the well-defined but delicate eyebrow; or, when her glance fell before the gaze of admiration, threw a long shade on a cheek of unequalled beauty, both for form and color. The contour of her features, inclining to the Roman, might perhaps have been called masculine, had it not been softened to the sweetest model of maiden loveliness by the delicacy of its size and coloring. The glowing scarlet of the lips formed a contrast with a complexion constitutionally pale, but varying every moment; while round her easily but firmly closing mouth lurked not a trace of the sensual or the vain, but all was calm benevolence, and saintly purity.

In the contemplation of a countenance, the perfect symmetry of which was its meanest charm, De Courcy, who was a physiognomist, suffered the stream of time, as well as that of Mrs. Dawkins' eloquence, to flow on without notice, and first became sensible that he had profited by neither, when the shop-boy announced that the coach was at the door. While handing the ladies into the carriage, De Courcy again offered his attendance, which Laura, gracefully thanking him for his attentions, again declined; and they drove off just as he was about to inquire where they chose to be set down.

Now, whether it was that Laura was offended at De Courcy's inspection of her face, or whether she saw any thing disagreeable in his; whether it was that her pride disclaimed lodgings in Holborn, or that she desired not to be recognized by one who had met her in such a situation, certain it is, that she chose the moment when that gentleman was placing her voluble companion in the coach, to give the coachman her directions, in sounds which escaped the ears of De Courcy. As he had no means of remedying this misfortune, he walked home, and philosophically endeavored to forget

it in a game of chess with his mother. The fidelity of a historian, however, obliges us to confess, that he this evening played in a manner which would have disgraced a school-boy. After mistaking his antagonist's men for his own, playing into check, throwing away his pieces, and making false moves, he answered his mother's question of "Montague, what are you doing!" by pushing back his chair, and exclaiming, "Mother, you never beheld such a woman!"

"Woman!" repeated Mrs. de Courcy, setting her spectacles, and looking him full in the face. "Woman!" said his sister, laying down Bruyere, "who is she!"

"I know not," answered De Courcy, "but had Lavater seen her, he could scarcely have believed her human."

"What is her name?"

"The woman who attended her called her Montreville."

"Where did you meet her?"

"In the street."

"In the street!" cried Harriet, laughing. "Oh, Montague, this is not half sentimental enough for you. You should have found her all in a shady bower, playing on a harp which came there nobody knows how; or, all elegant in India muslin, dandling a beggar's brat in a dirty cottage. But let us hear the whole adventure."

"I have already told you all I know," answered De Courcy. "Now, madam, will you give me my revenge?"

"No, no," said Mrs. de Courcy, "I will play no more; I should have no glory in conquering such a defenceless enemy."

"Well, then," said Montague, good humoredly, "give me leave to read to you, for I would rather amuse you and Harriet in any other way than by sitting quietly to be laughed at."

After the ladies had retired for the night, De Courcy meditated for full five minutes on the descent from Laura Montreville's forehead to her nose, and bestowed a proportionable degree of consideration upon other important lines of her physiognomy; but it must be confessed, that by the time he arrived at the dimple in her left cheek, he had forgotten both Lavater and his opinions, and that his recollection of her mouth was somewhat confused by that of her parting smile, which he more than once declared aloud to himself was "heavenly." We were credibly informed that he repeated the same expression three times in his sleep; and whether it was that his dreams reminded him of Mrs. Dawkins' eloquence, or whether his memory was refreshed by his slumbers, he had not been long awake before he recollected that he had heard that lady mention a Mr. Wilkins, and hint that he kept a print-shop. By a proper application to the London Directory, he easily discovered the print-seller's abode, and thither he that very day repaired.

Mr. Wilkins was not in the shop when De Courcy entered it, but the shop-boy said his master would be there in a minute. This minute appearing to De Courcy of unusual length, he, to while it away, began to examine the prints that hung round. His eye was presently attracted by the only oil-picture in the shop; and

his attention was fixed by observing, that it presented a striking resemblance of his old school-fellow Hargrave. He turned to make some inquiry of the shop-boy, when Mr. Wilkins came in, and his interest reverted to a different object. The question, however, which he had come to ask, and which to ask would have three minutes before appeared the simplest thing in the world, now faltered on his tongue; and it was not without something like hesitation, that he inquired whether Mr. Wilkins knew a Miss Montreville. Desirous to oblige a person of De Courcy's appearance, Wilkins immediately related all that he knew of Laura, either from his own observation, or from the report of her loquacious landlady; and perceiving that he was listened to with attention, he proceeded further to detail his conjectures. "This picture is painted by her," said he, "and I rather think the old captain can't be very rich, she seemed so anxious to have it sold."

De Courcy again turned to the picture, which he had before examined, and on this second inspection was so fortunate as to discover that it bore the stamp of great genius,—an opinion in which, we believe, he would have been joined by any man of four-and-twenty who had seen the artist. "So," thought he, "this lovely creature's genius is equal to her beauty, and her worth perhaps surpasses both; for she has the courage to rise superior to the silly customs of the world, and can dare to be useful to herself and others. I knew by the noble arching of her forehead, that she was above all vulgar prejudice;" and he admired Laura the more for being a favorable instance of his own penetration,—a feeling so natural, that it lessens even our enmity to the wicked, when we ourselves have predicted their vices. It must be owned, that De Courcy was a little hasty in his judgment of Laura's worth; but the sight of such a face as hers gives great speed to a young man's decision upon female character. He instantly purchased the picture, and recollecting that it is highly proper to patronize genius and industry, he desired Mr. Wilkins to beg that a companion to it might be painted. He then returned home, leaving orders that his purchase should follow him immediately.

Though nature, a private education, and studious habits, made De Courcy rather reserved to strangers, he was, in his domestic circle, one of the most communicative persons in the world; and the moment he saw his mother, he began to inform her of the discoveries he had made that morning. "Montreville!" said Mrs. de Courcy, when he had ended, "can that be William Montreville who was in the — regiment when your father was the major of it?"

"Most likely it is," said Montague, eagerly.

"Many a time did he hold you upon his horse, and many a paper-kite did he make for you."

"It must be the same," said Montague; "the name is not a common one; it certainly must be the same."

"I can hardly believe it," said Mrs. de Courcy; "William Montreville married that strange, imprudent woman, Lady Harriet Bircham. Poor Montreville!—he deserved a better wife."

"It cannot be he," said De Courcy, sorrowfully; "no such woman could be the mother of Miss Montreville."

"He settled in Scotland immediately after his marriage," continued Mrs. de Courcy, "and since that time I have never heard of him."

"It is the same then," said Montague, his countenance lightening with pleasure, "for Miss Montreville is a Scotch woman. I remember his kindness. I think I almost recollect his face. He used to set me on his knee and sing to me; and when he sung the Babes in the Wood, I pretended to go to sleep in his bosom, for I thought it not manly to cry; but when I looked up, I saw the tears standing in his own eyes. I will go and see my old friend this very hour."

"You have forgotten," said Mrs. de Courcy, "that you promised to escort Harriet to the Park, and she will be disappointed if you engage yourself elsewhere."

De Courcy, who would have postponed any personal gratification rather than disappoint the meanest servant in his household, instantly agreed to defer his visit; and as it had never occurred to him that the claims of relationship were incompatible with those of politeness, he did not once during their walk insinuate to his sister that he would have preferred another engagement.

Never had he, either as a physiognomist, or as a man, admired any woman so much as he did Laura; yet her charms were no longer his only, or even his chief, magnet of attraction towards the Montrevilles. Never before had any assemblage of features possessed such power over him, but De Courcy's was not a heart on which mere beauty could make any very permanent impression; and, to the eternal disgrace of his gallantry, it must be confessed that he scarcely longed more for an interview with Laura than he did for an opportunity of paying some grateful civilities to the man who, twenty years before, had good-naturedly foregone the society of his equals in age, to sing ballads and make paper kites for little Montague. Whatever member of the family occupied most of his thoughts, certain it is, that he spoke much more that evening of Captain Montreville than of his daughter, until the arrival of the painting afforded him occasion to enlarge on her genius, industry, and freedom from vulgar prejudice. On these he continued to descant, till Mrs. de Courcy smiled, and Harriet laughed outright; a liberty at which Montague testified his displeasure, by carefully avoiding the subject for the rest of the evening.

Meanwhile the ungrateful Laura had never, from the hour in which they met, bestowed one thought upon her champion. The blackness of his eyes, and the whiteness of his teeth, had entirely escaped her observation; and, even if she had been asked whether he was tall or short, she could scarcely have given a satisfactory reply. For this extraordinary stupidity, the only excuse is, that her heart was already occupied, the reader knows how, and that her thoughts were engrossed by an intention which her father had mentioned, of borrowing money upon his half-pay.

Though Laura had never known affluence, she was equally a stranger to all the shames,

and the distresses, and embarrassments of a debtor, and the thoughts of borrowing what she could not hope by any economy to repay, gave to her upright mind the most cutting uneasiness. But no resource remained; for, even if Captain Montreville could have quitted London within the hour, he had not the means of defraying the expense of the journey. Warren's promises had hitherto produced nothing but hope, and there was no immediate prospect that the payment of the annuity would relieve the difficulty.

Laura turned a despairing wish towards her picture, lamenting that she had ever formed her presumptuous scheme; and hating herself for having, by her presence, increased the perplexities of her father. She prevailed on him; however, to defer borrowing the money till the following day; and once more, accompanied by Julia, bent her almost hopeless steps towards the print-shop.

Silent and melancholy she passed on, equally regardless of the admiration which she occasionally extorted, and of the animadversions called forth by the appearance of so elegant a woman on foot in the streets of the city. As she entered the shop, she cast a half-despairing look toward the place where her picture had hung, and her heart leaped when she perceived it was gone. "Well, ma'am," said Wilkins, approaching her, "it is sold at last, and here is the money;" and he put into her hands by far the largest sum they had ever contained. "You may have as much more whenever you please," continued he, "for the gentleman who bought it wants a companion painted."

Laura spoke not—she had not, indeed, the power to speak;—but she raised her eyes with a look that intelligibly said, "Blessed Father! thy tender mercies are over all thy works." Recollecting herself, she thanked Wilkins, liberally rewarded him for his trouble, and then taking her companion by the arm, she hastened homewards.

The sight of Laura's wealth powerfully affected the mind of Miss Dawkins, and she formed an immediate resolution to grow rich by similar means. One little objection to this scheme occurred to her, namely, that she had learnt to draw only flowers, and that even this humble branch of the art she had discontinued since she left school. But she thought that a little practice would repair what she had lost, and that though, perhaps, flowers might not be quite so productive as historical pieces, she might better her fortune by her works; at the least, they would furnish her with clothes and pocket-money. Upon this judicious plan, she harangued with great volubility to Laura, who, buried in her own reflections, walked silently on, unconscious even of the presence of her loquacious companion.

As she approached her home, she began to frame a little speech, with which she meant to present her treasure to her father; and, on entering the house, she flew with a beating heart to find him. She laid her wealth upon his knee. "My dearest father," she began, "the picture —" and she fell upon his neck and burst into tears. Sympathetic tears stood in the eyes of Montreville. He had been surprised at the stoicism with which his daughter appeared to him to support her disappointment,



and he was not prepared to expect from her so much sensibility to success. But though Laura had learned, from frequent experience, how to check the feelings of disappointment, to pleasure such as she now felt she was new, and she could not control its emotions.\* So far was she, however, from thinking that sensibility was bestowed merely for an ornament, (an opinion which many fair ladies appear to entertain,) that the expression of it was always with her an occasion of shame. Unable at this moment to contain herself, she burst from her father's embrace, and hiding herself in her chamber, poured forth a fervent thanksgiving to Him who "feedeth the ravens when they cry to him."

"This money is yours, my love," said Captain Montreville to her when she returned to the parlor. "I cannot bear to rob you of it. Take it, and you can supply me when I am in want of it." The face and neck of Laura flushed crimson. Her whole soul revolted at the thought of her father's feeling himself a pensioner on her bounty. "No, indeed, sir," she replied with energy; "it is yours—it always was intended for you. But for you, I could never have acquired it." "I will not disappoint your generosity, my dearest," said Montreville; "part I will receive from you, but the rest you must keep. I know you must have many little wants." "No, papa," said Laura; "so liberal has your kindness been to me, that I cannot at this moment name a single want." "Wishes, then, you surely have," said the captain, still pressing the money upon her; "and let the first-fruits of your industry supply them." "I have no wishes," said Laura; "none, at least, which money can gratify; and when I have," added she, with an affectionate smile, "let their gratification come from you, that its pleasure may be doubled to me."

No creature could less value money for its own sake than did Laura. All her wealth, the fruit of so much labor and anxiety, would not have purchased the attire of a fashionable lady for one evening. She, who had been accustomed to wander in happy freedom among her native hills, was imprisoned amidst the smoke and dust of a city. Without a companion, almost without an acquaintance, to invigorate her spirits for the task, it was her province to revive the fainting hopes, and beguile the tedium of her father, who was depressed by disappointment in his pursuits, and disconcerted by the absence of his accustomed employments. She was at a distance from the object not only of a tender affection, but of a romantic passion,—a passion, ardent in proportion as its object was indebted to her imagination for his power. Scarce three months had elapsed since the depravity of this idolized being had burst on her in thunder; and the thought of it was still daggers to her heart, and it was very doubtful whether he ever could give such proofs of reformation as might make it safe for her to restore him to his place in her regard. Yet he it known to all who, from similar circumstances, feel entitled to fancy themselves miserable, and thus (if they live with beings of common humanity) make others really so, that no woman ever passed an evening in more heartfelt content, than Laura did that which our history is

now recording. She did, indeed, possess that which, next to the overflowings of a pious heart, confers the purest happiness on this side heaven. She felt that she was useful. Nay, in one respect, the consciousness of a successful discharge of duty has the advantage over the fervors of devotion: for Providence, wise in its bounty, has decreed, that while these foretastes of heavenly rapture are transient, lest their delights should detach us from the business of life, we are invited to a religious practice by the permanence of its joys.

## CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN MONTREVILLE and his daughter were engaged in a friendly contest on the subject of a companion for the picture, when De Courcy made his visit. Though, as he entered the room, something unfashionably like a blush visited his face, his manner was free from rustic embarrassment. "I believe," said he, advancing towards Captain Montreville, "I must apologize for the intrusion of a stranger. My person must have outgrown your recollection. My name, I hope, has been more fortunate. It is De Courcy."

"The son, I presume, of Major de Courcy," said Montreville, cordially extending his hand to him.

"Yes," replied Montague, heartily taking the offered hand; "the same whose childhood was indebted to you for so many pleasures."

"My old friend Montague!" cried the captain; "though your present form is new to me, I remember my lovely little noble-spirited play-fellow with an interest which I have never felt in any other child except this girl."

"And who knows," said De Courcy, turning to Laura with a smile, "who knows what cause I may find to rue that Miss Montreville is past the age when I might have repaid her father's kindness by assiduities to her doll?"

"That return," said Laura, coloring, as she recollected her late champion, "would not have been quite so arduous as the one you have already made. I hope you have had no further trouble with those rude people."

"No, madam," answered De Courcy, "nor did I expect it; the spirits which are so insolent where they dare, are submissive enough where they must." Laura now explained to her father her obligation to De Courcy; and the captain having thanked him for his interference, the conversation took a general turn.

Elated as he was with the successful industry and genius of his child, and pleased with the attentions of the son of his friend, the spirits of Montreville rose higher than they had ever done since his arrival in London. Won by the happy mixture of familiarity and respect, of spirit and gentleness, which distinguished the manners of De Courcy, the captain became cheerful, and Laura almost talkative; the conversation rose from easy to animated, from animated to gay; and two hours had passed before any of the party was aware that one fourth of that time was gone. Laura's general reserve with strangers seemed to have forsaken her while she conversed with De Courcy.

But De Courcy was not a stranger.

character she knew him well. Hargrave had mentioned to her his intimacy with De Courcy. Nay, De Courcy had, at the hazard of his life, saved the life of Hargrave. Laura had heard her lover dwell with the eloquence of gratitude upon the courage, the presence of mind, with which (while others, confounded by his danger, or fearing for their own safety, left him to perish without aid) De Courcy had seized a fisher's net, and, binding one end of it to a tree, the other to his body, had plunged into the water, and intercepted Hargrave, just as the stream was hurrying him to the brink of a tremendous fall. "All struggle was in vain," had Hargrave said to the breathless Laura; "but for that noble fellow, that minute would have been my last, and I should have died without awakening this interest so dear to my heart."—"I wish I could see this De Courcy," had Laura fervently exclaimed.—"Heaven forbid!" had been the hasty reply; "for your habits, your pursuits, your sentiments, are so similar that he would gain without labor, perhaps without a wish, the heart that has cost me so much anxious toil." A recollection of this dialogue stole into the mind of Laura, as De Courcy was expressing an opinion which, though not a common one, coincided exactly with her own. For a moment she was absent and thoughtful; but De Courcy continued the conversation, and she resumed her gaiety.

When unwillingly at last he rose to take his leave, Captain Montreville detained him while he made some friendly inquiries into the history of the family for the last twenty years. As the questions of the captain, however, were not impertinently minute, nor the answers of De Courcy very copious, it may not be improper to supply what is wanting in the narrative.

Major De Courcy was the representative of a family, who could trace their descent from the time of the Conqueror,—an advantage which they valued above the hereditary possessions of their fathers; and if an advantage ought to be estimated by its durability, they were in the right; for the former, of necessity, was improved by time; the latter seemed tending towards decline. Frederick de Courcy was suffered to follow his inclinations in entering the army; because that was the profession the most suitable to the dignity of an ancient house. That it was of all professions the least likely to improve his fortune, was a consideration equally despised by his father and by himself. When he attained his seventeenth year, a commission was purchased for him. Stored with counsels, sufficient, if he followed them, to conduct him to wisdom and happiness, and with money sufficient to make these counsels of no avail, he set out from his paternal house to join his regiment. Thus was De Courcy, in his dangerous passage from youth to manhood, committed to the guidance of example, and the discretion belonging to his years, fortified, indeed, by the injunctions of his parents, and his own resolutions, never to disgrace his descent. But this bulwark, he soon found, was too weak to resist the number and variety of the weapons which attacked him. The shafts of ridicule assailed him; his own passions took up arms; his pride itself turned against him. Unable to resist with vigor, he ceased to resist at all;

and was hurried into every folly in which his companions wished for the assistance of his purse or for the countenance of his example.

His father's liberal allowance was soon insufficient to supply his extravagance. He contracted debts. After severe but well merited reproof, his father paid them; and De Courcy promised amendment. A whole week of strict sobriety ensued; and the young soldier was convinced that his resolution was immutable. And so he would probably have found it, if now, the first time since man was made, temptation had become weaker by victory, or virtue stronger by defeat. But though he had tasted the glittering bait of folly, and though he at times confessed its insipidity, the same lure again prevailed, and De Courcy was again entangled in pecuniary embarrassments. What was to be done? His father had declared his irrevocable determination no further to injure the interests of his younger children by supplying the prodigality of the eldest. By the advice of a veteran in profusion, De Courcy had recourse to Jews. As it was in his father's power to disinherit him, it was necessary to conceal these transactions; and the high spirit of Frederick was compelled to submit to all the evasions, embarrassments, and wretchedness, which attend a clandestine course of action.

Often did he illustrate the trite observation that no life is more remote from happiness than a life of pleasure. The reward of all his labor was satiety; the wages of all his self-reproach were the applauses of the thoughtless for his spirit—the lamentations of the wise, that an honorable mind should be so perverted. In his twenty-second year, his father's death left him at liberty to pay his old debts, and to contract new. That which has preserved the virtue of many young men, prevented the total ruin of De Courcy. He became attached to a virtuous woman; and influenced much by inclination, more by the wishes of her friends she married him.

Mrs. de Courcy brought no dowry except the beauty which had captivated her husband, the sweetness which prolonged her power, and the good sense which made that power useful. She therefore did not think herself entitled to remonstrate very warmly on the negligence that appeared in the conduct of her husband's affairs; and it was not till after she became a mother that she judged it proper to interfere. Her gentle remonstrances, however, procured little effect beyond the promises and vague resolutions, that at some "convenient season" the major would examine into the real state of his fortune.

Accident at last befriended her endeavors. Soon after the birth of her second child (a daughter) a demand was made on De Courcy for a debt which he had not the means of discharging. He could not apply to the Jew; for he had solemnly pledged his word to Mrs. de Courcy, that he would never more have recourse to that ruinous expedient. He was discussing with his wife the possibility of procuring the money by a new mortgage, while Montague, then a child of four years old, was playing in the room. Struck by the melancholy tone of his mother's voice, the child forsook his play, and taking hold of her gown, looked anx-

iously from one morntal face to the other. "I am as averse to it as you can be my, dear," said the major, "but there is no other way of raising the money." "Wait till I am a man, papa," said the child, "and then Betty says I shall have a good two thousand pounds a year, and I will give it all to you. And here," added he, searching his little pocket, "here is my pretty shilling that Captain Montreville gave me; take it, and don't look sorry any more." Mrs. de Courcy passionately loved this child. Overcome by the feeling of the moment, she clasped him in her arms. "My poor wronged child!" she exclaimed, and burst into tears.

These were the first words of bitterness which Major de Courcy had ever heard from her lips; and overcome by them, and by her tears, he gave her a hasty promise that he would that very hour, begin the examination of his affairs. Sensible of her advantage, she permitted not his purpose to slumber, but persuaded him to a full inquiry into the extent of his debts; and in order to remove him from future temptations, she prevailed on him to sell his commission, and reside at his paternal Norwood.

After selling so much of his estate as to clear the remainder from all incumbrance, he found his income diminished to little more than a third of its original extent. His family pride reviving at the sight of the halls of his fathers, and a better affection awakening in his intercourse with the descendants of those whom his ancestors had protected, he determined to guard against the possibility of Norwood and its tenants being transferred to strangers, and retained the remains of his property on Montague de Courcy, in the strictest forms of English law. For Mrs. de Courcy he made but a slender provision. For his daughter he made none; but he determined to save from his income a sum sufficient to supply this deficiency. He was still a young man, and never thought of doubting whether he might live long enough to accomplish his design, or whether the man who had found an income of £2000 a year too small for his necessities, might be able to make savings from one of £800. In spite of the soberness of the establishment, which, during the novelty of his reform, he allowed Mrs. de Courcy to arrange, he continued to find uses for all the money he could command. His fields wanted inclosing; his house needed repairs; his son's education was an increasing expense; and he died while Montague was yet a boy, without having realized any part of his plans in favor of his daughter.

He left the highest testimony to the understanding and worth of Mrs. de Courcy, by making her the sole guardian of his children; and the steady rectitude and propriety of her conduct justified his confidence. Aware of the radical defect of every mode of education which neglects or severs the domestic tie, yet convinced that the house where he was master, and the dependents whom he could command, were dangerous scenes and companions for a youth of Montague's spirit, she committed him to the care of a clergyman whose residence was a few miles distant from Norwood, and who also took charge of four other boys of about the same age.

This gentleman was admirably fitted for his trust; for he had a cultivated understanding, an affectionate heart, sound piety, and a calm but inflexible temper. Add to which he had travelled, and, in his youth, associated much with men of rank, and more with men of talents; though, since he had become a pastor, the range of his moral observation had been narrowed to the hearts of a few simple villagers, which were open to him as to their father and their friend. The boys studied and played together; but they had a separate apartment; for Mr. Wentworth had himself been educated at a public school, and never recollected, without shuddering, the hour when his youthful modesty first had shrunk from sharing his bed with a stranger, and when the prayer for his parents, which he was mingling with his tears, had been disturbed by the jokes of a little rabble.

Every Saturday did Montague bend his joyful course homewards, regardless of summer's heat or winter storms. Every Sunday did his mother spend in mixing the lessons of piety with the endearments of love, in striving to connect the idea of a superintending God with all that is beautiful—all that is majestic—in nature. As her children grew up, she unfolded to them the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, so sublime, so consolatory, so suitable to the wants of man. Aware how much occasion favors the strength of impressions, she chose the hour of strong remorse, on account of a youthful fault, while the culprit yet trembled before the offended Majesty of Heaven, to explain to her son the impossibility that repentance should, of itself, cancel errors past, or that the great Lawgiver should accept a few ineffectual tears, or a tardy and imperfect obedience, as a compensation for the breach of a law which is perfect. When she saw that the intended impression was made, she spoke of the great atonement which once was offered, not to make repentance unnecessary, but to make it effectual; and, from that time, using this as one of the great landmarks of faith, she contributed to render it, in the mind of De Courcy, a practical and abiding principle. The peculiar precepts of Christianity she taught him to apply to his actions, by applying them herself; and the praise which is so often lavished upon boldness, dexterity, and spirit, she conscientiously reserved for acts of candor, humility, and self-denial.

Her cares were amply rewarded, and Montague became all that she wished him to be. He was a Christian from the heart, without being either forward to claim, or ashamed to own, the distinction. He was industrious in his pursuits, and simple in his pleasures. But the distinctive feature of his character was the total absence of selfishness. His own pleasure or his own amusement he never hesitated to sacrifice to the wishes of others; or, to speak more correctly, he found his pleasure and amusement in theirs. Upon the whole, we do not say that Montague de Courcy had no faults, but we are sure he had none which he did not strive to conquer. Like other human beings, he sometimes acted wrong; but we believe he would not deliberately have neglected a known duty to escape any worldly misfortune; we are sure he would not deliberately have committed a crime to attain any earthly advantage.

Desirous that her darling should enjoy the benefit of the most liberal education, yet afraid to trust him to the temptations of an English university, Mrs. de Courcy went for some years to reside in Edinburgh during the winter—in summer she returned with her family to Norwood. To his private studies, and his paternal home, Montague returned with ever new delight; for his tastes and his habits were all domestic. He had no ambitious wishes to lure him from his retreat, for his wants were even more moderate than his fortune. Except in so far as he could make it useful to others, he had no value for money, nor for anything that money could buy, exclusive of the necessaries of life, books, and implements of chemistry. The profession which he had chosen was that of improving and embellishing his estate; in the tranquil pleasures of a country gentleman, a man of taste, a classical scholar, and a chemist, he found means to occupy himself without injury to his health, his morals, or his fortune. His favorite amusements were drawing and physiognomy; and, like other favorites, these were, sometimes, in danger of making encroachments, and advancing into the rank of higher concerns. But this he prevented by an exact distribution of his time, to which he resolutely adhered.

With his mother and his sister he lived in the most perfect harmony, though the young lady had the reputation of wit, and was certainly a little addicted to sarcasm. But she was, in other respects, amiable, and incapable of doing anything to offend her brother, whose indignation, indeed, never rose unless against cruelty, meanness, or deceit.

De Courcy had just entered his twenty-fifth year, when a rheumatic fever deprived his mother of the use of her limbs; and, forsaking all his employments, he had quitted his beloved Norwood to attend her in London, whither she had come for the benefit of medical advice. He had been but a few days in town when he met with Miss Montreville, and the impression which her beauty made, the second interview tended to confirm.

Montague had never, even in imagination, been in love. The regulation of his passions, the improvement of his mind, and the care of his property, had hitherto left him no leisure for the tender folly. He had scarcely ever thought of a young woman's face, except with a reference to Lavater's opinion; or of her manners, except to wonder how she could be so obtrusive. But, in contemplating Laura's face, he forgot the rules of the physiognomist; and, in the interesting reserve of her manners, he found continually something to desire. If, at the close of his visit, he was not in love, he was, at least, in a fair way for being so. He was assailed at once by beauty, grace, good sense, and sweetness; and to these Laura added the singular charm of being wholly insensible to their effects upon the beholder. No side-glance was sent in search of admiration; no care was taken to compose her drapery; no look of triumph accompanied her judicious remarks; no parade of sensibility disgraced her tenderness. Every charm was heightened by a matchless absence of all design; and against this formidable battery had poor De Courcy to

make his stand, just at the inauspicious hour when, for the first time in his life, he had nothing else to do.

## CHAPTER XII.

As soon as De Courcy was gone, Captain Montreville launched out warmly in his praise. Laura joined in the eulogium; and, the next moment, forgot that there was such a person in existence, when she read a letter from Mrs. Douglas, of which the following is a part:

"Before this reaches you, Colonel Hargrave will be far on his way to London. It is possible that you may have no interest in this journey; but, lest you should, I wish to prevent your being taken by surprise. Since your departure he has repeatedly visited us; and endeavored, both directly and indirectly, to discover your address. Perhaps you will think my caution ill-timed; but I acted according to my best judgment, in avoiding to comply with his desire. I think, however, that he has elsewhere procured the information he wanted; for his features wore an air of triumph, as he asked my commands for you.

"Dear child of my affections, richly endowed as you are with the dangerous gift of beauty, you have hitherto escaped, as if by miracle, from the snares of folly and frivolity. My heart's prayer for you is, that you may be as safe from the dangers which await you, in the passions of others, and in the tenderness of your own heart. But, alas! my beloved Laura, distant as I am from you, ignorant as I am of the peculiarities of your situation, I can only pray for you. I fear to express my conjectures, lest I should seem to extort your confidence. I fear to caution, lest I should shock or offend you. Yet, let me remind you that it is easier, by one bold effort, to reject temptation, than to resist its continued allurements. Effectually to bar the access of the tempter may cost a painful effort—to parley with him is destruction. But I must stop. Tears of anxious affection blot out what I have written.

E. DOUGLAS."

The joyful expectation of seeing Hargrave filled for a time the heart of Laura, and left no room for other thoughts. The first that found entrance was of a less pleasing cast. She perceived that Mrs. Douglas suspected Hargrave of the baseness of deliberate seduction; and, with a feeling of indignation, she collected her writing materials, and sat down to exculpate him. But, as she again read her friend's expression of affection, and considered how little the suspicion was remote from the truth, she accused herself of ingratitude and injustice in giving way to anything like resentment. She thanked Mrs. Douglas for her cautions; but assured her that the proposals of Hargrave were honorable, unequivocal, and sanctioned by her father; that they had been rejected by herself; and, therefore, that no motive, except that of vindicating him from an unfounded suspicion, should have tempted her to betray, even to her most confidential friend, a secret which she thought a woman bound, both in delicacy and in honor, to keep inviolable. She did not once hint at the cause of her rejecting an offer so

splendid, nor, except by the warmth with which she defended her lover, did she show a trace of inclination which she had so nobly sacrificed to virtue. For though she felt that her story would have raised her in her friend's esteem, she scorned to purchase that advantage at the expense of another, and retained all her aversion to exposing the faults of Hargrave.

Having finished her letter, she returned to the more agreeable subject of contemplation, and began to calculate upon the time when she might expect to see the colonel. Her conclusion was, that he would probably visit her on the following day, and her heart throbbled with delight at the prospect.

But from the dream of joy, Laura soon returned to the more habitual consideration of the line of conduct which it was fit that she should pursue. She saw the folly of committing her happiness to the guardianship of one whose passions were his masters; and, while it was her daily prayer that she might not be led into temptation, her conscience revolved from trusting her conduct to the guidance, her virtue to the example, of a man whose principles were doubtful. For Laura's virtue was not of that saint-errant kind which sallies forth in quest of opportunities to signalize itself, and inflames its pride by meditation on the wonders it would achieve, if placed in perilous situations. Distrustful of herself—watchful to avoid occasions of falling—she had no ambition for the dangerous glory of reforming a rake into a good husband. She therefore adhered to her determination, that she would not consent to a union with her lover, till by a course of virtuous conduct, he had given proof that his offence had been the sudden fault of a moment, not the deliberate purpose of a corrupted heart.

Yet even in this mitigated view, the recollection was poison to the soul of Laura. The painful thought was far from new to her, that the passion of Hargrave was a tribute to her personal charms alone. With such a passion, even were its continuance possible, Laura felt that she could not be satisfied. To be the object of it degraded her in her own eyes. "No, no!" she exclaimed, covering her face with her hands, "let me not even legally occupy only the place which the vilest might fill. If I cannot be the friend, the companion, as well as the mistress, better, far better were it, that we should part forever."

No labor is sufficient to acquaint us fully with our own hearts. It never occurred to Laura, that she was, as much as Hargrave, the captive of mere externals; and that his character would never have deceived her penetration, had it been exhibited in the person of a little red-haired man, with bandy legs, who spoke broad Scotch, and smoked tobacco. Till the hour when he had himself dispelled the illusion, the character of Hargrave, such as she chose to imagine it, had been to her a theme of the most delightful contemplation; and to its fascinations she had willingly and entirely resigned herself. The disguise, which was rather the excuse than the cause of her passion, had been dropped in part; yet the passion was as strong as ever. It was, indeed, no longer pleasing, no longer blind, no

longer paramount; for her reason, which had before been silent, was now permitted to speak, and though it was unable to conquer, it could control. She anticipated the vehemence with which Hargrave would urge her to shorten the term of his probation, and she feared that she should find it difficult, perhaps impossible, to resist his entreaties. She would not, therefore, expose her prudence to too severe a trial. "Yes," said she, "I will bar the access of the temper. I will see Hargrave only once, and that shall be to bid him farewell, till the stipulated two years are finished. If he really loves me, his affection will survive absence. If it fail in the trial, I may, though lost to happiness, find in my solitude a peace which never can visit a neglected wife."

This philosophical conclusion was the fruit of her meditations during a restless night; and having worked herself, as she thought, into a temper decorously relentless, she proceeded, with all the consistency of her sex, to adorn her person with a care she had never before bestowed upon it. She arranged every curl for effect; chose a dress which showed to advantage the graceful slope of her shoulders, and brightened the whiteness of her neck and arms, by contrasting it with fillets of jet. Though she was but indifferently pleased with her success, it proved sufficient for her occasion. The day passed away, and Hargrave did not appear. Laura was disappointed, but not surprised; for it was barely possible that he could have reached London on that day. On the succeeding one she thought it likely that he might come; but the succeeding one was equally barren of event.

On the third she was certain that he would arrive; and, when breakfast was over, she seated herself in expectation at the window of the front parlor, startled if a carriage stopped, and listened to every voice that sounded from below stairs. Half desirous to escape her father's observation, half wishing that her interview with Hargrave should be without witnesses, she persuaded Captain Montreville to go and pay his respects to Mrs. De Courcy. Anxiously she waited, conjectured, doubted, reconsulted Mrs. Douglas's letter. The captain returned; the hours of visiting passed away; and still no Hargrave came.

Unwilling to own, even to herself, the extent of her anxiety and disappointment, Laura talked to her father of his visit, with which he had been highly pleased. He had been amused with Harriet; charmed with Mrs. de Courcy; and doubly charmed with Montague, whom he praised as a scholar and a man of sense, as an affectionate brother and a respectful son; and to crown all these commendations, he declared, that De Courcy was more than a match for himself at chess.

When they retired for the night, Laura returned to her conjectures on the cause of Hargrave's delay. She considered that he might have been detained on the road, or might have found it necessary to make a visit on his way. She had little doubt, that to see her was the object of his journey to London at this unfashionable season. She had none, that he would hurry to her the first moment that it was possible. By degrees, she persuaded herself into

an absolute certainty that she should see him on the following day; and on that day she again took her anxious station in the parlor.

She was ashamed to lean over the window, and could not otherwise see who entered the house; but she left the room door a-jar, that she might have warning of his approach, held her breath to distinguish the voices from below, and listened eagerly to every footstep. At last, she imagined that she heard the wished-for inquiry. She was sure some one pronounced her name. A man's step ascended the stair; Laura trembled, and her breath came short. She feared to look up, and leaned her face on her hand to conceal her emotion.

The voice of her visitor made her start, and turn her head. It was Warren!

Expectation had been wound up to its highest pitch, and Laura could not instantly recover herself. She paid her compliments with a confusion and trepidation, which Warren interpreted in a way most flattering to his vanity. He approached her with a look, in which ill-suppressed triumph contended with labored condescension; and spoke to her in a voice which seemed to say, "Pray, endeavor to reassure yourself." But Laura was in no humor to endure his impertinence, and she seized the first opportunity to leave the room.

Captain Montreville soon entered on the business in which he took such painful interest, by inquiring whether any traces had been discovered of the sale of his daughter's annuity. Warren, with abundance of regret and condolence, informed him, that Williams had as yet been able to discover no mention of the transaction in the books.

This assertion was so far true, that Williams had as yet seen no record of the business in question; for which Mr. Warren could, if he had chosen, have given a very satisfactory reason. From the moment this gentleman had first seen Laura, he had been determined not willfully to expedite her departure from London; and therefore he had casually dropped a hint to his solicitor, that, as he was already overwhelmed with a multitude of affairs, it was unnecessary to hasten a concern of such trivial importance; and that he might defer inquiring into the sale of the annuity till he was at perfect leisure. Had he insinuated to Williams, that this delay was detaining from his home a man who could ill afford the consequent expense, or that it was alarming a father for the future subsistence of his only child, the attorney would have found leisure to investigate the matter, even if he had subtracted the necessary time from his hours of rest. But the upright Mr. Warren had given no such intimation; and in this honorable transaction, he was, for the present, secure from detection, for he knew that business had called his agent to a distance from London.

Captain Montreville knew not what to think. He could not doubt the integrity of Mr. Baynard, nor could he imagine to what purpose Warren should deny the transaction; since, if it had really taken place, the vouchers of it must be found among his deceased friend's papers. He was persuaded that to examine the books according to the date of the sale could be the work of only a few hours; and again he inquired

whether the necessary examination had been made. Mr. Warren answered, that he could not take it upon him to say that every possible search had yet been made; but his agent, he said, had examined all the most probable records of the concern, and would, on his return to town, make a still more particular scrutiny.

With this unsatisfactory answer, Captain Montreville was obliged to content himself. He had only one alternative—either to wait in London the appointment of the person who was to arrange Mr. Baynard's papers, or to return to Scotland, and resign all hopes of the annuity. He feared, too, to offend Warren by urging him too strongly, since, even should a voucher of the payment of 1500*l.* be found, the informality in the deed would still leave room for litigation. No merely personal interest would have induced the high spirit of Montreville to conciliate a man whom he despised as a fool and a coxcomb. For nothing that concerned himself alone would he have submitted to the trouble and anxiety which he had lately undergone. Ill calculated by nature to struggle with difficulties, he had long been accustomed to let the lesser disasters glide by without notice, and to sink without effort under the greater. Disappointed in the woman of his choice, and deprived, by her folly or perverseness, of the domestic pleasures which he loved, his mind had taken a cast of melancholy. Early secluded from society, and tormented by the temper of his wife, he had concentrated all the affections which solitude confined, and caprice rejected, upon one object,—and Laura became the passion of his soul. The thought of leaving her destitute, of leaving her sensibility to the scorn, her beauty to the temptations, of poverty, was more than he could bear, and it sometimes almost overpowered him. He was naturally inclined to indolence; and as, like all indolent people, he was the creature of habit, his spirits had suffered much from the loss of the woman, who, though too heartless for a friend, and too bitter for a companion, had for twenty years served him as a sort of stimulus. The same force of habit, joined to her improving graces and confirming worth, made Laura daily more dear to him, and he would willingly have given his life to secure her independence and happiness.

Brooding on the obscurity in which she must remain, whom he judged worthy to adorn the highest station—on the poverty which awaited her during his life—on the want to which his death must consign her—removed from his habitual occupations, and deprived of the wholesome air and exhilarating exercises to which he had been so long accustomed,—he allowed his spirits to grow daily more depressed. Along with the idea of the misfortunes which his death would bring upon his darling, the fear of death settled on his mind. The little ailments to which the sedentary are liable, he magnified into the symptoms of mortal disease; and momentary pain seemed to his fancy to foretell sudden dissolution. Montreville was fast sinking into a melancholy hypochondriac.

His daughter's spirits, too, failed under continued expectation, and continued disappointment; for day after day passed on, and still Hargrave came not. Her father's dejection

increased her own, and her ill-disguised depression had a similar effect upon him. While, however, Captain Montreville gave way without effort to his feelings, the more vigorous mind of Laura struggled to suppress the sorrow which she saw was contagious. She sometimes prevailed upon her father to seek amusement abroad, sometimes endeavored to amuse him at home. She read to him, sung to him, exerted all her conversational talent to entertain him; and, often, when all was in vain, when he would answer her by forced smiles, languid gestures, or heavy sighs, she would turn aside to wipe the tears from her eyes, then smile, and attempt her task again.

In these labors she had now, it is true, the assistance of an intelligent companion. De Courcy came often; and the captain seemed to receive a pleasure from his visits, which even Laura's efforts could not bestow. The tenderness of his child, indeed, appeared sometimes to overpower him; for, when she was exerting herself to divert his melancholy, he would gaze upon her for a while in an agony of fondness, then suddenly desire to be left alone, and dismiss her from his presence. But De Courcy's attentions seemed always welcome. He soothed the irritated mind with respectful assiduities—he felt for its sickly sensibility—and, though ignorant of the cause of Montreville's dejection, found in alleviating it a pleasure, which was more than doubled by the undisguised approbation and gratitude of Laura.

His sister, too, came to visit Miss Montreville, and, apologizing for her mother, who was unable to accompany her, brought an invitation for the captain and his daughter to dine in Audley street. Laura, in hopes of amusing her father, prevailed on him to accept the invitation; and an early day was fixed for the visit. She was pleased with the frankness and gayety of Harriet's manner, and her curiosity was roused by Captain Montreville's praises of Mrs. de Courcy.

The day arrived, and Laura prepared to accompany her father, not without trepidation at the thought of entering, for the first time in her life, a room which she expected to find full of strangers. When she had finished dressing, he examined her with triumph, and thought that nothing in nature was so perfect. The thought was legible in his countenance, and Laura, with great simplicity, answered to it as if it had been spoken. "Except to please you," said she, "I wish I had been neither tall nor pretty, for then I should have been allowed to move about without notice." "Then, too," thought she, with a heavy sigh, "I should have been loved for myself, and not have been perhaps forgotten."

Laura was not ignorant of her own beauty, but no human being could less value the distinction. She was aware of the regularity of her features; but as she never used a looking-glass, unless for the obvious purpose of arranging her dress, she was insensible of the celestial charm which expression added to her face. The seriousness and dignity of her manners made it difficult to address her with commonplace compliment; and she had accordingly never experienced any effect of her beauty, but one which was altogether disagreeable to her,

that of attracting notice. To being the subject of observation, Laura retained that Caledonian dislike which once distinguished her countrywomen, before they were polished into that glitter which attracts the vulgar, and paid for the acquisition by losing the timidity which, like the aerugo of ancient coin, adds value in the eye of taste to intrinsic worth, while it shields even baser merit from contempt.

Laura's courage failed her when, throwing open the door of a large room, Mrs. de Courcy's servant announced Captain and Miss Montreville. But she revived when she perceived that the company consisted only of the mistress of the house, her son and daughter. Mrs. de Courcy's appearance seemed to Laura very prepossessing. She still wore the dress of a widow; and her countenance bore the traces of what is called a green old age; for though the hair that shaded her commanding forehead was silver white, her dark eyes retained their brightness; and though her complexion was pale, it glowed at times with the roses of youth. The expression of her face, which was serious even to solemnity, brightened with a smile of inexpressible benevolence, as she received her guests; and, even in the difficulty with which she appeared to move, Laura found somewhat interesting. Her air and manners, without a tincture of fashion, spoke the gentlewoman. Her dress, her person, her demeanor, every thing about her, seemed consistently respectable.

The dinner was plain, but excellent. The few indispensable pieces of plate were antique and massive; and the only attendant who appeared seemed to have grown gray in the service of the family. Laura had pleasure in observing, that the reverence with which this old man addressed his lady softened into affectionate solicitude to please when he attended De Courcy, who, in his turn, seemed to treat him with the most considerate gentleness.

Mrs. de Courcy behaved to Laura with distinguished politeness; addressed her often; endeavored to draw forth her latent powers; and soon made her sensible that the impression she had given was no less favorable than that which she had received. Montague's conversation had its accustomed effect on Montreville, and the lively Harriet gave spirit to the whole. The evening passed most agreeably; and Laura was sorry when the hour of separation arrived. Mrs. de Courcy courteously thanked her for her visit, and begged her to repeat it; but Harriet sportively objected: "No, no," said she, "if you come back, you will not leave a heart among all the household—even old John seems in danger."

"Well, mamma," continued she, when Laura was gone, "what do you think of my brother's beauty?"—"I think," said Mrs. de Courcy, "that Montague's praises did her no more than justice. She is the most lovely, the most elegant woman I ever saw." "She is no doubt beautiful and interesting," returned Harriet—"but I must still think she has too much of the buckram of the old school to be elegant." Montague bit his lip, and tried, before he spoke, to ascertain that he was not angry. "You are too severe, Harriet," said Mrs. de Courcy; "Miss Montreville's reserve is not stiffness—it is not 'buckram'; it is rather the graceful drapery,

embellishing what it veils." "Mother," cried Montague, grasping her hand, "you have more candor, sense, and taste, than all the misses in England." "Oh! pray, except Miss Montreville and the present company," said Harriet, laughing. "She, you know, is all perfection—and I have really candor, sense, and taste enough to admire her more than ever I did any woman, except my little self." De Courcy threw his arm round her. "I see, by that good-natured smile," said he, "that my dear Harriet has at least candor enough to pardon the folly of a wayward brother." And, for the rest of the evening, he treated her with even more than his usual attentive kindness.

From this day Miss de Courcy frequently accompanied her brother on his visits to the Montrevilles, and Laura was a welcome guest in Audley street. By degrees Mrs. de Courcy and she discovered the real worth of each other's character, and their mutual reserve entirely disappeared. Between Laura and De Courcy, almost from the first hour of their acquaintance, there seemed (to use the language of romance) a sympathy of souls; an expression which, if it has any meaning, must mean the facility with which simple, upright, undesigning minds become intelligible to each other. Even the sarcastic Harriet found, in the chaste propriety of Laura's character, something to command respect; and, in her gentleness and warmth of heart, something to engage affection; while in her ideas, which solitude had slightly tinged with romance, though strong sense had preserved them from absurdity, and in her language, which sometimes rose to the very verge of poetry, she found constantly somewhat to interest and amuse.

Meanwhile Montreville's dejection seemed to increase; and Laura's health and spirits, in spite of her efforts to support them, daily declined. Hargrave did not appear, and vainly did she endeavor to account for his absence. She at first conjectured that he had found it impossible to leave Scotland at the time he proposed; but a second letter from Mrs. Douglas had mentioned his departure, and repeated the assurance that, however obtained, he had information of Laura's address, since he had undertaken to be the bearer of a letter from a neighboring gentleman to Captain Montreville.

She next supposed that he had stopped on the road, or quitted it on some errand of business or pleasure—but a newspaper account of a fête champêtre, at Lady Bellamer's elegant villa at Richmond, was graced, among other fashionable names, with that of the handsome Colonel Hargrave, nephew and heir to Lord Lincourt. No supposition remained to be made, except the mortifying one, that three months of absence had erased her image from the fickle heart of Hargrave. She, who had herself consigned her lover to a banishment of two years, could not bear that he should voluntarily undergo one of a few weeks. Nay, she had once herself resigned him; but to be herself resigned without effort, was more than she could endure. Her appetite, her sleep, forsook her; her ordinary employments became irksome—and even the picture, the price of which was so soon to be necessary, she had not the spirits to finish.

But one who was accustomed every night to examine the thoughts and actions of the day, was not likely to remain long a prey to inactive melancholy. Not satisfied with languid efforts in the discharge of duty, she reproached herself for every failure. She upbraided herself as a wicked and slothful servant, who, when the means of usefulness were put within her power, suffered them to remain unimproved; as a rebel who had deserted the service of her rightful master, to bow to the worse than Egyptian bondage of her passions. She accused herself of having given up her love, her wishes, her hopes and fears, almost her worship, to an idol; and no sooner did this thought occur to the pious mind of Laura, than she became resigned to her loss. She even felt grateful—with such gratitude as the wretch feels under the knife which amputates the morbid limb.

Unused to let her self-reproaches pass without improvement, she resolved by vigorous efforts to become herself again. She even called in the aid of a decent pride. "Shall I," she cried, "who have vowed to overcome the world—I who have called myself by that glorious name, a Christian, sink from these honors into a love-sick girl? Shall all my happiness, all my duties, the comfort of my father, the very means of his support, be sacrificed to a selfish passion? Or is a love, whose transient duration has proved its degenerate nature, of such value to me, that I must repay it with my whole heart and soul!"

These reflections were not made at once, nor were they at once effectual; but when made, they were called in as oft as the image of Hargrave intruded unbidden; and constant and regular occupation was again employed to second their operation. The picture was again resorted to; but, as it afforded rather an unsocial employment, and as Laura's company was more than ever necessary to her father, it proceeded slowly.

De Courcy, was now a daily visitor. Sometimes he brought books, and would spend hours in reading aloud. Sometimes he would amuse the captain and his daughter by experiments in his favorite science. With a gentleness peculiar to himself, he tried to prevent the little annoyances to which hypochondriacs are subject. He invented a hundred little indulgences for the invalid; and no day passed in which Montreville was not indebted for some comfort, or some amusement, to the considerate kindness of De Courcy. At times he would gently rally the captain on his imaginary ailments, and sometimes prevailed on him to take an airing in Mrs. de Courcy's carriage; though to such a height had fancy worked upon the invalid, that Montague found it impossible to persuade him that he was able to endure the fatigue of walking.

To Laura, De Courcy's behavior, uniformly respectful and attentive, was sometimes even tender. But, accustomed to see love only in the impassioned looks of Hargrave, to hear its accents only in his words of fire, she did not recognize it in a new form; and to consider De Courcy as a lover, never once entered her imagination. Captain Montreville was more clear-sighted; and hence arose much of the pleasure which he took in De Courcy's visits. Not that he was more knowing in the mysteries of love



than his daughter; but he took it for granted that no mortal could withstand her attractions; and he was persuaded that Laura would not withhold her heart, where she so freely expressed approbation. This opinion was a proof of the justice of the captain's former confession, "that women were creatures he did not understand." Laura had never praised Hargrave. She never shrunk from De Courcy's eye—she never felt embarrassed by his presence—she treated him with the frankness of a sister; and though she reserved her commendations for his absence, she waited only for that to bestow them with all the warmth which his own merit and his attention to her father could demand.

Meanwhile Montreville did not, by a premature disclosure of his hopes, endanger their completion; and De Courcy continued unconsciously to foster in his bosom a passion which was destined to destroy his peace.

### CHAPTER XIII.

THE picture at last was finished, and Laura herself accompanied it to the print-shop. Wilkins immediately delivered to her the price, which, he said, had been for some time in his hands. It now occurred to Laura to ask who had been the purchaser of her work. "Why, ma'am," said Wilkins, "the gentleman desired me not to mention his name." "Indeed!" said Laura, surprised. "These were his orders, ma'am, but I shouldn't think there could be any great harm in telling it just to you, ma'am." "I have no wish to hear it," said Laura, with a look which compelled the confidant to unwilling discretion; and again thanking him for the trouble he had taken, she returned home. The truth was, that De Courcy had foreseen the probability of Laura's question, and averse to be known to her under a character which savored of patronage and protection, had forbidden the shopkeeper to mention who had purchased the pictures.

Again did Laura, delighted, present to her father the produce of her labors, her warm heart glowing with the joys of usefulness. But not as formerly did he with pleasure receive the gift. With the fretfulness of disease, he refused to share in her satisfaction. Through the gloom of melancholy, every object appeared distorted; and Captain Montreville saw in his daughter's well-earned treasure only the wages of degrading toil.

"It is hard, very hard," said he, with a deep sigh, "that you, my lovely child, the descendant of such a family, should be dependent on your daily labor for your support."

"Oh, call it not hard, my dear father," cried Laura. "Thanks, a thousand thanks, to your kind foresight, which, in teaching me this blessed art, secured to me the only real independence, by making me independent of all but my own exertion."

"Child," cried Montreville, fretfully, "there is an enthusiasm about you which will draw you into ten thousand errors—you are quite mistaken in fancying yourself independent. Your boasted art depends upon the taste, the very caprice, of the public for its reward; and

you, of course, upon the very same caprice for your very existence."

"It is true," answered Laura, mildly, "that my success depends upon taste, and that the public taste is capricious; but some, I should hope, will never be wanting, who can value and reward the labors of industry—you observe," added she with a smile, "that I rest nothing upon genius."

"Be that as it may," returned Captain Montreville, with increasing querulousness, "I cannot endure to see you degraded into an artist, and therefore I desire there may be no more of this traffic."

This was the first time that Montreville had ever resorted to the method well known and approved by those persons of both sexes, who, being more accustomed to the exercise of authority than of argument, choose to wield the weapon in the use of which practice has made them the most expert. Laura looked at him with affectionate concern: "Alas!" thought she, "if bodily disease be pitiable, how far more deplorable are its ravages on the mind." But even if her father had been in perfect health, she would not have chosen the moment of irritation for reply. Deeply mortified at this unexpected prohibition, she yet endeavored to consider it as only one of the transient caprices of illness, and to find pleasure in the thought, that the hour was come when De Courcy's daily visit would restore her father to some degree of cheerfulness.

But De Courcy's visit made no one cheerful. He was himself melancholy and absent. He said he had only a few minutes to spare, yet lingered above an hour; often rose to go, yet irresolutely resumed his seat. At last, starting up, he said, "The longer I remain here, the more unwilling I am to go; and yet I *must* go, without even knowing when I may return." "Are you going to leave us?" said Montreville, in a tone of despondency, "then we shall be solitary indeed." "I fear," said Laura, looking with kind solicitude in De Courcy's face, "that something distressing calls you away." "Distressing, indeed," said De Courcy. "My excellent old friend, Mr. Wentworth, has lost his only son, and I must bear the news to the parents." "Is there no one but you to do this painful office?" asked Montreville. "None," answered De Courcy, "on whom it could with such propriety fall. Wentworth was one of my earliest friends; he was my father's early friend. I owe him a thousand obligations; and I would fain, if it be possible, soften this heavy blow. Besides," added he, endeavoring to speak more cheerfully, "I have a selfish purpose to serve—"I want to see how a Christian bears misfortune." "And can you fix no time for your return?" asked the captain, mournfully. De Courcy shook his head. "You will not return while your presence is necessary to Mr. Wentworth," said Laura, less anxious to regain De Courcy's society than that he should support the character of benevolence with which her imagination had justly vested him. Grieved by the prospect of losing his companion, fretted by an indefinite idea that he was wrong in his ungracious rejection of his daughter's efforts to serve him, ashamed of his distempered selfishness, yet unable to conquer it,

Captain Montréville naturally became more peevish ; for the consciousness of having acted wrong, without the resolution to repair the fault, is what no temper can stand. "Your charity is mighty excursive, Laura," said he. "If Mr. de Courcy delay his return long, I shall probably not live to profit by it." Laura, whose sweetness no captious expressions could ruffle, would have spoken to turn her father's views to brighter prospects, but the rising sob choked her voice, and courtesying hastily to De Courcy, she left the room. De Courcy now no longer found it difficult to depart. He soon bade the captain farewell, promising to return as soon as it was possible, though he had no great faith in Montréville's dismal prediction, uttered in the true spirit of hypochondriasis, that he would come but to lay his head in the grave.

As he was descending the stairs, Laura, who never forgot, in selfish feeling to provide for the comforts of others, followed him, to beg that when he had leisure he would write her father. Laura blushed and hesitated, as she made this request, not because she had in making it any selfish motive whatever, but purely because she was unused to ask favors. Flattered by the request, but much more by her confusion, the countenance of De Courcy glowed with pleasure. "Certainly I shall write," said he, with great animation, "if you—I mean if Captain Montréville, wish it." These words, and the tone in which they were uttered, made Laura direct a look of inquiry to the speaker's face, where his thoughts were distinctly legible ; and she no sooner read them, than, stately and displeased, she drew back. "I believe it will give my father pleasure to hear from you, sir," said she, and coldly turned away. "Is there no man," thought she, "exempt from this despicable vanity—from the insignificant Warren to the respectable De Courcy?" Poor Montague would fain have besought her forgiveness for his presumption in supposing it possible that she could have any pleasure in hearing of him ; but the look with which she turned from him left him no courage to speak to her again, and he mournfully pursued his way to Audley street.

He was scarcely gone when Warren called, and Laura, very little disposed for his company, took shelter in her own room. Her father, however, suffered no inconvenience from being left alone to the task of entertaining his visitor, for Warren found means to make the conversation sufficiently interesting.

He began by lamenting the captain's long detention from his home, and consoled with him upon the effects which London air had produced upon his health. He regretted that Mr. Williams' absence from town had retarded the final settlement of Montréville's business ; informed him that Mr. Baynard's executors had appointed an agent to inspect his papers ; and, finally, surprised him by an unconditional offer to sign a new bond for the annuity. He could not bear, he said, to think of the captain's being detained in London to the prejudice of his health, especially as it was evident that Miss Montréville's suffered from the same cause. He begged that a regular bond might be drawn up, which he would sign at a moment's notice, and which he would trust to the

captain's honor to destroy, if it should be found that the £1500, mentioned as the price of the annuity, had never been paid.

At this generous proposal, surprise and joy almost deprived Montréville of the power of utterance ; gratefully clasping Warren's hand, "Oh, sir," he exclaimed, "you have, I hope, secured an independence for my child. I thank you—with what fervor you can never know till you are yourself a father." Seemingly anxious to escape from his thanks, Warren again promised that he would be ready to sign the bond on the following day, or as soon as it was ready for signature. Captain Montréville again began to make acknowledgments ; but Warren, who appeared rather distressed than gratified by them, took his leave, and left the captain to the joyful task of communicating the news to Laura.

She listened with grateful pleasure. "How much have I been to blame," said she, "for allowing myself to believe that a little vanity necessarily excluded every kind and generous feeling. What a pity it is that this man should condescend to such an effeminate attention to trifles! Lost to the expectation, almost the desire, of seeing Hargrave, she now had no tie to London, but one which was soon to be broken, for Mrs. and Miss de Courcy were about to return to Norwood. With almost unmixed satisfaction, therefore, she heard her father declare that in less than a week, he should be on his way to Scotland. With pleasure she looked forward to revisiting her dear Glenalbert, and anticipated the effects of its quiet shades and healthful air upon her father. Already she beheld her home, peaceful and inviting, as when, from the hill that sheltered it, she last looked back upon its simple beauties. She heard the ripple of its waters ; she trod the well-known path ; met the kind, familiar face, and listened to the cordial welcome, with such joy as they feel who return from the land of strangers.

Nor was Montréville less pleased with the prospect of returning to his accustomed comforts and employments—of feeling himself once more among objects which he could call his own. His own ! there was magic in the word, that transformed the cottage at Glenalbert into a fairy palace—the garden and the farm into a little world. To leave London interfered, indeed, with his hopes of De Courcy as a lover for his daughter ; but he doubted not that the impression was already made, and that Montague would follow Laura to Scotland.

His mind suddenly relieved from anxiety, his spirits rose, all his constitutional good nature returned, and he caressed his daughter with a fondness that seemed intended to atone for the captious behavior of the morning. At dinner he called for wine, a luxury in which he rarely indulged, drank to their safe arrival at Glenalbert, and obliged Laura to pledge him to the health of Warren. To witness her father's cheerfulness was a pleasure which Laura had of late tasted so sparingly, that it had the most exhilarating effect upon her spirits ; and neither De Courcy nor Hargrave would have been much gratified, could they have seen the gaiety with which she supported the absence of the one, and the neglect of the other.

She was beginning to enjoy one of those

cheerful domestic evenings which had always been her delight, when Miss Dawkins came to propose that she should accompany her and her mother on a visit to Mrs. Jones. Laura would have excused herself, by saying, that she could not leave her father alone; but the captain insisted upon her going, and declared that he would himself be of the party. She had, therefore, no apology, and, deprived of the amusement which she would have preferred, contentedly betook herself to that which was within her reach. She did not sit in silent contemplation of her own superiority; or of the vulgarity of her companions; nor did she introduce topics of conversation calculated to illustrate either; but having observed that even the most ignorant have some subject on which they can talk with ease and pleasure, and even be heard with advantage, she suffered others to lead the discourse, rightly conjecturing that they would guide it to the channel which they judged most favorable to their own powers. She was soon engaged with Mrs. Dawkins in a dissertation on various branches of household economy, and to the eternal degradation of her character as a heroine, actually listened with interest to the means of improving the cleanliness, beauty, and comfort of her dwelling.

Mrs. Jones was highly flattered by the captain's visit, and exerted herself to entertain him, her husband being inclined to taciturnity by a reason which Bishop Butler has pronounced to be a good one. Perceiving that Montreville was an Englishman, she concluded that nothing but dire necessity could have exiled him to Scotland. She inquired what town he lived in; and being answered that his residence was many miles distant from any town, she held up her hands in pity and amazement. But when she heard that Montreville had been obliged to learn the language of the Highlands, and that it was Laura's vernacular tongue, she burst into an exclamation of wonder. "Mercy upon me!" cried she, "can you make that outlandish spluttering so as them savages can know what you say! Well, if I had been among them a thousand years, I should never have made out a word of their gibberish."

"The sound of it is very uncouth to a stranger," said Captain Montreville, "but now I have learnt to like it."

"And do them there wild men make you wear them little red and green petticoats?" asked Mrs. Jones, in a tone of compassionate inquiry.

"Oh, no," said Captain Montreville, "they never interfered with my dress. But you seem quite acquainted with the Highlands. May I ask if you have been there?"

"Ay, that I have, to my sorrow," said Mrs. Jones; and forthwith proceeded to recount her adventures, pretty nearly in the same terms as she had formerly done to Laura.

"And what was the name of this unfortunate place?" inquired the captain, when, having narrated the deficiency of hot rolls, Mrs. Jones made the pause in which her auditors were accustomed to express their astonishment and horror.

"That was what I asked the waiter often and often," replied she; "but I never could make head or tail of what he said. Sometimes

it sounded like *A rookery*; sometimes like one thing, sometimes like another. So I take the road-book, and looks it out, and it looked something like *A rasher*, only not right spelt. So, thinks I, they'll call it *A rasher*, because there is good bacon here; and I asked the man if they were famous for pigs; and he said, no, they got all their pigs from the manufactory in Glasgow, and that they weren't famous for any thing but fresh herrings as are caught in that black Loch-Lomond, where they wanted me to go."

"Kate," said Mr. Jones, setting down his tea-cup, and settling his hands upon his knees, "you know I think you're wrong about them herrings."

"Mr. Jones," returned the lady, with a look which showed that the herrings had been the subject of former altercation, "for certain the waiter told me that they came out of the loch, and to what purpose should he tell lies about it!"

"I tells you, Kate, that herrings come out of the sea," said Mr. Jones.

"Well, that loch is a great fresh-water sea," said Mrs. Jones.

"Out of the salt sea," insisted Mr. Jones.

"Ay," said Mrs. Jones, "them salt herrings as we gets here; but it stands to reason, Mr. Jones, that the fresh herrings should come out of fresh water."

"I say, cod is fresh, and doesn't it come out of the sea? answer me that, Mrs. Jones."

"It is no wonder the cod is fresh," returned the lady, "when the fishmongers keep fresh water running on it day and night."

"Kate, it's of no use argufying.—I say herrings come out of the sea. What say you, sir?" turning to Captain Montreville.

The captain softened his verdict in the gentleman's favor, by saying, that Mrs. Jones was right in her account of the waiter's report, though the man, in speaking of "the loch," meant not Loch-Lomond, but an arm of the sea.

"I know'd it," said Mr. Jones, triumphantly; "for haven't I read it in the newspaper as government offers a reward to anybody that'll put most salt upon them Scotch herrings, and isn't that what makes the salt so dear!" So having settled this knotty point to his own satisfaction, Mr. Jones again applied himself to his tea.

"Did you return to Glasgow by the way of Loch-Lomond?" inquired Captain Montreville.

"Ay," cried Mrs. Jones, "that was what the people of the inn wanted us to do; but when I looked out, and seed a matter of forty of them there savages, with the little petticoats and red and white stockings, loitering and lolling about the inn-door, doing nothing in the varsal world, except wait till it was dark to rob and murder us all, bless us! So, thinks I, let me once get out from among you, in a whole skin, and catch me in the Highlands again; so as soon as the chaise could be got, we just went the way we came."

"Did you find good accommodation at Glasgow?" said the captain.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Jones; "but after all, captain, there's no country like our own;—do you know, I never got so much as a buttered muffin all the while I was in Scotland!"

The conversation was here interrupted by an exclamation from Mrs. Dawkins, who, knowing

that she had nothing new to expect in her daughter's memoirs of her Scottish excursion, had continued to talk with Laura apart.—“Goodness me!” she cried, “why, Kate, as sure as eggs, here's miss never seed a play in all her life!”—“Never saw a play! Never saw a play!” exclaimed the landlord and landlady at once. “Well, that's so odd; but to be sure, poor soul, how should she, among them there hills!” “Suppose,” said Mrs. Jones, “we should make a party, and go to-night. We shall be just in time.” Laura was desirous to go; her father made no objection; and Mr. Jones, with that feeling of good-natured self-complacency which most people have experienced, arising from the discovery that another is new to a pleasure with which they themselves are familiar, offered, as he expressed it, “to do the genteel thing, and treat her himself.”

The party was speedily arranged, and Laura soon found herself seated in the pit of the theatre. The scene was quite new to her; for her ignorance of public places was even greater than her companions had discovered it to be. She was dazzled with the glare of the lights, and the brilliance of the company, and confused with the murmur of innumerable voices; but the curtain rose, and her attention was soon confined to the stage. The play was *The Gamester*, the most domestic of our tragedies; and, in the inimitable representation of Mrs. Beverly, Laura found an illusion strong enough to absorb for the time every faculty of her soul. Of the actress she thought not; but she loved and pitied Mrs. Beverly with a fervor that made her insensible to the amusement which she afforded to her companions. Meanwhile her countenance,—as beautiful, almost as expressive,—followed every change in that of Mrs. Siddons. She wept with her; listened, started, rejoiced with her; and when Mrs. Beverly repulsed the villain Stukely, Laura's eyes too flashed with “heaven's own lightnings.” By the time the representation was ended, she was so much exhausted by the strength and rapidity of her emotions, that she was scarcely able to answer to the questions of “How have you been amused?” and “How did you like it?” with which her companions all at once assailed her. “Well,” said Miss Julia, when they were arrived at home, “I think nothing is so delightful as a play. I should like to go every night—shouldn't you?”—“No,” answered Laura. “Once or twice in a year would be quite sufficient for me. It occupies my thoughts too much for a mere amusement.”

In the course of the two following days Laura had sketched more than twenty heads of Mrs. Siddons, besides completing the preparations for her journey to Scotland. On the third, the captain, who could now smile at his own imaginary debility, proposed to carry the bond to receive Mr. Warren's signature. The fourth was to be spent with Mrs. de Courcy; and on the morning of the fifth, the travellers intended to depart.

On the appointed morning, Captain Montreville set out on an early visit to Portland street, gayly telling his daughter at parting that he would return in an hour or two, with her dowry in his pocket. When he knocked at Mr. Warren's door, the servant informed him that his

master had gone out, but that expecting the captain to call, he had left the message to beg that Montreville would wait till he returned, which would be very soon.

The captain was then shown into a back parlor, where he endeavored to amuse himself with some books that were scattered round the room. They consisted of amatory poems and loose novels, and one by one he threw them aside in disgust, lamenting that one who was capable of a kind and generous action should seek pleasure in such debasing studies. The room was hung with prints and pictures, but they partook of the same licentious character; and Montreville shuddered, as the momentary thought darted across his mind, that it was strange that the charms of Laura had made no impression on one whose libertinism in regard to her sex was so apparent. It was but momentary. “No!” thought he, “her purity would awe the most licentious; and I am uncandid, ungrateful, to harbor, even for a moment, such an idea of the man who has acted towards her and me with the most disinterested benevolence.”

He waited long, but Warren did not appear; and he began to blame himself for having neglected to fix the exact time of his visit. To remedy this omission, he rung for writing materials, and telling the servant that he could stay no longer, left a note to inform Mr. Warren that he would wait upon him at twelve o'clock next day. The servant, who was Mr. Warren's own valet, seemed unwilling to allow the captain to depart, and assured him that he expected his master every minute; but Montreville, who knew there was no depending upon the motions of a mere man of pleasure, would be detained no longer.

He returned home, and finding the parlor empty, was leaving it to seek Laura in her painting-room, when he observed a letter lying on the table addressed to himself. The handwriting was new to him. He opened it—the signature was equally so. The contents were as follows:

“SIR,—The writer of this letter is even by name a stranger to you. If that circumstance should induce you to discredit my information, I offer no proof of my veracity, but this simple one, that obviously no selfish end can be served by my present interference. Of the force of my motive you cannot judge, unless you have yourself lured to destruction the heart which trusted you,—seen it refuse all comfort,—reject all reparation,—and sink at last in untimely decay.

“From a fate like this, though not softened like this by anxious tenderness, nor mourned like this by remorseful pity, but aggravated by being endured for one incapable of any tender or generous feeling, it is my purpose, sir, to save your daughter. I was last night one of a party where her name was mentioned;—where she was described as lovely, innocent, and respectable; yet the person who so described her scrupled not to boast of a plan for her destruction. In the hope (why should I pretend a better motive?) of softening the pangs of late but bitter self-reproach, by saving one fellow-creature from perhaps reluctant ruin, one family from domestic shame, I drew from him your

address, and learnt that, to ingratiate himself with you, and with his intended victim, he has pretended to offer as a gift, what he knew that he could not long withhold. He means to take the earliest opportunity of inveigling her from your care, secure, as he boasts, of her pardon in her attachment. Ill, indeed, does her character, even as described by him, accord with such a boast; yet even indifference might prove no guard against fraud, which, thus warned, you may defy.

"A fear that my intention should be frustrated by the merited contempt attached to anonymous information, inclines me to add my name, though aware that it can claim no authority with a stranger.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
"PHILIP WILMOT."

Captain Montreville read this letter more than once. It bore marks of such sincerity that he knew not how to doubt of the intelligence it gave; and he perceived with dismay that the business which he had considered as closed was as far as ever from a conclusion; for how could he accept a favor which he had been warned to consider as the wages of dishonor. For Laura he had indeed no fear. She was no less safe in her own virtue and discretion, than in the contemptuous pity with which she regarded Warren. This letter would put her upon her guard against leaving the house with him, which Captain Montreville now recollected that he had often solicited her to do, upon pretence of taking the air in his curricie.

But must he still linger in London; still be cheated with vain hopes; still fear for the future subsistence of his child; still approach the very verge of poverty; perhaps be obliged to defend his rights by a tedious law-suit! His heart sunk at the prospect, and he threw himself on a seat, disconsolate and cheerless.

He had long been in the habit of seeking relief from every painful feeling in the tenderness of Laura,—of finding in her enduring spirit a support to the weakness of his own; and he now sought her in the conviction that she would either discover some advantage to be drawn from this disappointment, or lighten it to him by her affectionate sympathy. He knocked at her door. She did not answer. He called her. All was silent. He rung the bell, and inquired whether she was below, and was answered that she had gone out with Mr. Warren in his curricie two hours before. The unfortunate father heard no more. Wildly striking his hand upon his breast, "She is lost," he cried, and sunk to the ground. The blood burst violently from his mouth and nostrils, and he became insensible.

The family were soon assembled round him; and a surgeon being procured, he declared that Montreville had burst a blood-vessel, and that nothing but the utmost care and quiet could save his life. Mrs. Dawkins, with great humanity, attended him herself, venting in whispers to the surgeon her compassion for Montreville, and her indignation against the unnatural desertion of Laura, whom she abused as a methodical hypocrite, against whom her wrath was the stronger because she could never have suspected her.

Montreville no sooner returned to recollection, than he declared his resolution instantly

to set off in search of his child. In vain did the surgeon expostulate, and assure him that his life would be the forfeit; his only answer was, "Why should I live! she is lost." In pursuance of his design, he tried to rise from the bed on which he had been laid; but exhausted nature refused to second him, and he again sunk back insensible.

When Montreville called in Portland street, the servant had deceived him in saying that Warren was not at home. He was not only in the house, but expecting the captain's visit, and prepared to take advantage of it, for the accomplishment of the honorable scheme of which he boasted to his associates. As soon, therefore, as the servant had disposed of Montreville, Warren mounted his curricie, which was waiting at a little distance, and driving to Mrs. Dawkins', informed Laura that he had been sent to her by her father, who proposed carrying her to see the British Museum, and for that purpose was waiting her arrival in Portland street. Entirely unsuspecting of any design, Laura accompanied him without hesitation; and though Portland street appeared to her greatly more distant than she had imagined, it was not till, having taken innumerable turns, she found herself in an open road, that she began to suspect her conductor of having deceived her.

"Whither have you taken me, Mr. Warren?" she inquired; "this road does not lead to Portland street." "Oh yes, it does," answered Warren, "only the way is a little circuitous." "Let us immediately return to the straight one, then," said Laura. "My father will be alarmed, and conclude that some accident has happened to us." "Surely, my charming Miss Montreville," said Warren, still continuing to drive on, "you do not fear to trust yourself with me." "Fear you?" repeated Laura, with involuntary disdain. "No, but I am at a loss to guess what has encouraged you to make me the companion of so silly a frolic. I suppose you mean this for an ingenious joke upon my father." "No, 'pon my soul," said the beau, a little alarmed by the sternness of her manner; "I mean nothing but to have an opportunity of telling you that I am quite in love with you—dying for you—faith I am." "You should first have ascertained," answered Laura, with ineffable scorn, "whether I was likely to think the secret worth a hearing. I desire you will instantly return."

The perfect composure of Laura's look and manner (for, feeling no alarm, she showed none) made Warren conclude that she was not averse to being detained; and he thought it only necessary that he should continue to make love, to induce her quietly to submit to go on for another half mile, which would bring them to a place where he thought she would be secure. He began, therefore, to act the lover with all the energy he could muster; but Laura interrupted him. "It is a pity," said she, with a smile of calm contempt, "to put a stop to such well-timed gallantry, which is, indeed, just such as I should have expected from Mr. Warren's sense and delicacy. But I would not for the sake of Mr. Warren's raptures, nor all else that he has to offer, give my father the most momentary pain, and therefore if you do not suffer

me to alight this instant, I shall be obliged to claim the assistance of passengers on an occasion very little worthy of their notice." Her contumelious manner entirely undeceived her companion in regard to her sentiments; but it had no other effect upon him, except that of adding revenge to the number of his incitements; and perceiving that they were now at a short distance from the house whither he intended to convey her, he continued to pursue his way.

Laura now rose from her seat, and, seizing the reins with a force which made the horses rear, she coolly chose that moment to spring from the carriage and walked back towards the town, leaving her innamorato in the utmost astonishment at her self-possession, as well as rage at her disdainful treatment.

She proceeded till she came to a decent-looking shop, where she entered, and, begging permission to sit down, dispatched one of the shopboys in search of a hackney-coach. A carriage was soon procured, and Laura, concluding that her father, tired of waiting for her, must have left Portland street, desired to be driven directly home.

As she entered the house, she was met by Mrs. Dawkins. "So, miss," cried she, "you have made a fine spot of work on't. You have murdered your father." "Good heavens!" cried Laura, turning as pale as death, "what is it you mean? where is my father?" "Your father is on his death-bed, miss, and you may thank your morning rides for it. Thinking you were off, he burst a blood-vessel in the fright, and the doctor says the least stir in the world will finish him."

Laura turned sick to death. Cold drops stood upon her forehead; and she shook in every limb. She made an instinctive attempt to ascend the stair; but her strength failed her, and she sunk upon the steps. The sight of her agony changed in a moment Mrs. Dawkins' indignation into pity. "Don't take on so, miss," said she; "to be sure you didn't mean it. If he is kept quiet, he may mend still, and now that you're come back, too. By-the-by, I may as well run up and tell him." "Oh, stop!" cried Laura, reviving at once in the sudden dread that such incautious news would destroy her father. "Stay," said she, pressing with one hand her bursting forehead, while with the other she detained Mrs. Dawkins. "Let me think, that we may not agitate him. Oh no! I cannot think;" and leaning her head on Mrs. Dawkins' shoulder, she burst into an agony of tears.

These salutary tears restored her recollection, and she inquired whether the surgeon, of whom Mrs. Dawkins had spoken, was still in the house. Being answered that he was in Montreville's apartment, she sent to beg that he would speak with her. He came, and she entreated him to inform her father, with the caution which his situation required, that she was returned and safe. She followed him to the door of Montreville's apartment, and stood listening in trembling expectation to everything which stirred within. At last she received the wished-for summons. She entered; she sprung towards the bed. "My child!" cried Montreville, and he clasped her to his bosom, and sob-

bed aloud. When he was able to speak, "Oh, Laura," said he, "tell me again that you are safe, and say by what miracle, by what unheard-of mercy, you have escaped." "Compose yourself, my dearest father, for Heaven's sake," cried Laura. "I am indeed safe, and never have been in danger. When Warren found that I refused to join in his frolic, he did not attempt to prevent me from returning home."

She then briefly related the affair, as it had appeared to her, suppressing Warren's rhapsodies, from the fear of irritating her father; and he, perceiving that she considered the whole as a frolic, frivolous in its intention, though dreadful in its effects, suffered her to remain in that persuasion. She passed the night by his bedside, devoting every moment of his disturbed repose to fervent prayers for his recovery.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

From feverish and interrupted sleep, Montreville awoke unrefreshed; and the surgeon, when he repeated his visit, again alarmed Laura with representations of her father's danger, and assurances that nothing but the most vigilant attention to his quiet could preserve his life. The anguish with which Laura listened to this sentence she suppressed, lest it should injure her father. She never approached him but to bring comfort; she spoke to him cheerfully, while the tears forced themselves to her eyes; and smiled upon him while her heart was breaking. She felt what he must suffer, should the thought occur to him that he was about to leave her to the world, unfriended and alone; and she never mentioned his illness to him unless with the voice of hope. But of the danger which she strove to disguise, Montreville was fully sensible; and though he forbore to shock her by avowing it explicitly, he could not, like her, suppress his fears. He would sometimes fervently wish that he could see his child safe in the protection of Mrs. Douglas; and sometimes, when Laura was bending over him in the tenderest sympathy, he would clasp her neck, and cry with an agony that shook his whole frame, "What—oh, what will become of thee!"

He seemed anxious to know how long Mrs. de Courcy was to remain in town, and inquired every hour whether Montague was not returned. Full well did Laura guess the mournful meaning of these questions. Full well did they remind her that when the De Courcy family left London, she with her dying father would amidst this populous wilderness be alone. She anticipated the last scene of this sad tragedy; when, amidst busy thousands, a senseless corpse would be her sole companion. She looked forward to its close, when even this sad society would be withdrawn. Human fortitude could not support the prospect; and she would rush from her father's presence, to give vent to agonies of sorrow.

But the piety of Laura could half invest misfortune with the character of blessing; as the mists which rise to darken the evening sun are themselves tinged with his glory. She called to mind the gracious assurance which marks the afflicted who suffer not by their own guilt or folly as the favored of Heaven; and the

more her earthly connections seemed dissolving, the more did she strive to acquaint herself with Him from whose care no accident can sever. To this care she fervently committed her father; praying that no selfish indulgence of her grief might embitter his departure; and resolving by her fortitude to convince him that she was able to struggle with the storm from which he was no longer to shelter her.

The day succeeding that on which Montreville was taken ill had been set apart for a farewell visit to Mrs. de Courcy; and Laura's note of mournful apology was answered by a kind visit from Harriet. Unconscious of the chief cause of her father's impatience for Montague's return, Laura, wishing to be the bearer of intelligence which she knew would cheer him, inquired anxiously when Miss de Courcy expected her brother. But De Courcy's motions depended upon the spirits of his venerable friend, and Harriet knew not when he might be able to leave Mr. Wentworth. It was even uncertain whether for the present he would return to town at all, as in another week Mrs. de Courcy meant to set out for Norwood. Laura softened this unpleasing news to her father; she did not name the particular time of Mrs. de Courcy's departure, and she suffered him still confidently to expect the return of his favorite.

The next day brought a letter from De Courcy himself, full of affectionate solicitude for the captain's health and spirits; but evidently written in ignorance of the fatal change which had taken place since his departure. In this letter the name of Laura was not mentioned, not even in a common compliment, and Montreville remarked to her this omission. "He has forgotten it," answered Laura; "his warm heart is full of his friend's distress and yours, and has not room for mere ceremony." "I hope," said Montreville, emphatically, "that is not the reason." "What is then the reason?" inquired Laura; but Montreville did not speak, and she thought no more of De Courcy's little omission.

Her father, indeed, for the present, occupied almost all her earthly thoughts, and even her prayers rose more frequently for him than herself. Except during the visits of the surgeon, she was Montreville's sole attendant; and, regardless of fatigue, she passed every night by his bed-side, every day in ministering to his comfort. If, worn out with watching, she dropped asleep, she started again at his slightest motion, and obstinately refused to seek in her own chamber a less interrupted repose. "No," thought she, "let my strength serve me while I have duties to perform, while yet my father lives to need my efforts; then may I be permitted to sink to early rest, and the weary laborer, while yet it is but morning, be called to receive his hire."

The desertion of Hargrave, whom she had loved with all the ardor of a warm heart and a fervid imagination, the death of her father so fast approaching, her separation from every living being with whom she could claim friendship or kindred, seemed signals for her to withdraw her affections from a world where she would soon have nothing left to love and to cherish. "And be it so," thought she; "let me no longer grovel here in search of objects

which earth has not to offer—objects unfitted for unbounded and unchangeable regard. Nor let me peevishly reject what this world really has to give—the opportunity to prepare for a better. This it bestows even on me; and a few childish baubles are all else that it reserves for those who worship it with all their soul, and strength, and mind."

No mortal can exist without forming some wish or hope. Laura *hoped* that she should live while she could be useful to her father; and she *wished* that she might not survive him. One only other wish she had, and that was for De Courcy's return; for Montreville, whose spirits more than shared his bodily languor, now seldom-spoke, but to express his longing for the presence of his favorite. Laura continued to cheer him with a hope which she herself no longer felt; for now three days only remained ere Mrs. de Courcy was to quit London. The departure of their friends Laura resolved to conceal from her father, that, believing them to be near, he might feel himself the less forlorn; and this she thought might be practicable, as he had never since his illness expressed any wish to quit his bed, or to see Miss de Courcy when she came.

In Montreville's darkened apartment, without occupation but in her cares for him, almost without rest, had Laura passed a week, when she was one morning summoned from her melancholy charge to attend a visitor. She entered the parlor. "Mr. de Courcy! she exclaimed, springing joyfully to meet him, "thank Heaven you are come!" But not with equal warmth did De Courcy accost her. The repulsive look she had given him at parting was still fresh in his recollection; and, with a respectful, distant bow, he expressed his sorrow for Captain Montreville's illness. "Oh, he is ill, indeed!" said Laura, the saint hectic of pleasure fading suddenly from her cheek. "Earnestly has he longed for your return; and we feared," said she, with a violent effort suppressing her tears, "we feared that you might not have come till—till all was over." "Surely, Miss Montreville," said De Courcy, extremely shocked, "surely you are causelessly alarmed."

"Oh, no," cried Laura, "he cannot live!" and no longer able to contain her emotion, she burst into a passion of tears. Forced entirely from his guard by her grief, Montague threw himself on the seat by her. "Dearest of human beings," he exclaimed, oh that I could shield thee from every sorrow!" But, absorbed in her distress, Laura heeded him not; and the next moment, sensible of his imprudence, he started from her side, and retreated to a distant part of the room.

As soon as she was again able to command herself, she went to inform her father of De Courcy's arrival. Though told with the greatest caution, Montreville heard the news with extreme emotion. He grasped Laura's hand; and with tears of joy streaming down his pale cheeks, said, "Heaven be praised! I shall not leave thee quite desolate." Laura herself felt less desolate; and she rejoiced even for herself, when she once more saw De Courcy seated beside her father.

It was only the morning before, that a letter from Harriet had informed her brother of

Montreville's illness and of Laura's distress. To hear of that distress, and to remain at a distance, was impossible; and Montague had left Mr. Wentworth within the hour. He had travelled all night; and without even seeing his mother and sister, had come direct to Captain Montreville's lodgings. He was shocked at the death-like looks of Montreville, and still more so at those of Laura. Her eyes were sunk, her lips colorless, and her whole appearance indicated that she was worn out with fatigue and wretchedness. Yet De Courcy felt, that never in the bloom of health and beauty had she been so dear to him, and scarcely could he forbear from addressing her in the accents of compassion and of love. Montreville wishing to speak with him alone, begged of Laura to leave him for a while to De Courcy's care, and endeavor to take some rest. She objected that Montague had himself need of rest, having travelled all night; but when he assured her, that even if she drove him away he would not attempt to sleep, she consented to retire, and seek the repose of which she was so much in want.

When they were alone, Montreville showed De Courcy the warning letter, and related to him the baseness of Warren, and the escape of Laura. Montague listened to him with intense interest. He often changed color, and his lips quivered with emotion; and when her father had described the manner in which she had accomplished her escape, he exclaimed with enthusiasm, "Yes, she is superior to every weakness, as she is alive to every gentle feeling." Montreville dwelt upon her unremitting care of him — on the fortitude with which she suppressed her sorrow, even while its violence was perceptibly injuring her health. "And is it to be wondered at," said he, "that I look forward with horror to leaving this lovely, excellent creature in such a world, alone, and friendless?" "She shall never be friendless," cried De Courcy; "my mother and sister shall be her friends, and I will——." He stopped abruptly, and a heavy sigh burst from him.

Recovering himself, he resumed, "You must not talk so despondingly. You will long live, I trust, to enjoy the blessing of such a child." Montreville shook his head, and remained silent. He was persuaded that De Courcy loved his daughter, and would fain have heard an explicit avowal that he did so. To have secured to her the protection of Montague would have destroyed the bitterness of death. Had Laura been the heiress of millions, he would have rejoiced to bestow her and them upon De Courcy. But he scorned to force him to a declaration, and respected her too much to make an approach towards offering her to any man's acceptance.

He was at a loss to imagine what reason withheld De Courcy from avowing an attachment which he was convinced that he felt. When he considered his favorite's grave, reflecting character, he was rather inclined to believe that he was cautiously ascertaining the temper and habits of the woman with whom he meant to spend his life. But the warmth of approbation with which he mentioned Laura seemed to indicate that his opinion of her was already fixed. It was possible, too, that De

Courcy wished to secure an interest in her regard before he ventured formally to petition for it. Whatever was the cause of Montague's silence, the captain anticipated the happiest consequences from his renewed intercourse with Laura; and he resolved that he would not, by any indelicate interference, compel him to precipitate his declaration. He therefore changed the conversation by inquiring when Mrs. De Courcy was to leave town. Montague answered, that as he had not seen his mother since his return, he did not exactly know what time was fixed for her departure; "but," said he, "whenever she goes, I shall only attend her to Norwood, and return on the instant; nor will I quit you again, till you are much, much better, or till you will no longer suffer me to stay." Montreville received this promise with gratitude and joy; and De Courcy persuaded himself that, in making it, he was actuated chiefly by motives of friendship and humanity. He remained with Montreville till the day was far advanced, and then went to take a late dinner in Audley street.

Next morning, and for several succeeding days, he returned, and spent the greatest part of his time in attending, comforting, and amusing the invalid. He prevailed on his mother to delay her departure, that he might not be obliged immediately to leave his charge. He soothed the little impatiences of disease; contrived means to mitigate the oppressiveness of debility; knew how to exhilarate the hour of ease; and watched the moment, well known to the sickly, when amusement becomes fatigue.

Laura repaid these attentions to her father with gratitude unutterable. Often did she wish to thank De Courcy as he deserved; but she felt that her acknowledgments must fall far short of her feelings and of his deserts, if they were not made with a warmth which, to a man, and to a young man, she revolted from expressing. She imagined too, that, to one who sought her friendship, mere gratitude might be mortifying; and that it might wound the generous nature of Montague to be thanked as a benefactor, where he wished to be loved as an equal. She therefore did not speak of, or but slightly mentioned, her own and her father's obligations to him; but she strove to repay them in the way which would have been most acceptable to himself, by every mark of confidence and good will. Here no timidity restrained her; for no feeling which could excite timidity at all mingled with her regard for De Courcy. But, confined to her own breast, her gratitude became the stronger; and if she had now had a heart to give, to Montague it would have been freely given.

Meanwhile, the spirits of Montreville lightened of a heavy load, by the assurance that, even in case of his death, his daughter would have a friend to comfort and protect her, his health began to improve. He was able to rise; and one day, with the assistance of Montague's arm, surprised Laura with a visit in the parlor. The heart of Laura swelled with transport when she saw him once more occupy his accustomed seat in the family-room, and received him as one returned from the grave. She sat by him, holding his hand between her own, but



did not try to speak. "If it would not make you jealous, Laura," said Montreville, "I should tell you that Mr. De Courcy is a better nurse than you are. I have recruited wonderfully since he undertook the care of me. More, indeed, than I thought I should ever have done." Laura answered only by glancing upon De Courcy a look of heart-felt benevolence and pleasure. "And yet," said Montague, "it is alleged that no attentions from our own sex are so effectual as those which we receive from the other. How cheaply would bodily suffering purchase the sympathy, the endearments of—" —the name of Laura rose to his lips, but he suppressed it, and changed the expression to "an amiable woman." "Is it indeed so?" cried Laura, raising her eyes full of grateful tears to his face. "Oh, then, if sickness or sorrow ever be your portion, may your kindness here be repaid by some spirit of peace in woman's form—some gentleness yet more feminine than De Courcy's!"

The enthusiasm of gratitude had hurried Laura into a warmth which the next moment covered her with confusion; and she withdrew her eyes from De Courcy's face before she had time to remark the effects of these, the first words of emotion that ever she had addressed to him. The transport excited by the ardor of her expressions, and the cordial approbation which they implied, instantly gave way to extreme mortification. "She wishes," thought he, "that some woman may repay me. She would then, not only with indifference, but with pleasure, see me united to another; resign me without a pang to some mere commonplace, insipid piece of sweetness, and give her noble self to one who could better feel her value."

De Courcy had never declared his preference for Laura; he was even determined not to declare it. Yet, to find that she had not a wish to secure it for herself, gave him such acute vexation, that he was unable to remain in her presence. He abruptly rose and took his leave. He soon, however, reproached himself with the unreasonableness of his feelings, and returned to his oft-repeated resolution to cultivate the friendship, without aspiring to the love, of Laura. He even persuaded himself that he rejoiced in her freedom from a passion which could not be gratified without a sacrifice of the most important duties. He had a sister, for whom no provision had been made; a mother, worthy of his warmest affection, whose increasing infirmities required increased indulgence. Mrs. De Courcy's jointure was a very small one; and though she consented, for the present, to share the comforts of his establishment, Montague knew her too well to imagine that she would accept of any addition to her income, deducted from the necessary expenses of his wife and family. His generous nature revolted from suffering his sister to feel herself a mere pensioner on his bounty, or to seek dear-bought independence in a marriage of convenience—a sort of bargain upon which he looked with double aversion, since he had himself felt the power of an exclusive attachment.

Here even his sense of justice was concerned; for he knew that, if his father had lived, it

was his intention to have saved from his income a provision for Harriet. From the time that the estate devolved on Montague, he had begun to execute his father's intention; and he had resolved that no selfish purpose should interfere with its fulfilment. The destined sum, however, was as yet little more than half collected, and it was now likely to accumulate still more slowly; for, as Mrs. De Courcy had almost entirely lost the use of her limbs, a carriage was to her an absolute necessary of life.

Most joyfully would Montague have relinquished every luxury, undergone every privation, to secure the possession of Laura; but he would not sacrifice his mother's health, nor his sister's independence, to any selfish gratification; nor would he subject the woman of his choice to the endless embarrassments of a revenue too small for its purposes.

These reasons had determined him against addressing Laura. At their first interview he had been struck with her as the most lovely woman he had ever beheld; but he was in no fear that his affections should be entangled. They had escaped from a hundred lovely women, who had done their utmost to ensnare them, while she was evidently void of any such design. Besides, Montreville was his old friend, and it was quite necessary that he should visit him. Laura's manners had charmed De Courcy as much as her person. Still, might not a man be pleased and entertained, without being in love? Further acquaintance gradually laid open to him the great and amiable qualities of her mind, and was it not natural and proper to love virtue? but this was not being in love.

Symptoms at last grew so strong upon poor De Courcy, that he could no longer disguise them from himself; but it was pleasing to love excellence. He would never reveal his passion. It should be the secret joy of his heart; and why cast away a treasure which he might enjoy without injury to any? Laura's love, indeed, he could not seek; but her friendship he might cherish; and who would exchange the friendship of such a woman for the silly fondness of a thousand vulgar minds!

In this pursuit he had all the success which he could desire; for Laura treated him with undisguised regard; and with that regard he assured himself that he should be satisfied. At last this "secret joy," this "treasure of his heart," began to mingle pain with its pleasure; and, when called away on his mournful errand to Mr. Wentworth, De Courcy confessed, that it was wise to wean himself a little from one whose presence was becoming necessary to his happiness, and to put some restraint upon a passion which, from his toy, was become his master. Short absence, however, had only increased his malady; and Laura in sorrow, Laura grateful, confiding, at times almost tender, seized at once upon every avenue to the heart of De Courcy; he revered her as the best, he admired her as the loveliest, he loved her as the most amiable, of human beings. Still he resolved that, whatever it might cost him, he would refrain from all attempt to gain her love; and he began to draw nice distinctions between the very tender friendship with which he hoped to inspire her, and the tormenting passion which he most silently endure.

Happily for the success of De Courcy's self-deceit, there was no rival at hand, with whose progress in Laura's regard he could measure his own; and he never thought of asking himself what would be his sensations if her *very tender* friendship for him should not exclude love for another.

A doubt would sometimes occur to him, as to the prudence of exposing himself to the unremitting influence of her charms, but it was quickly banished as an unwelcome intruder, or silenced with the plea, that, to withdraw himself from Montreville on a sick bed, would outrage friendship and humanity. He had, too, somewhat inadvertently, given his friend a promise that he would not leave him till his health was a little reëstablished; and this promise now served as the excuse for an indulgence which he had not resolution to forego. After escorting Mrs. de Courcy to Norwood, he pleaded this promise to himself when he returned to London without an hour's delay; and it excused him in his own eyes for going every morning to the abode of Montreville, from whence he had seldom resolution enough to depart, till the return of night drove him away.

Meanwhile, with the health of her father, the spirits of Laura revived; and considering it as an act of the highest self-denial in a domestic man to quit his home—a literary man to suspend his studies—a young man to become stationary in the apartment of an invalid, she exerted herself to the utmost to cheer De Courcy's voluntary task. She sometimes relieved him in reading aloud, an accomplishment in which she excelled. Her pronunciation was correct, her voice varied, powerful and melodious, her conception rapid and accurate, while the expression of her countenance was an animated comment upon the author.

De Courcy delighted to hear her sing the wild airs of her native mountains, which she did with inimitable pathos, though without skill. Her conversation, sometimes literary, sometimes gay, was always simply intended to please. Yet, though void of all design to dazzle, it happened, she knew not how, that in De Courcy's company she was always more lively, more acute, than at other times. His remarks seemed to unlock new stores in her mind; and the train of thought which he introduced, she could always follow with peculiar ease and pleasure. Safe in her preference for another, she treated him with the most cordial frankness. Utterly unconscious of the sentiment she inspired, she yet had an animating confidence in De Courcy's good will; and sometimes pleased herself with thinking, that, next to his mother and sister, she stood highest of women in his regard. No arts of the most refined coquetry could have riveted more closely the chains of the ill-fated De Courcy; and the gratitude of the unconscious Laura pointed the shaft which gave the death-wound to his peace.

How was it possible for her to imagine that the same sentiment could produce a demeanor so opposite as De Courcy's was from that of Hargrave! Hargrave had been accustomed to speak of her personal charms with rapture. De Courcy had never made them the subject of direct compliment; he had even of late wholly discontinued those little gallantries which

every pretty woman is accustomed to receive. Hargrave omitted no opportunity to plead his passion; and though the presence of a third person of necessity precluded this topic, it restrained him not from gazing upon Laura with an eagerness from which she shrunk abashed. De Courcy had never mentioned love; and Laura observed that, when his glance met hers, he would sometimes withdraw his eye with (as she thought) almost womanly modesty. In her private interviews with Hargrave, he had ever approached her with as much vehemence and freedom of speech and manner as her calm dignity would permit. Privacy made no change in De Courcy's manner, except to render him a little more silent—a little more distant; and to personal familiarity, he seemed to be, if possible, more adverse than herself; for if she accidentally touched him, he colored and drew back.

Some of these circumstances Montreville had remarked, and had drawn from them inferences very different from those of his daughter. He was convinced that the preference of De Courcy for Laura had risen into a passion, which, for some unknown reason, he wished to conceal; and he perceived, by the ease of her behavior, that Montague's secret was unsuspected by her. Most anxiously did he wish to know the cause of his favorite's silence, and to discover whether it was likely to operate long. In Laura's absence, he sometimes led the conversation towards the subject; but De Courcy never improved the offered opportunity. Partly in the hope of inviting equal frankness, Montreville talked of his own situation, and mentioned the motive of his journey to London. Montague inquired into every particular of the business, and rested not till he had found Mr. Baynard's executor, and received from him an acknowledgment that he had in his possession a voucher for the payment of Montreville's fifteen hundred pounds to Warren.

He next, without mentioning the matter to Montreville, called upon Warren, with an intention finally to conclude the business; thinking it impossible that, since the payment of the money was ascertained, he could refuse either to pay the annuity or refund the price of it. But the disdain of Laura yet rankled in the mind of Warren, and he positively refused to bring the affair to any conclusion, declaring that he would litigate it to the last sixpence he was worth; to which declaration he added an excellent joke concerning the union of Scotch pride with Scotch poverty. At this effrontery the honest blood of De Courcy boiled with indignation, and he was on the point of vowing that he, too, would beggar himself, rather than permit such infamous oppression; but his mother, his sister, and Laura herself, rose to his mind, and he contented himself with threatening to expose Warren to the disgrace which he merited.

Warren now began to suspect that De Courcy was the cause of Laura's contemptuous reception of his addresses, and enraged at his interference, yet overawed by his manly appearance and decided manner, became sullen, and refused to answer Montague's expostulations. Nothing remained to be done, and De Courcy was therefore obliged to communicate

to Montreville the ill success of his negotiations.

Bereft of all hopes of obtaining justice, which he had not the means to enforce, Montreville became more anxiously desirous to regain such a degree of health as might enable him to return home. In his present state, the journey was impracticable; and he was convinced that while he remained pent up in the polluted air of the city, his recovery could advance but slowly. Some weeks must at all events elapse before he could be in a condition to travel; and to accommodate his funds to this prolonged demand upon them, he saw that he must have recourse to some scheme of economy yet more humble than that which he had adopted.

He hoped, if he could recover strength sufficient for the search, to find in the suburbs some abode of purer air, and still more moderate expenses than his present habitation. The former only of these motives he mentioned to De Courcy; for though Montreville did not affect to be rich, he never spoke of his poverty. Various circumstances, however, had led De Courcy to guess at his friend's pecuniary embarrassments: and he too had a motive which he did not avow, in the offer which he made to seek a more healthful residence for Montreville.

Unwilling to describe the humble accommodation with which he meant to content himself, or the limited price which he could afford to offer for it, Montreville at first refused De Courcy's services; but they were pressed upon him with such warmth, that he was obliged to submit, and Montague lost no time in fulfilling his commission.

He soon discovered a situation which promised comfort. It was in the outskirts of the town, a small flower-garden belonged to the house, the apartments were airy and commodious, the furniture was handsome, and the whole most fitly neat. The rent, however, exceeded that of Montreville's present lodgings; and De Courcy knew that this objection would be insurmountable. That Laura should submit to the inelegancies of a mean habitation, was what he could not bear to think of; and he determined, by a friendly little artifice, to reconcile Montreville's comfort with his economy. The surgeon had named two or three weeks as the time likely to elapse before Montreville could commence his journey. De Courcy paid in advance above half the rent of the apartments for a month, charging the landlady to keep the real rent a secret from her lodgers.

As far as the author of these memoirs has been able to learn, this was the only artifice which ever Montague de Courcy practised in his life; and it led, as artifices are wont to do, to consequences which the contriver neither wished nor foresaw.

Much to his satisfaction, Montreville was soon settled in his new abode, where De Courcy continued to be his daily visiter. A certain delicacy prevented Laura from endeavoring to procure a reversal of her father's decree, issued in a moment of peevishness, that she should paint no more with a view to pecuniary reward. She felt that he had been wrong, and she shrunk from reminding him of it, till her labors should again become neces-

sary. But, desirous of conveying to Mrs. de Courcy some token of her remembrance and gratitude, she employed some of the hours which Montague spent with her father, in laboring a picture which she intended to send to Norwood. The subject was the choice of Hercules; and to make her gift the more acceptable, she presented in the hero a picture of De Courcy, while the form and countenance of Virtue were copied from the simple majesty of her own. The figure of Pleasure was a fancied one, and it cost the fair artist unspeakable labor. She could not portray what she would have shrunk from beholding—a female voluptuary. Her draperies were always designed with the most chastened decency; and, after all her toil, even the form of Pleasure came sober and matronly from the hand of Laura.

Designing a little surprise for her friends, she had never mentioned this picture to De Courcy; and as she daily stole some of the hours of his visit to bestow upon it, it advanced rapidly. Montague bore these absences with impatience; but Montreville, who knew how Laura was employed, took no notice of them, and De Courcy durst not complain.

Three weeks had glided away since Montreville's removal to his new lodgings, and he remained as much as ever anxious, and as much as ever unable to guess De Courcy's reason for concealing a passion which evidently increased every day. He recollected that Montague had of late never met Laura but in his presence, and he thought it natural that the lover should wish to make his first application to his mistress herself. He had an idea, that the picture might be made to assist the denouement which he so ardently desired; and with this view he privately gave orders that when next Mr. De Courcy came he should be ushered into the painting-room, which he knew would be empty, as Laura never quitted him till De Courcy arrived to take her place.

Next morning accordingly Montague was shown into the room which he had himself destined for Laura, and, for that reason, supplied with many little luxuries which belonged not to its original furniture. He looked round with delight on the marks of her recent presence. There lay her book open as she had quitted it, and the pencil with which she had marked the margin. It was one which he himself had recommended, and he thought it should ever be dear to him. On a table lay her portfolio and drawing materials; in a corner stood her easel with the picture, over which was thrown a shawl which he had seen her wear.

Not conceiving that she could have any desire to conceal her work, he approached it, and raising the covering, stood for a moment motionless with surprise. The next, a thousand sensations, vague but delightful darted through his mind; but before he could give shape or distinctness to any of them, the step approached which ever roused De Courcy to eager expectation, and letting the shawl drop, he flew towards the door to receive Laura.

With rapture in his eyes, but confusion on his tongue, De Courcy paid his compliments, and again turned towards the picture. Laura sprung forward to prevent him from raising the

covering. "Is this forbidden, then?" said he. "Oh yes, indeed," said Laura, blushing; "you must not look at it." "Can you be so mischievous," cried De Courcy, a delighted smile playing on his countenance, "as to refuse me such a pleasure?" "I am sure," said Laura, blushing again, and still mofe deeply, "it could give you no pleasure in its present state." "And I am sure," said De Courcy, ardently, "it would give me more than I have language to express."

De Courcy's eagerness, and the consciousness of her own confusion, made Laura now more unwilling that Montague should discover the cause of both to be his own portrait, and actually trembling with emotion, she said, putting her hand on the shawl to prevent him from raising it, "Indeed, I cannot show you this. There is my portfolio—look at anything but this." "And what inference may I draw as to the subject of a picture which Miss Monteville will not show to the most partial—the most devoted of her friends!" "Any inference," replied Laura, still holding the shawl, "which friendship or charity will permit." "And must I not remove this perverse little hand?" said De Courcy, laying his upon it; for all prudence was forgotten in his present emotion. Laura, a little offended at his perseverance, gravely withdrew her hand, and turned away, saying, "Since my wishes have no power, I shall make no other trial of strength." "No power!" cried De Courcy, following her, "they have more force than a thousand arms." "Well," said Laura, a little surprised by his manner, but turning upon him a smile of gracious reconciliation, "your forbearance may hereafter be rewarded by a sight of this important picture; but lest you should forfeit your recompense, had we not better remove from temptation!"

She then led the way to the parlor, and De Courcy followed her in a state of agitation which could not be concealed. He was absent and restless. He often changed color, seemed scarcely sensible of what was addressed to him, or began to reply, and the unfinished sentence died upon his lips. At last, starting up, he pleaded sudden indisposition, and was hurrying away. "Do not go away, ill and alone," said Laura, kindly detaining him. "Walk round the garden—the fresh air will relieve you." "No air will relieve me!" said De Courcy, in a voice of wretchedness. "What, then, can we do for you?" said Laura, with affectionate earnestness. "What can you do for me!" cried De Courcy, "oh, nothing, nothing, but suffer me to go, while yet I have the power." He then wrung Monteville's hand, and uttering something which his emotion made inarticulate, without venturing a glance towards Laura, he quitted the house, and returned home in a state bordering on distraction.

He shut himself up in his chamber to consider of his situation, if that can be called consideration, which was but a conflict of tumultuous feeling. That Laura should have painted his portrait in a group where it held such a relation to her own; that she should keep it concealed in an apartment exclusively appropriated to herself; her alarm lest he should examine it; her confusion, which had at last risen to the most distressing height, from the idea of what

De Courcy might infer, should he discover that his own portrait was the cause of so many blushes; the confiding, affectionate manner in which she treated him;—all conspired to mislead De Courcy. He felt a conviction that he was beloved, and, in spite of himself, the thought was rapture.

But what availed this discovery! Could he forget the justice of his sister's claims, sacrifice to his selfish wishes the comfort of his mother, or wed his half-worshipped Laura to the distresses of an embarrassed fortune! "Oh, no," he cried; "let not my passions involve in disaster all whom I love."

Or, could he lay open to Laura his feelings and his situation, and sue for her love, even while their union must be delayed? Her attachment, he thought, was yet in its infancy, born of gratitude, fostered by separation from other society, and, for the present, pleasing in its sensations, and transient in its nature. But he thought her capable of a love as fervent, as deep-rooted, as that which she inspired; and should he wilfully awaken in her peaceful breast the cravings of such a passion as tortured his own; see her spirits, her vigor of mind, her usefulness, perhaps her health, give way to the sickness of "hope deferred!" No,—rather let her return to the indifference in which he found her. Or, should he shackle her with a promise, of which honor might extort a reluctant fulfilment, after the affection which prompted it was perhaps withdrawn from him? Or, should he linger on from day to day in vain endeavors to conceal his affection, dishonorably sporting with the tenderness of the woman he loved, his ill-suppressed feelings every hour offering a hope which must every hour be disappointed! No! the generous heart of De Courcy would sooner have suffered a thousand deaths.

But could he return—could he again see this creature, now more than ever dear to him, and stiff the fondness, the anguish, which would rend his bosom at parting! Impossible! He would see her no more. He would tear at once from his heart every hope—every joy—and dare at once all the wretchedness which awaited him. In an agony of desperation he rung for his servant, ordered his horses, and in an hour was on his way to Norwood, with feelings which the criminal on the rack need not have envied.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE next morning, while Monteville and his daughter were expecting with some anxiety the arrival of their daily visitor, a note was brought, which De Courcy had left in Audley street, to be delivered after his departure. Though nearly illegible from the agitation in which it was written, it contained nothing but the simple information, that he had been suddenly obliged to leave London. It assigned no reason for his journey—it fixed no period for his absence; and Monteville endeavored to hope that his return would not be distant. But day after day passed heavily on, and De Courcy came not. Monteville again began to feel himself a solitary, deserted being; again became dejected; again became the victim of real debility and fancied disease.

All Laura's endeavors failed to animate him to cheerfulness, or rouse him to employment. If he permitted her to remain by him, he seemed rather to endure than to enjoy her presence, repressed with a languid monosyllable her attempts at conversation, or passed whole hours in listless silence. Laura, who foreboded the worst consequences from the indulgence of this depression, endeavored to persuade him that he might now safely attempt a voyage to Scotland, and predicted beneficial effects from the sea air. But Montreville answered her with displeasure, that such an exertion would certainly destroy him, and that those who were themselves in high health and spirits could not judge of the feelings, nor sympathize with the weakness, of disease. The reproach had no more justice than is usual with the upbraids of the sickly; for Laura's spirits shared every turn of her father's, though her stronger mind could support with grace the burden that weighed his to the earth. She desisted, however, from a subject which she saw that, for the present, he would not bear, and confined her endeavors to persuading him to undertake some light occupation, or to walk in the little garden which belonged to the house. But even in these attempts she was commonly defeated; for Montreville would make no exertion, and the winter wind, now keen and biting, pierced through his wasted form.

None but they who have made the melancholy experiment can tell how cheerless is the labor of supporting the spirit that will make no effort to sustain itself, of soliciting the languid smile, offering the rejected amusement, or striving with vain ingenuity to enliven the oft-repulsed conversation. They only know who have tried it, what it is to resist contagious depression—to struggle against the effects of the complaining voice, the languid motion, the hopeless aspect; what it is to suppress the sympathetic sigh, and restrain the little sally of impatience, so natural to those whose labors are incessant, yet unavailing. Such were the tasks which Laura voluntarily prescribed to herself. Incited by affection, and by strong sense of duty, she soothed the fretful humor, prompted the reluctant exertion, fanned the expiring hope, and seized the favorable moment to soften by feminine tenderness, or exhilarate by youthful gayety.

Many motives may lead to one great effort of virtue. The hope of reward, the desire of approbation, a sense of right, the natural benevolence which still affords a faint trait of the image in which man was made—all, or any of these, may produce single, or even oft-repeated acts deserving of praise; but one principle alone can lead to virtuous exertions, persevering and unremitting, though without success. That principle was Laura's; and even while her endeavors seemed unavailing, she was content to employ all her powers in the task selected for her by the bestower of them.

Montreville often reproached himself for the untimely burden which he was laying on the young heart of his daughter; but he could make no effort to lighten it; and self-reproach served only to embitter the spirit which it failed of stimulating to exertion. Fretful and impatient, yet conscious of his injustice, and unwilling that Laura should observe it, he would often dismiss her from her attendance, and

spend whole hours in solitary gloom. These hours Laura devoted to her picture, stealing between whiles, on tiptoe, to the door of her father's apartment, to listen whether he was stirring; and sometimes venturing to knock gently for admittance.

The picture, which was far advanced when De Courcy left town, soon received the finishing touches; and Laura lost no time in transmitting it to Norwood. She wrote an affectionate letter to Harriet, in which, after thanking her for all her kindness, she offered her gift, and added, that, to give her work a value which it would not otherwise have possessed, she had introduced the portrait of De Courcy; and that, glad of an opportunity of associating the remembrance of herself with an object of interest, she had admitted her own resemblance into the group. She apologized for the appearance of conceit which might attend her exhibiting her own form under the character of Virtue, by relating, with characteristic simplicity, that she had determined on her subject, chosen and half-finished her Hercules, before she designed the figures of his companions; that she had afterwards thought that her memorial would be the more effectual if it contained the portrait of the giver. "And you know," added she, "it would have been impossible to mould my solemn countenance into the lineaments of Pleasure."

In the singleness of her heart, it never occurred to Laura, that anything in the mutual relation of the figures of her piece stood in need of explanation. Had Hargrave furnished the model for her hero, she would probably have been a little more quick-sighted. As it was, she felt impatient to show the De Courcy family, not excepting Montague himself, that she was not forgetful of their kindness; and she chose a day, when the influence of bright sunshine a little revived the spirits of Montreville, to leave him for an hour, and accompany the picture to the shop of the print-seller, that it might be packed more skillfully than by herself.

After seeing it safely put up, she gave the address to Wilkins, who immediately exclaimed, "So, ma'am, you have found out the secret which you would not let me tell you?" "What secret?" inquired Laura. "The name of the gentleman, ma'am, who bought your pictures." "Was it De Courcy, then?" "Yes, ma'am; though, to be sure, it mightn't be the same. But I suppose you'll know him, ma'am. A tall, pleasant-looking gentleman, ma'am. The pictures were sent home to Audley street." Laura's countenance brightened with satisfaction, and she suffered her informer to proceed. "I am sure," continued he, "I managed that business to the very best of my power, and, as one may say, very dexterously." "Was there any occasion for management?" inquired Laura. "Oh, yes, ma'am; for when he seemed very much taken with the first one, then I told him all about you, just as I had it all from Mrs. Dawkins, and how you were so anxious to have it sold; and then he said he'd have it, and paid the money into my hands; and then I told him how you looked the first day you brought it here, and that you were just ready to cry about it; and then he said he must have a companion to it."

The flush both of pride and vexation for once stained the transparent skin of Laura. Yet it was only for a moment; and her next feeling was pleasure at the confirmation of the benevolent character with which her imagination had invested De Courcy. He had purchased her work when she was quite unknown to him, only, as she thought, from a wish to reward industry; and because he had been led to believe that the price was an object to the artist. Had another been the purchaser, she might have allowed something for the merit of the piece; but Laura was not yet cured of first imagining characters, and then bending facts to suit her theory. Sooner than bate one iota from De Courcy's benevolence, she would have assigned to her picture the rank of a sign-post.

She now remembered, that in her visits to Audley street she had never seen her works; and in her approbation of the delicacy which prompted De Courcy to conceal that she was known to him as an artist, she forgot the little prejudice which this concealment implied. De Courcy, indeed, was himself unconscious that he entertained any such prejudice. He applauded Laura's exertions; he approved of the spirit which led a young woman of family to dare, in spite of custom, to be useful. Yet he could not help acting as if she had shared the opinion of the world, and been herself ashamed of her labors. But this was a shame which Laura knew not. She wished not, indeed, to intrude on the world's notice. Her choice was peaceful obscurity. But, if she must be known, she would have far preferred the distinction earned by ingenious industry, to the notoriety which wealth and luxury can purchase.

On her return home, she found her father reading a letter which he had just received from De Courcy. It seemed written in an hour of melancholy. The writer made no mention of returning to town; on the contrary, he expressed a hope that Montreville might now be able to undertake a journey to Scotland. He besought the captain to remember him, to speak of him often, and to write to him sometimes; and ended with these words—"Farewell, my friend; the dearest of my earthly hopes is, that we may one day meet again, though years, long years, must first intervene."

"So ends my last hope," said Montreville, letting his head sink mournfully on his breast; "De Courcy comes not, and thou must be left alone and unprotected."

"The protection of so young a man," said Laura, avoiding to answer to a foreboding which she considered merely as a symptom of her father's disease, "might not perhaps have appeared advantageous to me in the eyes of those who are unacquainted with Mr. de Courcy."

"It would have given comfort to my dying hour," said Montreville, "to consign thee to such a guardian—such a husband."

"A husband!" cried Laura, starting and turning pale. "Heaven be praised, that Mr. de Courcy never harbored such a thought!"

Montreville looked up in extreme surprise, and inquired the reason of her thankfulness.

"Oh, sir," she replied, "we owe so much to

Mr. de Courcy's friendship, that I should have hated myself for being unable to return his affection; and pity would it have been that the love of so amiable a being should have been bestowed in vain."

Montreville fixed his eyes upon her, as if to seek for further explanation, and continued to gaze on her face, when his thoughts had wandered from the examination of it. After some minutes of silence, he said—"Laura, you once rejected an alliance, splendid beyond my hopes, almost beyond my wishes, and that with a man formed to be the darling of your sex; and now you speak as if even Montague de Courcy would have failed to gain you. Tell me, then, have you any secret attachment? Speak candidly, Laura; you will not always have a father to confide in."

Deep crimson dyed the cheeks of Laura; but, with the hesitation of a moment, she replied—"No, sir, I have no wish to marry. I pretend not to lay open my whole heart to you; but I may with truth assure you that there is not at this moment a man in being with whom I would unite myself. I know you would not be gratified by extorted confidence."

"No, Laura," said Montreville, "I ask no more than you willingly avow. I confide, as I have always done, in your prudence and integrity. Soon, alas! you will have no other guides. But it was my heart's wish to see you united to a man who could value and protect your worth—of late, more especially, when I feel that I so soon must leave you."

"My dearest father," said Laura, throwing her arm affectionately round his neck, "do not give way to such gloomy forebodings. Your spirits are oppressed by confinement—let us but see Glenalbert again, and all will be well!"

"I shall never see Glenalbert," said Montreville; "and left alone in such a place as this, without money, without friends, without a home;—where shall my child find safety or shelter?"

"Indeed, sir," said Laura, though a cold shuddering seized her, "your fears have no foundation. Only yesterday Dr. Flint told me that your complaints were without danger, and that a little exercise would make you quite strong again."

Montreville shook his head. "Dr. Flint deceives you, Laura," said he; "you deceive yourself."

"No, indeed," said Laura, though she trembled; "you look much better,—you are much better. It is only these melancholy thoughts which retard your recovery. Trust yourself—trust me to the Providence that has hitherto watched over us."

"I could die without alarm," said Montreville; "but to leave thee alone and in want—oh! I cannot bear it."

"Should the worst befall," said Laura, turning pale as alabaster, "think that I shall not be alone, I shall not want, for —" her voice failed, but she raised her eyes with an expression which filled up the ennobling sentiment.

"I believe it, my love," said Montreville, "but you feel these consolations more strongly than I do. Leave me for the present; I am fatigued with speaking, and wish to be alone."

Laura retired to her own room and endeav-

ored herself to practise the trust which she recommended to her father. Her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of her landlady, Mrs. Stubbs, who, with many courtesies and apologies, said that she was come to present her account. Laura, who always had pleasure in cancelling a debt the moment it was incurred, and who conceived no apology to be necessary from those who came to demand only their own, received her landlady very graciously, and begged her to be seated, while she went to bring her father's purse. Mrs. Stubbs spread her bills upon the table; and Laura, after examining them, was obliged to ask an explanation.

"Why, ma'am," returned the landlady, "there are fourteen guineas for lodgings for six weeks, and 10*l.* 15*s.* for victuals and other articles which I have furnished. I am sure I have kept an exact account."

"I understood," said Laura, "that we were to have the lodgings for a guinea and a half a week, and —"

"A guinea and a half!" cried the landlady, coloring with wrath at this disparagement of her property. "Sure, miss, you did not think to have lodgings such as these for a guinea and a half a-week. No, no—these lodgings have never been let for less than four guineas, and never shall so long as my name is Bridget."

Laura mildly pleaded her ignorance of those matters, and urged De Courcy's information as an excuse for her mistake. "To be sure, ma'am," said the now pacified Mrs. Stubbs, "nobody that know'd anything of the matter would expect to have such rooms for less than four guineas; and that was what the gentleman said when he took them; so he paid me two guineas and a half advance for four weeks, and charged me not to let you know of it; but I can't abide them secret doings; and, besides, if I take only a guinea and a half from you, where was I to look for the rest of my rent for the last fortnight—for the young gentleman seems to have taken himself off!"

Laura suffered her loquacious hostess to proceed without interruption, for her thoughts were fully occupied. She had incurred a debt greater, by five guineas, than she had been prepared to expect; and this sum was, in her present circumstances, of great importance. Yet her predominant feeling was grateful approbation of De Courcy's benevolence; nor did her heart at all upbraid him with the consequence of his well-meant deception. "Kind, considerate, De Courcy," thought she; "he had hoped that, ere now, we should have ceased to need his generosity, and even have been removed from the possibility of discovering it."

Recollecting herself, she paid the landlady her full demand; and dismissing her, sat down to examine what remained of her finances. All that she possessed she found amounted to no more than one guinea and a few shillings; and, dropping the money into her lap, she sat gazing on it in blank dismay.

The poverty, whose approach she had so long contemplated with a fearful eye, had now suddenly overtaken her. Husbanded with whatever care, the sum before her could minister only to the wants of a few hours. In her present habitation, it would scarcely purchase shel-

ter for another night from the storm which a keen winter wind was beginning to drive against her window. An immediate supply was then necessary; but where could that supply be found? It was too late to resort to the earnings of her own genius. Painting was a work of time and labor. No hasty production was likely to find favor amidst the competition of studied excellence. Even the highest effort of her art might long wait a purchaser; and tears fell from the eyes of Laura while she reflected that, even if she could again produce a *Leonidas*, she might never again find a De Courcy.

To borrow money on her father's half pay was an expedient which Laura had always rejected, as calculated to load their scanty income with a burden which it could neither shake off nor bear. But even to this expedient she could now no longer have recourse; for Montreville had assured her, that, in his present state of health, it would be impossible to mortgage his annuity for a single guinea.

She might raise a small supply by stripping her beloved Glenthalbert of some of its little luxuries and comforts; but, long before this revolting business could be transacted, she must be absolutely penniless. Nor did she dare, without consulting her father, to give orders for dismantling his home. And how should she inform him of the necessity for such a sacrifice! Weakened both in body and in mind, how would he endure the privations that attend on real penury! His naturally feeble spirits already crushed to the earth, his kindly temper already, by anxiety and disappointment, turned to gall, his anxieties for his child alarmed even to anguish, how could he bear to learn that real want had reached him—had reached that dear child, the dread of leaving whom to poverty was poisoning the springs of life within him! "He thinks he is about to leave me," cried she, "and shall I tell him that I must owe to charity even the sod that covers him from me! No; I will perish first;" and, starting from her seat, she paced the room in distressful meditation on the means of concealing from her father the extent of their calamity.

She determined to take upon herself the care of their little fund, under pretence that the trouble was too great for Montreville. He had, of late, shown such listless indifference to all domestic concerns, that she hoped he might never inquire into the extent of his landlady's demand, or that his inquiries might be eluded. It seemed a light thing in Laura's eyes alone; or, rather, she thought not of her own sufferings, could she but spare to her father the anguish of knowing himself and his child utterly destitute. She judged of his feelings by her own; felt, by sympathy, all the pangs with which he would witness wants which he could not supply; and she inwardly vowed to conceal from him every privation that she might endure—every labor that she might undergo.

But, void of every resource, far from every friend, destitute amid boundless wealth, alone amid countless multitudes, whither should she turn for aid, or even for counsel? "Whither," cried she, dropping on her knees, "except to Him who hath supplied me in yet more urgent want, who hath counselled me in yet more fearful difficulty, who hath fed my soul with angels'

god, and guided it with light from heaven!" Laura rose from her devotions, more confiding in the care of Providence, more able to consider calmly of improving the means which still remained within her own power.

Before she could finish and dispose of a picture, weeks must elapse for which she could make no provision. To painting, therefore, she could not have immediate recourse. But sketches in chalk could be finished with expedition; the print-seller might undertake the sale of them; and the lowness of the price might invite purchasers. Could she but hope to obtain a subsistence for her father, she would labor night and day, deprive herself of recreation, of rest, even of daily food, rather than wound his heart, by an acquaintance with poverty. "And since his pride is hurt by the labors of his child," said she, "even his pride shall be sacred. He shall never know my labors." And, so frail are even the best! an emotion of pride swelled the bosom of Laura at the thought that the merit of her toils was enhanced by their secrecy.

The resolutions of Laura were ever the immediate prelude to action; and here was no time for delay. She again looked mournfully upon her little treasure, hopelessly re-examined the purse that contained it; again, with dismay, remembered that it was her all; then, hastily putting it into her pocket, she drew her portfolio towards her, and began to prepare for her work with the hurry of one to whom every moment seems precious. Invention was at present impossible; but she tried to recollect one of her former designs, and busied herself in sketching it till the hour of dinner arrived. She then went to summon her father from his chamber to the eating-room. "This day," thought she, "I must share his precarious sustenance. Hereafter I shall be more provident. And is this, then, perhaps, our last social meal!" And she turned for a moment from the door, to suppress the emotion which would have choked her utterance. "Come in, my dear," cried Montreville, who had heard her footstep; and Laura entered with a smile. She offered her arm to assist him in descending to the parlor. "Why will you always urge me to go down stairs, Laura?" said he; "you see I am unequal to the fatigue." "I shall not urge you to-morrow," answered Laura; and Montreville thought the tears which stood in her eyes were the consequence of the impatient tone in which he had spoken.

During the evening, Laura avoided all mention of restoring the purse to her father, and he appeared to have forgotten its existence. But, by no effort could she beguile those cheerless hours. Her utmost exertions were necessary to maintain the appearance of composure; and De Courcy's letter seemed to have consummated Montreville's feelings of solitude and desolation. Wilfully, and without effort, he suffered his spirits to expire. His whole train of thinking had become habitually gloomy. He was wretched, even without reference to his situation; and the original cause of his melancholy was rather the excuse than the reason of his depression. But this only rendered more hopeless all attempts to cheer him; for the woes of the imagination have this dire pre-eminence over such as spring from real evils,

that, while these can warm at times, in benevolent joy, or even brighten for a moment to the flash of innocent gayety, the selfishness of the former, checkered by no kindly feeling, reflects not the sunny smile; as the dark and noisome fog drinks in vain the beam of heaven.

Montreville, when in health, had been always and justly thought a kind-hearted, good-natured man. He had been a most indulgent husband, an easy master, and a fond father. He was honorable, generous, and friendly. Those who had witnessed his patient endurance of Lady Harriet's caprice had given his philosophy a credit which was better due to his indolence; for the grand defect of Montreville's character was a total want of fortitude and self-command; and of these failings he was now paying the penalty. His health was injured by his voluntary inaction; his fancy aggravated his real disorder, and multiplied to infinity his imaginary ailments. He had habituated his mind to images of disaster, till it had become incapable of receiving any but comfortless and doleful impressions.

After spending a few silent hours without effort towards employment or recreation, he retired for the night; and Laura experienced a sensation of relief, as, shutting herself into her apartment, she prepared to resume her labors. After every other member of the family had retired to rest, she continued to work till her candle had expired in the socket; and then threw herself on the bed to rise again with the first blush of dawn.

Montreville had been accustomed to breakfast in his own room; Laura, therefore, found no difficulty in beginning her system of abstinence. Hastily swallowing a few mouthfuls of dry bread, she continued her drawing, till her father rung for his chocolate. She was fully resolved to adhere to this plan, to labor with unceasing industry, and to deny herself whatever was not essential to her existence.

But neither hard fare, nor labor, nor confinement, could occasion to Laura such pain as she suffered from another of the necessities of her situation. Amidst her mournful reflections, it had occurred to her, that unless she would incur a debt which she could not hope to discharge, it would be necessary to dismiss the surgeon who attended her father. All her ideas of honor and integrity revolted from suffering a man to expend his time and trouble, in expectation of a return which she was unable to make. She was, besides, convinced that in Montreville's case medicine could be of no avail. But she feared to hint the subject to her father, lest it should lead to a discovery of their present circumstances; and such was her conviction of the feebleness of his spirits, and such her dread of the consequences of their increased depression, that all earthly evils seemed light compared with that of adding to his distress. Laura perhaps judged wrong; for one real evil sometimes ameliorates the condition, by putting to flight a host of imaginary calamities, and by compelling that exertion which makes any situation tolerable. But she trembled for the effects of the slightest additional suffering upon the life or the reason of her father; and she would have thought it little less than parricide to add a new bruise to the wounded spirit. On



the other hand, she dreaded that Montreville, if kept in ignorance of its real cause, might consider the desertion of his medical attendant as an intimation that his case was hopeless, and, perhaps, become the victim of his imaginary danger.

She knew not on what to resolve. Her distress and perplexity were extreme; and if any thing could have vanquished the stubborn integrity of Laura, the present temptation would have prevailed. But no wilful fraud could be the issue of her deliberations, who was steadily convinced that inflexible justice looks on to blast with a curse even the successful schemes of villany, and to shed a blessing on the sorrows of the upright. She would not even for her father incur a debt which she could never hope to pay; and nothing remained but to consider of the best means of executing her painful determination.

Here a new difficulty occurred, for she could not decline the surgeon's further attendance without offering to discharge what she already owed. In the present state of her funds, this was utterly impossible; for though, at her investigation, his bill had been lately paid, she was sure that the new one must already amount to more than all she possessed. How to procure the necessary supply she knew not; for even if she could have secured the immediate sale of her drawings, the price of her daily and nightly toil would scarcely suffice to pay for the expensive habitation which she durst not propose to leave, and to bribe the fastidious appetite of Montreville with the dainties of which he could neither bear the want nor feel the enjoyment.

Once only, and it was but for a moment, she thought of appealing to the humanity of Dr. Flint, of unfolding to him her situation, and begging his attendance upon the chance of future remuneration. But Laura was destined once more to pay the penalty of her hasty judgments of character. On Montreville's first illness, Dr. Flint had informed Laura, with (as she thought) great want of feeling, of her father's danger. He was a gaunt, atrabilious, stern-looking man, with a rough voice, and cold, repulsive manners. He had, moreover, an uninviting name; and though Laura was ashamed to confess to herself that such trifles could influence her judgment, these disadvantages were the real cause why she always met Dr. Flint with a sensation resembling that with which one encounters a cold, damp, north-east wind. To make any claim upon the benevolence of a stranger—and such a stranger! It was not to be thought of. Yet Laura's opinion, or rather her feelings, wronged Dr. Flint. His exterior, it is true, was far from prepossessing. It is also true, that, considering Montreville's first illness as the effect of a very unpardonable levity on the part of Laura, he had spoken to her on that occasion with even more than his usual frigidity. Nor did he either possess or lay claim to any great share of sensibility; but he was not destitute of humanity; and had Laura explained to him her situation, he would willingly have attended her father without prospect of recompense. But Laura did not put his benevolence to the test. She suffered him to make his morning visit and depart, while she was con-

sidering of a plan which appeared a little less revolting.

Laura knew that one of the most elegant houses in Grosvenor street was inhabited by a Lady Pelham, the daughter of Lady Harriet Montreville's mother by a former marriage. She knew that, for many years, little intercourse had subsisted between the sisters; and that her father was even wholly unknown to Lady Pelham. But she was ignorant that the imprudence of her mother's marriage served as the excuse for a coldness, which had really existed before it had any such pretext. With all her Scottish prejudice in favor of the claims of kindred, (and Laura in this and many other respects was entirely a Scotchwoman,) she could not, without the utmost repugnance, think of applying to her relation. To introduce herself to a stranger whom she had never seen—to appear not only as an inferior, but as a supplicant—a beggar! Laura had long and successfully combated the innate pride of human nature; but her humility almost failed under this trial. Her illustrious ancestry—the dignity of a gentleman—the independence of one who can bear to labor and endure to want, all rose successively to her mind; for pride can wear many specious forms. But she had nearer claims than the honor of her ancestry—dearer concerns than her personal importance; and when she thought of her father, she felt that she was no longer independent.

Severe was her struggle, and bitter were the tears which she shed over the conviction that it was right for her to become a petitioner for the bounty of a stranger. In vain did she repeat to herself, that she was a debtor to the care of Providence for her daily bread, and was not entitled to choose the means by which it was supplied. She could not conquer her reluctance. But she could act right in defiance of it. She could sacrifice her own feelings to the comfort of her father—to a sense of duty. Nay, upon reflection, she could rejoice that circumstances compelled her to quell that proud spirit with which, as a Christian, she maintained constant and vigorous combat.

Whilst these thoughts were passing in her mind, she had finished her drawing; and, impatient to know how far this sort of labor was likely to be profitable, she furnished her father with a book to amuse him in her absence; and, for the first time since they had occupied their present lodgings, expressed a wish to take a walk for amusement. Had Montreville observed the blushes that accompanied this little subterfuge, he would certainly have suspected that the amusement which this walk promised was of no common kind; but he was in one of his reveries, banging over the mantel-piece, with his forehead resting on his arm, and did not even look up while he desired her not to be long absent.

She resolved to go first to Lady Pelham, that coming early she might find her disengaged, and afterwards to proceed to the print-shop.

The wind blew keen across the snow as Laura began her reluctant pilgrimage. Her summer attire to which her finances could afford no addition, ill defended her from the blast. Through the streets of London she was to explore her way unattended. Accustomed to find

both safety and pleasure in the solitude of her walks, she was to mix in the throngs of a rude rabble, without protection from insult. But no outward circumstances could add to the feelings of comfortless dismay with which she looked forward to the moment, when, ushered through stately apartments into the presence of self-important greatness, she should announce herself a beggar. Her courage failed—she paused, and made one step back towards her home. But she recalled her former thoughts. "I have need to be humbled," said she; and again proceeded on her way.

As she left the little garden which surrounded her lodging, she perceived an old man who had taken shelter by one of the pillars of the gate. He shivered in the cold, which found easy entrance through the rags that covered him, and famine glared from his hollow eye. His gray hair streamed on the wind, as he held out the tattered remains of a hat, and said, "Please to help me, lady—I am very poor." He spoke in the dialect of her native land, and the accents went to Laura's heart; for Laura was in the land of strangers. She had never been deaf to the petitions of the poor; for all the poor of Glenabert were known to her; and she knew that what she spared from her own comforts was not made the minister of vice. Her purse was already in her hand, ere she remembered that to give was become a crime.

As the thought crossed her, she started like one who had escaped from sudden danger. "No, I must not give you money," said she, and returned the purse into her pocket, with a pang which taught her the true bitterness of poverty. "I am cold and hungry," said the man, still pleading, and taking encouragement from Laura's relenting eye. "Hungry!" repeated Laura; "then come with me, and I will give you bread;" and she returned to the house to bestow on the old man the humble fare which she had before destined to supply her own wants for the day, glad to purchase by a longer fast the right to feed the hungry.

"In what respect am I better than this poor creature," said she to herself, as she returned with the beggar to the gate, "that I should offer to him with ease, and even with pleasure, what I myself cannot ask without pain! Surely I do not rightly believe that we are of the same dust! the same frail, sinful, perishable dust!"

But it was in vain that Laura continued to argue with herself. In this instance she could only do her duty; she could not love it. Her heart filled, and the tears rose to her eyes. She dashed them away—but they rose again.

When she found herself in Grosvenor street, she paused for a moment. "What if Lady Pelham should deny my request? dismiss me as a bold intruder? Why, then," said Laura, raising her head, and again advancing with a firmer step, "I shall owe no obligation to a stranger."

She approached the house—she ascended the steps. Almost breathless she laid her hand upon the knocker. At that moment she imagined her entrance through files of insolent domestics, into a room filled with gay company. She anticipated the inquisitive glances—shrunk in fancy from the supercilious examination; and she again drew back her hand. "I shall

never have courage to face all this," thought she. While we hesitate, a trifle turns the scale. Laura perceived that she had drawn the attention of a young man on the pavement, who stood gazing on her with familiar curiosity; and she knocked, almost before she was sensible that she intended it.

The time appeared immeasurable till the door was opened by a maid-servant. "Is Lady Pelham at home?" inquired Laura, taking encouragement from the sight of one of her own sex. "No, ma'am," answered the maid, "my lady has gone to keep Christmas in —shire, and will not return for a fortnight." Laura drew a long, deep breath, as if a weight had been lifted from her breast; and, suppressing an ejaculation of "Thank Heaven!" sprang in the lightness of her heart at one skip from the door to the pavement.

## CHAPTER XVI.

LAURA'S exultation was of short continuance. She had gone but a few steps ere she reflected that the wants which she had undertaken so painful a visit to supply were as pressing as ever, and now further than ever from a chance of relief. Mournfully she pursued her way toward the print-shop, hopelessly comparing her urgent and probably prolonged necessities with her confined resources.

The utmost price which she could hope to receive for the drawing she carried would be far from sufficient to discharge her debt to the surgeon; and there seemed now no alternative but to confess her inability to pay, and to throw herself upon his mercy. To this measure, however, she was too averse to adopt it without considering every possible expedient. She thought of appealing to the friendship of Mrs. Douglas, and of suffering Dr. Flint to continue his visits till an answer from her friend should enable her to close the connection. But Mrs. Douglas's scanty income was taxed to the uttermost by the maintenance and education of a numerous family, by the liberal charities of its owners, and by the hospitable spirit, which, banished by ostentation from more splendid abodes, still lingers by the fireside of a Scottish clergyman. Laura was sure that Mrs. Douglas would supply her wants at whatever inconvenience to herself; and this very consideration withheld her from making application to her friend.

Laura had heard and read that ladies in distress had found subsistence by the sale of their ornaments. But by their example she could not profit; for her ornaments were few in number and of no value. She wore, indeed, a locket, which she had received from her mother, with an injunction neither to lose it nor to give it away; but Laura, in her profound ignorance of the value of trinkets, attached no estimation to this one, except as the only unnecessary gift which she had received from her mother. "It contains almost as much gold as a guinea," said she, putting her hand to it, "and a guinea will soon be a great treasure to me." Still she determined that nothing short of extremity should induce her to part with it; but desirous to ascertain the extent of this last resource, she entered the shop of a jeweller, and presenting the locket, begged to know its value.

After examining it, the jeweler replied that he believed it might be worth about five guineas; "for though," said he, "the setting is antiquated, these emeralds are worth something."

At the mention of this sum, all Laura's difficulties seemed to vanish. Besides enabling her to pay the surgeon, it would make an addition to her little fund. With rigorous abstinence on her part, this little fund, together with the price of her incessant labor, might pay for her lodgings, and support her father in happy ignorance of his poverty, till he was able to remove to Glenalbert. Then, when he was quite well, and quite able to bear it, she would tell him how she had toiled for him, and he would see that he had not lavished his fondness on a thankless child.

These thoughts occupied far less time than the recital: and yet, ere they were passed, Laura had untied the locket from her neck, and put it into the hands of the jeweler. It was not till she saw it in the hands of another that she felt all the pain of parting with it. She asked to see it once more; as she gazed on it for the last time, tears trickled from her eyes; but speedily wiping them away, and averting her head, she restored the locket to its new owner, and, taking up the money, departed.

She soon arrived at the print-shop, and finding Wilkins disengaged, produced her drawing, and asked him to purchase it. Wilkins looked at it, and inquired what price she put upon it. "I am quite unacquainted with its real value," answered she, "but the rapid sale of my work is at present such an object to me, that I shall willingly make it as cheap as possible, or allow you to fix your own price." "Have you any more to dispose of, ma'am?" asked Wilkins. "I have none finished," answered Laura, "but I think I could promise you six more in a week, if you are inclined to take them." "I think," said Wilkins, after some consideration, "I might venture to take them if you could afford them for half a guinea each." "You shall have them," said Laura, with a sigh; "but I think half a guinea rather a low—a high, I believe, I mean—"

Laura did not at this moment exactly know what she meant; for her eyes had just rested on a gentleman who, with his back toward her, was busied in examining a book of caricatures. She thought she could not be mistaken in the person. Only one form upon earth was endowed with such symmetry and grace; and that form was Hargrave's. He slightly turned his head, and Laura was certain.

Though Laura neither screamed nor fainted, this recognition was not made without extreme emotion. She trembled violently, and a mist spread before her eyes; but she remembered the apparently willful desertion of her lover; and determined neither to claim his compassion nor gratify his vanity by any of the airs of a forsaken damsel, she quietly turned away from him, and leaned against the counter to recover strength and composure.

She was resolved to quit the shop the instant that she was able; and yet, perhaps, she would have become sooner sensible of her recovered powers of motion, had it not been for a latent hope that the caricatures would not long continue so very interesting. No one, however,

accosted her; and next came the idea that Hargrave had already observed her, without wishing to claim her acquaintance. Before the mortifying thought could take a distinct form, Laura was already on her way toward the door.

"You have left your half guinea, ma'am," said Wilkins, calling after her; and Laura, half angry at being detained, turned back to fetch it. At this moment Hargrave's eye fell upon her half-averted face. Surprise and joy illumined his fine countenance, "Laura!" he exclaimed, "is it possible! have I at last found you?" and springing forward, he clasped her to his breast; regardless of the inquisitive looks and significant smiles of the spectators of his transports. But to the scrutiny of strangers, to the caresses of Hargrave, even to the indecorum of her situation, poor Laura was insensible. Weakened by the fatigue and emotion of the two preceding days, overcome by the sudden conviction that she had not been willfully neglected, her head sunk upon the shoulder of Hargrave, and she lost all consciousness.

When Laura recovered, she found herself in a little parlor adjoining to the shop, with no attendant but Hargrave, who still supported her in his arms. Her first thought was vexation at her own ill-timed sensibility; her next, a resolution to make no further forfeiture of her respectability, but rather, by the most stoical composure, to regain what she had lost. For this purpose, she soon disengaged herself from her perilous support, and, unwilling to speak till secure of maintaining her firmness, she averted her head, and returned all Hargrave's raptures of love and joy with provoking silence.

As soon as she had completely recovered her self-possession, she rose, and apologizing for the trouble she had occasioned him, said she would return home. Hargrave eagerly begged permission to accompany her, saying that his carriage was in waiting, and would convey them. Laura, with cold politeness, declined his offer. Though a little piqued by her manner, Hargrave triumphed in the idea that he retained all his former influence. "My bewitching Laura," said he, taking her by the hand, "I beseech you to lay aside this ill-timed coquetry. After so sweet, so interesting a proof that you will still allow me some power over your feelings, must I accuse you of an affectation of coldness?" "No, sir," said Laura, indignantly; "rather of a momentary weakness, for which I despise myself."

The lover could not indeed have chosen a more unfavorable moment to express his exultation; for Laura's feelings of humiliation and self-reproach were just then raised to their height, by her perceiving the faces of two of the shop-boys peeping through the glass door with an aspect of roguish curiosity. Conscious of her inability to walk home, and feeling her situation quite intolerable, she called to one of the little spies, and begged that he would instantly procure her a hackney-coach.

Hargrave vehemently remonstrated against this order. "Why this unkind haste!" said he. "Surely, after so tedious, so tormenting an absence, you need not grudge me a few short moments." Laura thought he was probably himself to blame for the absence of which he complained, and coldly answering, "I have al-

ready been detained too long," was about to quit the room, when Hargrave, impatiently seizing her hand, exclaimed, "Unfeeling Laura! does that relentless pride never slumber! Have I followed you from Scotland, and sought you for three anxious months, to be met without one kind word, one pitying look!"

"Followed me!" repeated Laura, with surprise.

"Yes, upon my life, my journey hither had no other object. After you so cruelly left me, without warning or farewell, how could I endure to exist in the place which you once made delightful to me! Indeed, I could not bear it. I resolved to pursue you wherever you went, to breathe at least the same air with you, sometimes to feast my fond eyes with that form, beyond imagination lovely—perhaps to win that beguiling smile which no heart can withstand. The barbarous caution of Mrs. Douglas, in refusing me your address, has caused the disappointment of all my hopes."

Hargrave had egregiously mistaken the road to Laura's favor when he threw a reflection upon her friend. "Mrs. Douglas certainly acted right," said she; "I have equal confidence in her prudence and in her friendship."

"Probably, then," said Hargrave, reddening with vexation, "the system of torture originated with you. It was at your desire that your friend withstood all my entreaties."

"No," answered Laura, "I can not claim the merit of so much foresight. I certainly did not expect the honor which you are pleased to say you have done me, especially when you were doubtful both of my abode and of your own reception."

"Insulting girl!" cried Hargrave, "you know too well, that however received, still I must follow you. And, but for a series of the most tormenting accidents, I should have defeated the caution of your cold-hearted favorite. At the Perth post-office, I discovered that your letters were addressed to the care of Mr. Baynard; and the very hour that I reached London, I flew to make inquiries after you. I found that Mr. Baynard's house was shut up, and that he had gone in bad health to Richmond. I followed him, and was told that he was too ill to be spoken with, that none of the servants knew your abode, as the footman who used to carry messages to you had been dismissed, and that your letters were now left at Mr. Baynard's chambers in town. Thither I went, and learned that, ever since Mr. Baynard's removal to Richmond, you had yourself sent for your letters, and that, of course, the clerks were entirely ignorant of your residence. Imagine my disappointment! The people, however, promised to make inquiries of your messenger, and to let me know where you might be found; and day after day did I haunt them, the sport of vain hope and bitter disappointment. No other letter ever came from you, nor did you ever inquire for any."

"After Mr. Baynard's removal to Richmond," said Laura, "I directed Mrs. Douglas to address her letters to our lodgings."

"Ah, Laura, think what anxieties, what wretchedness I have suffered in my fruitless search! Yet you meet me only to drive me coldly from your presence. Once you said that

you pardoned the folly—the madness which offended you; but too well I see that you deceived yourself or me—that no attachment, no devotion can purchase your forgiveness."

"Indeed," said Laura, melted by the proof which she had received of her lover's affection, yet fearful of forfeiting her caution, "I am incapable of harboring enmity against the worst of human beings, and—"

"Enmity!" interrupted Hargrave; "heavens, what a word!"

"I mean," said Laura, faltering, "that I am not insensible to the regard—"

"Madam, the coach is at the door," said the shop-boy, again peeping slyly into the room; and Laura, hastily bidding Hargrave good-morning, walked toward the carriage. Having herself given the coachman his directions, she suffered Hargrave to hand her in, giving him a slight bow in token of dismissal. He continued, however, to stand for some moments with his foot upon the step, waiting for a look of permission to accompany her; but receiving none, he sprung into the seat by her side, and called to the man to drive on. Laura, offended at his boldness, gave him a very ungracious look, and drew back in silence. "I see you think me presumptuous," said he; "but just found, how can I consent to leave you! Oh, Laura, if you knew what I have suffered from an absence which seemed endless. Not for worlds would I endure such another."

"The stipulated two years are still far from a close," said Laura, coldly; "and, till they are ended, our intercourse can not be too slight."

"Surely," cried Hargrave, "when you fixed this lingering probation, you did not mean to banish me from your presence for two years!" Laura could not with truth aver that such a banishment had been her intention. "I believe," said she, suppressing a sigh, "that would have been my wisest meaning." "I would sooner die!" cried Hargrave, vehemently; "oh, had I sooner found you," added he, a dark expression which Laura could not define clouding his countenance, "what wretchedness would have been spared! But now that we have at last met," continued he, his eyes again sparkling with love and hope, "I will haunt you, cling to you, supplicate you, till I melt you to a passion as fervent as my own." While he spoke he dropped upon his knee by her side, and threw his arm passionately round her. Time had been when Laura would have withdrawn from the embrace, womanly shame alone rejecting caresses which yet she never imagined to be less holy than a mother's kiss. But Hargrave had himself torn the veil from her eyes; and, shrinking from him as if a serpent had crossed her path, she cast on him a look which struck like an ice-bolt on the glowing heart of Hargrave. "Just Heaven!" he cried, starting up with a convulsive shudder, "this is abhorrence! Why, why have you deceived me with a false show of sensibility? Speak it at once," said he, wildly grasping her arm; "say that you detest me, and tell me, too, who has dared to supplant me in a heart once wholly mine!"

"Be calm, I implore you," said Laura, terrified at his violence; "no one has supplanted you. I am, I ever shall be, whatever you deserve to find me."

Laura's soothing voice, her insinuating look retained all their wonted power to calm the fierce passions of her lover. "Oh, I shall never deserve you," said he, in a tone of wretchedness, while his face was again crossed by an expression of anguish, which the unsuspecting Laura attributed to remorse for his former treatment of herself.

The carriage at this moment stopped, and, anxious to calm his spirits at parting, Laura smiled kindly upon him, and said, "Be ever thus humble in your opinion of your own merits, ever thus partial in your estimate of mine, and then," added she, the tears trembling in her lovely eyes, "we may meet again in happier circumstances."

"You must not, shall not leave me thus," cried Hargrave, impatiently; "I will not quit this spot till you have consented to see me again."

"Do not ask it," replied Laura. "A long, long time must elapse, much virtuous exertion must be undergone, ere I dare receive you with other than this coldness, which appears to be so painful to you. Why, then, sport with your own feelings and with mine?"

"Ah, Laura," said Hargrave, in a voice of supplication, "use me as you will, only suffer me to see you."

Moved with the imploring tone of her lover, Laura turned toward him that she might soften by her manner the meditated refusal; but in an evil hour for her resolution, she met the fine eyes of Hargrave suffused with tears, and, wholly unable to utter what she intended, she remained silent. Hargrave was instantly sensible of his advantage, and willing to assist her acquiescence by putting his request into a less exceptionable form, he said, "I ask not even for your notice—suffer me but to visit your father."

"My father has been very ill," returned Laura, who, unknown to herself, rejoiced to find an excuse for her concession, "and it may give him pleasure to see you; but I can claim no share in the honor of your visits."

Hargrave, delighted with his success, rapturously thanked her for her condescension; and, springing from the carriage, led her, but half satisfied with her own conduct, into the house. She ushered him into the parlor, and before he had time to detain her, glided away to acquaint her father with his visit. She found the captain wrapped in the same listless melancholy in which she had left him; the book which she had meant to entertain him used only as a rest for his arm. Laura was now beset with her old difficulty. She had not yet learned to speak of Hargrave without sensible confusion; and to utter his name while an eye was fixed upon her face, required an effort which no common circumstances could have tempted her to make. She therefore took refuge behind her father's chair, before she began her partial relation of her morning's adventure.

"And is he now in the house?" cried Montreville, with an animation which he had long laid aside. "I rejoice to hear it. Return to him immediately, my love. I will see him in a few minutes." "As soon as you choose to receive him," said Laura, "I shall carry your commands. I shall remain in the dressing-

room." "For shame, Laura!" returned Montreville. "I thought you had been above these silly airs of conquest. Colonel Hargrave's rejected passion gives you no right to refuse him the politeness due to all your father's guests." "Certainly not, sir, but—" she stopped, hesitating; "however," added she, "since you wish it, I will go."

It was not without embarrassment that Laura returned to her lover; to offer him another *tête-à-tête* seemed so like soliciting a renewal of his ardors. In this idea she was stopping at the parlor door, collecting her courage, and meditating a speech decorously repulsive, when Hargrave, who had been listening for her approach, impatiently stepped out to look for her, and in a moment spoiled all her concerted oratory, by taking her hand and leading her into the room.

Though Hargrave could at any time take Laura's feelings by surprise, an instant was sufficient to restore her self-possession; and, withdrawing her hand, she said, "In a few minutes, sir, my father will be glad to see you, and at his desire I attend you till he can have that honor." "Bless him for the delay!" cried Hargrave; "I have a thousand things to say to you." "And I, sir," said Laura, solemnly, "have one thing to say to you, of more importance to me, probably, than all the thousand."

Hargrave bit his lip; and Laura proceeded, her color, as painful recollection rose, fading from the crimson which had newly flushed it, to the paleness of anguish. "Six months ago," said she, speaking with an effort that rendered her words scarcely articulate, "six months ago you made me a promise. Judge of my anxiety that you should keep it, when, to secure its fulfillment, I can call up a subject so revolting—so dreadful." She paused, a cold shudder running through her limbs; but Hargrave, abashed and disconcerted, gave her no interruption, and ventured not even to raise his eyes from the ground. "My father," she continued, "is no longer able to avenge his child; the bare mention of her wrongs would destroy him. If, then, you value my peace—if you dread my detestation—let no circumstance seduce, no accident surprise, from you this hateful secret."

While she spoke, the blushes which had deserted her cheek were transferred to that of Hargrave; for though, to his own conscience, he had palliated his former outrage till it appeared a very venial trespass, he was not proof against the unaffected horror with which it had inspired the virtuous Laura. Throwing himself at her feet, and hiding his face in her gown, he bitterly, and for the moment sincerely, bewailed his offense, and vowed to devote his life to its expiation. Then starting up, he struck his hand wildly upon his forehead, and exclaimed, "Madman that I have been! Oh! Laura, thy heavenly purity makes me the vilest wretch. No; thou canst never pardon me!"

The innocent Laura, who little suspected all his causes of self-reproach, wept tears of joy over his repentance, and, in a full voice of tenderness, said, "Indeed, I have myself too many faults to be unrelenting. Contrition and amendment are all that Heaven requires: why should I ask more?" Hargrave saw that she attributed all his agitation to remorse for his conduct

toward herself; but the effects of her mistake were too delightful to suffer him to undeceive her; and perceiving at once that he had found the master-spring of all her tenderness, he overpowered her with such vows, protestations, and entreaties, that, before their conference was interrupted, he had, amid tremors, blushes, and hesitation, which spoke a thousand times more than her words, wrung from her a confession that she felt a more than friendly interest in the issue of his probation.

Indeed, Montreville was in no haste to break in upon their dialogue. That any woman should refuse the hand of the handsome, the insinuating, the gallant Colonel Hargrave, had always appeared to him little less than miraculous. He had been told that ladies sometimes rejected what they did not mean to relinquish; and though he could scarcely believe his daughter capable of such childish coquetry, he was not without faith in a maxim which, it must be confessed, receives sanction from experience, namely, that in all cases of feminine obduracy perseverance is an infallible recipe. This recipe, he had no doubt, was now to be tried upon Laura; and he fervently wished that it might be with success. Though he was too affectionate a father to form on this subject a wish at variance with his daughter's happiness, he had never been insensible to the desire of seeing her brow graced by a coronet. But now more important considerations made him truly anxious to consign her to the guardianship of a man of honor.

The unfortunate transaction of the annuity would, in the event of his death, leave her utterly destitute. That event, he imagined, was fast approaching; and with many a bitter pang he remembered that he had neither friend nor relative to whom he could intrust his orphan child. His parents had long been dead; his only surviving brother, a fox-hunting squire of small fortune, shared his table and bed with a person who had stooped to these degrading honors from the more reputable situation of an innocent dairy-maid. With Lady Harriet's relations (for friends she had none) Montreville had never maintained any intercourse. They had affected to resent his intrusion into the family, and he had not been industrious to conciliate their favor. Except himself, therefore, Laura had no natural protector; and this circumstance made him ten-fold more anxious that she should recall her decision in regard to Hargrave.

He had no doubt that the present visit was intended for Laura; and he suffered as long a time to elapse before he claimed any share in it as common politeness would allow. He had meant to receive the colonel in his own apartment, but an inclination to observe the conduct of the lovers induced him to make an effort to join them in the parlor, where he with pleasure discovered, by the countenances of both, that their conversation had been mutually interesting. Hargrave instantly recovered himself, and paid his compliments with his accustomed grace; but Laura, by no means prepared to stand inspection, disappeared the moment her father entered the room.

This was the first time that the gentlemen had met since the day when Montreville had granted his fruitless sanction to the colonel's

suit. Delicacy prevented the father from touching upon the subject, and it was equally avoided by Hargrave, who had not yet determined in what light to represent his repulse. However, as it completely occupied the minds of both, the conversation, which turned on topics merely indifferent, was carried on with little spirit on either side, and was soon closed by Hargrave's taking leave, after begging permission to repeat his visit.

Colonel Hargrave had promised to spend that evening with the most beautiful woman in London; but the unexpected encounter of the morning left him in no humor to fulfill his engagement. He had found his Laura—his lovely, his innocent Laura—the object of his only serious passion—the only woman whose empire reached beyond his senses. He had found her cautious, reserved, severe; yet feeling, constant, and tender. He remembered the overwhelming joy which made her sink fainting on his bosom; called to mind her ill-suppressed tears—her smothered sighs—her unhidden blushes; and a thousand times assured himself that he was passionately beloved. He triumphed the more in the proofs of her affection, because they were not only involuntary, but reluctant; and, seen through the flattering medium of gratified pride, her charms appeared more than ever enchanting. On these charms he had formerly suffered his imagination to dwell, till to appropriate them seemed to him almost the chief end of existence; and, though in absence his phrensy had a little intermitted, his interview with Laura roused it again to double violence.

No passion of Hargrave's soul (and all his passions were of intense force) had ever known restraint, or control, or even delay of gratification, excepting only this, the strongest that had ever governed him. And must he now pine for eighteen lingering months, ere he attained the object of such ardent wishes! Must he submit, for a time that seemed endless, to the tyranny of this intolerable passion—see the woman on whom he doted receive his protestations with distrust, and, spite of her affection, shrink from his caresses with horror! No! he vowed that if there were persuasion in man, or frailty in woman, he would shorten the period of his trial; that he would employ for this purpose all the power which he possessed over Laura's heart, and if that failed, that he would even have recourse to the authority of her father.

But he had yet a stronger motive than the impetuosity of his passions for striving to obtain the immediate possession of his treasure. He was conscious that there was a tale to tell, which, once known (and it could not long be concealed), would shake his hopes to the foundation. But on this subject he could not now dwell without disgust, and he turned from it to the more inviting contemplation of Laura's beauty and Laura's love; and with his head and his heart, every nerve, every pulse full of Laura, he retired to pursue, in his dreams, the fair visions which had occupied his waking thoughts.

While he was thus willfully surrendering himself to the dominion of his phrensy, Laura, the self-denied Laura, was endeavoring, though, it must be owned, without distinguished suc-

cess, to silence the pleading of a heart as warm, though better regulated, by attending to the humble duties of the hour.

When she quitted Hargrave, she had retired to offer up her fervent thanks to Heaven, that he was become sensible of the enormity of his former conduct. Earnestly did she pray, that though earth should never witness their union, they might be permitted together to join a nobler society—animated by yet purer loves—bound by yet holier ties. She next reconsidered her own behavior toward Hargrave; and, though vexed at the momentary desertion of her self-command, saw, upon the whole, little cause to reproach herself, since her weakness had been that of the body, to which the will gave no consent. She resolved to be guardedly cautious in her future demeanor toward him; and since the issue of his probation was doubtful, since its close was, at all events, distant, to forfeit the enjoyment of her lover's society, rather than, by remaining in the room during his visits, appear to consider them as meant for herself.

As soon as Hargrave was gone, Montreville returned to his chamber; and there Laura ordered his small but delicate repast to be served, excusing herself from partaking of it, by saying that she could dine more conveniently in the parlor. Having in the morning bestowed on the beggar the meager fare that should have supplied her own wants, she employed the time of her father's meal in the labor which was to purchase him another; pondering meanwhile on the probability that he would again enter on the discussion of Hargrave's pretensions. To this subject she felt unconquerable repugnance; and though she knew that it must at last be canvassed, and that she must at last assign a reason for her conduct, she would fain have put off the evil hour.

She delayed her evening visit to her father, till he grew impatient for it, and sent for her to his apartment. The moment she entered the room, he began, as she had anticipated, to inquire into the particulars of her interview with Hargrave. The language of Laura's reply was not very perspicuous; the manner of it was more intelligible; and Montreville instantly comprehended the nature of her conference with the colonel. "He has then given you an opportunity of repairing your former rashness," said Montreville, with eagerness; "and your answer!" "Colonel Hargrave had his answer long ago, sir," replied Laura, trembling at this exordium. Montreville sighed heavily, and fixing his eyes mournfully upon her, remained silent. At last, affectionately taking her hand, he said, "My dear child, the time has been, when even your caprices on this subject were sacred with your father. While I had a shelter, however humble—an independence, however small, to offer you, your bare inclination determined mine. But now your situation is changed—fatally changed; and no trivial reasons would excuse me for permitting your rejection of an alliance so unexceptionable, so splendid. Tell me, then, explicitly, what are your objections to Colonel Hargrave?"

Laura remained silent, for she knew not how to frame her reply. "Is it possible that he can be personally disagreeable to you?" continued

Montreville. "Disagreeable!" exclaimed Laura, thrown off her guard by astonishment. "Colonel Hargrave is one whom any woman might—whom no woman could know without—" "Without what?" said Montreville, with a delighted smile. But Laura, shocked at the extent of her own admission, covered her face with her hands, and, almost in tears, made no reply.

"Well, my love," said Montreville, more cheerfully than he had spoken for many a day, "I can interpret all this, and will not persecute you. But you must still suffer me to ask what strange reasons could induce you to reject wealth and title, offered by a man not absolutely disagreeable?"

Laura strove to collect herself, and deep crimson dyeing her beautiful face and neck, she said, without venturing to lift her eyes, "You yourself have told me, sir, that Colonel Hargrave is a man of gallantry, and, believe me, with such a man I should be most miserable."

"Come, come, Laura," said Montreville, putting his arm round her, "confess that some little fit of jealousy made you answer Hargrave unkindly at first, and that now a little female pride, or the obstinacy of which we used to accuse you fifteen years ago, makes you unwilling to retract."

"No, indeed," returned Laura, with emotion; "Colonel Hargrave has never given me cause to be jealous of his affection. But jealousy would feebly express the anguish with which his wife would behold his vices, degrading him in the eyes of men, and making him vile in the sight of Heaven."

"My love," said Montreville, "your simplicity and ignorance of the world make you attach far too great importance to Hargrave's little irregularities. I am persuaded that a wife whom he loved would have no cause to complain of them."

"She would, at least, have no right to complain," returned Laura, "if, knowing them, she chose to make the hazardous experiment."

"But I am certain," said Montreville, "that a passion such as he evidently feels for you would insure his perfect reformation; and that a heart so warm as Hargrave's would readily acknowledge all the claims upon a husband's and a father's love."

Laura held down her head, and, for a moment, surrendered her fancy to prospects, rainbow-like, bright, but unreal. Spite of the dictates of sober sense, the vision was cheering; and a smile dimpled her cheek while she said, "But since this reformation is so easy and so certain, would it be a grievous delay to wait for its appearance?"

"Ah! Laura!" Montreville began, "this is no time for—" "Nay, now," interrupted Laura, sportively laying her hand upon his mouth, "positively I will be no more lectured to-night. Besides, I have got a new book for you from the library, and the people insisted upon having it returned to-morrow." "You are a spoiled girl," said Montreville, fondly caressing her; and he dropped the subject with less reluctance, because he believed that his wishes, aided, as he perceived they were, by an advocate in Laura's own breast, were in a fair train for accomplishment. He little knew how feeble was the

influence of inclination over the decisions of her self-controlling spirit.

To prevent him from returning to the topic which he had quitted, she read aloud to him till his hour of rest; and then retired to her chamber to labor as formerly, till the morning was far advanced.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Laura had it now in her power to discharge her debt to the surgeon, and she was resolved that it should immediately be paid. When, therefore, he called in the morning to make his daily visit, she met him before he entered Montreville's chamber, and requested to speak with him in the parlor.

She began by saying, she feared that medicine could be of little use to her father, to which Dr. Flint readily assented, declaring, in his dry way, that generous food and open air would benefit him more than all the drugs in London. Laura begged him to say explicitly so to the captain, and to give that as a reason for declining to make him any more professional visits. She then presented him with a paper containing four guineas, which she thought might be the amount of his claim. He took the paper, and deliberately unfolding it, returned one half of its contents; saying, that his account had been settled so lately, the new one could not amount to more than the sum he retained. Laura, who, having now no favor to beg, no debt which she was unable to pay, was no longer ashamed of her poverty, easily opened to Dr. Flint so much of her situation as was necessary to instruct him in the part which he had to act with Montreville. He made no offer to continue his visits, even as an acquaintance, but readily undertook all that Laura required of him, adding, "Indeed, Miss Montreville, I should have told your father long ago that physic was useless to him; but whimsical people must have something to amuse them, and if he had not paid for my bills, he would for some other man's." He then went to Montreville, and finding him in better spirits than he had lately enjoyed, actually succeeded in persuading him, for that day at least, that no new prescription was necessary, and that he might continue to use the old one without the inspection of a surgeon.

Laura's mind was much relieved by her having settled this affair to her wish; and when the doctor was gone, she sat down cheerfully to her drawing. Her meeting with Hargrave had lightened her heart of a load which had long weighed upon it more heavily than she was willing to allow; and, in spite of poverty, she was cheerful.

"I have now only hunger and toil to endure," thought she, smiling as gayly as if hunger and toil had been trifles; "but light will be my labor, for by them I can in part pay back my debt of life to my dear, kind father. I am no more forlorn and deserted, for he is come who is sunshine to Laura's soul. The cloud which darkened him has passed away, and he will brighten all my after life. Oh, fondly beloved! with thee I would have been content to tread the humblest path; but, if we must climb the steep, together we will court the breeze, to-

gether meet the storm. No time shall change the love I bear thee. Thy step, when feeble with age, shall still be music to Laura's ear. When the luster of the melting eyes is quenched, when the auburn ringlets fade to silver, dearer shalt thou be to me than in all the pride of manly beauty. And when at last the dust shall cover us, one tree shall shelter our narrow beds, and the wind which fans the flowers upon thy grave shall scatter their fallen leaves upon mine."

Casting these thoughts into the wild extempore measures which are familiar to the laborers of her native mountains,\* Laura was singing them to one of the affecting melodies of her country, her sweet voice made more sweet by the magic of real tenderness, when the door opened, and Hargrave himself entered.

He came, resolved to exert all his influence, to urge every plea which the affection of Laura would allow him, in order to extort her consent to their immediate union; and he was too well convinced of his power to be very diffident of success. Laura ceased her song in as much confusion as if her visitor had understood the language in which it was composed, or could have known himself to be the subject of it. He had been listening to its close, and now urged her to continue it, but was unable to prevail. He knew that she was particularly sensible to the charms of music. He had often witnessed the effect of her own pathetic voice upon her feelings; and he judged that no introduction could be more proper to a conference in which he intended to work upon her sensibility. He, therefore, begged her to sing a little plaintive air with which she had often drawn tears from his eyes. But Laura knew that, as her father was still in bed, she could not, without rudeness, avoid a long tête-à-tête with Hargrave, and therefore she did not choose to put her composure to any unnecessary test. She excused herself from complying with his request; but, glad to find any indifferent way of passing the time, she offered to sing, if he would allow her to choose her own song, and began a lively air, which she executed with all the vivacity that she could command. The style of it was quite at variance with Hargrave's present humor and design. He heard it with impatience; and scarcely thanking her, said, "Your spirits are high this morning, Miss Montreville."

"They are, indeed," replied Laura, gayly; "I hope you have no intention to make them otherwise."

"Certainly not; though they are little in unison with my own. The meditations of a restless, miserable night have brought me to you."

"Is it the usual effect of a restless night to bring you abroad so early the next morning?" said Laura, anxious to avoid a trial of strength in a sentimental conference.

"I will be heard seriously," said Hargrave, coloring with anger; "and seriously, too, I must be answered."

"Nay," said Laura, "if you look so tremendous, I shall retreat without hearing you at all."

Hargrave, who instantly saw that he had not chosen the right road to victory, checked his rising choler: "Laura," said he, "you have yourself made me the victim of a passion un-

\* See Jameson's Popular Ballads, vol. ii., p. 568.



governable—irresistible; and it is cruel—it is ungenerous in you to sport with my uneasiness."

"Do not give the poor passion such hard names," said Laura, smiling. "Perhaps you have never tried to resist or govern it."

"As soon might I govern the wind," cried Hargrave, vehemently, "as soon resist the fires of Heaven! And why attempt to govern it?"

"Because," answered Laura, "it is weak, it is sinful to submit unresisting to the bondage of an imperious passion."

"Would that you, too, would submit unresisting to its bondage!" said Hargrave, delighted to have made her once more serious. "But if this passion is sinful," continued he, "my reformation rests with you alone. Put a period to my lingering trial. Consent to be mine, and hush all these tumults to rest."

"Take care how you furnish me with arguments against yourself," returned Laura, laughing. "Would it be my interest, think you, to lull all these transports to such profound repose?"

"Be serious, Laura, I implore you. Well do you know that my love can end only with my existence; but I should no longer be distracted with these tumultuous hopes and fears if—"

"Oh!" cried Laura, interrupting him, "hope is too pleasing a companion for you to wish to part with that; and," added she, a smile and a blush contending upon her cheek, "I begin to believe that your fears are not very troublesome."

"Ah! Laura," said Hargrave, sorrowfully, "you know not what you say. There are moments when I feel as if you were already lost to me; and the bare thought is distraction. Oh! if you have pity for real suffering," continued he, dropping on his knees, "save me from the dread of losing you; forget the hour of madness in which I offended you. Restore to me the time when you owned that I was dear to you. Be yet more generous, and give me immediate, unalienable right to your love."

"You forget, Colonel Hargrave," said Laura, again taking sanctuary in an appearance of coldness, "you forget that, six months ago, I fixed two years of rectitude as the test of your repentance; and that you were then satisfied with my decision."

"I would then have blessed you for any sentence which left me a hope, however distant; but now the time when I may claim your promise seems at such a hopeless distance. Oh, Laura! let me but prevail with you, and I will bind myself by the most solemn oaths to a life of unsullied purity."

"No oaths," replied Laura, with solemnity, "can strengthen the ties which already bind you to a life of purity. That you are of noble rank calls you to be an example to others; and the yet higher distinction of an immortal spirit bids you strive after virtues which may never meet the eye of man. Only convince me that such are the objects of your ambition, and I shall no longer fear to trust with you my improvement and my happiness."

As she spoke, unusual animation sparkled in her eyes, and tinged her delicate cheek with brighter coloring. "Lovely, lovely creature!" cried Hargrave, in transport, "give but thyself

to these fond arms, and may Heaven forsake me if I strive not to make thee blessed beyond the sweetest dreams of youthful fancy!"

"Alas!" said Laura, "even your affection would fail to bless a heart conscious of acting wrong."

"Where is the wrong," said Hargrave, gathering hope from the relenting tenderness of her voice, "where is the wrong of yielding to the strongest impulse of nature! or, to speak in language more like your own, where is the guilt of submitting to an ordinance of Heaven's own appointment?"

"Why," replied Laura, "will you force me to say what seems unkind! Why compel me to remind you that marriage was never meant to sanction the unholy connection of those whose principles are discordant!"

"Beloved of my heart," said Hargrave, passionately kissing her hand, "take me to thyself, and mold me as thou wilt. I swear to thee, that not even thy own life shall be more pure, more innocent than mine. Blessed in thy love, what meaner pleasure could allure me! Oh! yield, then, and bind me forever to virtue and to thee."

Laura shook her head. "Ah! Hargrave," said she, with a heavy sigh, "before you can love and practice the purity which reaches the heart, far other loves must warm, far other motives inspire you."

"No other love can ever have such power over me," said Hargrave, with energy. "Be but thou and thy matchless beauty the prize, and every difficulty is light, every sacrifice trivial."

"In little more than a year," said Laura, "I shall, perhaps, ask some proofs of the influence you ascribe to me; but, till then—"

"Long, long before that time," cried Hargrave, striking his forehead in agony, "you will be lost to me forever!" and he paced the room in seeming despair.

Laura looked at him with a pity not unmixed with surprise. "Hear me for a moment," said she, with the soothing voice and gentle aspect which had always the mastery of Hargrave's feeling; and he was instantly at her side, listening with eagerness to every tone which she uttered, intent on every variation of her countenance.

"There are circumstances," she continued, her transparent cheek glowing with brighter beauty, tears in her downcast eyes trembling through the silken lashes, "there are circumstances which may change me; but time and absence are not of the number. Be but true to yourself, and you have nothing to fear. After this assurance, I trust it will give you little pain to hear that, till the stipulated two years are ended, if we are to meet, it must not be without witnesses."

"Good heavens! Laura, why this new, this intolerable restriction! what can induce you thus willfully to torment me!"

"Because," answered the blushing Laura, with all her natural simplicity, "because I might not always be able to listen to reason and duty rather than to you."

"Oh! that I could fill thee with a love that should forever silence the cold voice of reason!" cried Hargrave, transported by her con-

feeling; and, no longer master of himself, he would have clasped her in his arms. But Laura, to whose mind his caresses ever recalled a dark page in her story, recoiled as from pollution, the glow of ingenuous modesty giving place to the paleness of horror.

No words envenomed with the bitterest malice could have stung Hargrave to such phrensy as the look and the shudder with which Laura drew back from his embrace. His eyes flashing fire, his pale lips quivering with passion, he reproached her with perfidy and deceit; accused her of veiling her real aversion under the mask of prudence and principle; and execrated his own folly in submitting so long to the sport of a cold-hearted, tyrannical, obdurate woman. Laura stood for some minutes gazing on him with calm compassion; but, displeased at his groundless accusation, she disdained to soothe his rage. At last, weary of language which, for the present, expressed much more of hatred than of love, she quietly moved toward the door. "I see you can be very calm, madam," said Hargrave, stopping her, "and I can be as calm as yourself," added he, with a smile like a moonbeam on a thunder-cloud, making the gloom more fearful.

"I hope you will soon be so," replied Laura, coldly. "I am so now," said Hargrave, his voice half choked with the effort to suppress his passion. "I will but stay to take leave of your father, and then free you forever from one so odious to you."

"That must be as you please, sir," said Laura, with spirit; "but, for the present, I must be excused from attending you." She then retired to her own chamber, which immediately adjoined to the painting-room; and with tears reflected on the faint prospect of happiness which remained for the wife of a man whose passions were so ungovernable. Even the ardor of his love, for which vanity would have found ready excuse in many a female breast, was to Laura subject of unfeigned regret, as excluding him from the dominion of better motives, and from the pursuit of nobler ends.

Hargrave was no sooner left to himself than his fury began to evaporate. In a few minutes he was perfectly collected, and the first act of his returning reason was to upbraid him with his treatment of Laura. "Is it to be wondered that she shrinks from me," said he, the tears of self-reproach rising to his eyes, "when I make her the sport of all my frantic passion? But she shall never again have cause to complain of me. Let but her love this once excuse me, and henceforth I will treat her with gentleness like her own."

There is no time in the life of a man so tedious as that which passes between the resolution to repair a wrong and the opportunity to make the reparation. Hargrave wondered whether Laura would return to conduct him to her father; feared she would not—hoped that she would—thought he heard her footsteps—listened, sighed; and tried to beguile the time by turning over her drawings.

Almost the first that met his eye was a sketch of features well known to him. He started and turned pale. He sought for a name upon the reverse; there was none, and he again breathed more freely. "This must be

accident," said he; "De Courcy is far from London—yet it is very like;" and he longed more than ever for Laura's appearance. He sought refuge from his impatience in a book which lay upon the table. It was the Pleasures of Hope, and marked in many parts of the margin with a pencil. One of the passages so marked was that which begins,

"Thy pencil traces on the lover's thought  
Some cottage home, from towns and toil remote,  
Where love and lore may claim alternate hours," &c.

And Hargrave surrendered himself to the pleasing dream that Laura had thought of him while she approved the lines. "Her name, written by her own snowy fingers, may be here," said he, and turned to the title-page, that he might press it, with a lover's folly, to his lips. The title-page was inscribed with the name of Montague De Courcy.

The glance of the basilisk could not have been more powerful. Motionless he gazed on the words, till, all the fiends of jealousy taking possession of his soul, he furiously dashed the book upon the ground. "False, false siren!" he cried, "is this the cause of all your coldness—your loathing?" And, without any wish but to exclude her forever from his sight, he rushed like a madman out of the house.

He darted forward, regardless of the snow which was falling on his uncovered head, till it suddenly occurred to him that he would not suffer her to triumph in the belief of having deceived him. "No," said he, "I will once more see that deceitful face; reproach her with her treachery; enjoy her confusion, and then spurn her from me forever."

He returned precipitately to the house; and, flying up stairs, saw Laura, the traces of melancholy reflection on her countenance, waiting for admission at her father's door. "Madam," said he, in a voice scarcely articulate, "I must speak with you for a few minutes." "Not for a moment, sir," said Laura, laying her hand upon the latch. "Yes, by Heaven, you shall hear me!" cried Hargrave; and rudely seizing her, he forced her into the painting-room, and bolted the door.

"Answer me," said he, fiercely, "how came that book in your possession?" pointing to it as it still lay upon the floor. "Whence have you this infernal likeness? Speak!"

Laura looked at the drawing, then at the book, and at once understood the cause of her lover's phrensy. Sincere compassion filled her heart; yet she felt how unjust was the treatment which she received; and, with calm dignity, said, "I will answer all your questions, and then you will judge whether you have deserved that I should do so."

"Whom would not that face deceive?" said Hargrave, gnashing his teeth in agony. "Speak, sorceress—tell me, if you dare, that this is not the portrait of De Courcy—that he is not the lover for whom I am loathed and spurned?"

"That is the portrait of De Courcy," replied Laura, with the simple majesty of truth. "It is the sketch from which I finished a picture for his sister. That book, too, is his," and she stooped to lift it from the ground.

"Touch not the vile thing!" cried Hargrave, in a voice of thunder. With quiet self-possession, Laura continued, "Mr. De Courcy's fa-

ther was, as you know, the friend of mine. Mr. De Courcy himself was, when an infant, known to my father; and they met, providentially met, when we had great need of a considerate friend. That friend Mr. De Courcy was to us, and no selfish motive sullied his benevolence; for he is not, nor ever was, nor, I trust, ever will be, known to me as a lover!"

The voice of sober truth had its effect upon Hargrave, and he said, more composedly, "Will you then give me your word that De Courcy is not, nor ever will be, dear to you?"

"No!" answered Laura. "I will not say so, for he must be loved wherever his virtues are known; but I have no regard for him which should disquiet you. It is not such," continued she, struggling with the rising tears, "it is not such as would pardon outrage, withstand neglect, and humble itself before unjust aspersion."

"Oh, Laura," said Hargrave, at once convinced and softened, "I must believe you, or my heart will burst."

"I have a right to be believed," returned Laura, endeavoring to rally her spirits. "Now, then, release me, after convincing me that the passion of which you boast so much is consistent with the insolent disrespect, the most unfounded suspicion." But Hargrave was again at her feet, exhausting every term of endearment, and breathing forth the most fervent petitions for forgiveness.

Tears, which she could no longer repress, now streamed down Laura's cheeks, while she said, "How could you suspect me of the baseness of pretending a regard which I did not feel, of confirming engagements from which my affections revolted!" Hargrave, half wild with the sight of her tears, bitterly reproached himself for his injustice; vowed that he believed her all perfection; that, with all a woman's tenderness, she possessed the truth and purity of angels, and that, could she this once pardon his extravagance, he would never more offend. But Laura, vexed and ashamed of her weakness, insisted on her release in a tone that would be obeyed, and Hargrave, too much humbled to be daring, unwillingly suffered her to retire.

In the faint hope of seeing her again, he waited till Montreville was ready to admit him; but Laura was not with her father, nor did she appear during the remainder of his visit. Desirous to know in what light she had represented their affairs, in order that his statement might tally with hers, he again avoided the subject, resolving that next day he should be better prepared to enter upon it. With this view, he returned to Montreville's lodgings early in the next forenoon, hoping for an opportunity to consult with Laura before seeing her father. He was shown into the parlor, which was vacant. He waited long, but Laura came not. He sent a message to beg that she would admit him, and was answered that she was sorry it was not in her power. He desired the messenger to say that his business was important, but was told that Miss Montreville was particularly engaged. However impatient, he was obliged to submit. He again saw Montreville without entering upon the subject so near his heart, and left the house without obtaining even a glimpse of Laura.

The following day he was equally unsuccessful. He, indeed, saw Laura, but it was only in

the presence of her father, and she gave him no opportunity of addressing her particularly. Finding that she adhered to the resolution she had expressed, of seeing him no more without witnesses, he wrote to her, warmly remonstrating against the barbarity of her determination, and beseeching her to depart from it, if only in a single instance. The billet received no answer, and Laura continued to act as before.

Fretted almost to fever, Hargrave filled whole pages with the description of his uneasiness, and complaints of the cruelty which caused it. In conclusion, he assured Laura that he could no longer refrain from confiding his situation to her father; and entreated to see her, were it only to learn in what terms she would permit him to mention their engagement. This letter was rather more successful than the former; for, though Laura made no reply to the first part, she answered the close by a few cautious lines, leaving Hargrave, excepting in one point, at full liberty as to his communications with her father.

Thus authorized, he seized the first opportunity of conversing with Montreville. He informed him that he had reason to believe himself not indifferent to Laura; but that, some of his little irregularities coming to her knowledge, she had sentenced him to a probation which was yet to continue for above a year. Though Hargrave guarded his words so as to avoid direct falsehood, the conscious crimson rose to his face as he uttered this subterfuge. But he took instant refuge in the idea that he had no choice left; and that, if there was any blame, it in fact belonged to Laura, for forcing him to use concealment. He did yet more. He erected his head, and planted his foot more firmly, as he thought that what he dared to do he dared to justify, were he not proud to yield to the commands of love, and humanely inclined to spare the feelings of a sick man. He proceeded to assure Montreville, that though he must plead guilty to a few youthful indiscretions, Laura might rely upon his constancy and fidelity. Finally, addressing himself to what he conceived to be the predominant failing of age, he offered to leave the grand affair of settlements to Montreville's own decision; demanding only, in return, that the father would use his interest, or even his authority, if necessary, to obtain his daughter's consent to an immediate union.

Montreville answered, that he had long desisted from the use of authority with Laura, but that his influence was at the colonel's service; and he added, with a smile, that he believed neither would be very necessary.

In consequence of this promise, Montreville sought an opportunity of conversing on this subject with his daughter; but she showed such extreme reluctance to enter upon it, and avoided it with such sedulous care, that he could not immediately execute his design. He observed, too, that she looked ill, that she was pale and languid. Though she did not confess any ailment, he could not help fearing that all was not right; and he waited the appearance of recovered strength, ere he should enter on a topic which was never heard by her without strong emotion. But Laura looked daily more wretched. Her complexion became wan, her eyes sunk, and her lips colorless.

Hargrave observed the change, and, half persuaded that it was the effect of his own capricious behavior at their last interview, he became more anxious for a private conference, in which his tenderness might soothe her to forgetfulness of his errors. When she was quitting the room, he often followed her to the door, and entreated to be heard for a single minute. But the utmost he could obtain was a determined "I can not," or a hasty "I dare not," and in an instant she had vanished.

Indeed, watching and abstinence, though the chief, were not the only causes of Laura's sickly aspect. Hargrave's violence had furnished her with new and painful subjects of meditation. While yet she thought him all perfection, he had often confessed to her the warmth of his temper, with a candor which convinced her (anxious as she was to be so convinced) that he was conscious of his natural tendency, and vigilantly guarded it from excess; consequently, that to the energy of the passionate he united the justice of the cool. She had never witnessed any instance of his violence; for, since their first acquaintance, she had herself, at least while she was present, been his only passion. All things unconnected with it were trivial in his estimation; and, till the hour which had roused her caution, she had unconsciously soothed this tyrant of his soul with perpetual incense, by proofs of her tenderness, which, though unobserved by others, were not lost upon the vanity of Hargrave. Successful love shedding a placid gentleness upon his really polished manners, he had, without intention to deceive, completely misled Laura's judgment of his character. Now he had turned her eyes from the vision, and compelled her to look upon the reality; and, with many a bitter tear, she lamented that ever she suffered her peace to depend upon a union which, even if accomplished, promised to compensate transient rapture with abiding disquiet.

But still fondly attached, Laura took pleasure in persuading herself that a mere defect of temper was not such a fault as entitled her to withdraw her promise; and, having made this concession, she soon proceeded to convince herself that Hargrave's love would make ample amends for occasional suffering, however severe. Still she assured herself that if, at the stipulated time, he produced not proofs of real improvement, much more if that period were stained with actual vice, she would, whatever it might cost her, see him no more. She determined to let nothing move her to shorten his probation, nor to be satisfied without the strictest scrutiny into the manner in which it had been spent.

Aware of the difficulty of withstanding the imploring voice, the pleading eyes, of Hargrave, she would not venture into temptation for the mere chance of escape; and adhered to her resolution of affording him no opportunity to practice on her sensibility. Nor was this a slight exercise of self-denial, for no earthly pleasure could bring such joy to Laura's heart, as the assurance, however oft repeated, that she was beloved. Yet, day after day, she withstood his wishes and her own, and generally spent the time of his visits in drawing.

Meanwhile, her delicate face and slender

form gave daily greater indications of malady. Montreville, extremely alarmed, insisted upon sending for medical advice; but Laura, with a vehemence most unusual to her, opposed this design, telling him, that if he persisted in it, vexation would cause the reality of the illness which at present was merely imaginary.

The captain, however, was the only member of the family who did not conjecture the true cause of Laura's decay. The servant who attended her reported to her mistress that the slender repast was always presented, untouched by Laura, to her father; that her drink was only water, her fare coarse and scanty; and that often a few morsels of dry bread were the only sustenance of the day. Mrs. Stubbs, who entertained a suitable contempt for poverty, was no sooner informed of these circumstances, than she recollected with indignation the awe with which Laura had involuntarily inspired her, and determined to withdraw part of her misplaced respect. But Laura had an air of command, a quiet majesty of demeanor, that seemed destined to distance vulgar impertinence; and Mrs. Stubbs was compelled to continue her unwilling reverence. Determined, however, that, though her pride might suffer, her interest should not, she dropped such hints as induced Laura to offer the payment of the lodgings a week in advance, an offer which was immediately accepted.

In spite of Laura's utmost diligence, this arrangement left her almost penniless. She was obliged, in that inclement season, to give up even the comfort of a fire; and more than once passed the whole night in laboring to supply the wants of the following day.

In the mean time, Hargrave continued to pay his daily visits, and Laura to frustrate all his attempts to speak with her apart. His patience was entirely exhausted. He urged Montreville to the performance of his promise, and Montreville often approached the subject with his daughter, but she either evaded it, or begged with such pathetic earnestness to be spared a contest which she was unable to bear, that when he looked on the sickly delicacy of her frame, he had not courage to persecute her further. Convinced, however, that Laura's affections were completely engaged, he became daily more anxious that she should not sacrifice them to what he considered as mistaken prudence; especially since Hargrave had dropped a hint which, though not so intended, had appeared to Montreville to import that his addresses, if rejected in the present instance, would not be renewed at the distant date to which Laura chose to postpone them.

The father's constant anxiety for the health and happiness of his child powerfully affected both his strength and spirits; and he was soon more languid and feeble than ever. His imagination, too, betrayed increasing symptoms of its former disease, and he became more persuaded that he was dying. The selfishness of a feeble mind attended his ailments, and he grew less tender of his daughter's feelings, less fearful to wound her sensibility. To hints of his apprehensions for his own life, succeeded direct intimations of his conviction that his end was approaching; and Laura listened with every gradation of terror to prophetic forebod-

ings of the solitude, want, and temptation to which she must soon be abandoned.

Pressed by Hargrave's importunities, and weary of waiting for a voluntary change in Laura's conduct toward her lover, Montreville at last resolved that he would force the subject which she was so anxious to shun. For this purpose, detaining her one morning in his apartment, he entered on a melancholy description of the perils which await unprotected youth and beauty, and explicitly declared his conviction that to these perils he must soon leave his child. Laura endeavored, as she was wont, to brighten his dark imagination, and to revive his fainting hope. But Montreville would now neither suffer her to enliven his prospects, nor to divert him from the contemplation of them. He persisted in giving way to his dismal anticipations, till, spite of her efforts, Laura's spirits failed her, and she could scarcely refrain from shedding tears.

Montreville saw that she was affected; and fondly putting his arm round her, continued, "Yet still, my sweet Laura, you, who have been the pride of my life, you can soften to me the bitterness of death. Let me but commit you to the affection of the man whom I know that you prefer, and my fears and wishes shall linger no more in this nether world."

"Oh, sir," said Laura, "I beseech, I implore you to spare me on this subject!" "No!" answered Montreville, "I have been silent too long. I have too long endangered your happiness, in the dread of giving you transient pain. I must recur to—"

"My dear father," interrupted Laura, "I have already spoken to you on this subject—spoken to you with a freedom which I know not where I found courage to assume. I can only repeat the same sentiments; and, indeed, indeed, unless you were yourself in my situation, you can not imagine with what pain I repeat them."

"I would willingly respect your delicacy," said Montreville, "but this is no time for frivolous scruples. I must soon leave thee, child of my affections. My eyes must watch over thee no more! my ear must be closed to the voice of thy complaining. Oh, then, give me the comfort to know that other love will console, other arms protect thee."

"Long, long," cried Laura, clasping his neck, "be your affection my joy—long be your arms my shelter! But alas! what love could console me under the sense of acting wrong—what could protect me from an avenging conscience!"

"Laura, you carry scruples too far. When I look on these wan cheeks and lusterless eyes, you can not conceal from me that you are sacrificing to these scruples your own peace, as well as that of others."

"Ah, sir," said Laura, who from despair of escape gathered courage to pursue the subject, "what peace can I hope to find in a connection which reason and religion alike condemn!"

"That these have from childhood been your guides, has ever been my joy and my pride," returned Montreville. "But, in this instance, you forge shackles for yourself, and then call them the restraints of reason and religion. It were absurd to argue on the reasonableness of

preferring wealth and title with the man of your choice, to a solitary struggle with poverty or an humbling dependence upon strangers. And how, my dear girl, can any precept of religion be tortured into a restriction on the freedom of your choice!"

"Pardon me, sir, the law which I endeavor to make my guide is here full and explicit. In express terms it leaves me free to marry whom I will, but with this grand reservation, that I marry 'only in the Lord'—that I marry no one who is not in heart and life a Christian; for it can not be thought that this limitation refers only to a careless assent to the truth of the Gospel, shedding no purifying influence on the heart and life. And can I hope for happiness in a willful defiance of this restriction!"

"If I could doubt," said Montreville, avoiding a reply to what was unanswerable, "if I could doubt that a union with Colonel Hargrave would conduce to your happiness, never should I thus urge you. But I have no reason to believe his religious principles are unsound, though the follies incident to his sex, and the frailty of human nature, may have prevailed against him."

"My dear sir," cried Laura, impatiently, "how can you employ such qualifying language to express what my soul sickens at! How can my father urge his child to join to pollution this temple (and she laid her hand emphatically on her breast), which my great Master has offered to hallow as his own abode! No! the express command of Heaven forbids the sacrifice; for I can not suppose that when *man* was forbidden to degrade himself by a union with vileness, the precept was meant to exclude the sex whose feebler passions afford less plea for yielding to their power."

"Whither does this enthusiasm hurry you!" said Montreville, in displeasure. "Surely you will not call your marriage with Colonel Hargrave a union with vileness!"

"Yes," returned Laura, all the glow of virtuous animation fading to the paleness of anguish, "if his vices make him vile, I must call it so."

"Your language is as much too free, Laura, as your notions are too rigid. Is it dutiful, think you, to use such expressions in regard to a connection which your father approves! Will you call it virtue to sport with your own happiness, with the peace of a heart which dotes upon you—with the comfort of your dying parent!"

"Oh! my father," cried Laura, sinking on her knees, "my spirit is already bowed to the earth: do not crush it with your displeasure. Rather support my feeble resolution, lest, knowing the right, I should not have power to choose it."

"My heart's treasure!" said Montreville, kissing the tears from her eyes, "short is ever my displeasure with thee; for I know that though inexperience may mislead thy judgment, no pleasure can bribe, no fear betray, thy inflexible rectitude. Go on, then; convince me, if thou canst, that thou art in the right to choose thy portion amid self-denial, and obscurity, and dependence."

"Would that I were able to convince you," returned Laura, "and then you would no longer

ger add to the difficulties of this fearful struggle. Tell me, then, were Colonel Hargrave your son, and were I what I can not name, could any passion excuse, any circumstances induce you to sanction the connection for which you now plead?"

"My dear love," said Montreville, "the cases are widely different. The world's opinion affixes just disgrace to the vices in your sex, which in ours it views with more indulgent eyes."

"But I," returned Laura, "when I took upon me the honored name of Christian, by that very act became bound that the opinion of the world should not regulate my principles, nor its customs guide my practice. Perhaps even the worst of my sex might plead that the voice of a tempter lured them to perdition; but what tongue can speak the vileness of that tempter! Could I promise to *obey* him who willfully leads others to their ruin! Could I honor him who deceives the heart that trusteth in him! Could I *love* him who can look upon a fellow-creature—once the image of the Highest, now humbled below the brutes that perish—upon the heir of immortality, immortal only to misery, and who can, unmoved, unpitied, seek in the fallen wretch a minister of pleasure! Love!" continued Laura, forgetting in the deformity of the hideous image that it was capable of individual application, "words can not express the energy of my abhorrence!"

"Were Hargrave such, or to continue such—" said Montreville.

"Hargrave!" continued Laura, almost with a shriek, "oh, God forbid! And yet—" She covered her face with her hands, and cold drops stood on her forehead, as she remembered how just cause she had to dread that the portrait might be his.

"Hargrave," continued Montreville, "is not an abandoned profligate, though he may not have escaped the follies usual to men of his rank; and he has promised, if you will be favorable to him, to live henceforward in irreproachable purity. Heaven forgives the sins which are forsaken, and will you be less lenient!"

"Joyfully will I forgive," replied Laura, "when I am assured that they are indeed abandoned and forsaken."

"They are already forsaken," said Montreville; "it rests with you to confirm Hargrave in the right, by consenting to his wishes."

"I ask but the conviction which time alone can bring," said Laura, "and then—"

"And how will you bear it, Laura, if, weary of your perverse delays, Hargrave should relinquish his suit? How would you bear to see the affections you have trifled with transferred to another?"

"Better, far better," answered Laura, "than to watch the deepening of those shades of iniquity, which close at last into 'outer darkness'; better than to see each guilty day advance and seal our eternal separation. To lose his affection," she continued, with a sickly smile, "I would bear as I strive to bear my other burdens; and should they, at last, prove too heavy for me, they can but weigh me to the earth, where they and I must soon rest together."

"Talk not so, beloved child," said Montre-

vill; "a long life is before you. All the joys that ambition, all the joys that love can offer, are within your power. A father invites, implores, I will not say commands, you to accept them. The man of your choice, to whom the proudest might aspire, whom the coldest of your sex might love, entreats you to confirm him in the ways of virtue. Consent, then, to this union, on which my heart is set, while yet it can be hallowed by the blessing of your dying father."

"Oh, take pity on me," Laura would have said, "and league not with my heart to betray me!" but convulsive sobs were all that she could utter.

"You consent, then," said Montreville, choosing so to interpret her silence; "you have yielded to my entreaties, and made me the happiest of fathers."

"No! no!" cried Laura, tossing her arms distractedly, "I will do right, though my heart should break. No, my father—my dear, honored father—for whom I would lay down my life, not even your entreaties shall prevail."

"Ungrateful child," said Montreville; "what could you have pleaded for, that your father would have refused—your father, whom anxiety for your welfare has brought to the gates of the grave, whose last feeling shall be love to you, whose last words shall bless you!"

"Oh, most Merciful, most Gracious," cried Laura, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes in resigned anguish, "wilt thou suffer me to be tempted above what I am able to bear! Oh, my dear father, if you have pity for misery unutterable, misery that can not know relief, spare me now, and suffer me to think, if to think be yet possible."

"Hear me but for one moment more," said Montreville, who, from the violence of her emotion, gathered hopes of success.

"Oh, no! no!" cried Laura, "I must leave you while yet I have the power to do right." And darting from his presence, she shut herself into her chamber. There, falling on her knees, she mingled bitter expressions of anguish with fervent prayers for support, and piteous appeals for mercy.

Becoming by degrees more composed, she endeavored to fortify her resolution by every argument of reason and religion which had formerly guided her determination. She turned to the passages of Scripture which forbid the unequal yoke with the unbeliever; convinced that the prohibition applies no less to those whose lives are unchristian, than to those whose faith is unsound. She asked herself whether she was able to support those trials (the severest of all earthly ones) which the wife of a libertine must undergo; and whether, in temptations which she voluntarily sought, and sorrows which she of choice encountered, she should be entitled to expect the Divine support. "Holy Father," she cried, "what peace can enter where thy blessing is withheld! and shall I dare to mock thee with a petition for that blessing on a union which thou hast forbidden? May I not rather fear that this deliberate, premeditated guilt may be the first step in a race of iniquity! May I not dread to share in the awful sentence of those who are 'joined to their idols,' and be 'let

alone to wander in the way which leadeth to destruction!"

Yet, as oft as her father's entreaties rose to her recollection, joined with the image of Hargrave—of Hargrave beseeching, of Hargrave impassioned, Laura's resolution faltered; and half desirous to deceive herself, she almost doubted of the virtue of that firmness which could withstand a parent's wish. But Laura was habitually suspicious of every opinion which favored her inclinations, habitually aware of the deceitfulness of her own heart; and she did not, unquestioned, harbor for a moment the insidious thought that flattered her strongest wishes. "And had my father commanded me to marry where I was averse," said she, "would I then have hesitated? Would my father's command have prevailed on me then to undertake duties which I was unlikely to perform! No; there I would have resisted. There, authority greater than a father's would have empowered me to resist; I know that I should have resisted even unto death. And shall mere inclination give more firmness than a sense of duty? Yet, oh, dear father, think me not unmindful of all your love, or forgetful of a debt which began with my being. For your sake, cold and hunger shall be light to me; for you, poverty and toil shall be pleasing. But what solitary sorrow could equal the pang with which I should blush before my children for the vices of their father! What is the wasting of famine to the mortal anguish of watching the declining love, the transferred desires, the growing depravity of my husband!"

In thoughts and struggles like these Laura passed the day alone. Montreville, though disappointed at his ill success with his daughter, was not without hope that a lover's prayers might prevail where a father's were ineffectual; and believing that the season of Laura's emotion was a favorable one for the attempt, he was anxious for the daily visit of Hargrave.

But, for the first time since his meeting with Laura, Hargrave did not appear. In her present frame, Laura felt his absence almost a relief; but Montreville was uneasy and half alarmed. It was late in the evening when a violent knocking at the house-door startled Montreville, who was alone in his apartment; and the next minute, without being announced, Hargrave burst into the room. His hair was disheveled, his dress neglected, and his eyes had a wildness which Montreville had never before seen in him. Abruptly grasping Montreville's hand, he said, in the voice of one struggling for composure, "Have you performed your promise—have you spoken with Laura?"

"I have," answered Montreville; "and have urged her, till, had you seen her, you would yourself have owned that I went too far. But you look—"

"Has she consented?" interrupted Hargrave; "will she give herself to me?"

Montreville shook his head. "Her affections are wholly yours," said he; "you may yourself be more successful; I fervently wish that you may. But why this strange emotion! What has happened?"

"Nothing, nothing," said Hargrave; "ask

me no questions; but let me speak instantly with Laura."

"You shall see her," returned Montreville, opening the door, and calling Laura; "only I beseech you to command yourself, for my poor child is already half distracted."

"She is the fitter to converse with me," said Hargrave, with a ghastly smile, "for I am upon the very verge of madness."

Laura came at her father's summons; but when she saw Hargrave, the color faded from her face, a universal tremor seized her, she stopped and leaned on the door for support, "Colonel Hargrave wishes to speak with you alone," said Montreville; "go with him to the parlor."

"I can not," answered Laura, in words scarcely audible; "this night I can not."

"I command you to go," said the father, in a tone which he had seldom employed; and Laura instantly prepared to go. "Surely, surely," said she, "Heaven will not leave me to my own weakness, while I act in obedience to you."

Perceiving that she trembled violently, Hargrave offered her the support of his circling arm; but Laura instantly disengaged herself. "Will you not lean on me, dearest Laura?" said he; "perhaps it is for the last time."

"I hope," answered Laura, endeavoring to exert her spirit, "it will be the last time that you will avail yourself of my father's authority to constrain me."

"Spare your reproaches, Laura," said Hargrave, "for I am desperate. All that I desire on earth—my life itself depends upon this hour."

They entered the parlor, and Laura, sinking into a seat, covered her eyes with her hand, and strove to prepare for answering this new call upon her firmness.

Hargrave stood silent for some moments. Fain would he have framed a resistless petition; for the events of that day had hastened the unraveling of a tale which, once known to Laura, would, he knew, make all his petitions vain. But his impatient spirit could not wait to conciliate; and, seizing her hand, he said, with breathless eagerness, "Laura, you once said you loved me, and I believed you. Now to the proof; and if that fail—but I will not distract myself with the thought. You have allowed me a distant hope. Recall your sentence of delay. Circumstances, which you can not—must not know, leave you but one alternative. Be mine now, or you are forever lost to me."

Astonished at his words, alarmed by the ill-suppressed vehemence of his manner, Laura tried to read his altered countenance, and feared she knew not what. "Tell me what you mean," said she. "What mean these strange words—these wild looks! Why have you come at this late hour!"

"Ask me nothing," cried Hargrave, "but decide. Speak. Will you be mine—now—tomorrow—within a few hours! Soon, very soon, it will be no longer possible to choose."

A hectic of resentment kindled in Laura's cheek at the threat of desertion which she imagined to lurk beneath the words of Hargrave. "You have," said she, "I know not how, ex-

tended my conditional promise to receive you as a friend far beyond what the terms of it would warrant. In making even such an engagement perhaps I condescended too far. But, admitting it in your own sense, what right have you to suppose that I am to be weakly terrified into renouncing a resolution formed on the best grounds!"

"I have no right to expect it," said Hargrave, in a voice of misery. "I came to you in desperation. I can not—will not survive the loss of you; and if I prevail not now, you must be lost to me."

"What means this strange, this presuming haste!" said Laura. "Why do you seem thus wretched?"

"I am, indeed, most wretched. Oh, Laura, thus on my knees I conjure you to have pity on me; or, if it will cost you a pang to lose me, have pity on yourself. And if thy love be too feeble to bend thy stubborn will, let a father's wishes, a father's prayers, come to its aid."

"Oh, Hargrave," cried Laura, bursting into tears, "how have I deserved that you should lay on me this heavy load—that you should force me to resist the entreaties of my father!"

"Do not—oh, do not resist them. Let a father's prayers—let the pleadings of a wretch whose reason, whose life depends upon you, prevail to move you."

"Nothing shall move me," said Laura, with the firmness of despair; "for I am used to misery, and will bear it."

"And will you bear it, too, if, driven from virtuous love—from domestic joy, I turn to the bought smile of harlots, forget you in the haunts of riot, or in the grave of the suicide!"

"Oh, for mercy," cried the terrified Laura, "talk not so dreadfully! Be patient, I implore you. Fear not to lose me. Be but virtuous, and no power of man shall wrest me from you. In poverty—in sickness—in disgrace itself, I will cleave to you."

"Oh, I believe it," said Hargrave, moved even to woman's weakness, "for thou art an angel. But wilt thou cleave to me in—"

"In what?" said Laura.

"Ask me nothing—but yield to my earnest entreaty. Save me from the horrors of losing you; and may Heaven forsake me if ever again I give you cause to repent of your pity!"

Softened by his imploring looks and gestures, overpowered by his vehemence, harassed beyond her strength, Laura seemed almost expiring. But the upright spirit shared not the weakness of its frail abode. "Cease to importune me," said she; "everlasting were my cause of repentance, should I willfully do wrong. You may break my heart—it is already broken—but my resolution is immovable."

Fire flashed from the eyes of Hargrave, as, starting from her feet, he cried, in a voice of phrensy, "Ungrateful woman, you have never loved me! you love nothing but the fancied virtue to which I am sacrificed. But tremble, obdurate, lest I dash from me this hated life, and my perdition be on your soul!"

"Oh no," cried Laura, in an agony of terror, "I will pray for you—pity you—what shall I say! love you as never man was loved! Would that it were possible to do more!"

"Speak, then, your final rejection," said Har-

grave, grasping her hand with convulsive energy, "and abide by the consequences."

"I must not fear consequences," said Laura, trembling in every limb. "They are in the hands of Heaven."

"Then be this first fond parting kiss our last!" cried Hargrave, and frantically straining her to his breast, he rushed out of the room.

Surprise, confusion, a thousand various feelings kept Laura for a while motionless; till, Hargrave's parting words ringing in her ear, a dreadful apprehension took possession of her mind. Starting from her seat, and following him with her arms as if she could still have detained him, "Oh, Hargrave, what mean you!" she cried. But Hargrave was already beyond the reach of her voice; and, sinking to the ground, the wretched Laura found refuge from her misery in long and deep insensibility.

In the attitude in which she had fallen, her lily arms extended on the ground, her death-like cheek resting upon one of them, she was found by a servant who accidentally entered the room, and whose cries soon assembled the family. Montreville, alarmed, hastened down stairs, and came in just as the maid, with the assistance of the landlady, was raising Laura, to all appearance dead.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "what is this!" The unfeeling landlady immediately expressed her opinion that Miss Montreville had died of famine, declaring that she had long feared as much. The horror-struck father had scarcely power to ask her meaning. "Oh, sir," said the maid, sobbing aloud, "I fear it is but too true—for she cared not for herself, so you were but well—for she was the sweetest lady that ever was born—and many a long night has she sat up toiling when the poorest creature was asleep—for she never cared for herself."

The whole truth flashed at once upon Montreville, and all the storm, from which his dutiful child so well had sheltered him, burst upon him in a moment. "Oh, Laura!" he cried, clasping her lifeless form, "my only comfort—my good, my gentle, my blameless child, hast thou nourished thy father with thy life! Oh! why didst thou not let me die!" Then laying his cheek to hers, "Oh! she is cold—cold as clay," he cried, and the father wrung his hands, and sobbed like an infant.

Suddenly he ceased his lamentation; and pressing his hands on his breast, uttered a deep groan, and sunk down by the side of his senseless child. His alarm and agitation burst again the blood-vessel which before had been slightly healed, and he was conveyed to bed without hopes of life. A surgeon was immediately found, but he administered his prescription without expecting its success; and, departing, left the dying Montreville to the care of the landlady.

The tender-hearted Fanny remained with Laura, and at last succeeded in restoring her to animation. She then persuaded her to swallow a little wine, and endeavored to prevail upon her to retire to bed. But Laura refused. "No, my kind, good girl," said she, laying her arm gratefully on Fanny's shoulder, "I must see my father before I sleep. I have thwarted his will to-day, and will not sleep without his blessing." Fanny then besought her so ear-



estly not to go to the captain's chamber, that Laura, filled as every thought was with Hargrave, took alarm, and would not be detained. The girl, dreading the consequences of the shock that awaited her, threw her arms round her to prevent her departure. "Let me go," cried Laura, struggling with her; "he is ill; I am sure he is ill, or he would have come to watch and comfort his wretched child."

Fanny then, with all the gentleness in her power, informed Laura that Montreville, alarmed by the sight of her fainting, had been suddenly taken ill. Laura, in terror which effaced the remembrance of all her former anguish, scarcely suffered her attendant to finish her relation, but broke from her, and hurried, as fast as her tottering limbs would bear her, to her father's chamber.

Softly, on tiptoe, she stole to his bedside. His eyes were closed, and death seemed already stamped on every feature. Laura shuddered convulsively, and shrunk back in horror. But the dread of scaring the spirit from its frail tenement suppressed the cry that was rising to her lips. Trembling, she laid her hand upon his. He looked up, and a gleam of joy brightened in his dying eyes as they rested on his daughter. "Laura, my beloved," said he, drawing her gently toward him, "thou hast been the joy of my life. I thank God that thou art spared to comfort me in death."

Laura tried to speak the words of hope; but the sounds died upon her lips.

After a pause of dread silence, Montreville said, "This is the hour when thy father was wont to bless thee. Come, and I will bless thee still."

The weeping Laura sunk upon her knees, and Montreville laid one hand upon her head, while she still held the other, as if wishing to detain him. "My best—my last blessing be upon thee, child of my heart," said he. "The everlasting arms be around thee, when mine can embrace thee no more. The Father of the fatherless be a parent to thee; support thee in sorrow; crown thy youth with joy—thy gray hairs with honor; and when thou art summoned to thy kindred angels, may thy heart throbb its last on some breast kind and noble as thine own!"

Exhausted by the effort which he had made, Montreville sunk back on his pillow; and Laura, in agony of supplication, besought Heaven to spare him to her. "Father of mercies!" she inwardly ejaculated, "if it be possible, save me, oh save me from this fearful stroke—or take me in pity from this desolate wilderness to the rest of thy chosen."

The dead of night came on, and all but the wretched Laura was still. Montreville breathed softly. Laura thought he slept, and stifled even her sighs, lest they should awake him. In the stillness of the dead, but in agony of suspense which baffles description, she continued to kneel by his bedside, and to return his relaxing grasp, till she felt a gentle pressure of her hand, and looked up to interpret the gesture. It was the last expression of a father's love. Montreville was gone!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

COLONEL HARGRAVE had been the spoiled child of a weak mother, and he continued to retain one characteristic of spoiled children; some powerful stimulant was with him a necessary of life. He despised all pleasures of regular recurrence and moderate degree; and even looked down upon those who could be satisfied with such enjoyments as on beings confined to a meaner mode of existence. For more than a year Laura had furnished the animating principle which kept life from stagnation. When she was present, her beauty, her reserve, her ill-concealed affection, kept his passions in constant play. In her absence, the interpretation of looks and gestures of which she had been unconscious, and the anticipation of concessions which she thought not of making, furnished occupation for the many hours which, for want of literary habits, Colonel Hargrave was obliged to pass in solitude and leisure, when deprived of fashionable company, public amusements, and tolerable romances. In a little country town these latter resources were soon exhausted, and Hargrave had no associates to supply the blank among his brother officers; some of them being low both in birth and education, and others, from various reasons, rather repelling than courting his intimacy. One had a pretty wife, another an unmarried daughter; and the phlegmatic temperament and reserved manners of a third tallied not with Hargrave's constitutional warmth. The departure of Laura, therefore, deprived him at once of the only society that amused, and the only object that interested him. He was prevented by the caution of Mrs. Douglas from attempting a correspondence with his mistress; and his muse was exhausted with composing amatory sonnets, and straining half-imaginary torments into reluctant rhymes.

He was soon tired of making sentimental visits to the now deserted Glenalbert, and grew weary of inspecting his treasures of pilfered gloves and stray shoe-bows. His new system of reform, too, sat rather heavily upon him. He was not exactly satisfied with its extent, though he did not see in what respect it was susceptible of improvement. He had some suspicion that it was not entitled to the full approbation of the "wise, the pious, the sober-minded" observers, whom he imagined that Laura had charged with the inspection of his conduct; and he reflected, with a mixture of fear and impatience, that by them every action would be reported to Laura, with all the aggravation of illiberal comment. For though he did not distinctly define the idea to himself, he cherished a latent opinion, that the "wise" would be narrow-minded, the "pious" bigoted, and the "sober-minded" cynical. The feeling of being watched is completely destructive of comfort, even to those who have least to conceal; and Colonel Hargrave sought relief at once from restraint and ennui, in exhibiting, at the Edinburgh races, four horses which were the envy of all the gentlemen, and a person which was the admiration of all the ladies. His thoughts dissipated, and his vanity gratified, his passion had never, since its first existence, been so little troublesome as during his stay in Edinburgh; and once or twice, as he caught a languishing

glance from a gay young heiress, he thought he had been a little precipitate in changing his first designs in regard to Laura. But, alas! the races endure only for one short week; Edinburgh was deserted by its glittering birds of passage; and Hargrave returned to his quarters, to solitude, and to the conviction that, however obtained, the possession of Laura was necessary to his peace.

Finding that her return was as uncertain as ever, he resolved to follow her to London; and the caution of Mrs. Douglas baffling his attempts to procure her address from any other quarter, he contrived to obtain it by bribing one of the under attendants of the post-office to transcribe for him the superscription of a letter to Miss Montreville. Delighted with his success, he could not refuse himself the triumph of making it known to Mrs. Douglas; and, by calling to ask her commands for her young friend, occasioned the letter of caution from her to Laura, which has been formerly mentioned.

The moment he reached London he hastened to make inquiries after the abode of Captain Montreville; but his search was disappointed by the accidents which he afterward related to Laura. Day after day he hoped that Laura, by sending to Mr. Baynard's chambers, would afford him the means of discovering her residence. But every day ended in disappointment; and Hargrave, who, intending to devote all his time to her, had given no intimation to his friends of his arrival in town, found himself as solitary, listless, and uncomfortable as before he quitted Scotland.

One evening, when, to kill the time, he had sauntered into the theater, he renewed his acquaintance with the beautiful Lady Bellamer. Two years before, Hargrave had been the chief favorite of Lady Bellamer, then Miss Walpole. Of all the dangles whom beauty, coquetry, and fifty thousand pounds, attracted to her train, none was admitted to such easy freedom as Hargrave. She laughed more heartily at his wit, whispered more familiarly in his ear, and slapped him more frequently on the cheek than any of his rivals. With no other man was she so unreasonably, troublesome, and ridiculous. In short, she ran through the whole routine of flirtation, till her heart was entangled, so far at least as the heart of a coquette is susceptible of that misfortune. But whatever flames were kindled in the lady's breast, the gentleman, as is usual on such occasions, escaped with a very light singe. While Miss Walpole was present his vanity was soothed by her blandishments, and his senses touched by her charms; but in her absence, he consoled himself with half a dozen other affairs of the same kind.

Meanwhile, Lord Bellamer entered the lists, and soon distinguished himself from his competitors, by a question, which, with all her admirers, Miss Walpole had not often answered. The lady hesitated; for she could not help contrasting the insignificant, starveling figure of her suitor with the manly beauty of Hargrave's person. But Lord Bellamer had a title in possession; Hargrave's was only reversionary. His lordship's estate, too, was larger than the colonel's expectations. Besides, she began to have doubts whether her favorite ever intended to propose the important question; for though,

to awaken his jealousy, she had herself informed him of Lord Bellamer's pretensions, and though she had played off the whole artillery of coquetry to quicken his operations, the young man maintained a resolute and successful resistance. So, after some fifty sighs given to the well-turned leg and sparkling eyes of Hargrave, Miss Walpole became Lady Bellamer; and this was the only change which marriage effected in her; for no familiarity could increase her indifference to Lord Bellamer, and no sacredness of connection can warm the heart of a coquette. She continued equally assiduous in courting admiration, equally daring in defying censure; and was content to purchase the adulation of fools, at the expense of being obliged to the charity of those who were good-natured enough to say, "To be sure, Lady Bellamer is a little giddy, but I dare say she means no harm."

Her husband's departure with his regiment for the Continent made no change in her way of life, except to save her the trouble of defending conduct which she would not reform. She continued in London, or at her villa on Richmond Hill, to enter into every folly which others proposed, or herself to project new ones.

Meanwhile Hargrave's duty called him to Scotland, where Lady Bellamer and all her rivals in his attention were entirely forgotten amid the superior attractions of Laura; attractions which acted with all the force of novelty upon a heart accustomed to parry only premeditated attacks, and to resist charms which were merely corporeal. From an early date in his acquaintance with Miss Montreville, he had scarcely recollected the existence of Lady Bellamer, till he found himself in the next box to her at the theater. The pleasure that sparkled in the brightest blue eyes in the world, the flush that tinged her face, wherever the rouge permitted its natural tints to appear, convinced Hargrave in a moment that her ladyship's memory had been more tenacious; and he readily answered to her familiar nod of invitation, by taking his place by her side.

They entered into conversation with all the frankness of their former intimacy. Lady Bellamer inquired how the colonel had contrived to exist during eighteen months of rustication, and gave him in return memoirs of some of their mutual acquaintance. She had some wit, and an exuberance of animal spirits; and she seasoned her nonsense with such lively sallies, sly scandal, and adroit flattery, that Hargrave had scarcely ever passed an evening more gayly. Once or twice, the composed grace, the artless majesty of Laura, rose to his recollections, and he looked absent and thoughtful. But his companion rallied him with so much spirit, that he quickly recovered himself, and fully repaid the amusement which he received. He accepted Lady Bellamer's invitation to sup with her after the play, and left her at a late hour with a promise to visit her again the next day. From that time the freedom of their former intercourse was renewed; with this difference only, that Hargrave was released from some restraint, by his escape from the danger of entanglement which necessarily attends particular assiduities toward an unmarried woman.

Let the fair enchantress tremble who approaches even in thought the utmost verge of

discretion. If she advance but one jot beyond that magic circle, the evil spirit is ready to seize her, which before feared even to rise in her presence. Lady Bellamer became the victim of unpardonable imprudence on her own part, and mere constitutional tendency on that of her paramour. To a most blamable levity she sacrificed whatever remained to be sacrificed, of her reputation, her virtue, and her marriage vow; while the crime of Hargrave was not palliated by one sentiment of genuine affection; for she by whom he fell was no more like the object of his real tenderness than those wandering lights which arise from corruption, and glimmer only to betray, are to the steady sunbeam which enlightens, guides, and purifies, where it shines.

Their intercourse continued, with growing passion on the side of the lady, and expiring inclination on that of the gentleman, till Lady Bellamer informed him that the consequences of their guilt could not long be concealed. Her lord was about to return to his disgraced home; and she called upon Hargrave to concert with her means of exchanging shackles which she would no longer endure for bonds which she could bear with pleasure, and himself to stand forth the legal protector of his unborn child. Hargrave heard her with a disgust which he scarcely strove to conceal; for at that moment Laura stood before him, bewitching in chastened love—respectable in saintly purity. He remembered that the bare proposal of a degradation, which Lady Bellamer had almost courted, had once nearly banished the spotless soul from a tenement no less pure than itself. In fancy he again saw through her casement the wringing of those snowy hands, those eyes raised in agony, and the convulsive heavings of that bosom which mourned his unlooked-for baseness; and he turned to Lady Bellamer, inwardly cursing the hour when his vows to Laura were sacrificed to a wanton.

The very day after this interview was that in which he accidentally encountered Laura; and from that moment his whole desire was to make her his own, before public report should acquaint her with his guilt. He durst not trust to the strength of her affection for the pardon of so foul an offense. He could not hope that she would again place confidence in vows of reformation which had been grossly violated. When the proper self-distrust of Laura refused him the opportunity of making a personal appeal to her sensibilities, he hoped that her father might successfully plead his cause; and that, before his guilt was known to her, he might have made it at once her interest and her duty to forget it. But the storm was about to burst even more speedily than he apprehended. Lady Bellamer little suspected that her conduct was watched with all the malice of jealousy, and all the eagerness of interest. She little suspected that her confidential servant was the spy of her injured husband, bound to fidelity in this task by ties as disgraceful as they were strong, and that this woman waited only for legal proof of her mistress's guilt, to lay the particulars before her lord. That proof was now obtained; and Lord Bellamer hastened to avail himself of it. He arrived in London on the morning of the last day of Montreville's life; and charging his guilty

wife with her perfidy, expelled her from his house.

She flew to Hargrave's lodgings, and found him preparing for his daily visit to Laura. Though provoked at being delayed, he was obliged to stay and listen to her, while she hastily related the events of the morning. She was about to speak of her conviction that, by making her his wife, he would shield her from the world's scorn, and that he would not, by any legal defense, retard her emancipation; but Hargrave suffered her not to proceed. He perceived that his adventure must now be public. It must immediately find its way into the public prints, and in a few hours it might be in the hands of Laura. He bitterly upbraided Lady Bellamer with her want of caution in the concealment of their amour; cursed her folly as the ruin of all his dearest hopes, and, in the phrensy of his rage, scrupled not to reveal the cutting secret, that while another was the true object of his affections, Lady Bellamer had sacrificed her all to an inclination as transient as it was vile. The wretched creature, terrified at his rage, weakened by her situation, overcome by the events of the morning, and stung by a reception so opposite to her expectations, sunk at his feet in violent hysterics. But Hargrave could at that moment feel for no miseries but his own, and, consigning her to the care of the women of the house, he was again about to hasten to Montreville's, when he was told that a gentleman wished to speak with him upon particular business.

This person was the bearer of a note from Lord Bellamer, importing that he desired to meet Colonel Hargrave on that or the following day, at any hour and place which the colonel might appoint. After the injuries given and received, their meeting, he said, could have but one object. Hargrave, in no humor to delay, instantly replied, that in three hours he should be found in a solitary field, which he named, at a few miles' distance from town, and that he should bring with him a friend and a brace of pistols. He then went in search of this friend, and finding him at home, speedily settled the business.

Nothing, in the slight consideration of death which Hargrave suffered to enter his mind, gave him so much disturbance as the thought that he might, if he fell, leave Laura to the possession of another. He willingly persuaded himself that she had an attachment for him too romantic to be transferable. But she was poor; she might in time make a marriage of esteem and convenience; and Laura, the virtuous Laura, would certainly love her husband and the father of her children. The bare idea stung like a scorpion; and Hargrave hastened to his attorney, where he spent the time which yet remained before the hour of his appointment in dictating a bequest of five thousand pounds to Laura Montreville; but, true to his purpose, he added a clause, by which, in case of her marriage, she forfeited the whole.

He then prepared to meet Lord Bellamer; and, the ground being taken, Hargrave's first ball penetrated Lord Bellamer's left shoulder, who then fired without effect, and instantly fell. Hargrave, whose humanity had returned with his temper, accompanied his wounded antago-

nist to a neighboring cottage to which he was conveyed, anxiously procured for him every possible comfort, and heard, with real joy, that if he could be kept from fever his wound was not likely to be mortal. The gentleman who had been Hargrave's second offered to remain near Lord Bellamer, in order to give warning to his friend should any danger occur; and it was late in the evening before Hargrave, alone and comfortless, returned to town.

Never had his own thoughts been such vexatious companions. To his own seared conscience his crimes might have seemed trivial; but when he placed them before him in the light in which he knew that they would be viewed by Laura, their nature seemed changed. He knew that she would find no plea in the custom of the times for endangering the life of a fellow-creature, and that her moral vocabulary contained no qualifying epithet to palliate the foulness of adultery. The next day would give publicity to his duel and its cause; and should the report reach Laura's ear, what could he hope from her favor! The bribes of love and ambition he had found too poor to purchase her sanction to the bare intention of a crime. Even the intention seemed forgiven only in the hope of luring him to the paths of virtue; and when she should know the failure of that hope, would not her forgiveness be withdrawn?

But Laura, thus on the point of being lost, was more dear to him than ever; and often did he wish that he had fallen by Lord Bellamer's hand, rather than that he should live to see himself the object of her indifference, perhaps aversion. Time still remained, however, by one desperate effort, to hurry or terrify her into immediate compliance with his wishes; and, half-distracted with the emotions of remorse, and love, and hope, and fear, he ordered his carriage to Montreville's house. Here passed the scene which has been already described. Hargrave was too much agitated to attend to the best methods of persuasion, and he quitted Laura in the full conviction that she would never be his wife. He threw himself into his carriage, and was driven home, now frantically bewailing his loss, now vowing that, rather than endure it, he would incur the penalties of every law, divine and human. All night he paced his apartment, uttering imprecations on his own folly, and forming plans for regaining, by fraud, force, or persuasion, his lost rights over Laura. At last, his vehemence having somewhat spent itself, he threw himself on a couch, and sunk into feverish and interrupted sleep.

It was not till next morning that he thought of inquiring after the unfortunate partner of his iniquity, and was told that, too ill to be removed, she had been carried to bed in the house, where she still remained.

Intending to renew the attempt of the preceding night, he again repaired early to Laura's abode; but his intention was frustrated by the death of Montreville. On receiving the information, he was at first a good deal shocked at the sudden decease of a man whom, a few hours before, he had left in no apparent danger. But that feeling was effaced when once he began to consider the event as favorable to his designs upon Laura. Left to solitude, to poverty, perhaps to actual want, what resource had she so

eligible as the acceptance of offers splendid and disinterested like his! And he would urge her acceptance of them with all the ardor of passion. He would alarm her with the prospects of desolateness and dependence; he would appeal to the wishes of her dead father. Such pleadings must, he thought, have weight with her; and again the hopes of victory revived in his mind. Should the principle to which she so firmly adhered outweigh all these considerations, he thought she would forfeit by her obstinacy all claims to his forbearance, and his heart fluttered at the idea that she had now no protector from his power. He resolved to haunt, to watch her, to lose no opportunity of pressing his suit. Wherever she went he was determined to follow; "and surely," thought he, "she must have some moments of weakness; she can not be always on her guard."

For some days he continued to make regular visits at her lodgings, though he had no hope of seeing her till after Montreville was consigned to the dust; and he rejoiced that the customary seclusion was likely to retard her knowledge of his misconduct. To make inquiries after the health and spirits of Laura was the ostensible, but not the only motive of his visits. He wished to discover all that was known to the people of the house of her present situation and future plans. On the latter subject they could not afford him even the slightest information, for Laura had never dropped a hint of her intentions; but he received such accounts of her pecuniary distresses, and of the manner in which she supported them, as at once increased his reverence for her character, and his hopes that she would take refuge from her wants in the affluence which he offered her.

From Fanny, who officiated as porter, and who almost adored Laura, he received most of his intelligence; and while he listened to instances of the fortitude, the piety, the tenderness, the resignation of his beloved, a love of virtue, sincere though transient, would cross his soul; he would look back with abhorrence on a crime which had hazarded the loss of such a treasure, and vow that, were he once possessed of Laura, his life should be a copy of her worth. But Hargrave's vows deceived him; for he loved the virtues only which were associated with objects of pleasure, he abhorred the vices only which threatened him with pain.

On the day succeeding the funeral, he ventured on an attempt to see Laura, and sent her a message, begging permission to wait upon her; but was answered that she received no visitors. He then wrote to her a letter full of the sentiments which she inspired. He expressed his sympathy with her misfortunes, and fervently besought her to accept of a protector who would outdo in tenderness the one whom she had lost. He implored her to add the strongest incentive to the course of virtue, in which, if she would listen to his request, he solemnly promised to persevere. He again insinuated that she must speedily decide; that, if her decision were unfavorable, he might be driven to seek forgetfulness amid ruinous dissipation; and he adjured her by the wishes of her dead father, a claim which he thought would, with her, be irresistible, to consent to dispense with his further probation. He said he would

visit her late in the following forenoon, in the hope of receiving his answer from her own lips ; and concluded by telling her that, lest the late unfortunate event had occasioned her any temporary difficulties, he begged to be considered as her banker, and inclosed a bill for a hundred pounds.

He gave this letter to Fanny, with injunctions to deliver it immediately, and then went to inquire for Lord Bellamer, whom it gave him real pleasure to find pronounced out of danger. Lady Bellamer, too, had ceased to reproach and molest him. She had recovered from her indisposition, and removed to the house of a relation, who humanely offered to receive her. His hopes were strong of the effect of his letter ; and he passed the evening in greater comfort than had lately fallen to his share. Often did he repeat to himself that Laura must accede to his proposals. What other course could she pursue ! Would her spirit allow her to become a burden on the scanty income of her friend Mrs. Douglas ! would she venture to pursue, as a profession, the art in which she so greatly excelled ! would she return to live alone at Glenalbert ! This last appeared the most probable to Hargrave, because the most desirable. Alone, without any companion whose frozen counsel could counteract the softness of her heart, in a romantic solitude, watched, as he would watch, importuned as he would importune her, strange if no advantage could be wrested from her affection or her prudence, her interest or her fears ! To obtain Laura was the first wish of his soul : and he was not very fastidious as to the means of its gratification ; for even the love of a libertine is selfish. He was perfectly sincere in his honorable proposals to Laura. He might have been less so had any others possessed a chance of success.

He rose early the next morning, and impatiently looked for the hour which he had appointed for his visit. He wished that he had fixed on an earlier one, took up a book to beguile the minutes, threw it down again, looked a hundred times at his watch, ordered his carriage to the door two hours before it was wanted, feared to go too soon, lest Laura should refuse to see him, and yet was at her lodgings long before his appointment. He inquired for her, and was answered that she had discharged her lodgings and was gone. "Gone ! whither !" Fanny did not know ; Miss Montreville had been busy all the evening before in preparing for her removal, and had left the house early that morning. "And did she leave no address where she might be found !" "I heard her tell the coachman," said Fanny, "to stop at the end of Grosvenor-street, and she would direct him where she chose to be set down. But I believe she has left a letter for you, sir." "Fool !" cried Hargrave, "why did you not tell me so sooner ! Give it me instantly."

He impatiently followed the girl to the parlor which had been Montreville's. The letter lay on the table. He snatched it, and hastily tore it open. It contained only his bill, returned with Miss Montreville's compliments and thanks. He twisted the card into atoms, and cursed with all his soul the ingratitude and cold prudence of the writer. He swore that if she were on earth he would find her ; and vowed that he

would make her repent of the vexation which he said she had always taken a savage delight in heaping upon him.

Restless, and yet unwilling to be gone, he next wandered into Laura's painting-room, as if hoping in her once-favorite haunt to find traces of her flight. He had never entered it since the day when the discovery of De Courcy's portrait had roused his sudden phrensy. Association brought back the same train of thought. He imagined that Laura, while she concealed herself from him, had taken refuge with the De Courcys ; and all his jealousy returned. After, according to custom, acting the madman for a while, he began, as usual, to recover his senses. He knew he could easily discover whether Miss Montreville was at Norwood, by writing to a friend who lived in the neighborhood ; and he was going home to execute this design, when, passing through the lobby, he was met by the landlady. He stopped to renew his inquiries whether any thing was known, or guessed, of Laura's retreat. But Mrs. Stubbs could give him no more information on the subject than her maid, and she was infinitely more surprised at his question than Fanny had been ; for having made certain observations which convinced her that Hargrave's visits were in the character of a lover, she had charitably concluded, and actually asserted, that Laura had accepted of his protection.

Hargrave next inquired whether Laura had any visitors but himself. "No living creature," was the reply. "Could Mrs. Stubbs form no conjecture whither she was gone !" "None in the world," answered Mrs. Stubbs ; "only this I know, it can't be very far off, for, to my certain knowledge, she had only seven shillings in her pocket, and that could not carry her far, as I told the gentleman who was here this morning." "What gentleman !" cried Hargrave. "One Mr. De Courcy, sir, that used to call for her ; but he has not been here these six weeks before ; and he seemed quite astounded, as well as yourself, sir." Hargrave then questioned her so closely concerning De Courcy's words and looks, as to convince himself that his rival was entirely ignorant of the motions of the fugitive. In this belief he returned home, uncertain what measure he should pursue, but determined not to rest till he had found Laura.

When De Courcy quitted Laura he had no intention of seeing her again till circumstances should enable him to offer her his hand. No sacrifice could have cost him more pain ; but justice and filial duty did not permit him to hesitate. Neither did he think himself entitled to sadden with a face of care his domestic circle, nor to make his mother and sister dearly for their comforts, by showing that they were purchased at the expense of his peace. Nor did he languidly resign to idle love-dreams the hours which an immortal spirit claimed for its improvement, and which the social tie bound him to enliven and cheer. But to appear what he was not, to introduce constraint and dissimulation into the sacred privacies of home, never occurred to De Courcy. He therefore strove not to seem cheerful, but to be so. He returned to his former studies, and even prosecuted them with alacrity, for he knew that Laura respected a cultivated mind. His faults he was, if possi-

ble, more than ever studious to correct, for Laura loved virtue. And when occasion for a kind, considerate, or self-denying action presented itself, he eagerly seized it, saying in his heart, "This is like Laura."

Sometimes the fear that he might be forgotten forced from him the bitterest sigh which he had ever breathed; but he endeavored to comfort himself with the belief that she would soon be screened from the gaze of admiration, and that her regard for him, though yet in its infancy, would be sufficient to secure her from other impressions. Of the reality of this regard he did not allow himself to doubt; or, if he hesitated for a moment, he called to mind the picture, Laura's concealment of it, her confusion at his attempt to examine it, and he no longer doubted.

The arrival of the picture itself might have explained all that related to it, had De Courcy chosen to have it so explained. But he turned his eye from the unpleasing light, and sheltered his hopes by a hundred treasured instances of love, which had scarcely any existence but in his fancy.

His efforts to be cheerful were, however, less successful, after Laura, in a few melancholy lines, informed Miss De Courcy that Montreville's increased illness made their return to Scotland more uncertain than ever. He imagined his dear Laura the solitary attendant of a sick-bed; no kind voice to comfort her, no friendly face to cheer her; perhaps in poverty, that poverty increased too by the artifice which he had used to lessen it. He grew anxious, comfortless, and, at length, really miserable. Every day the arrival of the letters was looked for with extreme solicitude, in hope of more cheering news; but every day brought disappointment, for Laura wrote no more. His mother shired in his anxiety, and increased it by expressing her own. She feared that Miss Montreville was ill, and unable to write; and the image of Laura among strangers, sick and in poverty, obliterated Montague's prudent resolutions of trusting himself no more in the presence of his beloved. He set out for London, and arrived at the door of Laura's lodgings about an hour after she had quitted them.

Mrs. Stubbs, of whom he made personal inquiries, was abundantly communicative. She gave him, as far as it was known to her, a full history of Laura's adventures since he had seen her; and, where she was deficient in facts, supplied the blank by conjecture. With emotion indescribable he listened to a coarse account of Miss Montreville's wants and labors. "How could you suffer all this!" cried he, indignantly, when he was able to speak. "Times are hard, sir," returned Mrs. Stubbs, the jolly purple deepening in her cheeks. "Besides, Miss Montreville had always such an air with her, that I could not for my very heart have asked her to take pot-luck with us."

The color faded from De Courcy's face as Mrs. Stubbs proceeded to relate the constant visits of Hargrave. "I'll warrant," said she, growing familiar as she perceived that she excited interest; "I'll warrant he did not come here so often for nothing. People must have ears, and use them too; and I heard him myself swearing to her one day, that he loved her bet-

ter than his life, or something to that purpose; and that if she would live with him, he would make her dreams pleasant, or some such stuff as that; and now, as sure as can be, she has taken him at his word, and gone to him."

"Peace, woman!" cried De Courcy, in a tone which he had never used to any of the sex; "how dare you—"

Mrs. Stubbs, who had all that want of nerve which characterizes vulgar arrogance, instantly shrunk into her shell. "No offense, sir," said she; "it's all mere guess-work with me; only she does not know a creature in London, and she had nothing to carry her out of it; for she had just seven shillings in her pocket. I gave her seventeen and sixpence of change this morning, and she gave half a guinea of that to the kitchen-maid. Now, it stands to reason, she would not have been so ready parting with her money, if she had not known where more was to be had."

De Courcy, shocked and disgusted, turned from her in displeasure, and finding that nothing was to be learned from her of the place of Laura's retreat, betook himself to the print-shop, where he remembered that he had first procured Miss Montreville's address. Mr. Wilkins declared his ignorance on the subject of Montague's inquiries; but, seeing the look of disappointment with which De Courcy was leaving the shop, good-naturedly said, "I dare say, sir, if you wish to find out where Miss Montreville lives, I could let you know by asking Colonel Hargrave. He comes here sometimes to look at the caricatures. And," added Mr. Wilkins, winking significantly, "I am mistaken if they are not very well acquainted."

De Courcy's heart rose to his mouth. "It may be so," said he, scarcely conscious of what he said.

"There was a famous scene between them here about three weeks ago," proceeded the print-seller, anxious to justify his own sagacity. "I suppose they had not met for a while, and there was such a kissing and embracing—"

"'Tis false!" cried De Courcy, lightning flashing from his eyes; "Miss Montreville would have brooked such indignities from no man on earth."

"Nay," said Wilkins, shrugging up his shoulders, "the shop-lads saw it as well as I; she fainted away in his arms, and he carried her into the back room there, and would not suffer one of us to come near her; and Mr. Finch there saw him down on his knees to her."

"Cease your vile slanders," cried De Courcy, half distracted with grief and indignation; "I abhor—I despise them. But at your peril dare to breathe them into any other ear." So saying, he darted from the shop, and returned to his hotel, infinitely more wretched than ever he had been.

The happy dream was dispelled which painted him the master of Laura's affections. Another possessed her love; and how visible, how indelicately glaring, must be the preference which was apparent to every vulgar eye! But, bitter as was his disappointment, and cruel the pangs of jealousy, they were ease compared to the torture with which he admitted a thought derogatory to Laura's worth. A thousand times he reproached himself for suffering the hints

and conjectures of a low-bred woman to affect his mind; a thousand times assured himself that no poverty, no difficulties, would overpower the integrity of Laura. "Yet Hargrave is a libertine," said he, "and if she can love a libertine, how have I been deceived in her! No! it can not be! She is all truth—all purity. It is she that is deceived. He has imposed upon her by a false show of virtue, and misery awaits her detection of his deceit. She gone to him! I will never believe it. Libertine as he is, he dare not even to think of it. Extremity of want—lingering famine would not degrade her to this;" and tears filled De Courcy's manly eyes at the thought that Laura was indeed in want.

He had no direct means of supplying her necessities; but he hoped that she might inquire at her former abode for any letters which might chance to be left for her, and that she might thus receive any packet which he addressed to her. "She shall never be humbled," said he with a heavy sigh, "by knowing that she owes this trifle to an indifferent, forgotten stranger;" and inclosing fifty pounds in a blank cover, he put both into an envelop to Mrs. Stubbs, in which he informed her that, if she could find no means of conveying the packet to Miss Montreville, the anonymous writer would claim it again at some future time, on describing its contents.

Before dispatching the letter, however, he resolved on making an attempt to discover whether Hargrave was acquainted with Laura's retreat. He shrunk from meeting his rival. His blood ran cold as he pictured to his fancy the exulting voice, the triumphant glance, which would announce the master of Laura's fate. But any thing was preferable to his present suspense; and the hope that he might yet be useful to Laura, formed an incitement still more powerful. "Let me but find her," said he, "and I will yet wrest her from destruction. If she is deceived, I will warn; if she is oppressed, I will protect her."

He imagined that he should probably find Hargrave at the house of his uncle, Lord Lincourt, and hastened thither to seek him; but found the house occupied only by servants, who were ignorant of the colonel's address. De Courcy knew none of Hargrave's places of resort. The habits and acquaintance of each lay in a different line. No means, therefore, of discovering him occurred to Montague, except that of inquiring at the house of Mrs. Stubbs, where he thought it probable that the place of Hargrave's residence might be known. Thither, then, he next bent his course.

The door was opened to him by Fanny, who replied to his question, that none of the family knew where Colonel Hargrave lived, and lamented that De Courcy had not come a little earlier, saying that the colonel had been gone not above a quarter of an hour. De Courcy was turning disappointed away; when Fanny, stopping him, said, with a courtesy and half whisper, "Sir, a'n't please you, my mistress was all wrong about Miss Montreville, for the colonel knows no more about her than I do." "Indeed!" said De Courcy, all attention. "Yes, indeed, sir; when I told him she was away, he was quite amazed, and in such a passion! So,

then, I thought I would give him the letter." "What letter?" cried De Courcy, the glow of animation fading in his face. "A letter that Miss Montreville left for him; but when he got it he was ten times angrier than before, and swore at her for not letting him know where she was going. So I thought, sir, I would make bold to tell you, sir, as mistress had been speaking her mind, sir; for it's a sad thing to have one's character taken away; and Miss Montreville, I am sure, wouldn't do hurt to nobody."

"You are a good girl, a very good girl," said De Courcy, giving her, with a guinea, a very hearty squeeze of the hand. He made her repeat the particulars of Hargrave's violent behavior; and satisfied from them that his rival had no share in Laura's disappearance, he returned to his hotel, his heart lightened of half the heaviest load that ever it had borne.

Still, however, enough remained to exclude for a time all quiet from his breast. He could not doubt that Laura's affections were Hargrave's. She had given proof of it palpable to the most common observer; and resentment mingled with his grief while he thought that, to his fervent, respectful love, she preferred the undistinguishing passion of a libertine. "All women are alike," said he, "the slaves of mere outward show;" an observation for which the world was probably first indebted to circumstances somewhat like De Courcy's.

Restless and uncomfortable, without any hope of finding Laura, he would now have left London without an hour's delay. But, though he forgot his own fatigues, he was not unmindful of those of the gray-haired domestic who attended him. He therefore deferred his journey to the following morning; and then set out on his return to Norwood, more depressed and wretched than he had quitted it.

## CHAPTER XIX.

ALL was yet dark and still, when Laura, like some unearthly being, stood by the bed where Fanny slept. The light which she bore in her wasted hand showed faintly the majestic form darkened by its mourning garments, and shed a dreary gleam upon tearless eyes, and a face whence all the hues of life were fled. She made a sign for Fanny to rise; and, awe-struck by the calm of unutterable grief, Fanny arose, and in silence followed her. They entered the chamber of death. With noiseless steps Laura approached the body, and softly drew back the covering. She beckoned Fanny toward her. The girl comprehended that her aid was wanted in performing the last duties to Montreville; and shrinking with superstitious fear, said, in a low, tremulous whisper, "I dare not touch the dead." Laura answered not; but raising her eyes to Heaven, as if there to seek assistance in her mournful task, she gently pressed her hand upon the half-closed eyes which had so often beamed fondness on her.

Unaided, and in silence, she did the last offices of love. She shed no tears. She uttered no lamentation. The dread stillness was broken only by the groans that burst at times from her heavy heart, and the more continued sobs of her attendant, who vented in tears her fear, her pity, and her admiration.

When the sad work was finished, Laura, still speechless, motioned to the servant to retire. In horror at the thought of leaving Laura alone with the dead, yet fearing to raise her voice, the girl respectfully grasped her mistress's gown, and in a low but earnest whisper besought her to leave this dismal place, and go to her own chamber. Scarcely sensible of her meaning, Laura suffered her to draw her away; and when the door closed upon all that remained of her father, she shuddered convulsively, and struggled to return. Fanny, however, gathered courage to lead her to her own apartment. There she threw herself prostrate on the ground; a flood of tears came to relieve her oppressed heart, and her recovered utterance broke forth in an act of resignation. She continued for some hours to give vent to her sorrow—a sorrow unallayed by any less painful feeling, save those of devotion. She had lost the affectionate guide of her youth, the fond parent, whose love for her had brought him untimely to the grave; and, in the anguish of the thought that she should watch his smile and hear his voice no more, she scarcely remembered that he had left her to want and loneliness.

The morning was far advanced, when her sorrows were broken in upon by her landlady, who came to ask her direction in regard to the funeral. Laura had been unable to bend her thoughts to the consideration of this subject; and she answered only by her tears. In vain did Mrs. Stubbs repeat that "it was a folly to take on so;" "that we must all die;" "and that as every thing has two handles, Laura might comfort herself that she would now have but one mouth to feed." Laura seemed obstinate in her grief; and at last Mrs. Stubbs declared that, whether she would hear reason or not, something must without delay be settled about the funeral; as for her part, she could not order things without knowing how they were to be paid for. Laura, putting her hand to her forehead, complained that her head felt confused, and, mildly begging her persecutor to have a little patience with her, promised, if she might be left alone for the present, to return to the conversation in half an hour.

Accordingly, soon after the time appointed, the landlady was surprised to see Laura enter the parlor, her cheeks indeed colorless, and her eyes swelled with weeping, but her manner perfectly calm and collected. "Here are my father's watch and seals," said she, presenting them. "They may be disposed of. That can not wound him now;" and she turned away her head and drew her hand across her eyes. "Have the goodness," continued she, "to order what is necessary, for I am a stranger, without any friend." Mrs. Stubbs, examining the watch, declared her opinion that the sale of it would produce very little. "Let every thing be plain, but decent," said Laura, "and when I am able I will work day and night till all be paid." "I doubt, miss," answered Mrs. Stubbs, "it will be long before your work will pay for much; besides, you will be in my debt for a week's lodgings—we always charge a week extra when there is a death in the house." "Tell me what you would have me to do, and I will do it," said the unfortunate Laura, wholly unable to contend with her hard-hearted companion. "Why,

miss," said Mrs. Stubbs, "there is your beautiful rose-wood work-table and the foot-stools, and your fine ivory work-box that Mr. De Courcy sent here before you came; if you choose to dispose of them, I will take them off your hands." "Take them," said Laura; "I knew not that they were mine." Mrs. Stubbs then conscientiously offered to give a fourth part of the sum which these toys had cost De Courcy three months before, an offer which Laura instantly accepted; and the landlady having settled this business much to her own satisfaction, cheerfully undertook to arrange the obsequies of poor Montreville.

Though the tragical scenes of the night had left Laura no leisure to dwell upon her fears for Hargrave, it was not without thankfulness that she heard of his safety and restored composure. Her mind was at first too much occupied by her recent loss to attempt accounting for his extravagant behavior; and, after the first paroxysms of her sorrow were past, she retained but an imperfect recollection of his late conversation with her. She merely remembered his seeming distraction and threatened suicide, and only bewildered herself by her endeavors to unravel his mysterious conduct. Sometimes a suspicion not very remote from the truth would dart into her mind; but she quickly banished it, as an instance of the causeless fears which are apt to infest the hearts of the unfortunate.

An innate delicacy, which in some degree supplied to Laura the want of experience, made her feel an impropriety in the daily visits which she was informed that Hargrave had made at her lodgings. She was aware that they might be liable to misrepresentation, even though she should persist in her refusal to see him; and this consideration appeared to add to the necessity, already so urgent, for resolving on some immediate plan for her future course of life. But the future offered to Laura no attractive prospect. Wherever she turned, all seemed dark and unpromising. She feared not to labor for her subsistence; no narrow pride forbade her the use of any honorable means of independence. But her personal charms were such as no degree of humility could screen from the knowledge of their possessor, and she was sensible how much this dangerous distinction increased the disqualifications of her sex and age for the character of an artist. As an artist, she must be exposed to the intrusion of strangers; to public observation, if successful; to unpitied neglect, if she failed in her attempt. Besides, it was impossible to think of living alone and unprotected in the human chaos that surrounded her. All her father's dismal forebodings rose to her remembrance; and she almost regarded herself as one who would be noticed only as a mark for destruction, beguiled by frauds which no vigilance could detect, overwhelmed by power which she could neither resist nor escape.

Should she seek in solitude a refuge from the destroyer, and return to mourn at her deserted Glenalbert the stroke which had left it, like her, lonely and forlorn, want lurked amid its shades; for with her father had died not only the duties and the joys of life, but even the means of its support. Her temporary right to



the few acres which Montreville had farmed was in less than a year to expire; and she knew that, after discharging the claim of the landlord, together with some debts which the long illness of Lady Harriet and the ill-fated journey had obliged Montreville to contract, little would remain from the sale of her effects at Glenalbert.

Laura was sure that the benevolent friend of her youth, the excellent Mrs. Douglas, would receive her with open arms, guide her inexperienced with a mother's counsel, comfort her sorrows with a mother's love. But her spirit revolted from a life of indolent dependence, and her sense of justice from casting a useless burden upon an income too confined to answer claims stronger and more natural than hers. Mrs. Douglas was herself the preceptress of her children, and both by nature and education amply qualified for the momentous task. In domestic management, her skill and activity were unrivaled. Laura, therefore, saw no possibility of repaying by her usefulness, in any department of the family, the protection which she might receive; and she determined that nothing but the last necessity should induce her to tax the generosity of her friend, or to forego the honorable independence of those who, though "silver or gold they have none," can barter for the comforts they enjoy, their mental treasures or their bodily toil.

To undertake the tuition of youth occurred to her as the most eligible means of procuring necessary subsistence, and protection more necessary still. It appeared to her that, as a member of any reputable family, she would be sheltered from the dangers which her father had most taught her to dread. She reviewed her accomplishments, and impartially examined her ability to communicate them with temper and perseverance. Though for the most part attained with great accuracy, they were few in number, and unobtrusive in kind. She read aloud with uncommon harmony and grace. She spoke and wrote with fluency and precision. She was grammatically acquainted with the French and Latin languages, and an adept in the common rules of arithmetic. Her proficiency in painting has been already noticed; and she sung with inimitable sweetness and expression.

But though expert in every description of plain needle-work, she was an utter novice in the manufacture of all those elegant nothings which are so serviceable to fine ladies in their warfare against time. Though she moved with unstudied dignity and peerless grace, we are obliged to confess that the seclusion of her native village had doomed her to ignorance of the art of dancing; that she had never entered a ball-room less capacious than the horizon, nor performed with a partner more illustrious than the schoolmaster's daughter. Her knowledge of music, too, was extremely limited. Lady Harriet had indeed tried to teach her to play on the piano-forte; but the attempt, after costing Laura many a full heart, and many a watery eye, was relinquished as vain. Though the child learned with unusual facility whatever was taught her by her father or Mrs. Douglas, and though she was already remarkable for the sweetness with which she warbled her wood-

notes wild, she no sooner approached the piano-forte than an invincible stupidity seemed to seize on all her faculties. This was the more mortifying, as it was the only one of her ladyship's accomplishments which she ever personally attempted to communicate to her daughter. Lady Harriet was astonished at her failure. It could proceed, she thought, from nothing but obstinacy. But the appropriate remedy for obstinacy only aggravated the symptoms; and, after all, Laura was indebted to Colonel Hargrave's tuition for so much skill as enabled her to accompany her own singing.

Laura had more than once felt her deficiency in these fashionable arts on seeing them exhibited by young ladies, who, to use their own expression, had returned from *finishing themselves* at a boarding-school, and she feared that this blank in her education might prove a fatal bar to her being employed as a governess. But another and a greater obstacle lay before her—she was utterly unknown. The only patrons whose recommendation she could command were distant and obscure; and what mother would trust the minds and the manners of her children to the formation of a stranger? She knew not the ostrich-like daring of fashionable mothers. This latter objection seemed equally hostile to her being received in quality of companion by those who might be inclined to exchange subsistence and protection for relief from solitude; and Laura, almost despairing, knew not whither to turn her eye.

One path indeed invited her steps, a path bright with visions of rapture, warm with the sunshine of love and pleasure; but the flaming sword of Heaven guarded the entrance; and as often as her thoughts reverted that way, the struggle was renewed which forces the choice from the pleasing to the right. No frequency of return rendered this struggle less painful. Laura's prudence had slept, when a little vigilance might have saved her many an after pang; and she had long paid, was still long to pay, the forfeit of neglecting that wisdom which would guard "with all diligence" the first beginnings of even the most innocent passions. Had she curbed the infant strength of an attachment which, though it failed to warp her integrity, had so deeply wounded her peace, how would she have lessened the force of that temptation which lured her from the rugged ascent where want and difficulty were to be her companions; which enticed her to the flowery bowers of pleasure with the voice and with the smile of Hargrave!

Yet Laura had resisted a bribe more powerful than any consideration merely selfish could supply; and she blushed to harbor a thought of yielding to her own inclination what she had refused to a parent's wants, to a parent's prayer. Her heart filled as she called to mind how warmly Montreville had seconded the wishes of her lover, how resolutely she had withstood his will; and it swelled even to bursting at the thought that the vow was now fatally made void, which promised, by every endearment of filial love, to atone for this first act of disobedience. "Dearest, kindest of friends," she cried, "I was inflexible to thy request—thy last request! and shall I now recede! now, when, perhaps, thou art permitted to behold and to ap-

prove my motive; perhaps permitted to watch me still—permitted with higher power to guard, with less erring wisdom to direct me! And Thou, who in matchless condescension refusest not to be called the Father of the fatherless—Thou, who in every difficulty canst guide, from every danger canst protect thy children, let, if thou see it good, the heavens, which are thy throne, be all my covering, the earth, which is thy fender, be all my bed; but suffer me not to wander from Thee, the only source of peace and joy, to seek them in fountains unhallowed and forbidden."

Religious habits and sentiments were permanent inmates of Laura's breast. They had been invited and cherished, till, like familiar friends, they came unsolicited; and, like friends, too, their visits were most frequent in adversity. But the most ardent emotions of piety are, alas! transient guests with us all; and, sinking from the flight which raised her for a time above the sorrows and the wants of earth, Laura was again forced to shrink from the gaunt aspect of poverty, again to turn a wistful eye toward a haven of rest on this side the grave.

Young as she was, however, she had long been a vigilant observer of her own actions, and of their consequences; and the result was an immutable conviction that no heartfelt comfort could, in any circumstances, harbor with willful transgression. As willful transgression she considered her inmarriage with a man whose principles she had fatal reason to distrust. As a rash defiance of unknown danger, as a desperate daring of temptations whose force was yet untried, as a desertion of those arms by which alone she could hope for victory in her Christian combat, Laura considered the hazardous enterprise, which, trusting to the reformation of a libertine, would expose her to his example and his authority, his provocations and his associates. Again she solemnly renewed her resolution never, by willfully braving temptation, to forego the protection of Him who can dash the fullness of worldly prosperity with secret bitterness, or gladden with joys unspeakable the dwelling visited by no friend but him, cheered by no comfort but the light of his countenance.

Hargrave's letter served rather to fortify the resolution which it was intended to shake; for Laura was not insensible to the indelicacy which did not scorn to owe to her necessities a consent which he had in vain tried to extort from her affection. Though pleased with his liberality, she was hurt by his supposing that she could have so far forgotten the mortal offense which he had offered her, as to become his debtor for any pecuniary favor; and, as nothing could be further from her intention than to owe any obligation to Colonel Hargrave, she did not hesitate a moment to return the money. When she had sealed the card in which she inclosed it, she resumed the contemplation of her dreary prospects, and half hopelessly examined the possibilities of subsistence. To offer instruction to the young, or amusement to the old, in exchange for an asylum from want and danger, still appeared to her the most eligible plan of life; and again she weighed the difficulty of procuring the necessary recommendations.

Lady Pelham occurred to her. Some claim

she thought she might have had to the patronage of so near a relative. But who should identify her! who should satisfy Lady Pelham that the claim of relationship did indeed belong to Laura! Had she been previously known to her aunt, her difficulties would have been at an end; now she would probably be rejected as an impostor; and she gave a sigh to the want of foresight which had suffered her to rejoice in attending an interview with Lady Pelham.

After much consideration, she determined to solicit the recommendations of Mrs. Douglas and the De Courcy family; and, until she could avail herself of these, to subsist, in some obscure lodging, by the labor of her hands. In the mean time, it was necessary to remove immediately from her present abode. The day following was the last when she could claim any right to remain there; and she proceeded to make preparations for her departure.

With a bleeding heart she began to arrange whatever had belonged to Montreville; and paused, with floods of tears, upon every relic now become so sacred. She entered his closet. His was the last foot that had pressed the threshold. His chair stood as he had risen from it. On the ground lay the cushion yet impressed with his knees; his Bible was open as he had left it. One passage was blistered with his tears; and there Laura read with emotions unutterable, "Leave to me thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them alive." Her recent wounds thus torn open with agony that could not be restrained, she threw herself upon the ground; and, with cries of anguish, besought her father to return but for one short hour to comfort his desolate child. "Oh, I shall never, never see him more!" said she; "all my cries are vain;" and she wept the more because they were in vain. Soon, however, she reproached herself with her immoderate sorrow, soon mingled its accents with those of humble resignation; and the vigorous mind recovering in devotion all its virtuous energy, she returned, with restored composure, to her melancholy labors.

In her father's writing-desk she found an unfinished letter. It began, "My dear De Courcy," and Laura was going to read it with the awe of one who listens to the last words of a father, when she remembered having surprised her father while writing it, and his having hastily concealed it from her sight. She instantly folded it without further acquaintance with its contents, except that her own name caught her eye. Continuing to arrange the papers, she observed a letter addressed to herself in a hand which she did not remember to have seen. It was Lady Pelham's answer to that in which Laura had announced her mother's death. She perceived that it might furnish an introduction to her aunt; and with a sensation of gratitude she remembered that she had been accidentally prevented from destroying it.

Lady Pelham was elder by several years than her sister, Lady Harriet. Her father, a saving, pains-taking attorney, died a few months after she was born. His widow, who, from an idea of their necessity, had concurred in all his economical plans, discovered, with equal surprise and delight, that his death had left her the entire management of five-and-forty thousand

pounds. This fortune, which she was to enjoy during her life, was secured, in the event of her demise, to little Miss Bridget; and this arrangement was one of the earliest pieces of information which little Miss Bridget received. For seven years the little heiress was, in her mother's undisguised opinion, and consequently in her own, the most important personage upon the face of the terrestrial globe. But worldly glories are fleeting. Lord Winterfield's taste in stewed carp had been improved by half a century's assiduous cultivation. Now the widow Price understood the stewing of carp better than any woman in England, so his lordship secured to himself the benefit of her talent by making her Lady Winterfield. In ten months after this marriage, another young lady appeared, as much more important than Miss Bridget as an earl is than an attorney.

Fortune, however, dispensed her gifts with tolerable equality. Beauty and rank, indeed, were all on the side of Lady Harriet, but the wealth lay in the scale of Miss Price; for Lord Winterfield, leaving the bulk of his property to the children of his first marriage, bequeathed to his youngest daughter only five thousand pounds. These circumstances procured to Miss Price another advantage, for she married a baronet with a considerable estate, while Lady Harriet's fate stooped to a poor lieutenant in a marching regiment. After ten years, which Lady Pelham declared were spent in uninterrupted harmony, Sir Edward Pelham died. The exclusive property of his wife's patrimony had been strictly secured to her; and either thinking such a provision sufficient for a female, or moved by a reason which we shall not at present disclose, Sir Edward bestowed on the nephew who inherited his title his whole estate, burdened only with a jointure of five hundred pounds a year, settled upon Lady Pelham by her marriage contract. Of his daughter and only child no mention was made in his testament; but Sir Edward, during the last years of his life, had acquired the character of an oddity, and nobody wondered at his eccentricities.

At the commencement of her widowhood, Lady Pelham purchased a villa in —shire, where she spent the summer, returning in the winter to Grosvenor-street; and this last was almost the only part of her history which was known to Laura. Even before Lady Harriet's marriage, little cordiality had subsisted between the sisters. From the date of that event, their intercourse had been almost entirely broken off; and the only attention which Laura had ever received from her aunt was contained in the letter which she was now thankfully contemplating. Her possession of this letter, together with her acquaintance with the facts to which it related, she imagined would form sufficient proof of her identity; and her national ideas of the claims of relationship awakened a hope of obtaining her aunt's assistance in procuring some respectable situation.

Determined to avail herself of her fortunate discovery, she quitted her father's apartments; and carrying with her her credentials, lost no time in repairing to Grosvenor-street. Nor did she experience the reluctance which she had formerly felt toward an interview with Lady Pelham; for she was fully sensible of the dif-

ference between a petitioner for charity and a candidate for honorable employment. Besides, there is no teacher of humility like misfortune; and Laura's spirits were too completely subdued to anticipate or to notice diminutive attacks upon her self-consequence. She still, however, with constitutional reserve, shrunk from intruding upon a stranger; and she passed and re-passed the door, examining the exterior of the house, as if she could thence have inferred the character of its owner, before she took courage to give one gentle knock.

A footman opened the door, and Laura, faltering, inquired if Lady Pelham was within. From Laura's single knock, her humble voice, and her yet more humble habit, which, in ten months' use, had somewhat faded from the sober magnificence of black, the man had formed no very lofty idea of the visitor's rank. He answered, that he believed his lady was not at home; but half afraid of dismissing some person with whom she might have business, he spoke in a tone which made Laura a little doubt the truth of his information. She inquired at what time she might be likely to gain access to Lady Pelham; and as she spoke threw back her crape veil, unconscious how successfully she was pleading her own cause. Struck with a countenance whose candor, sweetness, and beauty won a way to every heart, the man gazed at her for a moment with vulgar admiration, and then throwing open the door of a little parlor, begged her to walk in, while he inquired whether his lady were visible. He soon returned, telling Laura that Lady Pelham would receive her in a few minutes.

During these few minutes, Laura had formed a hundred conjectures concerning her aunt's person, voice, and manner. She wondered whether she resembled Lady Harriet; whether her own form would recall to Lady Pelham the remembrance of her sister. At every noise her heart fluttered; at every step she expected the entrance of this relation, on whom, perhaps, so much of her future fate might depend; and she held her breath that she might distinguish her approach. A servant at last came to conduct her to his mistress; and she followed him, not without a feeling of awe, into the presence of her mother's sister.

That sentiment, however, by no means gathered strength when she took courage to raise her eyes to the plain little elderly person to whom she was introduced, and heard herself addressed in the accents of cheerful familiarity. Laura, with modest dignity, made known her name and situation. She spoke of her mother's death, and the tears trickled from her eyes; of her father's, and in venting the natural eloquence of grief, she forgot that she came to interest a stranger. Lady Pelham seemed affected; she held her handkerchief to her eyes, and remained in that attitude for some time after Laura had recovered self-possession. Then throwing her arms round her lovely niece, she affectionately acknowledged the relationship, adding, "Your resemblance to my poor sister can not be overlooked, and yet, in saying so, I am far from paying you a compliment."

After showing Lady Pelham her own letter, and mentioning such circumstances as tended to confirm her identity, Laura proceeded to de-

tail her plans, to which her ladyship listened with apparent interest. She inquired into Laura's accomplishments, and seemed pondering the probability of employing them with advantage to the possessor. After a few moments' silence, she said, "that short as their acquaintance had been, she thought she could perceive that Laura had too much sensibility for a dependent situation. But we shall talk of that hereafter," continued she. "At present your spirits are too weak for the society of strangers; and mine," added her ladyship, with a sigh, "are not much more buoyant than your own." Laura looked up with the kindly interest which, whether she herself were joyful or in sadness, sorrow could always command with her; and her aunt answered her glance of inquiry, by relating, that her only daughter and heiress had eloped from her a few days before, with an artful young fellow without family or fortune. "She deceived me by a train of the basest artifices," said Lady Pelham, "though she might have known that my happiness was my chief concern; that my only possible motive for withholding my consent was to save her from the poverty to which she has doomed herself. But she has unfeelingly preferred her own indulgence to the society and the peace of a kind mother. Her disobedience I might have forgiven—her selfishness, her deceit, I never can; or if, as a Christian, I forgive, I never, never can forget it."

Lady Pelham had talked herself out of breath, and Laura, not quite understanding this kind of Christian forgiveness, was silent, because she did not well know what to say. She felt, however, compassion for a parent deserted by her only child; and the feeling was legible in a countenance peculiarly fitted for every tender expression.

There are some degrees of sorrow which increase in acuteness, at least which augment in vehemence of expression, by the perception of having excited sympathy. Weak fires gather strength from radiation. After a glance at Laura, Lady Pelham melted into tears, and continued, "I know not how I had deserved such treatment from her; for never had she reason to complain of me. I have always treated her with what I must call unmerited kindness, except, indeed, when natural abhorrence of vice hurried me into reproof, which, alas! I always found unavailing."

Laura now ventured a few conciliating words. "She will feel her error, madam; she will strive by her after life to atone—" Lady Pelham immediately dried her eyes. "No, no, my dear," interrupted she, "you don't know her; you have no idea of the hardness of her unfeeling heart. Rejoice, sweet girl, that you have no idea of it. For my part, though sensibility is at best but a painful blessing, I would not exchange it for the most peaceful apathy that can feel for nothing but itself. I must have something to love and cherish. You shall be that something. You shall live with me, and we shall console each other."

On another occasion, Laura might have been disposed to canvass the nature of that sensibility which could thus enlarge to a stranger on the defects of an only child. Indeed, she was little conversant even with the name of this

quality. Her own sensibility she had been taught to consider as a weakness to be subdued, not as an ornament to be gloried in; and the expansion of soul which opens to all the sorrows and to all the joys of others, she had learned to call by a holier name—to regulate by a nobler principle. But she was little disposed to examine the merits of a feeling to which she owed the offer of an unsolicited asylum. Her heart swelling with gratitude, she clasped Lady Pelham's hand between her own, and, while tears streamed down her face, "Kind, considerate friend," she cried, "why, why were you not known to us while my father could have been sensible to your kindness?"

After Lady Pelham had repeated her proposal more in detail, and Laura had thankfully acceded to it, they remained in conversation for some time longer. Lady Pelham showed that she had much wit, much vivacity, and some information; and, after settling that Laura should next day become an inmate in Grosvenor-street, they separated, mutually delighted with each other. Lady Pelham applauded herself for a generous action; and, to the interest which Laura awakened in every breast, was added in Lady Pelham's all the benevolence of self-complacency. Laura, on the other hand, did not dream that any fault could harbor in the unsuspicious liberal heart which had believed the tale and removed the difficulties of a stranger. She did not once dream that she owed her new asylum to any motive less noble than disinterested goodness.

No wonder that her ladyship's motive escaped the penetration of Laura, when it even evaded her own. And yet no principle could be more simple in its nature, or more constant in its operation, than that which influenced Lady Pelham; but the Proteus put on so many various forms, that he ever avoided detection from the subject of his sway. In the mean time, the desire of performing a generous action—of securing the gratitude of a feeling heart—of patronizing a poor relation, were the only motives which her ladyship acknowledged to herself when she offered protection to Laura. An idea had, indeed, darted across her right honorable mind, that she might now secure a humble companion at a rate lower than the usual price of such conveniences; a momentary notion, too, she formed of exciting the jealousy of her daughter, by replacing her with so formidable a competitor for favor; but these, she thought, were mere collateral advantages, and by no means the circumstances which fixed her determination. The resolution upon which she acted was taken, as her resolutions generally were, without caution; and she expressed it, as her custom was, the moment it was formed. Laura was scarcely gone, however, when her aunt began to repent of her precipitancy; and to wish, as she had often occasion to do, that she had taken a little more time for consideration. But she comforted herself, that she could at any time get rid of her charge by recommending Laura to one of the situations which she had mentioned as her choice. She knew it would not be difficult to find one more lucrative than that upon which her niece was entering; for how could she possibly offer wages to so near a relation, or insult with the gift of a

trifling sum a person of Laura's dignity of deportment! These reasons Lady Pelham alleged to herself, as sufficient grounds for a resolution never to affront her niece by a tender of pecuniary favors.

While these thoughts were revolving in Lady Pelham's mind, Laura had reached her home; and, on her knees, was thanking Providence for having raised up for her a protector and a friend, and praying that she might be enabled to repay, in affectionate and respectful duty, a part of the debt of gratitude which she owed to her benefactress. The rest of the evening she spent in preparing for her removal—in ruminating on her interview with her aunt, and in endeavoring to compose, from the scanty materials which she possessed, a character of this new arbiter of her destiny. From Lady Pelham's prompt decision in favor of a stranger, from her unreserved expression of her feelings, from her lively manner and animated countenance, Laura concluded that she was probably of a temper warm, susceptible, and easily wounded by unkindness or neglect, but frank, candid, and forgiving. Laura wished that she had better studied her aunt's physiognomy. What she recollected of it was quite unintelligible to her. She labored in vain to reconcile the feminine curvatures of the nose and forehead with the inflexible closing of the mouth, and the hard outline of the chin, where lurked no soft relenting line.

But, however the countenance might puzzle conjecture, of the mind she harbored not a doubt; Lady Pelham's, she was persuaded, was one of those open, generous souls, which the young and unwary are always prepared to expect and to love—souls having no disguise, and needing none. Now this was precisely the character which Lady Pelham often and sincerely drew of herself; and who ought to have been so intimately acquainted with her ladyship's dispositions!

## CHAPTER XX.

It was not without hesitation that Laura formed her resolution to conceal from Hargrave her place of abode. She felt for the uneasiness which this concealment would cause him. She feared that her desertion might remove one incitement to a virtuous course. But she considered, that while their future connection was doubtful, it was imprudent to strengthen by habitual intercourse their need of each other's society; and she reflected that she could best estimate his character from actions performed beyond the sphere of her influence. Her watchful self-distrust made her fear to expose her resolution to his importunities; and she felt the impropriety of introducing into her aunt's family a person who stood on terms with her which she did not choose to explain. These reasons induced her to withhold from Hargrave the knowledge of her new situation; and certain that, if it were known to Mrs. Stubbs or her servants, he would soon be master of the secret, she left no clew by which to trace her retreat. Perhaps, though she did not confess it to herself, she was assisted in this act of self-command by a latent hope that, as she was now to

be introduced to a society on his own level, Hargrave might not find the mystery quite inscrutable.

She was kindly welcomed by Lady Pelham, and took possession of a small but commodious apartment, where she arranged her drawing materials, together with the few books she possessed, intending to make that her retreat as often as her aunt found amusement or occupation independent of her. She resolved to devote her chief attention to making herself useful and entertaining to her patroness. In the first, she derived hopes of success from Lady Pelham's declared incapacity for all employments that are strictly feminine. The second, she thought, would be at once easy and pleasant; for Lady Pelham was acute, lively, and communicative. This latter quality she possessed in an unusual degree, and yet Laura found it difficult to unravel her character. In general, she saw that her aunt's understanding was bright; she was persuaded that in general her heart was warm and generous; but the descent to particulars baffled Laura's penetration. Lady Pelham could amuse—could delight; she said many wise and many brilliant things; but her wisdom was not always well-timed, and her brilliant things were soap-bubbles in the sun, sparkling and highly colored, but vanishing at the touch of him who would examine their structure. Lady Pelham could dispute with singular acuteness. By the use of ambiguous terms, by ingenious sophistry, by dexterously shifting from the ground of controversy, she could baffle, and perplex, and confound her opponents; but she could not argue; she never convinced. Her opinions seemed fluctuating, and Laura was sometimes ready to imagine that she defended them, not because they were just, nor even because they were her own, but merely because she called them so; for with a new antagonist she could change sides, and maintain the opposite ground with equal address.

In spite of all the warmth of heart for which she gave her aunt credit, Laura soon began to imagine that Lady Pelham had no friends. Among all the acquaintances whom she attracted and amused, no one seemed to exchange regard with her. The gaiety of pleasure never softened in her presence into the tenderness of affection. Laura could not discover that there existed one being from whose failings Lady Pelham respectfully averted her own sight, while reverently veiling them from the eyes of others. A few, a very few, seemed to be the objects of Lady Pelham's esteem; those of her love Laura could not discover. Toward her, however, her aunt expressed a strong affection; and Laura continued to persuade herself, that if Lady Pelham had no friends, it was because she was surrounded by those who were not worthy of her friendship.

As she appeared to invite and to desire unrestrained confidence, Laura had soon made her acquainted with the narrative of her short life, excepting in so far as it related to Hargrave. At the detail of the unworthy advantage which Warren had taken of Montreville's inability to enforce his claim for the annuity, Lady Pelham broke out into sincere and vehement expressions of indignation and contempt; for no one

more cordially abhorred oppression or despised meanness in others. She immediately gave directions to her solicitor to attempt bringing the affair to a conclusion, and even to threaten Warren with a prosecution in case of his refusal. Virtuous resistance of injustice was motive sufficient for this action. Pity that Lady Pelham should have sought another in the economy and ease with which it promised to provide for an indigent relative! Mr. Warren was no sooner informed that the poor, obscure, unfriended Laura was the niece of Lady Pelham, and the inmate of her house, than he contrived to arrive at a marvelous certainty that the price of the annuity had been paid, and that the mistake in the papers relating to it originated in mere accident. In less than a fortnight the informality was rectified, and the arrears of the annuity paid into Laura's hands, the lawyer having first, at Lady Pelham's desire, deducted the price of his services.

With tears in her eyes, Laura surveyed her wealth, now of diminished value in her estimation. "Only a few weeks ago," said she, "how precious had this been to me! But now! Yes, it is precious still," said she, as she wiped the tears away, "for it can minister occasions of obedience and of usefulness." That very day she dispatched little presents for each of Mrs. Douglas's children, in which use was more considered than show; and in the letter which announced her gifts, she inclosed half of the remaining sum to be distributed among her own poor at Glenalbert. That her appearance might not discredit her hostess, she next proceeded to renew her wardrobe; and though she carefully avoided unnecessary expense, she consulted not only decency, but elegance in her attire. In this, and all other matters of mere indifference, Laura was chiefly guided by her aunt; for she had early observed that this lady upon all occasions, small as well as great, loved to exercise the office of dictatrix. No person could have been better fitted than Laura to conciliate such a temper; for on all the lesser occasions of submission she was as gentle and complying as she was inflexible upon points of real importance. In their conversations, too, though Laura defended her own opinions with great firmness, she so carefully avoided direct contradiction or sarcastic retort, impatience in defeat, or triumph in victory, that even Lady Pelham could scarcely find subject of irritation in so mild an antagonist.

In some respects their tempers seemed to tally admirably. Lady Pelham had great aptitude in detecting errors, Laura a genius for remedying them. Difficulty always roused her ladyship's impatience, but she found an infallible resource in the perseverance of Laura. In short, Laura contrived so many opportunities, or seized with such happy art those which presented themselves, of ministering to the comfort or convenience of her aunt, that she became both respectable and necessary to her; and this was, generally speaking, the utmost extent of Lady Pelham's attachments.

Lady Pelham sometimes spoke of her daughter, and Laura never missed the opportunity of urging a reconciliation. She insisted that the rights of natural affection were inalienable; as they did not rest upon the merits, so neither

could they be destroyed by the unworthiness, either of parents or of children. The mother answered, with great impatience, that Laura's argument was entirely founded on prejudice; that it was true that for the helplessness of infancy a peculiar feeling was provided; but that in all animals this peculiar feeling ceased as soon as it was no longer essential to the existence of the individual. "From thenceforth," added she, "the regard must be founded on the qualities of the head and heart; and if my child is destitute of these, I can see no reason why I should prefer her to the child of any other woman." "Ah!" said Laura, tears of grateful recollection rushing down her cheek, "some parents have loved their child with a fervor which no worth of hers could merit."

The gush of natural sensibility for this time averted the rising storm; but the next time, Lady Pelham, growing more vehement as she became herself more convinced that she was in the wrong, burst into a paroxysm of rage; and execrating all rebellious children and their defenders, commanded Laura in future to confine her attention to what might concern herself. The humbling spectacle of a female face distorted with passion was not quite new to Laura. Undismayed, she viewed it with calm commiseration; and mildly expressing her sorrow for having given offense, took up her work, and left the ferment to subside at leisure. Her ladyship's passion soon cooled; and making advances with a sort of surly condescension, she entered on a new topic. Laura answered exactly as if nothing disagreeable had happened; and Lady Pelham could not divine whether her niece commanded her countenance or her temper. Upon one principle of judging, the lady had grounds for her doubt; she herself had sometimes commanded her countenance—her temper never.

Laura not only habitually avoided giving or taking offense, but made it a rule to extinguish its last traces by some act of cordiality and good-will. This evening, therefore, she proposed, with a grace which seemed rather to petition a favor than to offer a service, to attempt a portrait of her aunt. The offer was accepted with pleasure, and the portrait was begun on the following day. It proved a likeness, and a favorable one. Lady Pelham was kinder than ever. Laura avoided the prohibited subject, and all was quiet and serene. Lady Pelham at last herself reverted to it; for, indeed, she could not long forbear to speak upon any topic which roused her passions. No dread of personal inconvenience could deter Laura from an act of justice or mercy, and she again steadily pronounced her opinion. But aware that one who would persuade must be careful not to irritate, she expressed her sentiments with still more cautious gentleness than formerly; and perceiving that her aunt was far more governed by passion than by reason, she quitted argument for entreaty. By these means she avoided provoking hostility, though she failed to win compliance. Lady Pelham seemed to be utterly impenetrable to entreaty, or rather to take pride in resisting it, and Laura had only to hope that time would favor her suit.

Lady Pelham mentioned an intention of removing early to the country, and Laura re-

joined in the prospect of once more beholding the open face of heaven—of listening to nature's own music—of breathing the light air of spring. She longed to turn her ear from the discords of the city to the sweet sounds of peace—her eye from countenances wan with care, flushed with intemperance, or ghastly with famine, to cheeks brown with wholesome exercise, or ruddy with health and contentment; to exchange the sight of dusky brick walls, and walks overlooked by thousands, for the sunny slope or the sheltered solitary lane. Lady Pelham took pleasure in describing the beauties of Walbourne, and Laura listened to her with interest, anticipating eagerly the time when she should inhabit so lovely, so peaceful a scene. But that interest and eagerness rose to the highest, when she accidentally discovered that the De Courcy family were Lady Pelham's nearest neighbors in the country.

The want of something to love and cherish, which was with her ladyship a mere form of speech, was with Laura a real necessity of nature; and though it was one which almost every situation could supply, since every creature that approached her was the object of her benevolence, yet much of the happiness of so domestic a being depended on the exercise of the dearer charities, and no one was more capable of a distinguished preference than Laura. She had a hearty regard for the De Courcy family. She revered Mrs. De Courcy; she liked Harriet; and bestowed on Montague her cordial esteem and gratitude. This gratitude had now acquired a sacred tenderness; for it was associated in her mind with the remembrance of a parent. De Courcy's self-denial had cheered her father's sick-bed, his benevolence gladdened her father's heart, and his self-denial appeared more venerable, his benevolence more endearing.

Having written to inform Harriet of the change in her situation, she discovered from her answer a new proof of De Courcy's friendship, in the fruitless journey which he had made to relieve her, and she regretted that her caution had deprived her of an opportunity of seeing and thanking him for all his kindness. "Yet, if we had met," said she, "I should probably have acted as I have done a hundred times before; left him to believe me an insensible, ungrateful creature, for want of courage to tell him that I was not so." She longed, however, to see De Courcy; for with him she thought she could talk of her father—to him lament her irreparable loss, dwell with him on the circumstances which aggravated her sorrow—on the prospects which mingled that sorrow with hope. This was a subject on which she never entered with Lady Pelham any further than necessity required; real sorrow has its holy ground, on which no vulgar foot must tread. The self-command of Laura would have forbidden her, in any situation, to darken with a settled gloom the sunshine of domestic cheerfulness; but Lady Pelham had in her somewhat which repels the confidence of grief. Against all the arrows of misfortune, blunted at least as they rebound from the breasts of others, she seemed "to wear a charmed life." She often, indeed, talked of sensibility, and reproached the want of it as the worst of faults;

but the only kind of it in which she indulged rather inclined to the acrimonious than the benevolent; and Laura began to perceive, that however her aunt might distinguish them in others, irascible passions and keen feelings were in herself synonymous.

After the effort of giving and receiving the entertainment which Lady Pelham constantly offered, and as constantly exacted in return, Laura experienced a sensation of recovered freedom when the arrival of a visitor permitted her to escape to her own apartment. She saw nobody but her aunt, and never went abroad except to church. Thus, during a fortnight which she had passed in Grosvenor-street, she had heard nothing of Hargrave. She was anxious to know whether he visited Lady Pelham; for, with rustic ignorance, she imagined that all people of condition who resided in the same town must be known to each other; but she had not the courage to ask, and searched in vain for his name among the cards which crowded the table in the lobby. Though she was conscious of some curiosity to know how he employed the hours which her absence had left vacant, she did not own to herself that he was at all concerned in a resolution which she took, to inquire in person whether any letters had been left for her with Mrs. Stubbs. She did not choose to commit the inquiry to a servant, because she could not condescend to enjoin her messenger to secrecy as to the place of her abode; and she continued resolved to give her lover no clew to discover it.

Accordingly, she early one morning set out in a hackney-coach, which she took the precaution to leave at some distance from her old lodgings, ordering it to wait her return. Fanny was delighted to see her, and charmed with the improvement of her dress and the returning healthfulness of her appearance; but the landlady eyed her askance, and surlily answered to her inquiry for her letters, that she would bring the only one she had got; muttering, as she went to fetch it, something of which the words "secret doings" were all that reached Laura's ear. "There, miss," said the ungracious Mrs. Stubbs, "there's your letter, and there's the queer scrawl it came wrapped up in." "Mr. De Courcy's hand," cried Laura, surprised; but thinking, from its size, that some time would be required to read it, she deferred breaking the seal till she should return to her carriage. "I suppose you're mistaken, miss," said Mrs. Stubbs; "Mr. De Courcy was here twice the day it came, and never said a word of it."

Laura now tremulously inquired whether she might be permitted to revisit her father's room; but being roughly answered that it was occupied, she quietly prepared to go. As Fanny followed her through the garden to open the gate for her, Laura—a conscious blush rising to her face—inquired whether any other person had inquired for her since her departure. Fanny, who was ready to burst with the news of Hargrave's visit, and who was just meditating how she might venture to introduce it, improved this occasion of entering on a full detail of his behavior. With the true waiting-maid-like fondness for romance, she enlarged upon all his extravagances, peeping sidelong now and then

under Laura's bonnet to catch encouragement from the complacent simper with which such tales are often heard. But no smile repaid her eloquence. With immovable seriousness did Laura listen to her, gravely revolving the strange nature of that love which could so readily amalgamate with rage and jealousy, and every discordant passion. She was hurt at the indecorum which exposed these weaknesses to the observation of a servant; and with a sigh reflected, that, to constitute the happiness of a woman of sense and spirit, a husband must be possessed of qualities respectable as well as amiable.

Fanny next tried whether what concerned De Courcy might not awaken more apparent interest; and here she had at least a better opportunity to judge of the effect of her narrative, for Laura stopped and turned full toward her. But Fanny had now no transports to relate, except De Courcy's indignation at Mrs. Stubbs's calumny; and it was not without hesitating, and qualifying, and apologizing, that the girl ventured to hint at the insinuation which her mistress had thrown out. She had at last succeeded in raising emotion, for indignant crimson dyed Laura's cheeks, and fire flashed from her eyes. But Laura seldom spoke while she was angry; and again she silently pursued her way. "Pray, madam," said the girl, as she was opening the gate, "do be so good as to tell me where you live now, that nobody may speak ill of you before me." "I thank you, my good girl," returned Laura, a placid smile again playing on her countenance; "but my character is in no danger. You were kind to us, Fanny, when you knew that we could not reward you; accept of this from me;" and she put five guineas into her hand. "No, indeed, ma'am," cried Fanny, drawing back her hand and coloring; "I was civil for pure good-will, and—" Laura, whose sympathy with her inferiors was not confined to their bodily wants, fully understood the feeling which revolts from bartering for gold alone the services of the heart. "I know it, my dear," answered she, in an affectionate tone; "and, believe me, I only mean to acknowledge, not to repay, your kindness." Fanny persisted in her refusal, but took the opportunity to request Laura's recommendation to some service more comfortable than her present one. "Or, if you need a servant yourself, madam," added she, "I am sure I had as lief serve you as my own mother." Laura, with all the pleasure which a good heart receives from the expression of honest affection, promised that she would take the first occasion of endeavoring to procure Fanny's admission into the family with whom she herself resided. She obliged her humble friend to leave her at the gate, where, with tears in her eyes, the girl stood gazing after her till she was out of sight. "I'm sure," said she, turning toward the house as Laura disappeared, "I'm sure she was made to be a queen, for the more one likes her, the more she frightens one."

As soon as Laura was seated in her carriage, she opened her packet, and with momentary disappointment examined its contents. "Not one line!" she cried, in a tone of mortification; and then turned to the envelop addressed to Mrs. Stubbs. Upon comparing this with the

circumstances which she had lately heard, she at once comprehended De Courcy's intention of serving her by stealth, foregoing the credit due to his generosity. She wondered, indeed, that he had neglected to disguise his hand-writing in the superscription. "Did he think," said she, "that I could have forgotten the writing which has so often brought comfort to my father?" She little guessed how distant from his mind was the repose which can attend to minute contrivance.

Delighted to discover a trait of character which tallied so well with her preconceived opinion, she no sooner saw Lady Pelham than she related it to her aunt, and began a warm eulogium on De Courcy's temper and dispositions. Lady Pelham coldly cut her short by saying, "I believe Mr. De Courcy is a very good young man, but I am not very fond of prodigies. One can't both wonder and like at a time; your men with two heads are always superstitious or disgusting." This speech was one of the dampers which a warm heart abhors; real injury could not more successfully chill affection or repress confidence. It had just malice and just truth enough to be provoking; and for the second time that day Laura had to strive with the risings of anger. She was upon the point of saying, "So, aware of the impossibility of being at once wonderful and pleasing, your ladyship, I suppose, aims at only one of these objects;" but ere the sarcasm found utterance, she checked herself, and hastened out of the room, with the sensation of having escaped from danger. She retired to write to De Courcy a letter of grateful acknowledgment; in which, after receiving Lady Pelham's approbation, she inclosed his gift, explaining the circumstances which now rendered it unnecessary.

Lady Pelham was not more favorable to the rest of the De Courcy family than she had been to Montague. She owned, indeed, that Mrs. De Courcy was the best woman in the world, but a virtue, she said, so cased in armor necessarily precluded all grace or attraction. Harriet she characterized as a little sarcastic coquette. Laura, weary of being exposed to the double peril of weakly defending or angrily supporting her attacked friends, ceased to mention the De Courcys at all; though, with a pardonable spirit of contradiction, she loved them the better for the unprovoked hostility of Lady Pelham. The less she talked of them, the more she longed for the time when she might, unrestrained, exchange with them testimonies of regard. The trees in the park, as they burst into leaf, stimulated Laura's desire for the country; and while she felt the genial air of spring, or listened to the song of some luckless bird caged in a neighboring window, or saw the yellow glories of the crocus peeping from its unnatural sanctuary, she counted the days till her eyes should be gladdened with the joyous face of nature. Only a fortnight had now to pass before her wish was to be gratified, for Lady Pelham intended at the end of that time to remove to Walbourne.

Laura was just giving the finishing touches to her aunt's portrait, when a visitor was announced; and, very unwilling to break off at this interesting crisis, Lady Pelham, having first scolded the servant for letting in her friend,



desired him to show the lady into the room where Laura was at work. The usual speeches being made, the lady began, "Who does your ladyship think bowed to me *en passant*, just as I was getting out of the carriage? Why, Lady Bellamer! Can you conceive such effrontery?"

"Indeed, I think, in common modesty, she should have waited for your notice!"

"Do you know, I am told on good authority that Hargrave is determined not to marry her?"

Laura's breath came short.

"He is very right," returned Lady Pelham. "A man must be a great fool to marry where he has had such damning proofs of frailty."

Laura's heart seemed to pause for a moment, and then to redouble its beating. "What Hargrave can this be!" thought she; but she durst not inquire.

"I hear," resumed the lady, "that his uncle is enraged at him, and more for the duel than the *crim. con.*"

The pencils dropped from Laura's hand. Fain would she have inquired, what she yet so much dreaded to know; but her tongue refused its office.

"I see no cause for that," returned Lady Pelham; "Hargrave could not possibly refuse to fight after such an affair."

"Oh, certainly not," replied the lady, "but Lord Lincourt thinks that in such a case Hargrave ought to have insisted upon giving Lord Bellamer the first fire, and then have fired his own pistol in the air. But, bless me, what ails Miss Montreville!" cried the visitor, looking at Laura, who, dreadfully convinced, was stealing out of the room. "Nothing," answered Laura; and fainted.

Lady Pelham called loudly for help; and, while the servants were administering it, stood by conjecturing what could be the cause of Laura's illness; wondering whether it could have any possible connection with Colonel Hargrave, or whether it were the effect of mere constitutional habit.

The moment Laura showed signs of recollection, Lady Pelham began her interrogation. "What has been the matter, my dear! What made you ill! Did any thing affect you? Are you subject to faintings!" Laura remained silent, and, closing her eyes, seemed deaf to all her aunt's questions. After a pause, Lady Pelham renewed the attack: "Have you any concern with Colonel Hargrave, Laura?" "None," answered Laura, with a smile of ineffable bitterness; and again closing her eyes, maintained an obstinate silence. Weary of ineffectual inquiries, Lady Pelham quitted her, giving orders that she should be assisted into bed, and recommending to her to take some rest.

Vain advice! Laura could not rest! From the stupor which had overpowered her faculties, she awoke to the full conviction that all her earthly prospects were forever darkened. Just entering on life, she seemed already forsaken of all its hopes and all its joys. The affections which had delighted her youth were torn from the bleeding soul; no sacred connection remained to bless her maturity; no endearment awaited her decline. In all her long and dreary journey to the grave, she saw no kindly rest-

ing-place. Still Laura's hopes and wishes had never been bounded to this narrow sphere; and when she found here no rest for the sole of her foot, she had, in the promises of religion, an ark whither she could turn for shelter. But how should she forget that these promises extended not to Hargrave! How shut her ear to the dread voice which, in threatening the adulterer and the murderer, denounced vengeance against Hargrave! With horror unspeakable she considered his incorrigible depravity; with agony revolved its fearful consequences.

Yet, while the guilt was hateful in her eyes, her heart was full of love and compassion for the offender. The feeling with which she remembered his unfaithfulness to her had no resemblance to jealousy. "He has been misled," she cried; "vilely betrayed by a wretch, who has taken advantage of his weakness. Oh! how could she look on that form, that countenance, and see in them only the objects of a passion vile as the heart that cherished it!" Then she would repent of her want of candor: "I am unjust, I am cruel," said she, "thus to load with all the burden of his foul offense her who had, perhaps, the least share in it. No! He must have been the tempter; it is not in woman to be so lost."

But in the midst of sorrow, whose violence seemed at times almost to confuse her reason, she never hesitated for a moment on the final dissolution of her connection with Hargrave. She formed no resolution on a subject where no alternative seemed to remain, but assumed, as the foundation of all her plans of joyless duty, her eternal separation from Hargrave; a separation final as death.

By degrees she became more able to collect her thoughts; and the close of a sleepless night found her exercising the valuable habit of seeking in herself the cause of her misfortunes. The issue of her self-examination was the conviction that she had bestowed on a frail, fallible creature, a love disproportioned to the merits of any created thing; that she had obstinately clung to her idol after she had seen its baseness; and that now the broken reed whereon she had leaned was taken away, that she might restore her trust and her love where alone they were due.

That time infallibly brings comfort even to the sorest sorrows; that if we make not shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, we save from the storms of life the materials of peace at least; that lesser joys become valuable when we are deprived of those of keener relish, are lessons which even experience teaches but slowly, and Laura had them yet, in a great measure, to learn. She was persuaded that she should go mourning to the grave. What yet remained of her path of life seemed to lie through a desert waste, never more to be warmed with the sunshine of affection; never more to be brightened with any ray of hope, save that which beamed from beyond the tomb. She imagined that lonely and desolate she should pass through life, and joyfully hail the messenger that called her away; like some wretch, who, cast alone on a desert rock, watches for the sail which is to waft him to his native land.

But the despair of strong minds is not listless or inactive. The more Laura was convinced

that life was lost as to all its pleasing purposes, the more was she determined that it should be subservient to useful ends. Earthly felicity, she was convinced, had fled forever from her grasp; and the only resolution she could form, was never more to pursue it; but, in the persevering discharge of the duties which yet remained to her, to seek a preparation for joys which earth has not to bestow.

That she might not devote to fruitless lamentation the time which was claimed by duty, she, as soon as it was day, attempted to rise, intending to spend the morning in acts of resignation for herself, and prayers that pardon and repentance might be granted to him whose guilt had destroyed her peace; but her head was so giddy that, unable to stand, she was obliged to return to her bed. It was long ere she was again able to quit it. A slow fever seized her, and brought her to the brink of the grave. Her senses, however, remained uninjured, and she had full power and leisure to make those reflections which force themselves upon all who are sensible of approaching dissolution.

Happy were it if all who smart under disappointment would anticipate the hour which will assuredly arrive, when the burden which they impatiently bear shall appear to be lighter than vanity! The hand which is soon to be cold resigns without a struggle the baubles of the world. Its cheats delude not the eye that is forever closing. A death-bed is that holy ground where the charms of the enchanter are dissolved; where the forms which he had clothed with unreal beauty, or aggravated to gigantic horror, are seen in their true form and coloring.

In its true form and coloring did Laura behold her disappointment, when, with characteristic firmness, she had wrung from her attendants a confession of her danger. With amazement she looked back on the infatuation which could waste on any concern less than eternal the hopes, the fears, and the wishes once squandered by her on a passion which now seemed trivial as the vapor scattered by the wind.

At last, aided by the rigid temperance of her former life, and her exemplary patience in suffering, the strength of her constitution began to triumph over her disorder. As she measured back her steps to earth again, the concerns which had seemed to her reverting, eye diminished into nothing, again swelled into importance; but Laura could not soon forget the time when she had seen them as they were; and this remembrance powerfully aided her mind in its struggle to cast off its now disgraceful shackles. Yet bitter was the struggle; for what is so painful as to tear at once from the breast what has twined itself with every fiber, linked itself with every hope, stimulated every desire, and long furnished objects of intense, of unceasing interest? The heart which death leaves desolate slowly and gently resigns the affection to which it has fondly clung. It is permitted to seek indulgence in virtuous sorrow, to rejoice in religious hope; and even memory brings pleasures dear to the widowed mind. But she who mourned the depravity of her lover felt that she was degraded by her sorrow; hope was, as far as he was concerned,

utterly extinguished; and memory presented only a mortifying train of weaknesses and self-deceptions.

But love is not that irremediable calamity which romance has delighted to paint, and the vulgar to believe it. Time, vanity, absence, or any of a hundred other easy remedies, serves to cure the disease in the mild form in which it affects feeble minds, while more Herculean spirits tear off the poisoned garment, though it be with mortal anguish. In a few weeks, the passion which had so long disturbed the peace of Laura was hushed to lasting repose; but it was the repose of the land where the whirlwind has passed—dreary and desolate. Her spirits had received a shock from which it was long, very long, ere she could rouse them. And he who had ceased to be an object of passion still excited an interest which no other human being could awaken. Many a wish did she breathe for his happiness; many a fervent prayer for his reformation. In spite of herself, she lamented the extinguished love, as well as the lost lover; and never remembered, without a heavy sigh, that the season of enthusiastic attachment was, with her, passed never to return.

But she cordially wished that she might never again behold the cause of so much anguish and humiliation. She longed to be distant from all chance of such a meeting, and was anxious to recover strength sufficient for her journey to Walbourne. Lady Pelham only waited for her niece's recovery; and, as soon as she could bear the motion of a carriage, they left London.

#### CHAPTER XXI.

They traveled slowly, and Laura's health seemed improved by the journey. The reviving breeze of early spring, the grass field exchanging its winter olive for a brighter green, the plowman's cheerful labor, the sower whistling to his measured step, the larch-trees putting forth the first and freshest verdure of the woods, the birds springing busily from the thorn, were objects whose cheering influence would have been lost on many a querulous child of disappointment. But they were industriously improved to their proper use by Laura, who acknowledged in them the kindness of a father, mingling with some cordial drop even the bitterest cup of sorrow.

The grief which had fastened on her heart she never obtruded upon her companion. She behaved always with composure, sometimes with cheerfulness. She never obliquely reflected upon Providence, by insinuating the hardness of her fate, nor indulged in splenetic dissertations on the inconsistency and treachery of man. Indeed, she never, by the most distant hint, approached the ground of her own peculiar sorrow. She could not, without the deepest humiliation, reflect that she had bestowed her love on an object so unworthy. She burned with shame at the thought of having been so blinded, so infatuated, by qualities merely external. While she remembered, with extreme vexation, that she had suffered Hargrave to triumph in the confession of her regard, she rejoiced that no other witness existed of her folly—that she had never breathed the mortifying secret into any other ear.

In this frame of mind, she repelled with calm dignity every attempt which Lady Pelham made to penetrate her sentiments; and behaved in such a manner that her aunt could not discover whether her spirits were affected by languor of body or by distress of mind. Laura, indeed, had singular skill in the useful art of repulsing without offense; and Lady Pelham, spite of her curiosity, found it impossible to question her niece with freedom. Notwithstanding her youth, and her almost dependent situation, Laura inspired Lady Pelham with involuntary awe. Her dignified manners, her vigorous understanding, the inflexible integrity which descended even to the regulation of her forms of speech, extorted some degree of respectful caution from one not usually over careful of giving offense. Lady Pelham was herself at times conscious of this restraint; and her pride was wounded by it. In Laura's absence she sometimes thought of it with impatience, and resolved to cast it off at their next interview; but whenever they met, the nofeuding majesty of Laura effaced her resolution, or awed her from putting it in practice. She could not always, however, refrain from using that sort of innuendo which is vulgarly called *talking at one's companions*; a sort of rhetoric in great request with those who have more spleen than courage, and which differs from common scolding only in being a little more cowardly and a little more provoking. All her ladyship's dexterity and perseverance in this warfare were entirely thrown away. Whatever might be meant, Laura answered to nothing but what met the ear, and, with perverse simplicity, avoided the particular application of general propositions.

Lady Pelham next tried to coax herself into Laura's confidence. She redoubled her caresses and professions of affection. She hinted, not obscurely, that if Laura would explain her wishes, they would meet with indulgence, and even assistance, from zealous friendship. Her professions were received with gratitude, her caresses returned with sensibility; but Laura remained impenetrable. Lady Pelham's temper could never brook resistance, and she would turn from Laura in a pet; the pitiful garb of anger which can not disguise, and dares not show itself. Laura never appeared to bestow the slightest notice on her caprice, and received her returning smiles with unmoved complacency. She would fain have loved her aunt; but in spite of herself, her affection took feeble root amid these alternations of frost and sunshine. She was weary of hints and insinuations, and felt not a little pleased that Lady Pelham's fondness for gardening seemed likely to release her, during most of the hours of daylight, from this sort of sharp-shooting warfare.

It was several days after their arrival at Walbourne before they were visited by any of the De Courcy family. Undeceived in his hopes of Laura's regard, Montague was almost reluctant to see her again. Yet, from the hour when he observed Lady Pelham's carriage drive up the avenue, he had constantly chosen to study at a window which looked toward Walbourne. Laura, too, often looked toward Norwood, excusing to herself the apparent neglect of her friends, by supposing that they had not been informed of her arrival. Lady Pelham was abroad su-

perintending her gardeners, and Laura employed in her own apartment, when she was called to receive De Courcy. For the first time since the wreck of all her hopes, joy flushed the wan cheek of Laura and fired her eye with transient luster. "I shall hear the voice of friendship once more," said she, and she hastened down stairs with more speed than suited her but half-recovered strength. "Dear Mr. De Courcy!" cried she, joyfully advancing toward him. De Courcy scarcely ventured to raise his eyes. Laura held out her hand to him. "She loves a libertine!" thought he; and scarcely touching it, he drew back. With grief and surprise, Laura read the cold and melancholy expression of his face. Her feeble spirits failed under so chilling a reception; and while, in a low, tremulous voice, she inquired for Mrs. and Miss De Courcy, unbidden tears wandered down her cheeks.

In replying, Montague again turned his eyes toward her; and, shocked at the paleness and dejection of her altered countenance, remembered only Laura, ill, and in sorrow. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, with a voice and manner of the tenderest interest, "Laura—Miss Montreville—you are ill, you are unhappy." Laura, vexed that her weakness should thus extort compassion, hastily dried her tears. "I have been ill," said she, "and am still so weak that any trifle can discompose me." Montague's color rose. "It is, then, a mere trifle in her eyes," thought he, "that I should meet her with coldness." "And yet," continued Laura, reading mortification in his face, "it is no trifle to fear that I have given offense where I owe so much gratitude." "Talk not of gratitude, I beseech you," said De Courcy; "I have no claim—no wish to excite it." "Ah, Mr. De Courcy!" cried Laura, bursting into tears of sad remembrance, "has all your considerate friendship, all your soothing kindness to him who is gone, no claim to the gratitude of his child?" Montague felt that he stood at this moment upon dangerous ground, and he gladly availed himself of this opportunity to quit it. He led Laura to talk of her father, and of the circumstances of his death; and was not ashamed to mingle sympathetic tears with those which the narrative wrung from her.

In her detail, she barely hinted at the labor by which she had supported her father, and avoided all allusion to the wants which she had endured. If any thing could have exalted her in the opinion of De Courcy, it would have been the humility which sought no praise to recompense exertion—no admiration to reward self-denial. "The praise of man is with her as nothing," thought he, gazing on her wasted form and faded features with fonder adoration than ever he had looked on her full blaze of beauty. "She has higher hopes and nobler aims. And can such a creature love a sensualist? Now, too, when his infamy can not be unknown to her! Yet it must be so; she has never named him, even while describing scenes where he was daily present; and why this silence, if he were indifferent to her! If I durst mention him! but I can not give her pain."

From this reverie De Courcy was roused by the entrance of Lady Pelham, whose presence brought to his recollection the compliments and

ceremonial which Laura had driven from his mind. He apologized for having delayed his visit, and excused himself for having made it alone, by saying that his sister was absent on a visit to a friend, and that his mother could not yet venture abroad; but he warmly entreated that the ladies would waive etiquette, and see Mrs. De Courcy at Norwood. Lady Pelham, excusing herself for the present on the plea of her niece's indisposition, urged De Courcy to direct his walks often toward Walbourne, in charity, she said, to Laura, who, being unable to take exercise, spent her forenoons alone, sighing, she supposed, for some Scotch Strephon. Laura blushed; and Montague took his leave, pondering whether the blush was deepened by any feeling of consciousness.

"She has a witchcraft in her that no language can express—no heart withstand," said De Courcy, suddenly breaking a long silence, as he and his mother were sitting tête-à-tête after dinner.

"Marriage is an excellent talisman against witchcraft," said Mrs. De Courcy, gravely; "but Miss Montreville has charms which will delight the more the better they are known. There is such noble simplicity, such considerate benevolence, such total absence of vanity and selfishness in her character, that no woman was ever better fitted to embellish and endear domestic life."

"Perhaps in time," pursued De Courcy, "I might have become not unworthy of such a companion. But now it matters not;" and, suppressing a very bitter sigh, he took up a book which he had of late been reading to his mother.

"You know, Montague," said Mrs. De Courcy, "I think differently from you upon this subject. I am widely mistaken in Miss Montreville if she could bestow her preference on a libertine, knowing him to be such."

Montague took involuntary pleasure in hearing this opinion repeated; yet he had less faith in it than he usually had in the opinions of his mother. "After the emotion which his presence excited," returned he—"an emotion which even these low people—I can not think of it with patience," cried he, tossing away the book, and walking hastily up and down the room. "To betray her weakness, her *only* weakness, to such observers—to the wretch himself."

"My dear Montague, do you make no allowance for the exaggeration, the rage for the romantic, so common to uneducated minds?"

"Wilkins could have no motive for inventing such a tale," replied De Courcy; "and if it had any foundation, there is no room for doubt."

"Admitting the truth of all you have heard," resumed Mrs. De Courcy, "I see no reason for despairing of success. If I know any thing of character, Miss Montreville's attachments will ever follow excellence, real or imaginary. Your worth is real, Montague; and, as such, it will in time approve itself to her."

"Ah, madam! had her affection been founded even on imaginary excellence, must it not now have been completely withdrawn—now, when she can not be unacquainted with his depravity. Yet she loves him still. I am sure she loves him. Why else this guarded silence in regard to him? Why not mention that she permitted his daily visits—saw him even on the night when her father died!"

"Supposing," returned Mrs. De Courcy, "that her affection had been founded upon imaginary excellence, might not traces of the ruins remain perceptible, even after the foundation had been taken away? Come, come, Montague, you are only four-and-twenty, you can afford a few years' patience. If you act prudently, I am convinced that your perseverance will succeed; but if it should not, I know how you can bear disappointment. I am certain that your happiness depends not on the smile of any face, however fair."

"I am ashamed," said De Courcy, "to confess how much my peace depends upon Laura. You know I have no ambition—all my joys must be domestic. It is as a husband and a father that all my wishes must be fulfilled—and all that I have ever fancied of venerable and endearing so meet in her, that no other woman can ever fill her place."

"That you have no ambition," replied Mrs. De Courcy, "is one of the reasons why I join in your wishes. If your happiness had any connection with splendor, I should have regretted your choice of a woman without fortune. But all that is necessary for your comfort you will find in the warmth of heart with which Laura will return your affection—the soundness of principle with which she will assist you in duties. Still, perhaps, you might find these qualities in others, though not united in an equal degree; but I confess to you, Montague, I despair of your again meeting with a woman whose dispositions and pursuits are so congenial to your own; a woman, whose cultivated mind and vigorous understanding may make her the companion of your studies, as well as of your lighter hours."

"My dear mother," cried De Courcy, affectionately grasping her hand, "it is no wonder that I persecute you with this subject so near my heart; for you always, and you alone, support my hopes. Yet should I even, at last, obtain this treasure, I must ever regret that I can not awaken the enthusiasm which belongs only to a first attachment."

"Montague," said Mrs. De Courcy, smiling, "from what romance have you learned that sentiment! However, I shall not attempt the labor of combating it, for I prophesy that, before the change can be necessary, you will learn to be satisfied with being loved with reason."

"Many a weary day must pass before I can even hope for this cold preference. Indeed, if her choice is to be decided by mere rational approbation, why should I hope that it fall upon me! Yet, if it be possible, her friendship I will gain, and I would not exchange it for the love of all her sex."

"She already esteems you—highly esteems you," said Mrs. De Courcy; "and I repeat that I think you need not despair of animating esteem into a warmer sentiment. But will you profit by my knowledge of my sex, Montague! You know, the less we make of our own wisdom, the fonder we grow of bestowing it on others in the form of advice! Keep your secret carefully. Much of your hope depends on your caution. Pretensions to a pre-engaged heart are very generally repaid with dislike."

Montague promised attention to his mother's advice; but added, that he feared he should

not long be able to follow it. "I am a bad dissembler," said he, "and on this subject it is alleged that ladies are eagle-eyed."

"Miss Montreville, of all women living, has the least vanity," returned Mrs. De Courcy; "and you may always re-enforce your caution by recollecting that the prepossessions which will certainly be against you as a lover, may be secured in your favor as a friend."

The next day found De Courcy again at Walbourne; and again he enjoyed a long and private interview with Laura. Though their conversation turned only on indifferent subjects, De Courcy observed the settled melancholy which had taken possession of her mind. It was no querulous, complaining sorrow, but a calm sadness, banishing all the cheerful illusions of a life which was still valued as the preparation for a better. To that better world all her hopes and wishes seemed already fled; and the saint herself seemed waiting, with resigned desire, for permission to depart. De Courcy's fears assigned to her melancholy its true cause. He would have given worlds to know the real state of her sentiments, and to ascertain how far her attachment had survived the criminality of Hargrave. But he had not courage to probe the painful wound. He could not bear to inflict upon Laura even momentary anguish; perhaps he even feared to know the full extent of those regrets which she lavished on his rival. With scrupulous delicacy he avoided approaching any subject which could at all lead her thoughts toward the cause of her sorrow, and never even seemed to notice the dejection which wounded him to the soul.

"The spring of her mind is forever destroyed," said he to Mrs. De Courcy, "and yet she retains all her angelic benevolence. She strives to make pleasing to others the objects which will never more give pleasure to her." Mrs. De Courcy expressed affectionate concern, but added, "I never knew of a sorrow incurable at nineteen. We must bring Laura to Norwood, and find employments for her suited to her kindly nature. Meanwhile, do you exert yourself to rouse her; and, till she is well enough to leave home, I shall freely resign to her all my claims upon your time."

De Courcy faithfully profited by his mother's permission, and found almost every day an excuse for visiting Walbourne. Sometimes he brought a book, which he read aloud to the ladies; sometimes he borrowed one, which he chose to return in person; now he wished to show Laura a medal, and now he had some particularly fine flower-seeds for Lady Pelham. Chemical experiments were an excellent pretext, for they were seldom completed at a visit, and the examination of one created a desire for another. Laura was not insensible to his attentions. She believed what he attributed whatever was visible of her depression to regrets for her father; and she was by turns ashamed of permitting her weakness to wear the mask of filial piety, and thankful that she escaped the degradation of being pitied as a love-sick girl.

But love had now no share in Laura's melancholy. Compassion, strong indeed to a painful excess, was the only gentle feeling that mingled with the pain of remembering Hargrave. Who that, in early youth, gives way to the chill-

ing conviction that nothing on earth will ever again kindle a wish or a hope, can look without sadness on the long pilgrimage which spreads before him! Laura looked upon hers with resigned sadness, and a thousand times repeated to herself that it was but a point, compared with what lay beyond. Hopeless of happiness, she yet forced herself to seek short pleasure in the charms of nature and the comforts of affluence; calling them the flowers which a bountiful hand had scattered in the desert which it was needful that she should tread alone. It was with some surprise that she found De Courcy's visits produce pleasure without requiring an effort to be pleased; and with thankfulness she acknowledged that the enjoyments of the understanding were still open to her, though those of the heart were forever withdrawn.

In the mean time her health improved rapidly, and she was able to join in Lady Pelham's rambles in the shrubbery. To avoid particularly, De Courcy had often quitted Laura to attend on these excursions; and he rejoiced when her recovered strength allowed him to gratify, without imprudence, the inclination which brought him to Walbourne. It often, however, required all his influence to persuade her to accompany him in his walks with Lady Pelham. Her ladyship's curiosity had by no means subsided. On the contrary, it was rather exasperated by her conviction that her niece's dejection had not been the consequence of ill health, since it continued after that plea was removed; and Laura was constantly tormented with oblique attempts to discover what she was determined should never be known.

Lady Pelham's attacks were now become the more provoking, because she could address her hints to a third person, who, not aware of their tendency, might strengthen them by assent, or unconsciously point them as they were intended. She contrived to make even her very looks tormenting, by directing, upon suitable occasions, sly glances of discovery to Laura's face; where, if they found out nothing, they at least insinuated that there was something to find out. She was inimitably dexterous and indefatigable in improving every occasion of innuendo. Any subject, however irrelevant, furnished her with the weapons of her warfare. "Does this flower never open any further?" asked Laura, showing one to De Courcy. "No," said Lady Pelham, pushing in between them; "that close thing, wrapped up in itself, never expands in the general warmth; it never shows its heart." "This should be a precious book with so many envelopes," said Laura, untying a parcel. "More likely," said Lady Pelham, with a sneer, "that what is folded in so many doublings, won't be worth looking into." "This day is cold for the season," said De Courcy, one day warming himself after his ride. "Spring colds are the most chilling of any," said Lady Pelham; "they are like a repulsive character in youth; one is not prepared for them. The frosts of winter are natural."

Lady Pelham was not satisfied with using the occasions that presented themselves; she invented others. When the weather confined her at home, and she had nothing else to occupy her, she redoubled her industry. "Bless me,

what a sentiment!" she exclaimed, affecting surprise and consternation, though she had read the book which contained it above twenty times before, "Always live with a friend as if he might one day become an enemy!" I can conceive nothing more detestable. A cold-hearted, suspicious wretch! Now to a friend I could not help being all open and ingenuous; but a creature capable of such a thought could never have a friend." Lady Pelham ran on for a while, contrasting her open, ingenuous self with the odious character which her significant looks appropriated to her niece, till even the mild Laura was provoked to reply. Fixing her eyes upon her aunt with calm severity, "If Rouchefoucault meant," said she, "that a friend should be treated with suspicious confidence, as if he might one day betray, I agree with your ladyship in thinking such a sentiment incompatible with friendship; but we are indebted to him for a useful lesson, if he merely intended to remind us that it is easy to alienate affection without proceeding to real injury, and very possible to forfeit esteem without incurring serious guilt." The blood mounted to Lady Pelham's face, but the calm austerity of Laura's eye imposed silence; and she continued to turn over the pages of her book, while her niece rose and left the room. She tossed it away, and walked angrily up and down, fretting between balked curiosity and irritated pride.

Finding every other mode of attack unsuccessful, she once more resolved to have recourse to direct interrogation. This intention had, been frequently formed, and as often defeated by the dignified reserve of Laura; but now that Lady Pelham felt her pride concerned, she grew angry enough to be daring. It was so provoking to be kept in awe by a mere girl! a dependent! Lady Pelham could at any time meditate herself into a passion; she did so on the present occasion; and accordingly resolved and executed in the same breath. She followed Laura to her apartment, determined to insist upon knowing what affected her spirits. Laura received her with a smile so gracious, that, in spite of herself, her wrath began to evaporate. Conceiving it proper, however, to maintain an air of importance, she began with an aspect which announced hostility, and a voice in which anger increased intended gravity into surliness, "Miss Montreville, if you are at leisure, I wish to speak with you."

"Quite at leisure, madam," said Laura, in a tone of the most conciliating good-humor, and motioning her aunt to a seat by the fire.

"It is extremely unpleasant," said Lady Pelham, tossing her head to escape the steady look of inquiry which Laura directed toward her; "it is extremely unpleasant (at least if one has any degree of sensibility) to live with persons who always seem unhappy, and are always striving to conceal it, especially when one can see no cause for their unhappiness."

"It must, indeed, be very distressing," returned Laura, mentally preparing for her defense.

"Then I wonder," said Lady Pelham, with increased acrimony of countenance, "why you choose to subject me to so disagreeable a situation. It is very evident that there is something in your mind which you are either afraid or ashamed to tell."

"I am sorry," said Laura, with unmoved self-possession, "to be the cause of any uneasiness to your ladyship. I do not pretend that my spirits are high, but I should not have thought their depression unaccountable. The loss of my only parent, and such a parent, is reason for lasting sorrow; and my own so recent escape from the jaws of the grave might impose seriousness upon levity itself."

"I have a strong notion, however, that none of these is the true cause of your pensive humors. Modern misses don't break their hearts for the loss of their parents. I remember you fainted away just when Mrs. Harrington was talking to me of Colonel Hargrave's affair; and I know he was quartered for a whole year in your neighborhood."

Lady Pelham stopped to reconnoiter her niece's face, but without success; for Laura had let fall her scissors, and was busily seeking them on the carpet.

"Did you know him?" inquired Lady Pelham.

"I have seen him," answered Laura, painfully recollecting how little she had really known him.

"Did he visit at Glenalbert?" resumed her ladyship, recovering her temper, as she thought she had discovered a clew to Laura's sentiments.

"Yes, madam, often," replied Laura, who, having with a strong effort resumed her self-possession, again submitted her countenance to inspection.

"And he was received there as a lover, I presume?" said Lady Pelham, in a tone of interrogation.

Laura fixed on her aunt one of her cool, commanding glances. "Your ladyship," returned she, "seems so much in earnest, that if the question were a little less extraordinary, I should almost have thought you expected a serious answer."

Lady Pelham's eyes were not comfortably placed, and she removed them by turns to every piece of furniture in the apartment. Speedily recovering herself, she returned to the charge: "I think, after the friendship I have shown, I have some right to be treated with confidence."

"My dear madam," said Laura, gratefully pressing Lady Pelham's hand between her own, "believe me, I am not forgetful of the kindness which has afforded me shelter and protection; but there are some subjects of which no degree of intimacy will permit the discussion. It is evident, that whatever proposals have hitherto been made to me, have received such an answer as imposes discretion upon me. No addresses which I accept shall ever be a secret from your ladyship—those which I reject I am not equally entitled to reveal."

"By which I understand you to say, that you have rejected Colonel Hargrave!" said Lady Pelham.

"By no means," answered Laura, with spirit; "I was far from saying so. I merely intended to express my persuasion that you are too generous to urge me on a sort of subject where I ought not to be communicative."

"Very well, Miss Montreville," cried Lady Pelham, rising in a pet; "I comprehend the terms on which you choose that we should live.

I may have the honor of being your companion, but I must not aspire to the rank of a friend."

"Indeed, my dear aunt," said Laura, in a voice irresistibly soothing, "I have no earthly wish so strong as to find a real friend in you; but," added she, with an insinuating smile, "I shall never earn the treasure with tales of luckless love."

"Well, madam," said Lady Pelham, turning to quit the room, "I shall take care for the future not to press myself into your confidence; and as it is not the most delightful thing in the world to live in the midst of ambuscades, I shall intrude as little as possible on your more agreeable engagements."

"Pray don't go," said Laura, with perfect good humor, and holding upon her delicate fingers a cap which she had been making; "I have finished your cap. Pray have the goodness to let me try it on."

Female vanity is at least a *sexagenaire*. Lady Pelham sent a side glance toward the cap. "Pray do," said Laura, taking her hand, and coaxingly pulling her back. "Make haste, then," said Lady Pelham, sullenly, "for I have no time to spare." "How becoming!" cried Laura, as she fixed on the cap; "I never saw you look so well in any thing. Look at it;" and she held a looking-glass to her aunt. The ill humor which had resisted the graces of the loveliest face in the world, could not stand a favorable view of her own; and Lady Pelham quitted Laura with a gracious compliment to her genius for millinery, and a declaration that the cap should be worn the next day, in honor of a visit from Mr. de Courcy and Harriet.

The next day the expected guests dined at Walbourne. As Harriet had just returned from her excursion, this was the first time that she had seen Laura, and the meeting gave them mutual pleasure. Harriet seemed in even more than usual spirits; and Laura, roused by the presence of persons whom she loved and respected, showed a cheerfulness more unconstrained than she had felt since her father's death. Montague, who watched her assiduously, was enchanted to perceive that she could once more smile without effort; and, in the joy of his heart, resumed a gayety which had of late been foreign to him. But the life of the party was Lady Pelham; for who could be so delightful, so extravagantly entertaining, as Lady Pelham could be when she pleased! And she did please this afternoon; for a train of fortunate circumstances had put her into high good humor. She not only wore the becoming cap; but had hit, without difficulty, the most becoming mode of putting it on. The cook had done her office in a manner altogether faultless; and the gardener had brought in such a salad! its like had never been seen in the county.

Miss de Courcy was extremely anxious that Laura should pass a few days at Norwood. But Laura, remembering the coolness which had of late subsisted between herself and Lady Pelham, and unwilling to postpone her endeavors to efface every trace of it, objected that she could not quit her aunt for such a length of time. Harriet immediately proposed to invite Lady Pelham. "I'll set about it this moment, while she's in the vein," said she. "This sunshine is too bright to last." Laura looked very

grave, and Harriet hastened to execute her purpose.

There is no weakness in their neighbors which mankind so instinctively convert to their own use as vanity. Except to secure Laura's company, Harriet had not the slightest desire for Lady Pelham's. Yet she did not even name her friend, while she pressed Lady Pelham so earnestly to visit Norwood, that she succeeded to her wish, and obtained a promise that the ladies should accompany her and her brother home on the following day.

When, at the close of an agreeable evening, Laura attended her friend to her chamber, Harriet, with more sincerity than politeness, regretted that Lady Pelham was to join their party at Norwood. "I wish the old lady would have allowed you to go without her," said she; "she'll interrupt a thousand things I had to say to you. However, my mother can keep her in conversation. She'll be so delighted to see you, that she'll pay the penalty without a grudge." "I shall feel the more indebted to your mother's welcome," said Laura, with extreme gravity, "because she will extend it to a person to whom I owe obligations that can not be repaid." Harriet, blushing, apologized for her freedom; and Laura accepting the apology with smiles of courtesy and affection, the friends separated for the night.

## CHAPTER XXII.

NORWOOD had appeared to Laura to be little more than a mile distant from Walbourne. The swellings of the ground had deceived her. It was more than twice that distance. As the carriage approached Norwood, Laura perceived traces of a noble park, changed from its former purpose to one more useful, though less magnificent. The corn-fields were intersected by venerable avenues, and studded with gigantic elm and oak. Through one of these avenues, straight as a dart, and darkened by the woods which closed over it, the party drove up to a massive gate. In the door of a turreted lodge, overgrown with hornbeam, stood the gray-haired porter, waiting their arrival. He threw open the gate with one hand, and respectfully stood with his hat in the other, while De Courcy checked his horse to inquire for the old man's family.

The avenue now quitted its formality, to wind along the bank of a rapid stream, till the woods suddenly opening to the right discovered the lawn, green as an emerald, and kept with a neatness truly English. Flowering shrubs were scattered over it, and here and there a lofty forest-tree threw its quivering shadow; while tall spruce-firs, their branches descending to the ground, formed a contrast to its verdure. At the extremity of this lawn stood Norwood, a large castellated building; and, while Laura looked at it, she imagined the interior dull with baronial magnificence.

The carriage drove up to the door, and Laura could not help smiling at the cordial welcome which seemed to await De Courcy. The great Newfoundland dog that lay upon the steps leaped upon him, and expressed his joy by a hundred clumsy gambols; while John, the old ser-

vant, whom she had seen in Audley street, busied himself about his master, with an officiousness which evidently came from the heart, leaving Lady Pelham's attendants to wait upon their mistress and her companions. De Courcy, giving his hand to Lady Pelham, conducted her, followed by Harriet and Laura, into the room where Mrs. De Courcy was sitting; and the next moment his heart throbbled with pleasure, while he saw the beloved of his soul locked in his mother's arms.

When the first joy of the meeting was over, Laura had leisure to observe the interior of the mansion, which differed not less from her expectations than from anything she had before seen. Though it was equally remote from the humble simplicity of her cottage at Glenalbert, and the gaudiness of Lady Pelham's more modern abode, she saw nothing of the gloomy splendor which she had fancied; everything breathed comfort and repose. The furniture, though not without magnificence, was unadorned and substantial, grandeur holding the second place to usefulness. The marble hall through which she had entered was almost covered with matting. In the spacious room in which she was sitting, the little Turkey carpet of our forefathers had given place to one of homelier grain, but of far larger dimensions. The apartment was liberally stowed with couches, foot-stools, and elbow-chairs. A harp occupied one window, a piano-forte stood near it; many books were scattered about, in bindings which showed they were not meant for ornament; and in the chimney blazed a fire which would have done credit to the days of Elizabeth.

The dinner hour was four; and punctual to a moment the dinner appeared, plain, neat, and substantial. It was served without tumult, partaken of with appetite, and enlivened by general hilarity and good-will.

When the ladies rose from table, Harriet offered to conduct Laura through the other apartments, which exactly corresponded with those she had seen. The library was spacious; and besides an excellent collection of books, contained globes, astronomical instruments, and cabinets of minerals and coins. A similar room which opened from it, used as De Courcy's laboratory, was filled with chemical and mechanical apparatus. Comfort, neatness, and peace reigned everywhere, and Norwood seemed a fit retreat for literary leisure and easy hospitality.

Between music, work, and conversation, the evening passed cheerfully away; nor did Laura mark its flight till the great house-clock struck nine. The conversation suddenly paused; Harriet laid aside her work; Mrs. De Courcy's countenance assumed a pleasing seriousness; and Montague, quitting his place by Laura's side, seated himself in a patriarchal-looking chair, at the upper end of the room. Presently, John entered, followed by all the domestics of the family. He placed before his master a reading-desk and a large Bible, and then sat down at a distance with his fellow-servants.

With a manner serious and earnest, as one impressed with a just sense of their importance, Montague read a portion of the Holy Scriptures. He closed the volume; and all present sunk upon their knees. In plain but solemn lan-

guage, he offered a petition in the name of all, that all might be endowed with the graces of the Christian spirit. In the name of all, he confessed that they were unworthy of the blessings they implored. In the name of all, he gave thanks for the means of improvement, and for the hopes of glory. He next, more particularly, besought a blessing on the circumstances of their several conditions. Among the joyous faces of this happy household, Laura had observed one alone clouded with sorrow. It was that of a young, modest-looking girl, in deep mourning, whose audible sobs attested that she was the subject of a prayer which commended an orphan to the Father of the fatherless. The worship was closed; the servants withdrew. A silence of a few moments ensued; and Laura could not help gazing with delight, not unmingled with awe, on the traces of serene benevolence and manly piety, which lingered on the countenance of De Courcy.

"Happy Harriet," said she, when she was alone with her friend; "would that I had been your sister!" Harriet laughed. "You need not laugh, my dear," continued Laura, with most unembarrassed simplicity; "I did not mean your brother's wife, but his sister, and Mrs. de Courcy's daughter."

Though Miss de Courcy was much less in Montague's confidence than her mother, she was not ignorant of his preference for Laura; but Mrs. de Courcy had so strongly cautioned her against even hinting this preference to the object of it, that though she but half guessed the reasons, of her mother's injunctions, she was afraid to disobey. That Laura was even acquainted with Hargrave was unknown to Harriet; for De Courcy was almost as tenacious of Laura's secret as she herself was, and would as soon have thought of giving up his own heart to the frolics of a kitten, as of exposing that of Laura to the *badinage* of his sister. This kind precaution left Laura perfectly at her ease with Harriet, an ease which would quickly have vanished had she known her to be acquainted with her humiliating story.

The young ladies had rambled over half the ground of Norwood before the family had assembled at a cheerful breakfast; and as soon as it was ended, Harriet proposed that Laura should assist her with her advice in composing a water-color drawing from one of her own pictures. "We'll leave Lady Pelham and my mother in the drawing-room," said she, "for the pictures all hang in the library. I wanted them put up in the sitting-room, but Montague would have them where they are—and so he carried his point, for mamma humors him in everything." "Perhaps," returned Laura, "Mrs. de Courcy thinks he has some right to dictate in his own house." "Well, that's true," cried Harriet. "I protest I had forgotten that this house was not my mother's."

The picture which Miss de Courcy had fixed upon was that of Leonidas, and Laura would far rather have been excused from interference; yet, as she could not with propriety escape, nothing remained but to summon her composure, and to study anew this resemblance of her unworthy lover. She took her work, and began quietly to superintend Harriet's progress. Their employments did not interrupt conversa-



tion; and though Laura's was at first a little embarrassed, she soon recovered her ease. "Do touch the outline of the mouth for me," said Harriet; "I can't hit the resemblance at all." Laura excused herself, saying, that since her fever, her hand had been unsteady. "Oh, here's Montague; he'll do it. Come hither, Montague, and sketch a much prettier mouth than your own." De Courcy, who had approached his sister before he understood her request, shrunk back. She could scarcely have proposed an employment less agreeable to him; and he was hastily going to refuse it, when, happening to meet the eye of Laura, in the dread that she should detect his consciousness, he snatched the pencil and began.

Harriet having thus transferred her work, quickly found out other occupation. "O, by-the-by, my dear," said she to Laura, "your Leonidas is the greatest likeness in the world of my old beau, Colonel Hargrave. Bless me, how she blushes! Ah! I see Hargrave had not been so long in Scotland for nothing."

"Take away that thing, Harriet," cried De Courcy, quite thrown off his guard, and pushing the drawing from him; "I see no reason why Miss Montreville and I should both do for you what you ought to be doing for yourself."

"Heyday! what ails the man?" cried Harriet, looking after her brother to the window, whither he had retreated. "You need not be angry with me for making Laura blush. I dare say she likes it; it becomes her so well."

"If you are accustomed to say such strange things to your friends, my dear Harriet," said Laura, "the blushes you raise will not always have that advantage. The colorings of anger are not generally becoming."

"So, with that meek face of yours, you would have me believe that it is downright rage which has made you all scarlet. No, no, my dear; there is rage, and there is the color of it, too (pointing to Montague's face); and if you'll put your two heads together before the glass, you will see whether the colors are a bit alike!"

Montague, recovering his temper, tried to laugh, and succeeded very ill. "I don't wonder you laugh," said Laura, not venturing to look round to him, "at hearing Harriet, on such slender grounds, exalt such a matter-of-fact person as myself into the heroine of a romance. But, to spare your imagination, Harriet, I will tell you, that your old beau, as you call him, being the handsomest man I had seen, I saw no harm in making use of his beauty in my picture."

"Well, I protest," cried Harriet, "it was quite by accident I thought of mentioning it, for I had not the least idea that ever you had seen Hargrave."

"And, now that you have made that mighty discovery," said De Courcy, endeavoring to appear unconcerned, "I suppose you'll poison Miss Montreville; for you know you were so in love with Hargrave, that I was obliged to put a rail round the fish-pond to prevent *felo de se*."

"In love," said Harriet, yawning; "ay, so I was, indeed, for three whole days once when I had nothing else to do. But only think of the sly girl never even to name him to me! Well! well! I shall worm it all out of her when we are by ourselves, though she won't blab before you."

"I will give you an opportunity this moment," said De Courcy, who, quite unable to bear the subject any longer, determined to make his mother interrupt it, and immediately went in search of her. In a few minutes, Mrs. De Courcy appeared, and dismissed her unwilling daughter to escort Lady Pelham to the flower-garden, while Laura preferred remaining at home.

At the next opportunity, Harriet executed her threat, in so far as depended upon her. She did what she could to rally Laura out of her secret, but she totally failed of success. Laura, now upon her guard, not only evaded making any discovery, but, by the easy indifference of her answers, convinced Harriet that there was nothing to discover. Indeed, her suspicion was merely a transient thought, arising from Laura's confusion at her sudden attack, and scarcely outlived the moment that gave it birth; though the emotion which Montague had shown confirmed his sister in the belief of his attachment to Laura.

The subject thus entirely dropped which Laura could never approach without pain, the time of her visit to Norwood glided away in peace and comfort, every day lessening the dejection which she had believed, nay, almost wished, would follow her to the grave. Still, however, the traces of it were sufficiently visible to the observant eye of love; and Montague found in it an interest not to be awakened by the brightest flashes of gayety. "There is a charm inexpressible in her sadness," said he to Mrs. de Courcy. "I think," replied Mrs. de Courcy, "I can observe that that charm is decaying. Indeed, if it should entirely disappear before your fates are more closely united, you need not lament its departure. These cypresses look graceful bending over the urn there in the vista, but I should not like them to darken the sitting-room."

The only habit, common to love-lorn damsels, in which Laura indulged, was that of preferring solitary rambles; a habit, however, which had been imbibed long before she had any title to that character. Delighted with the environs of Norwood, she sometimes wandered beyond the dressed ground into the park, where art still embellished without restraining nature. The park might, indeed, have better deserved the name of an ornamental farm; for the lawns were here and there diversified by corn-fields, and enlivened by the habitations of the laborers necessary to the agriculturist. These cottages, banished, by fashion, far from every lordly residence, were contrived so as to unite beauty with usefulness; they gave added interest to the landscape even to the eye of a stranger, but far more to that of De Courcy, for he knew that every one of them contained useful hands or grateful hearts; youth for whom he provided employment, or age whose past services he repaid. Here the blue smoke curled from amidst the thicket; there the white wall enlivened the meadow; here the casement flashed bright with the setting sun; there the woodbine and the creeping rose softened the coloring which would have glared on the eye.

Laura had followed the windings of a little green lane, till the woods which darkened it suddenly opened into a small field, sheltered

by them on every side, which seemed to form the territory of a cottage of singular neatness and beauty. In a porch covered with honeysuckle, which led through a flower-garden to the house, a lovely little boy, about three years old, was playing with De Courcy's great Newfoundland dog. The child was stretching on tiptoe to hug with one arm the neck of his rough companion; while with the other hand he was playfully offering the animal a bit of bread, and then snatching it in sport away. Neptune, not used to be so tantalized, made a catch at his prey; but the child succeeded in preserving his prize, and laughing, hid it behind him. The next moment Laura saw the dog throw him down, and heard a piercing cry. Fearless of personal danger, she ran to his assistance. The child was lying motionless on its face; while, with one huge paw laid on his back, Neptune was standing over him, wagging his tail in triumph. Convinced that the child was unhurt, and that the scream had been caused merely by fear, Laura spoke to the dog, who immediately quitted his posture to fawn upon her. She lifted the child from the ground and carried him towards the cottage. The poor little fellow, pale with terror, clung round her neck; but he no sooner saw himself in safety, than, recovering his suspended faculties, he began to roar with all his might. His cries reached the people in the house, who hastened to inquire into their cause; and Laura was met in the door of the cottage by De Courcy's gray-haired servant, John, who seemed its owner, and a decent old woman, who was his wife.

Laura prefaced her account of the accident by an assurance that the child was not hurt, and the old woman, taking him in her arms, tried to soothe him, while John invited Miss Montreville to enter. She followed him into a room, which, unacquainted as she was with the cleanliness of English cottages, appeared to her quite Arcadian. While Margaret was busy with her little charge, Laura praised the neatness and comfort of John's abode. "It is as snug a place as heart can desire, please you, ma'am," answered John, visibly gratified; "and we have every thing here as convenient as in the king's palace, or as my master himself has, for the matter of that." "I thought, John, you had lived in Mr. de Courcy's house," said Laura. "Yes, please you, ma'am, and so I did, since I was a little fellow no higher than my knee, taken in to run messages, till my young master came of age, and then he built this house for me, that I might just have it to go to when I pleased, without being turned away like, for he knew old folks liked to have a home of their own. So now, of a fine evening, I come home after prayers, and I stay all night; and when it's bad weather, I have the same bed as I have had these forty years; not a penny worse than my master's own." "And if you are employed all day at Norwood," said Laura, "how do you contrive to keep your garden in such nice order?" "Oh! for the matter of that, ma'am, my master would not grudge me a day's work of the under gardener any time; no, nor to pay a man to work the little patch for me; but only as he says, the sweetest flowers are of one's own planting, so, of a

fine day, he often sends me home for an hour or two, in the cool, just to put the little place in order." "Mr. de Courcy seems attentive to the comfort of everybody who comes near him," said Laura. "That he is, madam; one would think he had an affection like for every mortal creature, and particularly when they grow old and useless, like me and Margaret. I know who offered him twenty pounds a year for this house and the bit of field; but he said old folks did not like moving, and he would not put us out of this, even though he could give us one twice as good." "And your rent is lower than twenty pounds, I suppose?" said Laura. "Why, sure, ma'am, we never pay a penny for it. My master," said John, drawing up his head, and advancing his chest, "my master has the proper true spirit of a gentleman, and he had it since ever he was born; for it's bred in the bone with him, as the saying is. Why, ma'am, he had it from a child. I have seen him, when he was less than that boy there, give away his dinner, when he was as hungry as a hound, just because a beggar asked it. Ay, I remember, one day, just two-and-twenty years ago come July, that he was sitting at the door on my knee, eating his breakfast, and he had asked it half a dozen times from Mrs. Martin, for he was very hungry; and she did not always attend to him very well. So, up came a woman leading a little ragged creature; and it looked at Master Montague's bread and milk, and said, 'I wish I had some too.' So says my master, 'Here, take you some, and I'll take what you leave.' Well, ma'am, the brat snapped it all up in a trice, and I waited to see what little master would do. Well, he just laughed as good naturedly! Then I was going to have got him another breakfast, but my lady would not allow me. 'No, no, John!' said my lady, 'we must teach Montague the connection between generosity and self-denial.' These were my lady's very words."

By this time Margaret had succeeded in quieting the child; and a double allowance of bread and butter restored all his gaiety. "Come, Nep.," said he, squatting himself down on the ground, where Neptune was lying at Laura's feet; "come, Nep., I'll make friends, and there's half for you, Henry's own dear Nep." "Will you sit upon my knee?" said Laura, who was extremely fond of children. The boy looked steadily in her face for a few moments, and then holding out his arms to her, said, "Yes, I will." "Whose charming child is this?" inquired Laura, twisting his golden ringlets round her fingers. The color rose to old Margaret's furrowed cheek as she answered, "He is an orphan, ma'am." "He is our grandson," said John, and drew his hands across his eyes. Laura saw that the subject was painful, and she inquired no further. She remained for a while playing with little Henry, and listening to John's praises of his master; and then returned homewards.

She was met by De Courcy and Harriet, who were coming in search of her. She related her adventure, and praised the extraordinary beauty of the child. "Oh, that's Montague's protégé!" cried Harriet. "By-the-by, he has not been to visit us since you came; I believe he

was never so long absent before. I have a great notion my brother did not want to produce him to you." "To me!" exclaimed Laura, in surprise. "Why not?" But receiving no answer from Harriet, who had been effectually silenced by a look from De Courcy, she turned for explanation to Montague; who made an awkward attempt to laugh off his sister's attack, and then as awkwardly changed the subject.

For some minutes Laura gravely and silently endeavored to account for his behavior. "His generosity supports this child," thought she, "and he is superior to blazoning his charity." So having, as greater philosophers have done, explained the facts to agree with her theory, she was perfectly satisfied, and examined them no more. Association carrying her thoughts to the contemplation of the happiness which De Courcy seemed to diffuse through every circle where he moved, she regretted that she was so soon to exchange the enjoyment of equable, unobtrusive kindness, for starts of officious fondness, mingled with intervals of cold neglect or peevish impertunity.

"Norwood is the Eden of the earth," said she to Harriet, as they drew their chairs towards the fire to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* after the family were retired for the night; "and it is peopled with spirits fit for paradise. Happy you, who need never think of leaving it!"

"Bless you! my dear," cried Harriet, "there is nothing I think of half so much. You would not have me an old maid, to comb lap-dogs and fatten cats, when I might be scolding my own maids, and whipping my own children."

"Really," said Laura, "I think you would purchase even these delightful recreations too dearly by the loss of your present society. Sore it were a mad venture to change such a blessing for any uncertainty!"

"And yet, Mrs. Graveairs, I have a notion that a certain gallant soldier could inspire you with the needful daring. Now, look me in the face, and deny if you can."

Laura did as she was desired; and, with cheeks flushed to crimson, but a voice of "sweet austere composure," she replied, "Indeed, Miss de Courcy, I am hurt that you should so often have taxed me, even in sport, with so discreditable partiality. You cannot be serious in supposing that I would marry an—" adulterer, Laura would have said; but to apply such an epithet to Hargrave was too much for human firmness, and she stopped.

"I declare she is angry," cried Harriet. "Well, my dear, since it displeases you, I shan't tease you any more; at least not till I find a new subject. But, pray now, do you intend to practise as you preach? Have you made a vow never to marry?"

"I do not say so," answered Laura; "it is silly to assert resolutions which nobody credits. Besides, my situation sadly differs from yours. Like the moon, which is rising yonder, I must pursue my course alone. Thousands around me might perhaps warm and enlighten me; but far distant, their influence is lost ere it reaches me. You are in the midst of a happy family, endeared to you by all that is lovely in virtue; all that is sacred in kindred. I know not what would tempt me to resign your situation."

"What would tempt you?" cried Harriet. "Why, a pretty fellow would. But I verily believe you have been taking your cue from Montague; these are precisely his ideas. I think he has set his heart upon making me lead apes."

"What makes you think so?" inquired Laura.

"Because he finds out a hundred faults to every man who talks nonsense to me. One is poor; and he thinks it folly to marry a beggar. Another is old, though he's rich; and that would be downrightly selling myself. One's a fool, and t' other's cross; and, in short, there's no end to his freaks. Only the other day he made me dismiss a creature whom I believe I should have liked well enough in time. I have not half forgiven him for it yet. Poor Wilmot!—and I should have had a nice barouche, too!"

"What could possibly weigh with your brother against the barouche?" said Laura, smiling.

"Why, my dear, the saucy wretch told me, as plainly as he civilly could, that Wilmot and I had not a grain of prudence between us; ergo, that we should be ridiculous and miserable. Besides, poor Wilmot once persuaded a pretty girl to play the fool; and though he afterwards did everything he could to prevail on her to be an honest woman, the silly thing chose rather to break her heart and die; and ever since, poor Wilmot has been subject to fits of low spirits."

"Is it possible, Harriet, that you can talk so lightly of a crime so black in its nature, so dreadful in its consequences! Can it seem a trifle to you to destroy the peace, the innocence, of a fellow-creature! Can you smile at remorse which pursued its victim even to the grave!"

Tears filled the eyes of Harriet. "Oh, no, my dearest," she cried, throwing her arms round Laura's neck; "do not think so hardly of me. I am a rattle, it is true, but I am not unprincipled."

"Pardon my injustice, dearest Harriet," said Laura, "in believing, even for a moment, that you were capable of such perversion; and join with me in rejoicing that your brother's influence has saved you from witnessing, from sharing, the pangs of unavailing repentance."

"Indeed," said Harriet, "Montague's influence can do anything with me; and no wonder. I should be the most ungrateful wretch on earth if I could oppose his wishes. I cannot tell you the thousandth part of the affection he has shown me. Did you ever hear, my dear, that my father had it not in his power to make any provision for me?"

Laura answered that she had never heard the circumstances of the family at all mentioned.

"Do you know," continued Harriet, "I am certain that Montague is averse to my marrying, because he is afraid that 'my poverty, and not my will, consents.' But he has himself set that matter to rest; for the very morning after I gave Wilmot his *conge*, Montague presented me with bills for two thousand pounds. The generous fellow told me that he did not offer his gift while Wilmot's suit was pending, lest I should think he bought a right to influence my decision."

"This is just what I should have expected from Mr. de Courcy," said Laura, the purest satisfaction beaming in her countenance. "He is ever considerate, ever generous."

"To tell you that he gives me money," cried Harriet, rapturously, "is nothing; he gives me his time, his labor, his affection. Do love him, dear Laura! He is the best of all creatures!"

"Indeed I believe it," said Laura, "and I have the most cordial regard for him."

"Ah, but you must—" Harriet's gratitude to her brother had very nearly been too strong for his secret, and she was on the point of petitioning Laura to return a sentiment warmer than cordial regard, when recollecting her mother's commands, she desisted; and, to fly from the temptation, wished Laura good-night, and retired.

It was with sincere regret that Laura, the next day, took leave of her kind hosts. As De Courcy handed her into the carriage, the tears were rising to her eyes; but they were checked by a glance from Lady Pelham, in which Laura thought she could read mingled scorn and anger. Lady Pelham had remarked the improved spirits of her niece; but, instead of rejoicing that any medicine should have "ministered to a mind diseased," she was offended at the success of a remedy applied by any other than herself. She was nettled at perceiving that the unobtrusive seriousness of Mrs. De Courcy, and the rattling gaiety of Harriet, had effected what all her brilliant powers had not achieved. Her powers, indeed, had been sometimes directed to entertain, but never to console; they had been exerted to purchase admiration, not to win confidence; yet, with a common perverseness, she was angry at their ill success, not sorry for their wrong direction. She did not consider, that real benevolence, or an excellent counterfeit, is the only road to an unadulterated heart. It appeared to her a proof of an ungrateful temper in her niece, that she should yield in so short a time to strangers, to whom she owed nothing, what she refused to a relation to whom she owed so much.

She had not been able to forbear from venting her spleen in little spiteful remarks, and sly stings, sometimes so adroitly given that they were unobserved, except by the person who was by degrees accustomed to expect them. The presence of the De Courcy family, however, restrained the expression of Lady Pelham's ill-humor; and, as she detested restraint (a detestation which she always ascribed to a noble ingenuousness of mind), she nestled, with peculiar complacency, into the corner of the carriage which was to convey her to what she called freedom, namely, the liberty to infringe with impunity the rights of others. Laura felt that her reluctance to quit Norwood was a bad compliment to her aunt, and she called a smile to her face as she kissed her hand to her kind friends; yet the contrast between their affectionate looks and the "lurking devil" in Lady Pelham's eye, did not lessen her regret at the exchange she was making.

Lady Pelham saw the tone of Laura's mind, and she immediately struck up a discord.—"Heaven be praised," she cried, "we have at last escaped out of that stupid place! I think it must be something extraordinary that tempts

me to spend four days there again." Laura remained silent; for she disliked direct contradiction, and never spoke what she did not think. Lady Pelham continued her harangue, declaring, "that your good sort of people were always intolerably tiresome; that clock-work regularity was the dullest thing in nature; that Norwood was another cave of Trophonius; Mrs. De Courcy inspired with the soul of a starved old maid; Harriet animated by the joint spirit of a magpie and a monkey; and Montague by that of a Methodist parson." Finally, she again congratulated herself on her escape from such society, and wondered how anybody could submit to it without hanging himself. Laura was accustomed to support Lady Pelham's attacks upon herself with perfect equanimity; but her temper was not proof against this unjust, this unexpected philippic against her friends; and she reddened with anger and disdain, though she had still so much self-command as to reply only, "Your ladyship is fortunate in being able to lose, without regret, what others find it difficult to replace."

Lady Pelham fully understood the emphasis which was laid on the word *others*, but the mortification to her vanity was compensated by the triumph of discovering the vulnerable side of her niece's temper. This was the first time that she had been conscious of power over it, and severely did Laura pay for the momentary negligence which had betrayed the secret. Some persons never feel pleasure without endeavoring to communicate it. Lady Pelham acted upon the converse of this amiable principle; and, as an ill-regulated mind furnished constant sources of pain, a new channel of participation was a precious discovery. As often, therefore, as spleen, jealousy, or malice prompted her to annoyance, she had recourse henceforth to this new-found weapon; and she varied her warfare through all the changes of hints, insinuations, and that mode of attack the most provoking of all, which, aiming at no particular point, becomes the most difficult to parry. During several months, she made it the occasional instrument of her vengeance for the jealousy which she entertained of Laura's increasing intimacy with the De Courcys, an intimacy which she chose to embitter, though she could not break it off without depriving herself of acquaintances who were visited by the first people in the county.

Her industry in teasing was not confined to Laura. She inflicted a double stroke, by the petulance or coldness with which she sometimes treated the De Courcys. But though Laura was keenly sensible to these petty wrongs done her friends, the injured passed them over without much notice. Harriet repaid them with laughter or sarcasm; while Montague seemed to consider them as wholly unworthy of attention. He continued his visits to Walbourne, and accident at last furnished excuse for their frequency.

In the course of Lady Pelham's improvements, a difficulty chanced to occur, which a slight knowledge of the elements of mathematics would have enabled her to solve. To supply the want of this knowledge, she had recourse to Mr. de Courcy, who removed her perplexity with the ease of one conversant with his sub-

ject, and the accuracy of one who speaks to a reasoning creature. Lady Pelham was charmed! She was convinced that "of all studies that of mathematics must be the most delightful. She imagined it might not be quite impracticable even for a lady, supposing she were so fortunate as to meet with a friend who could assist her." De Courcy, laughing, offered his services, not, it must be owned, with any idea that they would be accepted. Her ladyship, however, eagerly embraced the offer; for she was little accustomed to forecast the difficulties of any scheme which entered her brain. In the triumphant expectation that all difficulty would yield to her acuteness, and her brighter abilities gain in a comparison with the plain good sense of her niece, she obliged Laura to join in her new pursuit.

Upon the study of this science, so little in favor with a sex who reserve cultivation for faculties where it is least wanting, Laura entered with a pleasure which surprised herself, and she persevered in it with an industry which astonished her teacher. Lady Pelham was, for a little while, the companion of her labors; but, at the first difficulty, she took offence at the unaccommodating thing, which showed no more indulgence to female than to royal indolence. Forthwith she was fired with strong aversion to philosophers in bibs, and a horror at *she*-pedants, a term of reproach which a dexterous side-glance could appropriate to her niece, though the author of these memoirs challenges any mortal to say that ever Laura Montreville was heard to mention ellipse or parabola, or to insinuate her acquaintance with the properties of circle or polygon. Nothing moved by Lady Pelham's sneers, Laura continued her studies, impelled partly by the duty of improving the most valuable faculty of an immortal mind, partly by the pleasure which she derived from the study itself. It is true, that her ladyship's indiscreet use of the secret made Laura's labors the cause of much merriment to titterers of both sexes; but we have never discovered that De Courcy esteemed her the less for her persevering industry, or loved her the less for this new subject of mutual interest. He watched with delight the restoration of her mind to its full vigor; and as he had never known her in the blaze of youthful gayety, he was scarcely sensible of the shade which blended the radiance of her mid-day of life with the sober tints of evening.

The impression of her early disappointment was indeed indelible, but it was no longer overwhelming. She had given the reins to her imagination—it had fatally misled her; but its power had sustained an irrecoverable shock, and the sway was transferred to reason. She had dreamed of an earthly heaven, and seen that it was but a dream. All her earthly joys had vanished—yet misery had been almost as transient as delight, and she learned the practical use of a truth which all acknowledge in theory. In the course of four months' residence at Walbourne, she recovered a placid cheerfulness, which afterward continued to be the habitual tenor of her mind. If she looked forward to the future events of her life, it was to resolve that they should be subservient to the great end of her being. If she glanced back-

ward, it was less to lament the disappointment, than to blame the error which had led to it; and she never allowed her thoughts to dwell upon her unworthy lover, except when praying that he might be awakened to a sense of his guilt.

She was chiefly concerned to improve and to enjoy the present; and in this she was successful, in spite of the peevish humors of Lady Pelham, mixed occasionally with ebullitions of rage. Those who are furious where they dare, or when the provocation is sufficient to rouse their courage, sometimes chide with impotent perseverance where they are awed from the full expression of their fury; as the sea which the lightest breeze dashes in billows over the sand-bank, frets in puny ripples against the rock that frowns over it. If Lady Pelham's temper had any resemblance to this stormy element, it was not wholly void of likeness to another—for it "changed as it listed," without any discoverable reason. It would have lost half its power to provoke, and Laura half the merit of her patient endurance, if it had been permanently diabolical. The current, not only serene but sparkling, would reflect with added beauty every surrounding object, then would suddenly burst into foam or settle into a stagnant marsh. Laura threw oil upon the torrent, and suffered the marsh to clear itself. She enjoyed Lady Pelham's wit and vivacity in her hours of good humor, and patiently submitted to her seasons of low spirits, as she complaisantly called them.

Laura at last, undesignedly, opened a new direction to her aunt's spleen. From her first introduction to Lady Pelham, she had labored assiduously to promote a reconciliation between her aunt and her daughter, Mrs. Herbert. Her zeal appeared surprising to Lady Pelham, who could not estimate the force of her motive for thus laboring, to the manifest detriment of her own interest, she being (after Mrs. Herbert) the natural heiress of her aunt's fortune. She had seized the moment of complacency; watched the relents of nature; by turns tried to soothe and to convince; and, in the proper spirit of a peace-maker, adhered to her purpose with meek perseverance. According to the humor of the hour, Lady Pelham was alternately flattered by solicitations that confessed her power, or rendered peevish by entreaties which she was determined to reject, or fired to rage by the recollection of her wrongs. If the more placid frame prevailed, she could ring eternal changes on the same oft-refuted arguments, or adroitly shift the subject by some lively sally of wit, or some neat compliment to her niece. In her more stormy tempers, she would profess a total inability to pardon; nay, a determination never to attempt it; and took credit for scorning to pretend a forgiveness which she could not practise.

Still Laura was not discouraged; for she had often observed, that what Lady Pelham declared on one day to be wholly impossible, on the next became, without any assignable reason, the easiest thing in nature; and that what to-day no human force should wrest from her, was yielded to-morrow to no force at all. She therefore persisted in her work of conciliation; and her efforts, at last, prevailed so far,

that though Lady Pelham still protested implacability, she acknowledged that, as there was no necessity for her family feuds being made known to the world, she was willing to appear upon decent terms with the Herberts; and, for that purpose, would receive them for a few weeks at Walbourne.

Of this opening, unpromising as it was, Laura instantly availed herself; and wrote to convey the frozen invitation to her cousin, in the kindest language which she was permitted to use. It was instantly accepted; and Mrs. Herbert and her husband became the inmates of Walbourne.

Mrs. Herbert had no resemblance to her mother. Her countenance was grave and thoughtful: her manners uniformly cold and repulsive. Laura traced in her unbending reserve the apathy of one whose genial feelings had been blunted by early unkindness. Frank, high-spirited, and imprudent, Herbert was his wife's opposite; and Laura had not been half an hour in his company, before she began to tremble for the effect of these qualities on the irascible temper of her aunt. But her alarm seemed causeless; for the easy resoluteness with which he maintained his opinions appeared to extort from Lady Pelham a sort of respect; and, though she privately complained to Laura of what she called his assurance, she exempted him, while present, from her attacks, seeming afraid to exert upon him her skill in provoking. Laura began to perceive that a termagant is not so untamable an animal as she had once imagined, since one glimpse of the master-spirit is of sovereign power to lay the lesser imps of spleen.

But, though Lady Pelham seemed afraid to measure her strength with spirits of kindred irascibility, she was under no restraint with Mrs. Herbert, upon whom she vented a degree of querulousness which appeared less like the ebullitions of ill temper than the overflowings of settled malice. Every motion, every look, furnished matter of censure or of sarcasm. The placing of a book, the pronunciation of a word, the snuffing of a candle, called forth reprobation; and Laura knew not whether to be most astonished at the ingenious malice which contrived to convert "trifles, light as air," into certain proofs of degeneracy, or at the apathy on which the venomous shaft fell harmless. Mrs. Herbert received all her mother's reprimands in silence, without moving a muscle, without announcing, by the slightest change of color, that the sarcasm had reached further than the ear. If, as not infrequently happened, the reproof extended into a harangue, Mrs. Herbert, unmoved, withdrew no part of her attention from her netting, and politely suppressed a yawn.

These discourteous scenes were exhibited only in Mr. Herbert's absence; his presence instantly suspended Lady Pelham's warfare; and Laura inferred that his wife never made him acquainted with her mother's behavior. That behavior formed an exception to the general unsteadiness of Lady Pelham, for to Mrs. Herbert she was consistently cruel and insulting. Nothing could be more tormenting to the benevolent mind of Laura than to witness this system of aggression; and she repented having

been instrumental in renewing an intercourse which could lead to no pleasing issue.

But the issue was nearer than she expected. One day, in Herbert's absence, Lady Pelham began to discuss with his wife, or, rather, to her, the never-failing subject of her duplicity and disobedience. She was not interrupted by any expression of regret or repentance from the culprit, who maintained a stoical silence, laboring the while to convey mathematical precision to the crimping of a baby's cap, an employment upon which Lady Pelham seemed to look with peculiar abhorrence. From the turpitude of her daughter's conduct, she proceeded to its consequences. She knew no right, she said, that people had to encumber their relations with hosts of beggarly brats. She vowed that none such should ever receive her countenance or protection. Her rage kindled as she spoke. She inveighed against Mrs. Herbert's insensibility; and at last talked herself into such a pitch of fury, as even to abuse her for submitting to the company of one who could not conceal detestation of her; a want of spirit which she directly attributed to the most interested views—views which, however, she absolutely swore that she would defeat.

In the energy of her declamation, she did not perceive that Herbert had entered the room, and stood listening to her concluding sentences with a face of angry astonishment. Advancing towards his wife, he indignantly inquired into the meaning of the tumult. "Nothing," answered she, calmly surveying her handiwork; "only my mother is a little angry, but I have not spoken a word." He then turned for explanation to Lady Pelham, whom the flashing of his eye reduced to instantaneous quiet; and, not finding in her stammering abstract of the conversation any apology for the insult which he had heard, he took his wife by the arm, and instantly left the house, giving orders that his baggage should follow him to a little inn in the neighboring village.

Thus did the insolence of one person, and the nasty spirit of another, undo what Laura had for months been laboring to effect. The Herberts never made any attempt at reconciliation, and Lady Pelham would never afterwards bear them mentioned, without breaking out into torrents of abuse, and even imprecation, which made Laura's blood run cold. Yet, with her usual inconsistency, Lady Pelham was vexed at the suspension of her intercourse with the Herberts; because she thus lost even the shadow of power over her daughter. Not that she acknowledged this cause of regret. No! she eloquently bewailed her hard fate, in being exposed to the censure of the world, as at variance with her nearest relatives. She complained that, with a heart "warm as melting charity," she had no one to love or to cherish. Yet Laura could not always forbear smiling at the perverse direction of her aunt's regrets. Lady Pelham was angry, not that her own unkindness had driven her children from her, but that Laura's officious benevolence had brought them to her house—a measure from which she was pleased to say that no person of common sense could have expected a different issue.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

If Lady Pelham repined at the desertion of the Herberts, it was not because their departure consigned her to solitude. Never had Walbourne attracted so many visitors. Lady Pelham's beautiful niece drew thither all the gentlemen in the neighborhood. The ladies followed them of course. The beauty and modesty of Laura charmed the men, while the women were half inclined to think it an unfounded slander that such a good-natured, obliging, neat-handed creature studied mathematics and read Tacitus in the original.

Among the society to which she was introduced by Lady Pelham, and still more among that in which she mingled at Norwood, Laura met with persons of distinguished ability, rank, and politeness. In such company she rapidly acquired that ease of address which alone was wanting to make her manners as fascinating as they were correct. She grew accustomed to find herself the object of attention, and though no habit could reconcile her to the gaze of numbers, she gradually learnt to carry into these lesser occasions the self-command which distinguished her in more important concerns. In real modesty and humility she improved every day; for it was the study of her life to improve in them. She retained all the timidity which is the fruit of genuine sensibility and quick perception of impropriety, while she lost that bashfulness which owes its growth to solitude and inexperience. Her personal charms, too, increased as they approached maturity. The symmetry of her form and features was, indeed, scarcely susceptible of improvement; but added gracefulness gave new attractions to her figure; while the soul lent its improving strength and brightness to animate her face with charms which mere symmetry knows not.

With such qualifications Laura could not fail to excite admiration; yet never, perhaps, did beauty so seldom listen to its own praises. It was labor lost to compliment one who never rewarded the flatterer with one smile of gratified vanity, or repaid him with ope complaisant departure from the simple truth. To the every day nothings of the common herd she listened with a weariness which politeness could sometimes scarcely repress. "Oh, would," thought she, "that civil things, as they are called, required no answer, or that one obliging gentleman would undertake the labor of replying to the rest!" If addressed in the language of commonplace compliment by one whom she respected, her look of mortification intelligibly said, "Has, then, your penetration searched me deeper than I know myself, and detected in me the more than childish weakness of valuing myself on such distinctions as those you are praising!"

Laura had no personal vanity; and therefore it required no effort to withstand such praise. She had more merit in the more strenuous but less successful exertions which she made to resist the silent flattery of the respectful glance that awaited her decision, besought her approbation, or reflected her sentiments. Sometimes she thought Montague de Courcy an adept in this sort of flattery. But more frequently, when

it was administered by him, she forgot to call it by that name; and she was the less upon her guard against his homage because it was never offered in any more palpable form.

Fortified by the advice of his mother, who had convinced him that a premature disclosure of his sentiments would be fatal to his hopes, and aware, that were he even successful with Laura, some further provision must be made for his sister, ere he could with justice increase the expense of his establishment, he acted with such caution as to baffle the penetration of common observers. The neighboring tea-tables were rather inclined to consign his affections to a lively young heiress, whose estate had formerly been dismembered from that of Norwood; for he had flirted with her at a review, and danced with her at a county ball. Moreover, the charitable declared, "that if he was backward, it was not for the want of encouragement; that miss allowed herself strange liberties, though, to be sure, heiresses might do any thing."

In spite of the lynx eye in detecting embryo passion which is ascribed to the sex, Montague's secret was safe even from Laura herself; or, if a momentary suspicion had glanced across her mind, she chid it away with self-accusations of vanity, and recollections of the ten thousand opportunities for a declaration which he had suffered to pass unimproved. Besides, Mrs. de Courcy had once hinted that Montague's little fits of melancholy and absence were occasioned by his partiality for a lady whose affections were pre-engaged; and Laura was sure that the hint could not refer to herself. Her humiliating secret, she was thankful, was safely lodged in her own breast, and could never be divulged to cover her with mortification.

That which any effort of imagination can ascribe to the influence of Cupid, no woman ever attributed to any other power; and if, at any time, a shade crossed the open countenance of Montague, Laura called to mind his mother's hint, and added to her truly sisterly affection a pity which lent indescribable softness to her manners towards him. Indeed, she always treated him with undisguised regard, and Montague tried to be satisfied. Yet he could not help longing to read, in some inadvertent glance, a proof that all the heart was not freely shown. In vain!—the heart was as open as the day; and all was there that could delight the friend, but nothing that could satisfy the lover.

He had, however, none of the temptations of jealousy to betray his secret, for his rivals were neither numerous nor formidable. Laura was known to have no fortune; she had little talent for chit-chat, and still less for flattery; thus, amid universal admiration and general goodwill, she had only two professed adorers—one, who haunted her while present, toasted her when absent, and raved of her charms, both in prose and rhyme, without ever suffering his pretensions to become so serious as to afford her a pretext for seriously repulsing them—the other, a prudent, elderly widower, who, being possessed of a good fortune, and a full-grown daughter, thought himself entitled to consult his taste, without regard to pecuniary views, and conceived that Laura might be useful to the young lady in the double capacity of compan-

and example. Laura's answer to his proposals was a firm but gentle refusal, while she assured him that she would not abuse his confidence, nor betray the trust which he had reposed in her. Elderly gentlemen are seldom inclined to publish a repulse. The widower never mentioned his even to Lady Pelham; and Laura, on this occasion, owed to her principle an escape from many a tedious remonstrance, and many a covert attack.

The summer had almost glided away, and Montague continued to fluctuate between hope and fear, his mother to cherish his hopes, and allay his apprehensions, Laura to be tranquil, Harriet to be gay, and Lady Pelham to exhibit, by turns, every various degree of every various humor, when one morning Miss de Courcy, who had lately returned from a visit to a companion, accompanied her brother on horseback to Walbourne. Lady Pelham was, as usual, engaged in her garden, but the visitors had no sooner entered the room where Laura sat, than she observed that they seemed to have exchanged characters. Harriet looked almost thoughtful, while the countenance of De Courcy sparkled with unusual animation. He was gay even to restlessness. He offered to give Laura her lesson in mathematics; and before it was half over, having completely bewildered both himself and his pupil, he tossed away the book, declaring that he never in his life was so little fit for thinking. Pleasure spoke in every tone of his voice, or sported in his eye when he was silent. After a short visit, enlivened by a hilarity which Laura found more infectious than the gravity of Harriet, he proposed leaving his sister with her friend, while he rode on to call for a gentleman in the neighborhood. "Be-gone, then, cried Laura, gayly, "for I long to question Harriet what has given you such envious spirits this morning." "Ah, she must not betray me," said De Courcy, half smiling, half sighing, "or I forfeit my only chance of being remembered when I am out of sight. If she can be silent, curiosity may perhaps befriend me." "How very humble!" cried Laura, "as if curiosity were the only name you could find for the interest I take in what makes you gay, or Harriet grave!" "Dear Laura," said De Courcy, ardently, "give the cause what name you will, if you will but think of me." Then, snatching her lily hands, he pressed them to his lips, and the next moment was gone.

Confused, surprised, a little displeased, Laura stood silently revolving his behavior. He had never before made the slightest approach to personal familiarity. Had her frankness invited the freedom? "Dear Laura!" It was the first time he had ever called her by any name less respectful than Miss Montreville. "Well, and what then—it were mere prudery to be displeased at such a trifle. What," thought she, "can have delighted him so much? Perhaps the lady is kind at last. He need not, however, have vented his transports upon me." And Laura was a little more angry than before.

During her cogitation, Laura forgot that she might apply to her companion for the solution of the mystery; perhaps she did not even recollect that Harriet was in the room, till happening to turn her head, she met a glance of sly inquisition, which, however, was instantly with-

drawn. Harriet made no comment on the subject of her observation. "The man is as much elated," cried she "as if I were five-and-forty, and had never had a lover before."

"You, my dear Harriet," exclaimed Laura, suddenly recovering her good humor; "is it a conquest of yours which has pleased Mr. de Courcy so much!"

"Even so," returned Harriet. "Heigho!"

"I congratulate you; and yet it does not seem to delight you quite so much as it does your brother."

"Really, Laura, I am not sure whether it does or not; so I am come to ask you."

"Me! Indeed, you have too much confidence in my penetration; but you have, fortunately, abler and more natural advisers. Your mother—"

"Oh, my mother is so cautious, so afraid of influencing me! when to be influenced is the very thing I want. I do hate caution. Then I can't talk it over with her as I could with you. And then, there's Montague looks so provokingly pleased; and yet he pretends to prim up his mouth, and say, 'Really, it is a subject on which he neither can or ought to give an opinion.' Pray, advise me, my dear."

"What! before I know who the gentleman is; when perhaps you have even no right to inform me!"

"Pshaw! nonsense. It is Bolingbroke. But I believe you have never met with him."

"So you would have me advise you to marry a man whom I have never seen; for of course that is the advice you want. Had the balance lain on the other side, no advice would have been thought necessary."

"Poh!" cried Harriet, pouting, "I don't want to be advised to marry him."

"Are you sure," returned Laura, smiling, "that you know what you want?"

"Saucy girl! I would have you tell me whether I am ever likely to marry him!"

"Do you think I am by birth entitled to the second sight, that I should foresee this before I know anything of the gentlemen's merits, or, what is of more consequence, of their rank in your estimation?"

"The man has good legs," said Harriet, plaiting the fingers of her glove with great industry.

"Legs! really, Harriet, I was in hopes I had for once found you serious."

"So I am, my dear; I never was so serious before, and I hope I never shall be again. Yet I don't know what to think; so I shall just tell you honestly how the matter stands, and you shall think for me."

"I will not promise that; but I own I have some curiosity to hear your honest confession."

"Oh, you need not peep so archly askance under those long eye-lashes; I can stand a direct look, I assure you; for at this moment I have not the slightest preference in the world for Bolingbroke over half a score of others."

"Then what room is there for hesitation?"

"Why, my dear, in the first place, he has a noble fortune; though that goes for nothing with you; secondly, he is really a good creature, and far from a fool; and then, to talk in your style, I have had advantages, in observing his temper and dispositions, such as I shall never



have with any other man; for his sister and I have been companions from childhood, and I have lived under his roof for months; then, which will weigh with you more than all, he is Montague's particular favorite."

"Great recommendations these, Harriet; sufficient at least to bias any woman who intends to marry. I should like to know Mr. Bolingbroke."

"Here is his letter, my dear," said Harriet; "it came enclosed in one to my brother. There is a good deal of the man's turn in it."

Laura took the letter, and read as follows:

"I will not wrong your penetration so much as to suppose that this letter will surprise you, or that you will fail to anticipate the subject on the first glance at the signature. Nor do I write to tell you, in the hackneyed phrase, that the happiness of my whole life depends upon you, because, next to your affection, nothing is so desirable to me as your esteem, and the hope, that, though you should reject my suit, you will continue to respect my understanding. But I may with truth declare, that I prefer you to all women; that I love you not only in spite of your faults, but, perhaps, even the more for them; and that, to forfeit the hope of your affection, would dispel many a long cherished vision of domestic peace, and even some lighter dreams of rapture. Dearest Harriet, do not, in return for this confession, write me a cold profession of esteem. I know already that you esteem me, for you have long known me, possessed of qualities which inevitably engage esteem; but I am conscious of a deficiency in those which excite passion, and I dread that I may never awaken sentiments like those I feel. Yet it is no small compliment which I offer, when I suppose you superior to the attractions which captivate the vulgar of your sex; and you may value it the more, because it is perhaps the only one I shall ever pay you.

"To say all this, or something like it, has long been in my thoughts; and, during your late visit to my sister, occupied them more than I shall own; but a dread of I know not what forced me to let you depart without offering to your acceptance all that I have to offer. I felt a certainty that I was not yet beloved, and I believed that you, in your lively way (so I must call it, since no epithet which implies reproof must flow from a lover's pen), would give utterance to the feeling of the moment, and bid me think of you no more. Is it presumption to say, that I hope more from a more considerate decision! Ask your own heart, then, dear Miss de Courcy, whether time and the assiduities of respectful love can beguile you of such tenderness as is due to a confiding, affectionate husband. Ask yourself, whether you can ever return my warm attachment to such a degree as will make the duties of a wife easy and pleasant to you. I need not assure you that I am not the selfish wretch who could find joy in receiving those which were painfully and reluctantly performed. Be candid with yourself, then, I adjure you. Fear not that I shall persecute you with importunity or complaint. If it must be so, I will see you no more for some months; and, at the end of that time, I shall expect, in reward of my self-conquest, to be received with cordiality as your brother's friend.

"If your sentence be against me, save yourself the pain of telling me so; for I know that it must be painful to you. Yet judge of the strength of that regard which is thus anxious to shield you from uneasiness, at the moment when it anticipates such pain from your hands.

"If you can give me hope (and, observe, when I say hope, I do not mean certainty), do not tax your delicacy for studied phrases of acceptance, but write me even a common card of invitation to Norwood, and the tenderest billet that ever was penned by woman never gave more pleasure than it will bring to your very affectionate and obedient servant,

"EDWARD BOLINGBROKE."

Laura could not help smiling at the composed style of this epistle, so different from the only ones of its kind with which she was conversant. A lover confess that his mistress had faults; and that he was sensible of them—insinuate that he expected not only duty, but willing and graceful duty, from his wife! have the boldness to expect that, if his passion were unsuccessful, he should quickly be able to conquer it! Laura felt no inclination to envy her friend a lover so fully in the exercise of his judgment and foresight; but she was pleased with the plain, honest rationality of the letter; and with the materials before her, immediately busied her imagination in its favorite work of sketching and adorning character.

She was recalled from her meditation by another petition for advice. "You see," said Harriet, "he pretends not to expect certainty; but it is much the same whether one runs one's neck into the noose, or gets entangled so that one can't decently get off. If I could creditably contrive to keep him dangling till I had made up my mind," continued she, illustrating the metaphor with her watch-chain. "Do assist me, my dear; I am sure you have managed a dozen of them in your time."

"My experience is not so extensive," replied Laura, "and I can really assist you to no creditable method of trifling."

"You would not have me resolve to marry a man whom I don't care a farthing for!"

"No, indeed! but I think Mr. Bolingbroke would have a right to complain, if you gave hopes which you did not fulfil."

"You would have me dismiss him at once, then?"

"By no means; but I would have you think for yourself on a subject of which no other person can judge; and remember, my dear, that, as your decision has neither been wrested from you by surprise, nor seduced from you by persuasion, you have no excuse for forming a weak or wavering resolution."

Determined that on such a subject she would deliver no opinion, Laura was relieved from some embarrassment by the return of De Courcy. His reflections during his ride had effectually quelled the exuberance of his spirits, and he endeavored to repair his unguardedness by distant civility. His manner increased the feeling of restraint of which Laura could not at that time divest herself; and after a short and constrained sequel to a visit which had begun so differently, Montague hurried his sister away.

"I shall never conquer her indifference,"

said he to his mother, after relating the folly of the morning. "Had you seen her frozen look of displeasure, you would have been convinced." "And how, my dear Montague, could you expect Miss Montreville to receive such freedom! like a little village coquette, gasping at the prospect of a first lover! If you are convinced that your secret would still be heard without pleasure, you must redouble your caution to preserve it. But suffer me to warn you against the extreme of reserve into which I have sometimes observed that you are apt to fall. It can only confirm suspicions if they are excited; if not, it will disgust by an appearance of caprice."

Montague promised to be guarded; and withdrew to seek in his laboratory a refuge from despondence. Those who pursue worldly gains and vulgar pleasures must cheerlessly toil on, waiting for their reward till their end be attained; but the pursuits of science and of virtue have this advantage peculiar to themselves, that there is reward in the labor, even though the success be only partial; and, in half an hour, all Montague's cares were absorbed in the muriatic acid. In a few days he again saw Laura, and her sunny smile of welcome revived hopes which she little thought of fulfilling.

When a woman of ordinary delicacy is brought to hesitate upon the proposal of a lover, it is easy, provided prudence be on his side, to conjecture how the balance will turn. Mr. Bolingbroke received his card of invitation to Norwood; and his suit advanced prosperously, though slowly. He was a plain, unpretending man, seven years at least beyond excuse for any youthful indiscretion; habitually silent, though sure of commanding attention when he spoke. The perfect fairness and integrity of his mind had secured him the respect of all his acquaintance in a degree which he appeared to have precisely estimated; and he never seemed to expect less or to exact more. His calm, unobtrusive manners never captivated a stranger, nor gave offence to an intimate. He was kind and generous to a sister, who, twenty years before, had succeeded as his plaything to tops and marbles; and uniformly respectful to a maiden aunt, who had about the same date, replaced his mother as directress of the family.

His father had long been dead, and in consequence of his steady resistance of all the batteries of charms opened against him, or rather against his £7000 a year, the ladies had begun to shake their heads, and pronounce him a determined bachelor. But, notwithstanding their decision, Mr. Bolingbroke was resolved to marry, for he considered marriage as one of the duties of his station.

Harriet amused, became customary, pleasing, necessary to him. "Our dissimilarity will assist us to correct each other's failings," thought he, and his choice was fixed. He was aware that a grave, elderly man might find some difficulty in attaching a volatile girl; and though he could not condescend to flatter even his mistress, he was assiduous to please. He bestowed an infinity of little attentions, which were the more gratifying, because, from a man of his temper, they were wholly unexpected.

His books, his horses, his carriages, waited but a half-expressed wish. He planned little excursions and parties of pleasure, or contrived to add some agreeable surprise to those which were proposed by others. Far from showing any paltry jealousy, he treated Miss de Courcy's favorites of both sexes with distinguished politeness; and perhaps he owed his success, with a heart which had withstood more attractive admirers, partly to the agreeable associations which he founds means to raise, partly to vanity pleased with power over the philosophic Mr. Bolingbroke.

Montague watched the progress of his friend with keen interest, but he conscientiously avoided influencing Harriet's decision. On the contrary, lest the dread of future dependence should weigh with her, he informed her, that should she prefer a single life, or should other circumstances render such a sum important to her, he was determined to double the little fortune he had already given.

While he was anxious to see his sister's happiness secured by her union with an estimable man, he felt that her marriage with Mr. Bolingbroke would immediately remove one grand obstacle to his own wishes; for the little dower which he was determined, ere he settled in life, to save for Harriet, would form an addition altogether insignificant to the splendid settlement which was now in her power. There was nothing Quixotic in the justice and generosity of De Courcy, and he had no intention of incurring real difficulty and privation for the sake of adding a trifle to the stores of affluence. He therefore considered his sister's marriage as leaving him at full liberty to pursue his inclinations, with regard to Laura, if the time should ever arrive when he could declare them without hazarding the forfeiture of even his present stinted measure of favor.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE day Miss De Courcy expressed a wish to show Laura the collection of paintings at a celebrated seat in the neighborhood. Mr. Bolingbroke immediately undertook to procure the permission of the noble owner, who was his relation; and the party was speedily arranged. Mrs. Penelope's sociable, as Mr. Bolingbroke always called it, was to convey his aunt, his sister, Harriet, and Mrs. de Courcy, to whom the genial warmth of the season had partially restored the use of her limbs. Mrs. Penelope piqued herself upon rising with the lark, and enforcing the same wholesome habit upon the whole household; the Bolingbrokes were, therefore, to take an early breakfast at Norwood, and then proceed on their excursion. De Courcy and Mr. Bolingbroke were to ride. Lady Pelham and Laura were to join the party in the grounds.

The weather proved delightful; and, after spending some hours in examining the paintings, in which Laura derived additional pleasure from the skilful comments of De Courcy, the party proceeded to view the grounds, when she, with almost equal delight, contemplated a finished specimen of modern landscape-gardening. Pursuing, as usual, his cautious plan,

Montague divided his attentions pretty equally between the elder ladies and Miss Bolingbroke, bestowing the least part upon her for whom he would willingly have reserved all; while Harriet, in good humor with herself, and with all around her, frankly gave her arm to her lover; and sometimes laughing, sometimes blushing, suffered herself to loiter, to incline her head in listening to somewhat said in a half-whisper, and to answer it in an under tone; without recollecting that she had resolved, till she had quite made up her mind, to restrain her habitual propensity to flirting.

De Courcy was certainly above the meanness of envy, yet he could not suppress a sigh as, with Mrs. Penelope and his mother leaning on his arms, while Laura walked behind with Miss Bolingbroke, he followed Harriet and his friend into the darkened path which led to a hermitage. The walk was shaded by yew, cypress, and other trees of dusky foliage, each, closing into an arch, excluded the gaudy sunshine. As they proceeded, the shade deepened into twilight, and the heats of noon gave place to refreshing coolness. The path terminated in a porch of wicker-work, forming the entrance to the hermitage, the walls of which were composed of the roots of trees, on the outside rugged as from the hand of nature, but within polished and fancifully adorned with shells and fossils. Opposite to the entrance, a rude curtain of leopard skin seemed to cover a recess; and Harriet, hastily drawing it aside, gave to view a prospect gay with every variety of cheerful beauty. The meadows, lately cleared from their burden, displayed a vivid green, and light shadows quickly passed over them and were gone. The corn-fields were busy with the first labors of the harvest. The village spires were thickly sown in the distance. More near, a rapid river flashed bright to the sun; yet the blaze came chastened to the eye, for it entered through an awning close hung with the graceful tendrils of the passion-flower.

The party were not soon weary of so lovely a landscape, and returning to the more shady apartment, found an elegant collation of fruits and ices, supplied by the gallantry of Mr. Bolingbroke. Never was there a more cheerful repast. Lady Pelham was luckily in good humor, and therefore condescended to permit others to be so too. Laura, happily for herself, possessed a faculty not common to beauties—she could be contented where another was the chief object of attention; and she was actually enjoying the court that was paid to her friend, when, accidentally raising the vine-leaf which held the fruit she was eating, she observed some verses pencilled on the rustic table in a hand-writing familiar to her recollection.

Sudden instinct made her hastily replace the leaf, and steal a glance to see whether any other eye had followed hers. No one seemed to have noticed her; but Laura's gayety had vanished. The lines were distinct, as if recently traced; and Laura's blood ran chill at the thought, that, had she even a few hours sooner visited this spot, she might have met Colonel Hargrave. "He may still be near," thought she; and she wished, though she could not propose, to be instantly gone. None of her companions, however, seemed inclined to move.

They continued their merriment, while Laura, her mind wholly occupied with one subject, again stole a glimpse of the writing. It was undoubtedly Hargrave's; and, deaf to all that was passing around her, she fell into a reverie which was first interrupted by the company rising to depart.

Though she had been in such haste to be gone, she was now the last to go. In her momentary glance at the sonnet, she had observed that it was inscribed to her. "Of what possible consequence," thought she, "can it be to me?" yet she lingered behind to read it. In language half passionate, half melancholy, it complained of the pains of absence and the cruelty of too rigid virtue? but it broke off abruptly, as if the writer had been suddenly interrupted.

So rapidly did Laura glance over the lines, that her companions had advanced but a few paces, ere she was hastening to follow them. On reaching the porch, she saw that the walk was just entered by two gentlemen. An instant convinced her that one of them was Hargrave. Neither shriek nor exclamation announced this discovery; but Laura, turning pale, shrunk back out of view. Her first feeling was eager desire of escape; her first thought, that, returning to the inner apartment, she might thence spring from the lofty terrace, on the verge of which the hermitage was reared. She was deterred, by recollecting the absurd appearance of such an escape, and the surprise and confusion which it would occasion. But what was to be done? There was no third way of leaving the place where she stood, and if she remained, in a few moments Hargrave would be there.

These ideas darted so confusedly through her mind, that it seemed rather by instinct than design that she drew her hat over her face, and doubled her veil, in order to pass him unnoticed. She again advanced to the porch; but perceived, not without consternation, that Hargrave had joined her party, and stood talking to Lady Pelham in an attitude of easy cordiality. Laura did not comment upon the free morality which accorded such a reception to such a character; for she was sick at heart, and trembling in every limb. Now there was no escape. He would certainly accost her, and she must answer him—answer him without emotion! or how would Mr. De Courcy—how would his mother construe her weakness? What would Hargrave himself infer from it? What, but that her coldness sprung from mere passing anger? or, more degrading still, from jealousy! The truant crimson now rushed back unbidden; and Laura proceeded with slow but steady steps.

During her short walk she continued to struggle with herself. "Let me but this once command myself," said she; "and wherefore should I not! It is he who ought to shrink. It is he who ought to tremble." Yet it was Laura who trembled, when, advancing towards her, Lady Pelham introduced her to Colonel Hargrave as her niece. Laura's inclination of the head, cold as indifference could make it, did not seem to acknowledge former intimacy; and when Hargrave, with a manner respectful even to timidity, claimed her acquaintance, she gave

a short answer of frozen civility, and turned away. Shrinking from even the slightest converse with him, she hastily passed on; then, determined to afford him no opportunity of speaking to her, she glided in between Mrs. De Courcy, who stood anxiously watching her, and Harriet, who was studying the contour of Hargrave's face; and offering an arm to each, she gently drew them forward.

Mr. Bolingbroke immediately joined them, and entered into conversation with Harriet; while Mrs. de Courcy continued to read the legible countenance of Laura, who silently walked on, revolving in her mind the difference between this and her last unexpected meeting with Hargrave. The freedom of his address to the unfriended girl, who was endeavoring to exchange the labor of her hands for a pittance to support existence, (a freedom which had once found sympathetic excuse in the breast of Laura,) she now, not without indignation, contrasted with the respect offered to Lady Pelham's niece, surrounded by the rich and the respectable. Yet while she remembered what had then been her half-affected coldness, her ill-restrained sensibility, and compared them with the total alienation of heart which she now experienced, she could not stifle a sigh which rose at the recollection, that in her the raptures of love and joy were chilled, never more to warm. "Would that my preference had been more justly directed," thought she, her eye unconsciously wandering to De Courcy; "but that is all over now."

From idle regrets, Laura soon turned to more characteristic meditation upon the conduct which it was most suitable for her to pursue. Hargrave had joined her party; had been acknowledged, by some of them at least, as an acquaintance; and had particularly attached himself to Lady Pelham, with whom he followed in close conversation. Laura thought he would probably take the first opportunity of addressing himself to her; and if her manner towards him corresponded with the bent of her feelings, consciousness made her fear, that in her distance and constraint, Lady Pelham's already suspicious eye would read more than merely dislike to a vicious character. Hargrave himself, too, might mistake what so nearly resembled her former manner for the veil of her former sentiments. She might possibly escape speaking to him for the present, but if he was fixed in the neighborhood (and something of the woman whispered that he would not leave it immediately) they would probably meet where to avoid him was not in her power. After some minutes of close consideration, she concluded, that to treat Colonel Hargrave with easy, civil indifference, best accorded with what she owed to her own dignity; and was best calculated, if he retained one spark of sensibility or discernment, to convince him that her sentiments had undergone an irrevocable change. This method, therefore, she determined to pursue; making, with a sigh, this grand proviso, that should she find it practicable.

Mrs. de Courcy, who guessed the current of her thoughts, suffered it to proceed without interruption; and it was not till Laura relaxed her brow, and raised her head, like one who

has taken his resolution, that her companion, stopping, complained of fatigue; proposing, as her own carriage was not in waiting, to borrow Lady Pelham's, and return home, leaving the other ladies to be conveyed in Mrs. Penelope's sociable to Norwood, where the party was to dine. Not willing to direct the proposal to Laura, upon whose account chiefly it was made, she turned to Mrs. Penelope, and inquired whether she did not feel tired with her walk; but that lady, who piqued herself upon being a hale, active woman of her age, declared herself able for much greater exertion, and said she would walk till she had secured an appetite for dinner. Laura, who had modestly held back till Mrs. Penelope's decision was announced, now eagerly offered her attendance, which Mrs. de Courcy, with a little dissembled hesitation, accepted, smiling to perceive how well she had divined her young favorite's inclinations.

The whole party attended them to the spot where the carriages were waiting. On reaching them, Mr. Bolingbroke, handing in Mrs. de Courcy, left Laura's side for the first time free to Hargrave, who instantly occupied it; while Montague, the drops standing on his forehead, found himself shackled between Mrs. Penelope and Miss Bolingbroke. "Ever dear, ever revered Miss Montreville," Hargrave began, in an insinuating whisper "Sir!" cried Laura, starting with indignant surprise. "Nay, start not," continued he in an under-voice; "I have much, much to say. Lady Pelham allows me to visit Walbourne; will you permit me to—" Laura had not yet studied her lesson of easy civility, and therefore the courtesy of a slight inclination of the head was contradicted by the tone in which she interrupted him, saying, "I never presume, sir, to select Lady Pelham's visitors."

She had reached the door of the carriage, and Hargrave took her hand to assist her in entering. Had Laura been prepared, she would have suffered him, though reluctantly, to do her this little service; but he took her unawares, and snatching back her hand, as from the touch of a loathsome reptile, she sprung unassisted into her seat.

As the carriage drove off, Mrs. de Courcy again apologized for separating Laura from her companions; "though I know not," added she, "whether I should not rather take credit for withdrawing you from such dangerous society. All ladies who have stray hearts must guard them either in person or by proxy, since this formidable Colonel Hargrave has come among us." "He has fortunately placed the more respectable part of us in perfect security," returned Laura, with a smile and a voice of such embarrassed simplicity as fully satisfied her examiner.

Had Laura spent a lifetime in studying to give pain, which, indeed, was not in all her thoughts, she could not have inflicted a sharper sting on the proud heart of Hargrave than by the involuntary look and gesture with which she quitted him. The idea of inspiring with disgust, unmixed, irresistible disgust, the woman upon whose affections, or, rather, upon whose passions, he had labored so zealously and so long, had ever been more than he could bear, even when the expression of her dislike had no witness; but now she had published it, to chatter-

ing misses, and prying old maids, and more favored rivals. Hargrave bit his lip till the blood came—and, if the lightning of the eye could scathe, his wrath had been far more deadly to others.

After walking for some minutes, surly and apart, he began to comfort himself with the hopes of future revenge. "She had loved him, passionately loved him, and he was certain she could not be so utterly changed. Her behavior was either all affectation, or a conceit of the strength of her own mind, which all these clever women were so vain of. But the spark still lurked somewhere, whatever she might imagine, and he could turn her own weapons against herself." Then, recollecting that he had resolved to cultivate Lady Pelham's favor, he resumed his station by her side, and was again the courtly, insinuating Colonel Hargrave.

Hargrave had lately acquired a friend, or rather an adviser (the dissolute have no friends), who was admirably calculated to supply the deficiencies of his character, as a man of pleasure. Indeed, except in so far as pleasure was his constant aim, no term could, with less justice, have been applied to Hargrave; for his life was chiefly divided between the goadings of temptations to which he himself lent arms, and the pangs of self-reproach which he could not exclude, and would not render useful. The straight and narrow way he never had a settled purpose of treading, but his wanderings were more frequent than he intended, his returns more lingering. The very strength of his passions made him incapable of deep or persevering deceit; he was humane to the suffering which pressed itself on his notice, if it came at a convenient season; and he was disinterested, if neglect of gold deserves the name. Lambert, his new adviser, had no passions, no humanity, no neglect of gold. He was a gamester.

The practice of this profession, for, though a man of family and fortune, he made it a profession, had rendered him skilful to discern, and remorseless to use, the weakness of his fellow-creatures. His estate lay contiguous to —, the little town where Hargrave had been quartered when he visited at Norwood; but the year which Hargrave passed at — was spent by Lambert almost entirely in London. He had returned, however, to the country, had been introduced to Hargrave, and had just fixed upon him as an easy prey, when the soldier was saved for a time, by receiving intimation of his promotion, and orders to join his regiment in a distant county.

They met again in an evil hour, just when Hargrave had half determined to abandon as fruitless his search after Laura. The necessity of a stimulant was as strong as ever. Another necessity, too, was strong, for £10,000 of damages had been awarded to Lord Bellamer; Hargrave could not easily raise the money, and Lord Lincourt refused to advance a shilling. "A pretty expensive pleasure has this Lady Bellamer been to me," said Hargrave, bestowing on her ladyship a coarse enough epithet—for even fine gentlemen will sometimes call women what they have found them to be. He was prevailed on to try the gaming table for the supply of both his wants, and found that pleasure fully twice as expensive. His friend introduced

him to some of those accommodating gentlemen who lend money at illegal interest, and was even generous enough to supply him when they would venture no more upon an estate in reversion. Lambert had accidentally heard of the phoenix which had appeared at Walbourne; and, on comparing the description he received of her with that to which, with politic patience, he had often listened, he had no doubt of having found the object of Hargrave's search. But, as it did not suit his present views that the lover should renew the pursuit, he dropped not a hint of his discovery, listening, with a gamester's insensibility, to the regrets which burst forth amidst the struggles of expiring virtue, for her whose soft influence would have led to peace and honor.

At last, a dispute arising between the worthy Mr. Lambert and his respectable coadjutors, as to the partition of the spoil, it occurred to him that he could more effectually monopolize his prey in the country; and thither accordingly he was called by pressing business. There he was presently so fortunate as to discover a Miss Montreville, on whose charms he descended in a letter to Hargrave in such terms, that, though he averred she could not be Hargrave's Miss Montreville, Hargrave was sure she could be no other; and, as his informer expected, arrived in —shire as soon as a chaise and four could convey him thither.

Lambert had now a difficult game to play, for he had roused the leading passion, and the collateral one could act but feebly. But they who often tread the crooked path find pleasure in its intricacy, vainly conceiving that it gives proof of their sagacity; and Lambert looked with pleasure on the obstacles in his way. He trusted, that while the master-spirit detained Hargrave within the circle of Walbourne, he might dexterously practise with the lesser imp of evil.

Had his letter afforded a clue to Laura's residence, Hargrave would have flown direct to Walbourne; but he was first obliged to stop at —; and Lambert, with some difficulty, persuaded him, that, as he was but slightly known to Lady Pelham, and probably in disgrace with her protégé, it would be more politic to delay his visit, and first meet them at Lord —'s, whither he had information that they were to go on the following day. "You will take your girl at unawares," said he, "if she be your girl; and that is no bad way of feeling your ground." The vanity of extorting from Laura's surprise some unequivocal token of his power prevailed on the lover to delay the interview till the morning; and, after spending half the evening in dwelling on the circumstances of his last unexpected meeting with her, which distance softened in his imagination to more than its actual tenderness, he early in the morning set out with Lambert for —, where he took post in the hermitage, as a place which no stranger omitted to visit.

Growing weary of waiting, he despatched Lambert as a scout; and, lest he should miss Laura, remained himself in the hermitage, till his emissary brought him information that the party were in the picture-gallery. Thither he hastened; but the party had already left the house, and thus Laura had accidental warning

of his approach. No reception could have been more mortifying to him, who was prepared to support her sinking under the struggle of love and duty, of jealousy and pride. No struggle was visible; or, if there was, it was but a faint strife between native courtesy and strong dislike. He had boasted to Lambert of her tenderness; the specimen certainly was not flattering. Most of her companions were little more gracious. De Courcy paid him no more attention than bare civility required. With the Bolingbroke he was unacquainted, but the character of his companion was sufficient reason for their reserve. Lady Pelham was the only person present who soothed his wounded vanity. Pleased with the prospect of unravelling the mystery into which she had pried so long in vain, charmed with the easy gallantry and adroit flattery of which Hargrave, in his cooler moments, was consummate master, she accepted his attentions with great cordiality; while he had the address tacitly to persuade her that they were a tribute to her powers of entertaining.

Before thy parted, she had converted her permission to visit Walbourne into a pressing invitation, nay, had even hinted to De Courcy the propriety of asking Colonel Hargrave to join the dinner party that day at Norwood. The hint, however, was not taken; and therefore, in her way home, Lady Pelham indulged her fellow-travellers with sundry moral and ingenious reflections concerning the folly of being "righteous over much;" and on the alluring, accessible form of the true virtue, contrasted with the repulsive, bristly, hedgehog-like make of the false. Indeed, it must be owned that for the rest of the evening her ladyship's conversation was rather sententious than agreeable; but the rest of the party, in high good humor, overlooked her attacks, or parried them in play.

Montague had watched the cold composure of Laura on Hargrave's first accosting her, and seen the gesture which repulsed him at parting; and though in the accompanying look he lost volumes, his conclusions, on the whole, were favorable. Still a doubt arose whether her manner sprung not from the fleeting resentment of affection; and he was standing mournfully calculating the effects of Hargrave's perseverance, when his mother, in passing him as she followed her guests to the eating-room, said, in an emphatical whisper, "I am satisfied. There is no worm in the bud."

Mrs. de Courcy's encouraging assertion was confirmed by the behavior of Laura herself; for she maintained her usual serene cheerfulness; nor could even the eye of love detect more than one short fit of abstraction; and then the subject of thought seemed anything rather than pleasing retrospect, or glad anticipation. The company of his friends, Harriet's pointedly favorable reception of Mr. Bolingbroke's assiduities, and the rise of his own hopes, all enlivened Montague to unusual vivacity, and led him to a deed of daring which he had often projected, without finding courage to perform it. He thought, if he could speak of Hargrave to Laura, and watch her voice, her eye, her complexion, all his doubts would be solved. With this view, contriving to draw her a little apart, he ventured, for the first time, to name

his rival; mentioned Lady Pelham's hint; and, faltering, asked Laura whether he had not done wrong in resisting it.

"Really," answered Laura, with a very naive smile, and a very faint blush, "I don't wonder you hesitate in offering me such a piece of flattery as to ask my opinion."

"Do not tax me with flattering you," said De Courcy, earnestly; "I would as soon flatter an apostle: but tell me candidly what you think."

"Then, candidly," said Laura, raising her mild, unembarrassed eye to his, "I think you did right, perfectly right, in refusing your countenance to a person of Colonel Hargrave's character. While vice is making her encroachments on every hand, it is not for the friends of virtue to remove the ancient landmarks."

Though this was one of the stalest pieces of morality that ever Montague had heard Laura utter, he could scarcely refrain from repaying it by clasping her to his heart. Convinced that her affections were free, he could not contain his rapture, but exclaimed, "Laura, you are an angel! and if I did not already love beyond all power of expression, I should be —" He raised his eyes to seek those of Laura, and met his mother's fixed on him with an expression which compelled him to silence. "You should be in love with me," said Laura, laughing, and filling up the sentence as she imagined it was to conclude. "Well, I shall be content with the second place."

Mrs. de Courcy, who had approached them, now spoke on some indifferent subject, and saved her son from a very awkward attempt at explanation. She drew her chair close to Laura, and soon engaged her in a conversation so animated, that Montague forgot his embarrassment, and joined them with all his natural ease and cheerfulness. The infection of his ease and cheerfulness Laura had ever found irresistible. Flashes of wit and genius followed the collision of their minds; and the unstudied eloquence, the poetic imagery of her style, sprung forth at his touch, like blossoms in the steps of the fabled Flora.

Happy with her friends, Laura almost forgot the disagreeable adventure of the morning; and every look and word mutually bestowing pleasure, the little party were as happy as affection and esteem could make them, when Lady Pelham, with an aspect like a sea fog, and a voice suitably forbidding, inquired whether her niece would be pleased to go home, or whether she preferred sitting chattering there all night. Laura, without any sign of noticing the rudeness of this address, rose, and said she was quite ready to attend her ladyship. In vain did the De Courcys entreat her to prolong her visit till morning. To dare to be happy without her concurrence was treason against Lady Pelham's dignity; and unfortunately she was not in a humor to concur in the joy of any living thing. De Courcy's reserve towards her new favorite she considered as a tacit reproof of her own cordiality; and she had just such a conviction that the reproof was deserved, as to make her thoroughly out of humor with the proofer, with herself, and consequently with everybody. Determined to interrupt pleasure which she would not share, the more her hosts

pressed her stay, the more she hastened her departure; and she mingled her indifferent good-nights to them with more energetic reprimands to the tardiness of her coachman.

"Thank Heaven," said she, thrusting herself into the corner of her carriage with that jerk in her motion which indicates a certain degree of irritation, "to-morrow we shall probably see a civilized being." A short pause followed. Laura's plain integrity and prudence had gained such ascendancy over Lady Pelham, that her niece's opinion was to her ladyship a kind of second conscience, having, indeed, much the same powers as the first—its sanction was necessary to her quiet, though it had not force to control her actions. On the present occasion, she wished above all things to know Laura's sentiments; but she would not condescend to ask them directly. "Colonel Hargrave's manners are quite those of a gentleman," she resumed. The remark was entirely ineffectual; for Laura coolly assented, without inquiring whether he were the civilized being whom Lady Pelham expected to see. Another pause. "Colonel Hargrave will be at Walbourne to-morrow," said Lady Pelham, the tone of her voice sharpening with impatience. "Will he, ma'am?" returned Laura, without moving a muscle. "If Miss Montreville has no objection," said Lady Pelham, converting, by a toss of her head and a twist of her upper lip, the words of compliment into an insult. "Probably," said Laura, with a smile, "my objections would make no great difference." "Oh, to be sure," returned Lady Pelham; "it would be lost labor to state them to such an obstinate, unreasonable person as I am! Well, I believe you are the first who ever accused me of obstinacy." If Lady Pelham expected a compliment to her pliability, she was disappointed; for Laura only answered, "I shall never presume to interfere in the choice of your ladyship's visitors."

That she should be thus compelled to be explicit was more than Lady Pelham's temper could endure. Her eyes flashed with rage. "Superlative humility, indeed!" she exclaimed with a sneer; but awed, in spite of herself, from the free expression of her fury, she muttered it within her shut teeth, in a sentence of which the word "close" and "jesuitical" alone reached Laura's ear. A long and surly silence followed, Lady Pelham's pride and anger struggling with her desire to learn the foundation and extent of the disapprobation which she suspected that her conduct had excited. The latter, at last, partly prevailed: though Lady Pelham still disdained direct consultation.

"Pray, Miss Montreville," said she, "if Colonel Hargrave's visits were to you, what mighty objections might your sanctity find to them?" Laura had long ago observed that a slight exertion of her spirit was the best *quintus* to her aunt's ill humor; and, therefore, addressing her with calm austerity, she said, "Any young woman, madam, who values her reputation, might object to Colonel Hargrave's visits, merely on the score of prudence. But even my 'superlative humility' does not reconcile me to company which I despise; and my 'sanctity,' as your ladyship is pleased to call it, shrinks from the violator of laws, divine and human."

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Lady Pelham withdrew her eyes to escape a glance which they never could stand; but, bridling, she said, "Well, Miss Montreville, I am neither young nor sanctimonious, therefore your objections cannot apply to Colonel Hargrave's visits to me; and I am determined," continued she, speaking as if strength of voice denoted strength of resolution, "I am determined, that I will not throw away the society of an agreeable man, to gratify the whims of a parcel of narrow-minded bigots."

To this attack Laura answered only by a smile. She smiled to see herself classed with the De Courcys; for she had no doubt that they were the "bigots" to whom Lady Pelham referred. She smiled, too, to observe that the boasted freedom of meaner minds is but a poor attempt to hide from themselves the restraint imposed by the opinions of the wise and good.

The carriage stopped, and Laura took sanctuary in her own apartment; but at supper she met her aunt with smiles of unaffected complacency, and, according to the plan which she invariably pursued, appeared to have forgotten Lady Pelham's fit of spleen; by that means enabling her aunt to recover from it with as little expense to her pride as possible.

## CHAPTER XXV.

LADY PELHAM was not disappointed in her expectation of seeing Colonel Hargrave on the following day. He called at Walbourne while her ladyship was still at her toilette; and was shown into the drawing-room, where Laura had already taken her station. She rose to receive him, with an air which showed that his visit gave her neither surprise nor pleasure; and motioning him to a distant seat, quietly resumed her occupation. Hargrave was a little disconcerted. He expected that Laura would shun him, with marks of strong resentment, or perhaps with the agitation of offended love; and he was preparing for nothing but to entreat the audience which she now seemed inclined to offer him.

Lovers are so accustomed to accuse ladies of cruelty, and to find ladies take pleasure in being so accused, that unlooked-for kindness discomposes them; and a favor unhoped is generally a favor undesired. The consciousness of ill desert, the frozen serenity of Laura's manner, deprived Hargrave of courage to use the opportunity which she seemed voluntarily to throw in his way. He hesitated, he faltered; while, all unlike her former self, Laura appeared determined that he should make love, for she would not aid his dilemma even by a comment on the weather. All the timidity which formerly marked her demeanor was now transferred to his; and, arranging her work with stoical composure, she raised her head to listen, as Hargrave, approaching her, stammered out an incoherent sentence, expressive of his unalterable love, and his fears that he had offended almost beyond forgiveness.

Laura suffered him to conclude without interruption; then answered, in a voice mild but determined, "I had some hopes, sir, from your knowledge of my character and sentiments, that, after what has passed, you could have

entertained no doubts on this subject. Yet, lest even a shadow of suspense should rest on your mind, I have remained here this morning on purpose to end it. I sincerely grieve to hear that you still retain the partiality you have been pleased to express, since it is now beyond my power to make even the least return."

The utmost bitterness of reproach would not have struck so chillily on the heart of Hargrave as these words, and the rancor in which they were uttered. From the principles of Laura he had indeed dreaded much; but he had feared nothing from her indifference. He had feared that duty might obtain a partial victory; but he had never doubted that inclination would survive the struggle. With a mixture of doubt, surprise, and anguish, he continued to gaze upon her after she was silent; then starting, he exclaimed, "I will not believe it; it is impossible. Oh, Laura, choose some other way to stab, for I cannot bear this!" "It pains me," said Laura, in a voice of undissembled concern, "to add disappointment to the pangs which you cannot but feel; yet it were most blameable now to cherish in you the faintest expectation. "Stop," cried Hargrave, vehemently, if you would not have me utterly undone. I have never known peace or innocence but in the hope of your love; leave me a dawning of that hope, however distant. Nay, do not look as if it were impossible. When you thought me a libertine—a seducer—all that you can now think me, you suffered me to hope. Let me but begin my trial now, and all womankind shall not lure me from you."

"Ah," said Laura, "when I dreamt of the success of that trial, a strange infatuation hung over me. Now it has passed away forever. Sincerely do I wish and pray for your repentance, but I can no longer offer to reward it. My desire for your reformation will henceforth be as disinterested as sincere."

Half-distracted with the cutting calmness of her manner, so changed since the time when every feature spoke the struggles of the heart, when the mind's whole strength seemed collected to resist its tenderness, Hargrave again vehemently refused to believe in her indifference. "'Tis but a few short months," he cried, grasping her hand with a violence which made her turn pale, "'tis but a few short months since you loved me with your whole soul, since you said that your peace depended upon my return to virtue. And dare you answer it to yourself to cast away the influence, the only influence, which can secure me!"

"If I have any influence with you," returned Laura, with a look and attitude of earnest entreaty, "let it but this once prevail, and then be laid aside forever? Let me persuade you to the review of your conduct—to the consideration of your prospects as an accountable being, of the vengeance which awaits the impenitent, of the escape offered in the Gospel. As you value your happiness, let me thus far prevail. Or if it will move you more," continued she, the tears gushing from her eyes, "I will beseech you to grant this, my only request, in memory of a love which mourned your unworthiness almost unto death."

The sight of her emotion revived Hargrave's hopes; and casting himself at her feet, he

passionately declared, while she shuddered at the impious sentiment, that he asked no heaven but her love, and cared not what were his fate if she were lost. "Ah, sir," said she, with pious solemnity, "believe me, the time is not distant when the disappointment of this passion will seem to you a sorrow light as the baffled sports of childhood. Believe the testimony of one who but lately drew near to the gates of the grave. On a death-bed, guilt appears the only real misery; and lesser evils are lost amidst its horrors, like shadows in the midnight gloom."

The ideas which Laura was laboring to introduce into the mind of Hargrave were such as he had of late too successfully endeavored to exclude. They had intruded like importunate creditors; till, oft refused admittance, they had ceased to return. The same arts which he had used to disguise from himself the extent of his criminality, he now naturally employed to extenuate it in the sight of Laura. He assured her that he was less guilty than she supposed; that she could form no idea of the force of the temptation which had overcome him; that Lady Bellamer was less the victim of his passions than of her own; he vehemently protested that he despised and abhorred the wanton who had undone him; and that, even in the midst of a folly for which he now execrated himself, his affections had never wandered from their first object. While he spoke, Laura in confusion cast down her eyes, and offended modesty suffused her face and neck with crimson. She could indeed form no idea of a heart, which, attached to one woman, could find any temptation in the allurements of another. But when he ended, virtuous indignation flashing in her countenance, "For shame, sir!" said she. "If any thing could degrade you in my eyes, it were this mean attempt to screen yourself behind the partner of your wickedness. Does it lessen your guilt that it had not even the poor excuse of passion? or think you that, even in the hours of a weakness for which you have given me such just reason to despise myself, I could have prized the affection of a heart so depraved? You say you detest your crime; I fear you only detest its punishment; for, were you really repentant, my opinion, the opinion of the whole world, would seem to you a trifle unworthy of regard, and the utmost bitterness of censure be but an echo to your own self-upbraidings."

Hargrave had no inclination to discuss the nature of repentance. His sole desire was to wrest from Laura some token, however slight, of returning tenderness. For this purpose he employed all the eloquence which he had often found successful in similar attempts. But no two things can be more different in their effects than the language of passion poured into the sympathizing bosom of mutual love, or addressed to the dull ear of indifference. The expressions which Laura once thought capable of warming the coldest heart seemed now the mere ravings of insanity; the lamentations which she once thought might have softened rocks now appeared the weak complainings of a child for his lost toy. With a mixture of pity and disgust she listened and replied; till the entrance of Lady Pelham put a period to



the dialogue, and Laura immediately quitted the room.

Lady Pelham easily perceived that the conversation had been particular; and Hargrave did not long leave her in doubt as to the subject. He acquainted her with his pretensions to Laura, and begged her sanction to his addresses; assuring her that his intercourse with Lady Bellamer was entirely broken off, and that his marriage would secure his permanent reformation. He complimented Lady Pelham upon her liberality of sentiment and knowledge of the world; from both of which he had hopes, he said, that she would not consider one error as sufficient to blast his character. Lady Pelham made a little decent hesitation on the score of Lady Bellamer's prior claims; but was assured that no engagement had ever subsisted there. "She had hoped that Lord Lincourt would not be averse." She was told that Lord Lincourt anxiously desired to see his nephew settled. "She hoped Colonel Hargrave was resolved that his married life should be irreplicable. Laura had a great deal of sensibility, it would break her heart to be neglected; and Lady Pelham was sure, that in that case the thought of having consented to the dear child's misery would be more than she could support." Her ladyship was vanquished by an assurance, that for Laura to be neglected by her happy husband was utterly impossible.

"Laura's inclinations then must be consulted; everything depended upon her concurrence, for the sweet girl had really so wound herself round Lady Pelham's heart, that positively her ladyship could not bear to give her a moment's uneasiness, or to press her upon a subject to which she was at all averse." And, strange as it may seem, Lady Pelham at that moment believed herself incapable of distressing the person, whom, in fact, she tormented with ceaseless ingenuity! Hargrave answered by confessing his fears that he was for the present less in favor than he had once been; but he disclosed Laura's former confessions of partiality, and insinuated his conviction that it was smothered rather than extinguished.

Lady Pelham could now account for Laura's long illness and low spirits; and she listened with eager curiosity to the solution of the enigma which had so long perplexed. She considered whether she should relate to the lover the sorrows he had caused. She judged (for Lady Pelham often *judged* properly) that it would be indecate thus to proclaim to him the extent of his power; but, with the usual inconsistency between her judgment and her practice, in half an hour she had informed him of all that she had observed, and hinted all that she suspected. Hargrave listened, was convinced, and avowed his conviction, that Lady Pelham's influence was alone necessary to secure his success. Her ladyship said, "that she should feel some delicacy in using any strong influence with her niece, as the amiable orphan had no friend but herself, had owed somewhat to her kindness, and might be biased by gratitude against her own inclination. The fortune which she intended bequeathing to Laura might by some be thought to confer a right to advise; but, for her part, she thought her title all was no more than due to the person whose tender assiduities

filled the blank which had been left in her ladyship's maternal heart by the ingratitude and disobedience of her child." This sentiment was pronounced in a tone so pathetic, and in language so harmonious, that though it did not for a moment impose upon her hearer, it deceived Lady Pelham herself; and she shed tears, which she actually imagined to be forced from her by the mingled emotions of gratitude and of disappointed tenderness.

Lady Pelham had now entered on a subject inexhaustible; her own feelings, her own misfortunes, her own dear self. Hargrave, who in his hours of tolerable composure was the most polite of men, listened, or appeared to listen, with unconquerable patience, till he fortunately recollected an appointment which his interest in her ladyship's conversation had before banished from his mind, when he took his leave, bearing with him a very gracious invitation to repeat his visit.

With him departed Lady Pelham's fit of sentimentality; and in five minutes, she had dried her eyes, composed the paragraph which was to announce the marriage of Lord Lincourt (for she killed off the old peer without ceremony) to the lovely heiress of the amiable Lady Pelham; taken possession of her niece's boudoir and four, and heard herself announced as the benefactress of this new wonder of the world of fashion. She would cut off her rebellious daughter with a shilling; give her up to the beggary and obscurity which she had chosen, and leave her whole fortune to Lady Lincourt; for so, in the fulness of her content, she called Laura. After some time enjoying her niece's prospects, or, to speak more justly, her own, she began to think of discovering how near they might be to their accomplishment; and, for this purpose, she summoned Laura to a conference.

Lady Pelham loved nothing on earth but herself: yet vanity, gratified curiosity, and, above all, the detection of a mere human weakness reducing Laura somewhat more to her own level, awakened in her breast an emotion resembling affection, as, throwing her arms round her niece, she, in language half sportive, half tender, declared her knowledge of Laura's secret, and reproached her with having concealed it so well. Insulted, wronged, and forsaken by Hargrave, Laura had kept his secret inviolable, for she had no right to disclose it; but she scorned, by any evasion, to preserve her own. Glowing with shame and mortification, she stood silently shrinking from Lady Pelham's looks; till, a little recovering herself, she said, "I deserve to be thus jumbled for my folly in founding my regards, not on the worth of their object, but on my own imagination; and more, if it be possible, do I deserve, for exposing my weakness to one who has been so ungenerous as to boast of it. But it is some compensation to my pride," continued she, raising her eyes, "that my disorder is cured beyond the possibility of relapse." Lady Pelham smiled at Laura's security, which she did not consider as an infallible sign of safety. It was in vain that Laura proceeded solemnly to protest her indifference. Lady Pelham could allow for self-deceit in another's case, though she never suspected it in her own. Vain were Laura's

comments upon Hargrave's character; they were but the fond revilings of offended love. Laura did not deny her former preference; she even owned that it was the sudden intelligence of Hargrave's crimes which had reduced her to the brink of the grave; therefore Lady Pelham was convinced that a little perseverance would fan the smothered flame; and perseverance, she hoped, would not be wanting.

Nevertheless, as her ladyship balanced her fondness for contradicting by her aversion to being contradicted, and as Laura was too much in earnest to study the qualifying tone, the conference concluded rather less amicably than it began; though it ended by Lady Pelham's saying, not very consistently with her sentiments an hour before, that she would never cease to urge so advantageous a match, conceiving that she had a right to influence the choice of one whom she would make the heiress of forty thousand pounds. Laura was going to insist that all influence would be ineffectual, but her aunt quitted her without suffering her to reply. She would have followed to represent the injustice of depriving Mrs. Herbert of her natural rights; but she desisted on recollecting that Lady Pelham's purposes were, like wedges, never fixed but by resistance.

The time had been when Lady Pelham's fortune would have seemed to Hargrave as dust in the balance, joined with the possession of Laura. He had gamed, had felt the want of money, and money was no longer indifferent to him. But Laura's dower was still light in his estimation, compared with its weight in that of Lambert, to whom he incidentally mentioned Lady Pelham's intention. That prudent person calculated that forty thousand pounds would form a very handsome addition to a fund upon which he intended to draw pretty freely. He had little doubt of Hargrave's success; he had never known any woman with whom such a lover could fail. He thought he could lead his friend to bargain for immediate possession of part of his bride's portion, and for certainty of the rest in reversion, before parting with his liberty. He allowed two, or perhaps even three months for the duration of Laura's influence; during which time he feared he should have little of her husband's company at the gaming-table; but from thenceforth he judged that the day would be his own, and that he should soon possess himself of Hargrave's property, so far as it was alienable. He considered that, in the mean time, Laura would furnish attraction sufficient to secure Hargrave's stay at —, and he trusted to his own dexterity for improving that circumstance to the best advantage. He failed not, therefore, to encourage the lover's hopes, and bestowed no small ridicule on the idea that a girl of nineteen should desert a favorite on account of a little gallantry.

Cool cunning would engage with fearful odds against imprudence, if it could set bounds to the passions, as well as direct their course. But it is often deceived in estimating the force of feelings which it knows only by the effects. Lambert soon found that he had opened the passage to a torrent which bore all before it. The favorite stimulus found, its temporary substitute was almost disregarded; and Hargrave, intoxicated with his passion, tasted sparingly

of the poisoned cup which his friend designed for him. His time and thoughts were again devoted to Laura, and gaming was only sought as a relief from the disappointment and vexation which generally attended his pursuit. The irritation of his mind, however, made amends for the lessened number of opportunities for plundering him, by rendering it easier to take advantage of those which remained.

The insinuating manners and elegant person of Hargrave gained daily on the favor of Lady Pelham; for the great as well as the little vulgar are the slaves of mere externals. She permitted his visits at home and his attendance abroad, expatiating frequently on the liberality of sentiment which she thus displayed. At first these encomiums on her own conduct were used only to disguise from herself and others her consciousness of its impropriety; but she repeated them till she actually believed them just, and considered herself as extending a charitable hand to rescue an erring brother from the implacable malignity of the world.

She was indefatigable in her attempts to promote success with Laura. She lost no opportunity of pressing the subject. She obstinately refused to be convinced of the possibility of overcoming a strong prepossession. Laura, in an evil hour for herself thoughtlessly replied, that affection was founded on the belief of excellence, and must of course give way when the foundation was removed. This observation had just fallacy sufficient for Lady Pelham's purpose. She took it for her text, and harangued upon it with all the zeal and perseverance of disputation. She called it Laura's theory; and insisted, that, like other theorists, she would shut her eyes against the plainest facts, nay, stifle the feelings of her own mind, rather than admit what might controvert her opinion. She cited all the instances which her memory could furnish of agricultural, and chemical, and metaphysical theorism; and, with astonishing ingenuity, contrived to draw a parallel between each of them and Laura's case. It was in vain that Laura qualified, almost retracted, her unlucky observation. Her adversary would not suffer her to desert untenable ground. Delighted with her victory, she returned again and again to the attack, after the vanquished had appealed to her mercy; and much more than "thrice she slew the slain."

Sick of arguing about the possibility of her indifference, Laura at length confined herself to simple assertions of the fact. Lady Pelham at first merely refused her belief; and, with provoking pity, rallied her niece upon her self-deceit; but, finding that she corroborated her words by a corresponding behavior to Hargrave, her ladyship's temper betrayed its accustomed infirmity. She peevishly reproached Laura with taking a coquettish delight in giving pain; insisted that her conduct was a tissue of cruelty and affectation; and upbraided her with disingenuousness in pretending an indifference which she could not feel. "And does your ladyship communicate this opinion to Colonel Hargrave?" said Laura, one day, fretted almost beyond her patience by a remonstrance of two hours' continuance. "To be sure I do," returned Lady Pelham. "In common humanity I will not allow him to suffer

more from your perverseness than I can avoid." "Well, madam," said Laura, with a sigh and a shrug of impatient resignation, "nothing remains but that I show a consistency, which, at least, is not common to affectation."

Lady Pelham's representations had their effect upon Hargrave. They brought balm to his wounded pride, and he easily suffered them to counteract the effect of Laura's calm and uniform assurances of her indifference. While he listened to these, her apparent candor and simplicity, the regret she expressed at the necessity of giving pain, brought temporary conviction to his mind; and with transports of alternate rage and grief, he now execrated her inconstancy, then his own unworthiness; now abjured her, then the vices which had deprived him of her affection. But the joint efforts of Lady Pelham and Lambert always revived hopes sufficient to make him continue a pursuit which he had not, indeed, the fortitude to relinquish.

His love (if we must give that name to selfish desire, mingled at times with every ungentle feeling) had never been so ardent. The well-known principle of our nature, which adds charms to what is unattainable, lent new attractions to Laura's really improved loveliness. The smile which was reserved for others seemed but the more enchanting; the hand which he was forbidden to touch seemed but the more soft and snowy; the form which was kept sacred from his approach bewitched him with more resistless graces. Hargrave had been little accustomed to suppress any of his feelings, and he gave vent to this with an entire neglect of the visible uneasiness which it occasioned to its object. He employed the private interviews, which Lady Pelham contrived to extort for him, in the utmost vehemence of complaint, protestation, and entreaty. He labored to awaken the pity of Laura; he even condescended to appeal to her ambition; and persevered, in spite of unequivocal denials, till Laura, disgusted, positively refused ever again to admit him without witnesses.

His public attentions were, if possible, still more distressing to her. Encouraged by Lady Pelham, he, notwithstanding the almost repulsive coldness of Laura's manner, became her constant attendant. He pursued her wherever she went; placed himself, in defiance of propriety, so as to monopolize her conversation; and seemed to have laid aside all his distinguishing politeness, while he neglected every other woman to devote his assiduities to her alone. He claimed the station by her side till Laura had the mortification to observe that others resigned it at his approach; he snatched every opportunity of whispering his adulations in her ear; and, far from affecting any concealment in his preference, seemed to claim the character of her acknowledged adorer.

It is impossible to express the vexation with which Laura endured this indelicate pre-eminence. Had Hargrave been the most irreproachable of mankind she would have shrunk from such obtrusive marks of his partiality; but her sense of propriety was no less wounded by the attendance of such a companion, than her modesty was shocked by her being thus

dragged into the notice, and committed to the mercy, of the public. The exclusive attentions of the handsome Colonel Hargrave, the mirror of gallantry, the future Lord Lincourt, were not, however undesired, to be possessed unenvied. Those who unsuccessfully angled for his notice avenged themselves on her to whom they imputed their failure, by looks of scorn, and by sarcastic remarks, which they sometimes contrived should reach the ear of the innocent object of malice. Laura, unspeakably averse to being the subject of even laudatory observation, could sometimes scarcely restrain the tears of shame and mortification that were wrung from her by attacks which she could neither resent nor escape.

In spite of the natural sweetness of her temper, she was sometimes tempted to retort upon Colonel Hargrave the vexation which he caused to her; and his officiousness almost compelled her to forsake the civility within the bounds of which she had determined to confine her coldness. He haunted her walks, stole upon her unannounced, detained her almost by force at these accidental meetings, or at those which he obtained by the favor of Lady Pelham. His whole conduct conspired to make him an object of real dread to Laura, though her watchful self-command and habitual benevolence preserved him from her aversion.

Sometimes she could not help wondering at the obstinacy of her persecutor. "Surely," said she to him, "after all I have said, after the manner in which I have said it, you cannot expect any fruit from all these rhapsodies; you must merely think your honor bound to keep them up, at whatever hazard to the credit of your understanding." Laura had never herself submitted to be driven into a course of action contrary to reason, and it never occurred to her that her lover had no reason for his conduct, except that he was not sufficiently master of himself to desist from his pursuit.

From the importunities of Hargrave, however, Laura could sometimes escape. Though they were frequent, they were of necessity intermitting. He could not always be at Walbourne; he could not intrude into her apartment. She visited sometimes where he was not admitted, or she could decline the invitation which she knew extended to him. But her persecutions by Lady Pelham had no intermission; from them she had no retreat. Her chamber was no sanctuary from so familiar a friend; and the presence of strangers only served to exercise her ladyship in that ingenious species of conversation which addresses to the sense of one of the company what it conveys to the ear of the rest.

For some time she employed all her forces in combating Laura's supposed affection; and when, not without extreme difficulty, she was convinced that she strove against a phantom of her own creation, she next employed her efforts to alter her niece's determination. She tried to rouse her ambition; and again and again expatiated on all the real and on all the imaginary advantages of wealth and title. The theme in her ladyship's hands seemed inexhaustible, though Laura repeatedly declared that no earthly thing could be less in her esteem than distinctions which she must share

with such a person as Hargrave. Every day, and all day, the subject was canvassed, and the oft-confuted argument vamped up anew, till Laura was thoroughly weary of the very names of rank, and influence, and coronets, and coaches.

Next her ladyship was eloquent upon Laura's implacability. "Those who were so very unforgiving," she supposed, "were conscious that they had no need to be forgiven. Such people might pretend to be Christians, but in her opinion such pretensions were mere hypocrisy." Laura stood amazed at the strength of self-deception which could produce this sentiment from lips which had pronounced inextinguishable resentment against an only child. Recovering herself, she calmly made the obvious reply, "that she entertained no enmity against Hargrave; that, on the contrary, she sincerely wished him every blessing, and the best of all blessings, a renewed mind; but that the Christian precept was never meant to make the vicious and the impure the denizens of our bosoms." It might be thought that such a reply was quite sufficient; but Lady Pelham possessed one grand qualification for a disputant, she defied conviction. She could shift, and turn, and bewilder, till she found herself precisely at the point from whence she set out.

She had a practice, too, of all others the most galling to an ingenuous and independent spirit—she would invent a set of opinions and sentiments, and then argue upon them as if they were real. It was in vain for Laura to disclaim them. Lady Pelham could prove incontrovertibly that they were Laura's sentiments; or, which was the same thing, proceeded as if she had proved it. She insisted that Laura acted on a principle of revenge against Hargrave, for the slight his inconstancy had put upon her; and argued most convincingly on the folly and wickedness of a revengeful spirit. Laura in vain protested her innocence. Lady Pelham was certain of the fact; and she dilated on the guilt of such a sentiment, and extenuated the temporary secession of Hargrave, till a bystander must have concluded that Laura was the delinquent, and he her harmless victim. Her ladyship declared, that "she did not wonder at her niece's obduracy. She had never, in her life, known a person of cool temper who was capable of forgiving. She had reason, for her own part, to be thankful, that if she had the failings of a warm temper, she had its advantages too. She had never, except in one instance, known what it was to feel permanent displeasure."

On this topic Lady Pelham had the more room for her eloquence, because it admitted of no reply; and, perhaps, for this reason it was the sooner exhausted; for it had not been discussed above half a dozen times, before she forsook it in order to assert her claims to influence her niece's decision. And here her ladyship was suddenly convinced of the indefeasible rights of relationship. "She stood in the place of Laura's parents, and in their title might claim authority." But finding Laura firmly of opinion that parental authority extended no further than a negative voice, Lady Pelham laid aside the imperative tone to take up that of entreaty. "She would not advance the claim which her

tried friendship might give her to advise; she would only beseech, conjure. She hoped her importunities would be forgiven, as they could proceed only from the tenderest regard to her dear girl's welfare. Laura was her only hope—the sole being on earth to whom her widowed heart clung with partial affection—and to see her thus throw away her happiness was more than her ladyship could bear." Closely as Laura had studied her aunt's character, and well as it was now known to her, she was sometimes overpowered by these expressions of love and sorrow; and wept as she was compelled to repeat, that her happiness and her duty must alike be sacrificed ere she could yield to the wishes of her friend. But as she never, even in these moments of softness, betrayed the smallest symptom of compliance, Lady Pelham had not patience to adhere to the only method of attack which possessed a chance of success.

Of all her arts of teasing, this was indeed the most distressing to a person of Laura's sensibility, and she felt not a little relieved when, exasperated by the failure of all her efforts, Lady Pelham burst into vehement upbraidings of her niece's hardness of heart. "She could not have conceived," she said, "such obduracy in one so young—in woman, too; a creature who should be all made up of softness. Laura might pique herself upon her stoicism, but a Zeno in petticoats was, in her opinion, a monster. For her part she never could resist entreaty in her life."

"Then I beseech you, madam," said Laura, after having patiently submitted to be baited thus for three full hours, "do not make an exception; but for pity's sake be prevailed upon to drop this subject. I assure you it can have no effect but to distress me."

"You may be determined, Miss Montreville, that all my endeavors shall be vain, but I shall certainly never be so far wanting to my duty as to neglect pressing upon you a match so much for your honor and advantage."

"It is possible," cried Laura, losing patience at this prospect of the continuation of her persecutions, "that your ladyship can think it for my 'advantage' to marry a man I despise: for my 'honor' to share the infamy of an adulterer."

"Upon my word, Miss Montreville," returned Lady Pelham, reddening with anger, "I am constrained to admire the delicacy of your language; so very suitable to the lips of so delicate a lady."

"A smile, not wholly free from sarcasm, played on Laura's lips. "If delicacy," said she, "be henceforth to find so strenuous a supporter in your ladyship, I shall hope to be exempted in future from all remonstrance on the subject of this evening's altercation."

If Laura really entertained the hope she mentioned, she was miserably disappointed; for Lady Pelham remitted not a jot of her tormentings. Her remonstrances were administered in every possible form, upon every possible occasion. They seasoned every *tête-à-tête*, were insinuated into every conversation. Laura's attempts to avoid the subject were altogether vain. The discourse might begin with the conquests of Genghis Khan, but it always ended with the advantages of marrying Colonel Hargrave.

Teased and persecuted; disturbed in every useful occupation, and every domestic enjoyment, Laura often considered of the possibility of delivering herself from her indefatigable tormentors, by quitting the protection of her aunt, and taking refuge with Mrs. Douglas. But this plan she had unfortunately deprived herself of the means of executing.

Laura knew that her cousins, the Herberts, were poor. She knew that Mrs. Herbert was in a situation which needs comforts that poverty cannot command, and it was vain to expect these comforts from the maternal compassion of Lady Pelham. She therefore determined to supply them, as far as possible, from her own little fund; and fearing that a gift from her might revolt the high spirit of Herbert, she enclosed almost all her half-year's annuity in a blank cover, and conveyed it to her cousin. What she retained was a sum far too small to defray the expense of a journey to Scotland; and several months were to elapse before she could recruit her fund. Till then, she had no resource but patience; and she endeavored to console herself with a hope that in time the perseverance of her adversaries would fail.

Often did she with a sigh turn her eyes towards Norwood—Norwood, the seat of all the peaceful domestic virtues; where the voice of contention was unheard, where courtly politeness, though duly honored, held the second place to the courtesy of the heart. But Mrs. De Courcy had never hinted a wish that Laura should be a permanent inmate of her family; and, even if she had, there would have been a glaring impropriety in forsaking Lady Pelham's house for one in its immediate neighborhood. De Courcy, too, she thought, was not the kind friend he was wont to be. She had of late seen him seldom, which was probably caused by the marked coolness of Lady Pelham's reception; but it had happened unfortunately that he had twice surprised her in the midst of Hargrave's extravagances, when she almost feared to speak to him, lest he should awaken the furious jealousy to which her tormentor was subject; and she dreaded that her father's friend (for so she loved to call him) suspected her of encouraging the addresses of such a lover. During these visits he had looked, she thought, displeased; and had early taken leave. Was it kind to judge her unheard? Perhaps, if an opportunity had been given her, she might have assumed courage to exculpate herself; but without even calling to ask her commands, De Courcy was gone with Mr. Bolingbroke to London, to make arrangements for Harriet's marriage.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THOUGH Laura could not escape the attacks of Lady Pelham, she sometimes found means to elude those of Hargrave. She watched his approach; and whenever he appeared, entrenched herself in her own apartment. She confined herself almost entirely to the house, and excused herself from every visit where she thought he might be of the party. He besieged her with letters; she sent them back unopened.

Lady Pelham commanded her to be present during his visits; she respectfully, but peremptorily, refused to comply.

She had thus remained a sort of prisoner for some weeks, when her aunt one morning entered her room with an aspect which Laura could not well decipher. "Well, Miss Montreville," said she, "you have at last accomplished your purpose; your capricious tyranny has prevailed at last; Colonel Hargrave leaves—this morning."

"Dear madam," cried Laura, starting up overjoyed, "what a deliverance!"

"Oh, to be sure, mighty cause you have to congratulate yourself upon a deliverance from a man who might aspire to the first woman in England! But you will never have it in your power to throw away such another offer. You need hardly expect to awaken such another passion."

"I hope, with all my heart, I shall not; but are you certain he will go?"

"Oh, very certain. He has written to tell me so!"

"I trust he will keep his word," said Laura; "and when I am sure he is gone, I will beg of your ladyship to excuse me for a few hours, while I walk to Norwood. I have been so shackled of late! but the first use I make of my liberty shall be to visit my friends."

"I am afraid, my dear," returned Lady Pelham, with more gentleness than she was accustomed to use in contradiction, "you will scarcely find time to visit Mrs. de Courcy. I have long promised to pass some time with my friend, Mrs. Bathurst; and I purpose setting off to-morrow. I should die of ennui here, now I have lost the society which has of late given me so much pleasure."

"Mrs. Bathurst, madam? she who was formerly—"

"Poh, poh, child," interrupted Lady Pelham; "don't stir up the embers of decayed slander. Will you never learn to forget the little mistakes of your fellow-creatures! Mrs. Bathurst makes one of the best wives in the world; and to a man with whom everybody would not live so well."

Practice had made Laura pretty expert in interpreting her aunt's language, and she understood more in the present instance than it was meant she should comprehend. She had heard of Mrs. Bathurst's fame, and, knowing that it was not quite spotless, was rather averse to accompany Lady Pelham; but she never, without mature deliberation, refused compliance with her aunt's wishes, and she resolved to consider the matter before announcing opposition. Besides, she was determined to carry her point of seeing Mrs. de Courcy, and therefore did not wish to introduce any other subject of altercation. "Though I should accompany you to-morrow, madam," said she, "I shall have time sufficient for my walk to Norwood. The preparations for my journey cannot occupy an hour; and, if I go to Norwood now," added she, tying on her bonnet, "I can return early. Good-morning, madam; to-day I may walk in peace."

Laura felt as if a mountain had been lifted from her breast as she bounded across the lawn, and thought that Colonel Hargrave was,

by this time, miles distant from Walbourne; but as she pursued her way she began to wonder that Lady Pelham seemed so little moved by his departure. It was strange that she, who had remonstrated so warmly, so unceasingly, against Laura's behavior to him, did not more vehemently upbraid her with its consequences. Lady Pelham's forbearance was not in character. Laura did not know how to explain it. "I have taken her by surprise," thought she, "with my excursion to Norwood, but she will discuss it at large in the evening; and probably in many an evening—I shall never hear the last of it."

It was needless, however, to anticipate evil, and Laura turned her thoughts to the explanation which she was bent upon making to her friends. The more she reflected, the more she was persuaded that De Courcy suspected her of encouraging the addresses of Hargrave; addresses now provokingly notorious to all the neighbourhood. He had most probably communicated the same opinion to his mother; and Laura wished much to exculpate herself, if she could do so without appearing officiously communicative. If she could meet Mr. de Courcy alone, if he should lead her to the subject, or if it should accidentally occur, she thought she might be able to speak freely to him; more freely than even to Mrs. de Courcy. "It is strange, too," thought she, "that I should feel so little restraint with a person of the other sex; less than ever I did with one of my own. But my father's friend ought not to be classed with other men."

Her eyes yet swam in tears of grateful recollection, when she raised them to a horseman who was meeting her. It was Montague de Courcy; and, as he leisurely advanced, Laura's heart beat with a hope that he would, as he had often done before, dismount to accompany her walk. But Montague, though evidently in no haste to reach the place of his destination, stopped only to make a slight inquiry after her health, and then passed on. Laura's bosom swelled with grief, unmingled with resentment. "He thinks," said she, "that I invite the attentions of a libertine; and is it surprising that he should withdraw his friendship from me? But he will soon know his error." And again she more cheerfully pursued her way.

Her courage failed her a little as she entered Norwood. "What if Mrs. de Courcy, too, should receive me coldly," thought she; "can I notice it to her? Can I beg of her to listen to my justification?" These thoughts gave Laura an air of timidity and embarrassment as she entered the room where Mrs. de Courcy was sitting alone. Her fears were groundless. Mrs. de Courcy received her with kindness, gently reproaching her for her long absence. Laura assured her that it was wholly involuntary, but "Of late," said she, hesitating, "I have been very little from home." Mrs. de Courcy gave a faint, melancholy smile; but did not inquire what had confined her young friend. "Harriet has just left me," said she, "to pay some visits, and to secure the presence of a companion for a very important occasion. She meant also to solicit yours, if three weeks hence you are still to be capable of acting as a bridesmaid." Laura, smiling, was about to reply,

that being in no danger of forfeiting that privilege, she would most joyfully attend Miss de Courcy; but she met a glance of such marked, such mournful scrutiny, that she stopped; and the next moment was covered with blushes.

"Ah!" thought she, "Mrs. de Courcy, indeed, believes all that I feared, and more than I feared—what can I say to her?"

Her embarrassment confirmed Mrs. de Courcy's belief; but, unwilling further to distress Laura, she said, "Harriet herself will talk over all these matters with you, and then your own peculiar manner will soften the refusal into somewhat almost as pleasing as consent; if, indeed, you are obliged to refuse."

"Indeed, madam," said Laura, "nothing can be further from my thoughts than refusal; I shall most willingly, most gladly, attend Miss de Courcy; but may I—will you allow me to—to ask you why you should expect me to refuse?"

"And if I answer you," returned Mrs. de Courcy, "will you promise to be candid with me on a subject where ladies think that candor may be dispensed with?"

"I will promise to be candid with you on every subject," said Laura, rejoiced at this opportunity of entering on her justification.

"Then I will own to you," said Mrs. de Courcy, "that circumstances have conspired with public report to convince me that you are yourself about to need the good office which Harriet solicits from you. Colonel Hargrave and you share between you the envy of our little world of fashion."

"And have you, madam—has Harriet—has Mr. de Courcy given credit to this vexatious report?" cried Laura, the tears of mortification filling her eyes. "Ah, how differently should I have judged of you!"

"My dearest girl," said Mrs. de Courcy, surprised, but delighted, "I assure you that none of us would, upon slight grounds, believe anything concerning you, that you would not wish us to credit. But, in this instance, I thought my authority indisputable; Lady Pelham—"

"Is it possible," cried Laura, "that my aunt could propagate such a report, when she knew the teasing, the persecution which I have endured?"

"Lady Pelham did not directly assure me of its truth," answered Mrs. de Courcy; "but when I made inquiries, somewhat, I own, in the hope of being empowered to contradict the rumor, her answer was certainly calculated to make me believe that you were soon to be lost to us."

"Lost, indeed!" exclaimed Laura. "But what could be my aunt's intention? Surely she cannot expect still to prevail with me. My dear friend, if you knew what I have suffered from her importunities. But she has only my advantage in view, though, surely, she widely mistakes the means."

Laura now frankly informed Mrs. de Courcy of the inquietude she had suffered from the persevering remonstrances of Lady Pelham, and the obtrusive assiduities of Hargrave. Mrs. de Courcy, though she sincerely pitied the comfortless situation of Laura, listened with pleasure to the tale. "And is all this

confidential!" said she, "so confidential that I must not mention it even to Montague or Harriet."

"Oh, no, indeed, madam," cried Laura; "I wish above all things that Mr. de Courcy should know it; tell him all, madam; and tell him, too, that I would rather be in my grave than to marry Colonel Hargrave."

Laura had scarcely spoken ere she blushed for the warmth with which she spoke, and Mrs. de Courcy's smile made her blush again, and more deeply. But the plea which excused her to herself she the next moment urged to her friend. "Ah, madam," said she, "if you had witnessed Mr. de Courcy's kindness to my father; if you had known how my father loved him, you would not wonder that I am anxious for his good opinion."

"I do not wonder, my love," said Mrs. de Courcy, in a tone of heartfelt affection. "I should be much more surprised, if such a mind as yours could undervalue the esteem of a man like Montague. But why did not my sweet Laura take refuge from her tormentors at Norwood, where no officious friends, no obtrusive lovers, would have disturbed her quiet?"

Laura excused herself, by saying that she was sure her aunt would never have consented to her absence for more than a few hours; but she promised that now, when Lady Pelham's particular reason for detaining her was removed, she would endeavor to obtain permission to spend some time at Norwood. "I fear I must first pay a much less agreeable visit," continued Laura, "for my aunt talks of carrying me to-morrow to the house of a Mrs. Bathurst, of whom you probably have heard." Mrs. de Courcy knew that Lady Pelham was on terms of intimacy with Mrs. Bathurst, yet she could not help feeling some surprise that she should choose to introduce a niece to such a *chaperon*. She did not, however, think it proper, by expressing her opinion, to heighten Laura's reluctance towards what she probably could not prevent; and therefore merely expressed a strong wish that Lady Pelham would permit Laura to spend the time of her absence at Norwood. Laura, though she heartily wished the same, knew her aunt too well to expect that a purpose which she had once announced she would relinquish merely because it interfered with the inclinations of others. Still it was not impossible that it might be relinquished. A thousand things might happen to alter Lady Pelham's resolutions, though they were invincible by entreaty.

Laura lingered with Mrs. de Courcy for several hours, and when, at last, she was obliged to go, received at parting many a kind injunction to remember her promised visit. As she bent her steps homeward she revolved in her mind every chance of escape from being the companion of her aunt's journey. She was the more averse to attend Lady Pelham, because she conjectured that they would not return before Miss de Courcy's marriage, on which occasion Laura was unwilling to be absent. But she was sensible that neither this nor any other reason she could urge would in the least affect Lady Pelham's motions. Derham Green, the seat of Mrs. Bathurst, was above ninety miles from Walbourne; and it

was not likely that Lady Pelham would travel so far with the intention of making a short visit.

Laura had quitted the avenue of Norwood, and entered the lane which led to that of Walbourne, when the noise of singing, for it could not be called music, made her look round; and she perceived that she was overtaken by a figure in a dingy regimental coat, and a rusty hat, which, however, regained somewhat of its original shade, by a contrast with the gray side-locks which blew up athwart it. This person was applying the whole force of his lungs to the utterance of "Hearts of Oak," in a voice, the masculine bass of which was, at times, oddly interrupted by the weak and treble tones of age; while, with a large crabstick, he beat time against the sides of a starveling ass upon which he was mounted. The other hand was charged with the double employment of guiding the animal, and of balancing a large portmanteau, which was placed across its shoulders. Laura, retaining the habits of her country, addressed the man with a few words of courtesy, to which he replied with the frankness and garrulity of an old Englishman; and as they proceeded at much the same pace, they continued the conversation. It was, however, soon interrupted. At the gate of a grass field, with which the ass seemed acquainted, the creature made a full stop. "Get on," cried the man, striking it with his heel. It would not stir. The rider applied the crabstick more vigorously than before. It had no effect; even an ass can despise the chastisement with which it is too familiar. The contention was obstinate; neither party seemed inclined to yield. At last, fortune decided in favor of the ass. The portmanteau slipped from its balance, and fell to the ground. The man looked dolefully at it. "How the plague shall I get it up again!" said he. "Don't dismount," said Laura, who now first observed that her companion had but one leg; "I can lift it for you."

As she raised it, Laura observed that it was directed to Mr. Jones, at Squire Bathurst's, Derham Green, — shire. Though the name was too common to excite any suspicion, the address struck her as being to the same place which had so lately occupied her thoughts. "Have you far to go?" said she to the man. "No, ma'am," answered he, "only to Job Wilson, the carrier's, with this portmanteau, for Colonel Hargrave's gentleman. The colonel took Mr. Jones with himself in the chaise, but he had only room for one or two of his boxes, so he left this with the groom, and the groom gave me a put of porter to go with it."

The whole affair was now clear. Lady Pelham, finding Laura unmanageable at home, was contriving that she should meet Colonel Hargrave at a place where, being among strangers, she would find it less possible to avoid him. Mrs. Bathurst, too, was probably a good, convenient friend, who would countenance whatever measures were thought necessary. In the first burst of indignation at the discovery of her aunt's treachery, Laura thought of retracing her steps to Norwood, never more to enter the presence of her unworthy relation; but resentment cooling at the recollection of the benefits which she owed to Lady Pelham, she deter-

mined on returning to Walbourne, to announce in person her refusal to go with her aunt; conceiving this to be the most respectful way of intimating her intention.

As soon as she reached home, she retired to her chamber without seeing Lady Pelham; and immediately despatched the following note to Mrs. de Courcy:—"My dear madam, an accident has happened which determines me against going to Derham Green. Will you think I presume too soon on your kind invitation, if I say that I shall see you to-morrow at breakfast! Or will not your benevolence rather acquire a new motive in the shelterless condition which awaits your very affectionate L. M.!"

She then proceeded to make arrangements for her departure, reflecting, with tears, on the hard necessity which was about to set her at variance with the only living relation who had ever acknowledged her. She knew that Lady Pelham would be enraged at the frustration of a scheme, to accomplish which she had stooped to such artifice; and she feared that, however gentle might be the terms of her intended refusal, her aunt would consider it as unpardonable rebellion. She was, however, firmly resolved against compliance, and all that remained was to use the least irritating mode of denial.

They met at dinner. Lady Pelham in high good humor, Laura grave and thoughtful. Lady Pelham mentioned her journey; but, dreading to rouse her aunt's unwearied powers of ob- jurgation, Laura kept silence; and her just displeasure rendering her averse to Lady Pelham's company, she contrived to spend the evening chiefly alone.

As the supper hour approached, Laura began to tremble for the contest which awaited her. She felt herself more than half inclined to withdraw from the storm, by departing without warning; leaving Lady Pelham to discover the reason of her flight after she was beyond the reach of her fury. But she considered that such a proceeding must imply an irreconcilable breach with one to whom she owed great and substantial obligations; and would carry an appearance of ingratitude which she could not bear to incur. Summoning her courage, therefore, she resolved to brave the tempest. She determined, that whatever provocation she might endure, she would offer none but such as was unavoidable; though, at the same time, she would maintain that spirit which she had always found the most effectual check to her aunt's violence.

The supper passed in quiet; Laura unwilling to begin the attack; Lady Pelham glorying in her expected success. Her ladyship had taken her candle, and was about to retire, before Laura durst venture on the subject. "Good-night, my dear," said Lady Pelham. "I fear," replied Laura, "I may rather say farewell, since it will be so long ere I see you again." "How do you mean?" inquired Lady Pelham. "That I cannot accompany you to Mrs. Bathurst's," replied Laura; fetching, at the close of her speech, a breath longer than the speech itself. "You won't go!" exclaimed Lady Pelham, in a voice of angry astonishment. "Since it is your wish that I should," returned Laura, meekly, "I am sorry that it is not in my power." "And pray

what puts it out of your power!" cried Lady Pelham, wrath working in her countenance. "I cannot go where I am to meet Colonel Hargrave." For a moment Lady Pelham looked confounded; but presently recovering utterance, she began, "So! this is your Norwood intelligence; and your charming Mrs. de Courcy—your model of perfection—sets spies upon the conduct of all the neighborhood!"

Laura reddened at this vulgar abuse of a person whom she revered so highly; but she had set a guard upon her temper, and only answered, that it was not at Norwood she received her information. "A fortunate, I should rather say a providential, accident," said she, "disclosed to me the whole"—the word "stratagem" was rising to her lips, but she exchanged it for one less offensive.

"And what if Colonel Hargrave is to be there!" said Lady Pelham, her choler rising as her confusion subsided. "I suppose, forsooth, my pretty prudish miss cannot trust herself in the house with a man!" "Not with Colonel Hargrave, madam," said Laura, coolly.

Lady Pelham's rage was now strong enough to burst the restraints of Laura's habitual ascendancy. "But I say you shall go, miss!" cried she, in a scream that mingled the fierceness of anger with the insolence of command. "Yes, I say you shall go; we shall see whether I am always to truckle to a baby-faced chit, a creature that might have died in a workhouse but for my charity." "Indeed, madam," said Laura, "I do not forget—I never shall forget—what I owe to you; nor that, when I was shelterless and unprotected, you received and cherished me." "Then show that you remember it, and do what I desire," returned Lady Pelham, softened, in spite of herself, by the resistless sweetness of Laura's look and manner. "Do not, I beseech you, madam," said Laura, "insist upon this proof of my gratitude. If you do, I can only thank you for your past kindness, and wish that it had been in my power to make a better return." "Do you dare to tell me that you will not go?" cried Lady Pelham, stamping till the room shook. "I beg, madam," said Laura, entreatingly, "I beg of you not to command what I shall be compelled to refuse." "Refuse at your peril!" shrieked Lady Pelham, in a voice scarcely articulate with passion, and grasping Laura's arm in the convulsion of rage.

Laura had sometimes been the witness, but seldom the object, of her aunt's transports—and while Lady Pelham stood eyeing her with a countenance "fierce as ten furies," she, conscious with what burning shame she would herself have shrunk from making such an exhibition, sympathetically averted her eyes, as if the virago had been sensible of the same feeling. "I say, refuse at your peril!" cried Lady Pelham. "Why don't you speak! obstinate—" "Because," answered Laura, with saint-like meekness, "I can say nothing but what will offend you—I cannot go to Mrs. Bathurst's."

Angry opposition Lady Pelham might have retorted with some small remains of self-possession, but the serenity of Laura exasperating her beyond all bounds, she was so far transported as to strike her a violent blow. Without uttering a syllable, Laura took her candle and quitted the room; while Lady Pelham, herself



enfolded at the outrage which she had committed, made no attempt to detain her.

Laura retired to her chamber, and sat quietly down to consider the state of her warfare, which she determined to conclude by letter, without exposing her person to another assault; but in a few minutes she was stormed in her citadel, and the enemy entered, conscious of mistake, but with spirit unbroken. Lady Pelham had gone too far to retract, and was too much in the wrong to recant her error; her passion, however, had somewhat exhausted itself in the intemperate exercise which she had allowed it; and though as unreasonable as ever, she was less outrageous. Advancing towards Laura with an air intended to express offended majesty, (for studied dignity is generally the disguise chosen by conscious degradation,) she began, "Miss Montreville, do you, in defiance of my commands, adhere to your resolution of not visiting Mrs. Bathurst!" "Certainly, madam," replied Laura, provoked that Lady Pelham should expect to intimidate her by a blow; "I have seen no reason to relinquish it." "There is a reason, however," returned Lady Pelham, elevating her chin, curling her upper lip, and giving Laura the side-glance of disdain, "though probably it is too light to weigh with such a determined lady, and that is, that you must either prepare to attend me to-morrow, or return to that beggary from which I took you, and never more enter my presence."

"Then, madam," said Laura, rising with her native mien of calm command, "we must part; for I cannot go to Mrs. Bathurst's."

Laura's cool resistance of a threat which was expected to be all-powerful, discomposed Lady Pelham's heroics. Her eyes flashing fire, and her voice sharpening to a scream, "Perverse, ungrateful wretch!" she cried, "get out of my sight; leave my house this instant." "Certainly, if you desire it, madam," answered Laura, with unmoved self-possession; "but, perhaps, if you please, I had better remain here till morning. I am afraid it might give rise to unpleasant observations, if it were known that I left your house at midnight."

"I care not who knows it—I would have the world see what a viper I have fostered in my bosom. Begone, and never let me see your hypocritical face again!"

"Then I hope," said Laura, "your ladyship will allow a servant to accompany me to Norwood. At this hour it would be improper for me to go alone." "Oh, to be sure," cried Lady Pelham, "do go to your friend and favorite, and make your complaint of all your harsh usage, and descent at large upon poor Lady Pelham's unucky failings. No, no, I promise you, no servant of mine shall be sent on any such errand." "There is fine moonlight," said Laura, looking calmly from the window, "I dare say, I shall be safe enough alone." "You shall not go to Norwood!" cried Lady Pelham; "I'll take care to keep you from that prying, censorious old hag. You two shan't be allowed to sit primming up your mouths, and spitting venom on all the neighborhood."

Weary of such low abuse, Laura took her bonnet, and was leaving the room. Lady Pelham placed herself between her and the door.

"Where are you going!" she demanded, in a voice in which rage was a little mingled with dread. "To the only shelter that England affords me," returned Laura; "to the only friends from whom death or distance does not sever me." "I shall spoil your dish of scandal for to-night, however," said Lady Pelham, flouncing out of the room; and, slapping the door with a force that made the windows rattle, she locked it on the outside. Laura, making no attempt to obtain release, quietly sat down, expecting a renewal of the charge. Soon, however, all the household seemed still, and Laura, having mingled with the prayer which commended herself to the care of Heaven, a supplication for pardon and amendment to her aunt, retired to a sound and refreshing rest.

On quitting Laura, Lady Pelham went to bed, pride and anger in her breast fiercely struggling against a sense of blame. But the darkness, the silence, the loneliness of night, assuage the passions even of a termagant; and by degrees she turned from re-acting and excusing her conduct, to fretting at its probable consequences.

The courage of a virago is no more than the daring of intoxication. Wait till the paroxysm be past, and the timid hare is not more the slave of fear. Lady Pelham began to feel, though she would scarcely acknowledge it to herself, how very absurdly her contest would figure in the mouths of the gossips round Walbourne. If her niece left her house in displeasure, if a breach were known to subsist between them, was it not most likely that Laura would in her own defence relate the treatment to which she had been subjected! At all events, if she went to Norwood before a reconciliation took place, she would certainly explain her situation to Mrs. de Courey, and Lady Pelham could not brave the contempt of the woman whom she disliked and abused. Anger has been compared to a short madness, and the resemblance holds in this respect, that in both cases a little terror is of sovereign use in restoring quiet. Lady Pelham even feared the calm displeasure of Laura, and shrunk from meeting the reproving eye of even the dependent girl whom she had persecuted, and reproached, and insulted.

By degrees Laura's habitual ascendancy was completely restored, perhaps with added strength for its momentary suspension; for she had rather gained in respectability by patient endurance, while Lady Pelham was somewhat humbled by a sense of misconduct. Besides, in the course of eight months' residence under her roof, Laura was become necessary to her aunt. Her prudence, her good temper, and her various domestic talents, were ever at hand to supply the capital defects of Lady Pelham's character. Lady Pelham could not justly be said to love any mortal, but she felt the advantages of the method and regularity which Laura had introduced into her family; Laura's beauty gratified her vanity; Laura's sweetness bore with her caprice; Laura's talents amused her solitude; and she made as near an approach as nature would permit to loving Laura. What was of more consequence, Laura was popular in the neighborhood; her story would be no sooner told than believed; and Lady Pelham's lively im-

agination strongly represented to her the aggravation, commentary, and sarcasm with which such an anecdote would be circulated.

But though these ideas floated in Lady Pelham's mind, let it not be thought that she once supposed them to be the motives of her determination to seek a reconciliation. No. Lady Pelham had explained, and disguised, and adorned her failings, till she had converted the natural shame of confession into a notion that a candid avowal atoned for any of her errors; and no sooner did she begin to think of making concessions to her niece, than the consciousness of blame was lost in inward applause of her own candor and condescension. An observing eye, therefore, would have seen more of conceit than of humility in her air, when early in the morning she entered Laura's apartment.

Laura was already dressed, and returned her aunt's salutation a little more coldly than she had ever formerly done, though with perfect good humor. Lady Pelham approached and took her hand; Laura did not withdraw it. "I fear," said Lady Pelham, "you think I behaved very absurdly last night." Laura looked down and said nothing. "I am willing to own that I was to blame," continued her ladyship, "but people of strong feelings, you know, my dear, cannot always command themselves." Laura was still silent. "We must forget and forgive the failings of our friends," proceeded her ladyship. Laura, who dreaded that these overtures of peace only covered a projected attack, still stood speechless. "Will you not forgive me, Laura," said Lady Pelham, coaxingly, her desire of pardon increasing, as she began to doubt of obtaining it.

"I do, madam," said Laura, clasping Lady Pelham's hand between her own. "I do from my heart forgive all, and if you will permit me, I will forget all—all but that when I was an orphan, alone in the world, you sheltered and protected me."

"Thank you, my dear good girl," returned Lady Pelham, sealing the reconciliation with a kiss. "I knew you would think it a duty to excuse an error arising merely from my natural warmth, and the interest I take in you—'A bad effect from a noble cause.' It is a melancholy truth that those who have the advantages of a feeling heart must share in its weaknesses too."

Laura had so often listened to similar nonsense, that it had ceased to provoke a smile. "Let us talk of this no more," said she; "let me rather try to persuade you not only to excuse, but to sanction, the obstinacy which offended you."

"Ah, Laura," returned Lady Pelham, smiling, "I must not call you obstinate, but you are very firm. If I could but prevail on you to go with me only for a day or two, I should make my visit as short as you please; for, now it has been all arranged, I must go, and it would look so awkward to go without you."

"If the length of your visit depends upon me," answered Laura, waiving a subject on which she was determined not to forfeit her character for firmness, "it shall be short indeed, for I shall long to offer some reparation for all my late perverseness and disobedience."

At another time Lady Pelham's temper would have failed her at this steady opposition of her will; but fear kept her in check. After a few very gentle expostulations, she gave up the point, and inquired whether her niece still intended to spend the time of her absence at Norwood. Laura answered that she did; and had promised to breakfast there that morning. Upon this Lady Pelham overwhelmed her with such caresses and endearments as she intended should obliterate the remembrance of her late injurious behavior. She extolled Laura's prudence, her sweet and forgiving disposition, her commendable reserve with strangers, and her caution in speaking of herself, or of her own affairs. Unfortunately for the effect of the flattery, Laura recollected that some of these qualities had at times been the subject of Lady Pelham's severe reprehension. She had, besides, sufficient penetration to detect the motive of her ladyship's altered language; and she strove to repress a feeling of contempt, while she replied to her aunt's thoughts as frankly as if they had been frankly spoken; assuring her that she should be far from publishing to strangers the casual vexations of her domestic life. Lady Pelham reddened, as her latent thoughts were thus seized and exposed naked to her view; but fear again proved victorious, and she redoubled her blandishments. She had even recourse to a new expedient, and for the first time made Laura an offer of money. With infinite difficulty did Laura suppress the indignation which swelled her breast. She had forgiven abuse and insult, but it was beyond endurance that her aunt should suppose that her pardon and silence might be bought. Restraining her anger, however, she positively refused the money; and bidding Lady Pelham farewell, departed, amidst pressing injunctions to remain at Norwood no longer than till her aunt returned to Walbourne; her ladyship protesting that her own home would not be endurable for an hour without the company of her dear Laura.

Lady Pelham unwillingly set out on a journey of which the first intention had been totally defeated; but she had no alternative, since, besides having promised to visit Mrs. Bathurst, she had made an appointment to meet Hargrave at the stage where she was to stop for the night, and it was now too late to give him warning of his disappointment. Even Hargrave's politeness was no match for his vexation, when he saw Lady Pelham, late in the evening, alight from her carriage, unaccompanied by Laura. He listened with impatience to her ladyship's apology and confused explanations, and more than half resolved upon returning to —, to carry on his operations there. But he, too, had promised to Mrs. Bathurst, whom for particular reasons he wished not to disoblige. The travelers, therefore, next day pursued their journey to Derham Green, beguiling the way by joint contrivances to conquer the stubbornness of Laura.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Laura had proceeded but a short way toward Norwood when she was met by De Courcy, who, with a manner the most opposite to his

coldness on the preceding day, sprung forward to meet her, his countenance radiant with pleasure. Laura, delighted with the change, playfully reproached him with his caprice. Montague colored, but defended himself with spirit; and a dialogue, more resembling flirtation than any in which Laura had ever engaged, occupied them till, as they loitered along the dark avenue of Norwood, a shade of the sentimental began to mingle with their conversation.

De Courcy had that morning resolved, firmly resolved that, while Laura was his guest at Norwood, he would avoid a declaration of his sentiments. Convinced, as he now was, that he had no longer any thing to fear from the perseverance of Hargrave, he was yet far from being confident of his own success. On the contrary, he was persuaded that he had hitherto awakened in Laura no sentiment beyond friendship, and that she must become accustomed to him as a lover before he could hope for any further grace. He considered how embarrassing would be her situation in a house of which the master was a repulsed, perhaps a rejected admirer; and he had determined not to hazard embittering to her a residence from which she had at present no retreat. Yet the confiding manner, the bewitching loveliness of Laura, the stillness, shade, and solitude of their path, had half beguiled him of his prudence, when, fortunately for his resolution, he saw Harriet advancing to meet her friend. Harriet's liveliness soon restored gaiety to the conversation; and the party proceeded less leisurely than before to Norwood, where Laura was received with affectionate cordiality by Mrs. De Courcy.

Never had the time appeared to Laura to fly so swiftly as now. Every hour was sacred to improvement, to elegance, or to benevolence. Laura had a mind capable of intense application, and therefore could exalt relaxation into positive enjoyment. But the pleasure which a vigorous understanding takes in the exercise of its powers was now heightened, in her hours of study, by the assistance, the approbation of De Courcy; and the hours of relaxation he enlivened by a manner which, at once frank and respectful, spirited and kind, seemed peculiarly fitted to adorn the domestic circle.

A part of every day was employed by Mrs. De Courcy in various works of charity; and, joining in these, Laura returned with satisfaction to a habit which she had unwillingly laid aside during her residence in London, and but imperfectly resumed at Walbourne. Amiable, rational, and pious, the family at Norwood realized all Laura's day-dreams of social happiness; and the only painful feeling that assailed her mind arose from the recollection that the time of her visit was fast stealing away.

Her visit was, however, prolonged by a fortunate cold, which detained Lady Pelham at Derham Green; and Laura could not regret an accident which delayed her separation from her friends. Indeed, she began to dread Lady Pelham's return, both as the signal of her departure from Norwood, and as a prelude to the renewal of her persecutions on account of Hargrave. Far from having, as Lady Pelham had insinuated, renounced his pursuit, he returned

in a few days from Mrs. Bathurst's; again established himself with Lambert; and, though he could not, uninvited, intrude at Norwood, contrived to beset Laura as often as she passed its bounds. In the few visits which she paid, she generally encountered him; and he regularly waylaid her at church. But he had lost an able coadjutor in Lady Pelham; and now, when no one present was concerned to assist his designs, and when Laura was protected by kind and considerate friends, she generally found means to escape his officious attentions; though, remembering his former jealousy of Montague, and the irritability of his temper, she was scrupulously cautious of marking her preference of De Courcy, or of appearing to take sanctuary with him from the assiduities of Hargrave.

Indeed, notwithstanding the mildness of De Courcy's disposition, she was not without fear that he might be involved in a quarrel by the unreasonable suspicion of Hargrave, who had often taxed her with receiving his addresses, ascribing his own failure to their success. She had in vain condescended to assure him that the charge was groundless. He never met De Courcy without showing evident marks of dislike. If he accosted him, it was in a tone and manner approaching to insult. The most trivial sentence which De Courcy addressed to Laura drew from Hargrave looks of enmity and defiance; while Montague, on his part, returned these aggressions by a cool disdain, the most opposite to the conciliating frankness of his general manners. Laura's alarm lest Hargrave's ill-concealed aversion should burst into open outrage, completed the dread with which he inspired her; and she felt like one subjected to the thralldom of an evil genius, when he one day announced to her that he had procured leave to remove his regiment to —; in order, as he said, "that he might be at hand to assert his rights over her."

He conveyed this information as, rudely preventing Mr. Bolingbroke and De Courcy, he led her from Mrs. De Courcy's carriage into church. Laura durst not challenge his presumptuous expression, for Montague was close by her side, and she dreaded that his aversion to arrogance and oppression might induce him to engage in her quarrel. Silently, therefore, though glowing with resentment, she suffered Hargrave to retain the place he had usurped, while Montague followed, with a countenance which a few short moments had clouded with sudden care. "Ah," thought he, "those rights must indeed be strong which he dare thus boldly, thus publicly assert."

It was some time ere the service began, and Laura could not help casting glances of kind inquiry on the saddened face which, a few minutes before, she had seen bright with animation and delight. Hargrave's eye followed hers with a far different expression. While she observed him darting a scowl of malice and aversion on the man to whom he owed his life, Laura shuddered; and wondering at the insatiation which had so long disguised his true character, bent her head, acknowledged her short-sightedness, and resigned the future events of her life to the disposal of Heaven.

It was the day immediately preceding Har-

riet's marriage, and neither she nor Mrs. De Courcy was in church; Laura, therefore, returned home tête-à-tête with Montague. Ignorant that Hargrave's provoking half-whisper had been overheard by De Courcy, she could not account for the sudden change in his countenance and manner; yet though she took an affectionate interest in his melancholy, they had almost reached home before she summoned courage to inquire into its cause. "I fear you are indisposed," said she to him, in a voice of kind concern. De Courcy thanked her. "No, not indisposed," said he, with a faint smile. "Disturbed, then," said Laura. De Courcy was silent for a moment, and then taking her hand, said, "May I be candid with you?" "Surely," returned Laura. "I trust I shall ever meet with candor in you." "Then I will own," resumed De Courcy, "that I am disturbed. And can the friend of Montreville be otherwise when he hears a right claimed over you by one so wholly unworthy of you?" "Ah," cried Laura, "you have then heard all. I hoped you had not attended to him." "Attended!" exclaimed De Courcy, "could any right be claimed over you, and I be regardless?" "It were ungrateful to doubt your friendly interest in me," replied Laura. "Believe me, Colonel Hargrave has no right over me, nor ever shall have." "Yet I did not hear you resist the claim," returned De Courcy. "Because," answered Laura, "I feared to draw your attention. His violence terrifies me, and I feared that—that you might—" She hesitated, stopped, and blushed very deeply. She felt the awkwardness of appearing to expect that De Courcy should engage in a quarrel on her account, but the simple truth ever rose so naturally to her lips that she could not even qualify it without confusion. "Might what?" cried De Courcy, eagerly. "Speak frankly, I beseech you." "I feared," replied Laura, recovering herself, "that the interest you take in the daughter of your friend might expose you to the rudeness of this overbearing man." "And did you, upon my account, dearest Laura, submit to this insolence?" cried De Courcy, his eyes sparkling with exultation. "Is my honor, my safety, then dear to you! Could you think of me even while Hargrave spoke!"

With surprise and displeasure, Laura read the triumphant glance which accompanied his words. "Is it possible," thought she, "that, well as he knows me, he can thus mistake the nature of my regard! or, can he, attached to another, find pleasure in the idle dream! Oh, man! thou art altogether vain!" Snatching away the hand which he was pressing to his lips, she coldly replied, "I should have been equally attentive to the safety of any common stranger, had I expected his interference, and Colonel Hargrave's speeches can not divert my attention even from the most trivial object in nature."

Poor De Courcy, his towering hopes suddenly leveled with the dust, shrunk from the frozen steadiness of her eye. "Pardon me, Miss Montreville," said he, in a tone of mingled sorrow and reproach, "pardon me for the hope that you would make any distinction between me and the most indifferent. I shall soon be cured of my presumption." Grieved at the

pain she saw she had occasioned, Laura would fain have said something to mitigate the repulse which she had given; but a new light began to dawn upon her, and she feared to conciliate the friend lest she should encourage the lover. Fortunately for the relief of her embarrassment, the carriage stopped. De Courcy gravely and in silence handed her from it; and hurrying to her chamber, she sat down to reconsider the dialogue she had just ended.

De Courcy's manner more than his words recalled a suspicion which she had oftener than once driven from her mind. She was impressed, she scarcely knew why, with a conviction that she was beloved. For some moments this idea alone filled her thoughts; the next that succeeded was recollection that she ought sincerely to lament a passion which she could not return. It was her duty to be sorry, very sorry indeed, for such an accident; to be otherwise would have argued the most selfish vanity, the most hard-hearted ingratitude toward the best of friends, and the most amiable of mankind. Yet she was not *very* sorry; it was out of her power to convince herself that she was; so she imputed her philosophy under her misfortune to doubtfulness of its existence. "But, after all," said she to herself, "his words could not bear such a construction; and for his manner—who would build any thing upon a manner! While a woman's vanity is so apt to deceive her, what rational creature would give credit to what may owe so much to her own imagination! Besides, did not Mrs. De Courcy more than hint that his affections were engaged? Did he not even himself confess to me that they were! And I taxed him with vanity! Truly, if he could see this ridiculous freak of mine, he might very justly retort the charge. And see it he must. What could possess me, with my absurd prudery, to take offense at his expecting that I, who owe him ten thousand kind offices, should be anxious for his safety! How could I be so false, so thankless, as to say I considered him as a common acquaintance! The friend of my father, my departed father! the friend who supported him in want, and consoled him in sorrow! No wonder that he seemed shocked! What is so painful to a noble heart as to meet with ingratitude! But he shall never again have reason to think me vain or ungrateful;" and Laura hastened down stairs, that she might lose no time in convincing De Courcy that she did not suspect him of being her lover, and highly valued him as a friend. She found him in the drawing-room, pensively resting his forehead against the window sash; and approaching him, spoke some trifle with a smile so winning, so gracious, that De Courcy soon forgot both his wishes and his fears, enjoyed the present, and was happy.

The day of Harriet's marriage arrived; and for once she was grave and silent. She even forgot her bridal finery; and when Laura went to inform her of Mr. Bolingbroke's arrival, she was sitting on the ground in tears, her head resting on the seat of an old-fashioned elbow-chair. She sprang up as Laura entered; and dashing the drops from her eyes, cried, "I have been trying to grow young again for a few minutes, before I am made an old woman for

life. Just there I used to sit when I was a little thing; and laid my head upon my father's knee; for this was his favorite chair, and there old Rover and I used to lie at his feet together. I'll beg this chair of my mother, for now I love every thing at Norwood." Laura drew her away, and she forgot the old elbow-chair when she saw the superb diamonds which were lying on her dressing-table.

The ceremonial of the wedding was altogether arranged by Mrs. Penelope; and though, in compliance with Mr. Bolingbroke's whims, she suffered the ceremony to be privately performed, she invited every creature who could claim kindred with the names of Bolingbroke or De Courcy to meet and welcome the young bride to her home. Mr. Bolingbroke having brought a license, the pair were united at Norwood. Mr. Wentworth officiated, and De Courcy gave his sister away. Mr. Bolingbroke's own new barouche, so often beheld in fancy, now really waited to convey her to the future dwelling; but she turned to bid farewell to the domestics who had attended her infancy, and forgot to look at the new barouche.

Mr. Bolingbroke was a great man, and could not be allowed to marry quietly. Bonfires were lighted, bells were rung, and a concourse of his tenantry accompanied the carriages which conveyed the party. The admiration of the company whom Mrs. Penelope had assembled in honor of the day was divided between Mrs. Bolingbroke's diamonds and her bride-maid; and as the number of each sex was pretty equal, the wonders shared pretty equally.

"Did you ever see any thing so lovely as Miss Montreville?" said Sophia Bolingbroke to the young lady who sat next her. "I never can think any body pretty who has red hair," was the reply. "If her hair be red," returned Sophia, "it is the most pardonable red hair in the world, for it is more nearly black. Don't you admire her figure?" "Not particularly; she is too much of the May-pole for me; besides, who can tell what her figure is, when she is so muffled up? I dare say she is stuffed, or she would show a little more of her skin." "She has at least an excellent taste in stuffing, then," said Sophia, "for I never saw any thing so elegantly formed." "It is easy to see," said the critic, "that she thinks herself a beauty by her dressing so affectively. To-night, when every body else is in full dress, do but look at hers!" "Pure, unadorned, virgin white," said Miss Bolingbroke, looking at Laura; "the proper attire of angels!" The name of Miss Montreville had drawn the attention of De Courcy to this dialogue. "I protest," cried he to Mr. Wentworth, who stood by him, "Sophy Bolingbroke is the most agreeable plain girl I ever saw." He then placed himself by her side; and while she continued to praise Laura, gave her credit for all that is most amiable in woman.

The moment he left her she ran to rally Laura upon her conquest. "I give you joy, my dear," said she; "De Courcy is certainly in love with you." "Nonsense," cried Laura, coloring crimson; "what can make you think so?" "Why he will talk of nothing but you; and he looked so delighted when I praised you, and paid me more compliments in half an hour

than ever I received in my whole life before." "If he was so complimentary," said Laura, smiling, "it seems more likely that he is in love with you." "Ah," said Sophia, sighing, "that is not very probable." "Fully as probable as the other," answered Laura; and turned away to avoid a subject which she was striving to banish from her thoughts.

During the few days which Laura and the De Courcys spent with the newly-married pair, Miss Bolingbroke's observations served to confirm her opinion; and merely for the pleasure of speaking of Montague, she rallied Laura incessantly on her lover. In weighing credibilities, small weight of testimony turns the scale; and Laura began alternately to wonder what retarded De Courcy's declaration, and to tax herself with vanity in expecting that he would ever make one. She disliked her stay at Orford Hall, and counted the hours till her return to Norwood. De Courcy's attentions she had long placed to the account of a regard which, while she was permitted to give it the name of friendship, she could frankly own that she valued above any earthly possession. These attentions were now so familiar to her, that they were become almost necessary, and she was vexed at being constantly reminded that she ought to reject them. She had, therefore, a latent wish to return to a place where she would have a legitimate claim to his kindness, and where, at least, there would be no one to remind her that she ought to shrink from it.

Besides, she was weary of the state and magnificence that surrounded her. While Harriet glided into the use of her finery as if she had been accustomed to it from her cradle, Laura could by no means be reconciled to it. She endured with impatience a meal of three hours long; could not eat while six footmen were staring at her; started, if she thoughtlessly leaned her head against the white damask wall; and could not move with ease where every gesture was repeated in endless looking-glasses. With pleasure, therefore, she saw the day arrive which was to restore her to easy hospitality and respectable simplicity at Norwood; but that very day she received a summons to attend her aunt at Walbourne.

Unwilling as Laura was to quit her friends, she did not delay to comply with Lady Pelham's requisition. Mrs. De Courcy judged it improper to urge her to stay; and Montague in part consoled himself for her departure by reflecting that he would now be at liberty to disclose his long-concealed secret. "No doubt you are at liberty," said Mrs. De Courcy, when he spoke to her of his intentions, "and I am far from pretending to advise or interfere. But, my dear Montague, you must neither be surprised, nor in despair, if you be at first unsuccessful. Though Laura esteems you, perhaps more than esteems you, she is convinced that she is invulnerable to love; and it may be so, but her fancied security is all in your favor."

Weary of suspense, however, De Courcy often resolved to know his fate; and often went to Walbourne, determined to learn, ere he returned, whether a circle of pleasing duties was to fill his after life, or whether it was to be spent alone, "loveless, joyless, unendeared;" but when he met the friendly smile of Laura,

and remembered that, his secret told, it might vanish like the gleaming of a wintery sun, his courage failed, and the intended disclosure was again delayed. Yet his manner grew less and less equivocal, and Laura, unwilling as she was to own the conviction to herself, could scarcely maintain her willful blindness.

She allowed the subject to occupy the more of her thoughts, because it came disguised in a veil of self-condemnation and humility. Sometimes she repeated to herself, that she should never have known the vanity of her own heart, had it not been visited by so absurd a suspicion; and sometimes that she should never have been acquainted with its selfishness and obduracy, had she not borne with such indifference the thoughts of what must bring pain and disappointment to so worthy a breast. But, spite of Laura's efforts to be miserable, the subject cost her much more perplexity than distress, and in wondering whether De Courcy really were her lover, and what could be his motive for concealing it if he were, she often forgot to deplore the consequences of her charms.

Meanwhile Hargrave continued his importunities; and Lady Pelham seconded them with unwearied perseverance. In vain did Laura protest that her indifference was unconquerable; in vain assure him, that though a total revolution in his character might regain her esteem, her affection was irrecoverably lost. She could at any time exasperate the proud spirit of Hargrave, till in transports of fury he would abjure her forever; but a few hours always brought the "forever" to an end, and Hargrave back, to supplicate, to importune, and not unfrequently to threaten. Though her unremitting coldness, however, failed to conquer his passion, it by degrees extinguished all of generous or kindly that had ever mingled with the flame; and the wild, unholy fire which her beauty kept alive was blended with the heart-burnings of anger and revenge. From such a passion Laura shrunk with dread and horror. She heard its expressions as superstition listens to sounds of evil omen; and saw his impassioned glances with the dread of one who meets the eye of the crouching tiger. His increasing jealousy of De Courcy, which testified itself in haughtiness, and even ferocity of behavior toward him, and Montague's determined though cool resistance of his insolence, kept her in continual alarm. Though she never on any other occasion voluntarily entered Hargrave's presence, yet if De Courcy found him at Walbourne, she would hasten to join them, fearing the consequences of a private interview between two such hostile spirits; and this apparent preference not only aggravated the jealousy of Hargrave, but roused Lady Pelham's indefatigable spirit of remonstrance.

The subject was particularly suited for an episode to her ladyship's harangues in favor of Hargrave; and she introduced and varied it with a dexterity all her own. She taxed Laura with a passion for De Courcy; and in terms not eminently delicate, reproached her with facility in transferring her regards. Then assuming the tone of a tender mistress, and affecting to treat all Laura's denials as the effect of maiden timidity, she would pretend to sym-

pathize in her sufferings, advising her to use her native strength of mind to conquer this unfortunate partiality; to transfer affections from one to whom they appeared valueless to him who sued for them with such interesting perseverance. Above all, she entreated Laura to avoid the appearance of making advances to a man who probably never bestowed a thought on her in return; thus intimating that her behavior might bear so provoking a construction.

Laura, sometimes irritated, oftener amused, by these impertinences, could have endured them with tolerable patience; but they were mere interludes to Lady Pelham's indefatigable chidings on the subject of Hargrave; and Laura's patience would have failed her, had she not been consoled by reflecting that the time now drew near when the payment of her annuity would enable her to escape from her unwearied persecutors. She heartily wished, however, that a change of system might make her residence with Lady Pelham endurable; for strong as was her attachment to Mrs. Douglas, it was no longer her only friendship; and she could not without pain think of quitting, perhaps forever, her valued friends at Norwood.

Winter advanced, and Lady Pelham began to talk of her removal to town. Laura could not help wondering sometimes that her aunt, while she appeared so anxious to promote the success of Hargrave, should meditate a step which would place him at a distance from the object of his pursuit; but Lady Pelham's conduct was so generally inconsistent, that Laura was weary of trying to reconcile its contradictories. She endeavored to hope that Lady Pelham, at last becoming sensible of the inefficacy of her efforts, was herself growing desirous to escape the colonel's importunity; and she thought she could observe that, as the time of their departure approached, her ladyship relaxed somewhat of her industry in teasing.

But the motives of Lady Pelham's removal did not at all coincide with her niece's hopes; and nothing could be further from her intention than to resign her labors in a field so rich in controversy and provocation. She imagined that Laura's obstinacy was occasioned, or at least strengthened, by the influence of the De Courcys, and she expected that a more general acquaintance with the world might remove her prejudices. At Walbourne, Laura, if offended, could always take refuge with Mrs. De Courcy. In London she would be more defenseless. At Walbourne, Lady Pelham acted under restraint, for there were few objects to divide with her the observation of her neighbors, and she felt herself accountable to them for the propriety of her conduct; but she would be more at liberty in a place where, each immersed in his own business or pleasure, no one had leisure to comment on the concerns of others. She knew that Hargrave would find means to escape the duty of remaining with his regiment, and, indeed, had concerted with him the whole plan of her operations.

Meanwhile Laura, altogether unsuspecting of their designs, gladly prepared for her journey, considering it as a fortunate instance of the instability of Lady Pelham's purposes. She paid a parting visit to Mrs. Bolingbroke, whom she found established in quiet possession of

all the goods of fortune. By the aid of Mrs. De Courcy's carriage, she contrived, without molestation from Hargrave, to spend much of her time at Norwood, where she was always received with a kindness the most flattering, and loaded with testimonies of regard. De Courcy still kept his secret; and Laura's suspicions rather diminished when she considered that, though he knew she was to go without any certainty of returning, he suffered numberless opportunities to pass without breathing a syllable of love.

The day preceding that which was fixed for the journey arrived; and Laura begged Lady Pelham's permission to spend it entirely with Mrs. De Courcy. Lady Pelham was rather unwilling to consent, for she remembered that her last excursion had been rendered abortive by a visit to Norwood; but, flattering herself that her present scheme was secure from hazard of failure, she assumed an accommodating humor, and not only permitted Laura to go, but allowed the carriage to convey her, stipulating that she should return it immediately, and walk home in the evening. She found the De Courcys alone, and passed the day less cheerfully than any she had ever spent at Norwood. Mrs. De Courcy, though kind, was grave and thoughtful; Montague absent and melancholy. Harriet's never-failing spirits no longer enlivened the party, and her place was but feebly supplied by the infantine gayety of De Courcy's little protégé, Henry.

This child, who was the toy of all his patron's leisure hours, had, during her visits to Norwood, become particularly interesting to Laura. His quickness, his uncommon beauty, his engaging frankness; above all, the innocent fondness which he showed for her, had really attached her to him, and he repaid her with all the affections of his little heart. He would quit his toys to hang upon her; and though at times as restless as any of his kind, was never weary of sitting quietly on her knee, clasping her slender neck in his little sun-burned arms. His prattle agreeably interrupted the taciturnity into which the little party were falling, till his grandfather came to take him away. "Kiss your hand, Henry, and bid Miss Montreville farewell," said the old man, as he was about to take him from Laura's arms. "It will be a long while before you see her again." "Are you going away?" said the child, looking sorrowfully in Laura's face. "Yes; far away," answered Laura. "Then Henry will go with you, Henry's dear, pretty lady." "No, no," said his grandfather; "you must go to your mammy; good boys love their mummies best." "Then you ought to be Henry's mammy," cried the child, sobbing and locking his arms round Laura's neck; "for Henry loves you best." "My dear boy!" cried Laura, kissing him with a smile that half consented to his wish; but happening to turn her eye toward De Courcy, she saw him change color, while, with an abruptness unlike his usual manner, he snatched the boy from her arms, and, regardless of his cries, dismissed him from the room!

This little incident did not contribute to the cheerfulness of the group. Grieved to part with her favorite, and puzzled to account for De Courcy's behavior, Laura was now the most

silent of the trio. She saw nothing in the childish expression of fondness which should have moved De Courcy; yet it had evidently stung him with sudden uneasiness. She now recollected that she had more than once inquired who were the parents of this child, and that the question had always been evaded. A motive of curiosity prompted her now to repeat the inquiry, and she addressed it to Mrs. De Courcy. With a slight shade of embarrassment, Mrs. De Courcy answered, "His mother was the only child of our old servant; a pretty, meek-spirited, unfortunate girl; and his father—" "His father's crimes," interrupted De Courcy, hastily, "have brought their own punishment; a punishment beyond mortal fortitude to bear;" and, catching up a book, he asked Laura whether she had seen it, endeavoring to divert her attention by pointing out some passages to her notice. Laura's curiosity was increased by this appearance of concealment, but she had no means of gratifying it, and the subject vanished from her mind when she thought of bidding farewell to her beloved friends, perhaps forever.

When she was about to go, Mrs. De Courcy affectionately embraced her. "My dear child," said she, "second in my love and esteem only to my own Montague, almost the warmest wish of my heart is to retain you always with me; but, if that is impossible, short may your absence be, and may you return to us as joyfully as we shall receive you." Weeping, and reluctant to part, Laura, at last, tore herself away. Hargrave had so often stolen upon her walks that the fear of meeting him was become habitual to her, and she wished to escape him by reaching home before her return could be expected. As she leaned on De Courcy's arm, ashamed of being unable to suppress her sensibility, she averted her head, and looked sadly back upon a dwelling endeared to her by many an innocent, many a rational pleasure.

Absorbed in her regrets, Laura had proceeded a considerable way before she observed that she had held a trembling arm, and recollected that De Courcy had scarcely spoken since their walk began. Her tears suddenly ceased, while, confused and disquieted, she quickened her pace. Soon recollecting herself, she stopped; and, thanking him for his escort, begged that he would go no further. "I can not leave you yet," said De Courcy, in a voice of restrained emotion, and again he led her onward.

A few short sentences were all that passed till they had almost reached the antique gate which terminated the winding part of the avenue. Here Laura again endeavored to prevail upon her companion to return, but without success. With more composure than before, he refused to leave her. Dreading to encounter Hargrave while De Courcy was in such evident agitation, she besought him to go, telling him it was her particular wish that he should proceed no further. He instantly stopped, and clasping her hand between his, "Must I then leave you, Laura?" said he; "you, whose presence has so long been the charm of my existence!" The blood rushed violently into Laura's face, and as suddenly retired. "And can I," continued De Courcy, "can I suffer you to go without pouring out my full heart to you?" Laura breathed painfully, and she pressed her

hand upon her bosom to restrain its swelling. "To talk to you of passion," resumed De Courcy, "is nothing. You have twined yourself with every wish and every employment, every motive, every hope, till to part with you is tearing my heart-strings." Again he paused. Laura felt that she was expected to reply, and, though trembling and breathless, made an effort to speak. "This is what I feared," said she, "and yet I wish you had been less explicit, for there is no human being whose friendship is so dear to me as yours; and now I fear I ought—" The sob which had been struggling in her breast now choked her utterance, and she wept aloud. "It is the will of Heaven," said she, "that I should be ref of every earthly friend." She covered her face; and stood laboring to compose herself; while, heart-struck with a disappointment which was not mitigated by all the gentleness with which it was conveyed, De Courcy was unable to break the silence.

"Ungrateful! selfish that I am," exclaimed Laura, suddenly dashing the tears from her eyes, "thus to think only of my own loss, while I am giving pain to the worthiest of hearts! My best friend, I can not, indeed, return the regard with which you honor me, but I can make you cease to wish that I should. And I deserve the shame and anguish I shall suffer. She whom you honor with your love," continued she, the burning crimson glowing in her face and neck, "has been the sport of a passion, strong as disgraceful—disgraceful as its object is worthless."

Her look, her voice, her manner, conveyed to De Courcy the strongest idea of the torture which this confession cost her; and no sufferings of his own could make him insensible to those of Laura. "Cease, cease," he cried, "best and dearest of women; do not add to my wretchedness the thought of giving pain to you." Then, after a few moments' pause, he continued, "It would be wronging your noble candor to doubt that you have recalled your affections."

"In doing so," answered Laura, "I can claim no merit. Infatuation itself could have been blind no longer."

"Then why, dearest Laura," cried De Courcy, his heart again bounding with hope, "why may not time, and the fond assiduities of love—"

"Ah!" interrupted Laura, "that is impossible. A mere preference I might give you, but I need not tell you that I have no more to give."

"My heavenly Laura," cried De Courcy, eager joy beaming in his eyes, "give me but this preference, and I would not exchange it for the fondest passions of all womankind."

"You deceive yourself," said Laura, mournfully; "miserably deceive yourself. Such a sentiment could never content you. You would miss a thousand little arts of happiness which love alone can teach; observe a thousand nameless coldnesses, which no caution could conceal; and you would be unhappy without knowing, perhaps, of what to complain. You, who deserve the warmest affection, to be content with mere endurance! Oh, no! I should be wretched in the bare thought of offering you so poor a return."

"Endurance, Laura! I should, indeed, be a monster to find joy in any thing which you could describe by such a word. But must I despair of awakening such an affection as will make duty delightful, such as will enjoy the bliss which it bestows?"

"Believe me, my dear friend," said Laura, in a voice as sweet, as soothing, as ever conveyed the tenderest confession, "believe me, I am not insensible to the value of your regard. It adds a new debt of gratitude to all that Montreville's daughter owes you. My highest esteem shall ever be yours, but, after what I have confided to you, a moment's consideration must convince you that all beyond is impossible."

"Ah!" thought De Courcy, "what will it cost me to believe that it is indeed impossible!" But Laura's avowal was not quite so fatal to his hopes as she imagined; and while she supposed that he was summoning fortitude to endure their final destruction, he stood silently pondering Mrs. De Courcy's oft-repeated counsel to let love borrow the garb of friendship, nor suffer him undisguised to approach the heart where, having once been dethroned as an usurper, all was in arms against him.

"If I must, indeed, renounce every dearer hope," returned he, "then in your friendship, my ever dear Miss Montreville, I must seek the happiness of my after life, and surely—"

"Oh, no," interrupted Laura, "that must not be; the part, the little part of your happiness which will depend upon earthly connections, you must find in that of some fortunate woman who has yet a heart to give."

"How can you name it to me!" cried De Courcy, half indignantly. "Can he who had known you, Laura, admired in you all that is noble, loved in you all that is enchanting, transfer his heart to some commonplace being! You are my business; you are my pleasure; I toil but to be worthy of you; your approbation is my sweetest reward; all earthly things are precious to me only as you share in them; even a better world borrows hope from you. And is this a love to be bestowed on some soulless thing? No, Laura, I can not, will not change. If I can not win your love, I will admit no substitute but your friendship."

"Indeed, Mr. De Courcy," cried Laura, unconsciously pressing, in the energy of speech, the hand which held hers; "indeed it is to no commonplace woman that I wish to resign you. Lonely as my own life must be, its chief pleasures must arise from the happiness of my friends, and to know that you are happy." Laura stopped, for she felt her voice grow tremulous. "But we will not talk of this now," resumed she; "I shall be absent for some months at least, and in that time you will bring yourself to think differently. Promise me, at least, to make the attempt."

"No, Laura," answered De Courcy, "this I can not promise. I will never harass you with importunity or complaint, but the love of you shall be my heart's treasure, it shall last through life—beyond life; and if you can not love me, give in return only such kind thoughts as you would bestow on one who would promote your happiness at the expense of his own. And promise me, dearest Laura, that when we meet, you will not receive me with suspicion or re-



serve, as if you feared that I should presume on your favor, or persecute you with solicitations. Trust to my honor, trust to my love itself, for sparing you all unavailing entreaty. Promise me, then, ever to consider me as a friend, a faithful, tender friend; and forget, till my weakness remind you of it, that ever you knew me as a lover."

"Ah, Mr. De Courcy," cried Laura, tears filling her eyes, "what thoughts but the kindest can I ever have of him who comforted my father's sorrows, who relieved—in a manner which made relief indeed a kindness—relieved my father's wants! And what suspicion, what coldness, can I ever feel toward him whom my father loved and honored! Yes, I will trust you; for I know that you are as far above owing favor to compassion as to fear."

"A thousand thanks, beloved Laura," cried De Courcy, kissing her hands; "and thus I seal our compact. One thing more; shall I trespass on your noble frankness, if I ask you whether, had not another stolen the blessing, I might have hoped to awaken a warmer regard! whether any labor, any cares, could have won for me what he has forfeited!"

Silent and blushing, Laura stood for a few moments with her eyes fixed on the ground, then raising them, said, "From you I fear no wrong construction of my words, and will frankly own to you that for my own sake, as well as yours, I wish you had been known to me ere the serpent wound me in his poisoned folds. I believe, indeed, that no mortal but himself could have inspired the same—what I shall call an infatuation, with which reason had nothing to do. But you have the virtues which I have been taught to love, and—and—but what avails it now! I was indeed a social creature; domestic habits, domestic wishes, strong in me. But what avails it now!"

"And was there a time when you could have loved me, Laura! Blessings on you for the concession! It shall cheer my exiled heart when you are far distant; soothe me with delightful day-dreams of what might have been; and give my solitude a charm which none but you could bring to the most social hour."

"Your solitude, my honored friend," replied Laura, "needs it not; it has better and nobler charms; the charms of usefulness, of piety; and long may these form your business and delight. But what makes me linger with you! I meant to hasten home, that I might avoid one as unlike you as confidence is to fear; the feelings which you each inspire. Farewell. I trust I shall soon hear that you are well and happy."

Loth to part, De Courcy endeavored to detain her while he again gave utterance to his strong affection; and when she would be gone, bade her farewell in language so solemn, so tender, that all her self-command could not repress the tears which trickled down her cheeks. They parted; he followed her to beg that she would think of him sometimes. Again she left him; again he had some little boon to crave. She reached the gate, and, looking back, saw De Courcy standing motionless where she had last quitted him. She beckoned a farewell. The gate closed after her, and De Courcy felt as if one blank, dreary waste had blotted the fair face of nature.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE evening was closing when Laura proceeded on her way. She had outstayed her purposed time, and from every bush by the path-side she expected to see Hargrave steal upon her; in every gust of the chill November wind she thought she heard his footstep. She passed the last cottages connected with Norwood. The evening fires glanced cheerfully through the casements, and the voice of rustic merriment came softened on the ear. "Amiable De Courcy!" thought Laura. "The meanest of his dependents finds comfort in his protection, while the being on whom I have lavished the affection which might have rejoiced that worthy heart makes himself an object of dread, even to her whom he pretends to love."

She reached home, however, without interruption, and was going to join Lady Pelham in the sitting-room, when, happening to pass a looking-glass, she observed that her eyes still bore traces of the tears she had been shedding, and, in dread of the merciless raiillery of her aunt, she retired to her own room. There, with an undefined feeling of despondence, she sat down to reconsider her conversation with De Courcy.

Never was task more easy or more unprofitable. She remembered every word that De Courcy had uttered; remembered the very tone, look, and gesture with which they were spoken. She recollected, too, all that she had said in reply; but she could by no means unravel the confused effects of the scene upon her own mind. She certainly pitied her lover to a very painful degree. "Poor De Courcy!" said she, accompanying the half whisper with a heavy sigh. But having, in the course of half an hour's rumination, repeated this soliloquy about twenty times, she began to recollect that De Courcy had borne his disappointment with considerable philosophy, and had appeared to derive no small comfort from the prospect of an intercourse of mere friendship.

This fortunate recollection, however, not immediately relieving her, she endeavored to account for her depression by laying hold of a vague idea which was floating in her mind, that she had not on this occasion acted as she ought. Friendship between young persons of different sexes was a proverbial fomentor of the tender passion; and though she was herself in perfect safety, was it right to expose to such hazard the peace of De Courcy! Was it generous, was it even honorable, to increase the difficulties of his self-conquest, by admitting him to the intimacy of friendship! It was true he had voluntarily sought the post of danger; but then he was under the dominion of an influence which did not allow him to weigh consequences; and was it not unpardonable in her, who was in full possession of herself, to sanction, to aid his imprudence! Yet how could she have rejected a friendship which did her so much honor! the friendship of a man whom her father had so loved and respected! of the man to whom her father had wished to see her connected by the closest ties! the man to whom she owed obligations never to be repaid! Alas! how had she acknowledged these obligations! By suffering the most amiable of mankind to

sport with his affections, while she had weakly thrown away her own. But the mischief was not totally irremediable; and dazzled by the romantic generosity of sacrificing her highest earthly joy to the restoration of her benefactor's quiet, she snatched a pen, intending to retract her promise.

An obsolete notion of decorum was for once favorable to a lover, and Laura saw the impropriety of writing to De Courcy. Besides, it occurred to her that she might withdraw into Scotland without formally announcing the reason of her retreat; and thus leave herself at liberty to receive De Courcy as a friend whenever discretion should warrant this indulgence. After the most magnanimous resolves, however, feeling her mind as confused and comfortless as before, she determined to obtain the benefit of impartial counsel, and changed the destination of the paper, on which she had already written "My dear friend," from De Courcy to Mrs. Douglas.

With all her native candor and singleness of heart did Laura detail her case to the monitress of her youth. To reveal De Courcy's name was contrary to her principles; but she described his situation, his mode of life, and domestic habits. She enlarged upon his character, her obligations to him, and the regret which, for his sake, she felt, that particular circumstances rendered her incapable of such an attachment as was necessary to conjugal happiness. She mentioned her compliance with her lover's request of a continuance of their former intimacy; confessed her doubts of the propriety of her concession; and entreated Mrs. Douglas's explicit opinion on the part, as well as her directions for the future.

Her mind thus unburdened, she was less perplexed and uneasy, and the next morning cheerfully commenced her journey, pleasing herself with the prospect of being released from the harassing attendance of Hargrave. On the evening of the second day the travelers reached Grosvenor-street; and the unsuspecting Laura, with renewed sentiments of gratitude toward her aunt, revisited the dwelling which had received her when she could claim no other shelter.

Her annuity having now become due, Laura, soon after her arrival in town, one day borrowed Lady Pelham's chariot, that she might go to receive the money and purchase some necessary additions to her wardrobe. Remembering, however, the inconveniences to which she had been subjected by her imprudence in leaving herself without money, she regulated her disbursements by the strictest economy, determined to reserve a sum which, besides a little gift to her cousin, might defray the expense of a journey to Scotland.

Her way chancing to lie through Holburn, a recollection of the civilities of her old landlady induced her to stop and inquire for Mrs. Dawkins. The good woman almost compelled her to alight; overwhelmed her with welcomes, and asked a hundred questions in a breath, giving in return a very detailed account of all her family affairs. She informed Laura that Miss Julia, having lately read the life of a heroine who, in the capacity of a governess, captivated the heart of a great lord, had been seized with a desire to seek adventures under a similar

character; but finding that recommendations for experience were necessary to her admission into any family of rank, she had condescended to serve her apprenticeship in the tuition of the daughters of an eminent cow-feeder. The good woman expressed great compassion for the pupils of so incompetent a teacher, from whom they could learn nothing useful. "But that was," she observed, "their father's look out; and, in the mean time, it was so far well that July was doing something toward her keeping." After a visit of some length, Laura wished to be gone, but her hostess would not suspend her eloquence long enough to suffer her to take leave. She was at last obliged to interrupt the harangue; and breaking from her indefatigable entertainer, hurried home, not a little alarmed lest her stay should expose her, on her return home, to oratory of a different kind.

Lady Pelham, however, received her most graciously, examined all her purchases, and inquired very particularly into the cost of each. She calculated the amount, and the balance of the annuity remaining in Laura's possession. "Five-and-thirty pounds!" she exclaimed; "what in the world, Laura, will you do with so much money!" "Perhaps five-and-thirty different things," answered Laura, smiling; "I have never had, nor ever shall have, half so much money as I could spend." "Oh, you extravagant thing!" cried Lady Pelham, patting her cheek. "But take care that some one does not save you the trouble of spending it. You should be very sure of the locks of your drawers. You had better let me put your treasures into my bureau." Laura was about to comply, when, recollecting that there might be some awkwardness in asking her aunt for the money while she concealed its intended destination, she thanked Lady Pelham, but said she supposed it would be perfectly safe in her own custody; and then, as usual, avoided impending altercations by hastening out of the room. She thought Lady Pelham looked displeased; but as that was a necessary effect of the slightest contradiction, she saw it without violent concern; and the next time they met her ladyship was again all smiles and courtesy.

Some blanks remaining to be filled up in Lady Pelham's town establishment, Laura took advantage of the present happy humor for performing her promise to the kind-hearted Fanny, who was, upon her recommendation, received into the family. A much more important boon, indeed, would have been granted with equal readiness. Lady Pelham could, for the present, refuse nothing to her dear Laura.

Three days, "three wondrous days," all was sunshine and serenity. Lady Pelham was the most ingenuous, the most amusing, the most fascinating of womankind. "What a pity," thought Laura, "that my aunt's spirits are so fluctuating! How delightful she can be when she pleases." In the midst of these brilliant hours, Lady Pelham one morning ran into the room where Laura was at work: "Here's a poor fellow," said she, with a look and voice all compassion, "who has sent me his account, and says he must go to jail if it be not paid instantly. But it is quite impossible for me to get the money till to-morrow." "To jail!"

cried Laura, shocked: "what is the amount?" "Forty pounds," said Lady Pelham, "and I have not above ten in the house." "Take mine," cried Laura, hastening to bring it. Lady Pelham stopped her. "No, my dear good girl," said she, "I won't take away your little store; perhaps you may want it yourself." "Oh, no," said Laura, "I can not want it; pray let me bring it." "The poor man has a large family," said Lady Pelham, "but, indeed, I am very unwilling to take—" Her ladyship was spared further regrets, for Laura was out of hearing. She returned in a moment with the whole of her wealth, out of which Lady Pelham, after some further hesitation, was prevailed upon to take thirty pounds; a robbery to which she averred she never could have consented, but for the wretched situation of an innocent family, and her own certainty of repaying the debt in a day or two at furthest. Several days, however, passed away, and Lady Pelham made no mention of discharging her debt. Laura wondered a little that her aunt should forget a promise so lately and so voluntarily given; but her attention was entirely diverted from the subject by the following letter from Mrs. Douglas:

"You see, my dear Laura, I lose no time in answering your letter, though, for the first time, I answer you with some perplexity. The weight which you have always kindly allowed to my opinion makes me at all times give it with timidity; but this is not the only reason of my present hesitation. I confess that, in spite of the apparent frankness and perspicuity with which you have written, I am not able exactly to comprehend you.

"You describe a man of respectable abilities, of amiable dispositions, of sound principles, and engaging manners. You profess that such qualities, aided by intimacy, have secured your cordial friendship, while obligations beyond return have enlivened this friendship by the warmest gratitude. But, just as I am about to conclude that all this has produced its natural effect, and to prepare my congratulations for a happy occasion, you kill my hopes with a dismal sentence, expressing your regret for having been obliged to reject the addresses of this excellent person. Now, this might have been intelligible enough, supposing you were preoccupied by a stronger attachment. But so far from this, you declare yourself absolutely incapable of any exclusive affection, or of such a regard as is necessary to any degree of happiness in the conjugal state. I know not, my dear Laura, what ideas you may entertain of the fervency suitable to wedded love; but had you been less peremptory, I should have thought it not unlikely to spring from a young woman's 'most cordial esteem' and 'warmest gratitude' toward a young man with 'expressive black eyes,' and 'the most benevolent smile in the world.'

"From the tenor of your letter, as well as from some expressions you have formerly dropped, I am led to conjecture that you think an extravagant passion necessary to the happiness of married life. You will smile at the expression; but if it offend you, change it for any other descriptive of a feeling beyond tender friendship, and you will find the substitute nearly synonymous with the original. Now this idea appears to me rather erroneous; and I

can not help thinking that calm, dispassionate affection, at least on the side of the lady, promises more permanent comfort.

"All male writers on the subject of love, so far as my little knowledge extends, represent possession as the infallible cure of passion. A very unattractive picture, it must be confessed, of the love of that lordly sex! but they themselves being the painters, the deformity is a pledge of the resemblance, and I own my small experience furnishes no instance to contradict their testimony. Taking its truth, then, for granted, I need not inquire whether the passions of our own sex be equally fleeting. If they be, the enamored pair soon find themselves at best in the same situation with those who marry from sober sentiments of regard; that is, obliged to seek happiness in the esteem, the confidence, the forbearance of each other. But if, in the female breast, the fervors of passion be less transient, I need not describe to you the sufferings of feminine sensibility, under half-retained ardors, nor the stings of feminine pride under the unnatural and mortifying transference of the arts of courtship. I trust, my dear child, that should you even make a marriage of passion, your self-command will enable you to smother its last embers in your own bosom, while your prudence will improve the short advantage which is conferred by its empire in that of your husband, to lay the foundation of an affection more tender than friendship, more lasting than love.

"Again, it is surely of the utmost consequence to the felicity of wedded life, that a just and temperate estimate be formed of the character of him to whose temper we must accommodate ourselves, whose caprices we must endure; whose failings we must pardon, whether the discord burst upon us in thunder, or steal on amid harmonies which render it imperceptible, perhaps half pleasing. Small chance is there that passion should view with the calm, extenuating eye of reason the faults which it suddenly detects in the god of its idolatry. The once fervent votary of the idol, finding it unworthy of his worship, neglects the useful purposes to which he might apply the gold which it contains.

"I have other reasons for thinking that passion is at best unnecessary to conjugal happiness; but even if I should make you a proselyte to my opinion, the conviction would, in the present case, probably come too late. Such a man as you describe will probably be satisfied with the answer he has received. He will certainly never importune you, nor poorly attempt to extort from your pity what he could not win from your love. His attachment will soon subside into a friendly regard for you, or be diverted into another channel by virtues similar to those which first attracted him. I only wish, my dear Laura, that after this change takes place, the 'circumstances' may remain in force which render you 'forever incapable of repaying him with a love like his own.' If you are sure that these circumstances are decisive, I foresee no evil which can result from your cultivating a friendship so honorable and advantageous to you as that of a man of letters and a Christian; whose conversation may improve your mind, and whose experience may supply

that knowledge of the world which is rarely attainable by women in the more private walks of life.

"To him I should suppose that no danger could arise from such an intercourse. We are all apt to overrate the strength and durability of the attachments we excite. I believe the truth is, that in a vigorous, well-governed, and actively-employed mind, love rarely becomes that resistless tyrant which vanity and romances represent him. His empire is divided by the love of fame or the desire of usefulness, the eagerness of research or the triumph of discovery. But even solitude, idleness, and imagination can not long support his dominion without the assistance of Hope; and I take it for granted, from your tried honor and generosity, that your answer has been too explicit to leave your lover in any doubt that your sentence is final.

"I own I could have wished that the virtues of my ever dear Laura had found, in the sacred characters of wife and mother, a larger field than a state of celibacy can afford; but I have no fear that your happiness or respectability should ever depend upon outward circumstances. I have no doubt that moderate wishes and useful employments will diffuse cheerfulness in the loneliest dwelling, while piety will people it with guests from Heaven.

"Thus, my beloved child, I have given my opinion with all the freedom you can desire. I have written a volume rather than a letter. The passion for giving advice long survives that which is the subject of our correspondence; but to show you that I can lay some restraint on an old woman's rage for admonition, I will not add another line, except that which assures you that I am, with all a mother's love, and all a friend's esteem,

"Your affectionate E. DOUGLAS."

Laura read this letter often, and pondered it deeply. Though she could not deny that it contained some truths, she was not satisfied with the doctrine deduced from them. She remembered that Mrs. Douglas was the most affectionate of wives; and concluded that in one solitary instance her judgment had been at variance with her practice; and that, having herself made a marriage of love, she was not an adequate judge of the disadvantage attending a more dispassionate connection. Some passages, too, she could well have spared; but as these were prophetic rather than monitorial, they required little consideration; and after the second reading, Laura generally omitted them in the perusal of her friend's epistle. Upon the whole, however, it gave her pleasure. Her conscience was relieved by obtaining the sanction of Mrs. Douglas to her promised intimacy with De Courcy, and already she looked forward to the time when it should be renewed.

Since her arrival in town, her aunt, all kindness and complacency, had scarcely named Hargrave; and, with the sanguine temper of youth, Laura hoped that she had at last exhausted the perseverance of her persecutors. This fruitful source of strife removed, she thought she could, without much difficulty, submit to the casual fits of caprice to which Lady Pelham was subject; and, considering that her

aunt, with all her faults, was still her most natural protector, and her house her most proper abode, she began to lay aside thoughts of removing immediately to Scotland, and to look toward Walbourne as a permanent home.

In the mean time she promised herself that the approaching winter would bring her both amusement and information. The capital, with all its wonders, of which she had hitherto seen little, the endless diversity of character which she expected its inhabitants to exhibit, the conversation of the literary and the elegant, of wits, senators, and statesmen, promised an inexhaustible fund of instruction and delight. Nay, the patriotic heart of Laura beat high with the hope of meeting some of those heroes who, undaunted by disaster, where all but honor is lost, maintain the honor of Britain; or who, with happier fortune, guide the triumphant navies of our native land. She was yet to learn how little of character appears through the varnish of fashionable manners, and how little a hero or a statesman at a rout differs from a mere man of fashion in the same situation.

Lady Pelham seem inclined to furnish her with all the opportunities of observation which she could desire, introducing her to every visitor of distinction, and procuring for her the particular attention of two ladies of high rank, who constantly invited her to share in the gayeties of the season. But Laura, instructed in the value of time, and feeling herself accountable for its employment, stopped far short of the dissipation of her companions. She had long since established a criterion by which to judge of the innocence of her pleasures, accounting every amusement, from which she returned to her duties with an exhausted frame, languid spirits, or distracted attention, to be at best dangerous, and contrary to all rational ends of recreation. Of entertainments which she had never before witnessed, curiosity generally induced her for once to partake; but she found few that could stand her test; and to those which failed in the trial she returned as seldom as possible.

One species alone, if it deserves to be classed with entertainments, she was unwillingly obliged to except from her rule. From card-parties Laura always returned fatigued both in mind and body; while present at them she had scarcely any other wish than to escape; and she quitted them unfit for any thing but rest. Lady Pelham, however, sometimes made it a point that her niece should accompany her to these parties; and, though she never asked Laura to play, was occasionally at pains to interest her in the game, by calling her to her side, appealing to her against ill-fortune, or exacting her congratulation in success. A few of these parties excepted, Laura's time passed pleasantly. Though the calm of her aunt's temper was now and then disturbed by short gusts of anger, it returned as lightly as it fled; and the subject, fertile in endless chiding, seemed almost forgotten.

A fortnight had passed in this sort of quiet, when one morning Lady Pelham proposed to carry Laura to see the Marquis of ———'s superb collection of pictures. Laura, obliged by her aunt's attention to her prevailing taste, eagerly accepted the proposal, and hastened to equip herself for the excursion. Light of heart,

she was returning to the drawing-room to wait till the carriage drew up, when, on entering, the first object she beheld was Colonel Hargrave, seated confidentially by the side of Lady Pelham.

Laura, turning sick with vexation, shrunk back, and bemoaning the departure of her short-lived quiet, returned, half angry, half sorrowful, to her own room. She had little time, however, to indulge her chagrin, for Lady Pelham almost immediately sent to let her know the carriage waited.

Disconcerted, and almost out of humor, Laura had tossed aside her bonnet, and was about to retract her consent to go; when, recollecting that the plan had been proposed on her account, without any apparent motive unless to oblige her, she thought her aunt would have just reason to complain of such an ungracious rejection of her civility.

"Besides, it is like a spoiled child," thought she, "to quarrel with my amusement because one disagreeable circumstance attends it;" and, readjusting her bonnet, she joined Lady Pelham, not without a secret hope that Hargrave might not be of the party. The hope deceived her. He was ready to hand her into the carriage, and to take his seat by her side.

Her sanguine expectations thus put to flight, the habitual complacency of Laura's countenance suffered a sudden eclipse. She answered almost peevishly to Hargrave's inquiries for her health; and so complete was her vexation, that it was long ere she observed how much his manner toward her was changed. He whispered no extravagances in her ear; offered her no officious attentions; and seized no opportunities of addressing her, but such as were consistent with politeness and respect. He divided his assiduous not unequal between her and Lady Pelham; and even, without any apparent reluctance, permitted a genteel young man, to whom the ladies courted in passing, to share in his office of escort, and almost to monopolize Laura's conversation. Having accompanied the ladies home, he left them immediately, refusing Lady Pelham's invitation to dinner; and Laura, no less pleased than surprised at this unexpected turn, wished him good-morning more graciously than she had of late spoken to him.

The next day he dined in Grosvenor-street, and the same propriety of manner continued. The following evening Laura again met with him in a large party. He did not distinguish her particularly from any of her fair competitors. Laura was delighted. She was convinced that he had at last resolved to abandon his fruitless pursuit; but what had so suddenly wrought this happy change she could not divine.

He did not visit Lady Pelham daily; yet it happened that Laura saw him every day, and still he was consistent. Laura scarcely doubted, yet durst scarcely trust, her good fortune.

The violent passions of Hargrave, however, in some degree unfitted him for a deceiver; and sometimes the fiery glance of impatience, of admiration, or of jealousy, belied the serenity of his manner. Laura did not fail to remark this; but she possessed the happy faculty of explaining every ambiguity in human conduct

in a way favorable to the actor; a faculty which though it sometimes exposed her to mistake and vexation, was, upon the whole, at once a happiness and a virtue. She concluded that Hargrave, determined to persecute her no further, was striving to overcome his passion; that the appearances she had remarked were only the struggles which he could not wholly repress; and she felt herself grateful to him for making the attempt—the more grateful from her idea of its difficulty.

With her natural singleness of heart, she one day mentioned to Lady Pelham the change in Hargrave's behavior. "I suppose," added she, smiling, "that, finding he can make nothing more of me, he is resolved to lay me under obligation by leaving me at peace, having first contrived to make me sensible of its full value." Lady Pelham was a better dissembler than Colonel Hargrave; and scarcely did a change of color announce the deception, while, in a tone of assumed anger, she answered by reproaching her niece with having at last accomplished her purpose, and driven her lover to despair. Yet Lady Pelham was aware that Hargrave had not a thought of relinquishing his pursuit. His new-found self-command was merely intended to throw Laura off her guard, that Lady Pelham might have an opportunity of executing a scheme, which Lambert had contrived, to entangle Laura beyond the possibility of escape.

Many an action, harmless in itself, is seen, by a discerning by-stander, to have in it "nature that in time will venom breed, though no teeth for the present." It happened that Lambert, while at Walbourne, had once seen Laura engaged in a party at chess; and her bent brow and flushed cheek, her palpitating bosom, her trembling hand, her eagerness for victory, above all, her pleasure in success, restrained, but not concealed, inspired him with an idea that play might be made subservient to the designs of his friend; designs which he was the more disposed to promote, because, for the present, they occupied Hargrave to the exclusion of that folly of which Lambert had so well availed himself.

It was Lambert's proposal that he should himself engage Laura in play; and having won from her, by means which he could always command, that he should transfer the debt to Hargrave. The scheme was seconded by Lady Pelham, and, in part, acquiesced in by Hargrave. But though he could consent to degrade the woman whom he intended for his wife, he could not endure that any other than himself should be the instrument of her degradation, and sickening at the shackles which the love of gaming had imposed upon himself, he positively refused to accede to that part of the plan which proposed to make Laura's entanglement with him the branch of a habit previously formed. Besides, the formation of a habit, especially one so contrary to previous bias, was a work of time; and a stratagem of tedious execution did not suit the impatience of Hargrave's temper.

He consented, however, to adopt a more summary modification of the same artifice. It was intended that Laura should at first be induced to play for a stake too small to alarm her, yet sufficiently great to make success desirable; that she should at first be allowed to win; that the stake should be increased until she should

lose a sum which it might incommode her to part with; and then that the stale cheat of gamblers, hope of retrieving her loss, should be pressed on her as a motive for venturing nearer to destruction.

The chief obstacle to the execution of this honorable enterprise lay in the first step, the difficulty of persuading Laura to play for any sum which could be at all important to her. For obviating this, Lady Pelham trusted to the diffidence, the extreme timidity, the abhorrence of notoriety, which nature, strengthened by education, had made a leading feature in the character of Laura. Her ladyship determined that the first essay should be made in a large company, in the presence of persons of rank, of fame, of talent, of every qualification which could augment the awe, almost amounting to horror, with which Laura shrunk from the gaze of numbers.

Partly from a craving for a confidant, partly in hope of securing assistance, Lady Pelham communicated her intention to the Honorable Mrs. Clermont, a dashing widow of five-and-thirty. The piercing black eyes, the loud voice, the free manner, and good-humored assurance of this lady had inspired Laura with a kind of dread, which had not yielded to the advances which the widow condescended to make. Lady Pelham judged it most favorable to her righteous purpose that the first attempt should be made in the house of Mrs. Clermont, rather than in her own; both because that lady's higher circle of acquaintance could command a more imposing assemblage of visitors, and because this arrangement would leave her ladyship more at liberty to watch the success of her scheme than she could be where she was necessarily occupied as mistress of the ceremonies.

The appointed evening came, and Lady Pelham, though with the utmost kindness of manner, insisted upon Laura's attendance. Laura would rather have been excused; yet, not to interrupt a humor so harmonious, she consented to go. Lady Pelham was all complacency. She condescended to preside at her niece's toilet, and obliged her to complete her dress by wearing for that evening a superb diamond aigret, one of the ornaments of her own earlier years. Laura strenuously resisted this addition to her attire, accounting it wholly unsuitable to her situation; but her aunt would take no denial, and the affair was not worthy of a more serious refusal. This important concern adjusted, Lady Pelham viewed her niece with triumphant admiration. She burst forth into praises of her beauty, declaring that she had never seen her look half so lovely. Yet, with skillful malice, she contrived to awaken Laura's natural bashfulness, by saying, as they were alighting at Mrs. Clermont's door, "Now, my dear; don't mortify me to-night by any of your Scotch *gaucheries*. Remember every eye will be turned upon you." "Heaven forbid," thought Laura, and timidly followed her aunt to a couch, where she took her seat.

For a while Lady Pelham's words seemed prophetic, and Laura could not raise her eyes without meeting the gaze of admiration or of scrutiny; but the rooms began to be crowded by the great and the gay, and Laura was re-

lieved from her vexations distinction. Lady Pelham did not long suffer her to enjoy her release, but rising, proposed that they should walk. Though Laura felt in her own majestic stature a very unenviable claim to notice, a claim rendered more conspicuous by the contrast offered in the figure of her companion, she could not with politeness refuse to accompany her aunt, and giving Lady Pelham her arm, they began their round.

Laura, little acquainted with the ease which prevails in town parties, could not help wondering at the nonchalance of Mrs. Clermont, who, leaving her guests to entertain themselves as they chose, was lounging on a sofa, playing at picket with Colonel Hargrave. "Mrs. Clermont at picket," said Lady Pelham. "Come, Laura, picket is the only civilized kind of game you play. You shall take a lesson;" and she led her niece forward through a circle of misses, who, in hopes of catching the attention of the handsome Colonel Hargrave, were tittering and talking nonsense most laboriously. This action naturally drew the eyes of all upon Laura; and Lady Pelham, who expected to find useful engines in her timidity and embarrassment, did not fail to make her remark the notice which she excited. From this notice Laura would have escaped, by seating herself near Mrs. Clermont; but Lady Pelham, perceiving her intention, placed herself, without ceremony, so as to occupy the only remaining seat, leaving Laura standing alone, shrinking at the consciousness of her conspicuous situation. No one was near her to whom she could address herself, and her only resource was bending down to overlook Mrs. Clermont's game.

She had kept her station long enough to be fully sensible of its awkwardness, when Mrs. Clermont, suddenly starting up, exclaimed, "Bless me! I had quite forgotten that I promised to make a loo-table for the duchess. Do, my dear Miss Montreville, take my hand for half an hour." "Excuse me, madam," said Laura, drawing back, "I play so ill." "Nay, Laura," interrupted Lady Pelham, "your teacher is concerned to maintain your skill, and I insist on it that you play admirably." "Had not your ladyship better play?" "Oh no, my dear; I join the loo-table." "Come," said Mrs. Clermont, offering Laura the seat that she had just quitted, "I will take no excuse; so sit down, and success attend you!" The seat presented Laura with an inviting opportunity of turning her back upon her inspectors; she was averse from refusing a trifling request, and rather willing to give Hargrave a proof that she was not insensible to the late improvement in his behavior. She therefore quietly took the place assigned her, while the trio exchanged smiles of congratulation on the facility with which she had fallen into the snare.

Something, however, yet remained to be arranged, and Lady Pelham and her hostess still kept their stations by her side. While dividing the cards, Laura recollected having observed that, in town, every game seemed played for money; and she asked her antagonist what was to be the stake. He of course referred that point to her own decision; but Laura, in profound ignorance of the arcana of card-tables, blushed, hesitated, and looked at Lady Pelham and Mrs.

Clermont for instructions. "We don't play high in this house, my dear," said Mrs. Clermont; "Colonel Hargrave and I were only playing guineas." "Laura is only a beginner," said Lady Pelham, "and, perhaps, half a guinea—" Laura interrupted her aunt by rising and deliberately collecting the cards. "Colonel Hargrave will excuse me," said she; "that is far too great a stake for me." "Don't be absurd, my dear," said Lady Pelham, touching Laura's sleeve, and affecting to whisper; "why should not you play as other people do?" Laura, not thinking this a proper time to explain her conscientious scruples, merely answered that she could not afford it; and more embarrassed than before, would have glided away, but neither of her guards would permit her to pass. "You need not mind what you stake with Hargrave," said Lady Pelham, apart; "you play so much better than he that you will infallibly win." "That does not at all alter the case," returned Laura. "It would be as unpleasant to me to win Colonel Hargrave's money as to lose my own." "Whatever stake Miss Montreville chooses must be equally agreeable to me," said Colonel Hargrave. But Laura observed that the smile which accompanied these words had in it more of sarcasm than of complacency. "I should be sorry, sir," said she, "that you lowered your play upon my account. Perhaps some of these young ladies—" continued she, looking round to the talkative circle behind. "Be quiet, Laura," interrupted Lady Pelham again, in an under-tone; "you will make yourself the town-talk with your fooleries." "I hope not," returned Laura, calmly; "but, if I do, there is no help; little inconveniences must be submitted to for the sake of doing right." "Lord, Miss Montreville," cried Mrs. Clermont, aloud, "what odd notions you have! Who would mind playing for half a guinea? It is nothing; absolutely nothing. It would not buy a pocket-handkerchief." It would buy a week's food for a poor family, thought Laura; and she was confirmed in her resolution; but not willing to expose this reason to ridicule, and a little displeased that Mrs. Clermont should take the liberty of urging her, she coolly, yet modestly replied, "That such matters must greatly depend on the opinions and circumstances of the parties concerned, of which they were themselves the best judges." "I insist on your playing," said Lady Pelham, in an angry half whisper; "if you will make yourself ridiculous, let it be when I am not by to share in the ridicule." "Excuse me, madam, for to-night," returned Laura, pleadingly; "before another evening I will give you reasons which I am sure will satisfy you." "I am sure," said Hargrave, darting a very significant look toward Laura, "if Miss Montreville, instead of cards, prefer allowing me to attend her in your absence, I shall gain infinitely by the exchange."

Laura, to whom his glance made this hint very intelligible, reddened; and, by saying she would by no means interrupt his amusement, was again turning to seek a substitute among her kitting neighbors, when Mrs. Clermont prevented her, by calling out to a lady at a considerable distance: "My dear duchess, do have the goodness to come hither, and talk to this

whimsical beauty of ours. She is seized with an economical fit, and has taken it into her pretty little head that I am quite a gambler because I fix her stake at half a guinea." "What may not youth and beauty do!" said her grace, looking at Laura, with a smile half sly, half insinuating. "When I was the Miss Montreville of the day, I, too, might have led the fashion of playing for pence, though now I dare not venture even to countenance it."

The mere circumstance of rank could never discompose Laura; and, rather taking encouragement from the charming, though faded countenance of the speaker, she replied, "But, in consideration of having no pretensions to lead the fashion, may I not claim exemption from following it?" "Oh! by no means!" said her grace. "When once you have entered the world of fashion, you must either be the daring leader or the humble follower. If you choose the first, you must defy the opinions of all people; and if the last, you must have a suitable indifference for your own." "A gentle intimation," returned Laura, "that in the world of fashion I am quite out of place, since nothing but my own opinion is more awful to me than that of others."

"Miss Montreville," said Lady Pelham, with an aspect of vinegar, "we all wait your pleasure." "Pray, madam," answered Laura, "do not let me detain you a moment; I shall easily dispose of myself." "Take up your cards this instant, and let us have no more of these airs," said Lady Pelham, now without affectation, whispering, in order to conceal from her elegant companions the wrath which was, however, distinctly written in her countenance.

It now occurred to Laura as strange that so much trouble should be taken to prevail upon her to play for more than she inclined. Hargrave, though he had pretended to release her, still kept his seat, and his language had tended rather to embarrass than relieve her. Mrs. Clermont had interfered further than Laura thought either necessary or proper; and Lady Pelham was eager to carry her point. Laura saw that there was something in all this that she did not comprehend; and, looking up to seek an explanation in the faces of her companions, she perceived that the whole trio seemed waiting her decision with looks of various interest. The piercing black eyes of Mrs. Clermont were fixed upon her with an expression of sly curiosity. Hargrave hastily withdrew a sidelong glance of anxious expectation; while Lady Pelham's face was flushed with angry impatience of delay. "Has your ladyship any particular reason for wishing that I should play for a higher stake than I think right?" said Laura, fixing on her aunt a look of calm scrutiny. Too much out of humor to be completely on her guard, Lady Pelham's color deepened several shades, while she answered, "I, child! what should make you think so?" "I don't know," said Laura; "people sometimes try to convince from mere love of victory; but they seldom take the trouble to persuade without some other motive." "Any friend," said Lady Pelham, recollecting herself, "would find motive enough for what I have done, in the absurd appearance of these littlenesses to the world, and the odium that deservedly falls on a young

miser." "Nay, Lady Pelham," said the duchess, "this is far too severe. Come," added she, beckoning to Laura, with a gracious smile, "you shall sit by me, that I may endeavor to enlarge your conceptions on the subject of card-playing."

Laura, thus encouraged, instantly begged her aunt's permission to pass. Lady Pelham could not decently refuse; and, venting her rage by pinching Laura's arm till the blood came, and muttering through her clinched teeth, "Obstinate wretch!" she suffered her niece to escape. Laura did not condescend to bestow any notice upon this assault; but, pulling her glove over her wounded arm, took refuge beside the duchess. The fascinating manners of a high-bred woman of fashion, and the respectful attentions offered to her whom the duchess distinguished by her particular countenance, made the rest of the evening pass agreeably, in spite of the evident ill-humor of Lady Pelham.

Her ladyship restrained the further expression of her rage till Laura and she were on their way home; when it burst out in reproaches of the parsimony, obstinacy, and perverseness which had appeared in her niece's refusal to play. Laura listened to her in silence; sensible that, while Lady Pelham's passion overpowered the voice of her own reason, it was vain to expect that she should hear reason from another. But next day, when she judged that her aunt had had time to grow cool, she took occasion to resume the subject; and explained, with such firmness and precision, her principles in regard to the uses of money, and the accountableness of its possessors, that Lady Pelham laid aside thoughts of entangling her by means of play; since it was in vain to expect that she would commit to the power of chance that which she habitually considered as the sacred deposit of a father, and as specially destined for the support and comfort of his children.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

HARGRAVE, no sooner perceived the futility of his design to involve Laura in a debt of honor, than he laid aside the disguise which had been assumed to lull her vigilance, and which he had never worn without difficulty. He condescended, however, to save appearances, by taking advantage of the idea which Laura had herself suggested to Lady Pelham, and averred that he had made a powerful effort to recover his self-possession; but he declared that, having totally failed in his endeavors to obtain his liberty, he was determined never to renew them, and would trust to time and accident for removing Laura's prejudice. In vain did she assure him that no time could produce such a revolution in her sentiments as would at all avail him; that, though his eminent improvement in worth might secure her esteem, her affections were alienated beyond recall. The old system was resumed, and with greater vigor than before, because with less fear of observation, and more frequent opportunities of attack. Every meal, every visit, every public place, furnished occasions for his indefatigable assiduities, from which Laura found no refuge beyond the precincts of her own chamber.

Regardless of the vexation which such a report might give her, he chose to make his suit a subject of the tittle-tattle of the day. By this maneuver, in which he had before found his advantage, he hoped that several purposes might be served. The publicity of his claim would keep other pretenders at a distance; it would oblige those who mentioned him to Laura to speak, if not favorably, at least with decent caution; and it might possibly at last induce her to listen with less reluctance to what every one spoke of as natural and probable. Lady Pelham seconded his intentions, by hints of her niece's engagement, and confidential complaints to her friends of the *mauvaise honte* which made Laura treat with such reserve the man to whom she had long been affianced. The consequence of their maneuvering was, that Hargrave's right to persecute Laura seemed universally acknowledged. The men, at his approach, left her free to his attendance; the women entertained her with praises of his person, manners, and equipage; and hints of her situation, too gentle to warrant direct contradiction; or charges made with conviction too strong to yield to any form of denial.

Lady Pelham, too, resumed her unwearied remonstrances, and teased, chided, argued, upbraided, entreated, and scolded through every tedious hour in which the absence of visitors left Laura at her mercy. Laura had at one time determined against submitting to such a treatment, and had resolved that, if it were renewed, she would seek a refuge far from her persecutors, and from England. But that resolution had been formed when there appeared no immediate necessity for putting it in practice; and England contained somewhat to which Laura clung almost unconsciously. Amid all her vexations, Mrs. De Courcy's letters soothed her ruffled spirits; and more than once, when she had renewed her determination to quit Lady Pelham, a few lines from Norwood made her pause on its fulfilment, reminding her that a few months, however displeasing, would soon steal away, and that her return to the country would at least bring some mitigation of her persecutions.

Though Mrs. De Courcy wrote often, and confidentially, she never mentioned Montague further than was necessary to avoid particularity. She said little of his health, nothing of his spirits or occupations, and never hinted any knowledge of his rejected love. Laura's inquiries concerning him were answered with vague politeness; and thus her interest in the state of his mind was constantly kept awake. Often did she repeat to herself, that she hoped he would soon learn to consider her merely as a friend; and that which we have often repeated as truth, we in time believe to be true.

Laura had been in town about a month, when one of her letters to Norwood was followed by a longer silence than usual. She wrote again, and still the answer was delayed. Fearing that illness prevented Mrs. De Courcy from writing, Laura had endured some days of serious anxiety, when a letter was brought her, addressed in Montague's hand. She hastily tore it open, and her heart fluttered between pleasure and apprehension, when she perceived that the whole letter was written by him. It was short



and cautious. He apologized for the liberty he took, by saying that a rheumatic affection having prevented his mother from using her pen, she had employed him as her secretary, fearing to alarm Laura by longer silence. The letter throughout was that of a kind yet respectful friend. Not a word betrayed the lover. The expressions of tender interest and remembrance with which it abounded were ascribed to Mrs. De Courcy, or at least shared with her, in a manner which prevented any embarrassment in the reply. Laura hesitated for a moment whether her answer should be addressed to Mrs. De Courcy or to Montague; but Montague was her benefactor; their intimacy was sanctioned by her best friend, and it is not difficult to imagine how the question was decided. Her answer produced a reply, which again was replied to in its turn; and thus a correspondence was established, which, though at first constrained and formal, was taught, by Montague's forbearance, to assume a character of friendly ease.

This correspondence, which soon formed one of Laura's chief pleasures, she never affected to conceal from Lady Pelham. On the contrary, she spoke of it with perfect openness and candor. Unfortunately, however, it did not meet with her ladyship's approbation. She judged it highly unfavorable to her designs in regard to Hargrave. She imagined that, if not already an affair of love, it was likely soon to become so; and she believed that, at all events, Laura's intercourse with the De Courcys would foster those antiquated notions of morality to which Hargrave owed his ill success. Accordingly, she first objected to Laura's new correspondence; then lectured on its impropriety and imprudence; and, lastly, took upon her peremptorily to prohibit its continuance. Those who are already irritated by oppression, a trifle will at last rouse to resistance. This was an exercise of authority so far beyond Laura's expectations, that it awakened her resolution to submit no longer to the impertinence and persecution which she had so long endured, but to depart immediately for Scotland. Willing, however, to execute her purpose with as little expense of peace as possible, she did not open her intentions at the moment of irritation. She waited a day of serenity to propose her departure.

In order to procure the means of defraying the expense of her journey, it was become necessary to remind Lady Pelham of her loan, which appeared to have escaped her ladyship's recollection. Laura, accordingly, one day gently hinted a wish to be repaid. Lady Pelham at first looked surprised, and affected to have forgotten the whole transaction; but, upon being very distinctly reminded of the particulars, she owned that she recollected something of it, adding that she knew Laura had no use for the money. Laura then frankly announced the purpose to which she meant to apply it; saying, that, as her aunt was now surrounded by more agreeable society, she hoped she might, without inconvenience, be spared, and would therefore relieve Lady Pelham of her charge, by paying a visit to Mrs. Douglas. Rage flamed in Lady Pelham's countenance, while she burst into a torrent of invective against her niece's

ingratitude and coldness of heart; and it mingled with triumph as she concluded by saying, "Do, miss; by all means go to your precious Scotland, but find the means as you best can; for not one penny will I give you for such a purpose. I have long expected some such fine freak as this; but I thought I should disappoint it."

Not daunted by this inauspicious beginning, Laura, taking encouragement from her aunt's known instability, again and again renewed the subject; but Lady Pelham's purposes, however easily shaken by accident or caprice, were ever inflexible to entreaty. "She possessed," she said, "the means of preventing her niece's folly, and she was determined to employ them." Laura burned with resentment at the injustice of this determination. She acknowledged no right which Lady Pelham possessed to detain her against her own consent, and she considered the detention of her lawful property as little else than fraud. But perceiving that remonstrance was useless, she judged it most prudent not to embitter, by vain recriminations, an intercourse from which she could not immediately escape. Without further complaint or upbraiding, she submitted to her fate; content with resolving to employ more discreetly the next payment of her annuity, and with making a just but unavailing appeal to her aunt's generosity, by asserting the right of defenselessness to protection. Lady Pelham had not the slightest idea of conceding any thing to this claim. On the contrary, the certainty that Laura could not withdraw from her power, encouraged her to use it with less restraint. She invited Hargrave to a degree of familiarity which he had not before assumed; admitted him at all hours; sanctioned any freedom which he dared to use with Laura; and forced or inveigled her into frequent tête-à-têtes with him.

Fretted beyond her patience, Laura's temper more than once failed under this treatment, and she bitterly reproached Hargrave as the source of all her vexation. As it was, however, her habitual study to convert every event of her life to the purposes of virtue, it soon occurred to her that, during these compulsory interviews, she might become the instrument of awakening her unworthy lover to more noble pursuits. Like a ray of light, the hope of usefulness darted into her soul, shedding a cheering beam on objects which before were dark and comfortless; and, with all the enthusiastic warmth of her character, she entered on her voluntary task; forgetting, in her eagerness to recall a sinner from the error of his ways, the weariness, disgust, and dread with which she listened to the ravings of selfish passion. She no longer endeavored to avoid him, no longer heard him with frozen silence or avowed disdain. During their interviews, she scarcely noticed his protestations, but employed every interval in urging him, with all the eloquence of dread, to retreat from the gulf which was yawning to receive him; in assuring him, with all the solemnity of truth, that the waters of life would repay him a thousand-fold for the poisonous cup of pleasure.

Truth, spoken by the loveliest lips in the world, confirmed by the lightnings of a witching eye, kindled at times in Hargrave a some-

thing which he mistook for the love of virtue. He declared his abhorrence of his former self, asserted the innocence of his present manner of life, and vowed that, for the future, he should be blameless. But when Laura rather incautiously urged him to give proofs of his reformation, by renouncing a passion whose least gratifications were purchased at the expense of justice and humanity, he insisted that she required more than nature could endure, and vehemently protested that he would never, but with life, relinquish the hope of possessing her.

Her remonstrances had, however, one effect, of which she was altogether unconscious. Hargrave could not estimate the force of these motives which led her to labor so earnestly for the conversion of a person wholly indifferent to her; and though she often assured him that her zeal was disinterested, he cherished a hope that she meant to reward his improvement. In this hope, he relinquished for a while the schemes which he devised against the unsuspecting Laura, till accident again decided him against trusting to her free consent for the accomplishment of his wishes.

Among other exercises of authority to which Lady Pelham was emboldened by her niece's temporary dependence on her will, she adhered to her former prohibition of Laura's correspondence with De Courcy. Laura, unwilling to make it appear a matter of importance, promised that she would desist; but said that she must first write to Mr. De Courcy to account for her seeming caprice. Lady Pelham consented, and the letter was written. It spoke of Laura's situation, of her sentiments, of her regret for Hargrave's strange perseverance, of the dread and vexation to which he occasionally subjected her. To atone for its being the last, it was more friendly, more communicative than any she had formerly written. Laura meant to disguise, under a sportive style, the effects which oppression had produced upon her spirits; and the playful melancholy which ran throughout gave her expressions an air of artless tenderness.

Lady Pelham passed through the hall as this letter was lying upon the table, waiting the servant who was to carry it to the post. She looked at it. The sheet was completely filled. She wondered what it could contain. She took it up and examined it, as far as the seal would permit her. What she saw did but increase her curiosity. It was only wafered, and therefore easily opened; but then it was so dishonorable to open a letter. Yet what could the letter be the worse? A girl should have no secrets from her near relations. Still, to break a seal! It was punishable by law. Lady Pelham laid down the letter and walked away, already proud of having disdained to do a base action; but she heard the servant coming for his charge; she thought it best to have time to consider the matter. She could give him the letter at any time; and she slipped it into her pocket.

Sad sentence is pronounced against "the woman who deliberates:" Lady Pelham read the letter; and then, in the heat of her resentment at the manner in which her favorite was mentioned, showed it to Hargrave. As he marked the innocent, confiding frankness, the

unconstrained respect, the chastened yet avowed regard, with which Laura addressed his rival, contrasting them with the timid caution which, even during the reign of passion, had characterized her intercourse with himself—contrasting them, too, with the mixture of pity, dislike, and dread, which had succeeded her infatuation—all the pangs of rage and jealousy took hold on the soul of Hargrave. He would have vented his phrensy by tearing the letter to atoms, but it was snatched from his quivering grasp by Lady Pelham, who, dreading detection, sealed and restored it to its first destination.

The first use which he made of his returning powers of self-command was to urge Lady Pelham's concurrence in a scheme which he had before devised, but which had been laid aside in consequence of his ill-founded hopes. He entreated that her ladyship would, by an opportune absence, assist his intention; which was, he said, to alarm Laura with the horrors of a pretended arrest for an imaginary debt, and to work upon the gratefulness of her disposition, by himself appearing as her deliverer from her supposed difficulty. Lady Pelham in vain urged the futility of this stratagem, representing the obstacles to its accomplishment, and the certainty of early detection. Hargrave continued to importune, and she yielded.

Yet Hargrave himself was as far as Lady Pelham from expecting any fruits from the feeble artifice which he had detailed to her. He had little expectation that Laura could ever be induced to receive any pecuniary obligation at his hands, and still less that she would consider a loan which she might almost immediately repay as a favor important enough to be rewarded with herself. He even determined that his aid should be offered in terms which would insure its rejection. Though he durst not venture to unfold his whole plan to Lady Pelham, his real intention was merely to employ the disguise of law in removing Laura from even the imperfect protection of her aunt, to a place where she would be utterly without defense from his power. To the baseness of his purpose he blinded himself by considering the reparation which he should make in bestowing wealth and title on his victim; its more than savage brutality he forgot in anticipation of the gratitude with which Laura, humbled in her own eyes, and in those of the world, would accept the assiduities which now she spurned. He little knew the being whom he thus devoted to destruction!

Incited by jealousy and resentment, he now resolved on the immediate execution of his design; and he did not quit Lady Pelham till he had obtained her acquiescence in it so far as it was divulged to her. He then hastened to prepare the instruments of his villainy; and ere he gave himself time to cool, all was in readiness for the scheme which was to break the innocent heart that had loved and trusted him in seeming virtue, and pitied and prayed for him and warned him in guilt. How had the shades of evil deepened since the time when Hargrave first faltered between his infant passion and a virtuous purpose! He had turned from the path which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." On that in which he trod the

night was stealing, slow but sure, which closes at last in "outer darkness."

One morning, at breakfast, Lady Pelham, with more than usual civility, apologized for leaving Laura alone during the rest of the day, saying, that business called her a few miles out of town, but that she would return in the evening. She did not say whither she was going; and Laura, never imagining that it could at all concern her to know, did not think of inquiring. Pleasing herself with the prospect of one day of peace and solitude, she saw her aunt depart, and then sat down to detail to the friend of her youth her situation, her wishes, and her intentions.

She was interrupted by Fanny, who came to inform her that two men below desired to speak with her. Wondering who, in the land of strangers, could have business with her, Laura desired that they might be shown up stairs. Two coarse, robust-looking men, apparently of the lower rank, entered the room. Laura was unable to divine what could have procured her a visit from persons of their appearance; yet, with her native courtesy, she was motioning them to a seat, when one of them stepped forward, and, laying on her shoulder a stick which he held, said in a rough, ferocious voice, "Laura Montreville, I arrest you at the suit of John Dykes." Laura was surprised, but not alarmed. "This must be some mistake," said she; "I know no such person as John Dykes." "He knows you, though, and that is enough," answered the man. "Get away, girl," continued he, turning to Fanny, who stood lingering with the door ajar; "you have no business here." "Friend," returned Laura, mildly, "you mistake me for some other person." "What, miss," said the other man, advancing, "do you pretend that you are not Laura Montreville, daughter of the late Captain William Montreville of Glenalbert, in Scotland?" Laura, now changing color, owned that she was the person so described. "But," said she, recovering herself, "I can not be arrested. I do not owe five shillings in the world." "Mayhap not, miss," said the man, "but your father did; and you can be proved to have intermeddled with his effects as his heiress, which makes you liable for all his debts. So you'll please to pay me the two hundred pounds which he owed to John Dykes." "Two hundred pounds!" exclaimed Laura. "The thing is impossible. My father left a list of his debts in his own handwriting, and they have all been faithfully discharged by the sale of his property in Scotland." The men looked at each other for a moment, and seemed to hesitate; but the roughest of the two presently answered, "What nonsense do you tell me of lists! who's to believe all that! I have a just warra nt; so either pay the money or come along." "Surely, friend," said Laura, who now suspected the people to be mere swindlers, "you can not expect that I should pay such a sum without inquiring into your right to demand it. If your claim be a just one, present it in a regular account, properly attested, and it shall be paid to-morrow." "I have nothing to do with to-morrow, miss," said the man. "I must do my business. It's all one to me whether you pay or not. It does not put a penny in my pocket; only, if you do not choose to pay,

come along; for we can't be staying here all day." "I can not procure the money just now, even though I were willing," answered Laura, with spirit; "and I do not believe you have any right to remove me." "Oh! as for the right, miss, we'll let you see that. There is our warrant, properly signed and sealed. You may look at it in my hand, for I don't much like to trust you with it."

The warrant was stamped, and imposingly written upon parchment. With the tautology which Laura had been taught to expect in a law-paper, it rung changes upon the permission to seize and confine the person of Laura Montreville, as heiress of William Montreville, debtor to John Dykes, of Pimlico. It was signed as by a magistrate, and marked with the large seals of office. Laura now no longer doubted; and, turning pale and faint, asked the men whether they would not stay for an hour while she sent to beg the advice of Mr. Derwent, Lady Pelham's solicitor. "You may send for him to the lock-up house," said the savage. "We have no time to spare." "And whither will you take me?" cried Laura, almost sinking with horror. "Most likely," answered the most gentle of the two ruffians, "you would not like to be put into the common prison; and you may have as good accommodations in my house as might serve a duchess."

Spite of her dismay, Laura's presence of mind did not entirely forsake her. She hesitated whether she should not send to beg the assistance of some of Lady Pelham's acquaintance, or at least their advice in a situation so new to her. Among them all there was none with whom she had formed any intimacy; none whom, in her present circumstances of embarrassment and humiliation, she felt herself inclined to meet. She shrunk at the thought of the form in which her story might be represented by the malignant or the misjudging; and she conceived it her best course to submit quietly to an inconvenience of a few hours' continuance, from which she did not doubt that her aunt's return would that evening relieve her. Still the idea of being a prisoner; of committing herself to such attendants; of being an inmate of the abodes of misery, of degradation, perhaps of vice, filled her with dread and horror. Sinking on a couch, she covered her pale face with her hands, inwardly commending herself to the care of Heaven.

The men, meanwhile, stood whispering apart, and seemed to have forgotten the haste which they formerly expressed. At last one of them, after looking from the window into the street, suddenly approached her, and, rudely seizing her arm, cried, "Come, miss, the coach can't wait all day. It's of no use crying; we're too well used to that; so walk away, if you don't choose to be carried." Laura dashed the tears from her eyes, and, faintly trying to disengage her arm, was silently following her conductor to the door, when it opened, and Hargrave entered.

Prepared as he was for a scene of distress, determined as he was to let no movement of compassion divert his purpose, he could not resist the quiet anguish which was written in the lovely face of his victim; and, turning with real indignation to her tormentor, he exclaimed,

"Ruffian! what have you done to her!" But, quickly recollecting himself, he threw his arm familiarly around her, and said, "My dearest Laura, what is the meaning of all this! What can these people want with you?" "Nothing which can at all concern you, sir," said Laura, her spirit returning at the boldness of his address. "Nay, my dear creature," said Hargrave, "I am sure something terrible has happened. Speak, fellows," said he, turning to his emissaries, "what is your business with Miss Montreville?" "No great matter, sir," answered the man; "only we have a writ against her for two hundred pounds, and she does not choose to pay it; so we must take her to a little snug place, that's all." "To a prison! You, Laura, to a prison! Heavens! it is not to be thought of. Leave the room, fellows, and let me talk with Miss Montreville." "There is no occasion, sir," said Laura. "I am willing to submit to a short confinement. My aunt returns this evening, and she will undoubtedly advance the money. It ought to be much the same to me what room I inhabit for the few intervening hours." "Good heavens! Laura, do you consider what you say! Do you consider the horrors—the disgrace! Dearest girl, suffer me to settle this affair, and let me for once do something which may give you pleasure." Laura's spirit revolted from the freedom with which this was spoken. Suffering undeserved humiliation, never had she been more jealous of her claim to respect. "I am obliged to you, sir," said she, "but your good offices are unnecessary. Some little hardship, I find, I must submit to; and I believe the smallest within my choice is to let these people dispose of me till Lady Pelham's return." Hargrave reddened. "She prefers a prison," thought he, "to owing even the smallest obligation to me. But her pride is near a fall;" and he smiled with triumphant pity on the stately mien of his victim.

He was, in effect, almost indifferent whether she accepted or rejected his proffered assistance. If she accepted it, he was determined that it should be clogged with a condition, expressly stated, that he was for the future to be received with greater favor. If she refused, and he scarcely doubted that she would, he had only to make the signal, and she would be hurried, unresisting, to destruction. Yet, recollecting the despair, the distraction with which she would too late discover her misfortune; the bitter upbraidings with which she would meet her betrayer; the frantic anguish with which she would mourn her disgrace, if, indeed, she survived it, he was inclined to wish that she would choose the more quiet way of forwarding his designs; and he again earnestly entreated he to permit his interference.

Laura's strong dislike to being indebted for any favor to Hargrave was somewhat balanced in her mind by the horror of a prison, and by the consideration that she could immediately repay him by the sale of part of her annuity. Though she still resisted his offer, therefore, it was less firmly than before, Hargrave continued to urge her. "If," said he, "you dislike to allow me the pleasure of obliging you, this trifling sum may be restored whenever you please; and if you afterward think that any

little debt remains, it is in your power to repay it a thousand-fold. One kind smile, one consenting look, were cheaply purchased with a world."

The hint which concluded this speech seemed to Laura manifestly intended to prevent her acceptance of the offer which he urged so warmly. "Are you not ashamed, sir," said she, with a disdainful smile, "thus to make a parade of generosity which you do not mean to practice! I know you do not—can not expect that I should stoop to purchase your assistance." "Upon my soul, Laura," cried Hargrave, seizing her hands, "I am most earnest, most anxious, that you should yield to me in this affair; nor will I quit this spot till you have consented—nor till you have allowed me to look upon your consent as a pledge of your future favor." Laura indignantly snatched her hands from his grasp. "All that I comprehend of this," said she, "is insult, only insult. Leave me, sir! It is unworthy, even of you, to insult the misfortunees of a defenseless woman."

Hargrave would not be repulsed. He again took her hand, and persevered in his entreaties, not forgetting, however, to insinuate the conditions. Laura, in silent scorn, turned from him, wondering what could be the motive of his strange conduct, till it suddenly occurred to her that the arrest might be a mere plot, contrived by Hargrave himself, for the purpose of terrifying her into the acceptance of the conditions necessary to her escape. This suspicion, once formed, gained strength by every circumstance. The improbability of the debt; the time chosen when Lady Pelham was absent; the opportune arrival of Hargrave; the submission of the pretended bailiffs to his order; his frequent repetition of the conditions of his offer, at the same time that he appeared to wish for its acceptance, all conspired to convince Laura that she was intended to be made the dupe of a despicable artifice. Glowing with indignation, she again forced herself from Hargrave. "Away with this contemptible mockery!" she cried; "I will hear no more of it. While these people choose to guard me in this house, it shall be in an apartment secure from your intrusion." Then, before Hargrave could prevent her, she left him and shut herself into her own chamber.

Here, at greater liberty to think, a new question occurred to her. In case of her refusal to accept of Hargrave's terms—in case of her intrusting herself to the pretended bailiffs, whither could they intend to convey her! Laura's blood ran cold at the thought. If they were indeed the agents of Hargrave, what was there of dreadful which she might not fear! Yet she could scarcely believe that persons could be found to attempt so daring a villainy. Would they venture upon an outrage for which they must answer to the laws! an outrage which Lady Pelham would certainly feel herself concerned to bring to immediate detection and punishment! "Unfortunate chance!" cried Laura, "that my aunt should be absent just when she might have saved me. And I know not even where to seek her. Why did she not tell me whither she was going! She who was wont to be so open! Can this be a part of this cruel snare! Could she—oh, it is impossible! My fears make me suspicious and unjust."

Though Laura thus endeavored to acquit Lady Pelham, her suspicion of Hargrave's treachery augmented every moment. While she remembered that her father, though he had spoken to her of his affairs with the most confidential frankness, had never hinted at such a debt, never named such a person as his pretended creditor; while she thought of the manner of Hargrave's interference—the improbability that her own and her father's name and address, as well as the casualty of Lady Pelham's absence, should be known to mere strangers—the little likelihood that common swindlers would endeavor to extort money by means so hazardous, and with such small chance of success, her conviction rose to certainty, and she determined that nothing short of force should place her in the power of these impostors. Yet how soon might that force be employed! How feeble was the resistance which she could offer! And who would venture to aid her in resisting the pretended servants of the law! "Miserable creature that I am!" cried she, wringing her hands in an agony of grief and terror, "must I submit to this cruel wrong! Is there no one to save me—no friend near! Yes! yes, I have a friend from whom no treachery of man can tear me; who can deliver me from their violence—who can do more—can make their cruelty my passport to life eternal. Let me not despair, then—let me not be wanting to myself. With His blessing the feeblest means are mighty."

After a moment's consideration, Laura rang her bell, that she might dispatch a servant in quest of Mr. Derwent, resolving to resist every attempt to remove her before his arrival, or, if dragged by force from her place of refuge, to claim the assistance of passengers in the street. No person, however, answered her summons. She rang again and again, yet still no one came. She perceived that the servants were purposely kept at a distance from her; and this served to confirm her suspicions of fraud.

The windows of her chamber looked toward the gardens behind the house; and she now regretted that she had not rather shut herself up in one of the front apartments, from whence she could have explained her situation to the passers-by. Seeing no other chance of escape, she resolved on attempting to change her place of refuge, and was approaching the door to listen whether any one was near, when she was startled by the rough voice of one of the pretended bailiffs. "Come along, miss," he cried; "we are quite tired of waiting. Come along." Laura made no reply; but, throwing herself on a seat, strove to rally the spirit she was so soon to need. "Come, come, miss," cried the man, again; "you have had time enough to make ready." Laura continued silent, while the ruffian called to her again and again, shaking the door violently. He threatened, with shocking oaths, that he would burst it open, and that she should be punished for resisting the officers of justice. All was in vain. Laura would not answer a single word. Trembling in every limb, she listened to his blasphemies and vows of vengeance till she had wearied out her persecutor, and her ear was gladdened with the sound of his departing steps.

He was almost immediately succeeded by his

less ferocious companion, who more civilly begged her to hasten, as their business would not permit any longer delay. Finding that she did not answer, he reminded her of the consequences of obstructing the execution of law, and threatened, if she continued obstinate, to use force. Laura sat silent and motionless, using every momentary interval of quiet in breathing a hasty prayer for deliverance. The least violent of the fellows proved the most persevering; yet at last she had the satisfaction to hear him also retire.

Presently a lighter step approached, and Hargrave called to her: "Miss Montreville! Laura! Miss Montreville!" Laura was still silent. He called again without success. "Miss Montreville is ill," cried he, aloud, as if to some one at a distance. "She is insensible. The door must be forced." "No! no!" cried Laura, determined not to leave him this pretense, "I am not insensible, nor ill, if you would leave me in peace." "For Heaven's sake, then," returned he, "let me speak a few words to you." "No," answered Laura, "you can say nothing which I wish to hear." "I beseech you, I implore you," said Hargrave, "only by one word put it in my power to save you from these miscreants—say but that one little word, and you are free." "Man, man!" cried Laura, vehemently, "why will you make me abhor you! I want no freedom but from your persecutions. Begone!" "Only promise me," said Hargrave, lowering his voice, "only promise me that you will give up that accursed De Courcy, and I will dismiss these men." "Do you curse him who saved your life? Monster! leave me! I detest you." Hargrave gnawed his lip with passion. "You shall dearly pay this obstinacy," said he, and fiercely strode away.

In the heat of his wrath, he commanded his coadjutors to force the door; but the law, which makes the home of an Englishman a sacred sanctuary, extends its precious influence, in some faint degree, to the breasts even of the dregs of mankind; and these wretches, who would have given up Laura to any other outrage, hesitated to perpetrate this. They objected the danger. "Does your honor think," said one of them, "that the servants will stand by and allow us to break open the door?" "I tell you," said Hargrave, "all the men-servants are from home. What do you fear from a parcel of women?" "Women can bear witness as well as men, your honor; and it might be as much as our necks are worth to be convicted. But if your honor could entice her out, we'd soon catch her."

Hargrave took two or three turns along the lobby, and then returned to Laura. "Miss Montreville," said he, "my dearest Miss Montreville, I conjure you to admit me only for a moment. These savages will wait no longer. They are determined to force your door. Once more I implore you, before it be too late, let me speak with you. I expect them every moment." Laura's breast swelled with indignation at this vile pretense of kindness. "Acting under your commands, sir," said she, "I doubt not that they may even dare this outrage. And let them at their peril. If the laws of my country can not protect, they shall avenge me." For a moment Hargrave stood confounded at

this detection, till anger replaced shame. "Very well, madam," he cried; "insult me as you please, and take the consequences." He then rejoined his emissaries; and, by bribery and threats, endeavored to prevail upon them to consummate their violence. The men, unwilling to forfeit the reward of the hazard and trouble which they had already undergone, allured by Hargrave's promises, and fearing his vengeance, at last agreed to drag their hapless victim to her doom.

Having taken such instruments as they could find for the purpose of forcing the door, they followed Hargrave up stairs and prepared to begin their work. At this near prospect of the success of all his schemes, Hargrave's rage began to cool, and a gleam of tenderness and humanity reviving in his heart, he shrunk from witnessing the anguish which he was about to inflict. "Stop," said he to his people, who were approaching the door; "stay a few moments;" and, putting his hand to his forehead, he walked about, not wavering in his purpose, but endeavoring to excuse it to himself. "It is all the consequence of her own obstinacy," said he, suddenly stopping. "You may go on. No—stay; let me first get out of this house; her cries would drive me mad. Make haste—lose no time after I am gone. It is better over."

Besides the motive which he owned, Hargrave was impelled to depart by the dread of meeting Laura's upbraiding eye, and by the shame of appearing, even to the servants, who were so soon to know his baseness, an inactive spectator of Laura's distress. He hastened from the house, and the men proceeded in their work.

With dread and horror did Laura listen to their attempts. Pale, breathless, her hands clinched in terror, she fixed her strained eyes on the door, which every moment seemed yielding; then flying to the window, surveyed in despair the height, which made escape an act of suicide; then again turning to the door, tried, with her feeble strength, to aid its resistance. In vain! it yielded, and the shock threw Laura on the ground. The ruffians seized her, more dead than alive, and were seizing her lily arms to lead her away; but, with all her native majesty, she motioned them from her. "You need not touch me," said she; "you see I can resist no further." With the composure of despair, she followed them to the hall, where, her strength failing, she sunk upon a seat.

Some of the servants now in pity and amazement approaching her, she addressed herself to one of them: "Will you go with me, my good friend," said she, "that you may return and tell Lady Pelham where to find her niece's corpse!" The girl consented, with tears in her eyes; but one of the fellows cried, "No, no! she may run after the coach, if she likes, but she don't go withinside." "Why not?" said the other, with a brutal leer. "They may both get home again together. They'll be free enough soon." Laura shuddered. "Where wandered my senses," said she, "when I thought of subjecting any creature to the chance of a fate like mine! Stay here, my dear, and tell Lady Pelham that I charge her, by all her hopes here and hereafter; to seek me before she sleeps. Let her seek me wherever there is wickedness and woe,

and there, living or dead, I shall be found." "Let's have done with all this nonsense," said one of the men. "John, make the coach draw up close to the door." The fellow went to do as he was desired, while the other, with a handkerchief, prepared to stifle the cries of Laura, in case she should attempt to move the pity of passengers in the street. Laura heard the carriage stop, she heard the step let down, and the sound was like her death-knell.

The man hurried her through the hall. He opened the street door, and Fanny entered with Mr. Derwent! Laura, raising her bowed-down head, uttered a cry of joy. "I am safe!" she cried, and sunk into the arms of Fanny.

The faithful girl had witnessed the arrest of her young mistress, and, with affectionate interest, had lingered in the ante-room till Laura's request that she might be allowed to send for Mr. Derwent had suggested to her what was most fit to be done; and the refusal of the pretended bailiff had warned her that it must be done quickly. She had then flown to Mr. Derwent's; and, finding him just stepping into his carriage, easily persuaded him to order it to Grosvenor-street.

Mr. Derwent immediately directed his servants to seize the fellow who had held Laura, the other having made his escape upon seeing the arrival of her deliverers. Laura, soon recovering, told her tale to Mr. Derwent, who, ordering the man to be searched, examined the warrant, and declared it to be false. The danger attending forgery, however, had been avoided, for there was no magistrate of the same name with that which appeared in the signature. Hargrave's villainy thus fully detected, Laura wished to dismiss his agent; but Mr. Derwent would not permit such atrocity to go unpunished, and gave up the wretch to the arm of the law. He then quitted Laura, leaving his servant to attend her till Lady Pelham's return; and, worn out with the emotion she had undergone, she threw herself on a bed to seek some rest.

Early in the evening Lady Pelham returned, and immediately inquired for her niece. The servants, always attentive and often uncharitable spectators of the actions of their superiors, had before observed the encouragement which their mistress gave to Hargrave, and, less unwilling to suspect than Laura, were convinced of Lady Pelham's connivance in his purpose. None of them, therefore, choosing to announce the failure of a scheme in which they believed her so deeply implicated, her questions produced no information except that Miss Montreuil was gone, indisposed, to bed. The habitual awe with which the good sense and discernment of Laura had inspired Lady Pelham was at present augmented almost to fear by the consciousness of duplicity. She shrunk from encountering the glance of quiet scrutiny, the plain, direct question which left no room for prevarication, no choice between simple truth and absolute falsehood. But curiosity to know the success of the plot, and, still more, a desire to discover how far she was suspected of abetting it, prevailed over her fears; and, having before studied the part she was to play, she entered Laura's apartment.

She found her already risen, and prepared to

receive her. "My dear child," said her ladyship, in one of her kindest tones, "I am told you have been ill. What is the matter?" "My illness is nothing, madam," answered Laura; "but I have been alarmed in your absence by the most daring, the most unprincipled outrage!" "Outrage, my dear!" cried Lady Pelham, in a voice of the utmost surprise; "what outrage?" Laura then, commanding by a powerful effort the indignation which swelled her heart, related her injuries without comment, pausing at times to observe how her aunt was affected by the recital.

Lady Pelham was all amazement, which, though chiefly pretended, was partly real. She was surprised at the lengths to which Hargrave had gone, and even suspected his whole design, though she was far from intending to discover her sentiments to her niece.

"This is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of!" cried she, when Laura had ended. "What can have been the meaning of this trick? What can have incited the people?"

"Colonel Hargrave, madam," said Laura, without hesitation.

"Impossible, my dear! Hargrave can be no further concerned in it than as taking advantage of the accident to extort the promise of a little kindness from you. He would never have ventured to send the men into my house on such an errand."

"One of them confessed to Mr. Derwent, before the whole family, that Colonel Hargrave was his employer."

"Astonishing!" cried Lady Pelham. "And what do you suppose to have been Hargrave's intention?"

"I doubt not, madam," returned Laura, commanding her voice, though resentment flashed from her eyes, "I doubt not that his intentions were yet more base and inhuman than the means he employed. But, whatever they were, I am certain he would never have dared to entertain them, had it not been for the encouragement which your ladyship has thought proper to give him."

"I, child!" cried Lady Pelham, truth in her color contradicting the falsehood of her tongue; "surely you do not think I would encourage him in such a plot."

"No, madam," answered Laura; "I hope and believe you are incapable of consenting to such wickedness. I allude only to the general countenance which you have always shown to Colonel Hargrave."

Lady Pelham could implicitly rely upon Laura's word; and, finding that she was herself unsuspected, she had leisure to attempt palliating the offense of her protégé. "That countenance," returned she, "shall be completely withdrawn for the future, if Hargrave do not explain this strange frolic entirely to my satisfaction."

"Frolic, madam!" cried Laura, indignantly. "If that name belong to crimes which would disgrace barbarians, then call this a frolic!"

"Come, my dear girl," said Lady Pelham, coaxingly throwing her arm round Laura, "you are too much, and, I must own, according to present appearances, too justly irritated to talk of this affair coolly to-night. To-morrow we shall converse about it. Now let's go to tea."

"No, madam," said Laura, with spirit, for she saw through her aunt's intention of glossing over Hargrave's villainy, "I will never again expose myself to the chance of meeting a wretch whose crimes are my abhorrence. I will not leave this room till I quit it forever. Madam, you have often called me firm. Now I will prove to you that I am so. Give me the means of going hence in a manner becoming your niece, or my own limbs shall bear me to Scotland, and on the charity of my fellow-creatures will I rely for support."

"I protest, my love," cried Lady Pelham, "you are absolutely in a passion; I never saw you so angry till now."

"Your ladyship never saw me have such reason for anger," replied Laura. "I own I am angry; yet I know that my determination is right; and I assure you it will outlive the heat with which it is expressed."

Had Laura's purpose been more placidly announced, it would have roused Lady Pelham to fury; but even those who have least command over their tempers have generalship enough to perceive the advantage of the attack; and the passion of a virago has commonly a patriarchal submission for its elder-born brother. Lady Pelham saw that Laura was in no humor for trifling; she knew that her resolutions were not easily shaken; and she quitted her niece upon pretense of fatigue, but in reality that she might consider how to divert her from the purpose which she had so peremptorily announced.

Laura was every day becoming more necessary to her aunt, and to think of parting with her was seriously disagreeable. Besides, Laura's departure would effectually blast the hopes of Hargrave; and what would then become of all Lady Pelham's prospects of borrowing consequence from the lovely young Countess of Lincourt?

Never wanting in invention, Lady Pelham thought of a hundred projects for preventing her niece's journey to Scotland. Her choice was fixed by a circumstance which she could not exclude from her consideration. The story of Hargrave's nefarious plot was likely soon to be made public. It was known to Mr. Derwent, and to all her own household. Her conscience whispered that her connivance would be suspected. Mr. Derwent might be discreet; but what was to be expected from the discretion of servants! The story would spread from the footmen to the waiting-maids, and from these to their ladies, till it would meet her at every turn. Nor had her imprudent consent left her the power of disclaiming all concern in it, by forbidding Hargrave her house, since he would probably revenge himself by disclosing her share in the stratagem.

Lady Pelham saw no better means of palliating these evils than by dismissing her establishment and returning immediately to Walbourne; and she hoped, at the same time, that it might not be impossible to prevail on Laura to change the direction of her journey. For this purpose, she began by beseeching her niece to lay aside all thoughts of retiring to Scotland, and was beginning to recount all the disadvantages of such a proceeding; but Laura would listen to no remonstrance on the subject, declaring that if, after what had happened, she

remained in a place where she was liable to such outrage, she should be herself accountable for whatever evil might be the consequence. Lady Pelham then proposed an immediate removal to Walbourne, artfully insinuating that, if any cause of complaint should there arise, Laura would be near the advice and assistance of her friends at Norwood, and of Mrs. Bolingbroke. Laura was not without some wishes that pointed toward Walbourne; but she remembered the impertinencies which she had there endured, and she firmly resisted giving occasion to their removal.

Lady Pelham had then resource to tender upbraids. "Was it possible that Laura, the only hope and comfort of her age, would quit her now, when she had so endeared herself to the widowed heart, rest of all other treasure—now, when increasing infirmity required her aid—now, when the eye which was so soon to close was fixed on her as on its last earthly treasure! Would Laura thus cruelly punish her for a crime in which she had no share; a crime which she was willing to resent to the utmost of her niece's wishes!" Lady Pelham talked herself into tears, and few hearts of nineteen are hard enough to resist the tears of age. Laura consented to accompany her aunt to Walbourne, provided that she should never be importuned on the subject of Hargrave, nor even obliged to see him. These conditions Lady Pelham solemnly promised to fulfill, and, well pleased, prepared for her journey.

Hargrave, however, waited on her before her departure, and excused himself so well on the score of his passion, his despair, and his eager desire of being allied to Lady Pelham, that, after a gentle reprimand, he was again received into favor, informed of the promises which had been made against him, and warned not to be discouraged if their performance could not immediately be dispensed with. Of this visit Laura knew nothing; for she adhered to her resolution of keeping her apartment, nor ever crossed its threshold till, on the third day after her perilous adventure, the carriage was at the door which conveyed her to Walbourne.

### CHAPTER XXX.

As Lady Pelham's carriage passed the entrance of the avenue which led to Norwood, Laura sunk into a profound reverie; in the course of which, she settled most minutely the behavior proper for her first meeting with De Courcy. She decided on the gesture of unembarrassed cordiality with which she was to accost him; intending her manner to intimate that she accounted him a friend, and only a friend. The awkwardness of a private interview she meant to avoid, by going to Norwood next day, at an hour which she knew that Montague employed in reading aloud to his mother.

All this excellent arrangement, however, was unfortunately useless. Laura was taking a very early ramble in what had always been her favorite walk, when, at a sudden turn, she saw De Courcy not three steps distant. Her white gown, shining through the still leafless trees, had caught his attention; the slightest glimpse of her form was sufficient for the eye of love, and

he had advanced prepared to meet her; while she, thus taken by surprise, stood before him conscious and blushing. At this confusion, so flattering to a lover, De Courcy's heart gave one bound of triumphant joy; but he was too modest to ascribe to love what timidity might so well account for; and he prudently avoided reminding Laura, even by a look, of either his hopes or his wishes. Quickly recollecting herself, Laura entered into a conversation, which, though at first reserved and interrupted, returned by degrees to the confidential manner which De Courcy had formerly won from her under the character of her father's friend.

This confidence, so precious to him, De Courcy was careful never to interrupt. From the time of Laura's return, he saw her almost daily. She made long visits to Mrs. De Courcy; he came often to Walbourne; they met in their walks, in their visits; they spent a week together under Mr. Bolingbroke's roof; yet De Courcy religiously kept his promise, nor ever willfully reminded Laura that he had a wish beyond her friendship. Always gentle, respectful, and attentive, he never invited observation by distinguishing her above others who had equal claims on his politeness. She only shared his assiduities with every other woman whom he approached; nor did he betray uneasiness when she, in her turn, received attention from others. His prudent self-command had the effect which he intended; and Laura, in conversing with him, felt none of the reserve which may be supposed to attend intercourse with a rejected admirer. His caution even at times deceived her. She recollected Mrs. Douglas's prophecy, that "his attachment would soon subside into friendly regard," and imagined she saw its accomplishment. "How happy are men in having such flexible affections!" thought she, with a sigh. "I wonder whether he has entirely conquered the passion which, three short months ago, was to 'last through life—beyond life?' I hope he has," whispered she, with a deeper sigh; and she repeated it again, "I hope he has;" as if, by repeating it, she would have ascertained that it was her real sentiment. Yet, at other times, some little inadvertency, unheeded by less interested observers, would awaken a doubt of De Courcy's self-conquest; and in that doubt Laura unconsciously found pleasure. She often reconsidered the arguments which her friend had used to prove that passion is unnecessary to the happiness of wedded life. She did not allow that she was convinced by them; but she half wished that she had had an opportunity of weighing them before she had decided her fate with regard to De Courcy. Meanwhile, much of her time was spent in his company, and his presence had ever brought pleasure with it. Week after week passed agreeably away and at the close of the winter atoned for the disquiet which had marked its commencement.

During all this time, Laura saw nothing of Hargrave. His visits, indeed, to Walbourne were more frequent than she supposed; but the only one of which she had been informed, Lady Pelham affected to announce to her, advising her to avoid it by spending that day at Norwood. Since their return from town, her ladyship had entirely desisted from her remonstrances in his favor; and Laura hoped that his last outrage



had opened her aunt's eyes to the deformity of his character. And could Lady Pelham's end have been pursued without annoyance to any living being, it would long before have shared the perishable nature of her other purposes. But whatever conferred the invaluable occasion of tormenting was cherished by Lady Pelham as the dearest of her concern; and she only waited fit opportunity to show that she could be as stubborn in thwarting the wishes of others, as capricious in varying her own.

De Courcy's attachment could not escape her penetration; and, as she was far from intending to desert the cause of Hargrave, she saw, with displeasure, the progressive advancement of Laura's regard for the friend of her father. Though she was sufficiently acquainted with Laura: to know that chiding would effect no change in her sentiments or conduct, she had not temper enough to restrain her upbraidings on this subject, but varied them with all the skill and perseverance of a veteran in provocation. "She did not, she must confess, understand the delicacy of ladies whose affections could be transferred from one man to another. She did not see how any modest woman could find two endurable men in the world. It was a farce to tell her of friendship and gratitude, and such like stuff. Every body knew the meaning of a friendship between a girl of nineteen and a good-looking young fellow of five-and-twenty. She wondered whether Laura was really wise enough to imagine that De Courcy could afford to marry her; or whether, if he were mad enough to think of such a thing, she could be so ungenerous as to take advantage of his folly, to plunge him into irretrievable poverty, and this, too, when it was well known that a certain young heiress had prior claims upon him."

Laura at first listened to these harangues with tolerable *sang froid*; yet they became, she was unconscious why, every day more provoking. Though she had self-command enough to be silent, her changing color announced Lady Pelham's victory; and it was followed up without mercy or respite. It had, however, no other effect than that of imposing a little restraint when her ladyship happened to be present; for De Courcy continued his attentions, and Laura received him with increasing favor.

Lady Pelham omitted none of the minor occasions of disturbing this harmonious intercourse. She interrupted their tête-à-têtes, beset them in their walks, watched their most insignificant looks, pried into their most commonplace messages, and dexterously hinted to the one, whatever foible she could see or imagine in the other.

A casual breath of scandal soon furnished her with a golden opportunity of sowing dissension, and she lost no time in taking advantage of the hint. "It is treating me like a baby," said she once to Laura, after opening in form her daily attack; "it is treating me like a mere simpleton, to expect that you are to deceive me with your flourishing sentiments about esteem and gratitude. Have esteem and gratitude the blindness of love! Don't I see that you overlook in your beloved Mr. Montague de Courcy faults which in another you would think sufficient excuse for any ill treatment that you chose to inflict!"

Laura kept silence; for of late she had found that her temper could not stand a charge of this kind.

"What becomes of all your fine high-flown notions of purity, and so forth," continued Lady Pelham, "when you excuse his indiscretions with his mother's *protégé*, and make a favorite and a plaything of his spoiled bantling!"

Laura turned pale, then reddened violently. "What *protégé*! what bantling!" cried she, quite thrown off her guard. "I know of no indiscretions—I have no playthings."

"What! you pretend not to know that the brat he takes so much notice of is his own! Did you never hear of his affair with a pretty girl whom his mamma was training as a waiting-maid for her fine lady-daughter?"

"Mr. De Courcy, madam!" cried Laura, making a powerful struggle with her indignation; "he seduce a girl, who, as a member of his family, was doubly entitled to his protection! Is it possible that your ladyship can give credit to such a calumny!"

"Heyday," cried Lady Pelham, with a provoking laugh, "a most incredible occurrence, to be sure! And pray, why should your immaculate Mr. De Courcy be impeccable any more than other people?"

"I do not imagine, madam," returned Laura, with recovered self-possession, "that Mr. De Courcy, or any of the human race, is perfectly sinless; but nothing short of proof shall convince me that he is capable of deliberate wickedness; or even that the casual transgressions of such a man can be so black in their nature, so heinous in their degree. It were next to a miracle if one who makes conscience of guarding his very thoughts, could, with a single step, make such progress in iniquity."

"It were a miracle, indeed," said Lady Pelham, sneeringly, "if you could be prevailed upon to believe any thing that contradicts your romantic vagaries. As long as you are determined to worship De Courcy, you'll never listen to any thing that brings him down from his pedestal."

"It is wasting time," returned Laura, calmly, "to argue on the improbability of this malicious tale. I can easily give your ladyship the pleasure of being able to contradict it. Mrs. Bolingbroke is at Norwood. She will tell me frankly who is the real father of little Henry, and I shall feel no difficulty in asking her. Will you have the goodness to lend me the carriage for an hour!"

"A pretty expedition, truly!" cried Lady Pelham; "and mighty delicate and dignified it is for a young lady to run about inquiring into the pedigree of all the bastards in the country! I assure you, Miss Montreville, I shall neither countenance nor assist such a scheme!"

"Then, madam," answered Laura, coolly, "I shall walk to Norwood. The claims of dignity, or even of delicacy, are surely inferior to those of justice and gratitude. But though it subject me to the scorn of all mankind, I will do what in me lies to clear his good-name whose kindness ministered the last comforts that sweetened the life of my father."

The manner in which these words were pronounced showed Lady Pelham that resistance was useless. She was far from wishing to

quarrel with the De Courcy family; and she now began to fear that she might appear the propagator of this scandal. Having little time to consult the means of safety, since Laura was already leaving the room, she hastily said, "I suppose, in your explanations with Mrs. Bolingbroke, you will give me up for your authority?"

"No, madam," replied Laura, with a scorn which she could not wholly suppress; "your ladyship has no right to think so at the moment when I am showing such concern for the reputation of my friends." Lady Pelham would have fired at this disdain, but her *quickness* was at hand—she was afraid of provoking Laura to expose her, and therefore she found it perfectly possible to keep her temper. "If you are resolved to go," said she, "you had better wait till I order the carriage; I fear we shall have rain." Laura at first refused; but Lady Pelham pressed her, with so many kind concerns for a slight cold which she had, that, though she saw through the veil, she suffered her ladyship to wear it undisturbed. The carriage was ordered, and Laura hastened to Norwood.

Though she entertained not the slightest doubt of De Courcy's integrity, she was restless and anxious. It was easy to see that her mind was preoccupied during the few minutes which passed before; taking leave of Mrs. De Courcy, she begged Mrs. Bolingbroke to speak with her apart. Harriet followed her into another room; and Laura, with much more embarrassment than she had expected to feel, prepared to begin her interrogations.

Harriet, from the thoughtful aspect of her companion, anticipating something of importance, stood gravely waiting to hear what she had to say; while Laura was confused by the awkwardness of explaining her reason for the question she was about to ask. "I have managed this matter very ill," said she at last, pursuing her thoughts aloud. "I have entered on it with so much formality, that you must expect some very serious affair; and, after all, I am only going to ask a trifling question. Will you tell me who is the father of my pretty little Henry?" Harriet looked surprised, and answered, "Really, my dear, I am not sure that I dare. You inquired the same thing once before; and just when I was going to tell you, Montague looked so terrible, that I was forced to hold my tongue. But what makes you ask? What! you won't tell! Then I know how it is. My prophecy has proved true, and the good folks have given him to Montague himself. Ah! what a tell-tale face you have, Laura! And who has told you this pretty story?" "It is of no consequence," replied Laura, "that you should know my authority, provided that I have yours to contradict the slander." "You shall have better authority than mine," returned Harriet. "Those who were malicious enough to invent such a tale of Montague might well assert that his sister employed falsehood to clear him. You shall hear the whole from nurse Margaret herself; and her evidence can not be doubted. Come, will you walk to the cottage, and hear what she has to say?"

They found Margaret alone; and Harriet, impatient till her brother should be fully justified, scarcely gave herself time to answer the old woman's civilities, before she entered on

her errand. "Come, nurse," said she, with all her natural frankness of manner, "I have something particular to say to you. Let's shut the door and sit down. Do you know somebody who has been malicious enough to tell Miss Montreville that Montague is little Henry's father." Margaret lifted up her hands and eyes. "My young master, madam!" cried she, "he go to bring shame and sorrow into any honest man's family! If you'll believe me, miss," continued she, turning to Laura, "this is, begging your pardon, the wickedest lie that ever was told."

Laura was about to assure her that she gave no credit to the calumny; but Harriet, who had a double reason for wishing that her friend should listen to Margaret's tale, interrupted her, saying, "Nurse, I am sure nothing could convince her so fully as hearing the whole story from your own lips. I brought her hither on purpose; and you may trust her, I assure you, for she is just such a wise, prudent creature as you always told me that I ought to be." "Ah! madam," answered Margaret, "I know that; for John says she is the prettiest behaved young lady he ever saw; and says how fond my lady is of her, and others too besides my lady, though it is not for servants to be making remarks." "Come, then, nurse," said Harriet, "sit down between us; tell us the whole sad story of my poor foster-sister, and clear your friend Montague from this aspersion."

Margaret did as she was desired. "Ah, yes!" said she, tears lending to her eyes a transient brightness, "I can talk of it now! Many a long evening John and I speak of nothing else. She always used to sit between us; but now we both sit close together. But we are growing old," continued she, in a more cheerful tone, "and in a little while we shall see them all again. We had three of the prettiest boys! My dear young lady, you will soon have children of your own; but never set your heart upon them, nor be too proud of them, for that is only provoking Providence to take them away." "I shall probably never have so much reason," said Harriet, "as you had to be proud of your Jessy." The mother's pride had survived its object; and it brightened Margaret's faded countenance, as, pressing Harriet's hand between her own, she cried, "Ah! bless you! you were always kind to her. She was indeed the flower of my little flock; and when the boys were taken away, she was our comfort for all. But I was too proud of her. Five years since, there was not her like in all the country round. A dutiful child, too, and never made us sad or sorrowful till—and such a pretty, modest creature! But I was too proud of her."

Margaret stopped, and covered her face with the corner of her apron. Sympathizing tears stood in Laura's eyes; while Harriet sobbed aloud at the remembrance of the play-fellow of her infancy. The old woman first recovered herself: "I shall never have done at this rate," said she; and, drying her eyes, turned to address the rest of her tale to Laura. "Well, ma'am, a gentleman who used to come a visiting to the castle, by ill-fortune chanced to see her; and ever after that he noticed her and spoke to her; and flattered me up, too, saying, what a fine-looking young creature she was, and so well brought up, and what a pity it was that

she should be destined for a tradesman's wife. So, like a fool as I was, I thought no harm of his fine speeches, because Jessy always said he behaved quite modest and respectful like. But John, to be sure, was angry, and said that a tradesman was her equal, and that he hoped her rosy cheeks would never give her notions above her station; and, says he—I am sure many and many a time I have thought of his words—says he, 'God grant I never see worse come of her than to be an honest tradesman's wife!' My young master, too, saw the gentleman one day speaking to her; and he was so good as to advise her himself, and told her that the gentleman meant nothing honest by all his fine speeches. So after that, she would never stop with him at all, nor give ear to a word of his flatteries; but always ran away from him, telling him to say those fine things to his equals.

"So one unlucky day I had some matters to be done in the town, and Jessy said she would like to go, and poor foolish I was so left to myself that I let her go. So she dressed herself in her clean, white gown. I remember it as were it but yesterday. I went to the door with her, charging her to be home early. She shook hands with me. Jessy, says I, you look just like a bride. So she smiled. 'No, mother,' says she, 'I sha'n't leave home so merrily the day I leave it for all'—and I never saw my poor child smile again. So she went, poor lamb, little thinking! and I stood in the door looking after her, thinking, like a fool as I was, that my young master need not have thought it strange, though a gentleman had taken her for a wife; for there were not many ladies that looked like her."

Margaret rested her arms upon her knees, bent her head over them, made a pause, and then began again. "All day I was as merry as a lark; singing and making every thing clean in our little habitation here, where I thought we should all sit down together so happy when John came home at night from the castle. So it was getting darkish before my work was done, and then I began to wonder what was become of Jessy; and many a time I went across the green to see if there was any sight of her. At last John came home, and I told him that I was beginning to be frightened; but he laughed at me, and said she had perhaps met with some of her comrades, and was gone to take her tea with them. So we sat down by the fire; but I could not rest, for my mind misgave me sadly; so says I, John, I will go and see after my girl. 'Well,' says he, 'we may as well go and meet her.' Alas! alas! a sad meeting was that! We went to the door; I opened it, and somebody fell against me—it was Jessy. She looked as dead as she did the day I laid her in her coffin; and her pretty cheek! and her pretty mouth, that used to smile so sweetly in my face when she was a baby on my knee! And her pretty shining hair that I used to comb so often! Oh, woe, woe is me! How could I see such a sight and live!"

The mother wrung her withered hands, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking. Laura laid her arms kindly round old Margaret's neck; for misfortune made the poor and the stranger her equal and her friend. She offered no words of unavailing consolation, but pitying tears trickled fast down her cheeks; while Mrs. Boling-

broke, her eyes flashing indignant fires, exclaimed, "Surely the curse of Heaven will pursue that wretch!"

"Alas!" said Margaret, "I fear I cursed him too; but I was in a manner beside myself then. God forgive both him and me! My poor child never cursed him. All that I could say, she would not tell who it was that had used her so. She said she should never bring him into justice; and always prayed that his own conscience might be his only punishment. So from the first we saw that her heart was quite broken; for she would never speak nor look up, nor let me do the smallest thing for her, but always said it was not fit that I should wait on such a one as she. Well, one night, after we were all a bed, a letter was flung in at the window of Jessy's closet; and she crept out of her bed to take it. I can show it you, miss, for it was under her pillow when she died." Margaret, unlocking a drawer, took out a letter and gave it to Laura, who read in it these words:

"My dear Jessy, I am the most miserable wretch upon earth. I wish I had been upon the rack the hour I met you. I am sure I have been so ever since. Do not curse me, dear Jessy! Upon my soul, I had far less thought of being the ruffian I have been to you, than I have at this moment of blowing out my own brains. I wish to Heaven that I had been in your own station, that I might have made you amends for the injury I have done. But you know it is impossible for me to marry you. I inclose a bank-bill for £100; and I will continue to pay you the same sum annually, while you live, though you should never consent to see me more. If you make me a father, no expense shall be spared to provide the means of secrecy and comfort. No accommodation which a wife could have shall be withheld from you. Tell me if there be any thing more that I can do for you. I shall never forgive myself for what I have done. I abhor myself; and from this hour, I forswear all womankind for your sake. Once more, dear Jessy, pardon me, I implore you."

This letter was without signature; but the handwriting was familiar to Laura, and could not be mistaken. It was Hargrave's. Shuddering at this new proof of his depravity, Laura inwardly offered a thanksgiving that she had escaped all connection with such a monster. "You may trust my friend with the wretch's name," said Harriet, anxious that Laura's conviction should be complete. "She will make no imprudent use of it." "I should never have known it myself had it not been for this letter," answered Margaret. "But my poor child wished to answer it, and she was not able to carry the answer herself, so she was obliged to ask her father to go with it. And first she made us both promise, on the Bible, never to bring him either to shame or punishment; and then she told us that it was that same Major Hargrave that used to speak her so fair. Here is the scroll that John took of her answer:

"Sir, I return your money, for it can be of no use where I am going. I will never curse you; but trust I shall to the last have pity on you, who had no pity on me. I fear your sorrow is not right repentance; for, if it was, you

would never think of committing a new sin by taking your own life, but rather of making reparation for the great evil you have done. Not that I say this in respect of wishing to be your wife. My station makes that unsuitable, more especially now, when I should be a disgrace to any man. And I must say, a wicked person would be as unsuitable among my friends, for my parents are honest persons, although their daughter is so unhappy as to bring shame on them. I shall not live long enough to disgrace them any further, so pray inquire no more for me, nor take the trouble to send me money, for I will not buy my coffin with the wages of shame; and I shall need nothing else. So, wishing that my untimely end may bring you to a true repentance, I remain, sir, the poor, dying, disgraced

JESSY WILSON.

"Ah! miss," continued Margaret, wiping from the paper the drops which had fallen on it, "my poor child's prophecy was true. She always said she would just live till her child was born, and then lay her dishonored head and broken heart in the grave. My lady and Miss Harriet there were very kind; and my young master himself was so good as to promise that he would act the part of a father to the little orphan. And he used to argue with her that she should submit to the chastisement that was laid upon her, and that she might find some comfort still; but she always said that her chastisement was less than she deserved, but that she could never wish to live to be 'a very scorn of men, an outcast and an alien among her mother's children.'

"So the day that little Henry was born, she was doing so well that we were in hopes she would still be spared to us; but she knew better; and, when I was sitting by her, she pulled me close to her, and said, 'Mother,' says she, looking pleased like, 'the time of my release is at hand now; and then she charged me never to give poor little Henry to his cruel father. I had not power to say a word to her, but sat hushing the baby, with my heart like to break. So, by-and-by, she said to me again, but very weak and low like, 'My brothers lie side by side in the church-yard; lay me at their feet; it is good enough for me.' So she never spoke more, but closed her eyes, and slipped quietly away, and left her poor old mother."

A long pause followed Margaret's melancholy tale. "Are you convinced, my friend?" said Mrs. Bolingbroke, at length. "Fully," answered Laura, and returned to silent and thankful meditation.

"My master," said Margaret, "has made good his promise to poor Jessy. He has shown a father's kindness to her boy. He paid for his nursing, and forces John to take a board for him that might serve any gentleman's son; and now it will be very hard if the end of all his goodness is to get himself ill spoken of; and nobody saying a word against him that was the beginning of all this mischief. But that is the way of the world." "It is so," said Laura. "And what can better warn us that the earth was never meant for our resting-place? The 'raven' wings his way through it triumphant. The 'dove' finds no rest for the sole of her foot, and turns to the ark from whence she came."

Mrs. Bolingbroke soon after took leave of her nurse, and the ladies proceeded in their walk toward Walbourne. Harriet continued to express the warmest detestation of the profligacy of Hargrave; while Laura's mind was chiefly occupied in endeavoring to account for De Courcy's desire to conceal from her the enormity which had just come to her knowledge. Unable to divine his reason, she applied to Harriet. "Why, my dear," said she, "should your brother have silenced you on a subject which could only be mentioned to his honor?" "He never told me his reasons," said Harriet, smiling; "but if you will not be angry, I may try to guess them." "I think," said Laura, "that, thus cautioned, I may contrive to keep my temper; so speak boldly." "Then, my dear," said Harriet, "I may venture to say that I think he suspected you of a partiality for this wretch, and would not shock you by a full disclosure of his depravity. And I know," added she, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "that in him this delicacy was virtue; for the peace of his life depends on securing your affectionate, your exclusive preference." "Ah! Harriet, you have guessed right. Yes! I see it all. Dear, generous De Courcy!" cried Laura, and burst into tears.

Harriet had not time to comment upon this agitation; for the next moment De Courcy himself was at her side. For the first time Laura felt embarrassed and distressed by his presence. The words she had just uttered still sounded in her ear, and she trembled lest they had reached that of De Courcy. She was safe. Her exclamation was unheard by Montague; but he instantly observed her tears, and they banished from his mind every other idea than that of Laura in sorrow. He paid his compliments like one whose attention was distracted, and scarcely answered what his sister addressed to him. Mrs. Bolingbroke, inwardly enjoying his abstraction and Laura's embarrassment, determined not to spoil an opportunity which she judged so favorable to her brother's suit. "This close walk," said she, with a sly smile, "was never meant for a trio. It is just fit for a pair of lovers. Now I have letters to write, and if you two will excuse me—" De Courcy, coloring crimson, had not presence of mind to make any reply, while Laura, though burning with shame and vexation, answered, with her habitual self-command, "Oh, pray, my dear, use no ceremony. Here are none but friends." The emphasis which she laid upon the last word wrung a heavy sigh from De Courcy, who, while his sister was taking leave, was renewing his resolution not to disappoint the confidence of Laura.

The very circumstances which Mrs. Bolingbroke had expected should lead to a happy *claircissement*, made this interview the most reserved and comfortless which the two friends ever had. Laura was too conscious to talk of the story which she had just heard, and she was too full of it to enter easily upon any other subject. With her gratitude for the delicacy which De Courcy had observed toward her, was mingled a keen feeling of humiliation at the idea that he had discovered her secret before it had been confided to him; for we can sometimes confess a weakness which we can not, without extreme mortification, see detected. Her silence

and depression infected De Courcy; and the few short, constrained sentences which were spoken during their walk formed a contrast to the general vivacity of their conversations.

Laura, however, recovered her eloquence as soon as she found herself alone with Lady Pelham. With all the animation of sensibility, she related the story of the ill-fated *Jessy*; and disclosing in confidence the name of her destroyer, drew, in the fullness of her heart, a comparison between the violator of laws human and divine, owing his life to the mercy of the wretch whom he had undone, and the kind adviser of inexperienced youth, the humane protector of forsaken infancy. Lady Pelham quietly heard her to an end; and then wrinkling her eyelids, and peeping through them with her glittering blue eyes, she began: "Do you know, my dear, I never met with prejudices so strong as yours! When will you give over looking for prodigies? Would any mortal but you expect a gay young man to be as correct as yourself! As for your immaculate Mr. De Courcy, with his sage advices, I think it is ten to one that he wanted to keep the girl for himself. Besides, I'll answer for it, Hargrave would have bid farewell to all his indiscretions if you would have married him." "Never name it, madam," cried Laura, warmly, "if you would not banish me from your presence. His marriage with me would have been itself a crime; a crime aggravated by being, as if in mockery, consecrated to Heaven. For my connection with such a person no name is vile enough." "Well, well," said Lady Pelham, shrugging her shoulders, "I prophesy that one day you will repent having refused to share a title with the handsomest man in England." "All distinctions between right and wrong," returned Laura, "must first be blotted from my mind. The beauty of his person is no more to me than the shining colors of an adder; and the rank which your ladyship prizes so highly would but render me a more conspicuous mark for the infamy in which his wife must share."

Awed by the lightnings of Laura's eye, Lady Pelham did not venture to carry the subject further for the present. She had of late been watching an opportunity of procuring the readmission of Hargrave to the presence of his mistress; but this fresh discovery had served, if possible, to widen the breach. Hargrave's fiery temper submitted with impatience to the banishment which he had so well deserved, and he constantly urged Lady Pelham to use her authority in his behalf. Lady Pelham, though conscious that this authority had no existence, was flattered by having power ascribed to her, and promised at some convenient season to interfere. Finding herself, however, considerably embarrassed by a promise which she could not fulfill without hazarding the loss of Laura, she was not sorry that an opportunity occurred of evading the performance of her agreement. She, therefore, acquainted Hargrave with Laura's recent discovery, declaring that she could not ask her niece to overlook entirely so great an irregularity.

From a regard to the promise of secrecy which she had given to Laura, as well as in common prudence, Lady Pelham had resolved not to mention the De Courcy family as the fountain from which she had drawn her intelli-

gence. Principle and prudence sometimes governed her ladyship's resolutions, but seldom swayed her practice. In the first interview with Hargrave which followed this rational determination, she was led, by the mere vanity of a babbler, to give such hints as not only enabled him to trace the story of his shame to Norwood, but inclined him to fix the publishing of it upon Montague.

From the moment when Hargrave first unjustly suspected Laura of a preference for De Courcy, his heart had rankled with an enmity which a sense of its ingratitude served only to aggravate. The cool disdain with which De Courcy treated him—a strong suspicion of his attachment—above all, Laura's avowed esteem and regard—inflamed this enmity to the bitterest hatred. Hopeless as he was of succeeding in his designs by any fair or honorable means, he might have entertained thoughts of relinquishing his suit, and of seeking, in a match of interest, the means of escape from his embarrassments; but that Laura, with all her unequalled charms, should be the prize of De Courcy, that in her he should obtain all that beauty, affluence, and love could give, was a thought not to be endured. Lady Pelham, too, more skilled to practice on the passions of others than to command her own, was constantly exciting him, by hints of De Courcy's progress in the favor of Laura; while Lambert, weary of waiting for the tedious accomplishment of his own scheme, continually goaded him with sly sarcasms on his failure in the arts of persuasion, and on his patience in submitting to be baffled in his wishes by a haughty girl. In the heat of his irritation, Hargrave often swore that no power on earth should long delay the gratification of his love and his revenge. But to marry a free-born British woman against her consent is, in these enlightened times, an affair of some difficulty; and Hargrave, in his cooler moments, perceived that the object of three years' eager pursuit was further than ever from his attainment.

Fortune seemed in every respect to oppose the fulfillment of his designs, for his regiment at this time received orders to prepare to embark for America; and Lord Lincoln, who had discovered his nephew's ruinous connection with Lambert, had influence to procure from high authority a hint that Hargrave was expected to attend his duty on the other side of the Atlantic.

The news of this arrangement Hargrave immediately conveyed to Lady Pelham, urging her to sanction any means which could be devised for making Laura the companion of his voyage. Lady Pelham hesitated to carry her complaint so far; but she resolved to make the utmost use of the time which intervened to promote the designs of her favorite. Her ladyship was not at any time much addicted to the communication of pleasurable intelligence, and the benevolence of her temper was not augmented by a prospect of the defeat of a plan in which her vanity was so much interested. She, therefore, maliciously withheld from her niece a piece of information so likely to be heard with joy. It reached Laura, however, by means of one who was ever watchful for her gratification. De Courcy no sooner ascertained the

truth of the report than he hastened to convey it to Laura.

He found her alone, and was welcomed with all her accustomed cordiality. "I am sorry," said he, with a smile which contradicted his words, "I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news to you; but I could not deny myself the edification of witnessing your fortune. Do you know that you are on the point of losing the most assiduous admirer that ever woman was blessed with? In three weeks Colonel Hargrave embarks for America. Nay, do not look incredulous. I assure you it is true." "Thank Heaven," cried Laura, "I shall once more be in peace and safety!" "Oh, fie! Is this your regret for the loss of so ardent a lover? Have you no feeling?" "Just such a feeling as the poor man had when he escaped from beneath the sword that hung by a hair. Indeed, Mr. De Courcy, I can not tell you to what degree he has embittered the last two years of my life. But I believe," continued she, blushing very deeply, "I need not explain to you any of my feelings toward Colonel Hargrave, since I find you have I know not what strange faculty of divining them." Assisted by a conversation which he had had with his sister, De Courcy easily understood Laura's meaning. Respectfully taking her hand, "Pardon me," said he, in a low voice, "if I have ever ventured to guess what it was your wish to conceal from me." "Oh! believe me," cried Laura, with a countenance and manner of mingled candor and modesty; "there is not a thought of my heart which I wish to conceal from you; since from you even my most humbling weaknesses are sure of meeting with delicacy and indulgence. But since you are so good an augur," added she, with an ingenuous smile, "I trust you perceive that I shall need no more delicacy or indulgence upon the same score."

The fascinating sweetness of her looks and voice for the first time beguiled De Courcy of his promised caution. "Dear, dear Laura," he cried, fondly pressing her hand to his breast, "it is I who have need of indulgence, and I must—I must sue for it. I must repeat to you that—" Laura's heart sprung to her lips, and, unconsciously snatching away her hand, she stood in breathless expectation of what was to follow. "Madman that I am!" cried De Courcy, recalled to recollection by her gesture, "whither am I venturing!" That was precisely what of all things Laura was most desirous to know; and she remained with her eyes fixed on the ground, half dreading the confidence, half the timidity, of her lover. A momentary glance at the speaking countenance of Laura, glowing with confusion, yet brightened with trembling pleasure, awakened the strongest hopes that ever had warmed De Courcy's bosom. "Beloved Laura," said he, again tenderly approaching her, "remember I am but human. Cease to treat me with this beguiling confidence. Cease to bewitch me with these smiles, which are so like all that I wish, or suffer me to—" Laura started, as her attention was drawn by some one passing close to the ground window near which they were standing. "Ah!" cried she, in a tone of vexation, "there is my evil genius. Colonel Hargrave is come into the house. He will be here this instant.

Excuse me for driving you away. I beseech you do not remain a moment alone with him."

Laura was not mistaken. She had scarcely spoken, ere, with a dark cloud on his brow, Hargrave entered. He bowed to Laura, who was advancing toward the door. "I am afraid, madam, I interrupt you," said he, darting a ferocious scowl upon De Courcy. Laura, without deigning even a single glance in reply, left the room.

Hargrave, as he passed the window, had observed the significant attitude of the lovers; and his jealousy and rage were inflamed to the uttermost by the scorn which he had endured in the presence of his rival. Fiercely stalking up to De Courcy, "Is it to you, sir," said he, "that I am indebted for this insolence?" "No, sir," answered De Courcy, a little disdainfully. "I have not the honor of regulating Miss Montreville's civilities." "This is a paltry evasion," cried Hargrave. "Is it not to your misrepresentations of a youthful indiscretion that I owe Miss Montreville's present displeasure?" "I am not particularly ambitious of the character of an informer," answered De Courcy, and taking his hat, wished Hargrave a stately good-morning. "Stay, sir!" cried Hargrave, roughly seizing him by the arm; "I must have some further conversation with you—you don't go yet." "I am not disposed to ask your permission," returned De Courcy; and, coolly liberating his arm, walked out of the house.

Boiling with rage, Hargrave followed him. "It is easy to see, sir," said he, "from whence you borrow a spirit which never was natural to you; your presumption builds upon the partiality of that fickle, capricious woman. But observe, sir, that I have claims on her—claims which she herself was too happy in allowing; and no man shall dare to interfere with them." "I shall dare," returned De Courcy, anger kindling his eyes, "to inquire by what right you employ such expressions in regard to Miss Montreville; and whether my spirit be my own or not, you shall find it sufficient to prevent your holding such language in my presence." "In your presence, or in the presence of all the devils," cried Hargrave, "I will maintain my right; and if you fancy that it interferes with any claim of yours, you know how to obtain satisfaction. There is but one way to decide the business." "I am of your opinion," replied De Courcy, "that there is one way, provided that we can mutually agree to abide by it; and that is, an appeal to Miss Montreville herself." Hargrave turned pale, and his lip quivered with rage. "A mode of decision, no doubt," said he, "which your vanity persuades you will be all in your favor! No, no, sir; our quarrel must be settled by means in which even your conceit can not deny my equality." "By a brace of pistols, you mean, of course," said De Courcy, coolly; "but I frankly tell you, Colonel Hargrave, that my notions must have changed before I can find the satisfaction of a gentleman in being murdered; and my principles, before I shall seek it in murdering you." "Curse on your hypocrisy!" cried Hargrave. "Keep this canting to cozen girls, and let me revenge my wrongs like a man, or the world shall know you, sir." "Do you imagine," said De Courcy, with a smile of calm disdain, "that

I am to be terrified into doing what I tell you I think wrong, by the danger of a little misrepresentation! You may, if you think fit, tell the world that I will not stake my life in a foolish quarrel, nor willfully send an unrepenting sinner to great account; and, if you go on to ascribe for my forbearance any motive which is derogatory to my character, I may, if I think fit, obtain justice as a peaceable citizen ought; or I may leave you, undisturbed, the glory of propagating a slander, which even you yourself believe to be groundless."

De Courcy's coolness served only to exasperate his adversary. "Truce with this methodical jargon!" cried he, fiercely. "It may impose upon women, but I see through it, sir; see that it is but a miserable trick to escape what you dare not meet." "Dare not!" cried De Courcy, lightnings flashing from his eye. "My nerves have failed me, then, since—" He stopped abruptly, for he scorned at such a moment to remind his antagonist of the courageous effort to which he owed his life. "Since when!" cried Hargrave, more and more enraged, as the recollection which De Courcy had recalled placed before him the full turpitude of his conduct. "Do you think I owe you thanks for a life which you have made a curse to me, by cheating me of its dearest pleasures! But may tortures be my portion if I do not foil you!"

The latter part of this dialogue was carried on in a close, shady lane, which branched off from the avenue of Walbourne. The dispute was proceeding with increasing warmth on both sides, when it was interrupted by the appearance of Laura. From a window she had observed the gentlemen leave the house together, had watched Hargrave's angry gestures, and seen De Courcy accompany him into the by-path. The evil which she had so long dreaded seemed now on the point of completion; and alarm leaving no room for reserve, she followed them with her utmost speed.

"Oh! Mr. De Courcy," she cried, with a look and attitude of the most earnest supplication, "for mercy leave this madman! If you would not make the forever miserable, carry this no further, I entreat, I implore you. Fear for me, if you fear not for yourself." The tender solicitude for the safety of his rival, which Hargrave imagined her words and gestures to express, the triumphant delight which they called up to the eyes of De Courcy, exasperated Hargrave beyond all bounds of self-command. Frantic with jealousy and rage, he drew, and rushed fiercely on De Courcy; but Montague, having neither fear nor anger to disturb his presence of mind, parried the thrust with his cane, closed with his adversary before he could recover, wrested the weapon from his hand; and, having calmly ascertained that no person could be injured by its fall, threw it over the fence into the adjoining field. Then taking Hargrave aside, he whispered that he would immediately return to him; and, giving his arm to Laura, led her toward the house.

She trembled violently, and big tears rolled down her colorless cheeks, as, vainly struggling with her emotion, she said, "Surely you will not endanger a life so precious, so—" She was unable to proceed; but, laying her hand on De Courcy's arm, she raised her eyes to his

face with such a look of piteous appeal as reached his very soul. Enchanted to find his safety the object of such tender interest, he again forgot his caution; and, fondly supporting with his arm the form which seemed almost sinking to the earth, "What danger would I not undergo," he cried, "to purchase such concern as this! Be under no alarm, dear Miss Montreville. Even if my sentiments in regard to duelling were other than they are, no provocation should tempt me to implicate your revered name in a quarrel which would, from its very nature, become public."

Somewhat tranquilized by his words, Laura walked silently by his side till they reached the house, when, in a cheerful tone, he bade her farewell. "A short farewell," said he, "for I must see you again this evening." Laura could scarcely prevail on herself to part from him. "May I trust you?" said she, with a look of anxiety which spoke volumes. "Securely, dearest Laura," answered he. "He whom you trust needs no other motive for rectitude."

He then hastened from her into the field whither he had thrown Hargrave's sword; and having found it, sprung over into the lane where he had left its owner. Gracefully presenting it to him, De Courcy begged pardon for having deprived him of it; "though," added he, "I believe you are now rather disposed to thank me for preventing the effects of a momentary irritation." Hargrave took his sword, and, in surly silence, walked on; then, suddenly stopping, he repeated that there was only one way in which the quarrel could be decided; and asked De Courcy whether he was determined to refuse him satisfaction. "The only satisfaction," returned De Courcy, "which is consistent with my notions of right and wrong, I will give you now on the spot. It is not to my information that you owe Miss Montreville's displeasure. Circumstances, which I own were wholly foreign to any consideration of your interests, induced me to keep your secret almost as if it had been my own; and it is from others that she has learned a part of your conduct, which, you must give me leave to say, warrants, even on the ground of modern honor, my refusal to treat you as an equal." "Insolent!" cried Hargrave; "leave me—avoid me, if you would not again provoke me to chastise you, unarmed as you are." "My horses wait for me at the gate," said De Courcy, coolly proceeding by his side; "and your way seems to lie in the same direction as mine."

The remainder of the way was passed in silence. At the gate, De Courcy, mounting his horse, bid his rival good-morning, which the other returned with an ungracious bow. De Courcy rode home, and Hargrave, finding himself master of the field, returned to Walbourne. There he exerted his utmost influence with Lady Pelham to procure an opportunity of excusing himself to Laura. Lady Pelham confessed that she could not venture to take the tone of command, lest she should drive Laura to seek shelter elsewhere; but she promised to contrive an occasion for an interview which he might prolong at his pleasure, provided such a one could be found without her apparent interference.

With this promise he was obliged for the

present to content himself; for, during his stay, Laura did not appear. She passed the day in disquiet. She could not rest. She could not employ herself. She dreaded lest the interview of the morning should have been only preparatory to one of more serious consequences. She told herself a hundred times that she was sure of De Courcy's principles, and yet feared as if they had been unworthy of confidence.

He had promised to see her in the evening, and she anxiously expected the performance of his promise. She knew that if he came while Lady Pelham was in the way, her ladyship would be too vigilant a guard to let one confidential word be exchanged. She, therefore, with a half-pardonable cunning, said not a word of De Courcy's promised visit; and, as soon as her aunt betook herself to her afternoon's nap, stole from the drawing-room to receive him.

Yet, perhaps, she never met him with less semblance of cordiality. She blushed and stammered while she expressed her hopes that the morning's dispute was to have no further consequences, and apologized for the interest she took in it, in language more cold than she would have used to a mere stranger. Scarcely could the expression of tenderness have delighted the lover like this little ill-concerted affectation, the first and the last which he ever witnessed in Laura Montreville. "Ah! dearest Laura," cried he, "it is too late to retract. You have said that my safety was dear to you; owned that it was for me you feared this morning, and you shall not cancel your confession." Laura's color deepened to crimson, but she made no other reply. Then, with a more timid voice and air, De Courcy said, "I would have told you *then* what dear presumptuous hopes your anxiety awakened, but that I feared to extort from your agitation what, perhaps, a cooler moment might refuse me. My long-loved, ever dear Laura, will you pardon me these hopes? Will you not speak to me! Not one little word to tell me that I am not too daring?" Laura spoke not even that little word. She even made a faint struggle to withdraw the hand which De Courcy pressed. Yet the lover read the expression of her half-averted face, and was satisfied.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

"PRAY," said Lady Pelham to her niece, "what might you and your paragon be engaged in for the hour and a half you were together this evening?"

"We were discussing a very important subject, madam," answered Laura, mustering all her confidence.

"May I be permitted to inquire into the nature of it?" returned Lady Pelham, covering her spleen with a thin disguise of ceremony.

"Certainly, madam," replied Laura. "You may remember I once told you that if ever I received addresses which I could with honor reveal, I should bespeak your ladyship's patience for my tale. Mr. De Courcy was talking of marriage, madam; and—and I—"

"Oh! mighty well, Miss Montreville," cried Lady Pelham, swelling with rage; "I comprehend you perfectly. You may spare your mod-

esty. Keep all these airs and blushes till you tell Colonel Hargrave that all your fine, high-flown passion for him has been quite at the service of the next man you met with!"

Laura's eyes filled with tears of mortification; yet she meekly answered, "I am conscious that the degrading attachment of which I was once the sport merits your upbraidings; and, indeed, they have not been its least punishment." She paused for a moment, and then added with an insinuating smile, "I can bear that you should reproach me with my new choice; for inconstancy is the prescriptive right of woman, and nothing else can be objected to my present views."

"Oh, far be it from me," cried Lady Pelham, scorn and anger throwing her whole little person into active motion, "far be it from me to make any objection to your immaculate swain! I would have you understand, however, that no part of my property shall go to enrich a parcel of proud beggars. It was indeed my intention, if you had made a proper match, to give you the little all which I have to bestow; but if you prefer starving with your Methodist parson, to being the heiress of five-and-forty thousand pounds, I have no more to say. However, you had better keep your own secret. The knowledge of it might probably alter Mr. De Courcy's plans a little."

"Your ladyship," returned Laura, with spirit, "has good access to know that the love of wealth has little influence on my purposes; and I assure you that Mr. De Courcy would scorn, upon any terms, to appropriate what he considers as the alienable right of your own child. Though we shall not be affluent, we shall be too rich for your charity, and that is the only claim in which I could compete with Mrs. Herbert."

This mention of her daughter exasperated Lady Pelham to fury. In a voice half choked with passion, she cried, "Neither that rebellious wretch nor any of her abettors or imitators shall ever have countenance or assistance from me. No! not though they should beg with their starved bantlings from door to door."

To this intemperate speech Laura made no reply, but quietly began to pour out the tea. Lady Pelham continued to hurry up and down the room, chafing and venting her rage in common abuse; for a scold in a drawing-room is not very unlike a scold at a green-stall. The storm, meeting with no opposition, at length spent itself, or subsided into short growlings, uttered in the intervals of a surlly silence. To these, as no answer was absolutely necessary, none was returned. Laura did not utter a syllable, till Lady Pelham's wrath beginning to give place to her curiosity, she turned to her niece, saying, "Pray, Miss Montreville, when and where is this same wise marriage of yours to take place?"

"The time is not quite fixed, madam," answered Laura. "As soon as you can conveniently spare me, I intend going to Scotland; and when you and Mrs. De Courcy wish me to return, Mr. De Courcy will escort me back."

"I spare you!" returned Lady Pelham, with a sneer. "Oh, ma'am, if that's all, pray don't let me retard your raptures. You may go to-morrow, or to-night, ma'am, if you please. Spare you, indeed! Truly, while I can afford



to pay a domestic, I need not be dependent on your assistance; and in attachment or gratitude, any common servant may supply your place."

The rudeness and ingratitude of this speech again forced the tears to Laura's eyes; but she mildly replied, "Well, madam, as soon as you find a substitute for me, I shall be ready to depart." Then, to escape further insult, she quitted the room.

Lady Pelham's wrath at the derangement of her plan would not suffer her to rest till she had communicated the disaster to Colonel Hargrave. Early next morning, accordingly, she dispatched a note requiring his immediate presence at Walbourne. He obeyed the summons, and was, as usual, privately received by Lady Pelham. He listened to her intelligence with transports of rage rather than of sorrow. He loaded his rival with execrations, declaring that he would rather see Laura torn in pieces than know her to be the wife of De Courcy. He swore that he would circumvent their schemes, and that, though his life should be the forfeit, he would severely revenge the sufferings which he had endured.

Lady Pelham had not the courage to encounter the evil spirit which she had raised. Subdued, and crouching before his violence, she continued to give a terrified assent to every extravagance he uttered, till he announced his resolution of seeing Laura on the instant, that he might know whether she dared to confirm this odious tale. Lady Pelham then ventured to represent to him that Laura might be so much offended by this breach of contract, to take refuge with Mrs. De Courcy, a measure which would oppose a new obstacle to any scheme for breaking off the intended marriage. She assured him that she would grant every reasonable assistance in preventing a connection so injurious to her niece's interest, though she knew Laura's obstinacy of temper too well to hope any thing from direct resistance. She hinted that it would be most prudent to give the desired interview the appearance of accident; and she promised to contrive the occasion as soon as Hargrave was sufficiently calm to consider of improving it to the best advantage.

But calm was a stranger to the breast of Hargrave. The disquiet which is the appointed portion of the wicked raged there beyond control. To the anguish of disappointment were added the pangs of jealousy, and the heart-burnings of hatred and revenge. Even the loss of the object of three years' eager pursuit was less cutting than the success of De Courcy; and the pain of a forfeiture, which was the just punishment of a former crime, was heightened to agony by the workings of such passions as consummate the misery of fiends.

The associates of the wicked must forego the consolations of honest sympathy. All Hargrave's tortures were aggravated by the sarcasms of Lambert, who, willing to hasten the fever to its crisis, goaded him with coarse comments upon the good fortune of his rival, and advices (which he well knew would act in a direction opposite to their seeming purpose) to desist from further competition. After spending four-and-twenty hours in alternate fits of rage and despair, Hargrave returned to Lady

Pelham, informing her that, whatever were the consequences, he would no longer delay seeing Laura. Lady Pelham had foreseen this demand; and, though not without fear of the event, had prepared for compliance. She had already arranged her scheme, and the execution was easy.

Laura's favorite walk in the shrubbery led to a little summer-house, concealed in a thicket of acacias. Thither Lady Pelham had conveyed some dried plants, and had requested Laura's assistance in classing them. Laura had readily agreed, and that very morning had been allotted for the task. Lady Pelham, having first directed Hargrave where to take his station, accompanied her unsuspecting niece to the summer-house, and there for a while joined in her employment. Soon, however, feigning a pretext for half an hour's absence, she quitted Laura, intending at first to loiter in the shrubbery, as a kind of safeguard against the ill consequences of her imprudent connivance; but meeting with a gardener, who was going to transplant a bed of favorite auriculas, she followed him to watch over their safety, leaving her niece to guard her own.

Scarcely had Laura been a minute alone, ere she was startled by the entrance of Hargrave, and seriously alarmed by seeing him lock the door, and deliberately secure the key. "What is it you mean, sir?" said she, trembling.

"To decide your fate and mine!" answered Hargrave, with a look and voice that struck terror to her soul. "I am told you are a bride, Laura," said he, speaking through his clinched teeth. "Say," continued he, firmly grasping her arm. "Speak, is it so?"

"I know no right," said Laura, recovering herself, "that you have to question me; nor meanly thus to steal—"

"No evasions!" interrupted Hargrave, in a voice of thunder. "I have rights—rights which I will maintain while I have being. Now tell me, if you dare, that you have transferred them to that abhorred—"

He stopped, his utterance choked by the phrensy into which he had worked himself. "What has transported you to this fury, Colonel Hargrave?" said Laura, calmly. "Surely you must be sensible that whatever claims I might once have allowed you have long since been made void by your own conduct. I will not talk to you of principle, though that were of itself sufficient to sever us forever; but ask yourself what right you can retain over the woman whom you have insulted, and forsaken, and oppressed, and outraged."

"Spare your taunts, Laura. They will only embitter the hour of retribution. And may hell be my portion if I be not richly repaid for all the scorn you have heaped upon me! I will be revenged, proud woman. You shall be at my mercy, where no cool, canting villain can wrest you from me!"

His threats, and the frightful violence with which they were uttered, filled Laura with mingled dread and pity. "Command yourself, I beseech you, Colonel Hargrave," said she. "If you resent the pain which, believe me, I have the most unwillingly occasioned, you are amply revenged. You have already caused me sufferings which mock description."

"Yes, yes, I know it," cried Hargrave, in a milder voice. "You were not then so hard. You could feel when that vile wanton first seduced me from you. Then think what I now endure when this cold-blooded—but may I perish if I do not snatch his prize from him. And think not of resistance, Laura; for, by all that I have suffered, resistance shall be vain."

"Why do you talk so dreadfully to me?" said Laura, making a trembling effort to release her arm, which he still fiercely grasped. "Why, why will you not cease to persecute me! I have never injured you. I have forgiven, pitied, prayed for you. How have I deserved this worse than savage cruelty?"

"Laura," said Hargrave, moved by the pleadings of a voice which could have touched a murderer's heart, "you have still a choice. Promise to be mine. Permit me only, by slow degrees, to regain what I have lost. Say that month's—that years hence you will consent, and you are safe."

"Impossible!" said Laura. "I can not bind myself; nor could you trust a promise extorted by fear. Yet be but half what I once thought you, and I will esteem—"

"Esteem!" interrupted Hargrave, with a ghastly smile. "Yes! And shrink from me, as you do now, while you hang on that detested wretch till even his frozen heart warms to passion. No!" continued he, with an awful adjuration, "though the deed bring me to the scaffold, you shall be mine. You shall be my wife too, Laura, but not till you have besought me—sued at my feet for the title which you have so often despised. I will be master of your fate—of that reputation, that virtue which you worship—and your minion shall know it, that he may writhe under jealousy and disappointment."

"Powers of Mercy!" cried Laura, raising her eyes in strong compunction, "have I made this mine idol!" Then turning on Hargrave a look of deep repentance, "Yes," she continued, "I deserve to see thee as thou art, without mitigation vile; since on thee my sacrilegious heart bestowed such love as was due to the Infinite alone!"

"Oh! Laura," cried Hargrave, softened by the remembrance of her youthful affection, "let but one faint spark of that love revive, and I will forget all your scorn, and feel again such gentle wishes as blessed our first hours of tenderness. Or only swear that you will renounce that bane of my existence—that you will shrink from him—shun him like a serpent! Or give me your word only, and I will trust it. Your liberty, your person, shall be sacred as those of angels. Promise, then—"

"Why do you attempt to terrify me?" said Laura, her indignation rising as her alarm subsided. "I have perhaps no longer the right—even if I had the inclination—to utter such a vow. I trust that, in this land of freedom, I am safe from your violence. My reputation, frail as it is, you can not harm without permission from on high; and if, for wise purposes, the permission be given, I doubt not that I shall be enabled to bear unjust reproach—nay, even to profit by the wrong."

Hargrave suffered her to conclude; rage be-  
-told him, for a time, of the power of utterance.

Then, bursting into a torrent of reproach, he upbraided her in language the most insulting. "Do you dare to own," said he, "that your inclination favors that abhorred—that this accursed marriage is your choice—your free choice!" He paused in vain for a reply. Laura would not irritate him further, and scorned to disguise the truth. "Then, Laura," said he, and he confirmed the sentence with a dreadful oath, "you have sealed your fate. Think you that your De Courcy shall foil me! By Heaven, I will see you perish first. I will tear you from him, though I answer it with my life and soul. Let this be the pledge of my triumph!" and he made a motion to clasp her rudely in his arms. With a cry of dread and horror, Laura sprang from him, and throwing open the casement, called loudly for assistance. Hargrave forced her back. "Spare your alarms, my lovely proud one," said he, with a smile which made her blood run cold. "You are safe for the present. But may I not even kiss this pretty hand, as an earnest that you shall soon be mine beyond the power of fate!" "Silence, audacious!" cried Laura, bursting into tears of mingled fear and indignation, while she struggled violently to disengage her hands. "Nay, this rosy cheek will content me better," cried Hargrave; when the door was burst suddenly open, and De Courcy appeared.

"Ruffian!" he exclaimed, approaching Hargrave, who, in his surprise, permitted Laura to escape. Her fears now taking a new direction, she flew to intercept De Courcy. "Ah!" she cried, "my folly has done this. Fly from this madman, entreat you. I have nothing to fear but for you. Begone, I implore you."

"And leave you to such treatment! Not while I have life! when you choose to go, I will attend you. For you, sir! But I must stoop below the language of a gentleman ere I find words to describe your conduct."

"For Heaven's sake," cried Laura, "dear De Courcy, provoke him no further. Let us fly from this place!" and, clinging to De Courcy's arm, she drew him on; while, with the other, he defended her from Hargrave, who had advanced to detain her. Her expression of regard, her confiding attitude, exasperated the phrensy of Hargrave to the uttermost. Almost unconscious of his own actions, he drew a pistol from his pocket and fired. Laura uttered a cry of terror, clasping her lover's arm more closely to her breast. "Be not alarmed, love," whispered De Courcy; "it is nothing!" and, staggering forward a few paces, he fell to the ground.

Laura, in desperation, rushed from the summer-house, calling wildly for help; then, struck with the fearful thought that Hargrave might now complete his bloody work, she hurried back. During the few moments of her absence, De Courcy addressed his murderer, whose rage had given place to a wild stupor. "I fear this is an unlucky stroke, Hargrave. Save yourself. My horse is at the gate." Hargrave answered only with a groan; and, striking his clinched hand on his forehead, turned away. His crime was unpremeditated. No train of self-deceit had reconciled his conscience to its atrocity. The remembrance of the courage which had saved his life; the generous concern of De

Courcy for his safety ; humanity, the last virtue which utterly forsakes us, all awakened him to remorse, keen and overwhelming, like every other passion of Hargrave. Not bearing to look upon his victim, he stood fixed and motionless ; while Laura, on her knees, watched, in dismay, the changing countenance of De Courcy, and strove to stanch the blood which was streaming from his wound.

De Courcy once more tried to cheer Laura with words of comfort. "Were it not," said he, "for the pleasure this kind concern gives me, I might tell you that I do not suffer much pain. I am sure I could rise, if I could trust this slender arm," laying his hand gently upon it. Laura eagerly offered her assistance, as he attempted to raise himself ; but the effort overpowered him, and he sunk back fainting.

In the strong language of terror, Laura now besought Hargrave to procure help. Still motionless, his forehead resting against the wall, his hands clinched as in convulsion, Hargrave seemed not to heed her entreaties. "Have you no mercy?" cried she, clasping the arm from which she had so lately shrunk in horror. "He saved your life—will you let him perish without aid?" "Off, woman!" cried Hargrave, throwing her from him. "Thy witchcraft has undone me!" and he distractedly hurried away.

Laura's terror was not the passive cowardice of a feeble mind. She was left alone to judge, to act for herself—for more than herself. Immediate, momentous decision was necessary ; and she did decide, by an effort of which no mind enfeebled by sloth or selfishness could have been capable. She saw that loss of blood was the cause of De Courcy's immediate danger ; a danger which might be irremediable before he could receive assistance from more skillful hands than hers. Such remedy, then, as she could command she hastened to apply.

To the plants which their beauty had recommended to Lady Pelham, Laura had added a few of which the usefulness was known to her. Agaric of the oak was of the number ; and she had often applied it where many a hand less fair would have shrunk from the task. Nor did she hesitate now. The ball had entered near the neck ; and the feminine, the delicate Laura herself disengaged the wound from its coverings ; the feeling, the tender Laura herself performed an office from which false sensibility would have recoiled in horror.

She was thus employed when she was found by a woman whom Hargrave had met and sent to her assistance, with an indistinct message, from which Laura gathered that he was gone in search of a surgeon. The woman no sooner cast her eyes on the bloody form of De Courcy, and on the colorless face of Laura, more death-like than his, than, with noisy imbecility, she began to bewail and ejaculate. Laura, however, instantly put a stop to her exclamations by dispatching her for cordials and assistance.

In a few minutes all the household was assembled round De Courcy ; yet, such was the general curiosity, horror, or astonishment, that he would have remained unaided but for the firmness of her who was most interested in the scene. She dismissed every one whose presence was unnecessary, and silenced the rest by a peremptory command. She administered a

cordial to recruit the failing strength of De Courcy ; and, causing him to be raised to the posture which seemed the least painful, made her own trembling arms his support.

Nothing further now remained to be done, and Laura began to feel the full horrors of her situation ; to weigh the fearful probability that all her cares were vain ; to upbraid herself as the cause of this dire tragedy. Her anguish was too great to find relief in tears. Pale and cold as marble, chilly drops bursting from her forehead, she sat in the stillness of him who waits the sentence of condemnation, save when a convulsive shudder expressed her suffering.

The mournful quiet was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Pelham, who, quite out of breath, began a string of questions, mixed with abundance of ejaculation. "Bless my soul!" she cried, "how has all this happened! For Heaven's sake, Laura, tell me the meaning of all this. Why don't you speak, girl! Good Lord! could you not have prevented these madmen from quarreling! What brought De Courcy here! How did he find you out! Why don't you speak! Mercy on me! Is the girl out of her senses!"

The expression of deep distress with which Laura now raised her eyes reminded Lady Pelham of the sensibility requisite upon such an occasion, which her ladyship's curiosity had hitherto driven from her recollection. Approaching, therefore, to De Courcy, she took a hasty look of this dismal spectacle ; and, exclaiming, "Oh, what a sight is here! Unfortunate Laura! Dear, wretched girl!" she began first to sob, and then to scream violently. Laura motioned to the attendants to lead her away, and she suffered them to do so without resistance ; but she had no sooner crossed the threshold than, perceiving the spectators whom curiosity had collected in the shrubbery, she redoubled her shrieks, struggled, beat herself ; and, but for the untoward strength of her nerves, would have soon converted her pretended fit into reality. Wearied with her efforts, she was beginning to relax them, when the surgeon appeared, and her ladyship was more vociferous than ever. Mr. Raby, a quiet, sensible man, undertook her cure before he proceeded to his more serious business ; and, either guided by previous acquaintance with his patient, or by his experience in similar cases, gave a prescription which, though simple, was perfectly efficacious. He directed that the lady should be instantly secluded in her own chamber, with only one attendant ; and the remedy proved so beneficial, that her ladyship enjoyed a night of tranquil repose.

He next turned his attention to De Courcy ; and, judging it proper to extract the ball without delay, advised Laura to retire. Without opposition she prepared to obey ; and, seeing De Courcy about to speak, put her hand on his lips to save him the exertion, and herself the pain of a farewell. Yet, as she resigned the charge, raising her eyes to Heaven, once more to commend De Courcy to the Divine protection, the fervor of her supplication burst into words. "Oh, if it be possible ! if it be possible!" she cried. "Yes, it is possible," said De Courcy, comprehending the unfinished sentence. "Your firmness, noble creature, has

made it possible." Reproaching herself with having allowed De Courcy to perceive her alarm, she hastened away; and, seating herself on the steps which led to the door, awaited in silence the event of the operation.

Here, as she sorrowfully called to mind the various excellences of De Courcy, his piety, his integrity, his domestic virtues, so lately known, so soon to be lost to her, she suddenly recollected the heavier calamity of the mother deprived of a son, and perceived the inhumanity of permitting the stroke to fall without preparation. Having access to no messenger more tender than a common servant, she determined, though with unspeakable reluctance, herself to bear the tidings to Mrs. De Courcy. "I will know the worst," thought she, "and then—"

She started at a faint noise that sounded from the summer-house. Steps approached the door from within. She sprang up, and the surgeon appeared. "I have the happiness to tell you," said he, "that, if no fever takes place, our friend is safe. The chief danger has been from loss of blood; and your presence of mind—Ah! do you feel faint!"

The awful interest which had supported the spirits of Laura thus suddenly withdrawn, the tide of various feeling overpowered them, and she sunk into one of those long and deep faintings which were now, unhappily, become in some degree constitutional with her. Mr. Raby, having given directions for her recovery, placed De Courcy in Lady Pelham's carriage, and himself attended him to Norwood, where he mitigated Mrs. De Courcy's horror and distress by assurances of her son's safety, which he again delighted Montague by ascribing to the cares of Laura.

It was late in the evening before Laura was sufficiently collected to review with composure the events of the day. As soon, however, as she was capable of considering all the circumstances, a suspicion occurred that her unfortunate interview with Hargrave had been sanctioned, if not contrived, by Lady Pelham. That he should know the place and the hour in which he might surprise her alone; that to this place, which, because of its loneliness, she had of late rather deserted, she should be conducted by her aunt; that at this moment she should, upon a trivial pretense, be left in solitude, seemed a coincidence too strong to be merely accidental. She recollected some symptoms of private communication between Lady Pelham and Hargrave. Suspicions of connivance in the infamous stratagem of her arrest again revived in her mind. Lady Pelham, she perceived, had afforded her a protection at best imperfect, perhaps treacherous. Hargrave's late threats, too, as she revolved them in her thoughts, appeared more like the intimations of settled design than the vague ravings of passion. Prudence, therefore, seemed to require that she should immediately provide for her own safety; and indignation at her aunt's breach of confidence hastened the purpose which she formed of leaving Walbourne without delay. She determined to go the next morning to Norwood, there to remain till De Courcy showed signs of convalescence, and then perform her long-projected journey to Scotland.

In order to avoid unpleasant altercation, she

resolved to depart without warning Lady Pelham of her intention, merely announcing by letter the reasons of her conduct. The affectionate Laura would not have parted from the meanest servant without a kindly farewell, but her innate abhorrence of treachery steeled her heart, and she rejoiced that it was possible to escape all present intercourse with her deceitful kinswoman.

As soon as the dawn appeared she arose, and on her knees thankfully acknowledged the protecting care which had watched over her, since first, as a destitute orphan, she applied to Lady Pelham. She blessed the goodness which had softened in her favor a heart little subject to benevolent impressions; which had restored her in sickness, consoled her in sorrow, delivered her from the snares of the wicked, and opened to her the joys of virtuous friendship. And where is the wretch so miserable that he may not, in the review of eighteen months, find subjects of gratitude still more numerous! Laura began no important action of her life without imploring a blessing on the event; and she now proceeded to commend herself and her future prospects to the same care of which she had glad experience.

The proper business of the morning ended, she had begun to make arrangements for her immediate departure, when she heard Lady Pelham's bell ring, and the next instant a noise like that occasioned by the fall of something heavy. She listened for a while, but all was again still. The rest of the family were yet buried in sleep, and Laura, hearing no one stirring to answer Lady Pelham's summons, began to fear that her aunt was ill, perhaps unable to make any further effort to procure assistance. At this idea, all her just indignation subsiding for a moment, she flew to Lady Pelham's chamber.

Lady Pelham was lying on the floor, having apparently fallen in an attempt to rise from her bed. She was alive, though insensible; and her face, though altered, was still florid. Laura, soon procuring help, raised her from the ground; and, guessing that apoplexy was her disorder, placed her in an upright posture, loosened her night-clothes, and, having hurried away a servant for Mr. Raby, ventured, until his arrival, upon such simple remedies as she knew might be safely administered. In little more than an hour the surgeon arrived; and, having examined his patient, declared her to be in extreme danger. Before he left her, however, he succeeded in restoring her to some degree of recollection; yet, far from changing his first opinion, he advised Laura to lose no time in making every necessary use of an amendment which he feared would be only transient.

From Lady Pelham he went to Norwood; and, returning to Walbourne in the evening, brought the pleasing intelligence that De Courcy continued to do well. This second visit produced no change in his sentiments, and he remained persuaded that, though Lady Pelham might continue to linger for a time, the shock had been too great to allow of complete recovery. Laura now rejoiced that she had not executed her purpose of leaving Walbourne, since, had her aunt's illness succeeded to the rage which her departure would have excited,

she could never have ceased to blame herself as the cause.

She looked with profound compassion, too, upon the condition of an unfortunate being, whose death-bed was neither smoothed by affection nor cheered by pious hope. "Unhappy woman!" thought she, as she sat watching an unquiet slumber into which her aunt had fallen, "to whom the best gifts of nature and of fortune have by some fatality been useless, or worse than useless; whose affluence has purchased no higher joys than half-grudged luxuries; whose abilities have dazzled others and bewildered herself, but lent no steady light to guide her way; whose generosity has called forth no gratitude; whose kindness has awakened no affection; to whom length of days has brought no reverence, and length of intimacy no friends! Even the sacred ties of nature have been to her unblest. Her only child, driven from her in anger, dares not approach to share the last sad offices with me, who, in performing them, must forgive as well as pity. Favorite of fortune! what has been wanting to thee save that blessing which 'bringeth no sorrow with it?' But that blessing was light in thine esteem; and, amid the glitter of thy toys, the 'pearl of great price' was disregarded."

For some days Lady Pelham continued much in the same situation. She suffered no pain, yet gave no signs of amendment. On the sixth morning from her first attack she grew suddenly and materially worse. It was soon discovered that her limbs were paralyzed, and the surgeon declared that her end could not be very distant. Her senses, however, again returned, and she continued free from pain. She showed little apprehension of her own danger; and Laura debated with herself whether she should permit her aunt to dream away the last precious hours of her probation, or endeavor to awaken her to a sense of her condition.

Laura had no faith in death-bed repentance. She knew that resolutions of amendment which there is no longer time to practice, and renunciations of sin made under the immediate prospect of punishment, are at best suspicious. She knew that, in the ordinary course of Providence, the grace which has been long despised is at length justly withdrawn. Yet she saw that she had no right to judge Lady Pelham as wholly impenitent; and she considered a death-bed as highly suitable to the renewal, though not to the beginning, of repentance. She knew, too, that the call *might* be made effectual even at the "eleventh hour;" and the bare chance was worth the toil of ages. She felt how little she herself would have valued the mistaken pity which could suffer her to enter on the "dark valley" without a warning to cling closer to the "staff and rod" of comfort; she therefore ventured to hint gently to Lady Pelham the opinion of her medical friends, and to remind her of the duty of preparing for the worst.

Lady Pelham at first appeared a good deal shocked, and lay for some time apparently meditating on her situation. At last, recovering her spirits, she said, "Your nerves, Laura, were always so coarse, that you seemed to me to take pleasure in thinking of shocking things; but I am sure it is abominably barbarous in you to tease me with them now when I am ill. Do

keep your horrid fancies to yourself, or keep away till you are cured of the vapors: I dare say it is your dismal fate which makes me to dream so unpleasantly."

Laura, however, was not to be so discouraged. She took occasion to represent that no harm could ensue from preparing to meet the foe, since his march was not to be retarded by shutting our eyes on his advances, nor hastened by the daring which watched his approach. She at length thought she had succeeded in convincing her aunt of her danger. Lady Pelham said that she feared she was dying, and she believed that she said the truth. But Lady Pelham had had sixty years' practice in self-deceit. The fear might flutter in her imagination, but was not strong enough to touch her heart.

Laura, however, made use of her acknowledgment to press upon her the duties of forgiveness and charity toward all mankind, and especially toward her child, reminding her of the affecting parity of situation between offending man and his disobedient offspring. Lady Pelham at first answered impatiently that she would not be urged on this subject; but, as her spirits began to fail under the first confinement which she had ever endured, she became more tractable. "God knows," said she to Laura, one day, "we have all much need to be forgiven; and, therefore, we must forgive in our turn. For my part, I am sure I die in charity with all mankind, and with that creature among the rest. However, I shall take my friend the Spectator's advice, and remember the difference between giving and forgiving."

Laura often begged permission to send for Mrs. Herbert; but Lady Pelham sometimes postponed it till she should get better, sometimes till she should grow worse. Laura was, in the mean time, her constant attendant; bearing with her peevishness, soothing her caprice, and striving to rouse in her feelings suitable to her condition. Finding, however, that she made but little progress in her pious work, she begged that she might be allowed to take the assistance of a clergyman. "A clergyman, child!" cried Lady Pelham; "do you imagine me to be a papist? Or do you think me capable of such weak superstition as to place more reliance on a parson's prayers than on yours or my maid Betty's? No, no! though I may be weak, I shall never be fanatical."

"It would indeed be superstition," answered Laura, "to expect that the prayers of any mortal should be useful to you any further than as they speak the language of your own heart; but, as our Divine Master has chosen some of his servants as guides to the rest, we may hope that he will grant a peculiar blessing on their labors. Besides, Mr. Wentworth has been accustomed to plead with men, and knows every avenue of persuasion."

"Oh, now I see the cloven foot. This is the true pharisaical cant. I, forsooth, am one of the unconverted. But, in spite of your charitable opinion, I trust I have been no worse than other people; and I have too high a sense of the Divine justice to think that our Maker would first give us ungovernable passions, and then punish us for yielding to them. A phlegmatic being like you may indeed be called to strict ac-

count: but people of strong feelings must be judged by a different standard."

"Oh, madam, said Laura, "be assured that our Maker gives us no unconquerable passions. If we ourselves have made them so, it becomes us to be humbled in the dust, not to glory in the presumptuous hope that he will soften the sanctions of his law to favor our remissness."

Driven from the stronghold of justice rather by the increase of her bodily languor than by the force of truth, the dying sinner had recourse to mercy—a mercy, however, of her own composing. "It is true," said she, one day, to Laura, "that I have done some things which I have reason to regret, and which, I must confess, deserve punishment. But Divine mercy toward believers, we are told, is infinite; and though I may at times have doubted, I have never disbelieved." Laura, shuddering at this awful blindness, was offering an inward prayer for aid to frame a useful reply, when she saw her aunt's countenance change. It was distorted by a momentary convulsion, and then fixed for ever in the stillness of death.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

Laura was more shocked than afflicted by the death of a person whom she was unable to love, and had no reason to respect. She lost no time in conveying the news to Mrs. Herbert, begging that she would herself come and give the necessary directions. Thinking it proper to remain at Walbourne till after her aunt's funeral, she refused Mrs. de Courcy's invitation to spend at Norwood the time which intervened. De Courcy continued to recover fast; and Laura, thinking she might soon leave him without anxiety, again fixed an early day for her journey to Scotland.

Notwithstanding Laura's knowledge of the plegmatic temperament of her cousin, she was surprised at the stoicism with which Mrs. Herbert supported the death of her mother. She examined the dead body with a cold comment on its appearance; gave orders for the interment in an unflinching voice; and neither seemed to feel nor to affect the slightest concern. Nor did her philosophy appear to fail her one jot, when, upon opening the will, she was found to be left without inheritance. The paper, which had been drawn up a few months before, evinced Lady Pelham's adherence to her scheme for her niece's advancement; and this, with her obstinate enmity to Mrs. Herbert, furnished the only instances of her consistency or perseverance which were ever known to the world. Her whole property she bequeathed to Laura Montreville, and to her second son, upon taking the name of Pelham, provided that Laura married Colonel Hargrave, or a peer, or the eldest son of a peer; but if she married a commoner, or remained unmarried, she was to inherit only ten thousand pounds, the bulk of the property going to a distant relation.

The very hour that this will was made public, Laura informed the contingent heir that he might possess himself of his inheritance, since she would certainly never perform the conditions which alone could destroy his claim. Not acquiescing in the justice of excluding Mrs.

Herbert from her natural right, she would instantly have offered to share with her cousin the bequest of Lady Pelham; but considering that her engagement with De Courcy entitled him to decide on the disposal of whatever belonged to his future wife, she hastened to ask his sanction for her purpose. De Courcy, without hesitation, advised that the whole should be given up to its natural owner. "We shall have enough for humble comfort, dear Laura," said he, "and have no need to grasp at a doubtful claim." Laura, however, differed from him in opinion. She thought she might, in strict justice, retain part of the bequest of so near a relation; and she felt pleased to think that she should enter the De Courcy family not altogether portionless. She therefore reserved two thousand pounds, giving up the rest unconditionally to Mrs. Herbert.

These points being settled, nothing now remained to retard Laura's journey for Scotland. Mrs. de Courcy indeed, urged her to postpone it till Montague should acquire a right to be her escort; but Laura objected that it was her wish to give a longer time to her old friend than she thought it proper to withdraw De Courcy from his business and his home. She reflected, too, with a light heart, that a protector in her journey was now less necessary, since her mad lover, as Harriet called Colonel Hargrave, had embarked for America. Laura had heard of his departure immediately after her aunt's death; and she gladly observed that favorable winds were speeding him across the Atlantic.

The day preceding that on which she meant to leave Walbourne, she spent with Mrs. de Courcy and Montague; who, though not entirely recovered, was able to resume his station in the family-room. De Courcy, with the enthusiasm of youth and love, spoke of his happy prospects; his mother, with the sober eye of experience, looked forward to joys as substantial, though less dazzling; while feminine modesty suppressed the pleasure with which Laura felt that she was necessary to these schemes of bliss. With the confidence of mutual esteem, they arranged their plan of life—a plan at once embracing usefulness and leisure, retirement and hospitality. Laura consented that one month, "one little month," should begin the accomplishment of these golden dreams; for she permitted De Courcy to follow her at the end of that time to Scotland. A few weeks they were to spend in wandering through the romantic scenes of her native land; and then join Mrs. de Courcy at Norwood, which was to continue her permanent abode.

Laura remained with her friends till the evening was closing; then, avoiding the solemnity of a farewell, by a half promise of stopping as she passed the next day, she sprung into Mrs. de Courcy's carriage, and drove off.—Tears rushed to De Courcy's eyes as the carriage was lost to his sight. "I am still weak," thought he, as he dashed them away. "She will soon return to bring gladness to every heart, and double joy to mine. To-morrow, too, I shall see her," thought he; yet he continued depressed, and soon retired to his chamber.

Mrs. de Courcy and her son met early the next morning, expecting that Laura would early begin her journey. Montague stationed himself at the window to watch for her appearance; half fearing that she would not keep her promise, yet every minute repeating that it was impossible she could go without bidding farewell. The breakfast hour arrived, and still Laura came not. De Courcy, impatient, forgot his weakness, and insisted upon walking to the gate, that he might inquire whether a carriage had passed from Walbourne.

He had scarcely left the house when old John, with a face that boded evil, hastily came to beg that his lady would speak with a servant of Lady Pelham's. Mrs. de Courcy, somewhat alarmed, desired that the servant might come in. "Please, madam," said he, "let me know where I may find Miss Montreville. The carriage has waited for her these three hours!" "Good heavens!" cried Mrs. de Courcy, in consternation, "is Miss Montreville not at Walbourne?" "No, madam, she has not been there since yesterday morning." Mrs. de Courcy, now in extreme alarm, summoned her coachman, and desired to know where he had left Miss Montreville the evening before. He answered, that, by Laura's desire, he had set her down at the gate of Walbourne; that he had seen her enter; and, afterwards, in turning the carriage, had observed her walking along the avenue towards the house.

Inexpressibly shocked, Mrs. de Courcy had yet the presence of mind to forbid alarming her son with these fearful tidings. As soon as she could recollect herself, she despatched old Wilson, on whose discretion she thought she might rely, to inform De Courcy that a message from Walbourne had made her cease to expect Laura's visit. Montague returned home, sad and disappointed. His melancholy questions and comments increased the distress of his mother. "Did she not even write one line?" said he. "Could you have believed that she would go without one farewell—that she could pass our very gate?" "She was willing to spare you the pain of a farewell," said Mrs. de Courcy, checking the anguish of her heart. "She will write soon, I hope."

But day after day passed, and Laura did not write. Mrs. de Courcy, still concealing from her son a misfortune which she thought him yet unequal to bear, used every possible exertion to trace the fugitive. She offered high rewards to whoever could afford the smallest clue to discovery. She advertised in every newspaper except that which De Courcy was accustomed to read. Her suspicions at first falling upon Hargrave, she caused particular inquiries to be made whether any of his domestics had been left in England with orders to follow him; but she found that he, with his whole suite, had sailed from Europe more than a fortnight before Laura's disappearance. She employed emissaries to prosecute the search in almost every part of the kingdom. Judging the metropolis to be the most likely place of concealment, she made application to officers of police for assistance in her inquiries there. All was in vain. No trace of Laura was to be found.

For a while, De Courcy amused himself from

day to day with the hope of hearing from her; a hope which his mother had not the courage to destroy. He calculated that she would reach the end of her journey on the sixth day after that on which she left. On the seventh she would certainly write; therefore, in four or five more he should undoubtedly hear from her. The expected day came and passed as others had done, without bringing news of Laura. Another and another came, and ended only in disappointment. De Courcy was miserable. He knew not how to account for a silence so adverse to the considerate kindness of Laura's character except by supposing that illness made her unable to write. This idea gathering strength in his mind, he resolved to follow her immediately to Scotland, tracing her through the route which he knew she intended to take. Mrs. de Courcy in vain attempted to dissuade him from the prosecution of his design, and to sooth him with hopes which she too well knew would prove deceitful. He was resolute, and Mrs. de Courcy was at last obliged to prevent his fruitless journey by unfolding the truth.

The utmost tenderness of caution was insufficient to prevent the effects of this blow on De Courcy's bodily frame. In a few hours, strong fever seized him; and his wound, which had hitherto worn a favorable appearance, gave alarming symptoms of inflammation. Three weeks did Mrs. de Courcy watch by his bedside in all the anguish of a mother's fears; forgetting, in her anxiety for his life, that he must for a time live only to sorrow. The balance long hung doubtful. At length, the strength of his constitution and his early habits of temperance prevailed. By slow degrees his health was restored, though his spirits were still oppressed by a dejection which long withstood every effort of reason and of religion.

To divert his sorrow, rather than in the hope of removing its cause, he left his home and wandered through the most unfrequented parts of England, making anxious, yet almost hopeless, inquiries for his lost treasure. Sometimes, misled by false intelligence, he was hurried from place to place, in all the eagerness of expectation, but bitter disappointment closed the pursuit; and the companion of his relaxation, his encouragement in study, his pattern in virtue, the friend, the mistress, almost the wife was lost beyond recall.

While De Courcy was thus languishing on a sick bed, or wandering restless and miserable, Laura, too, was a wanderer, a prey to care more deep, more hopeless.

From the unfortunate encounter in the summer-house, Hargrave retired in all the agonies of remorse. The companion of his youth, the man to whose courage he owed his life, had been murdered by his hand; had fallen unarmed and defenceless; had spent his almost expiring breath in providing for the safety of his assassin. The feelings of natural compunction were aided by a sense of disgrace; for to attack the unarmed was pronounced base even by the only code which Hargrave was accustomed to reverence. For a moment, abhorrence of his crime extended to all its incitements; and, while he flew to procure assistance for his victim, he cursed a thousand times the fatal charms which had undone him, and a

thousand times abjured the innocent girl upon whom he would fain have rested a share of his guilt. In the height of his desperation, he refused to fly, and retired to await at Lambert's house the issue of his crime.

But, among the many distinctions between natural remorse and true repentance, none is more striking than the difference of their duration. Hargrave's conscience, startled, not awakened, was soon restored to portentous quiet. His abjurations were forgotten. Laura's beauty regained its fascination, and Hargrave first shrunk from the thought of its being appropriated by another, then renewed his wishes that it were his own, then his determination that it should be so.

The threats with which he had terrified Laura were not the mere ravings of frenzy. Aided by the more relentless though not more unprincipled Lambert, he had actually formed a scheme for withdrawing her from the protection of her friends; and to this scheme, forgotten or detested in the hour of compunction, he again turned an approving eye, as pity and remorse subsided with De Courcy's danger. The ill fortune, however, which had attended all Hargrave's designs against Laura once more pursued him. He received a peremptory order to join his regiment, and Lord Lincoln, alarmed by his nephew's increasing intimacy with Lambert, urged his departure in terms which could not be disregarded.

Had these remonstrances reached him in the first moments of remorse, he would probably have yielded without resistance. But, before they arrived, the paroxysm was past. De Courcy, no longer in danger, was again the detested rival; Laura, on the point of being lost, was again irresistible; and Hargrave, enraged at being thwarted in his designs, would, in defiance of all authority, have remained in England to pursue them, had he not been dissuaded from this temerity by Lambert, who, knowing how much his own interest was involved in the question, used all his influence to prevent his friend from disobliging Lord Lincoln. He insisted that Hargrave's presence was not necessary to the seizure of Laura's person, and that his departure would rather serve to avert any suspicion of his being concerned in her disappearance. He offered to conduct the execution of their project, and pledged himself for its success. In this success he had now an additional interest; for he had been informed of Lady Pelham's danger, and foresaw that her approaching death would put Laura in possession of a fortune from which he hoped to be speedily reimbursed for the sums which he had advanced to Hargrave. Lambert's arguments, his promises, his habitual ascendancy, prevailed. Hargrave consented to depart, and his adviser remained at ——— to watch his prey.

In the course of his degrading profession, the gamester had acquired associates fit for any deed of darkness, and influence over them beyond what even the prospect of gain could bestow, for he could work upon their fears of punishment. With the help of these assistants, he arranged his nefarious scheme; and, in conformity with his own inclination, as well as with the injunctions of Hargrave, he spared neither contrivance nor expense to render its

success infallible. His arrangements completed, he only waited a favorable moment to effect his purpose. In hopes of finding the wished-for opportunity, he procured intelligence of all Laura's motions. He did not choose to hazard rescue or discovery, by seizing her in open day; and he was concerting the means of decaying her abroad alone, at a late hour, when he was relieved from his difficulty by her parting visit on the De Courcys.

The soft shades of twilight were stealing on as she cast a last look back towards Norwood; and were deepening fast as, with a sigh, half pleasing, half melancholy, she surveyed the sheltering chestnut tree where she had once parted from De Courcy. As she approached her home, the stars coming forth poured their silent language into the ear of piety. Never deaf to this holy call, Laura dismissed her attendants, that she might meditate alone. She proceeded slowly along till she came to the entrance of a woody lane which branched off from the avenue. She stopped, half inclined to enter; a sensation of fear made her pause. The next moment the consciousness of that sensation induced her to proceed. "This is mere childish superstition," said she, and entered the lane.

She had taken only a few steps when she felt herself suddenly seized from behind; one person forcibly constraining her arms while another prevented her cries. Vainly struggling against masculine strength, she was hurried rapidly forward, till her breath failing, she could resist no further. Her conductors, soon quitting the beaten path, dragged her on through a little wood that sheltered the lawn towards the east; till reaching a gap which appeared to have been purposely made in the park wall, Laura perceived a carriage in waiting. Again exerting the strength of desperation, she struggled wildly for freedom; but the unequal contest soon was closed; she was lifted into the carriage; one of the men took his place by her side, and they drove off with the speed of lightning.

From the moment when she recovered recollection, Laura had not a doubt that she owed this outrage to Hargrave. She was convinced that his pretence of leaving the kingdom had been merely intended to throw her off her guard, and that he was now waiting, at no distant place, the success of his daring villainy. At this idea, a horrible dread seizing her, she threw herself back in the carriage, and wept in despair. Her attendant, perceiving that she no longer struggled, with a coarse expression of pity, released her from his grasp, and, taking the handkerchief from her mouth, told her "she might cry as long as she pleased, for he knew it did a woman's heart good to cry." Laura now besought him to tell her whether she was going. "You'll know that by and by," said he. "Let me alone. I am going to sleep; do you the same."

The bare mention of his purpose revived Laura's hopes. "Surely," thought she, "while he sleeps, I may escape. In spite of this fearful speed I may spring out; and if I could gain but a few steps in this darkness I should be safe." Full of this project, she remained still as the dead; and fearing by the slightest sound or motion to retard the sleep of her guard.



At last his breathing announced that he was asleep; and Laura began, with trembling hands, to attempt her escape. The blinds were drawn up; and if she could let down that on the side of the carriage where she sat, she might without difficulty open the door. She tried to stir the blind. It refused to yield. She used her utmost force, but it remained firm. She ventured, cautious and trembling, to attempt that on the other side. It dropped; and Laura thought she was free. It only remained to open the door of the chaise and leap out. She tried it; but the door was immovable, and, in despair, she shrunk back. Again she started up; for it occurred to her that, though with more danger, she might escape by the window. Cautiously stepping across her guard, she leant out and placed her hands on the top of the carriage, that, trusting to her arms for supporting her weight, she might extricate herself, and drop from thence into the road. Raising herself upon the edge of the step, she fixed her hands more firmly. She paused a moment to listen whether her guard was undisturbed. He still slept soundly; and resting her limbs upon the window frame, she prepared to complete her escape.

A moment more and she had been free; when a horseman riding up, pushed her fiercely back, upbraiding with tremendous oaths the carelessness of his companion. The fellow, rousing himself, retorted upon the wretched Laura the abuse of his comrade, swearing that, "since he saw she was so cunning, he would keep better watch upon her for the future."

The desponding Laura endured his reproaches in silence. Finding herself thus doubly guarded, she resigned all hope of escaping by her own unaided exertions; and mingling silent prayers with her fearful anticipations, she strove to reanimate her trust that she should not be wholly forsaken. Sometimes her habitual confidence prevailed, and she felt assured that she should not be left a prey to the wicked. Yet the dreadful threats, the fiery passions, of Hargrave rose to her recollection, and she again shuddered in despair. She suddenly remembered Jessy Wilson. Starting, with an exclamation of horror and affright, she sought some weapon which might dispense to her a death less terrible! and instinctively grasping her penknife, hid it in her bosom. The next moment she shrunk back from her purpose, and doubted the lawfulness of such defence. "Will he dare his own death, too?" thought she. "Oh, Heaven! in mercy spare me the necessity of sending a wretch to his great account, with all his crimes unrepented on his head—or pardon him and me!"

She continued to commend herself to Heaven, till her terrors by degrees subsided. She began again to feel the steady trust which is acquired by all who are habituated to a grateful consideration of the care which they experience; a trust that even the most adverse events shall terminate in their real advantage; that the rugged and slippery ways of this dark wilderness shall, at the dawn of everlasting day, be owned as the fittest for conducting us to the house of our Father. She began, too, to regain the confidence which strong minds naturally put in their own exertions. She resolved not to be

wanting to herself; nor, by brooding over her terrors, to disable herself from taking advantage of any providential circumstance which might favor her escape.

Morning at length began to dawn, but the blinds being closely drawn up, Laura could make no observations on the country through which she was passing. She remarked that the furious speed with which she had at first been driven had slackened to a slow pace; and she judged that the wearied cattle could not proceed much further. She hoped that it would soon be necessary to stop; and that, during the few minutes in which they halted to change horses, she might find means of appealing to the justice of her fellow-creatures. "Surely," said she, "some heart will be open to me."

After proceeding slowly for some time, the carriage stopped. Laura listened for the sounds of human voices, but all was silent. She heard the trampling of horses, as if led close by the carriage. Some one was certainly near, who had no interest in this base oppression. "Help! oh, help me!" cried Laura. "I am cruelly and wrongfully detained. I have friends who will reward you. Heaven will reward you! Help me! for kind mercy help me!" "Heyday!" cried the fellow in the carriage, with something between a grin and a stare, "who is the girl speaking to? What! did you imagine we should be wise enough to bring you within holla of a whole yardful of stable-boys and piping chamber-maids! Reward, indeed! Set your heart at rest, miss; we shall be rewarded without your friends or Heaven either!"

The carriage again proceeded with the same speed as at first, and Laura strove to support with composure this new blow to her hopes. Her companion, now producing a bottle of wine and some biscuits, advised her to share with him; and that she might not wilfully lavish her strength and spirits, she consented. Once more in the course of the day the travellers stopped to change horses, and Laura once more, though with feeble hopes, renewed her appeals to justice and to pity. No answer greeted her ear. Again she was hurried on her melancholy way.

The day, as it advanced, seemed rough and gloomy. The wind swept in gusts through the trees, and the rain beat upon the carriage. The evening was drawing on when Laura remarked that the motion was changed. The chaise proceeded slowly over soft, uneven ground, and she guessed with dismay, that it had quitted all frequented paths. In renewed alarm, she again besought her companion to tell her whither he meant to conduct her, and for what end she was thus cruelly forced from her home. "Why, how should I tell you what I do not know myself!" answered the man. "I shan't conduct you much further—and a good riddance. As for the end, you'll see that when it comes."

About an hour after quitting the road, the carriage stopped; and the man letting down the blind, Laura perceived through the dusk, that they were on a barren moor. Waste and level it seemed to spread before her; but the darkness prevented her from distinguishing its features or its boundaries. Suddenly, as the gust died away, she fancied she heard the roar of waters. She listened; but the wind swelled

again, and she heard only its howlings over the heath. The horseman, who had ridden away when the carriage stopped, now galloped back and directed the postillion to proceed. They went on for a few hundred yards, and again they stopped. The roar of waters again burst on Laura's ear, now swelling loud, now sinking in a sullen murmur. She saw a light glimmer at a distance. It was tossed by the billows of the ocean.

The door of the chaise was opened, and she was lifted from it. Gliding from the arms of the ruffian who held her, and clasping his knees, "Oh! if you have the heart of a man," she said, "let me not be torn from my native land—let me not be cast upon the merciless deep. Think what it is to be an exile—friendless in a strange land—the sport, the prey of a pitiless enemy. Oh! if you have need of mercy, have mercy upon me." "Halloa! Robert," shouted the ruffian, "take away this girl. She's enough to make a man play the fool and whimper." The other fellow, now approaching, lifted Laura, more dead than alive, from the ground, and, wrapping her in a large cloak, bore her towards the beach.

In a creek sheltered by rocks from the breakers, lay a small boat. One man sat near the bow, roaring a hoarse sea-song. As the party approached, he rose, and pushing the boat ashore, received the half lifeless Laura in his brawny arms, cursing her with strange oaths for having made him wait so long. Then, on his uttering a discordant yell, two of his companions appeared; and, after exchanging with Laura's guards a murmuring account of the trouble which they had undergone, pushed off from the land. The keel grated along the pebbles; the next moment it floated on the waves; and Laura, starting up, threw back the cloak from her face, and with strained eyes gazed on her parting native land, till all behind was darkness.

A pang of anguish striking to her heart, she made once more a desperate effort to awaken pity. Stretching her clasped hands towards the man who sat near her, she cried, in the piercing voice of misery, "Oh! take pity on me; I am an orphan. I have heard that sailors have kindly hearts. Have pity, then—land me on the wildest coast, and I will fall down there and pray for you!" The person to whom she spoke, having eyed her for a moment in silence, coolly drew in his oar; and rising, wrapped her close in the cloak, and laid her down in the boat, advising her with an oath to "keep snug or she would capsize them."

In despair she renounced all further effort. Silent and motionless she lay, the cold spray dashing over her unheeded; till, wet, chilled, and miserable, she was lifted on board a small brig which lay about half a mile from the shore. She was carried down to the cabin, which was more decent than is usual in vessels of that size. A clean looking woman attended to undress her; night clothes were in readiness for her; and every accommodation provided which her situation rendered possible. Everything served to convince her of the care and precaution with which this cruel scheme had been concerted, and to show her the depth of the snare into which she had fallen.

She was laid in her narrow crib, ere it occurred to her that Hargrave might be near to watch his prey. Exhausted as she was, slept fast at the thought. She listened for his voice, for his footstep, amid the unwonted discord which disturbed her ear. Daylight returned, and no sound reached her more terrible than that of the gale rattling in the cordage, and dashing the waves against the vessel's side. Worn, out with fatigue and suffering, she at length slept; and a mid-day sun glanced by fits through her grated window ere she awoke to a new sense of sorrow. She rose, and going upon deck, looked sadly back upon the way she had unconsciously passed. Behind, the blue mountains were sinking in the distance; on the left lay a coast unknown to her; before her stretched the boundless deep, unvaried save by the whitening surge.

Laura spent most of her time upon deck, the fresh air reviving her spirits. One male and one female attendant seemed appropriated to her, and served her with even officious assiduity. Hoping that some opportunity might occur of transmitting an account of her situation to England, she begged these obsequious attendants to supply her with writing materials; but was firmly, though respectfully refused.

The third morning came, and Laura looked in vain for any object to vary the immeasurable waste. The sun rose from one unending line, and sunk again in naked majesty. She observed that the course of the vessel was in general directly west; and if she had before doubted, this circumstance would have convinced her of her destination. She once ventured to inquire whether the ship was bound, but was answered, that "she should know that when she reached the port."

It was on the fourth of May that Laura began her ill-omened voyage. On the twelfth of June, Land! land! was shouted in a voice of joyful triumph. All ran to gaze with glad eyes on what seemed a low cloud, faintly descried on the verge of the horizon—all but Laura, who looked sadly forward, as to the land of exile—of degradation—of death. Day after day that dreaded land approached, till, by degrees, the boundless ocean was narrowed to a mighty river, and the unfrequent sail, almost too distant for sight, was multiplied to a busy fleet, plying in every direction their cheerful labors. At length a city appeared in view, rising like an amphitheatre, and flashing bright with a material unknown to European architecture. Laura inquired what town it was; and, though refused all information, surmised that Quebec lay before her.

Opposite the town, the ship hoove to; a boat was launched, and Laura expected to be sent on shore. Nor did she unwillingly prepare to go. "Surely," thought she, "in this populous city some one will be found to listen to my tale, and to wrest me from the arm of the oppressor." The boat, however, departed without her, carrying ashore the man who had hitherto attended her. After remaining on shore for several hours, the man returned; and the vessel proceeded in her voyage. Laura now imagined that Montreal was her destined port; and again she strove to hope that among numbers she should find aid.

A still, cloudy evening had succeeded to a sultry day, when Laura observed an unusual bustle upon deck. It was growing dark, when, as she leaned over the rail, to watch the fire-flies that flashed like stars in the air, the captain, approaching her, told her that she must go ashore, and immediately lifted her into a boat which lay alongside. Her attendants and baggage were already there; the sailors had taken their oars; and, roaring to their companions a rough "good-night," made towards the land. Instead, however, of gaining the nearest point, they rowed into what in the darkness seemed a creek; but Laura soon perceived that, having left the great river on which they had hitherto sailed, they were following the course of one of its tributary streams. The darkness prevented her from distinguishing objects on the banks, though now and then a light glimmering from a casement showed that the haunts of man were near. She could not even discern the countenances of the sailors; but she observed that he who seemed to direct the others spoke in a voice which was new to her ear.

All night the rowers toiled up the stream. The day dawned; and Laura perceived that, passing an open cultivated plain, she was pursuing a course towards woods impervious to the light. Dark and tangled they lowered over the stream, till they closed around, and every cheerful object was blotted from the scene.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE travellers had proceeded for some time shaded by the overhanging woods, the distance lengthened by the dreary sameness of their way, when a wild halloo smote Laura's ear; and she perceived that three Indians stood at the water-edge, making signs for the boat to land. To her unspeakable surprise, the sailors joyfully obeyed the signal. They ran their bark into a creek to which the Indians pointed, and cheerfully busied themselves in discharging their cargo.

Placed with her attendants on a little eminence, which rose above the swampy margin of the river, Laura took a fearful survey of the scene around her. Save where the sluggish stream opened to the day, her view was bounded to a few yards of marshy ground, rank with unwholesome vegetation. No track appeared from this desolate spot. Between the gigantic pines, brushwood and coarse grass spread in sad luxuriance. No trace was here of human footstep. All was dreary and forlorn, as the land which the first wanderers visited unwillingly.

She had not long continued her melancholy survey, when the two stoutest of the Indians approached; and one of them, after talking apart with her attendants, lifted her female servant in his arms, and walked on. The other, making some uncouth gestures, prepared to raise Laura from the ground. She shrunk back alarmed; but the Indian, in broken French, assured her that he would not hurt her; and, pointing towards the woods, reminded her of the difficulty of passing them on foot. Her valet, too, represented the fatigue she must undergo, if she refused the assistance of the Indian. But Laura preferring a toilsome march

to such a mode of conveyance, persevered in her refusal; and hiding them lead the way, followed into the pathless wild.

They continued their journey for several hours, no object meeting their sight which might mark the stages of their way. No work of man appeared, not even the faintest trace that ever man had toiled through this wilderness; yet Laura perceived that the Indians proceeded without hesitation. The position of the grass, the appearance of the leaves, gave indications sufficient to guide them in their route. One of them carried a bag of provisions; and, having reached a spot where the ground was firm and dry, he invited Laura to sit down and take some refreshment. Faint with fatigue, Laura thankfully acceded. Scarcely, however, had she seated herself on the grass, ere her attention was drawn by a slight though unusual noise; and she was told that it was caused by a rattlesnake. At this intelligence her maid, screaming, started up and was going to dart forward into the wood. The Indians beheld her terror with silent contempt; while Laura calmly detained her with gentle force. "Stay, Mary," said she. "If you tread on the animal you are gone! If we are quiet, we may probably see and avoid it." The influence which Laura always acquired over those with whom she lived prevailed over Mary's dread; and in a few moments the serpent was seen by one of the Indians, who killed it with a single blow.

Their hasty meal ended, the party proceeded on their way; but they had not gone far ere Laura, worn out with toil and sorrow, sunk upon the ground. She had now no choice; and the Indian lifting her with the same ease as he would have done an infant, went on with more speed than before.

Towards the close of the day, the woods suddenly opened into a small field, surrounded by them on every side, which appeared to have been itself imperfectly redeemed from the same state of waste luxuriance. In the centre stood a house, or rather cabin, rudely constructed of the material which nature so lavishly supplied. Around it a small patch, enclosed by a palisade, bore marks of forsaken cultivation. Beyond this enclosure, logs of prodigious size lay scattered through the field; and the roots, which had not been cleared from the ground, were again shooting luxuriantly. With a faint sensation of gladness, Laura beheld traces of human kind. Yet no living creature appeared. Here reigned primeval stillness. The winds had died away. A sultry calm filled the air. The woods were motionless. The birds were silent. All was fixed as in death, save where a dull stream stole under the tall canes that deformed its margin.

Mary's exclamation of grief and surprise first informed Laura that she had reached her home. To Laura the dreariness of the scene was of small concern. No outward circumstances could add to the horrors with which her fears were familiar. While her attendant bewailed aloud that ever thirst of gain had lured her from happy England, Laura was inwardly striving to revive the hope that sudden death might snatch her from the grasp of the oppressor; and renewing her oft repeated prayer, "Oh that Thou

wouldst hide me in the grave." But no selfish sorrow could make her regardless of the woes of others. "Courage, Mary," said she, with a foreboding smile; "we shall soon be released; and both, I hope, find shelter in our Father's house."

The cabin was divided into three apartments, each entering from the other. To the innermost Laura was conducted; and she saw that it had been arranged for her. The window was secured with iron. The furniture, unlike that of the other room, was new and not inelegant. Laura looked round to observe whether any trace of Hargrave's presence was visible. None appeared. She examined every recess and corner of her new abode, as one who fears the lurking assassin. She ascertained that Hargrave was not its inmate; and thanked Heaven for the prospect of one night of peace. It was in vain, however, that she tried to discover how long this reprieve might last. The servants either could not or would not give her any information. She was too well acquainted with the character of her oppressor to hope that he would long delay his coming. "To-morrow, perhaps," thought she; and the cold shivering came over her which now ever followed her anticipation of the future. "Yet why do I despair!" said she. "Is any time too short, are any means too feeble for the Power—for the Wisdom in which I trust! But since the hour of trial may be so near, let me not waste the time which should prepare for it,—prepare to cast of this poor clog of earth, and rise beyond its sorrows and its stains."

Laura's bodily frame, however, could not long keep pace with the efforts of her mind, for her health and strength were failing under the continued influence of grief and fear. The form, once rounded in fair proportion, was wasted to a shadow. The once graceful neck bent mournfully forward. The lily arms hung down in listless melancholy. The cheek, once of form inimitable, was sunk and hollow now. The color, once quick to tell the modest thought, was fixed in the paleness of the dead. And death was ever present to her thoughts, the only point to which her hope turned steadily!

One only desire lingered upon earth. She wished that some friend should pity her hard fate, and know that the victim had shrunk from it, though in vain. Intending to leave behind her some attestation of her innocence, she besought Mary to procure for her the means of writing. "Why should you fear to trust me?" said she. "To whom upon earth can my complaint reach now! You may see all I write, Mary; and, perhaps, when I am gone you will yourself convey it to my friend. Your master will not prevent you then; for then he will have pity on me, and wish that he had not dealt with me so hardly." The irresistible sweetness of Laura had won the heart of her attendant, and Mary promised that she would endeavor to gratify her. She said that the writing materials were kept carefully locked up by Robert, the man-servant; that his master's orders on that subject had been peremptory; that she was sure he would not venture to disobey while there remained a possibility of conveying intelligence from the place of their confinement;

that two of the Indians were to depart on the following day; that after they were gone, no means of access to the habitable world remaining. Robert might possibly relax his strictness, and permit Laura to amuse herself with writing.

Mary's words awakened in Laura's mind an idea that all was not yet lost. The Indians were suspected of favoring her. They might then bear her appeal to human pity—to human justice. If she could find means to speak with them apart, she would plead so earnestly that even savages would be moved to mercy! At these thoughts a ray of hope once more kindled in her breast. It was the last. All day she watched for an opportunity to address one of the Indians. In vain! Robert guarded her with such relentless fidelity, that she found it impossible to effect her purpose. The Indians departed. Mary performed her promise, and the unfortunate Laura wrote the following letter, which was afterward, by Hargrave's permission, conveyed to Mrs. Douglas.

"From this dreary land of exile, to whom shall I address myself save to you, mine own friend, and my father's friend? Where tell my sad fate save to you, who first taught me the hope that looks beyond it? And let it comfort your kind heart to know, that while you are shedding tears over this last memorial of your Laura, I shall be rejoicing in the full consummation of that hope.

"There is, indeed, another friend! One to whom my last earthly thoughts are due! But I can not tell him that she who was almost the wife of his bosom is gone down to a dishonored grave. I have not time to soften my sad tale to him, nor to study words of comfort; for the moments are precious with me now. A few, a very few, are all that remain for preparation. I must not rob them of their awful right. Tell him my story as he is able to bear it. Tell him my innocence, and he will believe it, for he knew my very soul. But I must hasten, lest the destroyer come, ere, in these lines, I close my connection with this world of trial."

[She then proceeded to give a simple narrative of her wrongs. She expressed no bitterness against the author of them. She spoke of him as of a misguided being, and pitied the anguish which he was preparing for himself.] "Tell Mr. de Courcy," she proceeded, "that I charge him, by all the love he bears me, to . . . give my enemy, even from the heart forgive him. Let him do more. Let him pray for him, and, if they meet, admonish him. It may be that his heart will soften when he remembers me."

[The remainder of the letter was written at intervals. Laura spent her time chiefly in acts of devotion, of self examination, and of repentance. It was only when exhausted nature could no longer follow these exercises of the soul that she returned to add another line to her picture of wretchedness.]

"The saints, who resisted unto blood, striving against sin, who gave up their lives in defence of the truth, looked forward to the hour of their departure, rejoicing. But I must go to the grave laden with shame and sorrow. My soul is weary of my life, and yet I must fear to die. Yet let my enemy a little while delay his coming, and my death also will be joyful. Let

him stay only a few days, and I shall be deaf to the voice of the oppressor. I am wasting fast away. If he haste not to catch the shadow, it will be gone."

"The people whom he has appointed to guard his poor prisoner no longer watch me as they once did. It is useless now. A few short steps, and my feeble limbs bend to the earth, reminding me whither I am hastening."

"When I am gone, Mary will carry you the ringlets which you were wont to twine round your finger. Send one of them to her who should have been my sister; but give not any to my own Montague, for he will pine over them when he might be happy in some new connection. Yet tell him that I loved him to the end. I believe he sometimes doubted of my love; but tell him that I bore him a firm affection. Passion is unfit for the things of this world."

"I have a letter from my enemy. In two days more—"

"I have a knife concealed in my bosom. All night it is hidden beneath my pillow; and when my weary eyes close for a moment, I grasp it, and the dull touch rouses me again. Mine own dear friend, did you think when first you taught me to join my little hands in prayer, that these hands should be stained with murder!"

"Is it a crime to die when I can no longer live with innocence? When there is no escape but in the grave, is it forbidden to hide me there? My mind grows feeble now. I can not discern between good and evil."

"Why is my soul bowed down to the dust, as if the fountain of compassion were sealed? I will yet trust Him who is the helper of those who have no help in man. It may be that he will melt the heart of my enemy, and move him to let me die in peace. Or perhaps even the sight of my persecutor may be permitted to burst the rending heart—to scare the trembling spirit from its prison."

"This day is my last, and it is closing now! The silence of midnight is around me. Ere it again return, a deeper night shall close for me; and the weary pilgrim shall sink to rest. It is time that I loosen me from the earth; I will not give my last hours to this land of shadows. Then fare you well, mine own dear friend! You first pointed my wishes to that better world where I shall not long wait your coming. And fare thee well, mine own Montague! Take comfort. I was not fit to linger here; for I had desires which earth could not satisfy; and thirstings after a perfection which this weak heart could not attain. Farewell—I will look back no more."

*Hargrave's Letter to Laura.*

"MY DEAREST LAURA,—The tantalizing business which has so long thwarted my wishes will still detain me for two days. Your gentle mind can not imagine what this delay costs me. My only recompense is, that it affords me an opportunity of shewing you somewhat of that consideration with which I could always wish to treat you. I willingly forego the advantage of surprise for the sake of allowing you to exercise that decision which you are so well qualified to use discreetly.

"You know, Laura, how I have doated on

you. For near four long years you have been the desire of my soul; and now that my happy daring has placed me within reach of my utmost wishes, I would fain attain them without distress to you. This is no time for concealment; and you must pardon me if I am explicit with you. I have known the disposition of Lady Pelham's fortune from the hour when it was made. You know that with all my faults I am not sordid; but circumstances have rendered money necessary to me. Except in the event of Lord Lincourt's death I can not return to England otherwise than as your husband. I will own, too, dearest Laura, that after all I have done, and all I may be compelled to do, I dare not trust for pardon to your pity alone. I must interest your duty in my cause.

"Consider your situation, my beloved, and spare me the pain of distressing you. I have watched you, implored you, pined for you. I have borne your coldness, your scorn. I have ventured my life to obtain you. Judge, then, whether I be of a temper to be balked of my reward. You must be mine, bewitching Laura. No cool, insulting, plausible pretender can cheat me of you now. Trackless woods divide you from all human kind. I have provided against the possibility of tracing your retreat. It rests with you, then, to choose whether you will bless bless my love with a willing and honorable reward, or force me to extort the power of bestowing obligation.

"My charming Laura, for now indeed I may call you mine, pardon, in consideration of its sincerity, the abrupt language I am compelled to hold.

"One thing more. In three weeks I must return hither. The engagement of your British attendants expires before that time. I cannot for a moment allow myself to suppose that you will prefer a hopeless, solitary exile to the reparation which I shall even then be so anxious to make; to the endearments of a fond husband, of an impassioned lover; to the envy and homage of an admiring world. Suffer me, rather, dear lovely girl, to exult in the hope that you will receive, without reluctance, the man to whom fate assigns you, and that you will recall somewhat of the tenderness you once confessed for your own ever-devoted

"VILLIERS HARGRAVE."

*Laura's Answer,*

(Sent with the two foregoing to Mrs. Douglas.)

"I thought my spirit had been broken, crushed never more to rise. Must the glow of indignation mingle with the damps of death? But I will not upbraid you. The language of forgiveness best befits me now. The measure of your injuries to me is almost full; while those which you have heaped upon yourself are yet more deep and irreparable. My blasted fame, my life cut off in its prime, even the horrible dread which has overwhelmed me, are nothing to the pangs of hopeless remorse, the unaccepted struggle for repentance. Yet a little while, and this darkness shall burst into light ineffable; yet a little while and this sorrow shall be as the remembrance of a troubled dream. But you—Oh, Hargrave, have pity on yourself!

"It was not to warn, it was to plead with you, that I won on my knees the consent of your messenger to bear my reply. I will strive to hope; for you were not always pitiless. I have seen you feel for the sufferings of a stranger; and have you no mercy for me? Alas! in those pitying tears which I saw you shed, began this long train of evil; for then began my base idolatry, and justly have you been made the instrument of my punishment.

"My mind wanders. I am weaker than a child. Oh! Hargrave, if you have human pity, let the feeble spark expire in peace. Here, where no Christian footstep shall hallow the turf that covers me, nor song of Christian praise rise near my grave, here let me lay me down and die—and I will bless you that I die in peace. I dare not spend my parting breath in uttering unholy vows, nor die a voluntary partner in your crimes. Nor would I, had my life been prolonged, have joined to pollution this dust, which, perishable as it is, must rise to immortality—which, vile as it is, more vile as it soon may be, shall not be put on incorruption. Why, then, should you come hither? Will it please you to see this poor piece of clay, for which you have ventured your soul, faded to an object of horror? cast uncoffined into the earth, robbed of the decencies which Christians pay even to the worst of sinners! When you look upon my stiffened corpse, will you then triumph in the security of your possession? Will you again exult in hope, when you turn from my grave and say, 'Here lies the wretch whom I have undone!'

"Come not, I charge you, if you would escape the anguish of the murderer. When did the evil of your deeds stop within your first intention! Do not amuse your conscience with the dream of reparation. I am fallen, indeed, ere you dare insult me with the thought! Will you wed the dead? Or, could I outlive your injuries, think you that I would sink so low as to repay them with myself!—reward with vows of love a crime more black than murder! Though my name, already degraded through you, must no more claim alliance with the good and worthy, think you that I would bind myself before Heaven to a wretch who owed his very life to my undeserved mercy! Inhuman! Your insults have roused the failing spirit. Yet I must quell these last stirrings of nature. Instant, full, and free must be my forgiveness; for such is the forgiveness which I shall soon require.

"Perhaps, as now you seem to think me fit for any baseness, you will suppose my forebodings a poor deceit to win you from your purpose. See, then, if you can trace in these unsteady lines the vigor of health! Ask him who hears them to you, how looks now the face which you call lovely? Ask him if the hand which gave this letter looks soft and graceful now? I love to gaze upon it. It bids me hope! for it is like no living thing. Inquire minutely. Ask if there remain one charm to lure you on to further guilt. And if death has already seized on all, if he has spared nothing to desire, will you yet hurry him on his prey? You have made life a burden too heavy for the weary frame. Will you make death too dreadful to be endured? Will you add to its hor-

rors till nature and religion shrink from it in agony!

"I cannot plead with you as I would. My strength fails. My eyes are dim with weeping. Oh, grant that this farewell may be the last—that we may meet no more till I welcome you with the joy which angels feel over the sinner that repenteth."

The whole of the night preceding Hargrave's arrival was passed by Laura in acts of devotion. In her life, blameless as it appeared to others, she saw so much ground for condemnation, that, had her hopes rested upon her own merit, they would have vanished like the sunshine of a winter storm. Their support was more mighty; and they remained unshaken. The raptures of faith beamed on her soul. By degrees they triumphed over every fear; and the first sound which awoke the morning was her voice raised in a trembling hymn of praise.

Her countenance elevated as in hope; her eyes cast upwards; her hands clasped! her lips half opened in the unfinished adoration; her face brightened with a smile, the dawn of eternal day—she was found by her attendant. Awe-struck, the woman paused, and at a reverend distance gazed upon the seraph; but her entrance had called back the unwilling spirit from its flight; and Laura, once more a feeble child on earth, faintly inquired whether her enemy were at hand. Mary answered that her master was not expected to arrive before the evening; and entreated that Laura would try to recruit her spirits, and accept of some refreshment. Laura made no opposition. She unconsciously swallowed what was placed before her; unwittingly suffered her attendant to lead her abroad; nor once heeded aught that was done to her, nor aught that passed before her eyes, till her exhausted limbs found rest upon the trunk of a tree, which lay mouldering near the spot where its root was sending forth a luxuriant thicket.

The breath of morning blew chill on the wasted form of Laura, while it somewhat revived her strength and recollection. Her attendant, seeing her shiver in the breeze, compassionately wrapped her more closely in her cloak, and ran to seek a warmer covering. "She feels for my bodily wants," said Laura. "Will she have no pity for the sufferings of the soul! Yet what relief can she afford! What help is there for me in man? Oh, be Thou my help who art the guard of the defenceless! Thou who canst shield in every danger—Thou who canst guide in every difficulty!"

Her eye rested, as it fell, upon a track as of recent footsteps. They had brushed away the dew, and the rank grass had not yet risen from their pressure. The unwonted trace of man's presence arrested her attention; and her mind, exhausted by suffering, and sharing the weakness of its frail abode, admitted the superstitious thought that these marks afforded a providential indication for her guidance. Transient animation kindling in her frame, she followed the track as it wound round a thicket of poplar; then, suddenly recollecting herself, she became conscious of the delusion, and shed a tear over her mental decay.

She was about to return, when she perceived that she was near the bank of the river. Its

Jark flood was stealing noiseless by; and Laura looking on it, breathed the oft repeated wish that she could seek rest beneath its waves. Again she moved feebly forward. She reached the brink of the stream, and stood unconsciously following its course with her eye; when a light wind stirring the canes which grew down to the water-edge, she beheld close by her an Indian canoe. With suddenness that mocks the speed of light, hope flashed on the darkened soul—and, stretching her arms in wild ecstasy, "Help, help!" cried Laura, and sprung toward the boat. A feeble echo from the further shore alone returned the cry. Again she called. No human voice replied. But delicious transport lent vigor to her frame. She sprang into the bark; she pressed the slender oar against the bank. The light vessel yielded to her touch. It floated. The stream bore it along. The woods closed around her prison. "Thou hast delivered me!" she cried, and sunk senseless.

A meridian sun beat on her uncovered head ere Laura began to revive. Recollection stole upon her like the remembrance of a feverish dream. As one who, waking from a fearful vision, still trembles in his joy, she scarcely dared to hope that the dread hour was past, till, raising her eyes, she saw the dark woods bend over her, and steal slowly away as the canoe glided on with the tide. The raptures of fallen man own their alliance with pain, by seeking the same expression. Joy and gratitude, too big for utterance, long poured themselves forth in tears. At length returning composure permitting the language of ecstasy, it was breathed in the accents of devotion; and the lone wild echoed to a song of deliverance.

The saintly strain arose unmingled with other sound. No breeze moaned through the imperious woods. No ripple broke the stream. The dark shadows trembled for a moment in its bosom, as the little bark stole by, and then reposed again. No trace appeared of human presence. The fox peeping from the brushwood, the wild duck sailing stately in the stream, saw the unwonted stranger without alarm, untaught as yet to flee from the destroyer.

The day declined, and Laura, with the joy of her escape, began to mingle a wish, that, ere the darkness closed around her, she might find shelter near her fellow beings. She was not ignorant of the dangers of her voyage. She knew that the navigation of the river was interrupted by rapids, which had been purposely described in her hearing. She examined her frail vessel, and trembled; for life was again become precious, and feeble seemed her defence against the torrent. The canoe, which would not have contained more than two persons, was constructed of a slender frame of wood, covered with the bark of the birch. It yielded to the slightest motion; and caution was necessary to poise in it even the light form of Laura.

Slowly it floated down the lingering tide; and, when a pine of larger size, or form more fantastic than his fellows, enabled her to measure her progress, she thought that through wilds less impassable her own limbs would have borne her more swiftly. In vain behind each tangled point did her fancy picture the haunt of man. Vainly, amid the mists of eve, did she trace the smoke of sheltered cottages. In vain at every

winding of the stream she sent forward a longing eye in search of human dwelling. The view was bounded by the dark wilderness, repeating ever the same picture of dreary repose.

The sun went down. The shadows of evening fell; not such as in her happy native land blend softly with the last radiance of day; but black and heavy, harshly contrasting with the light of a naked sky reflected from the waters, where they spread beyond the gloom of impending woods. Dark and more dark the night came on. Solemn even amid the peopled land, in this vast solitude it became more awful.

Ignorant how near the place of danger might be, fearing to pursue darkling her perilous way, Laura tried to steer her light bark to shore, intending to moor it, to find in it a rude resting-place, and in the morning to pursue her way. Laboriously she toiled, and at length reached the bank in safety; but in vain she tried to draw her little vessel to land. Its weight resisted her strength. Dreading that it might slip from her grasp and leave her without means of escape, she re-entered it, and again glided on in her dismal voyage. She had found in the canoe a little coarse bread made of Indian corn; and this with the water of the river, formed her whole sustenance. Her frame worn out with previous sufferings, awe, and fear, at last yielded to fatigue; and the weary wanderer sunk to sleep.

It was late on the morning of a cloudy day, when a low murmuring sound stealing on the silence awoke Laura from the rest of innocence. She listened. The murmur seemed to swell on her ear. She looked up. The dark woods still bent over her. But they no longer touched the margin of the stream. They stretched their giant arms from the summit of a precipice. Their image was no more reflected unbroken. The gray rocks which supported them but half lent their colors to the rippling water. The wild duck, no longer tempting the stream, flew screaming over its bed. Each object hastened on with fearful rapidity, and the murmuring sound was now a deafening roar.

Fear supplying superhuman strength, Laura strove to turn the course of her vessel. She strained every nerve; she used the force of desperation. Half hoping that the struggle might save her, half fearing to note her dreadful progress, she toiled on—till the oar was torn from her powerless grasp, and hurried along with the tide.

The fear of death alone had not the power to overwhelm the soul of Laura. Somewhat might yet be done, perhaps, to avert her fate; at least, to prepare for it. Feeble as was the chance of life, it was not to be rejected. Fixing her clank more firmly round her, Laura bound it to the slender frame of the canoe. Then, commending herself to Heaven with the fervor of a last prayer, she, in dread stillness, awaited her doom.

With terrible speed the vessel hurried on. It was whirled round by the torrent—tossed fearfully, and hurried on again. It shot over a smoothness more dreadful than the eddying whirl. It rose upon its prow. Laura clung to it in the convulsion of terror. A moment she trembled on the giddy verge. The next, all was darkness!

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHEN Laura was restored to recollection, she found herself in a plain, decent apartment. Several persons of her own sex were humanely busied in attending her. Her mind retaining a confused impression of the past, she inquired where she was, and how she had been brought thither. An elderly woman, of prepossessing appearance, answered with almost maternal kindness, that she was amongst friends all anxious for her safety; begged that she would try to sleep; and promised to satisfy her curiosity when she should be more able to converse. This benevolent person, whose name was Falkland, then administered a restorative to her patient; and Laura, uttering almost incoherent expressions of gratitude, composed herself to rest.

Awaking refreshed and collected, she found Mrs. Falkland and one of her daughters still watching by her bedside. Laura again repeated her questions, and Mrs. Falkland fulfilled her promise, by relating that her husband, who was a farmer, having been employed with his two sons in a field which overlooked the river, had observed the canoe enter the rapid; that, seeing it too late to prevent the accident, they had hurried down to the bed of the stream below the fall, in hopes of intercepting the boat at its reappearance; that, being accustomed to float wood down the torrent, they knew precisely the spot where their assistance was most likely to prove effectual; that the canoe, though covered with foam for a moment, had instantly risen again; and that Mr. Falkland and his sons had, not without danger, succeeded in drawing it to land.

She then, in her turn, inquired by what accident Laura had been exposed to such a perilous adventure; expressing wonder at the direction of her voyage, since Falkland farm was the last inhabited spot in that district. Laura, mingling her natural reserve with a desire to satisfy her kind hostess, answered that she had been torn from her friends by an inhuman enemy, and that her perilous voyage was the least effect of his barbarity. "Do you know," said Mrs. Falkland, somewhat mistaking her meaning, "that to his cruelty you partly owe your life; for had he not bound you to the canoe, you must have sunk while the boat floated on."

Laura heard with a faint smile the effect of her self-possession; but considering it as a call to pious gratitude rather than as a theme of self-applause, she forbore to offer any claim to praise; and the subject was suffered to drop without further explanation.

Having remained for two days with this hospitable family, Laura expressed a wish to depart. She communicated to Mr. Falkland her desire of returning immediately to Europe; and begged that he would introduce her to some asylum where she might wait the departure of a vessel for Britain. She expressed a willingness to content herself with the poorest accommodation, confessing that she had not the means of purchasing any of a higher class. All the wealth, indeed, which she could command, consisted in a few guineas which she had accidentally had about her when she was taken from her home; and a ring which Mrs. de

Courcy had given her at parting. Her host kindly urged her to remain with them till they should ascertain that a vessel was immediately to sail, in which she might secure her passage; assuring her that a week scarcely ever elapsed without some departure for her native country. Finding, however, that she was anxious to be gone, Mr. Falkland himself accompanied her to Quebec.

They traveled by land. The country at first bore the character of a half-redeemed wilderness. The road wound at times through dreary woods; at others, through fields where noxious variety of hue bespoke imperfect cultivation. At last it approached the great river; and Laura gazed with delight on the ever-changing, rich, and beautiful scenes which were presented to her view; scenes which she had passed unheeded when grief and fear veiled every prospect in gloom.

One of the nuns in the Hotel Dieu was the sister of Mrs. Falkland; and to her care Mr. Falkland intended to commit his charge. But before he had been an hour in the town, he received information that a ship was weighing anchor for the Clyde, and Laura eagerly embraced the opportunity. The captain, being informed by Mr. Falkland that she could not advance the price of her passage, at first hesitated to receive her. But when, with the irresistible candor and majesty that shone in all her looks and words, she assured him of his reward; when she spoke to him in the accents of his native land, the Scotsman's heart melted; and having satisfied himself that she was a Highlander, he closed the bargain, by swearing that he was sure he might trust her.

With tears in her eyes, Laura took leave of her benevolent host; yet her heart bounded with joy as she saw the vessel cleaving the tide, and each object in the dreaded land of exile swiftly retiring from her view. In a few days that dreaded land disappeared. In a few days more the mountains of Cape Breton sunk behind the wave. The brisk gales of autumn wafted the vessel cheerfully on her way; and often did Laura compute her progress.

In a clear frosty morning, towards the end of September, she heard once more the cry of land! now music to her ear. Now with a beating breast she ran to gaze upon a ridge of mountains indenting the disk of the rising sun; but the tears of rapture dimmed her eyes, when every voice at once shouted "Scotland!"

All day Laura remained on deck, oft measuring with the light splinter the vessel's course through the deep. The winds favored not her impatience. Towards evening they died away, and scarcely did the vessel steal along the liquid mirror. Another and another morning came, and Laura's ear was blessed with the first sounds of her native land. The tolling of a bell was borne along the water; now swelling loud, and now falling softly away. The humble village church was seen on the shore; and Laura could distinguish the gay coloring of her countrywomen's Sunday attire—the scarlet plaid, transmitted from generation to generation, pinned decently over the plain, clean coil—the bright blue gown, the trophy of more recent housewifery. To her every form in the well-known garb seemed the form of a friend.



The blue mountains in the distance—the scattered woods—the fields yellow with the harvest—the rivers sparkling in the sun, seemed, to the wanderer returning from the land of strangers, fairer than the gardens of Paradise.

Land of my affections! when "I forget thee, may my right hand forget her cunning!" Blessed be thou among nations! Long may thy wanderers return to thee rejoicing, and their hearts throb with honest pride when they own themselves thy children!

The vessel at last cast anchor, and all was cheerful bustle; every one eager to hurry ashore. Some hastened to launch the boat; some ran below to seek out the little offerings of love which they had brought for their friends. Never had Laura heard sound so animating as the cry of "All ready!" followed by the light, short stroke of the oar which sent her swiftly forward. Many a wistful glance did the rowers turn. "There's mother on the pier-head!" cried one. "I see Anne and the bairns!" cried another; and the oar was plied more swiftly. They landed. The shout of joy and the whisper of affection were exchanged on every side. Laura stood back from the tumult, breathing a silent thanksgiving on behalf of herself and her companions. "Poor lassie!" said the captain, approaching her, "is there naebodie to welcome thee? Come, I am going up to Glasgow the night to see my wife and the owners; and if ye like to gang wi' me, ye'll be sae far on your way to your friends." Laura thankfully accepted the proposal; and the fly-boat being just about to sail up the river, she placed in it the little packet of necessaries which she had collected at Quebec, and accompanied the good-natured sailor to his home.

She was kindly received by his wife and daughter, and furnished with the best accommodation which they could command. The next morning she gave the captain a draft for the price of her passage; and producing her purse and Mrs. de Courcy's gold ring, offered them as further security; saying, that as she was now in her own country, a few shillings would support her till she reached her friends, since she might travel to Perthshire on foot. The sailor, however, positively refused to accept of anything more than the draft, swearing that if he were deceived in Laura, he would never trust woman again. He, then, at her desire, procured her a seat in the stage-coach, and once more she proceeded on her journey.

At a small village, a few miles from Perth, she desired to be set down. A by-road led from the village to Mr. Douglas's parish. The distance was said to be only seven miles; and Laura, forgetting the latitude allowed to Scottish measurement, thought she might easily reach the parsonage before nightfall. Leaving her little parcel at the village, she hastened forward;—now pausing a moment as some well-known peak or cliff met her eye, now bounding on with the light step of joy. She pictured the welcome of affection; already she saw the mild countenance of her early friend; already she felt the embrace of love.

Darkness surprised her when she had yet much of her journey to perform, and had

shrouded every object ere she reached the well-known gate, and saw across the narrow lawn the light streaming from the window. She stopped—fear stealing on her joy. In five months what changes might not have happened! Her friend, her mother, might be ill, might be dead! So must weak man mitigate, with the prospect of evil, the transports which belong not to his inheritance! She again proceeded. She entered the hall. The parlor door was open. A group of cheerful faces appeared, ruddy with youth and health; but Laura's eye rested on one of more mature, more interesting grace—one shaded with untimely silver, and lighted up with milder fires. She remained motionless, fearing to surprise her friend by too suddenly appearing, till one of the girls, observing her, exclaimed in a transport of joy, "Laura! Mamma! Laura!" Mrs. Douglas sprang from her seat; and the welcome of affection, the embrace of love, were reality!

The first burst of gladness was succeeded by the solicitous inquiry, by the interesting narrative; and Laura beguiled her friend of many tears by the story of her sad voyage, her hopeless captivity, her perilous escape. Tears, too, of real bitterness rose to her own eyes, at the thought, that although she had escaped from the cruelty of her oppressor, yet its consequences must be lasting as her life; and that she was now pouring her story into almost the only ear which could be open to her protestations of innocence. But she would not cloud the hour of joy by calling the attention of her friend to the shade that rested on her prospects; nor diminish her own gratitude for deliverance from more real misfortune, by anticipating the scorns of the world. She uttered not the faintest forebodings of evil, but continued with serene cheerfulness to "charm an she was wont to do," till at a late hour the friendly party separated for the night.

Weary as she was, Laura could not rest. She had a task to perform too painful to be thought of with indifference. It was necessary to write to De Courcy; and to damp all the pleasure which a knowledge of her safety would convey, by retracting engagements which had been made when her alliance inferred no dishonor. She well knew that De Courcy himself, convinced of her innocence, would spurn the idea of forsaking her in misfortune—of giving, by his desertion, a sanction to calumny. And should she take advantage of his honor and his love to fix in his heart the incurable anguish of following to the wife of his bosom the glance of suspicion or of scorn? The world's neglect was trivial in her estimation. Even its reproach might be endured by one who could appeal from its sentence to a higher tribunal. But what should ease the heart whose best affections were turned to poison by domestic shame; the heart jealous of the honor which it could not defend, bleeding at the stab from which it would not recoil?

Laura had already taken her resolution, and the next day saw it effected. She wrote to De Courcy, detailing minutely every event which had befallen her from the hour of their separation till her landing in Britain. There her narrative closed. She told not in what spot the

wanderer had found rest. She did not even intimate in what part of the island she had disembarked, lest it should furnish a clue to her present retreat. Nor did she, by expressions of tenderness and regret, aggravate the pang which she was compelled to inflict. In words like these she proceeded :

"And now, my respected friend, I imagine you pausing to offer a thanksgiving for yourself and for me. Let it not damp your just gratitude that somewhat of evil is permitted to mingle with this signal deliverance. Let not my escape from a misfortune the most dreadful be forgotten, even though the world should refuse to believe in that escape. For thus it must be. Known to have been in the power of that bad man, will the harsh-judging world believe me innocent? Will it be believed that he ventured to cast his very life upon my mercy, by dragging me unwilling from my home? So long the sport of his ungoverned passions, will it be believed that I have not even seen him?

"I know it will be difficult to convince you that an unjust sentence can be pronounced against me. Certain yourself of the truth of my story, you imagine that it will find easy credence with others. But even if we could change the nature of man, and teach strangers to judge with the candor of friendship, who shall furnish them with the materials for judging? Not he, who, corroborating my tale, must publish his own disgrace! Not the weak Laura, who, by a constitutional defect, shrinks even from the eye where she cannot read distrust!

"Consider all this, and you will at once perceive the reasons which induce me to conceal myself from you for a time. Engagements formed under circumstances now so materially changed I cannot consider as binding. You, I fear, may think otherwise, and be hurried on by your generous nature to tempt a fate which that very turn of mind would render insupportable. My own part in this fate I think I can bear. The share which would fall upon you, I own would crush me to the dust. My spirits are not yet what they have been. I am weary of struggling with a perverse heart, ever leading me aside from duty. I will not lend it arms by exposing myself to entreaties and arguments to which I cannot yield without betraying my best friend to anguish unpitied and hopeless; anguish which would bear with double pressure on myself.

"A stain is fallen on my good name, 'and the glory has departed from me.' Be it so! He who doth all things well hath chosen my lot, and his choice shall be mine. I trust I shall be enabled to act as becomes one who is degraded in the public eye. I have sometimes shrunk from the approbation of the world—that little circle, I mean, which we are apt to call the world. Now I will hide me from its censure; and shall find in the duties which peculiarly belong to the fallen—the duties of humility, of charity, and of devotion—enough to make life still no unpleasing pilgrimage. A good name has been justly likened to a jewel—precious, not necessary. But if you, my dear friend, covet fame for me, look forward to the time when an assembled universe shall behold my acquittal; when a Judge, before whom the

assembled universe is as nothing, shall proclaim me for his own."

This letter Laura accompanied with another, in which she begged Mrs. de Courcy's assistance in reconciling her son to the change in his prospects. Both were enclosed by Mr. Douglas to a friend in London, who was directed to forward them by post; thus avoiding any trace of the quarter from whence they came.

Her lot thus chosen, Laura began to make arrangements for entering on a mode of life befitting her situation. Fearing that the shaft of slander might glance aside from herself to the friends who still clung to her, she steadily resisted Mrs. Douglas's warm invitations to make the parsonage her home. Her father's little farm at Glenalbert had been annexed to one of larger size. The cottage remained untenanted, and thither Laura determined to retire. Her fortune, however far from affluent, she thought would suffice to support the humble establishment she meant to retain. One servant was sufficient for her who had been accustomed to make few claims on the assistance of others. To obviate the impropriety of living alone while yet extreme youth made even nominal protection valuable, she invited an elderly widow lady, poor, but respectable, to preside in her household.

In necessary preparations for her removal to Glenalbert, in affectionate assiduities to the friends with whom she resided, in compensating to her own poor for her long though involuntary neglect of their claims, Laura sought a refuge from painful reflection; and, if a sigh arose at the review of her altered prospects, she called to mind her deliverance, and regret was exchanged for thankfulness. The vain might have bewailed a seclusion thus untimely, thus permanent; the worldly-minded might have mourned the forfeiture of earthly prosperity; any spirit unsupported by religion must have sunk under unmerited disgrace, embittered by keen sense of shame and constitutional timidity. Laura was a Christian; and she could even at times rejoice that the spirit of vanity was mortified, that the temptations of the world were withdrawn; even where the blow was more painful, she humbly believed that it was necessary, and thankfully owned that it was kind.

The arrangements for her new establishment were soon completed, and the time came when Laura was to begin her life of seclusion. The day before her intended removal she completed her twentieth year; and Mrs. Douglas would have assembled a little group of friends to celebrate the occasion; but Laura steadily opposed it. "Let not one who is suspected," said she, "assume the boldness of innocence! Yet, since the suspicion wrings me, I will not wear the melancholy of guilt. Give the children a holiday for my sake, and I shall be as playful and as silly as the youngest of them." The holiday was granted; and Laura, amidst the joyful, noisy little company that soon assembled round her, forgot that she was an out-cast.

She was busily searching every corner for the hidden handkerchief, the little roguery who had concealed it in his shoe laughing the while and clapping his hands in delight, when she

started at the voice of a stranger in the lobby, who was announcing that he had a letter for Mrs. Douglas, which he could deliver to no person but herself. The next moment the stranger was shown into the room, and Laura with amazement beheld her American attendant. The amazement on his part was still greater. He started, he trembled, and at first shrunk from Laura; then eagerly advancing towards her, "Bless my soul, madam!" he exclaimed, "are you alive! Then Mary's words are true, and the angels watch over you."

It was some time before the man's astonishment permitted him to declare his errand. At last, when his curiosity had been partially satisfied, he was prevailed upon to enter on his narrative. "You may remember, madam," said he, addressing himself to Laura, "it was the morning we expected my master (though I told Mary, for a make-believe, that he would not come till the evening); that morning Mary took you out and left you; for which I was mortal angry with her, for my mind misgave me that some mischief would come of it. So she ran down to the place where she left you sitting, but you were not there. Then she looked all about, but she could see you nowhere. She was afraid to go among the canes, for fear of the rattlesnakes, so she ran home and told me. So I went with her, scolding her to be sure all the way. Well, we sought and sought, till at last, half in the water, and half on the shore, we found your hat; and then to be sure none of us never doubted that you had drowned yourself; and Mary cried and wrung her hands like a distracted creature, saying that my master was a wicked wretch that had broken your heart, and often she wished that we could find you to give you Christian burial; for she said she was sure your ghost would never let her rest in bed. But we had no drags, nor any thing to take you up with out of the water.

"Well, we were in the midst of all our troubles when my master came. 'Well, Robert,' says he, in his hearty way, 'where is my angel?' I had not the heart to say a word; so with that Mary ran forward, sobing like a baby, and says she, just off hand, 'Miss Montreville is in a watery grave, and I am sure, sir, some heavy judgment will light on him that drove her to it.' So my master stood for a moment thunderstruck, as it were, and then he flew upon us both like a tiger, and shook us till he scarce left breath in us, and swore that it was all a trick, and that he would make us produce you, or he would have our lives. So I tried to pacify him the best I could; but Mary answered him up, that it was all his own doing, and that he might seek you in the river, where he would find your corpse. This put my master beside himself; and he caught her up, and flung her from him, just as if she had been a kitten; and then flew down to the river side, and I followed him, and showed him where we had found your hat; and explained to him how it was not our fault, for we had both been very civil, and given you no disturbance at all, which you know, madam, was true.

"So, close to the place where we found your hat we saw the print of your little shoe in the bank; and when my master saw it he grew quite distracted, crying out that he had mur-

dered you, and that he would revenge you upon a wretch not fit to live (meaning himself), madam, and so he would have leaped into the river; but by this time one of the servants he brought with him came up, and we forced him back to the house. Then he grew more quiet; and called for Mary, and gave her his purse with all his money, and bid her tell everything about you, madam; how you had behaved, and what you had said. So she told him, crying all the while, for she repented from her heart that ever she consented to have any hand in the business. And sometimes he would start away and gnash his teeth, and dash his head against the wall; and sometimes he would bid her go on, that he might run distracted at once, and forget all. So she told him that you had written to one Mrs. Douglas, in hopes that when you were dead he would take pity on you (repeating your very words, madam). Then he asked to see the letter, and he carried it into your room. And there we heard him groaning and speaking to himself, and throwing himself against the walls; and we thought it best to let him come to himself a little, and not disturb him.

"So by and by he called for pen and ink, and I carried them to him, thinking if he wanted to write it was a sign he was growing more calm. Then he continued writing for some time, though now and then we heard him restless as before. At last he opened the door, and called me. 'Robert,' says he, quite calm and composed like, 'if you deliver this packet as directed, you will earn three hundred pounds. But be sure to deliver it with your own hand.' I was going to ask him something more about it, for I did not just know what he meant about the three hundred pounds; but he pushed me out, and shut himself in the room. Then I bethought myself that there was something strange-like in his look, and that he was pale, and somehow not like himself. So I went to the kitchen to consult with the rest what we had best do. So I had scarcely got there when I heard a pistol go off, and we all ran and burst open the door, and there we saw my master, madam, laid out upon Miss Montreville's bed, and the pistol still in hand; though he was stone dead, madam, for I suppose the ball had gone right through his heart."

Laura, dreadfully shocked, and no longer able to listen to this horrible relation, hastened out of the room, leaving Mrs. Douglas to hear what yet remained to be told of the history of a man of pleasure!!!

The servant proceeded to tell that he and his companions had conveyed their master's body to head-quarters, and seen it buried with military honors, and then had sailed in the first ship for Britain. That remembering the charge to deliver the packet with his own hand, he had come down to Scotland on purpose to execute his trust; and hoped that Mrs. Douglas would fulfil his master's promise. He then delivered the packet, which Mrs. Douglas opening in his presence, found to contain a bill for three hundred pounds, in favor of Robert Lewson, not payable without her signature; the two letters which Laura had written during her exile; and the following lines, rendered almost illegible by the convulsive startings of the hand which had traced them:

"The angel whom I have murdered was an angel still. 'The destroyer came,' but found her not. It was her last wish that you should know her innocence. None can attest it like me. She was purer than heaven's own light.

"She loved you. There is another, too, whom she protests that she loved to the last—but it was I alone whom she loved with passion. In the anguish of her soul she called it 'idolatry;' and the words of agony are true. But I, like a base fool, cast away her love for the heartless toyings of a wanton! and shall I, who might have been so blest, live now to bear the gnawings of this viper—this hell never to be escaped!

VILLIERS HARGRAVE."

Mrs. Douglas had no sooner read the contents of her packet, than she hastened to communicate them to Laura. The horror inspired by Hargrave's letter, and the dreadful destiny of the writer, did not render her insensible to the pleasure of being empowered to clear, beyond a doubt, the fame of her young friend. Laura was, however, for the present, in no state to share her joy. She could only weep; and, trembling, pray that she might be enabled to guard against the first beginnings of that self-indulgence whose end is destruction!

Mrs. Douglas at last found means to rouse her by naming De Courcy, and reminding her of his right to immediate intelligence of this happy change in her situation. Laura, as superior to coquetry as to any other species of despicable cruelty, instantly sat down to communicate the news to her lover. To her plain, unvarnished tale, she added copies of the letters which attested her innocence, with Lewson's account of the names and address of those persons who had been employed to carry her from England.

Evening was drawing on before Laura had

finished her task; and, desirous to recruit her spirits before she joined the family circle, she stole abroad to breathe the reviving air of her native hills. She had crossed the little lawn, and was opening the gate, when, seeing a carriage drive quickly up, she drew back. The carriage stopped. She heard an exclamation of joy, and the next moment she was pressed to the heart of De Courcy.

Laura first recovered utterance. "What happy chance," she cried, "has brought you here just at the moment when I am permitted to rejoice that you are come?" "Ah, Laura," said De Courcy, "could I know that you were alive and in Britain, yet make no effort to find you? I was convinced that Mrs. Douglas must know your retreat. I was sure that I could plead so that no human heart could resist my entreaties. And now I have found thee, I will never leave thee but with life."

The little shrubby walk which led round the lawn to the parsonage was not half a quarter of a mile in length, yet it was an hour before the lovers reached the house; and ere Laura presented De Courcy to her friends, she had promised that in one week, she would reward his tried affection; and had settled, that after they had spent a few days in delightful solitude at Glenalbert, she would accompany him to Norwood.

Laura has now been for some years a wife; and the same qualities which made her youth respectable, endear her to the happy partner of her maturer life. She still finds daily exercise for her characteristic virtue, since even amid the purest worldly bliss self-denial is necessary. But the tranquil current of domestic happiness affords no materials for narrative. The joys that spring from chastened affection, tempered desires, useful employment, and devout meditation, must be felt—they cannot be described.

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SUETONIUS tells us, that when the youthful Nero was brought the first death-warrant to sign, his heart was lacerated by the deepest and most sincere emotions of pity and regret, and that, in appending his signature to it, the future tyrant exclaimed, with genuine remorse,—

“QUAM VELLE NESCIRE LITERAS!”

And, in like manner, I am never compelled by dire necessity to launch a book, and by so doing, sign another schedule of my own death-warrant, that I do not also exclaim,—“How I wish that I was ignorant of letters, that I might be preserved from such an action!” for, for any one,—but more especially for a woman,—to have to be the target of such dastardly and paid-for abuse as I am always subjected to from a certain clique of the press, is really too revolting; but, nevertheless, nothing gives such lion-like and undaunted courage as a thorough knowledge of the utter worthlessness of one's assassins, and a proportionate contempt for them. In giving a brief *resumé* of the literary persecution I have been subjected to since my return to this country, I am well aware of the additional missiles I shall draw down upon my devoted head,† as in this land of cant, one of the most orthodox cants is, that a woman,—or, as the national phrase goes, a “female.”—should let the wheels of Juggernaut crush her

\* The author feels it necessary to state that the present work is printed entirely on her own account, and that the preface appears not only without the concurrence, but directly contrary to the wish and advice of the publisher.

† And what makes these projectiles the more terrible is, that that most docile of all donkeys, the Public, never presumes to judge for itself; but in its respective detachments, always goes by what “my paper” or “MR REVIEW” says; so that were “*The Times*” some fine foggy morning to make the wonderful discovery, that Jeremy Taylor was an atheistical writer, or the “*Post*” to invent, that Miss Edgeworth's socialism had demoralised the last two generations, and Daniel De Foe's *ship-stop* had corrupted the purity of the English language; instead of examining *these authors*, the gentle public would echo the baseless actions, the religiously believed them to be gospel truths; and on the other hand, my dear shade of Aristides, between you, and me, and the “*Post*,” were the latter to assert that “*THE HAUNTED MAN*” was the finest Epic (!) in the language, we should have all St. James's de-capoting the monstrous absurdity; and every little miss and mannikin in the kingdom, lauding the press with diluted imitations of this ineffable trash.

to death without ever uttering a murmur; but however great and elastic woman's powers of endurance are, (and have need to be,) there is a point of tension beyond which they *cannot* extend; and, as Louis the Fourteenth truly said,—“If people want respect, they must pay it;” now, in my individual case, not only have the laws of God been violated to injure me, but the laws of nature have been subverted to outrage me; and consequently, at the end of twenty years of the most cowardly persecution, including the grossest libels, and the blackest lies, I am perfectly callous to what *English society*, as it is at present constituted, may think of a woman's daring to wince under such *auto da fé* martyrdom; as, for the most part, what is called social respectability in England, is nothing more than *successful vice*.† Of this we have too many modern instances to admit of dispute; and that country is *not*, nor cannot be, a *moral* country, where there is a continual under current of *one-sided* twaddle going on upon *all* subjects, social, literary, and politi-

† A Frenchman's synopsis of English society, during the Exhibition, is so amusing and so true, that I shall here quote it:—

“Vous autres Anglais, are von drôle people. You run aftere, and make de cour to a Lady P., qui en a fait de toutes les couleurs; while you serve up de cold shouldere to a Lady C. or a Lady A., who have do presque a nothing. Wid all your aristocracy, you bow down, and you worship von linen draper, who have juive tout le monde, and you say not von word about dat honêre to your country, de Marquis de Chandos, who is von real noble man. You object to your poor, dancing in de guingette of de Sunday; but you no object to his drink like beast in de cabaret, and come home and kill his wife and child pour se désennuyer. You talk von great deal about de “propriety” and yet your young Misses make a terrible cour to de gentlemen. You shall see dem gathered round de mens in every salon, telling dem how dey like a de race, and de boat, and de cigar, and all tings de men like, and beg a and pray dem to come here, and to go dere wid dem, as he shall be ‘so dull,’ unless dear Mr. dis or dat he is of de party; in short, dey have all de petits soins, and de compliments, dat we men have for de womens in odere countries. Den, too, you let your jeune misses read de papers, fill wid all de horreurs! les plus scabreuses; and lastly, you make all your law for to protec de rascal de *trute* he is von libel, par exemple; while de *lic*, he may run about de world at him pleasure, and do as moche mischief as any odere gamin. Ma foi I no understan your moeurs, by damn!”

cal, and where no amount of private vice, and want of probity, incapacitates men from public life. Neither have we, God bless us! the consistency which gives at least a respectability to even erroneous opinions; for while we are the most loyal people under the sun, to our own lay figure of royalty, whatever it may chance to be, and eulogize, with all the strength of our lungs the wit and paternal solicitude of a King Log, or the forbearance and justice of a King Stork,—we, on the other hand, receive with open arms, and indigestions of public dinners, and crammed speeches, the rebels of every other country. But to resume this little memoir, I am not here going to touch upon the commencement of dirty work by a certain attorney, last July; for I have taken measures to deal with that elsewhere; neither am I going (as Coleridge accused Lord Byron of doing) to “wipe my eyes upon the public,”—for, indeed, notwithstanding my poverty, I am still exceedingly fastidious in *lingerie*, and therefore should prefer a more delicate pocket-handkerchief, perfumed with a *purer esprit*.

Upon my return to England, some four years ago, the first publisher I applied to informed me that what prevented my books having fair play was the underhand dirty work that was going on against me, and against them, for that a lady, more notorious than celebrated, had been sent to him to threaten all sorts of spiteful influences against him if he published for me; besides leaving no stone unturned to crush my individual works. To this gentleman's honour, be it spoken, he expressed the greatest indignation at such dastardly conduct; and it decided him to publish my book, which he had been before wavering about doing. Not so the magnate, Mr. —: “he was better drilled, belonging to the old band of amateur Sbirri. A gentleman in the kindest manner interested himself to try and dispose of (for at least something like an adequate price) my “Ophidion,” which Mr. — afterwards, to my unspeakable annoyance, christened “The Peer's Daughters.” Well, to — he went; and that gentleman, in his most bland and puff-paste manner, professed his willingness to take the book, but strongly objected to his, as the publisher, being kept in ignorance of the author's name, and after several days' *pour-parler*-ing, my friend and charge d'affaires, thinking to serve me, revealed the fatal secret, whereupon Mr. — had to act up to the restrictions he was under—to put every barrier in the way of my earning my bread.† I did not try Mr.

\* I myself feel that all these Mr. — are very invidious, as they may be filled with the names of innocent and irrelevant persons; but as it is a part of the social arcana of the nineteenth century, on all occasions to screen the guilty, at the risk of compromising the innocent; whatever I may think of such injustice, I, of course, single-handed, cannot conquer it.

† Which I am obliged to do, because £400 a year, from which even the income tax, is nobly deducted, and which £400 a year has been chiefly spent in defending myself against the blackest conspiracies, is not enough to support a person hampered with a beggarly bran new title, which in this country only procures the one privilege, of being cheated upon all occasions, as if one had all the rank of all the Howards; or what is far better, all their wealth to boot. Men have a thousand resources from which women are debarred. Politics alone are a *monte de pieté*, where everything is saleable, from an opinion down to an oppression; and any gentleman, who has rented a

—, the other publishing autocrat, notwithstanding that I, about that time, stumbled upon a letter of his, containing the most flourishing promises upon a former occasion; but I not only knew by experience that such promises, in this country, were indeed broken reeds to lean upon, but my nerves had also grown weak in wading through this Grub Street mud, and I had not courage to encounter the remembered glories of Mr. —'s white hands and white pocket handkerchief, as in my then enfeebled state, I might not have been able to distinguish whether

“That was more white than this,  
Or this, than that;—  
Or either whiter, than his white cravat!”

And yet, alas! I went farther and fared worse than I could possibly have done with the courteous and courtly Mr. B——, for I got deeper into the difficulty by going to Conduit Street, to Messrs. — and —. I was shown into a little sarcophagus of a room, as cold and empty as the heads of many of the authors for whom that “distinguished” firm had published —there I remained alone for some ten minutes, doubtless till the panic occasioned by the schrapnel of my arrival had subsided, for of course they had gone to the carriage to find out who I was. In this den was a horrible plaster cast, (I suppose of one of the Burkers) which glared down upon me with its cold, cruel eyes that reminded me strongly of a passage in the “Inferno,” so that I was beginning to get awfully frightened, when in stalked a portentous quarto edition of a man, bound in black cloth, and elaborately *tooled*, with a black wig. He soon informed me that the same objections existed to his publishing for me. I had no other weapons about me but a casselette and an emerald pin, so I solaced myself by recollecting the story of the gentleman who, having causes of complaint against these amiable publishers, entered their shop with a horsewhip, and accosting (I believe my friend in the black wig) while he simulated a sort of castanet accompaniment with the whip, said

“If a—you are—a Mr. —, d—— Mr. —, and a—if you are Mr. —, then d—— Mr. —!”

In short, like the Nigger, Joconde, in the Ethiopian serenade,‡

“I went to the east, I went to the west,”

though I did not exactly “go to Louisiana.” And the effect of all my interviews with these publishing *sbirri* was that of ipecacuanha,—which is, indeed, generally the result of seeking for manna in this wilderness.

Well, out came “The Peer's Daughters,” so villainously printed, certainly, that it would have warranted any amount of literary invective, but no such thing; from my grandmother's gazette, the “Literary,” down to a more recent penny trumpet, called “The Critic,” what they designated “the talent” (!) of the book was extolled to the skies; it was

radical all his landless youth, may prove himself a rogue in grain, and come out strong as a protectionist, on his own grounds, at the flag end of his days, and at this political *Mons Pédale*, turned coats are always at a premium.



only upon the *author* that they heaped the most dastardly *personal* abuse. Indeed, "The Critic," in its supreme wisdom, discovered that I—by myself—I had committed an outrage upon society in quoting (for it was but a quotation) Lady Mary Wortley Montague's own words,—which, upon the principle of "rendering unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," I put into Lady Mary's own mouth; but for their gross and coarse abuse on that occasion (done as usual to order), I sincerely thank them; as I cannot but look upon it as an inverse honour to be vituperated and maligned in the very same column that a Lady Blessington's moral and literary worth was lauded to the skies. With regard to my last book, "Miriam Sedley," there has been even a little more dirty work than usual done. I shall scarcely allude to the cowardly attack in the "John Bull," as from its reckless falsehood it bore too palpably the stamp of its "genteel letter writer" to leave any one in doubt of the quarter from whence it originated; but, to borrow one of those classical elegancies of diction with which Mr. Charles Dickens's indigenuous and extensive knowledge of St. Giles has enabled him to enrich our language and our literature, they have now got hold of a new "*doigt*." Every one knows that it is easy to make blasphemy even of the Bible itself, by *leaving out the context*; and this is the plan the critics (!) have now adopted in regard to my books; that (not exactly Delphic) oracle of Dowagers and Dandies, the "Morning Post," began it, and the others have followed it up with the usual coarse fresco-daubings of English imitations. The Morning Pap, for instance, taking all the Voltairian School of philosophy that I have not only reprobated, but ridiculed, in a certain Mrs. Marley, loyally holds these opinions up to public censure as those of Lady Bulwer Lytton! Now, having been so long behind the scenes of literary and political life in England, and being therefore perfectly aware that in *both* arenas, the abuse or praise of the press, with a very few honourable exceptions, are entirely done to order, though I make every allowance for the garbling and falsifying of this *Protective* organ, yet really it was too inane even for the "Morning Post!" to say "it hardly knew how to approach a book written in open defiance of the established rules that acknowledge the superiority of MAN!" or some such rubbish, for I have not the paper at hand. Now, if the "Morning Post" means by this that I have not that awful admiration for the male sex in general, and a blind belief in the *Juro divino* infallibility of some of them in particular, which a "*British female*" (in self-defence), should have, I plead guilty; all in begging leave most implicitly to state, that even this horrible heterodoxy is *their* fault, and not mine; my lot having fallen among the most unscrupulous villains on the one hand, and the most heartless fools on the other, my *nil admirari* has, as might naturally be expected, become chronic. Even for the literary Magnates I cannot whip or spur up any of the *obligato* enthusiasm; for having indulged in a more extensive course of reading than any "*British female*" ought to do, and being afflicted with a terribly retentive memory, in perusing modern English works I am continually running against very old acquaintances, who, not being Bishops, have in no way benefitted by the translation; and

when I recognise Montaigne, and La Rochefoucauld, whole pages of Charles Nodier, whole reams of German, and whole chapters of the Comtesse Dash, done into English as *original matter*, and see one of poor old Mar-montel's tales dragged through the mire of the Seven Dials, and then served up as an English *pièce de resistance*, the British public are free to feed on such garbage and welcome, provided I am not forced to do the same, for my appetite is but small, and I cannot swallow rechauffés. But for the epithet of "Xantippe," which the *exécuteur de Hautes Œuvres*, in the "Morning Post," has so amiably and gallantly bestowed upon me, as I cannot even accept a present to which I feel I have no right, I must beg leave to return it to him, "with many thanks," for if I remember rightly, Xantippe was married to a Socrates, which I am certainly not.

And now I come to a little curiosity of literature, which from its originality (a rare thing in English literature), I hope may prove entertaining to the public at large; I cannot say that, although greatly amused at it, I was much surprised, notwithstanding its novelty, inasmuch as that no one of common sense ever is surprised at any amount of meanness that emanates from a *liberal* paper, any more than one is astonished at any degree of inhumanity and hard-heartedness from a philanthropist, for their charity and benevolence being universal, it is folly to expect it should ever be exercised towards any individual. Here is my little literary offering to the British Museum. About two months after the publication of "Miriam Sedley," I received one morning a vulgar-looking, blue, parallelogramish letter, inclosing a little slip of printed paper, which turned out to be an advertisement of "Miriam Sedley," with these lines written:—

"The proprietor of 'THE LEADER' will thank Lady Bulwer Lytton to pay for the inclosed advertisement." Now, as I believe I am correct in stating that no advertisement is ever inserted in any paper without being first paid for, this could only have been intended as a gratuitous and personal insult to me, specially, as it was addressed to me, and not even to the publisher; I don't suppose it actually emanated from Mr. Thornton Hunt, who, as editor of a liberal paper, and dry nose to all the continental revolutionary movements, must, of course, be too busy for such puerilities. But there is another gentleman connected with that impartial journal, whom, I understand, one day disputed my identity with a friend of mine, insisting to her, that "*that* could not be Lady Bulwer Lytton;" he having no doubt been duly primed with the histories of my "disgusting appearance," so sedulously circulated in anonymous communications sent to penny papers; but if this gentleman really entertained the manly and magnanimous idea of annoying "*that* disgusting woman," by sending her that advertisement, she is very sorry that the malice should have lost its point, inasmuch as that she really had not the means of complying with his request, by paying for it, for, as the Bible tells us, "none can buy or sell in the market in these latter times but those who have the mark of the devil." The editor of a liberal newspaper must surely be well aware that it is only the members of the *OUTRÉ* of Literature and Art who can get high prices for their productions, and consequently afford to pay in *pro-*

*pria personæ* for puffs and advertisements, and all the other arcanæ of literary charlatanerie; but I, belonging to the Grab Street legion of poor wretches, who are not authors of MARK, my publisher does all that sort of thing, and when the book has run through one or two editions, then begins to account with me for the sale; so that for the future, I hope the *liberal and impartial portion* of the press will continue to play at "cross-questions and crooked answers," and not change it to "FOLLOW THE LEADER."

I now come to the most venal of the catch-pennies, called

"The Illustrated London News:"—six months after my last book was out, it had the following piece of unwarrantable impertinence, evidently done to order. After a plentiful use of the new "dodge," that of taking the speeches out of the mouths of some of the characters in my book, and saddling me with them, this low and clumsy assailant, presumes to ask the following question, which, insolent and unwarrantable as it is, I am quite prepared to answer—and what is better still, have the proofs wherewith to do so, all safe in my possession.

"Whose," says this hired tool, "has the fault of her life been?—her own, or another's? A fault there has been—a grievous one." Now, as this penny-a-liner has presumed to ask this question, I beg to inform him that his curiosity, with that of the rest of the public, if they have any, on the subject, shall one of these days, and perhaps at no distant one, be gratified; for, although, about a year ago I received the munificent offer of an additional £100 a-year if I would give up certain infamous letters in my possession, and live out of England, much as I detest, and have suffered in this land of "tin" and twaddle, I preferred remaining in it, and *living down* the whole *clique* (powerful as infamy has made them), to acceding to this additional outrage;—meanwhile, I hope the penny-a-liner of the "Illustrated London News," and all his coadjutors, will be better remunerated for their *honourable* services than a poor wretch of a newspaper proprietor was for similar ones some ten years ago,—when being induced to publish a gross and most ridiculous libel of me, from the assurance of his employers of its truth, and a promise that they would not only bear him harmless of all expenses, but remunerate him besides, which fair promises were contained in plausible letters to an oily gammon of a solicitor, who, when requested by the said newspaper proprietor to leave those letters with him as a guarantee, made him understand that private letters were sacred, (you see he was a man of nice honour!) and, therefore, he could not do that. The consequence was, that I brought my action for libel, and gained it; and the poor wretch of an editor, not having the scratch of a pen to produce in corroboration of all the flourishing promises he had received, was completely ruined; and he had not even the satisfaction of exposing his crafty betrayers, as, in doing so he must have exposed his own folly,—not to give it a harsher name; besides, his deceivers were too powerful for him, for every one knows how staunchly the Whigs support their doers of dirty work; and they are right, for it is upon that pivot that their legislation hinges. With regard to the "bad grammar," the critic (†) of the "Illustrated London News"

instances—for a wonder he is right; for, after much entreaty, having given my late publisher leave to substitute an initial for a name, what does he do but take the unwarrantable liberty of altering the whole passage without the slightest reference to its context. I cannot quit this disgusting subject without instancing another high-minded trait of this venal portion of the London press. Last May or June a person calling herself the "Comtesse de Brunetière Tallien," wrote to me begging I would subscribe to a French paper, to be published weekly in London, called the "Pilote de Londres," with which request I instantly complied. This paper, a very well written and agreeable one, existed for about three months. When it merged into the "Illustrated London News," and the *only* number I ever saw of it, under its new title, was as heavy and inane as its English namesake. From that day to this I have never received another number of it, so that I consider myself fairly swindled out of £1 10s., a large sum in these days of legislative cheese-parings and candle-ends, when the greatest people think so much of eighteen pence, and, indeed, when the *only* tariff of greatness seems to be making, scraping, and hoarding money. Having now done with this *clique* of the press, I beg most sincerely to thank the few GENTLEMEN of it who had the courage and the honesty to give *me* impartial reviews, fearlessly criticising, as *literary censors*, where I deserved criticism, and as fearlessly praising where they thought praise was due; and all this without one tinge of personal feeling, *pro or con*, which alone constitutes real criticism, properly so called. Like stars on a dark night, their conduct shines out the more brightly for the surrounding blackness with which the other reviews of my books are always conducted; for many, even of the least dastardly of my opponents, who will not compromise their integrity by furnishing ordered abuse, adopt the *mezzo termine* of prostituting their probity to SILENCE. And even could I write as vulgar, and as inane, therefore as truly feminine trash, as Mesdames — and —, those two great oases of the circulating library desert, still I should fare no better; for though they are befuddled and hepatized to the skies, I should get all the unmerciful lashing which such coarse and demoralizing inanity deserves. I must further assure them that I had no voice even in the christening of my present work, which I had called, up to the point to which it was written, "Molière's Tragedy, His Life and Times," but was told that the exquisite taste and penetration of the circulating libraries must be consulted, *avant tout!* So, as usual, author and book were immolated at the stake of a trashy title, and as what cannot be cured must be endured, it is now launched as "The School for Husbands." I am perfectly aware of the outcry there will be in this moral (*very!*) country at a woman, however solitary and persecuted, however outraged, and writhing under any and every amount of ceaseless injuries, daring to attempt to expose her cowardly oppressors; and I am quite ready to own that it would be much better, and certainly much fitter, if some man did it; but, unfortunately, the very few distant male relations that I have the misfortune to possess, seem to have been weaned on asses' milk, and to have imbibed the nature of that patient but not over-asapient ani-

mal during the process; and it is not till the whole arsenal of injury and outrage has been exhausted upon me that I "have spoken;" would that I could by any contrivance get to do so in a court of justice. But notwithstanding the ridicule that Bloomerism is so justly calculated to throw upon the cause of women, depend upon it, a day must come when even in this country they will be able to assert their rights as human beings—(I don't mean to have the power of voting, in order to send more knaves and fools to Parliament.) but to have some umpire to appeal to when they are treated worse than beasts of burden, and persecuted rather more than if they had fallen into the hands of the Holy Inquisition.

With regard to this present book of mine, were I publishing it in France, or even in any other country, I should be quite sure that the fidelity and exactitude with which I have stuck to my text, and re-embodied my *dramatis personæ*, in their own words and deeds, would be fully comprehended, and therefore appreciated; whatever other demerits or merits the work might be found to possess; but in consideration of the profound and extensive ignorance of a certain set of the *soi-disant* critics of England, I beg leave to state that every incident in this book is an historical fact, and that my only creations are the Hawthorne Family—Rupert Singleton—and the introduction of Tom Pepys.

Had I not been baffled in every effort to obtain even the faint shadows of justice and redress which are to be had for woman from our national tribunals, (for every strong fact that would open them to me has been got over by a perjury or a plot.) I should not now obtrude this much of my affairs upon the public; but "it is not against flesh and blood that I wrestle, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," and the odds being too cruelly unequal, I shall for the future, expose each fresh piece of villainy as it occurs, or if goaded much more, the whole tissue, from the beginning to the end; and it will not be upon my *ipse dixit* that the

facts I shall lay bare will hang, but upon innumerable written documents and hosts of witnesses. For the rest, having been left literally nothing on this side of the grave to lose, to hope, or to suffer, I have consequently nothing left to fear; and for a continuation of this manly and honourable game of strong oppression, on the part of powerful infamy, against a defenceless victim; I have been so gorged with it that I now feel strong and fearless enough, if not to crush, at least to expose it, and am quite prepared to brave the *one-sided* twaddle that such an unprecedented *Fronde* may occasion, as, fearing God alone, I have no fear of anything human, 'much less inhuman. And now to these back-stabbing assailants of the press, I bid farewell; and thank them for having raised me in my own estimation, for unquestionably, next to the approbation of the good, the censure of the worthless is the most honourable thing that can befall a person of integrity.

The term worthless, can scarcely be considered too strong, as applied to the Grub Street fraternity. Since Mr. Walter Savage Landor (a most competent authority upon such matters), has asserted that there is a "spice of the scoundrel in all literary men" and from a very extended practical experience, I can but endorse this truism; for, however slovenly those gentlemen may be, they are, nevertheless, 'very spicy!' I have now every reason to believe that I have met with that *Rara Avis*, an honest publisher; nay, something more; for, in a crisis of great distress, in which I was plunged by my former publisher's not very honourable conduct, he most generously and liberally (a rare virtue in these days) advanced me an important sum of money: bitterly wanting this assistance, and not being too proud to accept it, I am not too mean to acknowledge it, and therefore take this opportunity of publicly expressing my gratitude to him; the more so, that hitherto (with the exception of the late Mr. Bull), my intercourse with publishers had only confirmed the truth of Jean Paul's axiom, that the devil invented seeking, and his grandmother waiting.



# SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS.

## CHAPTER I.

"THE Blessed Virgin! grant me patience; for one needs it, when one lives with a fool, and has to look after him! Only one stocking, and one shoe, on, yet! —the brioche uncut, and the chocolate untasted—though all the clocks in Auteuil have struck ten, and the last *Coucou* has started for Paris. And there you are, for two mortal hours, roaring and screaming out that rag of a play—as if, in all conscience, you could not hear enough of it—and to spare, for Versailles and the town—every night in the week, at the theatre!"

This speech was enunciated, or rather screamed, in one breath, by an old, gaunt, and mahogany-colored female mummy, with a high coif, or *cauchoise*, and short, blue woollen petticoat and sabots, who was busily knitting a stocking, and had just entered a little sunny room looking upon a garden, and was addressed to the occupant of it, her master; who had indeed been guilty of *lèze gouvernante*, in neglecting to eat his breakfast—brought to him more than an hour back—and leaving his toilet unfinished, so intent was he in rehearsing aloud his play of "Le Médecin Malgré Lui." For the fool so unceremoniously addressed was none other than Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière!

"My good La Forêt, only five minutes more, and I shall have done," replied he, with a quiet smile, joining his hands imploringly.

"Bah!" rejoined the Mummy, flinging herself with such energy into an arm-chair, that she rebounded again; while, drawing another knitting-needle out of the arsenal that appeared at her right temple, she vehemently recommenced

clashing the glittering spears round the *tournais* of the blue worsted stocking. "Bah! and where do you think all these never ending, still beginning, five minutes have brought you to?"

"To this scene, with Sganarelle—listen, La Forêt:—

*'Quelques bon coups de bâton entretiennent  
L'amitié entre gens qui s'aiment.'*"\*

"A fine idea truly, it's a pity but you put on your stockings—keep your feet warm, and your head cool, and then may be you might chance to strike out a better notion of friendship, than beating those you love."

"Don't be alarmed, dear La Forêt; I never told you I loved you. But just listen only to this *one scene*;" and Molière read on to the end of the second act. During the declamation, the stocking had been twice lowered, and the knitting-needles laid in rest, on La Forêt's knee—while something forcibly served her lips more than once, that looked like a smile at starting, but which soon got so mutilated among the surrounding ruts and wrinkles, that it would have been impossible to identify it as such, though it had positively displayed three long yellow tusks; but being nearly caught in the fact, by her master's quick eye, at the conclusion of the scene, she rose hastily, poured the untasted cup of chocolate back into the chocolate-pot, and placed the latter on the fire, an infallible sign that she was mollified; which Molière, like a child who had gained a victory over some strong parental determinations, took advantage of, by rubbing

\* Eventually Molière rendered this passage as follows:—

*"Et cinq, ou six, coups de bâton entre gens qui s'aiment ne font que ragailardir l'affection."*

his hands, and exclaiming, "Ha! ha! my little *Quintillanus en Coutillons!* what do you think of *that?*" But, La Forêt, who like all great critics displayed her infallible wisdom by total abstinence from praise, merely grunted out, as she folded her arms, and looked steadily at the fire, "Humph! you did better six months ago."

"Six months ago!—why I was at the baths of Plombières; I did not write anything then."

"Exactly: *that's* what I mean!" and so saying, she took the now scalding chocolate off the fire, poured it out once more into the cup, cut a large slice of the brioche, and, pushing the tray over to her slave, though nominal master, flatly pronounced the one word—

"EAT!"

"In one minute," said Molière, cramming with his left hand a piece of the brioche into his mouth, while, with the right, he dipped his pen into the ink, in order to make some addition or correction to his manuscript.

"Ah! the old story. I was asking you half an hour ago, when I came in, to take the breakfast things away (as I thought) where you imagined your eternal '*only five minutes!* and *just one minute,* had brought you to?'—but you never listen to a word I say."

"Brought me to?—why to the skirts of the *Forêt Noire,*" laughed Molière, approaching his chair nearer to La Forêt, in order to purloin a couple of lumps more sugar, as she, *en bonne ménagère,* always mounted guard over that then expensive luxury.

"It's not *that* I mean, Monsieur Poquelin; guess again; unless you've been robbed of your wits in the Black Forest—for those poor devils of robbers don't always find valuables."

"That's true, *Ma Bossette,* for when they broke into Monsieur Robinnet's house last winter, they only found his snuff-box and madame's pet monkey, and did not find *you,* though you were in charge of the house, and I was still at the theatre."

"And pray how long is that ago, Monsieur Poquelin?"

"Why, I've just told you, Dorlotte—a year ago."

"Then, perhaps, you can at last manage to recollect what day this is?"

"Why, yes," replied Molière, drawing out the ribbon, and settling the deep lace frill at the knee of his one-stockinged leg—"I know that this is Thursday, for to-night they act '*L'Etourdi.*'"

"Great news, indeed! when *you* never act anything else," snapped La Forêt, and then added, leaning the palms of both her skinny hands upon the table, and bringing her face, with eyes distended for the occasion, so close to Molière's, that, unaffectedly frightened, he backed his chair as she vociferated—"It's the 15th of January, Monsieur Poquelin!"

"Well, *Ma bonne,* what's that to me?" rejoined Molière, with a smile.

"There's mankind for you all over; when once they begin to get on in the world, little they trouble their heads about those who gave them the *entrée* into it. What's the 15th of January to you? a pretty question truly; why it's your birthday, that's all! and the packages have been showering in from all parts ever since six o'clock this morning. Pierrot has scoured the country for flowers till he's made the *salon* look more like June than January. His Majesty has sent something, I don't know what (they're all on the table below). The Duc de Mazarin—game enough to dine the whole *troupe.* The Comte Bussy Rabutin, a box of perfumed gloves from Martial's, with a letter; his cousin Seigné, such a cravat! which she and Madame de Grignan embroidered between them; and such lace! and all for a man that will use it like a wisp of hay!"

"My birthday! Another! So soon," said Molière, with a sigh, and the smile which had lit up his countenance the minute before went suddenly out, and left every feature cold and blank.

"Why, certainly, you don't look much like a birthday beau, I must say; and I should recommend your covering your left leg with a stocking—if not on account of the cold, at least in compliment to Mademoiselle Armande, as she will not fail to be here soon, with her usual birthday bouquet for you."

"Armande," murmured Molière, while a slight flush suffused his face, and his hand mechanically wandered among the lace of his shirt-frills and ruffles.

"*Ah! ça,*" said La Forêt, without raising her eyes from her knitting, which she had now resumed, "what do you mean to do with that pretty child who is now no longer a child? For so many years you have danced her on your knee, exchanged bon bons with her for kisses, and heard her call you her little husband, that I believe you forget she is now seventeen instead of seven; but I think *La Béjart* intends that you should provide for the whole family by marrying her—

I don't mean Armande—but she herself."

At the word marrying, Molière's face had become crimson—a sudden and burning heat caused him to tear open his vest; but at the conclusion of La Forêt's harangue, which proclaimed that it was Armande's elder sister—the actress—who had matrimonial designs upon him, the volcano became extinct, he breathed freely, and exclaimed calmly, "Heaven forbid!"

"Amen," responded La Forêt, "for I don't like *ces femmes maîtresses*; but mind what you are about, for *she's* bent upon it."

"*Que le Diable m'emporte*," cried Molière, rising.

"That's just what I'm afraid of!" interrupted La Forêt.

"Bah! my Good La Forêt," said he, with a now genuine laugh, as he rapidly tied and buttoned sundry parts of his dress, endeavoring at the same time to scramble up the loose sheets of his manuscript. "One may be a physician in spite of one's self, as I have proved to you this morning, but scarcely a husband against one's will."

"Humph! you think not?" (And here the knitting-needles flew like forked lightning.) "At all events, console yourself, Monsieur Poquelin; you won't be the first by many hundreds!"

"But I tell you I don't like La Bèjart."

"Who ever said you did?"

"Then how is it possible I should marry a woman whom I do not like enough to ask, or rather, whom I dislike so much, that, were she to ask me, I should refuse her. *There*, I hope that is consequent and intelligible."

"Is it possible to be so devoid of common sense!" muttered La Forêt, shrugging her shoulders, and beating time to this fantasia by a rapid movement of her right foot.

Molière merely smiled; his opponent, exasperated at his forbearance, flung down her knitting on the table, and tightly folding her arms, suddenly rose, and walking leisurely over to him, while he kept backing as she advanced, till he could back no further, on account of the officiousness of the wall, she exclaimed—

"*Ah! ça Monsieur Poquelin, si vous n'êtes pas bête comme Dieu est puissant!* perhaps I shall be able to make you understand that nothing is more easy (since it is what is happening every day in the world) than to make people take things they have no mind to. I, for instance, abominable! hate! detest! can't

*endure!* the taste of Tarragon in soup; and every day, when I go for the herbs for my *pot au feu*, I say to La Mère Bobiche—take care of the Tarragon! and the crocodile looks up in my face with an '*Ah! ma bonne*, you may trust me, I know you dislike it; so I always keep back half old Barbouillier's, the *Ecrivain Public*'s *choux-vertes*, and send him *your* Tarragon, till the old crab ought to be perfect Tarragon vinegar by this time!" Nevertheless, Monsieur Poquelin," concluded she, lowering her voice to a solemn drawl, and shaking her skinny finger at him, so as to give each word due emphasis—"All that does not prevent my soup being poisoned with Tarragon every day!"

"And how do you account for such compulsory diet, my good La Forêt? for you are not the sort of woman to be made to swallow *anything*."

"How do I account for it? Why La Mère Bobiche has got it into her head that she *will* make me take my share of *estragon* with the fine herbs, and so it's always in the basket."

"And you, too, seemingly! *bonne mère*."

"Not so fast, Monsieur Poquelin; La Bèjart may yet be the *estragon* in your *pot au feu*."

"Never! La Forêt; there is one good and effectual reason why she will never be that; but where is Josselin? send him here; I want to get dressed."

"Ha! can it be that you like the child instead?" said the old woman, peering into Molière's face as if a light had suddenly broken in upon her. "*Ma foi!* that would be even worse!" added she, regardless of his order to send his servant to him.

"Bah! you are doating, La Forêt."

"Are you sure it is not you, Jean Baptiste?"

"Really the heat of this room is insupportable!" cried Molière, growing very red, and fanning himself with his handkerchief, as he walked to the window and opened it, although the snow was now descending in flakes athwart the bright sun.

"So—it's *la petite Armande*?" persisted the old woman, clenching the matter with an assertion.

"Pon my word! La Forêt, you forget yourself, my patience has limits;" but suddenly recollecting that from long experience his Prime Minister knew to the contrary, he changed his plan of defence; and, not having yet put on his wig for the day, he said with an appealing smile, as he lowered his head for her inspection:

"Look here; to-day I am forty-four! and my head is as gray as if it bore the snows of double that number of winters; it would be hard to find any love locks amongst them."

"Bah!" exclaimed the not-to-be-hood-winked La Forêt; "you are only exchanging the Tarragon for a cauliflower, Monsieur Poquelin; for though your head may be white, I'll swear your heart is very green!"

Here, luckily for Molière, who was beginning to find his adversary too much for him, a vehicle of some sort stopped at the garden gate, and a loud ring announced an arrival.

"Go, La Forêt—quick!—quick! and send Josselin here. No—stop!—stay! First get me my other stocking. It is on the bed in the next room."

La Forêt returned with the stocking, and also a coat of rich brown, murray-colored velvet, lined with white Padusay silk, and braided with gold, slung across one arm; while in the other hand she held a block, upon which was a magnificent, flowing, and full-curved Louis Quatorze peruke, which she placed on the table, laying the coat on the back of a chair, while Molière placed another for her, and, pressing her into it with gentle force, drew a second for himself. When seated, he placed his left leg in La Forêt's lap, saying, "My good La Forêt, *would* you be so kind as to put on my stocking?" And, in order to prevent any scrutinizing glances from her keen, small, penetrating eyes, during the operation, he again drew forth his manuscript, which he held before his face, as he leant back in his chair, and affected to be busily reading—instead of which he was only *listening* whether the old woman was *looking* at him; and he soon had ample proof that, at all events, she was *thinking* of him; for presently, as she was coaxing the wrinkles straight with her horny hands, in the delicately fine silk stocking, and finally rubbing the strip of red morocco at the heel of his shoe, with the corner of her apron, she continued to soliloquize:—

"So, it's the little Armande?"

"Hush! La Forêt; you matter so that I don't know what I'm about."

"Humph! I'm afraid not, indeed: that's the worst of it."

"*Diantre!*" cried Molière, starting to his feet in a pretended passion, "but you'd make the Pope swear! Can't you speak out if you have anything to say?"

This last request he considered as a master stroke of *finesse*, as it was intended to imply that he was so pre-occupied,

that he had not heard one word she had uttered; and then turning to the table, he took a penful of ink to cross some T's that were quite sufficiently crossed already, almost as much as he was himself. But it was absolutely necessary to appear very busy; for no one knew better, that in all *acting*, whether off or on the stage, appearances are everything. Luckily for him, Josselin now entered the room, and announced that Mademoiselle Armande Bèjart was below, with only her *bonne* and a magnificent bouquet for Monsieur. Now came Molière's *chef d'œuvre*, for he felt that La Forêt's basilisk eyes were upon him. At the theatre it would have elicited thunders of applause, for never was there a more finished and consummate piece of acting than the admirable look of but half resigned, and ill concealed, annoyance with which he flung down the pen, and, crumpling up his manuscript, shook it in his clenched hand above his head, and said, "*Allons!* it is decreed that I *am* to be interrupted, and that I *am not* to have *any peace* to-day!" and then plunging his left hand into his bosom, he turned to Josselin with evidently forced calm, and said—

"Beg of *La Petite* to wait; I'll come to her presently; and—Josselin," calling the latter back, as he was about to close the door, "don't say I was angry at being interrupted, it would look ungracious as—as—she has brought me a bouquet for my *fête*."

Molière now locked up his manuscript hastily, to which haste, however, he endeavored to give the semblance of petulance by the jerk with which he put the key of the bureau into his pocket, and then taking the wig from the block he placed it (with great care for a man so out of humor) on his head. "My good La Forêt, would you bring me another cravat?"

"Why, what is the matter with that one?"

"Oh! nothing—only the lace—that is, I thought there were some spots of coffee on it."

"No more than in the moon," decided La Forêt, now examining the long ends minutely through a pair of large round spectacles, with iron rims, which she had excavated from her pocket in order to pass sentence, and which, whatever justice they rendered to the cravat, by no means embellished her nose, which appeared like a solitary mushroom, sprung up in the plain of her very broad, flat, face between two mountainous cheek bones.



"Well; but La Forêt, I should prefer the one trimmed with Flanders lace."

"Flanders lace! *he* knowing the difference! or caring what lace he wears; poor man! there can be no *doubt* about it; it must have been sheer sorcery! the Jades! they have bewitched him! Ah! I'm sorry for him; for I don't like the breed," muttered the old woman, as she opened a drawer in the inner room, and took out the cravat which was adjusted with infinite pains by its owner; when she returned with it, while in the back ground, she accompanied every movement of her master with an expressive pantomime, that consisted in shaking her hands, and turning up her eyes, which plainly expressed in dumb show, that *she* considered that same fine Flanders lace cravat as the tempting Providence preliminary to a halter! And as she assisted Molière to induct himself into the murray-colored coat, and observed the care with which he bent forward, so as to prevent his curls being crushed, her own head not being similarly encumbered, she shook backwards and forwards, with the measured pendulum movement of a Chinese joss. At length the labors of the toilet were ended. With a beating heart Molière left the room to go down to Armande Bèjart. As soon as La Forêt heard his step descending the stairs, she seated herself close to the fire—resumed her knitting—and relieved her mind by once more prophetically and sympathetically exclaiming—

"THE POOR MAN!"

## CHAPTER II.

IN order to make the conversation between Molière and his *femme de charge*, in the foregoing chapter, more intelligible to the reader, previous to accompanying the former down stairs, we will cast a retrospective glance upon the last ten years of his life. When he first began to personate his own creations, and had enrolled his *troupe*, he was far from having attained to the pinnacle of celebrity, and what is better still *popularity* (which is the social part of fame), on which we find him at the commencement of this history; for merit of any kind marvelously resembles a rusty needle, which always finds great difficulty in penetrating the double-milled and cross-grained tissue of public opinion, till difficulties

and perseverance act on it as moral friction and emery, and render it sufficiently polished and pointed, to insinuate itself alike into the finest or coarsest textures. The public, to do them justice, are willing enough to be amused, delighted, or even instructed; but it is astonishing how often the banquet has to be spread before them, before they think it necessary to return thanks, and bestow fame on the amphytrion who has feasted them. And Molière was no exception to the rule. Ready-made reputations, like established religious creeds, never want votaries, it is so much easier to *follow* and to *echo*, than it is to *discover* and to *lead*. It is true that, from the first, "*La Troupe de Monsieur, or Théâtre du Petit Bourbon,*" as his was called, was always full; and, of course, his coffers began to follow its example; still the outlay was enormously disproportionate to the receipts, and the eternal feuds and squabbles among the *troupe* (each individual of which, male and female, thought his or her transcendent talents alone were entitled to the best *rôles*) became harassing and disheartening to the lessee in the highest degree; for he was not yet of sufficient renown to be an oracle and a fiat among his own; as the appreciation in which people are held by their intimates, or their relatives, is generally forced upon the latter, by the *pressure from without*. So that the only advantages Molière reaped from his twin labors of author and actor, were that his small apartment *au quatrième* in the house of Monsieur Robinet, *Rue Papejean aux Batignolles*, began to wear a somewhat less sordid appearance; and La Forêt consequently scolded less—did not quite so often prophesy the total destruction of France, with the rest of Europe bringing up the rear—if she missed, or thought she missed, a log of wood, from the store the water carrier brought up for the week's provision; and she also became less extreme to mark what her master did amiss in leaving the print of his muddy shoes on the polished red brick floor; and she even occasionally substituted a bottle of *Petit vin de Bourgogne*, for the ordinary—and execrable *macon*. It was about this time (1654), that Madeleine Bèjart joined his *troupe* as *première du gazon*. She was then a young girl of nineteen; a tolerable actress and rather good-looking—in an apocryphal style; for she had not one regular feature, nor much to boast of in the way of complexion; but still she had that *je ne sais quoi*, which every one *knows very well* is composed of

*espégerie*—a pretty *tourneur*, and coquetry à discretion—or, perhaps, the reverse. But what chiefly interested Molière was her being an orphan, and having her little sister, Armande, then a child of seven years old, entirely dependent on her; and though, even at that time, her squabbles with La Grange, the rival theatrical queen, were incessant, they were not yet, on account of Molière, who was not at that time sufficiently rich, or sufficiently celebrated, to enter into the designs of so worldly and ambitious a spirit as Madeleine Bèjart's. So she left him quietly to the then artless advances of her little sister, Armande, who loved him as children love, for the sweets love brings! How much more disinterested is the love of adults! for verily, they cannot love for the same reason!

For hours would this little creature sit upon Molière's knee, even while he wrote; and when, after numerous ineffectual efforts to make him listen to histories of dolls and sugar-plums, she would receive no other answer than a gentle pat on the cheek, and a "*c'est bien ma mignonne*, by-and-bye;" and then the pen would recommence its monotonous travels over the paper; Armande, relinquishing all attempts at conversation, in despair, would, with a sigh, bury her little face in Molière's bosom, and fall asleep—that blessed peroration of all childish disappointments!

Even the Hyperion curls of his best peruke, redolent of *Rose Ambrée*, were not sacred to her. Ink might be spilt on point-trimmed handkerchiefs, and manuscripts torn or destroyed; "*that child*," as La Forêt said, "was chartered," and never blamed. One memorable anecdote in particular was extant of her childish omnipotence. One day, that Molière returned home to dress, as he was to dine with Chapelle, he found Armande on his bed, where his gala clothes were laid out, at high romps with the cat; the latter on her back, with his best *point d'alençon* cravat in ribbons between her paws, and her companion applauding her achievement with peals of laughter? Molière, beside himself, was about to strike the cat, when Armande, seizing his arm, burst into tears, and exclaimed:—

"*Non, Non, petit Mari*—It was not *Mimie*—it was Armande!"

"Then, Armande is a very naughty girl," said Molière, turning from her.

"No, no, kiss me and forget it," but Molière turned his back on her and leaned on the mantel-piece.

When Armande (then between eight

and nine) drew herself up with the air of a tragedy queen, and walking out of the room said:—

"You shall remember calling me a naughty girl, Sir, for I will never see you again."

Half an hour after, Molière was at Madeleine Bèjari's lodgings, on his knees, asking Armande's pardon: and as he sued with *pralines* in one hand and cherries in the other, he did not sue in vain.

Upon this episode of her master's life, La Forêt's commentary was a portentous shake of the head, and a muttered "Aye! cherish the viper, till it is warm enough, and then it will sting you."

It is a curious anomaly in our bark of life, that, however skilfully steered, well disciplined, or richly freighted, and however bravely it may weather the storms of fate, it never progresses an inch upon the stream of success, till it has received an impetus from some great personage's praise; while stranger still, *their* slightest breath serves to inflate its sails, and launch it on the full tide of prosperity. But, lest the demi-god, Genius! should lord it after too Olympian a fashion over the inferior clay of earth, it generally right royally keeps a jester, and it is the fool that attracts, and for that reason is *privileged*.

This is the manner of Molière's first launch. It was one evening, in the Autumn of 1656, that John Paul Gondi, then Cardinal de Retz, exhausted at once by his own irregularities, and his indefatigable zeal in preaching the purest morality to the people and thus, like many other great men (?) doing the work of vice, and receiving the homage of virtue, found himself, by the advice of his secretary, at Molière's Theatre; which, according to the latter, was *the* very best place in all Paris for exorcising the demon *ennui*. The play happened to be "*Le Dépit Amoureux*," and though his Eminence had experienced it so often, he was not a little delighted at Molière's new version of it. Therefore, telling his secretary when he went out to see for his chair, to bespeak four boxes for him, for the following evening, and to bring Molière round to his box then,—he was so profuse in his compliments, both with regard to the play and the acting, that, in his double capacity, Molière's modesty stood on the defensive, and accused the Cardinal of a too amiable facility of being pleased: saying that he was sure his Eminence's critical acumen must pronounce a very different verdict.

"By no means, my good Monsieur

Poquelin," said De Retz, between the parenthesis of his phthisicky cough, as he complimentarily quoted these lines from the play, "I say, with your *Gros-Réné*,

*'Pour moi, je ne sais point tant de philosophie.  
Ce que voyent mes yeux; franchement je m'y fie.'*

Indeed," added he, as he rose to depart, "your fame *had* already reached me; for I recollect one night at Mdlle. de L'Enclos's, about three months ago, Made-moiselle de Soudery telling me that your plays, your theatre, and your acting, were all equally perfect. *Then*, I confess I thought she exaggerated, but I now see she did not."

"On the contrary, your Eminence must be more than ever convinced what charming romances Mademoiselle de Scudery composes," bowed Molière.

"Nay, my good Monsieur Poquelin; of romances I don't pretend to be a judge, but I find what she told me is the *truth*; and you will not, I hope, dispute my *gospel* knowledge. Good night; to-morrow I shall be here again with some friends. I have secured four boxes, as I hope to find the theatre overflowing."

"Oh! by the bye," added he, turning back, "let me see you to-morrow morning. My levee hour is from eleven to twelve, and that you may be punctual, do me the favor of consulting *my* oracle, for we are all prone to regulate the whole world by our own time;" and so saying the great man left in the poor actor's hand his own magnificent diamond repeater.

If "anger is like the letting out of water," a gift which fortune sends, is generally like the letting in of the same element; for where *one* has fallen, others are sure to follow, so that Molière was soon inundated; the court and the city outvying each other in their largesses. Nevertheless, he continued to inhabit the house of Monsieur Robinet, in the Rue Papejean, only exchanging his small apartment *au quatrième* for a handsome suite of rooms on the *Rez de Chaussée*, or ground floor; and adding thereto a small but pleasant country-house at Auteuil, the same in which he has been first introduced to the reader.

Now, indeed, his circumstances became worthy of the attention of so shrewd and sensible a woman as Madeleine Bèjart, than whom few were wiser in their generation; for she was deeply imbued with the world's first great truth of all ages, which teaches that human beings, in *themselves*, are nothing; but

like Chessmen, whether of pure gold, ivory, colored bone, or common clay, derive their sole value from their *position*, and the victorious moves they make on the checkered board of life; and Molière being *now* a *personnage*—never did Madame de Maintenon, at a later period, try harder to become sole proprietor of the antiquated splendors of Louis Quatorze, than did Madeleine Bèjart, at this juncture, to share the rising splendors of Molière. With this difference, that Madeleine had no prejudices, and she by no means insisted upon the Church ratifying her title to the person, and personals, of the great comedian. Yet even on these liberal terms, he rejected the boon so freely offered him, and then it was, that her jealousy of La Grange became venomous and unbounded; not only because her personal attractions were greater, but because her acting being so superior, she naturally occupied more of the time, attention, and approbation of Molière, who, without being the least in love with La Grange, was glad to make her a safety valve of escape, from Madeleine, who, confounding cause with effect, put no bounds to her reproaches and her rage. But as lookers on generally see more of the game than the players, La Forêt began to fear, that to escape from temporary annoyance, her master, like many equally wise men, would foolishly invest his fate in an annuity of misery, by marrying one or the other; and this, she would have been deeply grieved at: for though far from even *then* having a very exalted opinion of Molière's talents; as those who witness the first struggles and failures of genius, can seldom bring themselves to believe in the duration of even its meridian sun of fame, but think that the early clouds and storms will still return; yet La Forêt had a sort of dogged savage love for the man, whose nature was so guileless and attaching, which made her wince under the idea of his having any domestic tyrant but herself; and, as she had done all the sulking, snapping, and contradiction of the household for years, she justly thought she was fully competent to continue the office of tormentor-general, without any adjuncts whatever, over, or under her. The deceitful calm of a week's cessation of hostilities between the Bèjart and La Grange, would sometimes alarm her, and make her think that her master had compromised himself with one or the other; but, then again, she would consider the matter, and, accelerating her motions in winding her worsted, or knitting her

stocking, console herself, as Mrs. Malaprop would have done a couple of centuries later, by reflecting that there would be no danger, since the "*reciprocity was all on one side!*" while at other times (as we have seen at the close of the last chapter), her fears would return; and she felt convinced that *if* La Béjart was *determined* to marry her master, she *would* marry him. Alas! poor blind animals that we are; fears, like fire-arms, do not always serve for our safeguard, but too often explode at a time, and in a direction, that we least expected.

While La Forêt was fearing, and Madeleine was hoping, Time flew, dropping from his wing into the heart of Molière much greater fears, and much wilder hopes. Armande, from a young child, had become a young girl; nothing could have been more gradual, and natural, than this transition, yet nothing more sudden than the electric shock by which Molière first received intelligence of it. Although perceiving how rapidly the child grew, for the last two years, he had ceased to kiss, and to fondle her, instead of which, he gave her lessons in elocution and in acting, and felt a sort of paternal pride in his pupil; nay, it was a twofold pride, for, as with much talent, and exquisite tact, she embodied his conceptions, he felt that *she* also was his creation, and for the six months she had now been on the stage, the plaudits her daily increasing popularity received, excited strange tumults in his bosom; for, while he felt a sort of exulting pride at them, they occasioned a reaction of doubt and disappointment that he could not explain to himself, and which indeed assumed no tangible form till the envy of Madeleine at her sister's brilliant success, burst forth in all the malignity of that vile passion, and made her exercise towards the latter, all those subtle and implacable acts of tormenting, of which female malice possesses the masonic secret, and all the tyrannical despotism which relations have the power of resorting to, when death, or chance, delegates to them a spurious parental authority.

It was one morning after Armande had achieved a more than usually brilliant histrionic triumph, that Madeleine had made a scene, in which she had not spared a single opprobrious epithet in her voluminous vocabulary, on her more youthful, more attractive, and, worse than all, more successful sister, telling her that *no* girl of her age, who had any sense of propriety, could act with

such *aplomb* (for Satan is never tired of reproving sin, in this world). And this harangue, which took place in Armande's theatrical dressing-room, she perorated by tearing the latter's flagitiously becoming night's-before costume to ribbons, and strewing it over the field of battle; after which, she departed with a terrific slam of the door, leaving Armande bathed in tears, not, it must be confessed, so much at her sister's displeasure as over the manes of her demolished finery. Scarcely had the enemy retreated, before a knock came to the door.

"Come in," sobbed Armande, only too glad to have a witness to her distress. It was Molière; but instead of taking a chair near her, he stood behind one, at the furthest possible distance from her, and leaning over it, he said, in a tremulous voice, as he looked at her with a most tender compassion:—

"Armande! my child; I have seen your sister, and—and—perhaps she is right. I think you are too young, too—too—inexperienced for the stage."

"What! then," said Armande, with a sort of proud defiance, that but ill disguised her anguish and despair, "are *you*, also, against me? do *you*, too, think that, instead of improving, I am losing my art?"

"Just heaven! no, quite the contrary!" interrupted Molière; "but the stage is a fearful and a perilous career for a young girl, and there is—most unquestionably there is—something polluting, something desecrating, in being exposed to the full gaze of every profligate, and insulted with the coarse license of their applause!"

And as he spoke, Molière clenched his hands as convulsively as if he had been crushing their plaudits in their throats, and then opened them, each finger trembling as violently as if it had committed a separate and special murder.

Armande dried her tears, and stared at him, first, with unaffected surprise, and then, bursting into an affected laugh, she crossed her small white hands, with the same inimitable grace that she did everything, and said, "Surely you are jesting, sir?"

"Oh! no, Armande, it is *no* jest; it is a truth, a sad truth, that the stage is the last place where a young girl, gifted as *you* are, if she has a pure and noble mind, should appear."

"Ah! indeed; then should she starve, or eat the bread of charity?"

"Charity! Oh Armande, Armande! Have I deserved this?"

"Sugar it as you will, it is *still* the bread of charity, if I do not work to earn it for myself. Madeleine has told me so too often for me to forget it; she says that but for *you*, I must have perished long ago, and that *you* only befriended me to please *her*."

"Madeleine is mistaken."

"Then *why* did you befriend me? for I should like to know, that *she* may not always take the credit of it."

"Not certainly that you might become an actress," said Molière huskily, as he plunged his right hand into his bosom, and walked to and fro.

"Then why did you take such pains to teach me to act?"

"Because I'm a fool!"

"Nay," said Armande archly, "as it is the *first* time I have heard that accusation, I certainly cannot believe it, till it is better authenticated."

"You may—you must believe it—for I shall act with you no more; *I*, at all events, will not be guilty of encouraging you in your destruction!" And he paced the room with increased velocity.

"Then, *Monsieur*," rejoined Armande, making him a low courtesy, I must only act without you, and I shall not be the first *beau talent* which has struggled to celebrity unassisted by its *best friends*!"

There was a tone of irony in her last words, which stung Molière to the quick; but here their conversation was interrupted. He was, however, as good as his word; for from that day, he ceased to act with her, and thought himself a paragon of wisdom for so doing, which could not have been the case, for wisdom is said to make people happy—and decidedly Molière was, from that, out, wretched in the extreme, at seeing her act with others; but still, he champ'd his misery and his perseverance together; for he did not swerve from his resolution. And as he did all he could to avoid Armande (for like Fabius Maximus, doubting his own resources, he thought the best way of coming off victorious with a powerful enemy, was by shunning them) therefore the preposterous idea never occurred to him that he was in love with her! And as we have before said, when at last he was made acquainted with the fact, it was a perfect electric shock to him. Here is the way it came about; he was calling one morning at Madeleine's lodgings upon a matter of business, at an hour when he knew, or thought, her younger sister would be at the theatre; it so happened,

however, that they were *both* out; but the servant said, that Mademoiselle Bèjart would not be long before she was back, if he would walk in, and sit down. He did so, and seeing the harpsichon open, at which he had so often heard Armande play and sing, he seated himself before it, and began with one finger, trying to make out the air of a romance, then much in vogue, which she was in the habit of singing, called—

"LA VIOLETTE DES BOIS."

He had been for about half an hour, heating the woods (at least as much of them as had been taken to make the hammers of the harpsichon), and uprooting the poor violet, with the sharpest, and most spade-like sounds, accompanying every false note he played with a "tut! tut! no—that's not it!" when presently he heard a silvery laugh behind him, and a well-known sweet voice, saying—

"No, most certainly, *that's* not it!" and the next moment, a small, warm, satiny hand was laid on his, to conduct it over the right keys, while a cluster of soft ambrosial brown curls fell like a shower of Cupids on his cheek, as their owner bent over him; it was Armande! had he been stung by an adder, he could not have withdrawn his hand more quickly, as he uttered a faint exclamation, and fell back in his chair.

"Heavens! you are ill! you are in a high fever!" cried Armande, now feeling his pulse, which certainly galloped at fever speed, under the pressure of her touch.

"Yes—no—that is—I mean—I believe I have a fever of some sort," said Molière, rising and walking to the mantel-piece, in order to escape from the scrutiny of her eyes.

"How very imprudent of you to go out then; I will send for Doctor Rohault directly," said she, looking really anxious and distressed, as she had her hand on the handle of the door, in order to leave the room, and send for the Doctor.

"No, no," cried Molière, catching her dress, "I'm not ill, indeed I am not, but should *you* be sorry if I was, Armande?"

"Should I be sorry? What a question! To be sure I should be sorry, what would all Paris do?"

"Ah!" sighed her interrogator, "always in the fashion, Armande! you would only then be sorry for me, because you *think* all Paris would be so?"

"Not at all in the fashion; for I'm sure it's not at all the fashion for women to care for their husbands, and you know

you are *mon petit Mari*?" said the young girl, coaxingly laying her hand upon his shoulder.

"Don't, Armande," said he, retreating back a few paces, with a sort of shudder.

"Don't what? I am very unfortunate! you seem *always* angry with me *now*; surely, though it was so wrong *all of a sudden* for me to be an actress (the only thing I *can* be) it cannot be wrong for me to call you *petit Mari*, for have not I done so all my life?"

"Alas! yes, but you are too old, and I am *much* too old now for you to do so any longer; it becomes an *inconvenance*—a—bitter bad jest, Armande."

"There is no use in denying it, decidedly you *must* be ill, for you turn white, and red, and then livid again, all in a moment! so I *will* send for Rohault."

"On no account;" said Molière, seizing his large broad-leafed feather-trimmed hat, and slouching it as much as possible over his eyes. "I have urgent business now; tell your sister I shall return another day," and the next moment, he had closed the door after him, and was rushing down the stairs, leaving Armande convinced that he was either out of his senses, or in a fever; in which surmise she was doubly right, for his malady partook of both symptoms, as he was in love, and had for the first time made the discovery. He hurried along the streets, jostling and jostled, his mind a perfect chaos, from which, however, Armande rose like a beautiful creation: and then for a moment he thought, perhaps she *would* marry him; but it was only for a moment; though it was not Armande's rejection, nor even Armande's *ridicule*, that he dreaded; no; it was the world-wide sneer that ever pursues an apostate; the contemptuous *pity* with which the disciples of a deserted faith eye bid farewell to the convert of a new creed. "O I see it, I feel it all beforehand," writhed he, in his mental soliloquy. "I, Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, the High Priest of Celibacy! the great Blasphemer of Marriage! calling its solemn mystery, Love doing Penance! I, the Aristophanes of husbands! whom *my* 'clouds' of ridicule have compassed, as those of the caustic Athenian did Socrates: I, who have outstripped *thee*, François Rabelais, in my jibes against conjugalities, *now* to read my recantation, and become a target in the courts of Hymen, for every fool to pick up *my* spent arrows, and aim them back at me; nay, to have the *very* sex at whose shrine my liberty is immolated, be loudest in their declamations. A

Paris edition of the *Ecclesiastusæ*. No. no. Verily, my good friends, I *cannot* oblige you. Fool! Ass! Idiot!" exclaimed he aloud, still hurrying on, with his eyes bent on the ground. Just as he passed Ninon de L'Enclos's house, in the Rue des Tournelles—

"*Ah ça, Mon cher Poquelin*," cried the Duc de La Rochefoucault, who was about to knock at Ninon's door, placing both his hands upon Molière's shoulders: "Take care what you are about: for though I have not the least doubt that *nothing* can be more appropriate, for every nine men out of ten, than the names you are so liberally bestowing, yet, in thus publicly performing the rites, without the *ceremony* of a christening, you may chance to infringe upon the prerogative, and consequently incur the displeasure of our good friend, the Bishop of *Mcaux*;\* besides, there is an innate modesty in all civilized society, which causes its members to be greatly shocked at the sight of Truth in the unadorned state in which she leaves her well; they don't like it; and they invariably evince their displeasure by turning their backs on her as much as possible. Witness the scurvy reception my maxims have had. There is not a single vice or absurdity that I have analyzed, but what there has been some fool to start up, and resent it as a personality! Yet the best of the joke is, that though *each* is so eager to claim, and proclaim, their own individual property, *all* are agreed to hoot me, as if I *François de la Rochefoucault* were the *millionaire* monopolizer of all their separate peccadillos. Ah! my dear Molière, you are the knowing hand. You don't attack *all* mankind indiscriminately; you have selected the four most unpopular genus—husbands, hypocrites, misers, and *medicos*; and as you are not very likely to become the three first, and keep clear of the Pharmacopœia, you bring down your game from behind a hedge. By-the-by, considering you have deserted us for many months, I never saw '*Le Dépit Amoureux*' better cast than it was last night. The little Bèjart was charming in *Lucille*. Don't you think so?"

"I don't admire her acting," said Molière, curtly, but with perfect truth, though not *exactly* in the *sense* his auditor took it.

"Then, upon my word, you must be most unhappily difficult to please."

"Perhaps so," said Molière.

"And yet," resumed the Duc, "I have

\* Bossuet.

heard others, too, say that they think she has fallen off; especially, that she is not so happy in her inimitable by-play as she used to be, when she acted with you."

"Ay! Indeed!" said Molière, an involuntary, but transient gleam of joy fitting across his face.

"Why, really, my dear Poquelin, an ill-natured person—which I am not—would think you were pleased at poor little Armande's retrograding."

"Perhaps," again smiled Molière; "for no one should be better aware than the Duc de la Rochefoucault, that *there is always something in the misfortunes even of our best friends, which is not displeasing to us.*"

"Ha! ha! ha! *Et tu quoque Brute!*" laughed the Duke, again putting both his hands on Molière's shoulders, and then shaking him, as he added, giving one loud knock on the ponderous doors of Made-moiselle de L'Enclos's *Hôtel*, "Are you coming in?" to which the other, answering in the negative, they exchanged *adieux* and separated; Molière walking on abstractedly, till he found himself at the other end of Paris, half way to Auteuil, still pondering his own thoughts, or rather his *one* thought of Armande, of which Memory was the lever, and Hope the fulcrum, till roused by the rapidly falling leaves, which strewed the road on either side, and kept dancing before, and eddying round him, for it was the latter end of October.

"Ah," said he aloud, as he walked on, his eyes bent on the ground, as he cleared himself a passage, by putting the crisp and yellow leaves away on either side, with his stick. "Nature never lacks apt illustrations whereby to demonstrate to us the perishable tenure of all things fresh and fair: had not these leaves been so green, they would not be so withered now; and of all birds, *surely* the lark is the silliest; for *it* soars the highest into the heavens to quaff golden nectar from the sun, and by building in the most tufted trees, woos its own martyrdom of winter clouds and bare branches. Better far, to be the lone martlet on the house top, whose few tame negative joys are not sufficiently costly, to be paid by future suffering.

"Armande *my wife?* tush! madness—folly! at best. Mine, and *not* mine; for all who see her, admire her; and oh, worse still, *she likes* being admired, an execrable fault. Fancy the clustering grapes of one's own vine losing their purple bloom beneath the coarse gaze of every boor that praised their luxuriant

beauty. Who would have a vine were such the case? Not I, for one. Then, as I said before, to have all my own poisoned arrows come whizzing back to me, till I became a public laughing-stock, a perfect Marital St, Sebastian! No, no, the very idea is preposterous; for though the sugar Love infuses into our cup of life is the purest, the sweetest, and the most refined of all, but once tested by the subtle and searching chemistry of Hymen, there is plenty of acid to be discovered in it. Come then, courage, prudence, and self-control, ye are the only alternatives within my reach." The result of these resolutions was, that Molière avoided Armande more than ever. Was he in consequence happier, or wiser? Time will tell.

It was about six weeks after the above soliloquy that he was sitting by his own fire-side, in the Rue Papejean, finishing "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*," when he was startled by a loud ring at the door of his ante-room; and as he recollected a sort of half engagement he had made with La Fontaine, to go and pass the day with him, at Madame de la Sablière's; thinking it was "*le bonhomme*" now come for him, he laid down his pen, and opening a drawer of the library table at which he was writing, threw his paper into it, and locked it. He had scarcely done so, ere the ring was repeated more violently than before, whereat he remembered that he had sent Josselin of a message, and that La Forêt had announced to him about a quarter of an hour before, that she was going only as far as the laundress's, and would be back immediately; but as in all ages, and in all countries, whenever servants, male or female, are *only going to the laundress's, and will be back immediately*, some unforeseen circumstances are sure to detain them at least an hour; Molière had the good sense to decide upon opening the door himself; but had a schrapnel forced its way through, he could have scarcely been more astounded than he was at the appearance of Armande, who rushed in, bathed in tears, and flinging herself on her knees before him, exclaimed, between several hysterical sobs—

"Save me! Oh do save me from Madeleine, or I shall throw myself into the Seine, for I can bear it no longer."

"But how can I save you, my child?" asked he, raising her, and trying to place her in a chair, but instead of seconding his endeavors, her head leant forward, and she fell sobbing on his shoulder; it was now *his* turn to want support; his

feet appeared to be giving way from under him, and with his burden he tottered back a few paces, and sank upon a sofa; if he had a defined wish at that moment, and it could have been riveted into a fruition, it would have been to have sat *forever silently there*, with Armande's head leaning on his shoulder, but he was too happy not to feel that he was doing wrong, or at least to have a vague notion that he *ought* to do something to put an end to his happiness, so he spoke, to break the spell, and said—

"But how *can* I save you from her, my child?"

"By getting me an engagement in the Provinces; anything, no matter what!" Molière turned very pale; here was an evil he had never anticipated; for although he voluntarily excluded himself from her presence, he never contemplated the possibility of her being at a *real* and *positive* distance from him! and now, as the electric plummet of a new torture suddenly dived into the soundings of his heart, he felt that in misery's "lowest depths," there was "a deeper still!"

"Impossible! my child," he at length faltered out, "so young! so inexperienced! unfriended and alone! in that basest of Pandemoniums, a Provincial Theatre! never!"

"Then," said Armande, passionately lifting up her face, untying her hat, and flinging it from her, "let me stay here, for I will *not* return to Madeleine."

"Stay here!" exclaimed Molière, trembling violently. "More impossible still! that is if you—if I—I mean unless you were my wife, and—and—you would not marry me, would you, Armande?" added he, lowering his voice to an almost inaudible whisper, and taking her hand.

"And why not?" replied Armande, a sudden gleam of joy darting through her tears; for although, to do her justice, *she* had never had any designs upon Molière—being by far too impulsive a character to be artful—yet, with all her woman's quickness, solving at once a whole gnarl of problems, she at a glance took in (nay she even exaggerated) all the advantages of position she would derive from becoming Molière's wife; for was *he* not the idol both of the Court and the Town, and in marrying him would she not also wed his celebrity; and participate by "right divine" (or at least human) in the offerings laid upon his shrine; and as each individual's world is *the* circle, be it narrow or wide, in which *they* "live, move, and have their being," Molière being the sun of *her* social system, *she* would at least

reflect in lunar rays his splendor? but more, and most of all, *she then* might queen it over Madeleine! nay, the one signal victory of carrying off Molière from her was, without any other advantage, quite sufficient to cause her almost a delirium of joy; and if she had never thought of doing so before, it was because, from the fact of her knowing that her sister had laid a ten years' siege to him, custom had in her mind hedged him round with a sort of spurious fraternity, the boundaries of which she never dreamt of overstepping; but now that he himself had made a slight opening in this barrier—and she had at a single glance taken in the brilliant vista that lay beyond it, Coquetry slept on its post—and thus surprised, she had with unaffected delight, replied, "And why not?"

"Oh, Armande! dear Armande!" exclaimed the too happy Molière, now seizing both her hands, as he knelt before her; while with one deep, adoring look, he anchored that rich argosy—his soul—freighted with life-long hopes, in her young eyes. "Do you, then, love me enough to marry me?—me!—old enough to be your father?"

"Indeed I do love you well enough to marry you twice over, were you old enough to be my grandfather!"

Poor Molière! *he heard the words*, and neither knew, nor heeded, the source from whence they sprang; and it would have availed him little if he had—for there are moral as well as physical poisons, so subtle as to have no test, and which are only made manifest by their deadly effects. The next moment after those words were uttered, he had folded Armande convulsively in his arms, and beyond the small circle that those arms bound, there *was* no world for him; as, in those few seconds, the essence of a whole life had been distilled into one costly drop of happiness! While he is quaffing it we will take the opportunity of describing this woman—who exercised so omnipotent an influence over Molière—and we will do it in his own words: "Her eyes were not large, but they were dark and full of fire, at once brilliant and earnest, and yet of the most touching expression that can be imagined; her mouth was rather large, but it seemed to have been purposely moulded so by the Graces, in order the better to display her most pearl-like teeth. She was not tall, but still so willowy and graceful, that the absence of height was not perceptible. She rather affected a degree of nonchalance in her carriage and manner of speaking,



but, with all, there was an irresistible, because undefinable charm about her, that insinuated itself into every heart. As for her intellect, it was the most subtle and delicate possible; and if she was the most capricious person in the whole world, and what would have been past bearing in anybody else; she no doubt *was* so, to show people how *everything*, even the worst faults became *her*, and to convince them, there was nothing that they could not, and would not, bear from her. Her voice," to borrow the words of another contemporary, "was so imploringly touching, that when she acted, any one would have been persuaded that the feeling was really in her *heart*, which was only in her words; and even when she had ceased speaking, and her immediate rôle was ended, there was in her countenance such mobility, power, and eloquence of expression, that her bye-play became a wondrous antithesis of silent declamation."

"Armande, mine! my own!" said Molière, as soon as he could speak. "Did my ears deceive me, or did I hear aright, that you would marry me, even were I old enough to be your grandfather?"

"Your ears did *not* deceive you, neither do I, *petit mari*," replied the young girl, patting his cheek, "so the sooner we are married the better."

These words grated unpleasantly on the ear of the bridegroom elect, for two reasons; first, because there was an off-hand business-like barter and exchange tone about them, that wounded his love; and next, because there was an unfeminine and soulless boldness in them that hurt his self-love.

"Ah!" sighed he, "it is not *me*, Jean Baptiste, that she loves! it is Molière! the well off celebrity! that she is ready to sacrifice herself to! Oh! Armande! Armande!" groaned he aloud, "you do *not* love *me*; therefore I will not accept the sacrifice you are ready to make of your youth and your beauty, to such a one as I am; for *never* shall you have to reproach me, or worse still, never will I reproach myself for having, in a moment of selfishness, taken advantage of your position; no, no, *never*! A life-long regret is far better than even a momentary remorse." And he buried his face in the cushions of the sofa.

Armande in a moment perceived the mistake she had made; nor, indeed, was she wholly insensible to the depth, the fervor, and the ONENESS of his all-absorbing love for her; how should she be? for there is a magnetic power in *all* high,

pure, and noble natures, which raises for the time being, that inferior ones are within the sphere of their influence, even the *most* inferior, in some sort, to their own level. So that even Armande Bè-jart's heart, all *toilette* as it was, with its little conventional *sentiments du répertoire*, became infected with the strong feeling of the man, and touched by the deep devotion of his love till now in her turn, kneeling beside him, taking his passive hand, and pressing it within hers, as she leant her soft and glowing cheek against his, she said, in that low, sweet voice, all persuasion, and half tears, for which she was so renowned,—

"Jean! look at me!" She had never called him Jean before; and she knew in so naming him for the *first time!* she was becoming sponsor for her own success. "Dear Jean, don't let us begin, as most married people end, by a misunderstanding; don't think me forward and bold for saying the sooner we are married the better; but think *how kind* you have been (and you alone) to me all my life; and I was wild with joy! at the idea that I should be your wife! and then, that neither Madeleine, nor any one else, would have the power of tormenting me, and that I should have a right to love and cling to you."

"And would you love and cling to me, and me only, Armande?"

"Ah! *Méchant!* you doubt it?" was Armande's only reply, as she placed her little hand before his mouth, where it was soon filled with kisses. Molière then raised her; but, somehow or other, he mistook his knee for the sofa, and seated her on it; while she made a similar blunder with regard to his neck, which, no doubt, she took for the arm of the couch, as she put hers round it, as naturally as possible. Poor Molière! He had but a choice between two evils—either to reason with her upon their mutual folly, or to kiss her; and, as it is always far easier to do a foolish thing than even to say a wise one, he adopted the latter alternative; after which, drawing a long breath, that was something more than a sigh, he said, holding Armande at a little distance from him, and looking intently, yet wanderingly, into both her eyes, as if determined that, should the truth escape him in *one*, he would overtake it in the other, he said—

"And is not my pretty Armande afraid of being laughed at for marrying such an old fellow as I am?"

"*Par exemple!*" retorted Armande, archly, holding up her finger, and shak-

ing it at him; "there's a Jesuitical *poltron*! Who's the *Tartufe*,\* pray, now, sir? You are frightened at my youth, and want to scare me with your age! But it won't do! You are accustomed to make the world laugh, not at, but with you; and, if I am to be laughed at, I promise you, they shall not have all the laughter to themselves. For, since those may laugh that win, who will have a better right to laugh than I?"

"*Armande! Armande! tu me rends fou!*" cried Molière, again convulsively pressing her to his heart; and, indeed, he asserted little more than the exact truth; for he had now attained that acme of beatified delirium, wherein the heart overflows, and the determination of feeling to the brain subverts reason, and her whole court of consequences, and renders a man as malleable as wax in the hands of a woman, or *vice versa*, as the case may be. But Molière, though at that moment he would not have exchanged with any of the gods, was but mortal; and it is given to none of us to float for any length of time in the tepid, ambrosial, and intoxicating ether of the ideal, without falling into the cold, stagnant pool of reality beneath, and being disagreeably sobered by the plunge. Armande again began to urge their immediate marriage; and though she now did so with a tact, a delicacy, and yet an *abandon*, which, while they left her lover's affection nothing to wish, also gave it nothing to fear; still, it opened his eyes suddenly, and unpleasantly, to the full view of one of those inextricable dilemmas, which moral cowards are, from their pusillanimity, always barricading themselves with; the fact was that, in order to escape from the toils of Madeleine Bejart, Molière had for the last ten years been assuring her, that if any woman could induce him to test, by personal experience, that "*Invention Mirifique*," as Rabelais called marriage, it would be her; but that even she was not potent enough to tempt him to enter a state, which he had devoted all his wit, if not all his wisdom, to ridiculing. This particular phase of his fear of her sister, he did not of course communicate to Armande; but merely founded his objection to their immediate union, upon the general awe in which the latter stood of

\* *Tartufe* was written, and known to his whole *troupe*, for many years before Molière dared to publish and act it; and it was only by dint of Louis Quatorze—who was not yet *Maintenoned*—upholding him against a strong cabal, that it was at last acted.

Madeleine, in common with himself; and the frightful state of warfare into which her displeasure would plunge them; but, at the end of half an hour, all Molière's objections were exhausted, and his companion was too good a tactician not to let him expend them; and then gain her point by a compromise. So, in her turn, she urged that, without being his wife, she could neither return to seek his advice and support, nor endure her sister's despotism; but that, armed with the secret knowledge that he was her husband, and that, in the event of any catastrophe, she could openly claim his protection, and compel Madeleine to yield to his paramount authority, she should have courage to endure anything, and he then need not make their marriage public till it quite suited him to do so. All this was too congenial to Molière's love, and too flattering to his vanity, not to lull his better judgment into a deceitful repose, and silence his last faint remonstrances. Armande's arm was round his neck—Armande's eyes were diving through his, into his very soul—and Armande's gentle breath was on his cheek, driving back, with the strength of a tempest, all his resolutions, till the whole world, and even its "dread laugh," became as dust in the balance, weighed against her smile. And he was now as anxious as she was to rivet their compact indissolubly, but from a very different motive. Hers was to secure a position; his, to secure her. At length, he gave utterance to his thoughts:—

"Yes, Armande—dear Armande! my Armande! You shall return to your temporary tyrant, as my wife—my little wife! Oh! how happy that sounds! It circles round my heart, and makes it glow like a draught of sunshine!" And again he put back her clustering ringlets, with both his hands, and kissed her fair high forehead, as he added: "Yes, this very day—this very hour! We will go to the Pere Taschereau, the *Curé* of this parish. How fortunate! that La Forêt should be out!—and Josselin, too! So that no one will know that you have been here."

But he had scarcely ended his congratulations, before a loud ring pealed at the door.

"*Peste!*" cried Molière,—"*quick—your hat, gloves, and hood, and go into this closet—it's only the bonhomme, and I'll soon get rid of him.*"

"But if he sees me here," trembled Armande, "what a pretty history he will make of it."

"History!—hardly, my pretty coward—coming from him, every one would be sure to take it for a *fable*," rejoined Molière, as he pushed her into the closet and hastened to open the outer door. The visitor was, as he had surmised, La Fontaine, come by appointment to take him back to dinner. On opening the door, he discovered the former holding a piece of paper against the wall, and writing on it. "*Excusez, mon cher Jean*," said Molière, "but I am obliged to go out on very urgent business, but shall not be more than half-an-hour absent, if you will walk in and sit down."

"Ah! obliged to go out on urgent business!" repeated La Fontaine, evidently in a brown study, as he placed the pencil with which he had been writing against his chin, while, holding out his left hand to Molière, he began an elaborate apology for being obliged to go out and leave him!

"*Mais non, bonhomme*," said his host, laughing, and shaking him by both shoulders.

"It is I, Molière, who am obliged to go out, and leave you; for this is my house."

"Ah!—à la bonneheure!—that is better; then I can go in, and finish my fable before you return?"

"Yes, surely," said his companion, smiling, as they now walked into the *salon* together, and Molière placed the same chair for his guest that he himself had vacated on Armande's arrival, while La Fontaine lost no time, but elongating his feet under the table, and withdrawing the skirts of his coat from under him, next proceeded to lay his hat on the table, tuck the long ends of his laced cravat through a button-hole, and dip his pen into the ink, with a long drawn "Ah! *that's* something like; one's pen trots without spurs, now; how I hate writing with a pencil, it's like goading a jaded horse, *bon, c'est ça*," and he read aloud as he wrote.

"*J'ai vu beaucoup d'hymens; aucuns d'eux ne me tentent.*"

"*Apropos*," said Molière, who was leaning over his chair, the back of which faced the door of the closet in which Armande was concealed, and he therefore wished to get La Fontaine thoroughly occupied in his composition, before he released her; and he knew the best way to do that, would be to touch upon his domestic affairs, which would be sure to drive him at once for refuge, into the thickets of fiction.

"*Apropos, Mon cher Jean*; as I know

you went lately to Château Thierry to see her, I suppose there is no indiscretion in asking you how you found Madame La Fontaine?"

"Found her at church, so did not see her."

"Well, but surely she was not two whole days and nights at church; and that is the time you stayed at Château Thierry."

"Yes, true; but when I arrived, they told me my wife was *au salut*, and wanted to go for her; but I would not on any account let them disturb her, so I drove to Despréaux, who entertained me very hospitably for two days, and then I returned to Paris."

"Without going to see your wife again?"

"Yes, I forgot it; besides they were very busy at Despréaux gathering in the walnuts; and I am passionately fond of the perfume of walnut leaves, so that I really had not time."

Molière burst into an uncontrolled fit of laughter, which only served as a signal to La Fontaine, that he was at liberty to continue his fable: so the next moment his pen was leisurely pursuing its course over the paper, while he read aloud each line as he wrote it—

"*Ne peut trouver d'autre parti,  
Que de renvoyer son épouse.*"

"*Mais qu'est ce que tu nous chante là, mon cher Jean?*" cried Molière, under the peculiar circumstances not at all relishing the import conveyed by the jingling of the rhymes.

"Ah! it is my new fable of

"*LE MAL MARIE.*"

"Humph! it seems to me, you have not chosen a happy subject."

"Of course not, since '*Le Mal Marié*' must always be an unhappy subject; but my good Molière, do let me finish it, and pray don't interrupt me again; for recollect, that although you are Terence, I am only *Æsop*."

And the next moment La Fontaine was again engrossed with his fable, and Molière with his own thoughts, which were perhaps not equally fabulous, and certainly not half as agreeable; nevertheless, they were so all-absorbing, that he appeared to have taken root at the back of his friend's chair, till he was roused by a slight "Ahem!" from the closet, when turning round he beheld Armande first pointing to La Fontaine, and then to the opposite door, and intimating, by the most speaking pantomime, that they had better take that opportunity of making

their escape; as *Le Bonhomme* was now so completely in the clouds, that he would never perceive them.

"Well," said Molière aloud, and flipping the feathers round his hat with some little parade, so as to ascertain that fact beyond a doubt: "I am going now."

La Fontaine held up his hand, as much as to say, "Go; but don't talk." Whereat Molière beckoned Armande from the closet; and, placing her in advance of him, passed like one person before the poet; but so preoccupied was he, that they might have been a troop of cavalry, and he would neither have seen nor heard them.

Once in the street, the lovers hurried silently on, till they came to the river, when a *Débardeur*\* hailed them, in that picturesque costume now only seen at *bal masqués*, and soon rowed them across to the *Cure's* House; they found him at home, and the result was, that when Armande, as has been related in the first chapter, came to Auteuil, on the 15th of January, with a bouquet for Molière's fête, she had then, unknown to the whole world—including La Forêt, and Madeleine—been three months

HIS WIFE!

### CHAPTER III.

THE three months that Armande and Molière had been married, had been fertile in acute torture to him, and wearisome disappointments to her; if before, he had experienced the throes of a latent, undefined, and unauthorized jealousy at seeing one whom he would have had looked upon by none but himself and Heaven, subjected nightly to the admiring, or critical gaze of all, what he suffered, now that he felt that this "cynosure of wondering eyes," was in reality his exclusive property, and yet that he alone, of all that admiring crowd was debarred all access to her, became positively the torments of the damned; in vain his jealousy, and his love, continually urged her to retire from the stage; she on her side objected, that if she gave up her profession, her sister not

\* The *Débardeurs*, now so plentiful in the continental carnivals, are the exact costumes worn by the lightermen of the *Seine* in the time of Louis Quatorze. This costume was revived by Déjazet for a *bal masqué*, and has been the rage ever since.

being aware of her marriage, might naturally wonder from whence she derived her means of subsistence, and as to this, Molière could not offer any negation; he was perforce compelled to writhe in silence. Armande on her side, was more than disappointed at reaping none of the immunities, and *éclat* of her new position, and wearied her husband with importunities to declare their marriage, and publicly brave the fury and the vengeance of Madeleine. But it was not *only* Madeleine that Molière shrank from, it was from giving the world, in his own person, the spectacle of what he had most ridiculed—A JEALOUS HUSBAND—for such he felt he *was*; and even were the jealousy left out, had he not made *Mari, et Plastron* (husband and butt), the great synonyme of the day? Oh! even-handed justice! verily thou dost ever, sooner or later, stamp our crude theories into the current coin of our lives, and time tests by *facts*, the amount of alloy we have infused into them.

On the morning of the 15th of January, when the *Lapin*, in which Armande had arrived from Paris, stopped before the garden gate of *La Columbière* (for so was Molière's house at Auteuil called), it was with a beating heart that he descended to meet his young wife, for all their meetings had still the charm of mystery. But Molière's heart would have palpitated still more, had he known the desperate resolutions with which his *gentle* bride had come; for she was resolved not to leave the house that day without publicly making known their marriage; whereas her husband was in a fool's paradise, thinking with his own Tartufe, that marriage, like any other sin, only became a crime when known.

Never had Armande taken more pains with her dress, and never had the trouble better repaid her; for it was impossible for any one to look more bewitching than she did, on this occasion.

Poor La Vallière had given place to the brilliant and heartless Montespan, whose autocratic reign over the heart of Louis Quatorze had only then secretly commenced, and who consequently was at the zenith of her power. The latter had just introduced a new captivation in dress, which was a trimming of Grebe, dyed rose color, and called at the time *Aile d'Armour*, or Cupid's wing, the silvery tint of the feathers being perfectly visible through the blush color, sanded it one of the softest, and yet most brilliant things, that can be imagined. On the morning in question, Armande wore

a dove-colored velvet dress, and *juste-au-corps* (what in modern parlance we should call a polka), trimmed with this Cupid's wing, white doe-skin gauntlets, trimmed with Valenciennes lace, embroidered round the gauntlet, and at the back seams of the glove, with little wreaths of myrtle and roses, in green, and gold, and pink silks; her habit-shirt, which was also of the finest Valenciennes, was buttoned with opal studs, set round with small brilliants, and her *juste-au-corps*, frogged with *Brandenbourges*, and buttoned with opals like the habit-shirt; round her throat she wore a pink cashmere cravat, the long ends trimmed with silver lace, and drawn through one of the loops of her *juste-au-corps*. Her luxuriant brown hair fell in rich ringlets à la *Ninon*, as it was then worn on either side of her neck, and was surmounted by a broad-leaved, dove-colored velvet Montpensier hat, with a delicate pink ostrich-feather round the crown, curled over and drooping on the left side, and fastened with an opal and brilliant loop and button on the other side. Every *petite maitresse* at that time exhaled a most exquisite perfume, composed of heliotrope, attar of rose, violet, and maréchal, and called *Soupirs du Roi*. And, indeed, if Louis Quatorze's sighs were only half as fragrant, independent of his kingship, it cannot be a matter of surprise that they should have been irresistible.

"Oh! Monsieur," said Armande, gracefully advancing to meet Molière as he entered the room, presenting him a magnificent bouquet, while Josselin arranged the fire, and the chairs, "allow me the privilege of expressing to you the good wishes of the whole *troupe* on this auspicious day."

"*Mon Enfant*, you and they are too kind," said Molière, taking the flowers and burying the lower part of his face in them, as he anxiously looked over them, to watch Josselin's exit, which had no sooner taken place, than, throwing the flowers on the table, he flung himself at Armande's feet, which he began kissing.

"And me, what have I done that I am not to be kissed?" pouted Armande.

"Ah! what have you done, indeed?" echoed Molière, rising and folding her in his arms, "to go and make yourself so beautiful; you have no consideration, no feeling, no pity, for poor me, compared to whom Tantalus suffered from repletion."

"Nay, *Petit Mari*," rejoined Madame Molière, seating herself on the sofa; but first, like every French woman, evincing

a tender care for her dress, by duly drawing it out, and then taking off her gloves, as she continued, and laying them smoothly on the arm of the sofa, with their gauntlet cuffs outside, "your miseries—if you have any?—more resemble those of your own *Avare* than poor Tantalus; his sufferings were compulsory, yours are voluntary. I confess that all my pity is for *him*, as he and I are in the same *galère*. Every day Madeleine becomes more insupportable, and it really is well worth while to have been three months a married woman—nay, the wife of *Molière*, *Le grand Monarque du Théâtre*—to be treated, and ill-treated, like a child of seven years old, by a cross sister. Confess, that this Gall-moon—for I cannot call it a Honey-moon—lasts rather too long for mortal patience."

"But, dear Armande,"—

"Don't interrupt me," proceeded Armande, nonchalantly arranging, as she spoke, the lace of her habit-shirt and cuffs. "If I was so dear, you would not place me in such a false and difficult position. If I was dear, you would not, you *could* not, refuse my only request. If I was dear, you would show the whole world you thought me so, by letting them know that I was your wife."

"Ah! Armande! cruel Armande! what sharp words you use; in another week Madeleine will be gone to Bourdeaux, and then I will write, and announce our marriage. Surely another week is not much?"

"Oh no, nothing is much; when everything is nothing, this perhaps is not much either; and, indeed, I don't think it is, considering that the writer has so long graduated in the College of Cytheria," and as she spoke, she drew a letter from her pocket, out of which she took a magnificent diamond solitaire, and then read out a passionate declaration of love to herself.

"Hell! and fury!" cried Molière, now livid, and making a snatch at the letter, which Armande held out of his reach at arms length behind her back. "Who is the wretch who has dared to make you such propositions?"

"Ha! ha! ha! *Cher petit Mari*, moderate your indignation, for remember the wretch is not aware that he is injuring *Molière* and insulting his wife! No, no, he merely considers that he is making advantageous proposals to Armande Bejart, the orphan and the actress."

"Oh, true! true!" groaned Molière, now leaning both his elbows on the table, and burying his face in his hands.

"Besides," resumed Armande, "men make vice the fashion, yet each man thinks that, in his own person, he is to be sacred from its infiction, though chartered for its commission,—a monstrous fallacy! which every day disproves."

"Armande," said Moliere, with forced calmness, convulsively clenching his hands the while, "tell me who that letter is from?"

"What is the use of doing so, even were I known to be your wife? You would only be laughed at were you to resent it. Vengeance is out of the question, therefore honor is not in keeping. Who blames his Majesty? while every one laughed at Monsieur de Montespan because he did not like his honors at first. Who arraigns the great Condé, or pities his wife? and as for the poor Duchess de Grammont, she is positively, with all her beauty, unpopular and disliked. Why? I never could conceive, unless it is that being ill-used and irreproachable, is too great a dose of perfection for the world to swallow. Even Madame de Grignon, lovely as she is, makes no figure in the world—*affublée par sa vertu atroce!*—as Monsieur de la Sabliere says, always adding that the said virtue would do well to confine itself to Madame Scarron's buff mittens; and even your friend, La Fontaine, says, "*L'honnête homme trompe s'éloigne et ne dit mot.*"

"Heavens! Armande, with what levity you speak upon so serious a subject."

"Que voulez vous?" shrugged Armande; "I do none of these things: like poor Monsieur de la Rochefoucault in his maxims, I only point out other people's doings; and it is not fair to visit their misdeeds upon me, as if they were my own especial sins."

"Armande," said Moliere, who was now pacing the room, his eyes bent on the ground, and his right elbow supported by his left hand, while his chin was between the fingers of his right, as he suddenly stopped opposite his wife,— "Tell me who that letter is from, and I solemnly promise you, I will not be such a fool, such a madman, in short, such a *malotru*," concluded he, with a bitter laugh, "as to take any notice of it."

"Well, then," said Armande, with affected nonchalance, but not a little pride at her conquest, as she handed him the letter, "it is from *Le Marquis de la Fare—the beau la Fare*, as they call him."

"What, Madame de la Sabliere's la Fare?"

"Not particularly hers, more than *La Champmésles* the La Granges, or any one

elses," rejoined Armande with sublime indifference, as she carelessly rolled one of her silken ringlets round her fingers.

"The villain!" uttered Moliere.

"The man," corrected Armande, "for are you not all more or less the same?"

"Oh! Armande, it is shocking to hear a woman make so light of what should be so sacred."

"Nay, be just, and you will own that it is not *our* sex, but *yours*, who think lightly on these subjects, and make light of things the most sacred; breaking hearts, and destroying reputations, with as little, indeed with less, remorse, than I should destroy these poor flowers," said Armande, taking the bouquet off the table and scattering the leaves of a beautiful rose.

"*C'est pourtant vrai*," sighed Moliere, as he seated himself on the sofa beside her, and passed his arm round her waist; "but not *all*, we are not *all* monsters, Armande."

"No, no, of course," laughed Armande, kissing his forehead, and patting his cheek; "he is all perfection, isn't he?"

"No—he is not; but I'll tell you what he is," said he, pointing to some small green insects that were meandering along a leaf of the bouquet that Armande held in her hand. "I am one of these, in another sphere and on a larger scale; look well at them, they are poor ugly little things, condemned to an humble, hidden, and laborious existence, surrounded by enemies and harassing cares, to provide the food which their very toil deprives them of appetite to eat, and which toil gradually spins the winding-sheet in which they are wrapped; *apparently* dead for ever. But wait but a little while; and from this sear cloth will emerge, clad in the richest and most gorgeous colors, and furnished with brilliant wings, which enables them to soar high above the earth upon which they formerly grovelled; and instead of coarse and scanty food, they revel in the ambrosial honey of flowers, and quaff the pure nectar of the ambient air; but, oh! better still, they *then* find in those higher and brighter regions another being, beautiful as day, whom they love, and who loves them, and their love only ends with their existence. Shall I explain the allegory? For a long time I toiled in poverty to earn the daily bread which I was too exhausted to eat when earned; and, pining under privation and neglect, my race seemed run, till a great man's breath came like a genial summer air,

and burst the icy bonds of poverty, which had bound me in a living sepulchre. Then it was I soared on Reputation's brilliant wings into the higher regions of the perfumed atmosphere of luxury! and now that I have met with a being more beautiful than the day! whom I love! ah! how dearly! and who says she loves me; oh! Armande, let our loves but end with our existence!"

"*Eh bien.* I don't desire better," said Armande, "but do you call it love to be ashamed of what you love?"

"Ashamed! Oh! Armande!"

"Well, it looks very like shame, when one takes every pains to conceal from the world a love, which being perfectly orthodox, would give the world no pretext for censure."

"It is for your sake, Armande, to save you from your sister's fury, that I have concealed our marriage," stammered Moliere, for he knew he was not uttering the truth, and this consciousness—notwithstanding the world-old axiom, that all frauds exercised by man towards woman are fair; such being the right of might—blunted his usual aptitude of expression, and analytic lucidity.

"Nay, if that be all," rejoined Armande, "leave me to fight my own battles, and don't trouble yourself about the result."

But it was *not* all, and Moliere knew it; first he felt how his want of moral courage had compromised him with Madeleine, and what good right she would have to upbraid him with the falsehood and duplicity he had been guilty of towards her, and reproaches are always insupportable in proportion to their justice; and last and greatest of all, was his sense of ridicule, and his fear of danger; he was in the predicament of that Scythian king, who having been made umpire upon what he conceived to be an imaginary case, had passed on it the most rigorous sentence of the penal law, and was then suddenly informed that he had signed his own death-warrant. After all that he (Moliere) had said and written to unhallow marriage and make husbands ridiculous,—he now felt assured he was about to expiate in his own person, all the random profanities he had aimed at the conjugal state generally. Armande had him at bay; yet he was about to make a last effort at a reprieve, when another vehicle stopped at the garden gate, and a loud peal at the bell announced a visitor. Both Moliere and Armande sprang to their feet, and were peering through, without, however, ap-

proaching the window, and the next moment, Pierrot had opened the gate and assisted Madeleine to alight from the *Lapin*\* or *Coucou* in which she had arrived from Paris.

"Heavens! Madeleine!" exclaimed Moliere; "and no doubt that ass Pierrot is telling her you are here!"

"Well!" said Armande, calmly crossing her arms, "and am I not here?"

"Ye—ye—yes, no doubt—certainly—of course; but—but for mercy's sake! don't let her find you here. This way, dear Armande."

And he opened the dining-room door, and then another door, beyond which lay the kitchen, and a back door leading into the garden. But at one end of this passage was a flight of stairs that led to Moliere's bedroom; in short, the same flight by which he had an hour before descended to meet Armande.

"There! *Manie*," cried he, pointing to the garden door, "you can get out at that door, and wait in the summer-house till Madeleine is gone."

But instead of following the prescribed route, Armande, who had come determined to *remain*, or at least only to return to Paris as Madame Moliere, began deliberately to ascend the stairs. Moliere darted forward with the intention of grasping her dress and impeding her progress, but she bounded before him like an antelope, and never stopped till she reached the bedroom, where she threw her hat upon the bed, and herself into an easy-chair. The next moment Moliere had overtaken her, and joining his hands imploringly said, "*Dear Armande!* she is in the house! not here! for heaven's sake not here, this is my bedroom."

"Well," said Armande, leisurely taking off her rose-colored cashmere cravat, folding it and laying it on the bed beside which she was sitting, and then unfastening her *juste-au-corps*, and flinging it to the other side of the bed so as to completely litter it with her things, "Well, *mon ami*, and who has a better right to be in your bedroom than *YOUR WIFE*?" raising her voice terribly as she emphasized the last words. Here Madeleine's voice was heard on the stairs, saying, in a sharp key—

"So! it seems that while Monsieur Moliere is not visible for *me*, Mademoiselle Armande has her *entrées*. Ah! ha!

\* Public one-horse conveyances, plying from Paris to the environs, and so called at the time, like the modern Coucous, Gondoles, and Citadines.

Monsieur de la Fare is right—that little sister of mine, with her air *sainte n'y touche* should be watched, or she may give us all the slip, the artful little jade. I have long perceived that she contrives to be paramount at the theatre, and now no doubt she is rehearsing the first rôle in the *Dépit Amoureux*. Ha! ha! were not our good friend Poquelin too old, and had I not good reason to know that his *inclinations* are anchored elsewhere, I should almost be tempted to think that the little hussy had designs either upon his heart or his hand; but no, no; *that is too preposterous*; he would never make himself so ridiculous as *that*, to save himself the trouble of writing comedies, by himself becoming such a farce for the world's amusements."

From the first sound of Madeleine's voice, Moliere had risen hastily from his kneeling position, and hurried perturbedly from one door to the other, there being two entrances to the room, one from the back staircase, the other from the sitting-room, where we first introduced him to the reader; but as the import of Madeleine's words reached him, he seemed to lose all self-possession, and, in a fit of nervous distraction, locked the door that opened into the passage, before which, in another moment, Madeleine must pass: wringing his hands, he frantically turned to Armande, who sat calm and impassible as a statue, and pointed in dumb show, with supplicating gestures, to the sitting-room, with a look of entreaty that she would go there! But the only notice she took of this appeal was by springing on the bed, elongating her feet, leaning her right elbow on the pillow, and supporting her head in her hand, with an air of the most provoking indifference, as if resolved to await the issue of the event. At this, the hands which her husband had been so convulsively wringing the instant before, now dropped powerlessly by his sides; cold as the day was, large drops stood on his forehead, and, staggering back a few paces, he leaned helplessly against the door for support; the next moment Madeleine tried it, as she passed, but being locked it resisted her efforts.

"Ah!" said she, hurrying on, "they are doubtless in the sitting-room."

"Armande!" faintly groaned Moliere; but Armande, who had her back to him (as the bed was situated at the side of the room), never turned, but kept her eyes steadily and eagerly fixed on the opposite door: she had not long to wait, for presently it was flung wide open on both sides, by Madeleine, who was rushing

forward; but who no sooner beheld her sister calmly reclining on the bed, and Moliere pale and trembling against the door, as if he had committed murder outright, instead of only one of its phases—marriage—she started back, and remained a few seconds with her eyes and mouth distended, and her hands up.

"Is it possible!" she at length exclaimed, darting forward, seizing Armande by the wrist, and trying, but in vain, to drag her off the bed; "so young, and yet so shameless! So *this* is the translation of all your prudish airs with M. de la Fare, M. de Sévigné, and others, whom Ninon herself does not disdain, but who, forsooth, dare not approach that immaculate piece of perfection Mademoiselle Armande Bejart, without being petrified by the frigidity of her virtue; *this* is the reward too of all the care I took of your penniless infancy; *this* too after the example I have always set you! Viper!"

"Stop, my very dear sister," said Armande, with the most contemptuous and irritating *sang froid*, as she leisurely arranged the lace of her tucker; "stop, beware of false counts in the indictment: I never followed *your* example, because you know I am a bad walker, and walking in your steps, might have led me *too great lengths*."

"Insolent!" muttered Madeleine between her set teeth, as withdrawing her glaring eyes from her sister's face, she now advanced a step or two (with both her hands tightly clenched, held a little way out on each side of her, and quivering with passion) towards Moliere. "Ah, wretch!" she exclaimed, now bringing the whole battery of her invective to bear upon him! "tremble! and cower! it is what all detected villains do; blanch and turn pale; lie, and betray; for *such* are the coward's weapons; not content with deluding, beguiling, and trifling with *me* for years, with giving me perjuries for vows, and treachery for trust, you must complete your black list of iniquities, by ruining the youth of the girl whose childhood had been confided to your honor. *Your honor!* where is it? a vapor, wreathed in the clouds, and scattered by the winds. Ha! ha! *your honor!* oh! it is great, and mighty, and worthy to take precedence at Versailles; for have you not made of my sister—but no, I will not pollute my tongue; let your own craven lips utter the word. Say villain, I command you, what you have made of that deluded and degraded girl?"

"And I also command you, Moliere, if



you are a man, and not merely an author, and an actor, to say what you have made of me?" said Armande, quietly descending from the bed, and walking with her sweetest smile, and a look of the most profound submission, which contrasted strangely, not to say grotesquely, with her words, up to her husband.

Fear had now reached that height in Moliere's mind, from whence it perceives that escape is impossible, and growing giddy at sight of the abyss that surrounds it, loses itself, and becomes courage.

"Forgive me, dear Madeleine," said he, taking his young wife's hand, "for, indeed, against *you* have I much offended; but you are partly to blame; for from the pains you bestowed upon her, and the admirable manner in which you brought her up, you made an angel of Armande, and—and—I made her my wife." The bolt was shot, the arrow sped, the worst was past; and Moliere breathed freely, as he now stood, almost proudly, by Armande's side.

As he spoke, Madeleine glanced wildly from him to her sister, and from her sister back to him; and when he ceased, she at length said, in a hoarse, almost inarticulate voice, tearing her dress open at the throat the while with both hands, as if the words were choking her:—

"Shameless falsehood! unworthy subterfuge!"

"Not so, sister," said Armande, drawing her marriage certificate from her pocket; "you will see by this, that we have been married these three months, and not yet having had a husband to protect me," added she, with one of her sweetest smiles at Moliere, "I have, ever since, as a sort of safeguard, carried this charter about me."

Madeleine, with a trembling hand, snatched it from her, and having perused it, and seen that there was indeed no single flaw or informality in it, she crumpled the parchment convulsively in her hands, from which the next moment it fell, and Armande hastily seized it.

"*Malheureuse! Malheureuse!*" exclaimed Madeleine, grasping her own hair on either side, till suddenly assuming a tone of the most deadly calm and withering irony, which became fearful from the ashy pallor of her cheeks, with one crimson spot under each eye, she said, with her usually haughty air, "Every crime brings its own punishment, and as *you* have secured yours," added she, dropping them a low and stately courtesy, "I have the honor of wishing Monsieur and Ma-

dame Moliere a very good morning: not wishing to intrude upon their *domestic felicity!*"

With this speech, she swept out of the room, the house shaking and its master with it, from the manner in which she slammed the door; this probably gave Moliere an impetus, for the next moment he had his arms round Armande's neck, while hers encircled his.

"Well?" said Armande, looking up archly and affecting to feel first his head and then his arms, "*Now she knows it!* and yet, it seems to me, you are all here, not a single limb left on the field of battle. Are you not proud, my little *Condé!* of your victory?"

"That am I! For who would not be proud of such a conquest?" said he, again folding her in his arms.

"Did Monsieur call?" asked La Forêt, appearing at the sitting-room door; but she no sooner perceived that he was not alone, and who was his companion, than the now nearly completed blue stocking dropped from her hands.

"No, no," replied Moliere, somewhat pettishly, as he disengaged himself from Armande, "I did not call, I—I—am busy."

"So I perceive," said La Forêt.

"Well," laughed her master, as he patted his wife's peach-like cheek, and advanced with her towards the old woman—

"You cannot deny that it is a very pretty business at all events; in fact, *ma bonne*, I am married, and Mademoiselle Armande is now Madame Moliere, and your mistress."

La Forêt tried to drop a courtesy, but both her limbs and her *politesse* were too rusty for any such bendings; so she merely growled out, as she left the room,

"Humph! I suppose Monsieur's Comedies are not liked any longer, so he is now going to try the Tragic line!"

And so commenced the first day of Moliere's Honey-moon.

#### CHAPTER IV.

On his marriage having been made public, Moliere removed his Paris quarters from the Rue Papejean to the Rue de Richelieu, opposite the Rue Traversiere (the house, in fact, which is now No. 32, Rue de Richelieu), where he exercised a liberal and frank hospitality

with his thirty thousand francs a year, or £1,200, an ample fortune even in England, and still more so in France at that time. We will spare the reader the revengeful furies of Madeleine; the ceaseless regrets of La Forêt, that her master had not continued in old Poquelin's shop in the Rue St. Honoré, corner of the *Rue des Vieilles Etuves*, and followed his father's modest trade as an upholsterer rather than have changed his name for that of Moliere, and his original calling for that of marriage, which, she was convinced, was not his vocation; or, if he must be a playwright, why did he not stick to comedies, which he could construct successfully in a fortnight; witness "Le Misanthrope," the plot of which Signor Angelo had narrated to him from a Neapolitan piece, one day in an after-dinner stroll through the Palais Royal; and thirteen days after, Moliere reproduced it on the boards of *Le Petit Bourbon* under the title of "Le Misanthrope," to the envy and dismay of the rival company at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*. Nay, for that matter, had he not written "*L'Impromptu de Versailles*" in five days, "*Le Dépit Amoureux*" and "*La Critique de L'Ecole des Femmes*" in ten, all of which were so many triumphs! whereas would not his marriage, or his "tragedy," as she persisted in calling it, be as signal a failure? although it had taken him ten years to construct! Neither will we here dwell upon Moliere's own sufferings for the first year of his marriage; for suffer he did, as alas! his own Don Garcia was less jealous, and perhaps Georges Dandin and Sganarelle were less duped; but events must develop themselves. Suffice it to say, that he entreated his wife in vain to quit the stage, and therefore had no other alternative than to act with her, and undergo the nightly martyrdom of witnessing her coquetry and its too successful results; while Madeleine, in the blind fury of her resentment, went the lengths of calumniating herself, in order to injure Moliere, by asserting that she was the mother, instead of the sister of Armande, and that he had actually married his own daughter; but this slander was as clumsy as it was base, for the register of Armande's birth, but too clearly disproved it; besides at that time Moliere had *la raison des plus fort*. Success, and the consequent protection of those in high places, therefore, had he been, in reality, the monster of iniquity which Madeleine had endeavored to make him appear; protected as he was; the gentle public, ever amiable, indulgent,

and tolerant as it is to the favorites either of fortune, or of fame, would have held him blameless; for Louis Quatorze's colossal and truly royal selfishness, at that time, found its account in patronizing Moliere, by the constant fund of amusement he derived from his genius; and therefore he *did* protect him, right valiantly, against all gainsayers, even on the score of the Tartufe; for the star of the widow Scarron was not only not then in the ascendant, but was within many years of its rising; and as the poet's old school-fellow at the *College de Clermont* (since the *College de Louis le Grand*), the Prince de Conti, had not yet taken to Jansenism and jangling. He also stood by him; so that he had the signal honor of having the *Grand Monarque* and the Duchess d'Orléans stand sponsors to his first child, in the Chapel Royal, at Versailles; and it was upon that occasion that Moliere was guilty of his first and last pun. Here are *les circonstances atténuées* attending it: he was then engaged in writing his *Comédie Impromptu* of *Les Fâcheux*, which was written, learnt, rehearsed, and represented all in fourteen days, for *Les Fêtes de Vaux*. At the rehearsal, the hunting-scene was not yet written, but on the occasion of the christening, as Louis Quatorze was patronizingly walking apart with his *protégé* on the terrace at Versailles, after that ceremony, the former said, pointing to Monsieur de Soyecourt, his pompous *Grand Veneur*, or Master of the Buck-hounds, "There is an original that you have not yet copied, pray do give us one scene of him."

Here Monsieur de Soyecourt, seeing the king point to him, thought his Majesty wanted him, and advanced, hat in hand, to know his pleasure; whereupon Moliere in reply to Louis Quatorze's request said, glancing at the Master of the Buck-hounds, "Alors, Sa Majesté veut sans doute, que le spectacle *Soit Court* (Soyecourt)."

"Ha! ha! ha! *délicieux*," laughed the king; and the next day, Moliere brought out "*Les Fâcheux*" with the hunting-scene, as it now stands, and a full-length portrait of Monsieur de Soyecourt, who was the only one of the whole court who did not recognize the likeness, so difficult is it to know one's self. But as the same causes are always producing different effects in this world, while every one else was laughing, *because* they knew him, *he* was laughing as loud as any of them, because he had *not* the honor of his own acquaintance; it is true, he remarked to Bussy Rabutin, on leaving the

theatre, as they passed into the great banqueting hall at Versailles, after the *ballet*, that he thought the character of "Orante" rather simple; but Bussy only replied solemnly, and loud enough for the whole Court to hear, and the king to laugh at for full half an hour, whenever he looked at his Master of the Buckhounds,

"*Veritatis simplex oratio est.*"

## CHAPTER V.

It was about noon on a sultry day towards the end of June, that a considerable sensation was excited amongst the good Parisians, both pedestrian and equestrian, who happened to be passing along the *Rue de L'Universite*, at a stately gilt coach, and four English horses, followed by what, a century later, was called a chariot (save that this one was open in front, like a cabriolet, but had a square gilt, raised or dome-like top to it, with four spiral gilt knobs). To this vehicle, which only contained two (which two were an abigail and a lackey), were harnessed a pair of post horses, so cumbered with ropes and wisps of straw, that the wonder was, independent of the carriage and its freight, how they could move, much less draw; especially as two very large trunks were strapped on behind, one of iron, iron bound and nailed, the other of black leather, but so huge and clumsy, that it more resembled the gigantic skeleton of one of the black elephants to be found in the Caucasus than anything else. Nevertheless, it *did* move at a measured pace, after the gilt coach, the latter being driven by an English coachman, who managed even in those days, to grasp all the reins in one hand, and that hand his left. This it was, which caused so much astonishment and admiration, among the Parisians of the olden time, whose eyes and mouths both remained distended till the equipages turned into the wide court-yard of the "*Hôtel de L'Ecuille d'Or*," or the Hotel of the Golden Porringer, at that time considered the best Hostelry in Paris, and through Sir Richard Browne's recommendation (though he had now some time quitted St. Germaine and returned home) patronized by all the English who came to Paris. The arrival of the gilt coach and its satellite chariot at the Golden Porringer, was announced by a

loud ringing of the *porte-cochère* bell of that establishment, and a perfect canonade of whip-cracking, executed with great science and perseverance by the French postillion in the rear, so that the crowd rather thickened than decreased in the inn-yard to see the contents of the coach and chariot alight, while *Maitre Dindonnier*, mine host of the Golden Porringer, and all his *marmitons*, rushed forth to do the honors of his hostelry by welcoming the new arrivals, whom, we may as well tell the reader at once, were Sir Gilbert and Lady Hawthorne, and their daughter Lucy. Sir Gilbert was a worshipful Knight and staunch cavalier; moreover, a justice of the peace in his own county, that of Surrey, and worth the then large sum of £4,000 a year; which did not, however, prevent Lady Hawthorne from being one of the best housewives in the county, with the exception, perhaps, of her not having given her lord and master a son, or, what he took infinitely more to heart, an heir. It required much to atone for this, so that, although Dinah Hawthorne's pickles were the greenest—her preserves the freshest—her venison pasties the richest—her swan pies the most intricate!—her sack possets the most resuscitating—her cowslip wine the most sparkling—her rooms the most crowded with tent stitch hangings, chairs, and settles, and her daughter Lucy indisputably the prettiest and most amiable girl in the three kingdoms, Sir Gilbert only looked upon all these things as his bare due, or, in other words, as small, *very small* change for the son he *ought* to have had; and as for Lucy's beauty, in addition to the novel truism that beauty is only skin-deep, he was wont pithily to observe, that, with the portion he should be unfortunately *compelled* to give her, "*it was nothing more than a spend-thrift trap, and the wench would have been far better had she been as ugly as Madam Scroggins of the Grange*," while poor Lady Hawthorne thought such a speech great ingratitude to God, and so blest Him the more for having given her so beautiful a child. Lucy herself thought less of the matter, *pro or con*, than either of her parents, and chiefly spent her time acquiring a proficiency in French and Italian, and in endeavoring to excel upon the *harpischon* with her cousins, the Brownes; for Lady Browne was Lady Hawthorne's sister, and Mrs. Evelyn (the wife of John Evelyn) the latter lady's niece, who, from her father's long official residence in France, of course knew most of the notabilities of that

country; and had, therefore, furnished her aunt and cousin with numerous letters of introduction to the best people in Paris, and amongst others, to Madame de Sévigné, whose kind offices, in securing rooms for her relatives at "*L'Ecuelle d'Or*," she knew she might rely upon, as *Marie de Rabutin's* generous devotion had never yet failed either the necessity or the friendship that appealed to it. How Sir Gilbert Hawthorne had ever been induced to quit England, much less to visit France, remained indeed a marvel and a mystery to his most intimate acquaintance; for he was one of those ancient Britons who thanked his God that he did not know a syllable of French, or any other Popish language; and, next to being a Regicide, or sitting at the same table with a Roundhead, it was well known that he considered foreigners and *all foreigneering ways* as one of the greatest of abominations. There was much conjecture, therefore, touching this *going over of the Hawthornes into France*; and Tom Fairlop, Lady Hawthorne's nephew, who was training up with young Master Isaac Newton to the noble science of astronomy, and therefore fell very naturally into the error of mistaking pretty Mistress Lucy for one of the heavenly bodies, and her two dark blue eyes for constellations, did indeed remark that for some weeks before this journey of his uncle's, the nebular of sadness, as he expressed it, had overcast the glorious milky way of his cousin's face, and her ideas seemed to wander vaguely, and shoot off into space, when he would fain have fixed them in one sphere, of which he should have been the centre. Could Lucy—so young, so frank, so innocent of all and in all, have secrets? at least any secret that the angels themselves might not look upon? Alas! poor Tom Fairlop; it is precisely those sort of secrets in a young girl's heart which she cannot bear, that any *but* the angels *should* look upon! So without prying further into them at present, we will return to Sir Gilbert, who, like the other *grand monarch*, Louis XIV., has been almost kept waiting! As soon as *Maitre Dindonnier* had opened the coach door, Sir Gilbert descended therefrom, enjoining his wife and daughter to remain where they were till further orders, which command he additionally enforced by holding out his right hand so as to bar their passage; after which he flipped the dust from his damson velvet suit, majestically shook the curls of his wig for the same purpose, and, with his left hand, giving a tap to

one of Holden's best feathered beavers (which had cost him £4 10s. a fortnight before), so as to secure it upon his head, he grasped his gold-headed cane, holding it up in his right hand, and calling to the lackey, who was helping the maid to alight from the chariot, said:—

"Ho! Launcelot, sirrah! my morning's draught; get the drawer you dog, and let the *Mounseers* help the wench down; don't stand there, shilly-shallying over her, as gingerly as if she was a flask of my best Canary, though mayhap, the woman-kind be the frailer ware of the two; ha! ha! ha!"

And Sir Gilbert Hawthorne made the welkin—alias *Maitre Dindonnier's* courtyard—ring with his laughter, at what he deemed his own wit, while the trembling Launcelot let poor Mistress Winifred drop out of his hands as hastily as if she had been a red-hot poker, or an adder; so that she would inevitably have fallen, and broken her neck, had not one of the *Mounseers* to whom Sir Gilbert had alluded, rushed forward to her assistance. Launcelot, having assured himself by a hasty glance that she was safe, proceeded, without loss of time, to excavate a large silver-gilt goblet or cup, with a cover highly embossed, a demijohn of ale, and a corkscrew, from the vehicle from whence he had just descended, and soon presented a foaming tankard to his master, who swallowed it at a single draught, and then, with a deep-drawn *ha—h!* and a sharp click of his tongue against the roof of his mouth, in token of approbation, passed the back of his hand across his lips, and giving the cup back to Launcelot, he graciously turned to the coach-door, and said to his wife, "Now, sweetheart, you may get out."

But Lady Hawthorne, being busy searching for her *flacon* of gilliflower water, did not immediately obey; so the *Sweetheart* was followed by a—

"Dinah! come out, I say;" and eventually by a still more authoritative "*Lady Hawthorne! do you hear me?*"—

Which effectually brought her to her senses; and the next moment, somewhat pale, she stood on the pavement beside her master. Lady Hawthorne was a still handsome woman, of about forty, with soft, dark, earnest-looking eyes, small regular features, and a Madonna-like cast of countenance, which was set off to the best advantage by her continuing to wear the black dress, and wimple, or hood, worn by women during the Commonwealth.

"Well, girl, art asleep? Come along,"

cried Sir Gilbert, actually condescending to proffer his daughter the assistance of his hand to alight, and in an instant, Lucy Hawthorne, light as a bird perching on a spray, reached the ground. Hers was a different style of beauty from that of her mother; she had a profusion of that peculiar shade of light hair which the French call *blonde cendré*, and she wore it according to the fashion of the day, *à la Ninon*, or what we term the Charles the Second style; her eyes were (as we have before stated) of a deep, dark blue, whose depth, like the vault of heaven on a summer night, seemed unfathomable; her forehead was high, and of the whiteness and smoothness of ivory; her eyebrows two shades darker than her hair, were low and straight; her face was a perfect oval, and her complexion that of a blush rose; her nose was straight, but not of that insipid Grecian straightness, but twice indented, with that *piquante*, and delicate chiselling of the nostrils, which is known in France as the Montmorency nose, and which is so exquisite in profile; her lips were as red as pomegranate blossoms, and as pouting as cherries, and, when parted, displayed two rolls of small white teeth, like strung pearls; in her right cheek was a dimple, which seemed the parent of a numerous offspring of smaller and rounder ones, that played round her mouth when she smiled; her eyelashes were so long, that they curled upwards, and gave an arch expression to her eyes, though, at the same time, there was such a heaven of repose in her face, that it gave one the idea of an angel sleeping in it; her ears were small and delicate as a shell, and harmonized perfectly with her round swan-like throat; and although slight in the extreme, there was a flowing roundness in the contour of her bust, which was also apparent in her exquisitely moulded hands and arms; her height was about five feet seven, supported by the prettiest little feet and ankles in the world; and Lucy's dress on this memorable morning was a fawn-colored Indian silk, with a blue lute-string whisk,\* which partly concealed her face, as a bonnet would have done in these days. Her feet were inclosed in fawn-colored Indian silk slippers, the same as her dress, with large blue lute-string rosettes on them, while under her arm she carried a beautiful little King Charles spaniel, also decorated with blue

\* A sort of cardinal, or tippet with a hood to it, much worn at the time.

ribbons, and answering to the name of Fop.

"Now Luce, girl? it's for thee to wag thy tongue, and jabber French to these *Mounseers*," said her father; "for thank heaven! I never defiled my mouth with anything French, beyond mayhap a stoupe of their wine, now and then, which I must say, I like better than your mother's cowslip, only *they* needn't know it. Strike up! child, and tell them, I'm neither an olive, nor a pond, and so want neither frogs, nor oil; and still less, am I a rat, having been always staunch to my king and country, so I want no cats; for I do mind me, that Master Pepys did tell me, on his return from the Hague, and other foreign parts, that as soon as ever horse, or coach, entered an inn yard in France, all those white-capped varlets that you see there, did scale the house-tops after cats, and ten to one, but half an hour after, the poor wretch of a traveller was treated to a week's cramp in the stomach, in the shape of a Tom, or Tabby, *ragout*, and that they call Cat's, *Gibier* here, so none of their *Gibier* for me; and when you have told them that I keep to beef and mutton, and—unamputated—ducks and geese, pheasants and partridges, then ask, if your cousin Evelyn's friend, Madam de *Seven knees*, has been inquiring for us yet? Seven knees! ha! ha! ha! there's a name! if she has seven feet too, egad! I don't wonder at her standing so well with every one, as your Aunt Browne and Cousin Evelyn say she does; ha! ha! ha! but if she was to go on *all* her seven knees to me, she won't get me to eat frogs, nor cats either, I can tell her, ha! ha! ha! anything else, but I *can't* swallow that, Madam, dang it!" and again Sir Gilbert roared—and between each roar, he dived down, and slapped his own thigh so energetically, that, had he been a donkey on *four* legs, instead of on two, and any other hand had aimed the blows, he would have had every reason to consider himself a most ill-used animal.

But Lucy, before she warned *Maitre Dindonnier* and his coadjutors touching those branches of natural history which her father dreaded their introducing into his repasts, offered her mother her arm, and put down Fop, who seemed not a little delighted at once more shaking out his ears and his ribbons in the sunshine, after which, he made a hurried geological tour round the court, his nose minutely investigating every blade of grass that grew up between the pointed stones, save when his scientific researches

were interrupted by his occasionally treading on his own ears. After he was thoroughly satisfied as to the animal, vegetable, and mineral productions of the inn-yard, he raced round and round, barking with delight, till coming to a *remise* where a steady, middle-aged, black and white poodle sat sunning himself and indulging in a perpendicular, noon-day siesta, where, between half closed eyes and sundry nods, he appeared to be making desperate efforts to look wise, Fop suddenly stopped, and, lifting up his right paw, backed a few paces with a contemptuous growl, of which, however, Turlupin, the poodle, took not the slightest notice, which dignified indifference soon brought Fop to whine *pecari*, who, from bullying, proceeded to sniff amicably round the foreign gentleman; and thus courteously accosted, the latter soon began to reciprocate his civilities.

Meanwhile Lucy, under favor of Sir Gilbert's total innocence of French, without indulging in any personalities respecting frogs or cats, merely informed *Maitre Dindonnier* of the viands her sire most affected; requesting in her own most sweet voice, that mine host of the Golden Porringer would have the goodness to bear them in mind, and then she inquired whether he knew if Madame de Sévigné had received their letter sent on by a *corrier* from Calais? and whether she was aware that they would arrive on that day?"

"Certainly, Madame La Marquise is aware that the family of *Sare* Hawthorne was to arrive to-day, since she came down herself this morning to choose their apartments, and selected those on the ground floor to save them the trouble of going up and down stairs; and Madame is now here waiting to receive my lady, *Sare* Hawthorne and Mademoiselle," concluded *Maitre Dindonnier*, cap in hand.

"What does he say?" asked Sir Gilbert.

"That Madame de Sévigné is here waiting to receive us, sir; how very kind of her; had we not better go in immediately?" said Lucy.

"Aye, aye, in with you; and wife, mind you tell her to tell the people here what I like to eat; I suppose they've never a cold chine in the house? for I should like a snack before dinner, as I dare say that won't be ready this half hour; and you can ask Madame de Seven knees, if she'd like to stay and dine with us? in course, she's used to their foreigneering messes, and so won't mind. I must just go with Giles to look after the cattle, and then

I'll come in, and see Madame; but you and Luce must do all the talking, for I can't twist my tongue to it—there, in with you."

And both wife and daughter, with considerable alacrity, prepared to obey Sir Gilbert's unusually agreeable command; but as Lucy Hawthorne turned round to call her dog, I know not what apparition she saw, whether ghost or goblin, but she gave a faint scream, and turned first very pale and then very red, as she grasped her mother's shoulder.

"What, in the name of frogs and fiddlers, ails the wench?" cried her father, turning suddenly round.

"Oh!—oh!—nothing, sir," stammered Lucy, "only these stones are so sharp, I twisted my foot between two of them."

"Aye, aye, like enough," muttered Sir Gilbert, as he loosened the buckle of one of the reins, "most fools as come to foreign parts, are sure to put their foot in it."

"My dear love, lean on Winifred and me; and bathe your temples with some of this gilliflower water," said Lady Hawthorne, suiting the action to the word.

"No, no, dear mother, it's nothing," said Lucy in a faint voice, as she kissed and put aside her mother's hand.

"Aye, good lack! that's just what women always cry out about; ha! ha!" cried Sir Gilbert.

With another tremulous look round, Lucy entered the house with her mother, and the next moment there was a cry of "*Gare!*" among the crowd in the street, as a horseman—his hat slouched low over his eyes, his cloak and doublet much splashed, and the black horse he rode covered with foam, dug his spurs into the noble animal's flanks, and dashed through the street, up towards the bridge. "Gad wot!" exclaimed the knight, still continuing his groom-like operations upon his harness. "None but a fool, or a Frenchman, would ride at such a pace!"

## CHAPTER VI.

THE waiter threw open the door of a very large back room on the ground floor of the *Ecuelle d'Or* (so large that it was divided by a high arras, or stamped gold leather screen), the latticed windows open, and shaded by a natural drapery of fresh green apricot leaves, interspersed with their ripe golden fruit, while the walls within were hung with fine Gobe-

*lin's* tapestry, representing the whole of *Æsop's* fables, on the walls, chairs, and sofas. Over the folding doors (of which there were four), were battles by *Le Brun*, and mythological pieces by *Mignard*, let into the panels, while in one corner of the room was a harpischon, and on it a theorbo and a lute, and opposite to it, a large sofa, before which was a carved oak table, with a vase of fresh flowers, and a profusion of books upon it. On this sofa was seated a lady about eight and thirty, who, without being exactly pretty, like *Sterne's* *Eliza*, was "something more," for while all her details were good, hair, eyes, teeth, hands, and figure, her countenance was such an encyclopædia of expression, that it might have furnished matter for a whole life's study, without being exhausted at the end of it. She wore her dark brown hair, of which she had a profusion, *à la Ninon*; her dress consisted of a gray dove-colored *Padusay* silk, with a crimson taffety *Berthe*, fastened in front with a brooch of pearls and pendent sapphires, of that form which is now called a *Sévigé*; large rosettes of crimson Taffety, went down each side of her dress, in robings, and in the centre of each rosette was a large button of pearls and sapphires; while her shoes, which were of the same color and material as her dress, had also crimson rosettes on them, with similar buttons in the centre; half back on her shoulders, and nearly off her head, hung a hood of dove-colored *Moire* trimmed with black, and silver blonde; on her bare arms were some delicately fine gray (that is lavender-color like her dress) silk mittens, with a *ruche* of narrow quilled crimson tulle round the tops, and a band of crimson velvet, an inch and a half wide, for bracelets, which were also fastened by pearl and sapphire buckles of an oval shape.

This lady was reclining on the large tapestried sofa, while beside her stood a long, starched, yet mildewed looking individual of the other sex, gorgeously apparelled in straw-colored velvet, embroidered in amethysts and gold, the ends of his magnificently trimmed *Flanders* lace cravat brought through one of the gold-edged button-holes on the left side of his coat; he was patiently, or it might be *impatiently*, holding an interminable hank of white floss silk, that the lady, half turned towards him on her left elbow, was winding; but with great stoicism, he contrived to introduce some sort of variety into his monotonous occupation, by occasionally looking at the ceiling, then at the lace falls round his garters, and still

further, at the large violet bows on his shoes, accompanying these little fantasias either with a yarn, or by humming the then popular romance of "*çependant je ne suis pas mal*," which indeed, few men are, in their own estimation.

The lady was *Madame de Sévigé*; the *winder* was her son, whom she had told *must* attend on that day and hour, at the *Ecuelle d'Or*, to welcome the *Hawthornes*; and, although it was a bitter bore to him, as *Mademoiselle de L'Enclos* had a *partie Champêtre* at *Meudon*, on that very day, at which he greatly feared he should be late; yet, as no French son, or husband then, any more than now, ever dreamt of disobeying his wife's or his mother's wishes, twelve o'clock that said sultry 22d of June found the poor man *literally* at his mother's apron-string (a most unusual circumstance with him) winding silk, instead of being at *Ninon's* feet *conter-ing fleurette* and expatiating upon the torments of a love which he had never felt. But *Madame de Sévigé* had got some strange notions into her head, that the members of English families were always together (!) and that the *Hawthornes* would be scandalized if *her* son was not there, with her, to receive them; whereas *Monsieur de Sévigé*, who, thanks to his friend *St. Evermond*, was much more practically *au courant* to the state of society in England since the Restoration, did not at all relish the united family *rôle* his mother had decided upon, as far as he was concerned; so, after having exhausted the attractions of the ceiling, his knee ruffles, and his shoe ties, he at length ventured to say, after a sonorous yawn:—

"*Ah! ça, ma Mère*,"\* if these good people should not come after all, to-day?"

"Well, *Mon Ami*," replied she calmly, without raising her eyes from the silk she was rapidly turning over a silver reel, "If they don't come to-day, they'll come some other day."

"*Diantre!*" cried *Monsieur de Sévigé*,

\* Even *Madame de Sévigé* could not escape the censure of her contemporaries, and it was upon this very natural, but at that time unique, fact, of insisting upon her son and daughter addressing her as *mother*, that she incurred their reproach of outraging the proprieties and shocking the laws of etiquette, prescribed to women of a certain rank "aux femmes d'un certain état," when the little *Marquis* and *Vicomtes* of the day, spoke of their mothers as *Madame ma Mère!* and the same mothers, if their sons had been dying, would have ceremoniously inquired of their attendants, *çammet va Monsieur mon fils?*

slightly stamping his foot, and letting the silk slip off one of his wrists. "And am I to stand here, like a *Devidoire*, day after day, to appear ridiculous after all! for these relations of *Sare Brownes* will actually fancy that we are in love with each other! not perhaps knowing that we are mother and son; for you look very young, *Marquise*."

"They'll not think any such thing, if they are sensible people," sighed Madame de Sévigné.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you know, my dear, sensible people never judge from *appearances*, neither will Ninon; she will know that it is *necessity*, not *inclination*, which keeps you away."

"*Peste!*" cried Monsieur de Sévigné, with another stamp, "this skein is getting entangled."

"It is only because you have *too many ends*, and don't keep steadily to one," rejoined his mother, now for the first time raising her eyes, and fixing them steadily on his.

"Bah! must one then always end, where one begins?" said he, bursting into an affected laugh.

"No, but if one does not perceive the beginning of the end, one is apt to get entangled, as you see."

"*Je n'y suis pas*," said the *Marquis*, biting his lip, which gave a denial to his words, and he then added *à propos de bottes*, "if these Hawthornes are like the Brownes, they are not worth waiting for; *car, ma foi!* that poor Mistress Browne, now Madame Evelyn, was fastidiously ugly; and poor Monsieur Evelyn, with that terrible nose of his, like a large frost-bitten *bon chrétien* pear, made one always long to build a little hot-house over it, as your cousin Bussy used to say."

"Ah! Bussy is a *mauvaise tête*," shrugged his fair cousin.

"Or a bad heart, which?" said Monsieur de Sévigné, with more asperity than the case seemed to require.

"Oh! no, certainly not *that*; that is not where the Rabutins fail."

"Rather say at once, *Marquise*, that they are infallible!" retorted he, not too dutifully; for poor Monsieur de Sévigné was one of those foolish sons who repay a wise mother's uttermost care and solicitude by becoming the very reverse of their hopes and wishes, and consequently, notwithstanding his frivolity, he was a martyr to a whole *inferno* of passions which he thought he *ought* to feel, but could not; for, as Ninon de L'En-

clos said of him: "His greatest glory would have been to have died for a love he did not feel;" and among this strange chaos of unfelt feelings, having heard of Bussy Rabutin's love for his cousin Marie, before he, Monsieur de Sévigné, was born, and more than suspecting that Bussy carried on this love to his mother's account, now she was a widow; though perfectly aware it was unreciprocated by her, he thought it due to his father's memory! to occasionally testify a few of those little *boutades* of causeless jealousy, which no doubt his father would have really felt, had he been still living, to suspect wrongs for himself.

Whenever, therefore, he thought fit to simulate any display of the kind, his mother grew impatient; and now flinging down the silk she was winding, with a somewhat contemptuous toss of the head, she drew over some writing materials that were on the table before her, and said, as she dipped a pen into the ink—

"Well, since Milady Hawthorne don't come, I'll write to my daughter."

"Good—so I'm free," said Monsieur de Sévigné; and disencumbering himself of his floss-silk manacles, he walked over to a long pier glass, where he practised a series of salutations with his hands pressed to his heart; then a fire of the most killing looks with, and *at*, his own eyes, which the trusty mirror faithfully returned; and lastly, he drew a glove from his pocket, redolent of *maréchal*, and raising it gracefully to his lips, imprinted a few deep, but silent kisses upon it, as passionately as if it had been the fairest hand of the fairest woman in the world; if self-knowledge be so desirable, surely Monsieur de Sévigné must have found it delightful to be thus hand in glove with himself; but just as he was about for the third time to raise the glove to his lips, the doors from the passage were thrown open, and Lady Hawthorne and Lucy, preceded by Pop, entered.

Madame de Sévigné rose with that cordial yet graceful alacrity, which is as far from the awkwardness of *hurry* in action, as energy is from vehemence in speaking, and pressing first Lady Hawthorne's hand in the most friendly manner between both her own, and then Lucy's, welcomed them to Paris, and hoped they would derive as much pleasure from their visit, as it gave her to make their acquaintance.

"Ah! Madame!" said Lucy, with all the genuine and expansive enthusiasm of youth, "to have the privilege of seeing and knowing you, of whose amiability,



and whose wit, we have heard so much from my aunt and cousin, is quite pleasure enough, even if your charming city contained no other."

"One cannot be surprised," smiled Madame de Sévigné, appealing with an admiring look to Lady Hawthorne, "that pretty speeches should come out of such a mouth. Allow me, *Mesdames*, to present my son to you. *Marquis*, Lady and Mistress Hawthorne, the sister and niece of our good friend Lady Browne."

"Ah! *Miladi* Browne is too happy to have such a sister, and such a niece!" said Monsieur de Sévigné, now lavishing more especially upon Lucy, some of that ammunition in the way of smiles, bows, and glances, which he had lately wasted on the glass; or not wasted either, since they had all been returned to him with the compound interest of satisfied conceit. His admiration he now involuntarily transferred to Lucy; yet still, he was afraid to invest too large an amount of it even upon her most faultless face; not yet knowing whether, with all her beauty, she would be the fashion; and a beauty, however exquisite, that was *not*, might, as far as *he* was concerned, have just as well been a fright. So now having finished his *corce*, as he himself would have said, he prepared to make his *adieux* and depart for Meudon; for though he was perfectly cognizant of Sir Gilbert's existence and approaching advent, he had no idea of putting himself out of the way for any *he* creature in existence. So he pleaded an unavoidable engagement, and proffered his excuses to Lady Hawthorne. No sooner had the door closed upon Monsieur de Sévigné, and his mother had seated herself between her new acquaintances, than she said, pointing to the profusion of books which lay piled round the table:—

"You see I was determined you should feel yourselves at home in our strange town; and as nothing looks to *me* so like old friends as books of every kind, whether old or new, I judged of you, as people generally do, by myself; and this morning I brought a quantity of choice books here, and have arranged them as you perceive. You cannot lay your hand on one of them, no matter which, but you will wish to read it through; here, my dear Mistress Lucy, is a whole row of pious works; and what piety, good heavens! what a point of view do they take, to do honor to our religion! others are all admirable historical works, others moral ones, others poetical! Don't be alarmed, my dear Lady Hawthorne, there are only

novels and memoirs besides, for romances have been duly despised, and are exiled to the small closets in your bedroom."\*

"I am sure, my dear Madame de Sévigné, we can never thank you half enough for all your kindness to us."

"*Comment donc! ma chère dame*, I hope I may indulge in a little chronological anticipation, and call you my *friends*; and it is a maxim of mine never to let the grass grow on the path of friendship."†

"And a charming maxim it is, if all the world would only act up to it, as you do," said Lady Hawthorne; and then added, after a moment's pause, "I hear you have such a beautiful daughter, Madame; I hope she is quite well?"

"Well, she is beautiful, *very* beautiful, I may say so to you, for you can appreciate the kind of holy vanity one has, in having a beautiful daughter; it makes one feel as if one had friends above, among the angels, and that they were always writing you word of it, in your child's face; thank you, she is quite well, thank God. I hear from her *nearly every day*, and write to her every day; here is a letter I got from her this morning." And as she spoke, Madame de Sévigné drew a letter from her bosom and kissed it.

It is not one of the least mysteries of the doctrine of affinities, or what Fourier calls *Les atomes crochus*, that two persons in such close corporeal proximity, as were Madame de Sévigné and Lady Hawthorne, should yet have their ideas at such an antipodal distance; for while the former was talking of angels, the latter was thinking of her husband, and his dinners, and how that all-important subject was to be broached to the very charming, and very anti-*Moutonnaire* woman beside her; but Sir Gilbert had ordered her to impress upon Madame de Sévigné the peculiarities and specialities of his gastronomic likings and antipathies, and therefore she *must* do it; so with a sigh, almost as overburdened as if she had actually eaten all the joints she was

\* Madame de Sévigné says, in one of her letters to Madame de Grignon: "J'ai apporté ici quantité de livres choisis, je les ai rangés ce matin; on ne met pas la main sur un, tel qu'il soit, qu'on n'ait envie de le lire tout entier. Toute une tablette de dévotion, et quelle dévotion mon Dieu! quel point de vue pour honorer notre religion; l'autre est toute d'histoires admirables, l'autre de morale, l'autre de poésies de Nouvelles et de Mémoires. Les Romains sont méprisés et ont gagnés les petites armoires. Quand j'entre dans ce cabinet, je ne comprends pas pourquoi j'en sors."

† "Il ne faut pas laisser croître l'herbe sur le chemin de l'amitié."—*Madame de Sévigné*.

about to expatiate upon, poor Lady Hawthorne said, "Forgive me, *Chère Marquise*, if I trouble you with our household affairs: but one word from *you*, I'm sure, would have more weight with the master of the hostelry, than all *our* directions, which, perhaps, he might not understand; and unfortunately, Sir Gilbert can only eat large joints; but my sister, Browne, used to tell me, that even your *pièces de résistance* are very small; but, perhaps, you would kindly tell the master of the hostelry to let the pieces of roast beef and roast veal be as large as possible; and, for safety (as Lucy and I don't care what we eat), to let us have legs of mutton as often as he can."

"*Ah! c'est fait!*" replied Madame de Sévigné, laughing; "for I remembered the hospitable dinners at the Chevalier Browne's, and I thought Sir Gilbert Hawthorne would like the same; and my *chef*, who knew the Chevalier Browne, has, I assure you, been practising, so that you may not be quite starved when you come to us, but, at least, see the shadow of your *grandiose* English hospitality; and he has put the people here in the way of your great *plats*, and as for legs of mutton I promise you ever since poor Monsieur Malebranche was so fortunate as to get rid of his, one hears of nothing else. Paris is overrun with them; ha! ha! ha!" and she laughed till the tears came into her eyes.

"What of Monsieur Malebranche's leg of mutton?" asked Lucy, justly surmising that thereby hung a tale.

"Oh!" said Madame de Sévigné, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, where laughter was still dissolved in tears: "Malebranche, you must know, is one of our great philosophical celebrities—as you may suppose, when I tell you, that he is now engaged on a great work entitled, 'A SEARCH AFTER TRUTH;' and two years ago, what do you think he found among his researches? ha! ha! ha! Why an enormous leg of mutton, large enough to satisfy even your good Sir Gilbert, appended to the end of his nose! ha! ha! ha! the weight and odor of which he declared so incommoded him that he could not rest night or day."

"Oh! then the poor man is mad?" interrupted Lucy.

"Not more mad," resumed Madame de Sévigné, "than our great Cardinal de Richelieu was, when occasionally he used to gallop on all fours round his room, neighing and kicking, and fancying himself a horse; and by the same token, the

French people an ass! and ride roughshod over them: yet this did not prevent his being not only the greatest, but the most *practical* spirit of the last age, and the first forty years of this—as our commerce, our navigation, and our French Academy, his immortal offspring, are there to testify—to say nothing of the fifteen hundred crowns a day he used to spend; and no man is a fool who can contrive to spend, or even to *owe!* such a sum."

"And did they put him in a mad-house?" asked Lucy, innocently.

"Oh dear, no; after he had galloped and neighed, and kicked, for about an hour round a billiard-table, and over chairs and stools, his attendants would endeavor to catch him: and, when they succeeded, would tie him to a manger, kept for the purpose, filled with hay, and a pail of water, beside which they made him lie down, and covered him over with blankets, to superinduce a profuse perspiration, under which he used to fall asleep; and, when he awoke, the quadruped paroxysm was over, and Richelieu was the great first minister of France again."

"How extraordinary!" cried Lucy and her mother in the same breath. "And this poor Monsieur Malebranche; you say he *did* get rid of his leg of mutton at last. How did he manage to do so?"

"Very easily," said Madame de Sévigné; "for the surest way of putting an end to errors and absurdities, whether of wise men or of fools, is not to oppose them. Had all Malebranche's friends gone on laughing at him, and ridiculing him for this fancy of his, as most of them did, who knows but he might have had the whole sheep appended to his nose by this time! But one of his friends, Monsieur Despréaux,\* undertook, though no cook, *de faire sauter le gigot*.† And he *did*. This is the way he managed it: a council was held by Malebranche's friends, but not one of them knew whether he considered the leg of mutton *roast*‡ or *raw*. This was a poser! But Despréaux being, like all persons of true genius, a man of resource, resolved upon taking under his cloak the largest roast leg of mutton he could get; justly concluding that it was easier to account for its *not* being raw, if Malebranche should

\* Better known in England as Boileau; but, being *Sieur Despréaux*, he more generally went by the latter name among his contemporaries.

† Literally, to make the leg of mutton jump; but, in French, *sauter* also means to *hash*.

‡ They never boil mutton in France.

fancy it raw, than for its not being dressed. Accordingly, thus provisioned, he set off to the Rue de Clichy, ascended, and, *au troisième*, rang. Malebranche was at home, pacing his room, and reading aloud to himself the last page he had written; while, by way of accompaniment, he was dealing the most unmerciful blows to the right side of his nose, with the flat side of a knife. 'Good morning! How fares it with you?' said Despréaux, shaking his friend by the hand. 'Well,' replied Malebranche, 'very well, if it were not for this confounded leg of mutton, the smell of which poisons me, while the weight drags me to the very earth.' 'Bless me!' cries Despréaux; 'I do indeed perceive that it is at least six pounds larger than when I saw it last; then I, like every one else, was inclined to look upon it merely as an abscess. Heavens! what you must suffer!' 'Ah! my dear friend,' exclaimed Malebranche, flinging down the paper he held in his hand, and embracing Despréaux, but holding his head at a respectful distance, so as not to spoil his visitor's cloak with the leg of mutton; 'you are the first, and only one, who has felt for me! Every one else laughs at me, and tries to persuade me out of my senses!' 'Feel for you!' said Despréaux, with a gravity that would not have discredited our inimitable comic actor, Moliere; 'ay, my dear friend, that do I; and for the many hungry mouths which so sadly want that leg of mutton, which your nose certainly does not want. But, if you had courage, and would trust to my skill, I think I could rid you of it.' 'Ah! if you could, I should be the happiest man in existence!' 'Well, then, put yourself in this arm-chair, before the fire' (for this happened on a cold day in February," parenthesized Madame de Sévigné), "'and, above all, don't speak till I tell you—that is, till I have succeeded in severing that horrible appendage (which I think I can do), without even shedding a drop of your blood, owing to an invaluable styptic that I possess, which was given to my great-great-grandmother, by Ambrose Paris, when she was keeper of the Puppy Dogs to his Most Mongrel Majesty, Henry the Third.'

"Malebranche seated himself in the great chair before the fire. Despréaux, disencumbering himself of his cloak, with which he carefully concealed the leg of mutton, which he placed on another chair, and then scientifically turned up his cuffs and drew a razor from his pocket, the edge of which he affected carefully to

try; next, he drew forth a small roll of lint, then a large packing-needle, which looked marvellously like a larding-pin, then some sticking plaster, and, finally, a very small phial of red ink, purporting to be the far-famed styptic of Ambrose Paris. These imposing preparations concluded, he said, giving his ruffles a still higher push: 'Now, my dear Malebranche, I must stand behind your chair, lean your head back, and shut your eyes, for fear the motion of my hand backwards and forwards should make you nervous; and, above all, as the operation is a nice one, and requires time and caution, don't move, or speak, till it is over.' So anxious was Malebranche to be relieved of his burden, that he only replied in dumb show, as he closed his eyes so tightly that, as Despréaux said, 'he is sure his eyelashes must have dug into his flesh and hurt him.' The *Chirurgien Improvisé* then began, cautiously passing the blunt edge of the razor down the patient's nose; then he slightly grazed the skin with the packing-needle; next, he cautiously dropped a drop of the red ink (which had become warm from being held in his hand) on the imaginary wound, which made Malebranche wince slightly, at which Despréaux soliloquized a long drawn 'Ah! it begins nicely; so far, so well;' then another pass of the razor, followed by a probe of the packing-needle, and another drop of ink. After which marvellous exertions, he announced that he must rest a little; by which means he got over half an hour, entertaining the immovable and self-blinded Malebranche the while, with some choice gossip about poor Mademoiselle de Fontange's misadventures; and then, repeating his surgical pantomime, he contrived to while away another half hour; when, gently unpinning the napkin it was covered with, he drew forth the leg of mutton, plentifully smeared one end of it with the red ink, generously bestowing the remainder on the tip of Malebranche's nose; after which, he concealed the phial, applied a piece of lint and sticking-plaster to the philosopher's nose, taking care to let the sanguinary red ink appear like a halo above it, and then shouted out a triumphant *Jubilate!* 'It is done!—the operation has succeeded to a miracle!—open your eyes, my dear Malebranche, and behold your enemy *hors de combat!*' He presented the miraculous leg of mutton to the enraptured searcher after truth, who, exclaiming, 'Ah! now indeed, I breathe; I am once more free! how can I ever repay you, my dear friend, so great

an obligation?' And in order to do so, he nearly hugged poor Despréaux to death. The next thing was to examine his fallen foe, which he did with his hands behind his back, his head poked forward, and the rest of his person elongated, as if he was going to fly; when suddenly, a blank look of horror stealing over his face, the features of which, including his eyes, appeared to grow rigid, he said in a sort of agony, first clasping his hands, and then shaking them, '*Mais Diantre! ça ne fait pas mon affaire! My leg of mutton was a raw one!*'

"*Je crois bien,*" replied Despréaux, 'and raw enough, it most assuredly was, when I came into the room first; but you forget, my dear friend, the long hour and a quarter it has been hanging from your nose before that roaring fire; and you see,' added he, pointing to the flow of red ink, '*here, where it was severed from you, it is still bleeding.*'

"*Ah! c'est vrai!* it is true! it is true!" assented Malebranche, who recommenced embracing his deliverer, as he called Despréaux, and the following week gave a grand dinner to the academicians, to celebrate the joyous event, at which no mutton appeared, save the miraculous leg! in spirits of wine on a side table, for the benefit of the *savants!* And Mademoiselle de Scudery expressed her felicitations, by sending the Amphitryon a dozen of beautifully embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, as, having regained the use of his nose, he might require to use his handkerchief; and poor Scarron (it was just a month before his death), who was her *chargé d'affaires* on the occasion, threw the whole party into convulsions of laughter, by saying, in his own inimitably dry, *serio-comico* manner, 'As we should always be prepared for the worst in this world, and you may (though Heaven forbid!) have a return of your pendant complaint, I, my dear friend, beg your acceptance of this tin pocket-handkerchief, which will be of more use to you then,' and so saying he presented Malebranche with a dripping-pan."

While they were still laughing at this anecdote, which Madame de Sévigné narrated most graphically, a great noise was heard in the passage, and Sir Gilbert's voice surmounting it, vehemently exclaiming—

"Odds Boddikins! carry that Demijan straight, varlet! for the ale will be as muddly as your own frog soup! beshrew the fellow! he minds me no more than if I were the ghost of an empty cask in old Nol's father's brewery. Ho! Mounseer,

straight, I say, straight. The knave must be deaf! Good wot! I forgot that he don't understand Christian language when he hears it; much use there is in my having a wife and daughter that can jabber their outlandish gibberish, which they learnt sore against my will, when they're never in the way when I want them; but that's the way with the whole sex; they'll talk a man's head off, if he wants to be quiet and sleep peaceably, after a hard day's hunting, by his own fireside, and at other times, when a no, or yet, would save one's life, there's no getting it out of them—no, no, they are dumb as a tombstone then, with this difference, mayhap, that the tombstone can lie without speaking, and they cannot speak without lying. You, sir, Launcelot! *you can* understand the King's English, lay down that lute-case, and let Winifred attend to her mistress's gear, and you take that Demijan from that fool yonder, who don't know how to carry it."

Though tongues were diversified and multiplied at the building of Babel, yet two universal languages still remain on earth—that of passion, and the passions; and poor Lady Hawthorne and Lucy both grew very red; not that the paternal and conjugal whirlwind had reached their ears; for they were too well used to it to mind, beyond obeying it; but that it should have come to Madame de Sévigné's! She, perceiving, and feeling for their distress, said, putting up her finger to listen, as if she had been catching the fleeting notes of the most delightful music!

"Ah! what a fine hunting voice! I like those deep, sonorous voices—there is something noble about them."

"And about you, too," thought Lucy; who, fully appreciating the delicate kindness and tact of this speech, felt strongly inclined to throw her arms round the speaker's neck; and, as if guessing her wishes, Madame de Sévigné said, as she smilingly turned to her:

"*Pardon,* Mistress Lucy; but your cheek looks so like a peach, that you must allow me—not, indeed, to bite it—but to kiss it. You know, it will only be another little instalment on our, I hope, long friendship."

"Ah! madame," said Lucy, embracing her, "how more than kind—how charming, you are!"

"While you are only adorable!"

The world is made up of contrasts; so Madame de Sévigné had scarcely uttered the word, before the door opened, and Sir Gilbert Hawthorne entered, Lady

Hawthorne trembled, lest he should, as was his wont when he meant to be amiable, seize Madame de Sévigné's hand, and shake it till he nearly dislocated her arm; but, for once, her fears were groundless; for there is a regality of intellect, and of grace, which, like that of birth, awes the most boorish; therefore, instead of even advancing up the room, electrified, as it were, by the bow Madame de Sévigné made him on entering, Sir Gilbert stood at the door, perpetrating a series of the most grotesque looks and scrapes imaginable; while, with an extraordinary degree of self-command, which prevented the smile that hovered round her lips from breaking bounds, and becoming a laugh, she turned to Lady Hawthorne, and said:

"Pray, dear Madame, tell Sir Gilbert how much I regret my ignorance, in not being able to welcome him to Paris in English; and, at the same time, assure him that the welcome is not less sincere on that account."

But Lady Hawthorne was a sensible woman, and never flung pearls before — those who would have preferred peas; so she as briefly as possible told her husband how kind Madame de Sévigné had been in anticipating his wants and wishes; and that, that very day and hour, a leg of mutton! awaited his approbation.

Recruited, even by the very mention of this substantial fare, Sir Gilbert now seemed to find strength and courage to advance, saying, as he did so:

"Egad! then your sister Browne was right, after all; and she is a sensible woman, and knows something beyond French, flummery, and furbelows. A comely-looking woman, too, by my troth; and, though French, neither patched nor painted, like Madam Palmer—I should say, my Lady Castlemaine, as she is now; nor Roxelana, that Miss of my Lord Oxford's; and all the other Misses and Madams that do swarm like ants now, about Whitehall. Good lack! to think, where four years ago, all was preaching and praying, all now should be patching and painting! Well, well! turn about's fair play, as the d——I said, when he gave Adam t'other half of the apple. Dinah, my dear, I hope you've asked Madame Seven knees to stay, and have a bit of dinner with us?"

"I have not; but I will." And poor Lady Hawthorne proceeded to say all sorts of civil things to Madame de Sévigné, from her spouse; which—Heaven forgive her!—she palmed off upon that unsuspecting lady, as a literal translation

of what he had been saying, and wound up with the invitation to dinner, which Madame de Sévigné said she was sorry she could not accept, as there was a late state dinner at two o'clock, at the old Duke de Mazarin's, to meet the king; but she would certainly, with their permission, stay to see that *Maitre Dindonnier* had benefited by the instructions of her cook; and five minutes after, the doors of the dining-room, which adjoined the sitting-room, were thrown open, and one of the drawers, as they were then called, announced, in a loud voice, that—

"*Sare Bon ton! était servi,*" which was the nearest approach that the French waiter could possibly make to *Sir Hawthorne!* And as, certainly, nothing could be more misapplied than this travesty of his name, no wonder that the worthy knight did not respond to it, till informed by his wife that it only meant that dinner was on the table.

If well-bred people ever evinced surprise at what is taking place around them, Madame de Sévigné would certainly have betrayed hers, at the *empressée* attention, and almost subaltern respect, that both Lady Hawthorne and Lucy paid to Sir Gilbert; their own dinner remaining in abeyance, till he was provided with all the innumerable condiments which he required, previous to commencing the general action of the meal, and making an attack upon the *pièce de resistance* which the *cuisine* of *Maitre Dindonnier* had been revolutionized to provide for him; for that huge leg of mutton, to which he gave no quarter, would, at least, have been divided into four, under the usual culinary *regime* of the Golden Porringer. Accustomed as she was to the universal attention of the male sex in general, and even to the scrupulous *bienséances* and *prevenances* of her not over-tender husband, for the seven years he had lived, (as a matter of course, from a man to a woman,) Madame de Sévigné could not comprehend the state of vassalage her two new friends appeared in, to their husband and father; and resolved, as soon as she was intimate enough with them, to get it elucidated, as a curious chapter in national manners. Sir Gilbert, having growled a little at the mutton being overdone, and ordered his wife to make the observation to *Madame de Seven knees*, that she might tell the cook to be sure and not let it happen again, he added:

"And now, Dinah, my dear, ask *Madam*, as she knows all about the court, if there is any news of the conspirators in

the Tower, especially the chief caitiff, Sir Henry Vane. For these three weeks that I have been on the road, *Lunnun* may have been swallowed up by an earthquake, for aught I know."

At this speech, Lucy Hawthorne turned deadly pale, and her mother poured her out some wine, and, in a hurried and under voice, begged of her to drink it. She mechanically raised the glass to her lips, and kept her eyes wildly fixed on Madame de Sévigné's face, as Lady Hawthorne repeated her husband's question; but before that lady had time to answer it, her coach was announced; so, rising to take leave, she said, as she did so:

"Why, yes; I saw Monsieur Colbert this morning, and he was at his Majesty's *En cas de Nuit*\* last night, when a courier arrived from Whitehall, who said that Sir Henry Vane was beheaded on the 14th of this month, and that never man died so bravely. Even his enemies were lost in admiration of his courage, though scandalized at his to the last justifying his conduct; as he asserted, that he had, throughout, followed the dictates of his conscience against his interest; but, when some one to taunt him asked him 'why he did not pray for the king?' he replied, 'You shall see I can pray for the king? I pray God bless him!'"

"Tut! tut! don't believe a word of it, the rascally Regicide!" cried Sir Gilbert, when his wife repeated what Madame de Sévigné had told her. "I wonder how *he* likes being beheaded himself? ha! ha! I am glad he's been made capable of judging any how."

Madame de Sévigné, thinking he was inquiring for further particulars, added, "The Lieutenant of the Tower says he died in a passion."

This Lady Hawthorne also translated, but evidently with a painful effort over herself. "Ay, ay, like enough, and that's what the fools took for courage! Ho! Launcelot, give me a goblet of Burgundy, that I may drink *down with all Traitors!* and that this execution of Vane may not have been in vain! Now Madam's gone, we may discuss family matters, and hang me if I don't drink another stoup, to think how well the

Hawthornes have escaped, having a bloody head, piked proper, quartered among the May flowers of their unsullied genealogical tree; ha! ha! ha! drink wife, and Luce wench! thou shalt drink too, for by my fay! thou hast the best cause to be thankful of the three; look up, girl, is it not so?"

But Lucy did not answer, for she had fallen back in her chair in a swoon.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE horseman, who had so furiously galloped past the *Ecuelle d'Or*, at the commencement of the last chapter, and whom Sir Gilbert Hawthorne had pronounced to be *either a fool or a Frenchman*, continued his headlong course through the streets of Paris, and never drew bridle till he arrived at the back of the *Pre aux Clercs*, which (it being the hour of noon, or dinner time) was then quite deserted; here, dismounting, he tied his horse to a tree, and taking off his *chapeau de poil*, or beaver hat, at that time one of the outward marks of a gentleman, he wiped the large drops from his forehead, and, after looking about him, in all directions, he again put on his hat, folded his arms, and with his eyes bent on the ground, paced up and down; having done so for about ten minutes, he drew forth a clumsy, oval gold watch, more like an egg in shape than anything else, embossed on one side with men and dogs, in a sort of greenish gold, while on the other was enamelled a floridly colored view of Antwerp; in the centre of the handle of this machine, was a small gold knob, attached to a piece of catgut, which he now drew out, whereupon, the watch, which was a repeater, returned twelve and a half strokes.

"Half-past twelve! and not come yet. Oh! why have the winds no voices, that might serve for special messengers, when men's fates hang upon minutes!"

And so saying, the stranger replunged the repeater into his bosom, and undid another button of his tight black velvet frock, or riding-coat, which displayed a waistcoat of white camelot. Taking both figure and face, it would have been impossible to have found a more perfect specimen of masculine beauty than this young man presented. Tall and *elance*, to a form of Apolline proportions, he added

\* The *En cas de Nuit* of the kings of France, continued up to the time of Louis Quinze, was, cold chicken, game and other *plats*, with bread and wine, laid on a table in their bedroom, in case they should be hungry in the night. Sometimes they actually made their supper of it, and it was esteemed a great favor for any one to be admitted to it.

a face which would have done for the model of the Antinous; his long dark eyes might have been too brilliant, had they not been curtained and subdued by their dark and silken lashes; his forehead was high and pale; and his cheeks (it might be from fatigue) were almost equally so; and that profusion of hair, then usually achieved by wigs, fell in rich and raven masses of natural curls on his shoulders; the slight, dark moustache that covered his upper lip, perhaps made his small, white, pearl-like teeth appear still whiter; his hands were unmistakably patrician in shape, size, and color; and his small feet and high instep were set off to the best advantage by the fine black morocco cavalier short riding-boots, wide at the top, with broad, gilt spurs that he wore. Again looking round, and seeing that no one came, the young man stooped down, and plucking a handful of long grass, he patted the beautiful black mare he had tied to the tree, and began rubbing her down with the wisp in his hand.

"Poor Zara!"\* said he, again affectionately patting the noble animal; "he who rides Chance I suppose must e'en abide by her, taking Hope for a spur and Patience for a curb; well, come," added he flinging away the wisp of grass, which had done its duty, and then rubbing his hands on the fresh, green sward, and finally drying them with his handkerchief previous to taking a letter from a side pocket of his coat, which he turned in all directions, and then read, half aloud, the superscription—

*à Monsieur Poquelin Molière,  
Rue de Richelieu, No. 30,  
à Paris.*

"Humph!" said he, "honest Master Tom Pepys was very sanguine about the good this letter was to do me; well, at all events, it was kindly meant, and he is worth a ship load, aye marry, the British fleet load! of his pompous, burley-faced, empty-pated cousin, the secretary; but, alas! I fear me, that honest Tom understands far better fashioning velvet, or fustian suits, at home, in his uncle's, or Pym's shop, than forwarding love suits abroad; poor thing! of shreds and patches, I pity him! there is another fag end of a family! What good do my Lord Sandwich, and my cousin, the sec., do him? And as for my lady Jem, she might indeed condescend to wear a Joseph of his choosing, without disputing the charge, but that's all; so that in point of

\* Zara means chance in Italian.

relatives, the Lords are of no more use than the Commons; 'a plague on both their houses!' say I. Relations, forsooth! why they were made it's impossible to tell, what they are made of is much clearer—of millstones, the broadest, and heaviest, which, being strung by Fate round a poor d—l's neck when he is drowning, always help to sink him the faster. I doubt if my uncle had been the Protector, whether he would have employed as much interest in my favor as would have procured me kneeling-room in a conventicle; for the chief immunity of wealth or power is, to be exempted from the *help tax*, by being disfranchised from poor relations! Whereas, the moment one's relations commit crimes, or incur disgrace, then, every relative they have, more especially their poorer ones, are made answerable for their forfeit to society." Here the repeater was again drawn forth, and told a quarter-past one.

"S'dearth! can any accident have befallen him?" exclaimed the young man aloud.

"Perhaps," said a voice in French at his ear; he started and on turning suddenly round, beheld a tall figure handsomely, nay almost gorgeously dressed, in the extreme of the mode—a violet velvet suit, with a cloak of the same, lined with white taffeta, collar, wrist, and knee ruffles, of the most costly lace, and a flowing peruke of bright auburn hair. This personage also wore a *chapeau de poul*; and his gauntlets, and the turn-overs of his boots, were trimmed with the finest *point d'Alençon*; while the basket hilt of his sword was one blaze of diamonds; and he likewise wore some order round his neck, in brilliants. But what struck the young man with a feeling of awe, almost amounting to the horrible! was the perfect immobility, not to say rigidity, of this person's face; which, though critically handsome in every feature, still had something painful and unnatural about it; upon examining it more closely he perceived that it was a wax mask, but fitted so accurately to the face and neck, that it required a minute inspection to discover this.

"You speak French?" interrogated the figure.

"Yes," replied the young man.

"And you are waiting here to meet, by appointment, one Master Hans Hallyburton?"

"It would be uncourteous to gainsay you," parried the youth.

"No, but useless," drily asserted the figure.

"Certainly, if you know to the contrary."

"I do, and there is no use in your waiting for him any longer."

"Why so?" asked the young man in evident alarm.

"Because, dead men keep no tryings-tings."

"Dead!" echoed the young man, clasping his hands, "My God! is it possible?"

"Ay, young sir, it is not always possible to live, but it is *always* possible to die; however, 'tis the worst of all blunders, to die by mistake, because it is irreparable."

"What mean you, sir? As you seem cognizant of poor Master Hallyburton's death, I pray you tell me the manner of it."

"The manner of it was this. Arriving in all haste last night at St. Denis, he stopped at a *cabaret* there, called after that saint, who is represented in the sign, taking his little constitutional stroll, with his head under his arm after his decapitation; but Master Hallyburton merely stayed to bait his horse, but could not be prevailed upon to pass the night, or even to take a hand at gleeke\* with some rufflers, who were supping there; though he stood a flagon of wine, and joined them in drinking the health of our great king, and our great captain, the immortal Condé! but I suppose it was to be, and when that's the case, warnings are of no avail; for what the Fates have written, no human hand can efface; yet as he vaulted into his saddle, a *Mousquetaire* pointed with his pipe over his shoulder to the inscription on the wall,† and nodded to him as he galloped off. I was also for the road, and followed him in about a quarter of an hour; when, upon reaching the Barrier, I saw a coach attacked by robbers, and Master Hallyburton gallantly defending the travellers; intending to come to his assistance, I leveled my pistol at one of the bandits, who, unfortunately stepping aside, the charge entered Master Hallyburton's left side, and he expired in a few minutes. Drawing, however, this packet from his bosom, telling me that you would be here at the back of the *Pre Aux Clercs* at noon to-day, waiting for it, and entreating that I would faithfully deliver it to you; also

\* A game at cards, then much in vogue; more gambling even than *Lansquenette*.

† On the walls of every *cabaret* formerly in France, were inscribed in florid letters, the words, "*Dieu te regarde.*" God sees you.

this small leathern bag of gold pieces, that is, if you are, as I take it you be, Master Rupert Singleton?"

"Alas! yes, I am indeed he! and none other," said the young man mournfully, taking the packet, which had a stain or two of Hallyburton's blood upon it.

"Poor Hans!" murmured Rupert Singleton, and then added, turning to the stranger, as he tore open the large official seal, "With your leave, Sir?"

The document contained only these words—

"Sir Henry Vane was beheaded on Tower Hill, at ten of the clock this morning, the fourteenth day of June, in the year of our Lord 1662; his lands of course being confiscated to the Crown. Though a traitor, he died bravely: *nonne more so.*

"John Robinson, Lieutenant of the Tower.

"His hand and seal.

"In witness thereof, Hans Hallyburton and William Swan."

"A beggar! and the nephew of a traitor!" exclaimed the young man, clasping his hands, and leaning his head against the tree: but as he spoke in English, the stranger said, pointing to the open letter.

"No bad news, young sir, I hope?"

"Only," said Rupert, with a bitter laugh, "that my uncle perished on the scaffold, as a traitor, eight days ago."

"Were you much attached to your kinsman?"

"No, for I never saw him. He was my mother's brother, and when our country was torn by the intestine commotions of civil war, he joined the Protector, and never would see either his sister or me, because she was the widow and I the son of a Cavalier."

"Whew!" whistled the stranger; "then methinks a midge's wing might suffice for your mourning."

"Not so, for Honor mourns longer than Affection, which is a Phoenix ever resuscitating out of its own ashes; but when a blow is aimed at Honor, it is always mortal!"

"Hark ye, my young friend," rejoined the stranger, placing his left hand upon Rupert's shoulder, while he pointed upwards with the forefinger of the other: "Our good Bossuet, and Bourdaloue, would tell you to look above; and I also tell you to look up, around, and about you; and you will see that half the time, what men call *honor!* is nothing but a scarecrow, set up by them to protect the immunities of SELF, which may and does scare the smaller birds, and casts a shadow on the earth, but *only* on the



earth, mind ; for the beam and the breeze are as bright and as free as ever for the eagle, and the gerfalcon, who dare soar high enough to meet them."

"But who can soar without wings? and what wings are to birds, wealth is to men," said the young man, with a melancholy smile.

"And what call you this, pray?" retorted the stranger, picking up the leathern bag (which Rupert had let fall on the ground when he read the Lieutenant of the Tower's letter), and tapping the side of it till the gold within returned an harmonious chink, he added, "Many a great man has begun the world with far less than even *one* of these broad pieces."

"This gold I cannot consider as lawfully mine," said Rupert, "for it must of right belong to poor Hallyburton's relations, if he has any."

"If he has any," repeated the stranger, seizing upon these last words, "aye, but he has—or rather had none—and his last request was, that they might be given to you."

"I can scarcely think so," said young Singleton, incredulously, for he was *very* poor; and poor people have always hosts of still poorer relations, depending upon their good offices; for on their *rich* ones they know it is no use to depend.

"Oh! then you know all about this Hallyburton?"

"No: for I never saw him till about three weeks ago, when, being obliged myself to leave England, and come over into France, I engaged him on the Tower wharf, to speed after me with the news of my uncle's trial, offering him fifteen gold pieces for the same, and he chattered much that I should make it seventeen, being, as he said, very poor."

"Of course," said the stranger, leisurely untying the leathern thong of the bag; "don't you know that poverty is always placed in the advanced guard, to clench a bargain?"

"Really sir, I—I—cannot think poor Hans ever possessed so plethoric a pulse; and I much fear me that *your* kindness, that is, your generosity, may lead you to—"

"To convince you," interrupted the stranger, not giving him time to stammer out the rest of the sentence, "that these are no moneys of mine, or of this realm; see, they are all ducateens, and broad Jacobus's; but as you *will* compliment my generosity, it must e'en respond to the appeal, and give you a taste of its quality. There will, from the terrible

scarcity of bread, be soon a collection made in all the churches in France, more especially in those of Paris; their Majesties and the Queen mother themselves holding the plates at Nôtre Dame. I like giving to the poor, at all events, making the rich do so; but as I cannot myself be there on that occasion, for it is two months hence, I will depute *you* to be my almoner, and beg you to put these into the plate as my contribution; but, remember, to *that* purpose alone must you dedicate them; for young gentlemen are apt to have lady loves, and you might think, perchance, that they would grace a fair round arm better than a church plate." And as he spoke, the stranger drew from his bosom a pair of costly strung pearl bracelets, each pearl being considerably larger than a white currant, and clasped with a large emerald, set round with brilliants.

"Oh! how beautiful!" exclaimed Rupert.

"In sooth, they *are* pretty baubles enough; and if charity covereth a multitude of sins, by my troth! jewels often do the same. At all events, the people are craving for bread, and methinks 'tis a pretty conceit, and one worthy of Monsieur de la Sabliere, by giving it to the boors in this shape, thus *literally* to throw pearls before swine! But hark ye, not a syllable of these pearls being in your possession to *mortal*, or you will have cause to repent it; it is *my* honor, ha! ha! ha! that I am intrusting to *yours*."

The stranger's laugh sounded suspiciously and disagreeably in Rupert's ear.

"But, sir, these really are too costly," said he, instinctively drawing back.

"Pooh! pooh! a matter of 10,000 crowns, not more."

"Really, I would rather you gave them yourself; people might wonder how I came by such things," still objected the young man.

"Ah! I see how it is," said his strange companion, "you *doubt* me, because I am *like* and yet *unlike* other men; for all other men wear a mask, only my mask is different from theirs, mine being of the most *penetrable* thing in the world—*wax*, while theirs is of the most *impenetrable*—*hypocrisy*!"

Youth, at least rightly-constituted youth, is naturally averse from hurting the feelings of others, especially if those others have been apparently kind to them; so coloring deeply, Rupert replied—

"Nay, sir, I can scarcely doubt one who has commenced his acquaintance

with me, by rendering me a signal service, as you did, in bringing me this letter, and—and—"the young man looked at the bag of gold, and colored still more deeply, without finishing his sentence.

"Good, that is something like; great benefits, they say, make ingrates, while small tokens beget friendship. So take this," added he (withdrawing from his own neck a small oval piece of vellum, with a monogram on it, and a piece of small green silk cord passed through it, like a miniature), "and wear it ever round your neck, within your doublet; it may do you good service when you least expect it; but never part from it, at least, while you are in France. Oh! I perceive," continued he, seeing that Rupert stared, "you are doubtless a Huguenot, and therefore have little faith in relics, but this is a famous one! one of St. Anthony's! that chivalric saint! the patron of ladies, and wayfarers in distress, and who himself never travelled without several changes of miracles in his valise, for the special use of both.

"*Aye! San Antonio, veggia Cavalieri,*" concluded he, singing out in a magnificent barytone voice, this refrain of an old Italian drinking song.

In order not discourteously to reject his gift of the strange-looking piece of vellum, Rupert passed it round his neck, and consequently cast down his eyes to arrange it within his vest; when he again raised them, the man in the wax mask was gone! having disappeared as noiselessly and suddenly as he had appeared. The young man looked round for him in all directions, but there was no trace of him. "Am I dreaming?" soliloquized he. "Yet no; for here is the heavy purse, the costly bracelets, and this rag of a relic hanging round my neck to authenticate the vision! Well, there is nothing like taking 'the goods the gods provide one,' as Master Dryden hath it;" and so saying, he plunged the purse into one pocket and the bracelets into another; and then unfastening and passing his horse's bridle round his wrist, he said, "Click! Come, Zara, thou hast not done so badly; it is my turn now to break my fast; and as I have wherewithal, the blind goddess be praised, to pay for it, it will go hard with me if I do not drink the Grand Monarque's health in a flask of kingly Burgundy." So saying, he turned out of the *Pre aux Clercs*, and down a narrow street on the right, called at that time the *Rue de L'Epee* (Sword Street), probably from all the duels that were fought in the adjoining meadow. Seeing

a peasant leading a donkey laden with melons, Rupert stopped, and asked him if there was an hostelry anywhere near, cheap enough for a poor scholar to put up at, and rich enough to afford a substantial meal, which he stood much in need of, not having eaten for four-and-twenty hours.

"*Eh Pardi!*" replied the peasant, "I believe you, my master. *Le Soliel Levant* (the Rising Sun) hard by, where you will get *soupe aux choux-verts*, and a *gibelotte* that might content the king himself, or even a cardinal!"

"Ah! indeed?" said the young man, smiling, "unfortunately, rabbits affect me not, nor green cabbage soup either; but still, it's always safe to follow the rising sun! So, many thanks for your information, friend," and putting a twenty-four sols piece into the countryman's hand, he continued his way down the street; his eyes bent abstractedly on the ground; and the sharp echo of his horse's feet upon the pointed and irregular pavement making a sort of harsh accompaniment to his by no means harmonious thoughts, till he came to "*the Soliel Levant,*" from the wooden balcony of the first story of which projected an enormous withered bush, which tempered the rays of the magnificent rising sun beneath! An inscription underneath informed the passers, that it found entertainment for man and beast; as indeed the rising sun generally does, of some kind or other. At the door were mine host, Maitre Potdevin and his better, at least bigger, half, Javotte, she shelling peas, and throwing them into a large flat basket, while a portly political economist of a pig, with an eye to the proper distribution of wealth, devoured the pods, and Maitre Potdevin, doubtless to keep his hand in for his customers, was plucking a very respectable, middle-aged duck, which Rupert, thinking a great improvement upon the promised *gibelotte* and cabbage soup, stopped, and inquired if his horse could be cared for, and himself served with that very duck and those identical peas (minus the pig), immediately? Having been answered in the affirmative, with innumerable bows and courtesys into the bargain, he conducted Zara to the stable, rubbed her down himself, made up her litter, and having cut a few carrots into her sieve of oats, for which she not only expressed her thanks by neighing and rubbing her head against him, but also drank his health in a pail of excellent water, which he had brought her, he left her to enjoy that repose of

which she stood so much in need; and returning to the house, entered the little inn's best, not worst, room, where he found the table already laid; but as he could not dine for half an hour, he ordered his saddle-bags to be carried up stairs to his sleeping-room, and having at length succeeded in making his ablutions by instalments, as travellers in England as well as France were obliged to do in those days, and re-dressed himself in a mourning suit of black velvet and jet, the cloak of which was lined with purple Florence silk, which well became him, he again descended. The dinner not having yet made its appearance, he poured out a glass of water and drank it; then, drawing a long silken ringlet of fair hair from his bosom, kissed it passionately; but hearing a footstep, he concealed it hastily, and dashing a tear from his eye, leant both elbows on the table, and held his forehead in his hands; and as if his thoughts, in their impetuous torrent, had burst all bounds, he said aloud—

“No, no, it is no use! *all now* is over! even *she*, perhaps, will shrink from me; for who will look upon me now?” Pushing back his hair, he raised his eyes, and as if Heaven had sent a direct and pitying answer to his despairing question, read on the opposite wall, the inscription of

DIEU TE REGARDE!

## CHAPTER VIII.

ARMANDE had now been a year Madame (or as actresses were always then called in France), Mademoiselle Moliere, and Armande was happy; for dress, pleasure, and admiration were all that her shallow and vapid heart required; and of each of these, she had more than enough to satisfy her. Of a deep and pure affection, or even of a great passion, she was incapable—as where there is no profundity of feeling there is seldom any tenacity of principle; for all *good* qualities are *great*, and, like large vessels at sea, require room, whereas the small craft of ignoble ones make better play in a shallow element. Consequently Armande, whom love could not sway nor principle bind, was a finished coquette; but as even coquettes have, in the chromatic scale of their vanity, certain semitones of predilection, which they mistake for the har-

monies of affection, she imagined that she was the victim of a *grande passion* for the captivating and worthless Duc de Lauzun. The reason that she deemed herself the *victim* of this imaginary attachment was, that although her heart was unguarded, either by the seraph Love, or the dragon Duty, and that she did not even feel that honest canine virtue, GRATITUDE, towards the man to whom she owed everything—that is, everything she most prized—celebrity, position, and independence; yet, to do her justice, she *did feel* the womanly leaven of pity for the heart she knew her infidelity would break. As in all our earthly possessions, the value of a thing is precisely that which we set upon it; and to the miser, who hoards and hugs the smallest copper coin with more devotion than a generous beggar would a gold one, the copper coin becomes inestimable, for more happiness has been invested in it, and more salvation staked upon it, than on the non-miser's gold; therefore, with all her vanity, Armande felt that she was not worth the vast mine of love Moliere had lavished on her; and not being able to pay him in kind, she thought a little charitable deception would be the most humane return she could make him; and so she cleverly *tried* to direct all his jealousy towards the Duc de Guiche, whom, without remorse, she cast forth as a scapegoat to her caprice for the handsome *vaurien* Lauzun. It so happened that one morning, after a scene between the husband and wife, the former telling her that he no longer could or would bear with her coquetry, and that, if she would not give up her danglers, she must give *him* up, for he would not live with her, Moliere lost his temper; and, like all persons who do so, his ground; while Armande, calm and unmoved, never acted better, even at the *Petit Bourbon*—winding up, however, with a fainting fit, which had the desired effect of converting her master into her slave, who, pressing one of her hands between both of his, as he knelt beside her, said, in a voice over whose inarticulate gaspings his very soul seemed broken in fragments—“Forgive me, Armande: I am a madman and a fool.”

“*Non, mon ami*, you are only cruel and unjust. I will write to the Duc de Guiche, forbidding him the house.”

“The Duc de Guiche!” echoed Moliere. “I thought \_\_\_\_\_”

But whatever he thought he did not utter it, as if he feared that a breath might give form and substance to his

already maddening, though only vague suspicions. Armande perceived his surprise and his hesitation, and knew well the *name* he *thought*, but had not spoken; and, lest he should do so, she clasped her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "Ah! Jean Baptiste, you are only surprised that I should name him, instead of being convinced, by my doing so, that my heart and my conscience acquit me; for it is easy to name those whom we don't care if we never see again."

"Yes, yes, of course, *m'amie*," said Moliere, patting her hand as he turned away his head, frowned, and bit his lips; and then again turning towards her, he drew her up by both hands out of her chair, imprinted a kiss on her forehead, and said with that terrible calm of exhaustion, which is the audible evidence of moral devastation, when a whirlwind of anguish and a tempest of conflicting passions have swept across the heart, and scathed with one electric flash the last green spot on which Hope dwelt, "Go, Armande, I have much to do, and must now be alone."

Too glad to escape all further accusation on the one hand, and subterfuge on the other, she obeyed, but still applied her handkerchief to the corner of her eyes, *en victime*. When Moliere closed the door after her, he turned the key in it, and then for some seconds remained with his arms folded, and his head sunk upon his bosom. At length he murmured in a low, hoarse voice between his set teeth, till the hollow whisper of his own voice echoed through the room, and seemed like hell returning a confirmation of his fears:—

"De Guiche! *can* it be he? and not Lauzun, as I have suspected? Oh!—no!—no!" he added, raising both hands to his head and grasping his hair; "She has my wits on a cast, and plays with my infirmity! Ah! she said truly—*it is easy to name those whom we don't care if we never see again!* The vile fair varnished sin! She never named—nay, by the rood! she never even hinted at Lauzun! Oh! arch fool and triple idiot that I am!—I see it all!" and he dashed his clenched hand against the wall, and then exclaimed with his own George Dandin, as he clenched both his hands and ground his teeth—

"*J'enrage! d'avoir toujours tort, lorsque j'ai raison.*"

But his physical strength was failing him, so he hung himself into a chair, and

tearing off his cravat, wiped the large drops from his forehead. At length he said, slowly shaking his head, and striking his breast, as if he had been saying a *mca culpâ*—

"Peace! friend Moliere; thou art a fool, and the worst of fools—one of thine own making!" and then, after rocking himself to and fro, for some time, he ended, as he always did, by making excuses for Armande.

"Poor soul; and is it *all her fault*? Oh! what selfish, dastardly, false, treacherous tyrants are men. Women by nature weaker than we are, from their more impressionable and susceptible organization, we make still weaker, by fettering them from their birth with the swathings of inane conventionalities; for we cripple our women's minds, as the Chinese do *their women's feet*; we pen them in the narrow fold of *irresponsibility, up to a certain point*, never allowing them to think for themselves, or lean upon their own resources. Denying them the wholesome mental food of rational beings, we sweeten the panada of their assumed inferiority with flattery and deceit, till we in reality enfeeble them down to a state of moral dentition, and *then* we throw them into that great arena of impossibilities, the world, to wrestle, single-handed and unarmed, with practised gladiators and untamed tigers; and so it will ever be, as long as we have two weights and two measures, palliation for *self*, and anathema for our neighbor. Can there be such a thing as morality until the Law of Morals is *immutable*, and the aggressor is punished at *least* equally with the victim? Can there be such a thing as morality, as long as we drape our social code with cobweb barriers, through which great offenders break with unlacerated wings, free as ever to recommence their career of depredation, and lesser ones alone get injured and entangled in their flimsy meshes? Can there be such a thing as morality, as long as virtue is only *preached* and vice is alone *practised*? Certainly *not*. Can there be such a thing as morality, when all ties are either violated with impunity, or made the subject of a ribald jest, when they belong to *others*, and only become solemn, sacred, and tragical, when similar ties happen to centre in, and be outraged against, *ourselves*? Certainly *not*. Oh! monstrous and fatal rock of egotism, upon which the great fleet of human happiness has split ever since the world began, and the giant wrecks will still go on multiplying, till the Sermon on the Mount be raised

as a Pharos upon that loadstone rock, and 'DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THEY SHOULD DO UNTO YOU,' becomes the inscription on the flag that flies from every human craft. And, to go from the universal to the particular; look at France at the present moment. Not content with the profligacy of our court, which one might think was demoralizing enough, we send our daughters to have their *manners* formed (their morals being of little consequence!) into the *salons* of the modern Lais, and actually *cabal!* for the *entree* for them *chez Ninon*,\* with as much unholy zeal as anchorites would exercise self-denial to get to Paradise! And have I not, too, contributed to the corruption of this great Lazar House? Armande! my poor Armande! have I not also cradled and trained you in it? And then, forsooth, I expect that you should be bright! and high! and pure! as a star whose way had always been in heaven! simply because I have chosen you as my particular star. Oh! worse than fool! Oh! more than madman! ever to have dreamt that *one* poor heartful of that most subtle purifier and disinfecter, love! could aught avail against *this universal pestilence of custom!* And worse than all, against these strange, long, crooked decisions of destiny *there*

\* Molière was justly horrified at the moral obliquity that could induce mothers to take their daughters to Ninon de L'Enclos, to form their *manners*,—but as far as the vicious state of society went, and the total *lèze morale*, we were not much behindhand in *virtuous England*; for Pepys, Evelyn, and all the other *mémories* of the time, mention, as a matter of course, Lord Brounker bringing "*his Miss*" into the society of very honorable ladies, and my Lord Sandwich doing the same; and moreover sending his daughters to lodge with "*his Miss*" at "*Chelsey*." It is true, that the English *then*, as *now*, always evince their own virtue, by expressing unmitigated abhorrence at the slightest dereliction from propriety in *others*, though indeed our Cordon *Sanitaire* was as knotted and entangled a puzzle to the uninitiated *then*, as it is *now*, serving, as in our own times, to give great law-breakers the whip hand over the few who fear God and not man, and so exercise it as a cat-o'-ninetails upon their eccentricity; but it is doubtless a great proof of our philanthropy, that we should thus devote all our scrutiny and severity to the short-comings of *others*, and so totally overlook our own. Consequently, while we are scandalized at the supposed demoralizing influence of the confessional, we do not seem to think there is anything either disgusting or vitiating, in letting our newspapers be filled with trials detailing the *grossest vice*, and, by the melancholy frequency of the record, proving that we are *not so singularly moral* a people after all!

*is no appeal!* Do we not often see the conscientious son paying his spendthrift father's debts? and often, too, the profligate sire shall have an exemplary wife and virtuous son, and this virtuous son shall doat upon *his* wife, and yet be betrayed *by her*. Strange, dark mystery of iniquity, which proves, beyond all doubt, that '*the sins of the fathers are, indeed, visited upon the children,*' and that Fate is God's delegate, and grim, relentless Nemesis ever *her* toll-taker! Oh! it's *all wrong*—all rotten at the core. We mire and poison society at its very source, and *then* punish and exclaim against, from time to time, the few stragglers who get splashed by its turbid impurities; while the mass, who plunge deep into its Stygian abominations, obtain the invulnerable franchise of impunity!"

Again Molière rose—again he paced the room with folded arms; but as if feeling the vanity of *words* against such stubborn crooked *facts*, he now thought in silence, save when a groan occasionally escaped him. As he again reached the door for about the twentieth time, some one knocked gently at it. Thinking it was Armande, he resolved to take no notice, for he would rather have died than have seen her at that moment; but the knock was soon repeated more loudly, and the unmistakable voice of the poet Chapelle, whose jovial and rubicund tones resembled, as Molière was wont to express it, clusters of grapes, ripened by the vicinity of a volcano—for Chapelle was the Sheridan of the age of *Louis Quatorze*, the lord of wit and the slave of wine. Like Sheridan, too, he abounded in the floating elements of better things; but alas! feeble were the efforts of his higher qualities to resist the force of his ruling passion, so that his virtuous resolves only shared the fate of Agave and Pentheus, whenever they attempted to mutiny against the ruddy god.

"*Ah ça Poquein, mon ami*, open the door if you are within," cried Chapelle.

Molière needed no second appeal. He was himself so true and expansive in his friendships, that he never doubted that his friends were less so to him; nor, for the most part, were they: and as none loved him more cordially than Chapelle, unless indeed it might be La Fontaine, the sound of his voice now fell like balm upon Molière's chafed and wounded spirit. In La Fontaine, he perhaps loved the leaven of the man better; but then there was no such thing as being *with* La Fontaine except when away from him; yet in this, the *bonhomme* reserved

nothing to himself that he did not share with his friends, for his own identity was a great abstraction; he was always *out of himself*, consequently he had strong theoretical friendships; but the moment these friendships became incarnate, and approached him in tangible forms, he felt so oppressed by their corporeal vicinity, which was to him like a condensed crowd, that in this pressure he was apt to lose his sympathies, and grope for them in vain, never being able to comprehend, till an hour or two after the person had left him, the joy, sorrow, hope, or fear, that he *ought* to have felt for, or with, the poor *soul*! Whereas Chappelle, drunk or sober, was always, *body and soul*, with his friends—what was *his* was *theirs*; and as all human weal, and still more, all human woe, is unavoidably selfish, there is nothing so attaching as those friends who *identify* themselves with both the one and the other; for we naturally like those whom we cling to, to be *present*, and not *absent*.

"Ah! it's you! Chappelle," said Moliere, instantly opening the door, and cordially shaking his friend's hand. "Always welcome! and never more welcome than now."

"Really," replied Chappelle, looking askance at his companion's flushed, yet haggard face: "I cannot return the compliment, and say, Ah! it's you, Moliere; for who would suppose that the Knight of the Rueful Countenance before me was Europe's greatest comic author and actor."

"Pshaw!" said Moliere, evasively: "Can anything well be more wretched than to be always writing and acting the follies of mankind?"

"Yes, one thing; for it is more foolish, too; which is, to fret at them."

"I don't fret at *them*," sighed Moliere.

"Then you fret at something, for I never saw a man so changed. Harkee, friend Poquelin, you are the property of the public, and the wealth of your friends; therefore you have no right to peril or squander the smallest atom of your well-being, without giving a strict account of it. Every human being is the best judge of their own joy, for no other heart can analyze it for them; but sorrow is a speck upon the eye of their existence, which it requires another's eye to scrutinize, and, through the assistance of that other, it may often be removed."

"I don't know," replied Moliere, with a pale smile, "I fear no friendship would long hold out, if we converted it into our *souffre douleurs* and *porte malheures*."

"Bah! My dear Poquelin, you would never have put so false a sentiment, and so clumsy a speech, into the mouth of one of your own *dramatis personæ*. As I have often said, touching the Jesuit and Jansenist's feuds, those whom religion disunites are not *really religious*, for every faith is but some separate ray of that universal halo, of which God is the centre; and, in like manner, those whom sorrow can estrange or misfortune weary, are *not friends*, though they may be companions; for friendship grafts itself alike on weal or woe, having sincerity for its radix. Hitherto, I confess, mine has been but a parasite, entwining itself around your flourishing tree of life; at all events, do the poor parasite the justice to believe that it will not *wither* 'neath any shade, however dark, that may fall from that goodly tree."

And a drop—as, alas! was too often the case—glistened in poor Chappelle's eye, as he held out his hand to his companion, who took it, and pressed it within both his own.

"My dear Chappelle, your kindness has unlocked my heart."

"I am glad of it, for I know no casket whose treasures I would rather explore."

"Treasures! What if you find the most puerile rubbish and the foulest toad that ever eat into a stone, and made it hideous with its presence?"

"The simile is illogical; for your heart, my good Moliere, is no stone, and therefore I am at a loss to conjecture which of its passions or feelings can possibly resemble that vile reptile."

"Jealousy! the most slimy, subtle, and deadly, that ever tortured and poisoned a human heart!" cried Moliere, clutching with an iron yet tremulous grasp both Chappelle's shoulders, his utterance almost choked between his set teeth, and a momentary insanity glaring in his eyes. Even Chappelle's florid face became livid, as the blood receded to his heart, under the magnetic influence of the strong agony before him.

"Yes," repeated Moliere, in a hollow, thin, sharp whisper, as he relaxed his grasp of Chappelle's shoulders, tottered back into his chair, and covering his face with his hands, said, with a bitter ironical laugh, "*I, Moliere*, am jealous! *jealous of my wife!* ha! ha! Don't you think I have *now* furnished the town with more matter for laughter than I ever did before?"

"Why, yes, my dear Poquelin, if what you say is true; but—but—it's utterly impossible! In the first place, I'm con-

vinced you have no cause; in the next, if you had, I'm sure your broad good sense would never allow you to make so serious an evil of being merely in the fashion, nay, in the very height of the fashion," stammered Chapelle, sore perplexed between the fear of seeming unfeeling, and his wish to try, by treating the matter lightly, to induce Moliere to conquer his misgivings.

"You are convinced I have no cause," sighed Moliere, slowly. "Would to God I could be convinced of the same. Ah, my dear Chapelle," added he, first pointing to his head, and then to his heart; "when these two witnesses agree, the evidence is conclusive."

"Nay, not always, for the one generally prejudices the other; besides, where is your strong, eagle-eyed, iron-minded common sense, Poquelin?"

"Destroyed, by my folly."

"Well; but if a woman whom I had loved and trusted, cherished and worshipped, as you have done your wife, played me false, by the rood! I should despise her too much to fret about her."

"Ah! you have never loved."

"Then I would avenge my honor at once, by repudiating what I knew had injured it."

"It is plain you have never loved, Chapelle."

"Yes I have; but sensibly and soberly, as befits an honest man, but I should never have made so great a grief of what I suspected to be so worthless; and being sure of it, I should never have hesitated as you do, to pursue a decided course. If you act thus on suspicion you wrong your wife, and if from certainty you wrong yourself, not to have the courage and the decision to avenge your injuries; and I don't hesitate to tell you, that I blush for you!"

"And I envy you; for all you say, convinces me that you have never loved! Despise me if you will, but beware how you make others despise Armande; mine, at all events, shall not be the hand to push her down the precipice; you have surprised my confidence, do not abuse it; I confide it to your honor."

"You may," said Chapelle, "but from my soul I grieve for you. And is it possible that you mean to go on inflicting the voluntary martyrdom on yourself, of acting every night with that woman scenes which I now perceive you rehearse in realities at home? Well may the town marvel at, and applaud, the inimitable nature of your acting, for what can be truer to nature than the real? Again I

ask you, my dear friend, can you inflict this voluntary, this horrible martyrdom on yourself?"

Before Moliere could reply, another knock was heard at the door. Previous to opening it, he grasped Chapelle's hand, and said in a low voice—

"Hush! not another word; you shall see that any degree of martyrdom can be borne by a voluntary martyr."

He then said in a loud voice, "Come in."

The intruder was Boileau; who, after having greeted Moliere, turned angrily to Chapelle; for Boileau was a sort of social St. Paul, who had the care of all his friend's oddities, misdemeanors, and peccadillos upon him.

"Ah! mauraise tête!" cried he. "You have been at your old tricks, and now have the honor of dividing the censure of the court and the town with Cartouche."\*

"Why?" asked Moliere, affecting to laugh, and not sorry that it was now Chapelle's turn to have a little of that good advice and unerring wisdom, which people always have ready at the service, of the faults and follies of others; "has he, during one of his campaigns in Burgundy, sworn allegiance to Cartouche?"

"No, not quite so bad as that. Cartouche's share of notoriety is this: the old Duchesse de Chevereuse, who was always boasting that she defied him, or even the d—l himself, to rob her—at least of her personals, such as clothes, jewels, &c. &c.—has, since the day before yesterday, made Versailles ring with her lamentations; as, it seems, upon rising two mornings ago, she found all her jewels gone, and one of Cartouche's civil notes on her toilet, expressing his happiness at not having disturbed her in the night, while removing those few baubles,

\* There are two celebrated robbers of this name. The one above mentioned was the most notorious of the two, he being supposed to have been a younger branch of a noble family in Languedoc, and to have served three years under Maréchal Turenne, when a disappointment in love made him turn bandit. The wonderful and mysterious success of his burglaries, and the magnanimous acts of restitution, charity, and generosity that he occasionally performed, made him at once the terror, the admiration, and the theme of the seventeenth century. His whole life was a romance, and he perished at the age of thirty-seven, in a highway encounter. The other Cartouche, equally celebrated for his daring, his almost sleight-of-hand robberies, his sang froid, and his wit, who flourished from 1719 to 1743, is supposed to have been great nephew to the above.

which, if left at Versailles, he feared might become the prey of some vulgar rapacity! and he ended by complimenting Madame la Duchesse upon her perspicacity, in always foretelling the safety of her *personals*, as he begged her to accept his solemn word of honor, that neither he, nor any of his *troupe*, would ever carry her off!"

While they were still laughing at this misadventure of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, Despréaux said to Chapelle:

"As for you, you don't come off with such flying colors as Cartouche; and I am so provoked with you for flinging Fortune's gifts back in her face, as you do, at every turn, that I have been hunting for you in every *cabaret* in Paris, to give you the scolding you so well deserve; though, Heaven only knows, all reproofs are thrown away upon you!"

"Why, what have I been doing now?" asked Chapelle, with a sort of frightened, school-boy look, that made both Moliere and Despréaux burst out laughing.

"Rather, what have you *not* been doing, in the way of *gaûcheries* and *manques de convenances*? Pray allow me to ask you, had you not the honor of an invitation from *Monsieur le Prince*,\* to sup at Fontainebleau last Thursday?"

"Yes—well?"

"No—but *ill, very ill*. As, instead of obeying it—for, you know, royal invitations are commands—did you not meet in your after-dinner walk a set of officers and young sparks, playing at bowls, near the *Mail*? And did you not loiter there, looking at them? And when the game was ended, and the losers adjourned to a neighboring tavern, to give a collation to the winners, did you not go with them, and there remain drinking, till, long before ten o'clock, instead of being at Fontainebleau, you were under the table *Malheureux!*"

"Alas! yes. It is all too true! But they pressed me so much to join them; and—and—you must make some allowance for the temptation of entreaty and the contagion of example," stammered Chapelle.

"No, sir; I make *none* for such childish weakness in a full-grown man, who calls himself a rational being!" vociferated Despréaux, striking the table with his clenched hand; and then added, "I suppose you had not even the decency to offer an apology to *M. le Prince*; though,

\* The son of the great Condé; in reality, the Duc D'Enghien, but always called Monsieur le Prince, during his father's lifetime.

indeed, I don't know what apology you *could* make for such a gross breach of decorum."

"O, yes," said Chapelle, now raising his drooping head, like a large poppy after a refreshing shower, and apparently quite *sure* that *this* time, at least, he was in the right: "I went the very next day and made his Royal Highness an ample apology."

"And what, in the name of Silenus, did you say?"

"I said, really, *Monseigneur*, these officers I met were such good people—such excellent company, so easy, that I could not refuse their supper; and with them, at least, there was no formality; one was quite at one's ease."\*

At this, both Moliere and Boileau roared!

"*Tiens!*" cried Chapelle, stopping in the act of blowing his nose—"there seems to be more wit in this apology than I'm aware of."

"Or less?" said Despréaux, going off into another fit of laughter.

"No; for Monsieur le Prince laughed just as you do when I made my excuses to him."

"I've no doubt of it," rejoined Despréaux, "and I advise you to make the most of *that laugh from Monsieur le Prince*; for, suppers inclusive, depend upon it, it is *all* you are likely to get from him!"

"You think so?"

"I'll swear it! but come," added Despréaux, looking at his watch, "it is nearly four o'clock, and time Moliere should be at the *Petit Bourbon*; but as I have not half done with you yet, I can continue my lecture in the street, as I intend to walk home with you to keep you out of harm's way; so, *adieu, Poquelin, mon ami.*"

"Adieu," said Moliere, readjusting his cravat before the glass, previous to his own departure for the theatre.

"Now, you see, my dear Chapelle," resumed Despréaux, taking his friend's arm as soon as they got into the street, and leaning both his hands on it, "what I say to you is wholly and solely for your good. If I did not care for you, and if you were not *worth* caring for, I assure you I would not waste a single lecture upon you, but let you go to the d—! your own way."

\* This tells better in Chapelle's own words: "*En vérité, mon Seigneur, c'étaient de si bonnes gens, et bien aisés à vivre, que ceux qui m'ont donné à souper: aux moins avec eux, il n'y avait point de gêne!*"



"I know it—I know it; and believe me, I feel grateful for it, my dear Despréaux," cried poor Chapelle, with the tears in his eyes, grasping both his companion's hands.

"Because you see," continued Despréaux, "this detestable and degrading vice will not only mar your every prospect in life, but will actually drag your talents, great and brilliant as they are, into the mire with you, as you will eventually quench the Promethean spark, which links the human with the divine; for where the man ends the brute begins."

"Oh! true, too true! How deeply—how keenly, I feel every word you utter; and time shall convince you of the sincerity of my resolves of amendment. My dear friend, I could listen to you forever; but let us finish our conversation in here, for you speak so loud, and I am so moved by what you say, that we are exciting the attention of all the people in the street."

"Willingly," said Despréaux, following him into a *café*, which bore the propitious title of

"LE CAFE DE LA SAGESSE."

In reply to the *garçon's* question of what he should bring? Despréaux was about to order two cups of coffee; but before he could speak, Chapelle from habit called, almost mechanically, for a bottle of Burgundy. Despréaux shrugged his shoulders as he seated himself at a table, which the poet perceiving, said: "Forgive me, my dear friend, it was inadvertence; but you know one must call for something, and we need only drink a glass of it."

The wine was brought. Despréaux at first refused to take any; but Chapelle, who had emptied his glass at one draught, pronounced it so superexcellent, and pressed his companion so urgently *only to taste it*, that he at length yielded.

"It is indeed first rate," assented Despréaux, making a sound with his tongue very like the drawing of a cork, to indorse his opinion; "but you promise me, my dear Chapelle, that you will in future abstain from this temptation?"

"I promise you everything, my dear, kind friend, for I feel the urgent necessity of following your admirable counsel," replied Chapelle, grasping his companion's hand, and at the same time refilling both their glasses.

"For I hope," resumed Despréaux, swallowing the contents of his second glass as he spoke, "I have convinced you not only how degrading, but how ruinous the vice of drinking is."

"Indeed! Have you?"

And again the glasses were replenished; and, amid good advice on the one side, and grateful acknowledgments on the other, were once more emptied; till, soon, the bottle had followed their example, and was emptied too.

"I think," said Despréaux, eyeing it askance, but still not actually attempting to rise, "we had better pay, and go."

"I think so, too," assented Chapelle.

"*Garçon!*"

"*Monsieur?*"

"How much?" asked Despréaux.

"Another bottle—quick!" cried Chapelle, in the same breath; and the waiter, thinking it more for the benefit of the establishment to obey the second speaker's order than answer the question of the first, vanished, and reappeared the next moment with the second flask of *nuits*—which followed its predecessor, embalming a whole course of philosophy against intemperance in general, and wine-bibbing in particular, till this second bottle had also three successors; then, indeed, not only the ideas of the two *savants*, but their utterance, became less clear. Chapelle, with a Jupiter-on-Olympus frown, seized Despréaux's shoulder, and stammered out:

"No, sir! I make *no* allowance for such full-grown weakness in a childish man!" being a sort of inverted paraphrase of Despréaux's rigorous speech to him at Moliere's, half an hour before, which he now repaid, perorating it with a dig in the side, and grunting out, "Eh? you understand?"

"To be—be—sure," said Despréaux, majestically waving his hand, as he rose, tried to steady himself on his feet, and then, making a clutch at Chapelle's arm, and succeeding in passing his own through it, said, as he began dragging him out of the *Café*:

"*Insanas leges, contrabibendit fallacias.*"

To which, an unclassical and intercepting waiter responded, holding out his hand:

"Fifteen twenty-four sol pieces, if you please, *Messieurs.*"

Whereupon, Chapelle, who was in much too exalted a state to grovel down to arithmetic, flung him a Louis d'Or, spluttering out:

"*There!* as you have fifteen daughters, who have twenty-four sons a-piece, I give it to you this once. But, *mind*, you rascal! you don't spend it in drink! a vice I especially abominate, and so does the great Despréaux here; so do we all."

You have only to see another man d—d—d—drunk, to be disgusted! Come, my dear friend," and he, in his turn, dragged Despréaux on, and they both reeled into the street together.

"Way! wo—a—stop," said Chapelle, looking up at the sign of this *café*, "I want to see what church this is that I have given golden alms in;" and then he hiccupped out, "*Ca—Café de la se—se—sagesse.*"

"It's not a church," stammered Despréaux: "de—de—don't you see it's a heathen temple; a ge—ge—ge—*Gymnasia bibonum.*"

"And ye—ye—you are the high-priest, I suppu—pu—pose?" said Chapelle, to the waiter, who stood grinning at the door.

"Yes," replied the latter, "and no one leaves this temple on foot." So he sent for a hackney-coach, and having heard that one of the Bacchanals was the illustrious Despréaux, had the worthy academicians, who were quite unable to guide themselves, safely conveyed home.\*

## CHAPTER IX.

THE sagacious reader—for all readers are sagacious, except it be reviewers; who, indeed, seldom read, which accounts for their ignorance, but only puff or abuse "*as per agreement,*" and in which they evince the most brass and least brains it would be impossible to decide, nor is it necessary to do so here—well, then, the sagacious reader has no doubt long before this discovered that Lucy Hawthorne and Rupert Singleton are lovers; but how they came to be such is what he cannot possibly know without being told. About a year previous to their arrival at the "*Golden Porringer,*" Sir Gilbert Hawthorne had been very angry with his wife and daughter, not indeed for refusing, for that was a stretch of self-will that neither of them ever dared be guilty of, but for entreating him with a feeling of sickening horror to dispense with their presence at the Bear

\* For the benefit of the most ignorant portion of the "*British public,*" to wit, the British reviewers, whose puffs and blows are on a par for clumsiness and brass (*both being equally done to order*), and totally irrelevant to the merits or demerits of a book, I beg leave to state that it is not I who have created the above scene, and made Boileau figure in an orgy; I have merely repeated the anecdote as history has handed it down, I alone furnishing the dialogue.

Garden; which Sir Gilbert considered a truly national and therefore an incomparable sport. This petition and their irrepressible disgust were quite sufficient to rivet his will and make him enforce his commands; so accordingly the coach was ordered, and to the Bear Garden they went. As they alighted at Bear Garden stairs (Lucy somewhat paler than usual, at the anticipation of the revolting sight she was about to witness), young Rupert Singleton sprang on shore from a boat, he having taken water at "*Chelsey,*" where his mother lived. He was not going originally to the Bear Garden, but to Mistress Hiram, the handsome landlady of the Bear Garden Tavern, with a message from his mother to borrow her famous receipt for the preparation of what was then called "*the new China drink,*" namely, tea; but he no sooner beheld Lucy, than, forgetting his mission, he followed her into the Bear Garden, and seated himself in a box immediately next to her. When the horrible spectacle began, she turned away her head and shut her eyes; but as there is a fascination in all horrors, she was presently roused by the vociferations of her father, who was crying out, as he clapped his hands—

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it! That's it! Ha, ha, ha! Bruin, my Hector, that'll be but an ortalon for you! Siss—siss—siss! High, boy! toss him, like a pancake!"

And, opening her eyes, and for a moment looking down into the amphitheatre, she beheld two butchers unmuzzling a poor little King Charles dog, and about to fling him to the bears.

"O! heavens! the poor little dog will be killed!" screamed Lucy.

The words were not out of her mouth before Rupert Singleton had cleared the box and sprang into the arena; where, giving the two men who were unmuzzling the dog three angels and a gold Jacobus (of which, it must be confessed, he did not possess too many) he bought the poor little trembling animal, and, tucking it under one arm, he laid his other hand upon the edge of the box and vaulted lightly into it; where, taking off his hat, he said, with a low and respectful bow to Lady Hawthorne, glancing but slightly at Lucy the while:

"Perhaps the young lady will be good enough to accept this poor little fellow, and then he will be out of all harm's way."

"May I, mother?" asked Lucy, timidly.

"Certainly, love, since the young gen-

tleman nearly risked his life to save this poor little dog's."

And the next moment, Fop (for it was he), with a beating heart and trembling paws was in Lucy's arms, returning her caresses with interest; while the spectators clapped their hands, and applauded young Singleton's gallantry, loudly demanding Lucy's name, that they might toast her, (!) as was the fashion of the day. Poor Lucy shrank abashed, and half-dead, behind her mother. But Sir Gilbert, who appeared greatly elated and flattered at the honor of having his daughter publicly toasted in a bear garden, attempted forcibly to drag her forward; but, failing in the effort, he leaned half out of the box, and placing his right hand, open, at the side of his mouth, as if he had been hailing a man-o'-war on the high seas, roared out:

"The wench hath no cause, friends, to be ashamed of her name, *thof*, mayhap, she makes as if she had! She's my daughter, my *only* daughter, Luce Hawthorne; and I'm Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, Knight of the Shire, of Hawthorne Glen, Merton, Surrey. So, patches and whisks! toast her, and welcome!"

When "PRETTY MISTRESS LUCY HAWTHORNE!" had been drunk, with three rounds of applause, in which Sir Gilbert joined as vehemently as any one—for was she not *his* daughter?—he turned to Rupert, the cause of his oration, and, holding out his hand to him, said:

"Your name, young sir? And gen it's an honest one, and no Roundhead's, here is an honest man's hand for you; and, moreover, you're welcome to a seat at his board, and a flagon of his best Canary, whenever you like to come to Hawthorne Glen to drink it."

"I am much beholden to you, sir, for your courtesy, of which I shall take an early opportunity of availing myself."

"Nay, nay, the earlier the better. 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' Why not back and sup with us to-night? and as there is no moon, and so like to be highwayman's harvest, my lady here will give you a bed,—won't you, sweetheart? But odds bodikins! your name first? I'm forgetting your name; and though your dress don't much betoken it, it would never do for a man of my kidney to light upon a Nottinghamshire numskull, merely because he had got my girl toasted at a bear garden. Ha! ha! ha!" And Sir Gilbert Hawthorne wagged his head, winked his eye, and again roared at the idea of

his caution being caught napping, and making such a blunder.

"My name, sir, is Singleton, Rupert Singleton," replied the young man.

"Singleton, Singleton—where have I heard of Singleton? Oh! Ah! to be sure; you ain't mayhap any relation of Sir Rupert Singleton, that gallant cavalier, who fell on the right side at Naseby in the year '45,\* are you?"

"His son, sir; but I have no recollection of my father, having been only a few months old when he died."

"Egad then, young sir, if you come to Hawthorne Glen, you *shall* remember him; for I always hold a solemn fast every year in commemoration of that rascally fourteenth of June; not forgetting, however, to drink the memory of the heroes of that day, which were neither Nol, nor Fairfax, mind you."

Poor Rupert was in the seventh heaven! to think that he should be, thus actually beyond his most sanguine expectations, and his wildest dreams, asked to return home with Lucy; nor can we with truth say that she was sorry for the arrangement; for though she had scarcely looked at young Singleton, yet, thanks to that mysterious magnetism peculiar to love, every look and tone of his had sunk into, and glowed through, her heart! for there was to her, in the beauty of his person, and the suavity and courteousness of his bearing, a warrant, as old *Herrick* hath it, that

"*Now was the time, so oft by truth  
Promis'd should come, to crown her youth.*"

For his gallantry was so deferential,—his voice so harmonious,—his manners so gentle,—his whole deportment, in short, so distant, and so different from the licentious freedom then in vogue among the courtiers, and yet so free from every particle of the sheepish awkwardness, and obtuse stolidity of her cousin, Tom Fairlop, who, though he studied them, was himself no star, that Lucy Hawthorne, for the first time in her life, found herself in the spiritual paradise of congeniality. But Rupert Singleton was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow;" therefore she had unimpededly instilled into him, from his earliest infancy, all those humanizing influences which are, to the mind of a man, what the edge and the polish are to sword iron, giving to the rough metal its temper and its value. Every age produces some minds in advance of it, or

\* 1645.

else the world would have stood still at the end of the very first century. Lady Singleton lived in times when the nearest approach to the science of ethics, even from the pulpit, was that of enjoining human nature the impossible task of annihilating its passions, instead of inculcating the very possible and all-important achievement of directing and subduing them; for as God's wisdom is unerring, He has given us no one passion which, if *properly* directed, is not of use; but our free-will being the mischievous and unruly child, which is forever producing fatal accidents with these moral combustibles, the great secret of education is to *direct* this reckless and troublesome free-will, to make a proper, and not an improper use of those dangerous weapons within its reach. With this profound truth Lady Singleton was so thoroughly imbued, that the first twelve years of her son's life, she devoted herself to educating his *heart*, and *disposition*; and though with a prejudice, very natural in the widow of a cavalier, against the puritanical times of religious hypocrisy in which she lived, yet, being a *genuinely* pious woman, she early instilled into the heart of her child, that there was no such thing as *trifles* in moral delinquency; for that all small things, whether of good or evil, were the connecting links either of our virtues or our vices; so that, early, Rupert was taught the self-catechism of

"Can I do this thing, and sin against God?"

For in all our transactions with our fellow-creatures, it is God's work that we do, or that we leave undone, or His commandments that we violate.

This good foundation laid, Lady Singleton was by no means neglectful of the external or decorative superstructure to be raised upon it; for, as she truly said, why should not the casket be worthy of the gem? And virtues in ungainly vehicles are seldom recognized, or let to take precedence of more smartly and modishly equipped vices; so, though much straitened in her means, she resolved that Rupert should have all the advantages of foreign travel—for what mother is poor, where her children are concerned? and, as Rupert thought that no man was a finished gentleman unless he were a good linguist, which it is impossible to be without living in foreign countries, and that nothing makes people find their level, and rounds their manners from all insular angles, like a little cosmopolite friction, accordingly he tra-

velled, and when he met Lucy Hawthorne for the first time, at the Bear Garden, he had only returned from a four years' continental tour, six months before.

Finding it impossible to witness the cruelty of the Bear Garden, Lucy complained of being ill and faint from the heat; which, indeed, was no exaggeration, as it was a sultry day in July; so that she, with her mother, obtained leave to adjourn into the Bear Tavern, and as Rupert had his mother's message to deliver to Mrs. Hiram, the handsome landlady, thither he accompanied them, and having installed Lady Hawthorne and Lucy in the bay-window of its best parlor, overlooking the Thames, and gorgeous with scarlet and white balsams, he got the receipt for the concoction of the fragrant shrub, and begged Mrs. Hiram to send for a pound of tea to Frewin the Chemist's, at the Galen's Head, opposite the May-Pole, in the Strand, which having obtained, he wrote a hasty letter to his mother, telling her of his invitation to the Hawthornes, and not to expect him; and, as he was in the habit of turning his heart inside out to her, he also told her what he thought of Lucy—adding, "and oh! mother, if I can but get her to like me; I don't care if she has not a Carolus, and, when you know her, I'm sure neither will you. I know what you'll say, with your quiet, kind smile, that would take the wrinkles out of even a miser's heart, that we must live; and that love alone don't do to go to market with; but mother, remember Prince Rupert is my godfather; and, although he never done anything for me yet, but give me a set of tennis-balls, and once let me bowl him out at a match, still, surely he *will* do something for me *then*; for his interest is good."

And having sealed up these golden certainties—for the *hopes* of youth are always such—he gave the waterman who had brought him half a crown, to make all haste in returning to "Chelsey," and deliver into his mother's hand his letter and the *medicinal* packet, as tea was then considered.

From that day for the next eight months, Rupert Singleton was a constant guest at Hawthorne Glen, and the result may be easily imagined. His mother and Lady Hawthorne also became great friends, and the former loved Lucy as well as if she had been her own daughter; while Lady Hawthorne believed, that if there was such a thing as human perfection, it was centred in young Singleton. Neither did Sir Gilbert escape

his influence, for Rupert was a capital shot, an accomplished rider, generally victor at a match, whether on the river or the turf; and could, as we have seen, beat the great tennis player of the day, Prince Rupert, whose heavy German phlegm ill brooked the defeat, which he took care should be a solitary one; and, to crown all, while Lucy knew how exquisitely he could sing an Italian *nocturna*, or serenade, Sir Gilbert was roused to enthusiasm by the *verve* with which he sang all the cavalier songs, and was wont to declare that, notwithstanding he was such a spruce gallant, such a prince of fops (and hence the little dog's name), he was the best fellow anywhere; and as manly as if he had "*been born in a kennel, and weaned on Audit ale.*" But with all this, it never entered Sir Gilbert Hawthorne's head that he, or any other man, would presume to fall in love with his daughter, without first asking his leave; so that when Rupert did ask his leave, not indeed to fall in love with her, for that he had done entirely on his own responsibility—but to marry her, the knight was rather taken aback; for, sooth to say, he had certain visions about Luce—as he called her—marrying a great Lord, and becoming a great lady at Court; and whatever greatness fate had decreed as the portion of Rupert Singleton, the young man had yet to achieve; for that which the world calls great, is not what we ARE, but *where we are*, and *what we have*. Still, Sir Gilbert liked Rupert, for he had become one of his *habits*, and therefore he did not like the discomfort of throwing him off; and as there was no one of more *singleness* of purpose than the knight, as he never in any transaction thought of but ONE person, and that ONE was *himself*, he neither positively refused, nor positively accepted young Singleton's proposals for his daughter, who he knew was quite rich enough to please herself, and marry a man without a *doit*, if she, or rather if *he* pleased it; so all he said was—

"Odds boddikins! What, in love with my girl Luce? Well, bide a while, boy, bide a while, and we'll see about it—thof—Marry come up! it's no bad notion either, for nothing, to move to a matter of £30,000."

"I don't want a Jacobus with Mistress Lucy, I do assure you, sir," said the young man, while all the blood in his body rushed into his face to repel the supposition.

"Ha! ha! ha! then more fool you, my

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spruce Gallantile; but bide a while, boy, bide a while, and we'll see about it."

And so poor Rupert continued for two months longer to saturate his heart in Lucy's eyes, till his love for her became ingrain, and never to be effaced; when, unluckily one day, when he and his mother were dining with the Hawthornes, at Chatelins, the French house in Covent Garden (the only one where people could have private rooms), in order to go to the King's playhouse after, to see a play that all the town were flocking to, entitled—

"IF YOU KNOW NOT ME, YOU KNOW NOBODY:

OR,

THE TROUBLES OF QUEEN ELIZABETH:"

one of the waiters (who in those days, with the barbers, supplied the place of one of our modern necessities, a daily newspaper) announced that Sir Henry Vane, and the rest of the conspirators, had been that morning sent to the Tower, and he feared it would fare badly with them; whereupon he left the room.

"My poor brother!" exclaimed Lady Singleton, covering her face with her hands, and sobbing aloud.

"What, madam!" roared Sir Gilbert, thumping the table with his clenched hand, till the glasses and flagons danced again: "Sir Henry Vane *your* brother! and your uncle, young master, and yet for either of you to dare to think of my daughter, Luce Hawthorne! or to suppose that, if even the wench was so lost to all shame (for there is no knowing where the folly of womenkind begins or ends); if, I say, *she* was so lost to all shame, as to marry the nephew of a traitor, and a regicide, do you think that I would allow any traitor's blood to creep into the veins of the Hawthornes? Come, I say, trudge; let us begone on the instant! A fine escape we have had truly, Luce, girl. Kneel down, and thank God for it."

But poor Lucy had thrown her arms round Lady Singleton's neck, and was now lying in a dead swoon on her shoulder, while Rupert, in an agony, regardless alike of Sir Gilbert's brutally issued commands, and of the publicity of the place, which rendered them liable every minute to some intrusion, hung over her, calling her *his* Lucy, for *his* she should be, even if he, like his uncle, were to perish on the scaffold for it.

This unlucky speech inflamed the anger of Sir Gilbert beyond all bounds; so, forcibly seizing poor Lucy's unconscious hand, he positively wrenched it out of Rupert's.

"Stand back, I say," cried the latter, glaring on him like a tiger; "were you twenty times her father, I would spurn and defy you."

"Rupert! Rupert! for shame! you forget he is our dear Lucy's father."

"No, mother, but *he* forgets it."

"You'll see I don't, young Jackanapes," vociferated Sir Gilbert, insolently snapping his fingers in Rupert's face, as he brutally tore his still fainting child off Lady Singleton's neck. Exasperated to madness at this, Rupert forcibly seized her, with his left arm, and with preternatural strength, pushed Sir Gilbert aside with the other, who seized a glass of wine, and flung it in Rupert's face, panting out—

"There! there! fancy it is some of your uncle's traitor's blood, and let go the girl, I say."

"Nay, I must needs fancy it a coward's blood! and your *own*, old man; for none but cowards offer insults that cannot be avenged, and are you not *her* father?"

"Silence! Rupert, for heaven's sake, or you will drive me mad!" cried his mother, and then flinging herself distractedly at Sir Gilbert's feet, and convulsively clutching his cloak, passionately exclaimed, "Good Sir Gilbert, sweet Sir Gilbert, for pity's sake pardon that rash boy, and hear me; it is indeed my misfortune, my *bitter*, sad misfortune, that my brother should be, as you justly say, a traitor; but surely, surely, it is not my fault, still less is it Rupert's; and you know how staunch a Royalist *his* father was, and that he has been brought up in the same principles; so much so, that my brother would never even see him or me."

"Mayhap, my Lady Singleton, it would have been more befitting true and loyal subjects, if the ban had come from *you* and your son, and *you* and *he* had refused to see Sir Harry Vane, instead of *his* taking the matter with a high hand, and forbidding *you* his sight."

"Alas! my good Sir Gilbert, Rupert was but a child, and his nephew, and I was his sister; and with women, the ties of nature are stronger than political opinions."

"Ah! like enough, like enough; for women are fools all through the piece: but, once for all, no daughter of mine shall wed with the kinsman of a traitor, were he *fifty times removed*, let alone *own* nephew to him. No offence to *you*, my Lady Singleton, who are a worthy, creditable gentlewoman as ever I desire to see,

and for a woman, have brought up your malapert of a son yonder *uncommon* well, and not too great a milk-sop neither; but mark me, for first and last, and to make an end on't, I have no fancy to quarter a scaffold rampant, and an axe sinister, with my arms; so no traitor's nephew for me. I've no *particklar* fancy for Frenchmen, as all the world knows; but still justice is justice, and they at least are not regicides;\* and the King of France is a king, and can make and unmake laws as he pleases, without being hectorated by his parliament, and twitted by his people; and moreover, he can seize upon the lands of one man that offends him, and give them to another that pleases him; and hang me if I don't take my girl to Paris, and marry her to some great French nobleman, who has the run of the court and the ear of the king."

Luckily poor Lucy had neither seen nor heard all that had past; but now coming to, and finding herself in Rupert's arms, she transferred herself to those of her mother, with only a vague recollection that something terrible had happened. Sir Gilbert forcibly snatching his cloak from Lady Singleton's grasp, now put on his hat, and told the drawer, who had just returned with a dish of Spanish flummery, and a pupton of Ripston pippins in golden syrup, to tell his coach to draw up, placing in his hand a gold Jacobus to defray the reckoning, telling him to keep the change. "And now, Luce," added he, turning to his daughter, "bid my Lady Singleton a last good-bye, and think no more of her son, if so be you ever *did* think of him, for I've other views for you."

And so saying, he pushed her out of the room, and strutted majestically after her, no more doubting her obedience than he would have done that of his coachman, had he, in the course of a morning's drive, suddenly changed his mind, and told him to turn about and go in another direction. Two months after the above scene, the Hawthornes drove into the court-yard of the *Hôtel de l'Ecuelle d'Or* at Paris. How Rupert came to be so accurately informed and to keep pace so exactly with their movements, will be seen in another chapter.

\* Not at that time.

## CHAPTER X.

WHEN Sir Gilbert Hawthorne left the French ordinary, it was three o'clock, and, therefore, he proceeded to the king's house alone, to witness "the troubles of Queen Elizabeth," which he conceived were nothing to his own, as Lucy was so ill that Lady Hawthorne, for the first time in her life, resisted his authority, and refused to accompany him, as she insisted upon returning home with her poor child. As for Rupert, he was like a madman. He would listen to nothing, not even to his mother's voice, telling him to take patience, and await the issue of his uncle's trial, who might be honorably acquitted, and then Sir Gilbert would be got to listen to reason; but as Lady Singleton well knew that reason is always like fuel to frenzy, she did not obtrude any more of it upon him then, unhinged as his mind was, but having sent for a hackney coach as soon as the Hawthornes had departed, and told the coachman to drive to Pym's, the tailor's, at the Flower Pot in Seething Lane, she threw her arm round Rupert's neck, and said:

"Now, listen to me, Rupert. Don't be rash and foolish for Lucy's sake, or you will spoil all; and I have a plan in my head by which you shall learn all that goes on at Hawthorne Glen; and if that obstinate old mule, Sir Gilbert, *does* really take his family to Paris, I promise you, even if I sell your poor father's jewel-hilted sword for it, which the late king gave him, you shall follow them, on condition that you give me your solemn promise, that you will not attempt to carry off Lucy by force, or even to marry her against her father's consent; but trust to time the issue of God's providence (which, believe me, smoulders in apparent evil, quite as intensely as it shines out in palpable good), and your own conduct, to bring Sir Gilbert round."

"Dearest mother! what do you mean?" cried Rupert, hugging her, as his heart, with the elasticity of youth, now bounded from the lowest depths of despair into the highest regions of hope, and sparkled in his eyes.

"Listen, and you shall hear. You know Master Tom Pepys, of Hatching, near Epsom; he who travels backwards and forwards to Paris for the modes for Pym, and his own uncle, the tailor?"

"Ay. What of him? How can he help me? unless, indeed, as a tailor, he being used to *press suits with a goose*, you

deem him the most suitable ambassador to send to Sir Gilbert," said the young man with a bitter smile.

"Perhaps," rejoined his mother, too happy to think that she had succeeded in bringing back a smile to his face. "My plan is this: the other day, when he brought home your Lincoln green suit, he showed me a new riding-coat that Pym was making for Lucy, on the model of one of Mademoiselle de Montpensier's, that he had brought from Paris. This riding-coat he was to take to Merton tomorrow. Honest Tom Pepys has often expressed his great regard for you, because you had been kind to him when he was a sizar at Cambridge, and said he would give anything to serve you; but, though people might fancy he was in the way of it, from his relationship to my Lord Sandwich, and his cousin being Secretary of the Admiralty, yet it was a melancholy fact, nearly as old as the world, that relations were the very last people to *serve*, however prompt and expert they might be at injuring one; but this last time that I saw him, he was fain to congratulate me upon its being all the talk, that it was to be a match between you and the great beauty and heiress, Mistress Lucy Hawthorne, and that, when it came off, it should not be *his* fault, if the King of France had a finer suit than your wedding one should be. I thanked him, and said that as yet it was only talk, for there was nothing settled about it. Now, I am sure," concluded Lady Singleton, "if I ask him, Master Pepys would bring us almost daily tidings from Hawthorne Glen."

"Ah! dear mother, if *that* is all we have to trust to," said Rupert, his countenance as suddenly overcast as it had previously illumined, "the prospect is dark indeed."

"All we have to trust to—*fi!* Rupert. To fear is unmanly, for necessity should develop strength, and disappointment exercise it; but to despair is unchristian-like. What says our good friend, Sir Thomas Browne, in his 'Religio Medici,' of which you are so fond? Does he not say that 'Light, which makes things seen, makes things invisible. Were it not for darkness and the shadow of the earth, the noblest part of creation had remained unseen, and the stars in heaven as invisible as on the fourth day, when they were created above the horizon with the sun, and there was not an eye to behold them. The greatest mystery of religion is expressed by adum-

bration; and in the noblest part of the Jewish types, we find the cherubim shadowing the mercy seat. Life itself is but the shadow of death, and souls departed but the shadows of the living. All things fall under this name. The sun itself is but the dark simulachrum, and its light but the shadow of God.' And he might have added, that that was the *only shadow* that will never be less, since its very denseness is love."

"That, at all events, I cannot doubt; since he has left me you to prove it. Forgive me, dear mother," said he, embracing her, "and if I seem weak at first, I will be strong at last; but it is terrible," added the young man, biting his under lip nearly through, "thus, at the very onset of life, to have all one's hopes crushed and scattered by a fool's caprice."

"Hush!" whispered Lady Singleton, kissing his forehead as the coach stopped at the Flower Pot, in Seething Lane: "Bow your head, when the *cherubim shadow the mercy-seat, and the light will return, when the shadow has subdued you.*"

Tom Pepys, the traveller of Mr. Pym's establishment, was seated at a high desk in the back shop, in the very act of inditing a French letter to their correspondents, *Messieurs Cosaubun Frères*, Rue du Petit St. Thomas, Paris, when the mother and son arrived.

"Ah! my good Master Pepys," said Lady Singleton, "I feared we should not find you, it being long past three."

"Your Ladyship need not have been alarmed, for we never close before six," replied Pepys, descending with alacrity from his perch, sticking his pen behind his right ear, and rubbing his hands as if he had been performing one of those 'few, and far between' ablutions, which his cousin, the Secretary, has handed down to posterity as invariably giving him cold, doubtless from the rarity of their occurrence; while this friction of the hands honest Tom accompanied by a profusion of the most respectful bows.

"No, I was aware you did not close till six, but I thought you might be away at the King's House, or perhaps at the Duke's, to see 'Sir Martin Marall,' which I do hear much commended, especially Marshall in the part of Mr. Warner, and Nelly Gwynne, as Dorothy Drawwater, the Cambridge vintner's pretty daughter."

"Ah, madame!" rejoined Tom Pepys, closing his eyes, it might be a little affectedly; but still with infinite sincerity:

"I have had the good or perhaps I ought to say the bad fortune of going frequently to Paris, where I have the signal honor of knowing, indeed, I may say without boasting of being intimate with the great Moliere, and of going night after night to *The Petit Bourbon*, that is acting, or rather it is *not acting*; but nature—perfect nature; for though it is true, there is much that is unnatural in all civilized states, yet on the French stage, the unnatural in actual life is never exaggerated into coarse caricature as with us, where all, from the scenes to the acting, is too painfully candid, and makes no attempt at illusion; even Betterton himself, though by far our nearest approach to a good actor, I find too much given, as old Will Shakespeare expresses it in one of his plays, to 'tearing a passion to tatters.' And then the way our court ladies conduct, or rather misconduct themselves in public, is, I must say, offensive, when one has seen the decorum of the French theatre, and how the court behaves there."

"Why, you surprise me," said Lady Singleton, with a slight twinge of nationality; "much as the license of our court is to be deplored, I always understood that that of Versailles was by no means behindhand with Whitehall."

"Doubtless not, Madam, in reality; but I am only talking of *public decency*, which it never violates. Poor Madame de la Valiere! long before she went *last month* to the Carmelites, always comported herself with the modesty of a cloistered nun; and even her imperious successor, Madame de Montespan, only seems what she would like to be in reality, a haughty Queen; whereas, look at the disgusting demonstrations to which the public here are treated by our king, with my Lady Castlemaine, Mistress Middleton, and Mistress Stuart, nor are the Duke of York's public conjugalities one whit less offensive. What women in other countries at least have the grace to be ashamed of being, our English ladies seem never to be satisfied till they have proclaimed to the whole world; for I take it that, from his Majesty downwards, the most graceless gallant going, would scarcely dare to compromise them as they compromise themselves; and as for my Lady Castlemaine, I protest that the other day at the Puppet Show, at Bartholomew Fair, Orange Moll could not have comported herself less like a gentlewoman. Of course, your Ladyship has heard of what the Duke of Buckingham



said one day last week to the Comte de Comminges, the French Ambassador?"

"No," said Lady Singleton, "thank heaven, I seldom hear any of the sayings or doings at Whitehall now-a-days. What was it?"

"Why, Monsieur de Comminges had begged of his Grace of Bucks to take him to the Duke's house to see the play, called '*The Custom of the Country*,' as he thought from the title, it would be a picture of our national manners; but the Duke, wishing to see Knipp in '*Flora's Vagaries*,' what does he do but take him to the King's house; and pointing to the King, who was kissing Lady Castlemaine's shoulder, though the Queen was on the other side, and to Tom Killigrew in another box on his knees, pretending to make love to the old Duchess of Newcastle, while one of her velvet footmen was giving her sliced oranges and sack: '*There! Monsieur L'Ambassadeur*,' cried he, bursting into a loud laugh, '*there are The Customs of the Country.*'"

"Is it possible!" said Monsieur de Comminges, turning up his eyes.\*

"Quite, as you perceive," said the Duke, "*car ce n'est qu'en France qu'on est assez galant de faire l'impossible pour plaire aux dames.*"

"But surely," said Lady Singleton, rescuing the only brand she could from the burning, "Mistress Stuart, *La Belle Stuart*, is very correct! At least, I've always heard she is; so, my good Master Pepys, you should not include her in your list."

"I firmly believe she is; then the more pity she should do herself such grievous wrong, as, by allowing the King to include her in his public *laissez aller*, to furnish spurs for the evil tongues."

"Alas! in this world, I fear there is no finding *bridles* for them; but good Master Pepys," added Lady Singleton, who dreaded lest he should again mount his theatrical hobby, or further jade his Rosinante of court gossip:

\* It was probably such exhibitions as these, and those at the Bear Garden, and the scene Monsieur de Comminges describes in one of his letters to Monsieur de Lionne, as having taken place between the Duke of Buckingham and the Duke of Buckingham's valet, that induced the Comte to end his letter with these words: "*Voyez, Monsieur, ce que c'est que L'Angleterre! Quand je viens à faire réflexion que cette terre ne produit, ni loups, ni betes venimeuses, je m'en étoune pas, les hommes y sont bien plus méchants, et plus dangereux, et s'il falloit se garder de tout, avec précaution, le meilleur serait de l'abandonner.*"

"My son would speak a word with you privately, and I will await his return here." For his mother justly conjectured that Rupert would prefer negotiating his own business.

"Certainly, by all means," said Tom Pepys, "but this way, pray, my Lady Singleton, into this room," and he placed a chair for her, as he added, "I doubt your ladyship's caring for such fooleries; but here is Playford's new catch-book, that hath a world of merry conceits in it, verchance it may beguile the time till Master Rupert's return; or here, if you prefer it, is the '*Grand Cyrus*;' but I have *that* book in abhorrence, for, good lack! to hear how Madame Pepys, my cousin, Sam's wife, do split one's ears with mutilated passages and broken similes, to say nothing of bruised sentiments out of it, till she do make '*Grand Cyrus*' appear the veriest pigmy that ever sprang from a toadstool."

"Thank you," said Lady Singleton, with a quiet smile, accepting the ponderous splendors of "*Grand Cyrus*," not to appear ungracious, but quite sufficiently pre-occupied with her own thoughts not to need any other employment.

When Tom Pepys took Rupert up stairs, the latter, after swearing his humble friend to the most masonic secrecy, revealed to him his morning's disappointment, and explained the nature of the services he required from him; Tom, listening most attentively, and alternately evincing sympathy, regret, and surprise, as the narration proceeded, and, finally, at its conclusion, stamping his foot with indignation at Sir Gilbert's heartless cruelty, and exclaiming:

"The old Griffin! but we'll be even with him. I do remember me at college, reading—in the Roman history—that upon one occasion, when they were sacrificing bulls to Jupiter, the high priest cried out with horror, that no heart was to be found in one of the animals, to which the Emperor Aurelian did exclaim: '*It is not in nature that such a thing should be; men, in truth, are sometimes without hearts, but animals never.*' Good lack! one would think he had known this Sir Gilbert Hawthorne; but courage, don't fret, Master Rupert, '*Faint heart never won fair lady*;' " added Pepys, walking over to a large oak press, and taking from one of its linen-covered shelves a forest-green velvet-braided with gold and lined with white Florence silk, Montpensier *just-au-corps*

and petticoat; in fact, what would now be called a riding-habit; and bringing it over to Rupert, he held up the jacket, showing him an interior side-pocket.

"Do you see *this*, Master Singleton?"

"Alas! yes; but shall I ever again see its lovely owner?"

"And do you see *these*?" re-interrogated Tom, as he opened a movable writing-desk, and placed pens, ink, and paper before his companion. "Now, methinks, a letter would travel marvelously well to Merton inside this little taffety envelope; and as I must bring it back again to make some alteration in the lapels, mayhap you may still find a letter in it on its return; and I suppose you're not particular, to a *sentence*, that it should be the *same* letter?"

"Oh! my dear Tom, you are indeed the very *best* fellow in the whole world," cried Rupert, shaking him by both hands, after which he flung off his hat and gloves, and seating himself at the table, the pen began to "gallop apace" like a "fiery-footed steed" over the paper.

To judge by Lady Singleton's impatience at the duration of her son's absence, Rupert must have written something more like a volume than a letter, for the shades of evening were closing in, when he at length rejoined her in "the back parlor;" but if the sky had grown darker, not so Rupert's countenance, and therefore his mother was well satisfied to have waited so long as she had done. Two days after (for though lovers had much more of the electric fluid in them then, than they have in these calculating-machine times of ours; yet, alas! there being neither electric telegraphs nor railroads, it was a work of time even to get to Merton from London and back; so it was two days after) Rupert again found himself in Pym's shop, where, without this time vacating his official seat, Tom, with a respectful bow, and a flourish of the hand over the rail, presented him with a letter, which one or two bystanders of course concluded was his "*little account*;" and so indeed it was, not being half the amount he had hoped for, as it was but three lines from Lucy. It was in fear that she wrote those; but a thousand, she assured him, could only repeat, that, though she might never be allowed to see him again, she should never cease to love him, and no human power should ever compel her to marry any one else. At all events this was like obtaining a reprieve; and these few kind words of Lucy's shone out like a star

amid the surrounding darkness of his heart and his prospects. Tom Pepys was as good as his word, and contrived to get him almost daily *bulletins* from Hawthorne Glen; and when he had ascertained beyond a doubt that Sir Gilbert was going to France, he arranged with Captain Browne of the Rose Bush, who was to convey the Hawthornes to Calais, to make two trips, and take Rupert there, some three days before; furnishing the latter, as we have seen, with a letter of introduction to Moliere, to take which letter Rupert had dressed himself with the intention of presenting it after his repast at the *Soleil Levant*; but in all things, whether great or apparently small (for nothing is small, at least unimportant in reality), Man proposes, but God disposes. Before the dinner arrived, he was attacked with a violent fever and ague, the result of a fortnight's fasting, and riding night and day, so as to keep up with the Hawthornes without being seen by them; for Lucy even was not aware of his proximity, and hence her alarm when, on the morning of her arrival, as she stood in the inn-yard, she thought she saw his phantom gallop past on Zara, for she had no idea that it was Rupert in flesh and blood.

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## CHAPTER XI.

THIS intermitting fever kept Rupert chained to his bed for nearly a month; but fortunately for him, the thorough breeding of Zara, and the irreproachable cut of his clothes (for which latter *agrément* he was again indebted to Tom Pepys), had so fully impressed *Maitre Potdevin* with an idea of his consequence, that the former, on his guest's illness, had sent for the best,—at all events for the physician then the most in vogue in Paris,—namely, Dr. Rohault, who happened to be a friend, or at least an acquaintance of Moliere's; for, as it may be supposed, their relentless satirizer had few *friends* in that profession. Had Rupert been a lover of the nineteenth instead of the seventeenth century (I beg pardon—I mean a *suitor*, for this age is by far too wise, and too take care of number oneish, to be guilty of the folly of *loving* anything but *SELF*); that is, had he lived in these our times, he would have been well at least ten days sooner;

but to tell the truth, as I am bound to do to you, dear reader, he got a relapse, and all through his own folly—and this was the way of it: The first day that he was able to leave his bed, and that his physician had given him permission to sit at the casement, and inhale as much fresh air and sunshine as came filtered through the broad green leaves and clustering grapes of a most redundant vine, which formed a natural drapery to the window, he tired himself by writing a long letter to his mother, assuring her that he was now quite well. After this, he was obliged to lie down; but towards evening, *without* Dr. Rohault's leave, he rose to take his letter to the post, which then left Paris twice a week! and the English courier was to start on the morrow. Once out, although he was so weak that the air made him reel like a tipsy man, he could not resist the temptation of going on to the *Rue de l'Université*; so he got into a hackney coach,—for to walk he was not able; and leaving it at the bridge, he alighted and crawled on foot as far as *l'Écuille d'Or*, whither he brought night with him, for the shades of evening were now fast closing in, as it was past nine o'clock. Thank heaven, an hostelry is free to all, was Rupert's reflection as he boldly walked into the court-yard, which was now deserted save by one or two *marmitons* and a stray postillion, who were enjoying a little *al-fresco* gossip in the cool of the evening at the kitchen door. The offices were on the right side of the court on entering,—so Rupert kept to that side. *Turlupin*, the black and white poodle of the *hôtel*, came up and sniffed him very civilly. This made Singleton resolve at once to reward his civility, and secure his friendship; for which reason he stopped before the kitchen window, which was open, and the *chef* standing at it reading, by the light of one of the kitchen lamps, a yard and a half of the three *sous* street edition of the melancholy suicide of his illustrious contemporary and brother *artiste*, *Vatel*, the king's cook, embellished by a wood-cut of a striking likeness of the retarded *Turbot*, which had caused the tragedy.

"Pardon," said young Singleton, civilly interrupting his studies: "Can you tell me if an English family of the name of Hawthorne are staying at this hotel?"

"*Mais oui, Monsieur*, there is a *Milor's* family of that name staying here, but I rather think they are out; however, if *Monsieur* will give himself the trouble of

inquiring at the house, any of the waiters will be better able to inform him," replied the cook, civilly taking off his white cap.

"Much obliged to you—I will. Ah! poor fellow,—what a fine dog. He seems to have taken quite a fancy to me," said Rupert, stooping down and patting the poodle: "What is its name?"

"*Turlupin, Monsieur, c'est un vrai farceur*, and fetches and carries to a miracle."

"Ah! indeed! I must cultivate his acquaintance. Do you happen to have such a thing as half a pullet by you?"

"Yes, I should think so," said the *chef*, calling to one of his *aides*, who immediately brought it; and Rupert having presented it to *Turlupin* (who needed no pressing, but accepted this agreeable courtesy with the same frankness it was offered), next gave the cook a *six livres* piece for his *poulet* and his *politesse*; and the cook, having as much *savoir vivre* as the dog, took it without ceremony, bowing his thanks, while the dog bow-wowed his, and Rupert proceeded to the house, followed by his new friend; and having been given to understand that they were out, boldly inquired of a waiter (who was carrying up supper to the Bear; that is, to an English actor of the name of Allen, who was domiciled in a chamber called the Bear, at the top of the house) "if the Hawthornes were at home?"

"*Non, Monsieur*; that is, *Milady and Sare Bon ton* are out. They sup *chez Madame la Maréchale de Turenne*, whither *la Marquise de Sevigne* has just carried them. *Mademoiselle*, indeed, would not go, for she complained of a headache; but then she is gone to bed, at least to her room."

Rupert was selfish enough to feel a thrill of delight that Lucy was not out amusing herself, more especially as for headache he read heartache. Seeing that he still lingered, the obsequious waiter (regardless that the Bear's supper was cooling, which, on so sultry a night, he perhaps thought would be an improvement to it) asked—

"If he would like to walk in and wait till *Sare Bon ton* returned?"

"O no! it is so desperately close," replied Rupert.

"Perhaps, then, *Monsieur* would like to take a turn in the garden?" suggested the obliging waiter, lifting up his knee so as to make an impromptu table to rest the tray upon, containing Mr. Allen's suspended supper, as he reached down

the key of the garden, which formed one of a long row of many others, and handed it to Rupert, saying: "If Monsieur likes to let himself out on the other side on the quay by the river, he can leave the key with the porter."

"Thank you," said Rupert, his eyes sparkling with delight; for at all events Lucy had walked in that garden, and would do so again; and possessed of this unexpected *open sesame*, as he resolved not to return it till he had had another made like it, he slipped into the waiter's hand a broad piece, more than sufficient to defray the expense of a new one, should he not be able to return it immediately; a proceeding which so whetted the waiter's civility, that, spying a slipshod *frotteur*,\* whom he evidently thought quite good enough to carry food to a bear, he called to him to take Mr. Allen's supper up stairs, and then offered to go a step further in his wish to oblige, and show Rupert the way to the garden—an offer which the latter thankfully accepted.

"Eh! And *Sare Bon ton*, who shall I say is waiting for him?" asked the waiter, as he turned the key in the garden gate, a ponderous iron-railed one, of very handsome design, with the Duchesse D'Estampe's initials, A. D. P., in a handsomely gilt monogram in the centre of it, as the hotel had once belonged to that celebrated Mistress of Francis the First; and hence, its remains of former splendor.

"Oh!" hesitated Rupert, a little taken aback at this question, "I don't think I can stay to-night; but will return to-morrow or the next day. So you may say Mr. Smith from England was inquiring for him."

"*Bien, Monsieur Smeete de L'Angleterre*," repeated the waiter, "but shall I not say from what part of England, sir?"

"No; Smith is a name so universally known in England, that there is no necessity," said Rupert, with a smile, as he thought of the *specific* address he was leaving for Sir Gilbert.

"*Bien, Monsieur*," replied the waiter, as he opened wide the garden gate; and giving Rupert the key, added: "The garden is large, sir, and when you have made the tour of it, you will find some large wooden gates at the other end, and a porter's lodge without them, where have the goodness to leave the key when you go."

\* A man who polishes the inlaid floors, in France.

The garden was indeed large, and well-stocked with fruit and flowers; while above, innumerable stars gemmed the heavens without a moon. Rupert gazed at them for a few seconds, and then, looking down, beheld two almost equally brilliant luminaries; they were the two large eyes, looking like balls of fire in the dark, of *Turlupin*, the poodle, who had followed him.

"Ah! bright *Canis*! it is you, is it?" said he, patting the dog's head: "well then, lead on, and I'll follow."

And the animal, in obedience to his command, (for dogs are good linguists, and "have the gift of tongues,") gave a little low whine of delight, wagged his tail, and bounded forward; presently, turning round a *charmille*, they came out opposite the back of the hotel; some of the windows of which were quite dark, as if death was holding a *conge d'elire* within; while through others, the lights were seen fitting to and fro with all the activity of busy life; and in some again, they were stationary, like those in a well-regulated mind, and only occasionally a faint shadow would flit across the white curtains, which the evening breeze, with its balmy freight of an *emeute* of fragrant odors, from the garden below, but faintly stirred. Rupert folded his arms, and leaning against a large magnolia tree, looked wistfully and intently at all the windows, wondering *which*, or if any of them, were Lucy's; for it might be that her room looked out into the court at the front of the house! At all events, thought he, moving back more completely into the shade of the tree, I can but risk it, and if she is at this side of the house, it will bring her to the window. And he began in a low voice at first, which, however, the stillness of the night made perfectly distinct, singing the following song, to an Italian air, that he used to sing at Hawthorne Glen, and which had been an especial favorite with Lucy. Although the words he now put to it were his own, and *improvisée* for the occasion, he took care not to mention *her name* in them, lest he should be overheard by other ears than hers.

#### SONG.

As the glance of day declining  
Before the queen of night,  
So seem thy deep eyes, shining  
From out their liquid light.

While a halo plays around thee,  
Of tenderness and grace,  
As though love had newly found thee  
For his sweetest resting-place.

And thy sighs steal on the air,  
Like the perfumed breath of flowers,  
When the south wind lingers there,  
To kiss the summer hours.

And such a sweet persuading seems  
To mingle with thy beauty,  
That the heart's decision deems,  
To love thee! *is a duty.*

Sweet lady, this fair country boasts,  
To every saint a shrine;  
But none can claim such eager hosts  
Of worshippers as *thine.*

All the time that Rupert sang, he kept looking from one to the other of the windows, and had scarcely concluded the first stanza, when behind the curtain of a window on the ground floor, he saw the *silhouette* of a slight female figure with a little dog in its arms. Oh, joy! could it be Lucy? and so completely within reach? *Turlupin* saw the shadows, too, and apparently recognized them as belonging to substances of his acquaintance, for he ran forward to the window, and after one dash at the casement, which made it rattle loudly, he continued to stand on his hind paws, vigorously scratching and whining; but no notice was taken of his appeal as long as Rupert continued singing, which perceiving, he ceased; whereupon *Turlupin* gave an angry and impatient bark, as he again violently shook the window by the *prestissimo* scratching of his paws; the bark was immediately answered from within by a shrill canine *falsetto*, and presently, the window was gently opened, turning noiselessly on its hinges, while *Turlupin*, to expedite the process, poked his nose in and forcibly pushed it back, at which, the other long-eared gentleman within barked so furiously that his mistress, after one or two unheeded sort of eider-down taps upon his silken ears, was fain to banish him into an inner closet, and close the door upon him; when, returning to the window, Rupert saw that lucky dog, *Turlupin*, kissed and patted on the head, while a voice—whose every tone sank deep into his heart and caused the blood to rush in happy tumults to his no longer pale cheeks—said: "So, poor *Turlupin*—good doggy—how d'ye do, poor fellow! yes, well, it was a very clever dog, and a nice-mannered doggy," added she, as *Turlupin* kept lifting up his right paw out of her hand, only to replace it in it immediately, "and I must see if there are not some *bon-bons* for him; but clever as he is, I don't think it was *mon petit Turlupin* who was singing just now;

poor fellow, you little know how miserable I am; but it's not your fault, is it poor *Turlupin*?" and taking the dog's shaggy head with both her hands, she bent her face down upon it, and burst into a passion of tears. It required almost a superhuman effort of self-command in Rupert, not to rush forward and throw himself at Lucy's feet; but although he felt how dangerous so sudden a shock might be to her, it was more his want of physical strength than his prudence, which restrained him, for he was himself so overpowered by this sudden vision of Lucy—looking, indeed, paler and thinner, but a thousand times lovelier, in his estimation, on that account—that had he not put up both his arms and leant against the trunk of the tree, he must have fallen to the ground; but, though riveted to the spot, the power that had deserted his limbs, seemed to have centered in his eyes, for while he was himself concealed by the darkness, Lucy, on the contrary, stood out in bold relief by the light from within the room, and seemed attached to Rupert's gaze, as a needle to a load-stone; and without much stretch of imagination, she might have been mistaken for one of those creations of impalpable loveliness, with which the poets, and the superstitions of all ages, and of every country, have peopled the air—for, about to retire for the night, though Winifred had left her to read, Lucy was habited in a soft white Indian muslin *Peignoir*, the sleeves of which were looped up on account of the intense heat, and showed her beautifully rounded and polished ivory arms, and although her bust was covered to the throat, the delicately soft and clinging texture of the muslin only added the graceful and almost artistic folds of drapery to the symmetrical *contour* of her willowy and elastic figure. Her long fair hair floated like a golden veil over her shoulders, descending nearly to her feet, while those two small witcheries were cased in little sky blue taffety slippers, covered with Valenciennes lace, with rosettes of the same, that might have belonged to Titania herself.

When Lucy raised her head from *Turlupin's*, and he had sympathized with her sorrow in all the canine sincerity of his honest heart, she put one little foot without the window on the one step that led to the garden, and looked cautiously and timorously around; then putting both her hands to her head, she murmured—

"Surely, I must have dreamt those sounds, or am I indeed going mad? Oh!

no, no, there is an insanity of heart which never has the mercy to lose itself in the head, but keeps fearfully aloof in its own appalling, isolated identity."

While she spoke, *Turlupin* kept his luminous eyes fixed steadily and anxiously up at her face, making a little plaintive whine as he first moved his head from one side, then to the other, and also his paws, which were trembling the while with agitation. Lucy drew a chair to the open window, and sat down. The dog put his head on her lap; she patted it mechanically as she looked silently and sadly upwards at the innumerable stars, and then said, with a deep sigh—

"*L'impossibilite ne me detourne pas.* Ah! that is a very pretty motto for a seal, but impossibilities, alas! seal everything with some unfortunates."

Lucy's thoughts were running in their usual channel upon Rupert; and she here made allusion to a jacinth ring that he used to wear, the device of which was: a moth flying after a star, and the motto, "*L'impossibilite ne me detourne pas.*" "Go; poor *Turlupin*," said she, after a moment's pause, as if she did not like breathing her lover's name even before that dumb auditor: "Go; there's a good doggy, and here is a rose for him to play with;" and she took one out of her girdle, and flung it to some distance on the gravel walk, the dog immediately darting after it. He was no sooner gone than, covering her face with her hands, and rocking herself distractedly to and fro, she exclaimed:

"Oh! Rupert, Rupert, have they murdered you too! and has your spirit come to wait out that air we loved so much, as its last farewell?" And again Lucy Hawthorne wept as if her very soul had dissolved, and flowed away in that bitter burning flood of tears.

Rapid as *Turlupin's* movements were, the rose having fallen at the foot of the magnolia tree, Rupert had seized it, passionately kissed it, and concealed it in his bosom before the dog could reach the spot; and when he did, and put up his two forepaws upon Rupert's arm, as if demanding a restitution of his property, the young man took off one of his gloves, passed one of the fingers of it through the ring which bore the device of the moth and the star, and placing the glove in the dog's mouth, patted him and whispered: "*Val Turlupin, mon brave! portez cela à Mademoiselle.*"

He had no sooner uttered the words, and let go the dog's head, than the latter set off swift as lightning, and in triumph arrived before Lucy, jumping from one side to the other, till at length he laid his prize on her lap and barked out joyously, as much as to say: "See what I have brought you." Lucy involuntarily put out her hands behind her with a look of dread, and was about to let the glove fall from her knee as if it had been a toad that *Turlupin* had begged her to accept, when she suddenly spied the well-known ring. Seizing the glove, or rather gauntlet, with both her hands, and trembling convulsively, she tottered to the table to examine it by the light, which she had no sooner done, than she shrieked out:

"His! Rupert's!" and would have fallen to the ground had not Rupert, who, from the moment the dog had set off with the glove, watched all his and Lucy's movements, and stealthily advanced to the window, now caught her in his arms.

"Yes, Lucy! mine! mine own! In spite of all, do I not bear out my motto? Impossibilities cannot deter me. Oh! Lucy, there is but ONE impossibility on earth for me, and that is to cease to love you; and you don't—oh! tell me you don't wish me to conquer *that one*, do you?"

Lucy did not scream again; neither did she faint—nay, she did not even blush; but for two minutes she lay with her head on Rupert's shoulder, and her arms round his neck, and then putting back his hair with both her hands, she said: "But how pale you are. Oh! tell me—tell me all—all that has happened since that cruel, cruel day; and, above all, how you knew I was here, and how you got into the garden? or—*or is it all a frightful dream?*" added she, grasping both Rupert's shoulders, and standing at a little distance from him.

"No, Lucy—dear, dear Lucy!" cried he, again pressing her to his heart, and transmuting all the sighs and tears—all the fears and tortures of the last two months of their lives into one long all-atoning kiss—"it is no *dream*; for love like ours is the ONE solitary reality that remains of the primeval world; all the rest is indeed a nightmare."

Here Pop, hearing Rupert's voice, began whining, and scratched furiously at the door of the closet to get out. This roused Lucy, who exclaimed (letting Pop out, who flew round and round his former deliverer, barking frantically with de-

light): "Heavens! you must not stay here. What if they should return home, and my mother comes in and finds you? She, dear soul, would be rejoiced; but then my father."

"You are right, my own Lucy; I ought not to stay here," said he, looking wistfully round the room, where everything spoke of her, and where even the dress she had worn that day lay across the foot of the little snowy canopied bed, with its blue and white damask curtains, where Winifred had thrown it, till she returned from her supper; "but," added he, putting his arm round Lucy's waist, and drawing her towards the window, "you won't refuse to take one turn in the garden with me, dearest, to talk over our plans, will you?"

"Our plans!" echoed poor Lucy, willingly suffering herself to be led into the air. "Ah! Rupert, will they ever be ours again?"

"If they ever cease to be ours, it will be your fault, and not mine, Lucy; yet, just Heaven, I never thought of that! Perhaps you also renounce me? Perhaps, since my poor uncle has paid the forfeit of his political creed on the scaffold, you too spurn me as having the blood of a traitor in my veins?" said he, gloomily, nay, almost savagely, suddenly relaxing his grasp of her waist, and clasping and twisting his hands convulsively.

"Oh, Rupert!" said she, wounded, by this doubt of his, out of all reserve, and only feeling that her love for him was stronger than all else, as she flung her arm round his neck: "I care not what blood is in your veins, as long as the same kind, true, generous heart that I have ever known beats in your bosom."

"Lucy! Lucy! what an angel you are! An angel come direct from heaven to raise me to it; yes," added he, passionately kissing her hair, eyes, lips, and hands, "my heart is kind, true, generous, and noble, for does it not contain you, and you only? And where a divinity dwells, the atmosphere must needs be pure."

"Nay, now you talk tropes and figures, I must talk reason, though I fear I've little left, to have been so forward as I've been to-night; but as it is the last time we may meet, for Rupert I will not disobey my father, truth was stronger than seeming—and—and—"

"What, Lucy? My own Lucy?"

"Where it was perhaps wrong even to listen, I did worse, and spoke."

"Worse! oh! Lucy—my own dear, dear angel love! if, indeed, out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, may that lovely mouth never be silent, except"—

But the exception was not uttered by Rupert, and, after a short pause, he gave a deep sigh, and Lucy was the first to speak.

"Do you know," said she, "I have grown quite nervous and superstitious; for the very first day we arrived here I saw such a vision—a phantom of you and Zara galloping past as quick as lightning; it was only for an instant, but in that instant I beheld you as distinctly as ever I did in my life."

"It was no phantom, love, but Zara and I in person; for did you suppose that wherever you are, we, at least I, could be far off?" And then Rupert gave her a *résumé* of his journey from England; Hans Hallyburton's being shot by the robbers; his strange meeting with the man in the wax mask at the *Pré aux Clercs*; his illness, and his letter of introduction to Moliere, which he had not yet presented; and his good fortune in meeting with the waiter, who had given him the key of the garden, when his most sanguine hope had been to look upon the house that contained her; and finally, *Turlupin's* admirable *Ciceroneship*, to which he was so much indebted; "and only think," concluded he, "now that I have got the key, I can always get into the garden."

"Oh! no, Rupert, on no account, I dare not—indeed, I dare not—meet you here again."

"You mistake me; I would not for worlds so compromise you, but—but occasionally I might bring you a letter, and you leave one for me under a flower-pot outside your window."

"No, Rupert," said Lucy, firmly: "I will neither write to you, nor receive letters from you; for that would be worse than simply disobeying my father, it would be deceiving him. I am not to blame for meeting you to-night, though I may be for thus prolonging the meeting; but, though we may be far as the poles asunder, as I have told you only too often, I shall never cease to love you—even I fear if you should no longer love me," faltered Lucy.

"O, then, I am safe for eternity," exclaimed Rupert, folding her in his arms. "But surely, surely, you won't be so cruel as to forbid me the poor consolation of hovering near you? if I give you

my solemn word of honor that I will never attempt to encroach upon the boon."

Instead of replying directly to this question, Lucy said, as she pressed his arm with a slight shudder, "Good heavens! to think you should have been so ill, and alone in that poor hostelry, and none of us to have known it."

"And would you have come to me if you had known it, Lucy?" asked he, with that insatiable vanity of heart which makes love always crave for the ovation of a sacrifice.

"I'm sure my mother would have gone to you," said Lucy; "and surely there could be no harm in my going where she went; and dear Lady Singleton," added she hastily, blushing at what she had just said, from the additional force that Rupert's rapturous and graceful embrace gave to her words: "Do give my affectionate love to her when you write; for you'll tell her of this meeting, won't you, Rupert?"

"Certainly. I never concealed anything from her in my life, especially anything that would give her pleasure to hear, which this will; for she loves you dearly, my Lucy."

"But, Rupert, what do you mean to do?"

"Why, if Sir Gilbert persists in keeping you here, take service in France."

Lucy, whose only idea of service was military service, made a faint exclamation of dread, as she thought of the wholesale butchery which Turenne and Condé had made the fashion, and christened GLORY.

"No, not that, my Lucy; I could scarcely take up arms in a foreign country under an alien king, with the chance of being compelled at any moment to turn them against my own; your father might with reason call me traitor then, and I should think myself one, which would be worse. But the Queen Mother\* has, I am told, gentlemen of all nations in her body-guard; perhaps Moliere can help me in this matter, as Rohault, my doctor, tells me he has the ear of the king, and better still, of Colbert, whom I think the greater man of the two; and I have a strong faith in really great men; I don't mean Popinjays perched in high places, but men whose great renown is but the shadow of their greater minds and higher hearts, as I believe Colbert's to be; one, in fact, of the few born statesmen, hewn

\* Anne of Austria, Louis the Fourteenth's mother.

out of the rock of ages for all times, and not a mere political adventurer, having self at the helm and ambition at the stern, lacerated with the reputation of local expediency. And if the worst comes to the worst, and Moliere cannot aid me (though I have much more dependence upon him as a stranger, than upon any of those whom I have what is called a claim upon), yet still, as a *pis aller*, I can but appeal to Prince Rupert, to hansom his godfather-ship by for the nonce exerting his interest in my behalf; and when I have cleft myself a way, and made myself a name, which none but courage and perseverance shall be sponsors to, then, perhaps, Sir Gilbert Hawthorne may be convinced that I am neither a traitor, nor what he deems equally atrocious, a fifth monarchy man; but even should we never meet again till then, oh! Lucy, let me once more have your assurance, for I never can hear it too often, that neither force nor fraud shall ever make you marry another?"

And as he said this, the tears trembled in his eyes and voice; they had now arrived at the other end of the garden, by the great gates opening on the quay. Young Singleton stood with his back against them, opposite to Lucy, and as he took both her hands and pressed them in his own, he added—

"Promise me, Lucy, that through good report and ill report, through time and trial, and even through absence, which is the greatest of all trials, this little hand that I now hold, and the heart you have given me, shall still be mine."

"Look here, Rupert," said Lucy, extricating her hands from his, and gathering a rose, some of the leaves of which she plucked and laid upon his hand, from whence the night wind instantly scattered them: "I have been told that men's love and lovers' vows are, like those leaves, turned aside by a breath, and carried away by every wind that blows; but now look up there at yonder fixed star. A thousand years hence it will still move in the same orbit; a thousand years hence we shall be in heaven, I hope; but even there, my love for you, Rupert, I feel will be the same, for it is at once the centre and the essence of my being; therefore, wherever I am it must be, for I am it and it is me."

"O Lucy! Lucy! How happy, how grateful, how dauntless you make me!" cried Rupert, ecstatically flinging himself at her feet, and covering both them and her hands with kisses: "Let Fate come on



now, backed by her monster legion of ten thousand trials; I have courage for them all!"

Here the two dogs, who had followed them most peaceably and amicably, now pricked up their ears, and uttered a low growl, which Fop gradually ascended into a shrill bark.

"Down, Fop; be quiet, sir." "Hush," added Lucy, "I thought I heard some one call."

"Ho! Luce, Luce, I say; where art thou? Is the wench dead, or deaf? Luce, I say," boomed Sir Gilbert's stentorian voice through the garden, or what Madame de Sévigné so politely termed his *belle voix de chasse*.

"Oh! heavens," faltered Lucy, breathlessly, as she tremblingly grasped Rupert's arm. "My father! we are lost!"

"No, no, dearest; I have the key of this gate, and now good-bye, God ever bless you." And with one hasty kiss he opened the ponderous gates, and the next moment they had closed upon him.

"Luce, if you are above ground, answer me, girl!" re-roared Sir Gilbert, his voice now growing nearer.

"My dear child, how very imprudent to be out at this hour," said Lady Hawthorne, as Lucy now came running towards her.

"Oh! dear mother, it was so very sultry, I could not stay in the house."

"Good luck! you look like Mad Moll of Moorfields, with your hair down to your heels, in that way; but I'm afraid you'll be closer still, if you complain of the heat down here, Ha! ha! ha! for I feel the heat so in the front of the house, that I can't get a wink of sleep; so I'm going to change roosts with you, girl, and see how I shall get on at this side of the house, to-night,"\* said Sir Gilbert.

Of course, even had she been inclined, which she was not, Lucy would not have dared to make any demur at her father's fiat; but as it was, she was

\* Sir Gilbert Hawthorne in this arrangement, evinced no uncommon, or unusual degree of ungallant selfishness when it is recollected how coolly even the good and pious Evelyn relates, as a matter of course, that on his return from Italy, arriving at a Swiss Inn, and dreading damp sheets, he ordered the landlady's daughter, who was *ill in bed!* to be removed into another bed; while he got into her warm place!! the result of which was, that he caught the smallpox, the malady from which the inn-keeper's daughter had been suffering. So that a little *less* selfishness, and a little *more bienséance*, even to a woman, might have saved him this fearful complaint.

only *too* thankful that the fancy to change rooms with her had not taken him on the preceding night, for then she would have missed seeing Rupert; so that although she lay down that night in a room that was suffocatingly close, and, moreover, in an atmosphere whose anti-amibrosial particles were composed of the fumes of defunct beer and tobacco, Lucy Hawthorne, as she offered up her heart in gratitude to the Giver of all good, whether He sends his blessings in trials or in triumphs, was more than ever convinced that

"There is a Divinity doth shape our ends,  
Rough-hew them as we will!"

## CHAPTER XII.

THE too violent exertion and excitement, added to the *mirage* rising from the river, during the little distance he had to walk on the quay, previous to regaining his hackney coach that he had left at the bridge, combined to occasion Rupert Singleton a relapse; but, notwithstanding his physical sufferings, he felt so happy and elated at his unexpected interview with Lucy, and the reiterated assurance of her undiminished love, that, in the short space of ten days, mind asserted its triumph over all the ills of matter, so that one might almost be tempted to suspect that Lucy Hawthorne's happy lover had been the author of that most concise, yet comprehensive metaphysical catechism, which has for its queries,—  
"What is matter?"

*Answer.*—"No mind."

*Query.*—"What is mind?"

*Answer.*—"No matter."

Be this as it may; in the teeth of his own prophecy, that Rupert would be laid up for at least another six weeks, on the tenth morning from his nocturnal visit to *l'Ecuelle d'Or*, Dr. Rohault found him so well, and with the unmistakable bloom of health so palpably suffusing his hitherto pale cheeks, that he not only gave him leave to go, but volunteered to accompany him that evening to *Le Petit Bourbon*, and introduce him personally to Moliere after the play; which, he kindly said, he thought would be better than Rupert's calling in the *Rue de Richelieu* with his letter, and submitting to the always *tant soit peu* awkward ordeal of self-presentation. His patient

gratefully accepted this agreeable proposition, and persuaded the doctor to stay and share his *mauvais diner d'Auberge*.

As they pursued their way to *La Colonnade du Louvre*, to *La Troupe de Monsieur*, as Moliere's company was then called, for it had not yet been removed to the *Palais Royal*, and enrolled as *La Troupe du Roi*,\* Rupert became naturally impatient to behold the genius of all ages, as Moliere most assuredly is; for there are certain colossus' of mind, which take their stand from one extremity of time to the other, letting the freight of every epoch and clime, pass under them, but never by them, and remaining still a monument and a marvel to each succeeding generation, while other lesser powers—mere intellectual *statuettes*, or at most ordinary-sized creations, being more within the calibre of the mass, enjoy perhaps more contemporary reputation, forming admirable, because necessary, accompaniments to the era which has produced them; but ceasing with their own activity, and leaving little or no impress upon the world—"no track along the deep." For instance, what would Racine, Pascal, and Bossuet,† those brilliant lights of the age of Louis Quatorze, who so naturally grew out of it, and so perfectly harmonized with all its phases, whether the brilliancy and mythological gallantry of its early stages, the military splendors of its meridian, or the more pure and deeper vein of thought discovered towards its evening, when the sophisms of Gassendi's philosophy, and the chimera of his *atoms*, gave place to the enlightened truths of Christianity, with Bossuet ruling its apogee, ere bigotry and intolerance formed the crutches of the *grand monarque's* dotage;—what, I ask, would these luminaries of that age be in this? At most, bright tapers, compared with the Bude lights which progression has discovered. Whereas, Moliere was *only* of that *particular* age, from lashing its absurdities, and clothing his eternal creations in its costume, because

\* It only became *La Troupe du Roi* in 1665; and later, at the death of Moliere, it joined the *Troupe du Marais*; and seven years after, in 1680, that of the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, which became *Le Théâtre Français*.

† For Boileau, La Rochefoucault, and Malebranche must certainly be excepted; and the Sévigné, La Sablières, Villarsaux, and P'Enclos, of that day, would most assuredly be even greater wonders in this, where there is, as our American neighbors would say, "no demand" for female intellect.

he drew human nature, and not merely manners; and as the former has been, and will be, in all times the same, however the latter may change, and modify it in the change, Moliere will still be the genius of every age; for while his creations are dashed off with all the artistic vigor of a single touch, they, at the same time, possess a combination and Flemish elaboration of detail, which seem to illustrate, to its fullest extent, that inimitable saying of Vauvenargues: "*Que la netteté est le vernis des maîtres.*"\*

But the real secret of the immortal literature of the age of Louis Quatorze, as Monsieur de Sainte Beuve truly remarks, was, that every species of intellect, every memorable faculty of thought, began to shiver under the naked infidelity of the sixteenth century, and clothe itself in a profoundly religious feeling; the high, noble, and generous sentiments then so rife, practically demonstrating that men began to contemplate humanity in and by the precepts of Christ.

And despite his original Gassendi-ism, it is evident, not only from the final scene of his own life, but from that strong passage of *Cléante* in the "*Tartufe*," that Moliere had in his heart a fund of genuine religion, which, in his daily intercourse with his fellow-creatures, he coined into acts of kindness, charity, and forbearance; the only currency, I take it, which will pass, and not be refused as base coin, in heaven.

It was not, however, even the *intense truth*, and the charming *naïveté* of his comedies, some of which more than equal those of Terence (supposed to be written by Scipio), which obtained for Moliere that enthusiastic cordiality evinced towards him by his contemporaries, so much as his own inimitable impersonation of them; for Moliere was not only a profound thinker, but a keen and shrewd observer, as indeed most French thinkers are; and this all-conquering combination it is which doubtless makes France always take the initiative in the progression of civilization; for as all work and no play proverbially makes Jack a dull boy, so all thought and no observation unquestionably makes *Mincheer* a ponderously dull and one-sided philosopher, always working in a mine (a rich one it is true), and taking little or no note of the actual and external world, which has its necessities and its mission, quite as

\* "Clearness (completeness in fact) is the varnish of great masters."

much as the interior one; for it is not enough to give that vast machine—our social system—an impetus, which your mere closet philosophers, or theorists, do every now and then; but, in order to produce any practical utility, it is necessary to *watch* the working and result of each fresh impetus; and this Moliere did in its most minute details. With regard to his acting being so wonderfully natural, the whole secret consisted in its *not* being acting, for he reproduced the entire circle of his acquaintance on the stage, from his reminiscences of the Barber's shop at Pézénas\* up to the courtly types of Versailles; and down to himself, whom he perhaps represented oftener than any other of his living models, for alas!

"He learnt in suffering, what he taught in song."

Or, in other words, he repeated on the mimic stage of the *Petit Bourbon* what he felt on the real stage of life; for instance, in the third act of "*Le Bourgeois-Gentilhomme*," he has given a striking likeness of his wife; and also, in the first scene of *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, he aims a satirical shaft at his own marriage; and even his own bodily infirmities do not escape him; for he jests upon his consumptive cough in the fifth scene of the second act of *L'Avare*; and there is little doubt that, in *Arnolphe* and *Alceste*, he thought of his own age and conjugal jealousy; while, in the travesty of *D'Argan*, he gave vent to his personal antipathy to the medical fraternity. But it is by no means equally sure that he meant to stamp Rohault *individually* in the *Bourgeois-Gentilhomme*, as some of his contemporaries so ingeniously discovered; or that even the De Grammonts, De la Feuillades, and De Bercys, figured quite so often as their good-natured friends fancied they recognized them; and as the Guy, Patins, Dangeaus, Tallemants, Cizeron, Rivals, and other anecdote-mongers would fain substantiate. And though, as Jean Baptiste Rousseau, with great subtlety, and a nice discrimination observes, "Moliere's imitations are infinite, and from all sources, yet there is an air of good faith and *sans façon* about them which savors of that primitive

\* They still preserve at Pézénas the old arm-chair in which Molière used to sit, when he came every Saturday to a much frequented barber's shop there, not only to hear the gossip, but to study the different physiognomies and peculiarities of the numerous classes that came there.

life, when all things were in common; and though he may take whole fables from Plautus, and Terence, and the foundation of his subjects from Strapparole, and Boccaccio—levying contributions on Rabelais and Regnier, for his characters; Boisrobert, Rotrou, and Cyrano for his scenes; Horace, Montaigne, and Balzac,\* for the pithy simplicity of his phrases; for all, and each, is to be found in Moliere;—yet *all* is transformed as by the touch of an enchanter's wand; nothing is the same. Who, then, can complain? for by the side of *Sosie*, which he copies, is there not *Cleanthes*? which he creates."

But in the present age, when M. Aimé Martin has written so charmingly and copiously upon Moliere, I feel it is almost desecration to dwell longer upon a subject which he has embalmed. So Doctor Rohault's coach having now arrived at the *Colonnade du Louvre*, we will alight, and accompany him and Rupert into the theatre of the *Petit Bourbon*.

## CHAPTER XIII.

In France, where they have always understood the science of society and the art of living so much better than we do, or than we are ever likely to do, as long as we persist in mistaking our brutality of manner for sincerity; and our intense selfishness, and standing aloof from our fellow-creatures, for morality and prudence,—the theatres opened two hours later than they did at that time in England, so that there was no unequal and detrimental struggle between the day and the lamplight; and, although the amphitheatre was but very faintly illuminated, in order to throw the whole mass of light upon the stage, and make the actors paramount, by bringing them out in bold relief; yet, it being the fashion of the day to indulge in a rich variety of costume, both as to material and color, and to wear a profusion of precious stones—

"From the pure pearl, up to the sparkling brilliant's blaze:"

wherever a mass of persons congregated, the *coup d'œil* could not fail to be one of

\* John Louis Guez de Balzac, author of "Letters," "The Prince," and "The Christian Socrates." Died 1654.

splendor; but as people *then*, really went to the theatre *for the play*, it was considered supreme *bon ton* to be there at least a quarter of an hour before the curtain rose; and a box at the *Petit Bourbon*, at that time, was pretty much what a box at *La Scala*, the *San Carlos*, the *Fenice*, or the *Pergola*, is now, namely, a small public *conversationsi*. But what struck Rupert with the most agreeable surprise, when he and his companion had, at length, struggled through the crowd and found themselves in the first box next to the stage-box, was the perfectly *comme il faut* air that pervaded the whole house, including the pit and gallery; for, although there was an universal hum of conversation through the theatre, it never rose into vulgar loudness, or degenerated into discordant cries. Above all, there was no *Orange Moll* screaming oranges! and carrying notes and messages to and from the stage, and up and down the house; but instead, there was a prettily dressed *bouquetière*, with very fresh flowers, tied up with different colored ribbons, books of the play, fans, and perfumed *gauts de martial*, which were not military gloves!!! as some English *litterateur* has translated them, but perfumed and embroidered gloves, bought of a man of the name of *Martial*, celebrated for the superiority of his gloves then, as *Jourin* is for his now. But neither the gloves, the flowers, nor the fans, did *Jenny Beaupure*, the flower-girl, scream about the house; she merely, occasionally, held up her basket to the *cavaliers* in attendance on the ladies present; and if she received (as she generally did) an affirmative nod, she went into the box with her wares; while the coffee, ice, lemonade, or whatever other refreshments people took, were brought quietly, either by their own servants, or by the waiters of the *café* attached to the theatre; which prevented all fuss, noise, and confusion.

"I have brought you to *this* side of the house," said Rohault, as soon as they were seated, "that you may be within ear-shot of the celebrities; for this is *Ninon's* side, and wherever she is, there are the wits also."

"Thank you," replied Rupert, "I have the greatest curiosity to see her; but who is that splendidly beautiful, modest, though somewhat imperious looking woman opposite, in the stage box? with a wreath of myrtle at the back of her hair, made of emeralds, and the buds in brilliant; a white satin dress, with dia-

mond shoulder knots, a Marabout feather fan—with a little mirror in the centre, in which she is looking at herself; for she has no one with her—only two *laquais* in superb velvet liveries, standing in the back of the box."

"That," said Rohault, "is at present the favorite, Madame de Montespan, la magnifique Athanaise! tête de colombe et langue de serpent,\* as Boileau calls her."

"She certainly is splendid!" exclaimed Rupert, enthusiastically, and then a peculiar smile passed over his countenance.

"You seem amused; what is it?" asked his companion.

"Why," said Singleton, "I was thinking of our Lady Castlemaine, and could not help smiling to see that the breadth of the Channel should make the same thing so very different in appearance, and *vivent les apparences*, say I; but there, in the next box but one, is also a very handsome woman, despite her very unbecoming *sacque* of *feuille morte*—black lace—whiske, and buff mittens. I mean, the one sitting next to that lively *brunette*, in the silver gray lutestring, with the *cerises pompons*, who appears to be laying down the law to those two desperately pompous looking men, who are more like card board lay figures, stuffed with ramrods, than actual flesh and blood."

"Here is the catalogue," said Rohault. "The *feuille morte sacque*, and buff mittens, is the widow Scarron. She is handsome, but poor thing, almost in a state of destitution; so that *feuille morte sacque* is as good a rag-bag to poke such a dowerless widowhood into as any other. The little *brunette* next to her, who looks as if she had been set going by innumerable springs, is our great novelist, Mademoiselle de Scudery, *l'eloquante Madeleine*; for do you know, she obtained the first prize for eloquence, instituted by the French academy; the lay figures, as you truly call them, are Monsieur de Soyecourt, His Majesty's *grand Veneur*, and the *Duc de la Feuillade*, which latter complains bitterly just now, of Mademoiselle de l'Enclos's rejection, or, as he calls it, ill usage of him; and the tale of his love is said to have terminated like that of a wasp, in a sting; for he sent her yesterday morning (as he says) a most bitter epigram, which I have not yet heard, but I have no doubt *que Ninon lui a rendu la monnaie de sa pièce*."†

Not perceiving any thing further re-

\* A dove's head, with a serpent's tongue.

† Gave him as good as he brought.

markable on the opposite side of the house, Rupert now directed his attention to the boxes on either side of him, which were rapidly filling; the stage box, more especially on his right hand, excited his curiosity; from seeing a young lady, apparently of about eighteen or twenty, of great personal attractions, enter it, surrounded by a perfect swarm of men; one removing her hood, another carrying her fan, a third her bouquet, while a fourth arranged her chair, and a fifth stooped down to place a footstool for her; the whole house, including *les somités, aristocratiques*, evinced the greatest *empressement* to bow to this lady, who returned their greetings with a circular salutation, which included them all, in the most graceful manner, and with the least possible trouble to herself, as she sank into her chair, and leant back to speak to one of her satellites, who was in waiting at the back of it. She was very little above the middle height, of beautifully rounded proportions; and plump, without being fat; her skin was of a dazzling and satiny whiteness; her bust, hands, and arms being both symmetrical; her face was more round than oval; her forehead was high and intellectual, the brows being low, straight, and beautifully pencilled; her eyes were large and liquid, and of a dark hazel; her nose small, white, and excessively *piquant*, having the end descend a little below the delicately chiselled nostrils, which had those little *fossettes* at each side, that, a century and a half later, Madame de Genlis was so vain of possessing. Her cheeks were suffused with that vivid, yet delicate, and peach-like bloom, so rare among her countrywomen; her mouth was a little large, but the lips were so deep and bright a red, and formed such a perfect Cupid's bow, from the short upper lip to the dimpled chin, and the teeth within it were so dazzlingly white, that envy itself could find nothing to criticize. Her magnificent hair (which was a dark brown, with that Georgioni or horse-chestnut red varnished tinge through it, as if sunbeams had got entangled amongst its meshes) she wore, according to the fashion of the time, wreathed in plats round the back of her head, and divided very low on the forehead, with a profusion of long tendril-like ringlets on either side, which were tied with knots of blue satin ribbon, over which, so as to show the blue ribbon through, were large bows of set pearls, with streamers and tassels of fine, Oriental, pear-shaped, strung pearls; and

the shoulders and front part of her *Berthe* were also fastened with the same; likewise the centre of her bodice, down to the point of her stomacher, where hung one large pearl, nearly the size of a pigeon's egg. Her dress was composed of white *moire*, with a broad sky blue velvet stripe upon it, while the *Berthe* was *entirely* of blue velvet, with a *Resille*, or network of pearls over it, which formed no contrast to her snowy skin.

"What a beautiful girl!" exclaimed Rupert. "Who is she?"

"You are partly right and partly wrong: *beautiful* she most unquestionably is; but for her girlhood, if you want to find *that*, you must go back to the time when our friend Moliere accompanied his late Majesty, Louis Treize, to Narbonne, in 1641; and, even *then*, she was not over *girlish*, being at that time five-and-twenty, as last Tuesday she completed her forty-sixth year."

"Impossible!" said Rupert.

"Nothing is impossible to Ninon de l'Enclos; except, perhaps, ceasing to be Ninon," rejoined Rohault.

"Ninon de l'Enclos!" echoed Rupert.

"Well, she really is an incarnate miracle! and I no longer wonder at her turning all the men's heads, when there is not a single hair yet turned on that beautiful head of hers. What a handsome young man that is leaning over her chair, too!"

"*Ah! je crois bien! C'est le beau Lesdiguières! The Duc de Lesdiguières*, for whom poor Pelisson was *comédie*; but he revenged himself in one of the most subtle, cutting, but delicately severe epigrams I ever heard. I'll repeat it to you, and you shall judge for yourself; for Ninon's lovers always take flight after a Parthian fashion, by hurling a few poisoned arrows at her: here is Pelisson's:—

"Tu vis un Duc, dans Lesdiguières,

Il était beau comme le jour!

Moi, je n'avais que mon amour;—

Encore je n'en avais guère!"\*

"Charming!" replied Rupert; "they seem to be laughing very much at one or both of these men in Mademoiselle de Scudery's box."

\* It is quite impossible in a translation not to lose much of the exquisite delicacy and fine satire of this inimitable epigram; but here is the nearest version I can give of it:—

"'Twas a Duke you saw in Lesdiguière,  
And beauty, both of form and mien;  
While I'd but my love, wherewith to dare;—  
And not e'en much of that, I ween!"

"I lay a wager it is at La Feuillade," said Rohault; "for the poor *Duc* is, out and out, one of Moliere's little *Marquis*; but would you like me to present you to Ninon? and then we shall find out what they are laughing at, and no doubt it is worth hearing."

Rupert hesitated; his first impulse was to accept the offer, but the image of Lucy rose up in all the beauty of its young, generous, and confiding love; and the holiness of its purity made him resolve to avoid, at all events not to seek, the acquaintance of this modern Circe.

"No, thank you," said he, with a smile; "I have no wish to enter the lists with such a fearful odds against me."

"Ah!" said Rohault, taking a pinch of snuff, "a most prudent resolve—provided it only lasts."

Ninon happening to turn round, and seeing the doctor, or in reality perceiving Rupert, and being much struck by his extraordinary beauty, wondered who he was; and, determined to ascertain, she turned the *Vicomte de Brajlone* out of his chair, which was next to the partition that divided the physician's box from hers, and putting out her hand to the latter, said—

"Ah! well met, Mr. Deserter, whom one never sees, and who leaves people to die at leisure."

"Well, when *you will* go on killing them, how can I help it? We divide the practice of the court and the town between us—as that villain, *Poquelin*, would say; those who resist the deleterious effects of drugs and narcotics, fall victims to love and Ninon. Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Rohault, affecting to feel the pulse of the beautifully rounded little wrist, held out to him: "*Voyons*, what is the matter with us?"

"Oh! I have such terrible palpitations," said she—putting her other hand on her heart, and glancing as she spoke at Rupert; but he was intensely pre-occupied, contemplating the very beautiful hands, cased in the very ugly buff mittens, opposite to him.

"*You!* suffer from palpitations of the heart! How comes it that you who *give* them to everybody, have any left? However, I am glad they have come home to you at last; you are sure there is *no La Feuillade in them?*" asked Rohault, with an irresistibly comic look of mock solemnity.

"Oh, *à propos!*" cried Ninon, with a laugh so bell-like and silvery, that it might have lured a falcon back; but

which had no effect upon Rupert, whose eyes were still riveted on the buff mittens. *L'imbecile est furieux!* he sent me such an ass of an epigram yesterday, which he meant to be very severe; but it would not do, after *Pelisson's*," added she, with something almost approaching to a sigh.

"Pray let me hear it; for I've heard enough of it," said Rohault.

"The rhymes were mere doggerel, so I don't even remember them; but the pith of them was this, 'that love had lent me a charm, which, in reality, I do not possess;' so I returned him his effusion, with this very natural query written on the back of it: '*If love can lend a charm of any sort, why for pity's sake don't you borrow it?*'"

"Ha! ha! ha! who would doubt you?" said Rohault; while Ninon perceived, by the smile that played round Rupert's mouth, that her wit, at all events, had not passed unnoticed, if she herself had.

"Who is that young man with you?" whispered she to the physician.

"A young Englishman of the name of Singleton. Handsome! is he not?"

"Very; but it seems, then, there are no buff mittens in England? since he cannot take his eyes off of *Madame Scaron's*."

"Ha! ha! ha! Don't be alarmed, *belle Ninon*; the widow will never carry off a conquest from *you*, by a *coup de main*," laughed Rohault.

"Perhaps not," rejoined Ninon. "But as *Bernier*—that wonderful man (not wonderful so much from his travels as from his *daring*; for does he not dare to say whatever he thinks to our *Grand Monarque*; even to telling him that he thought a republic the best form of government! and to translate whatever is most untranslatable in the tragedies of *Seneca*); well, as he said to *Prince Maurice* at the Hague, when the latter said that, had he been on the Rhine, instead of *Turenne*, he would have done so and so, 'possibly, *Monseigneur*, but you must first gain your victories!'"

"Hush!" said Rohault, glancing towards Rupert, "he speaks French as well as you do."

"Impossible! since he says nothing; present him to me!" The introduction over, Ninon invited Rupert to supper that same evening, but, heaven forgive him! (what I am sure it will) he pleaded a prior engagement.

"That's unfortunate," said she, "for a compatriot of yours, a *Monsieur Allen*,

an actor, whom Girot, one of our actors, introduced to me, is to be of the party."

"An invitation from Mademoiselle de l'Enclos needs no other inducement," bowed Rupert.

"Is this Allen one of your great actors?" asked Ninon.

"So far from it, that I never remember to have seen or heard of him: oh! yes, I do recollect *once* having seen a person of that name crucify 'Hamlet' at the Nursery."\*

"Ah! you see I was right," said she, turning to Rohault; "I never yet found merit of any sort associated with pomposity or pretension; and this Monsieur Allen has both, to a superhuman degree, to say nothing of his being so long-winded, that one would have time to rebuild Rome before he can get to the end of what ought to be the briefest commonplace; and prosy people are my favorite aversion, for, like the wick of a candle, the longer they are, the more obscure they become."

"Well, then, the only way is to pop on the extinguisher, and not to listen to them," said Rohault.

Here the door of Mademoiselle de l'Enclos's box opened, and admitted three more persons, Bussy Rabutin, the Comte de la Tour d'Auvergne, the Duc de Bouillon's youngest son, and Edward Allen, the very identical actor whom Ninon had been discussing.

"*Madame ma Mère*," said Monsieur de la Tour d'Auvergne, raising Ninon's hand to his lips, "has commissioned me, Mademoiselle, to solicit the honor of your company, to-morrow night, in her *petits appartements*."

In this one sentence Rupert seized the two extraordinary extremes, and the startling contradiction, which composed the manners of at once the stiffest, the most polished, and what, but for the far coarser and more shameless one of Charles the Second, would have been the most licentious court in Europe. Children calling their parents *Madame ma Mère*, and *Monsieur mon Père*, and yet a

woman, such as Ninon de l'Enclos, not only *admitted* to their society and tolerated, but sought and courted by the greatest ladies; even those of Royal houses, like the Duchesse de Bouillon. Still, this was but the history of all times, only in a little more glaring colors on a more brazen substratum; for is not our whole social system a continual effort to put a strait waistcoat upon all our better, more kindly, and consequently more moral feelings; while vice, of every sort, ranges the world at large? Break one of God's commandments, there is God to look to it, for men seldom trouble their heads about it; but only infringe, in the slightest degree, any of the conventional forms of society, and the whole world are up in arms; for *that is their affair*.

"No, my dear Philip," said Ninon, nonchalantly, when the young man had delivered his mother's message: "*C'est trop de peine de se mettre à la Duchesse*; but tell *Madame votre Mère* I shall be happy to see her instead, if she likes to come to me, for Moliere is coming to read his new play, '*La Critique de l'École des Femmes*,' (*Il y en a tant!*) and Chappelle, Boileau, Despréaux, Racine, and the whole galaxy are coming too; and as, therefore, our good Poquelin cannot go to *Emoustilier un peu ce bon vieux Cardinal*,\* as Madame de Sévigné says, his Eminence also is coming to me. Ah! Monsieur Allen," added she, turning to that very inflated-looking personage, "how do you do? I was just speaking of you."

"Too much flattered," bowed Allen.

"No, you have no reason to be so," rejoined Ninon, casting a sly look at Rohault.

"I have come," said the actor, drawing himself up, and puffing out his cheeks, as if he thought in so doing he was considerably swelling Moliere's reputation, "yes, I have come, in spite of three invitations to the country, to see and give my opinion of your great Moliere."

"Very flattering, indeed," muttered Bussy to the Duc de Lesdigueres, puffing out his cheeks exactly like Allen; "*very flattering*, upon my word, that *le petit talent* (*le petit Allen*) should come and see *le grand!*"

"I was informed, Mademoiselle," resumed Allen, "that Paris would soon have to go into mourning, for that Paris was about to lose you, as you were going to Russia with Prince Tolstoy."

\* De Retz.

\* A Playhouse so called in Charles the Second's time, being literally a nursery for young unpractised actors; indeed, there appears to have been two nurseries; one in Golden Lane, near the Barbican, described in Pennant's London as a row of houses of singular construction; the other, instituted by William Legge, Groom of the Bed-chamber to Charles the Second, and situated in Hatton Garden, but the latter was not founded till March, 1664.

"Indeed!" said Ninon, raising her eyebrows and shrugging her shoulders, "and that's the way they write history."

"This is the way they ought to write it," said Bussy Rabutin, putting into her hand a couple of pages of a satire of his, for which, on its completion three years later, he was sent to the Bastille. Ninon glanced her eye over it, and when she had ceased laughing at the perusal, she shook her head and her finger at Bussy, as she said—

"Ah! *Mauvaise tête!* I see you are canvassing suffrages for the Bastille. Who is that just come into Madame de Montespan's box? Look."

"Why, Lauzun, of course; he has a better view of *La Moliere* from that box than any other, so he goes, and *Montpensiers*,\* the Montespan, a little on the strength of it. But as you threaten me with the Bastille, I had better take the benefit of clergy, for I see Bourdaloue has just come in with my cousin, De Sévigné, Madame de Thionville, and the Prince de Condé, who I suspect has for the second time captured Thionville; † but all *caurien* as I am thought, and as I perhaps am, I confess myself one of Bourdaloue's † warmest admirers; for, notwithstanding his astounding and all-persuasive eloquence, he never seeks, like many less celebrated theologians, to make religion a mere pedestal for his fame; but, on the contrary, he makes it the basis of his conduct."

"A preacher, my dear Bussy, who lures you from an angel, can scarcely be so very orthodox," laughed the Vicomte de Brailone, looking at Ninon.

"Comment donc! Vicomte," said Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, as she nodded, and glanced at Madame de Sévigné, who had just entered the next box, on the other side of Rupert; "don't you know that

\* Mademoiselle de Montpensier was in love with the Duc de Lauzun, and sacrificed everything to marry him, which he repaid by the most brutal treatment—*selon les règles*.

† Thionville was one of the great Condé's victories.

‡ The clergy of Catholic countries in those days frequented the theatres, and Bourdaloue had been induced by his friend Boileau to visit the *Petit Bourbon*; it is to be lamented that Boileau could not also have imbued him with a more liberal, that is, with a more just spirit towards Moliere. All ecclesiastics, however, were not so prejudiced, for Rapin lauds the great comic poet of France ardently, and at great length, in his "*Réflexions sur la Poétique*;" and Bouhours wrote his epitaph in verse, at once elegant and judicious.

the worship of *Marie* is above that of all the other angels?"

"*Mechante!*" murmured Bussy Rabutin, as he closed the door of Ninon's box, and went into his cousin's.

At that time when conversation in France was at once a necessity, an art, and a triumph, Rupert was not sorry to have an opportunity of hearing even the gossip of persons so celebrated as Boileau, Bourdaloue, Madame de Sévigné, and the great Condé; and though it is very certain that clever people don't *always* talk articles for an encyclopedia, as ignoramuses take it for granted that they are in duty bound to do; yet it is also equally certain, that even their nonsense is better worth listening to than the solemnities and *wiseacrecisms* of less gifted mortals.

"Decidedly, *Messieurs*," said Madame de Sévigné, searching in all her own pockets, and then in the little reticule of gold *passementerie* hanging on her arm. "Some of you have taken my *drageoir*;\* I suspect it is *you*, Prince."

"Nay," said Condé, interrupted in a whisper to Madame de Thionville, but holding up both his open hands with a frank, good-humored smile, "it is somewhat invidious, *belle Marquise*, to fasten your suspicions upon *me*, when you are surrounded by a set of sayers of good things, in whose way, therefore, good things are more likely to be than in mine."

"It is, *Monseigneur*," said Bourdaloue, "because *Madame* knows that you are in the habit of *taking* everything."

"That is too bad of you, *Mon Père*, to shelter *Monsieur le Prince* amongst his laurels, for they are such a complete forest, that *now* I shall never find my poor *drageoir*."

"I see it!" cried Boileau, "at your feet; take care you do not tread upon it. *Ahem!*" added he, as he took it up and presented it to her. "*Moral*, as *La Fontaine* would say; it is not amid glory and renown that we should look for the sweets of life, but at the feet of beauty." They were all laughing at Boileau's mock heroic tag moral, when Bussy Rabutin said—

\* What in modern French would be called a *bonbonniere*. Roquefort says: "The ladies wore a little spice-box, in shape like a watch, to carry *dragées*;" and Palsgrave, in his "*Eclaircissement de la langue Française*," gives *dradge*, a spice, rendering it by the French word *dragée*. Chaucer uses the word in a medicinal sense.



"*Apropos, Prince, pour revenir à la gloire,* as you are in the habit of doing. I suppose you have heard this evening that the Parliament have voted unanimously two millions of *livres*, to erect a bronze column to you, to be emblazoned with the names of all your victories."

"Two millions! that is a great deal for blood money," said the great man, thoughtfully.

"A great deal do you think it, *Diantre!*" retorted Bussy, with an affected bluntness, which made the compliment the greater. "Colbert himself, by his most minute calculations, could hardly make it a *sou* a victory."

"Bravo! Bussy," cried Boileau.

"I like your *esprit de corps*, Boileau, towards a rival in your *corps d'esprit*," said Condé, holding out his hand to the poet.

"Talking of *esprit*, I wish, *Monseigneur*, you would help me to make war on the *Marquise* for her bad taste."

"No, no, thank you," laughed the great Captain, touching Rabutin's arm, and bowing to Madame de Sévigné, "both Bussy and I were at Lerida, and *once* is enough."\*

"Say, most redoubtable porcupine, what has my gentle coz done to incur your most formidable displeasure?" asked Bussy, laying his hand upon Boileau's shoulder.

"Why," replied the latter, "she entertains heretical opinions touching Racine, and she obstinately refuses to recant them."

"Yes, I maintain," said Madame de Sévigné, "that this absurd mania for Racine will pass, like that for coffee."†

"*Oui, partout!* yes, everywhere," said Boileau, with a generous enthusiasm which, towards his friends, he always carried beyond empty words; for his "ill-nature" consisted in lashing the follies and vices of mankind, while he always helped their weakness and upheld their virtues.

"*Ma Cousine*," said Bussy, "when do you mean to present me to those English friends of yours, who have the pretty daughter; and the sensible father, who is bent upon marrying her to a peer of France. If a *pauvre petit Comte* would satisfy him, I am quite ready, from your

\* Condé, and his till then victorious army, were repulsed before Lerida, as Bussy had often been by Madame de Sévigné.

† "*Racine passera comme le café.*"—Madame de Sévigné. For once, Madame de Sévigné was wrong—in both instances.

description of *Mademoiselle Lucie*, to make her *Comtesse de Bussy Rabutin*."

"You are really very obliging!" laughed Madame de Sévigné; "but Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, I imagine, will require in his daughter's husband some title to respectability, as well as the mere empty title you could confer upon her."

At the name of Hawthorne, coupled with Sir Gilbert's matrimonial schemes, Rupert's attention became painfully intense.

"Bah!" rejoined Bussy, appealing to Bourdaloue, "for the little time we are '*here below*,' as you preachers say, what does it matter, for the more or the less, of things being exactly as we would have them, especially in matrimony, which is proverbially a cross-grained, never-right sort of commodity? Besides—as Pere Mathieu has it somewhere on his tablets—

'La vie que tu vois, n'est qu'une Comédie,  
On l'un, fait le César, et l'autre l'Arliquin,  
Mais la mort la finit toujours en Tragedie,  
Et ne distingue point l'empereur du faquin.'

So that in common prudence a woman ought to marry a *Mauvais Sujet*, as she would be so much more easily consoled for the loss of a Harlequin than for that of a *Cæsar!*"

"In either case, surely, my dear *Comte*," said Bourdaloue, with a smile, "you could hardly expect women, when they regain their liberty, to vow with Tully, when he lost his—

"*Omnem hilaritatem in perpetuum amisi!*"

"Well, I don't know," laughed Bussy, "it would have a fine funereal effect! and would be as good a fiction for a dead man's ear, as any other."

"Was not that beautiful young girl I saw the other night at the *Marechale de Turenne's*, *Mademoiselle Hawthorne?*" asked the Prince de Condé.

"Yes, is she not lovely?" said Madame de Sévigné. "And Lady Hawthorne is also charming; but for Sir Gilbert, he is beyond me! We must turn him over to you, *Mon Pere*, for you are used to the *fathers!* and no one is better versed in them."

"Has the *brave homme* been presented at court yet? as I heard you say he was so anxious to be; and I'm sure that if he has, by your description, it must have been a *fête* for his Majesty, who is fond of farces—*off* as well as *on* the stage—but I must, if he has not, make De Sévigné resign in my favor, and let me be his *cornac*."

"O dear, no; the rehearsal is not half over yet," replied Madame de Sévigné, "for although we have been six weeks at it, we have only got as far as *oui Sire*, and *non Sire*, for the declamatory part of the performance, while for the action, we have not yet been able to enforce the necessity of this worthy gentleman's taking his Majesty's hand, with all the gentleness of respect, to kiss, instead of seizing it as a mastiff would a bone he was about to gnaw, to say nothing of the uncorrectly habit he has of accompanying every sentence he utters with a loud laugh. Poor dear gentleman, I don't know who could have had the charge of his education; but to use a culinary simile, all the more appropriate to such a *gastronome*, he is stuffed with prejudices, larded with absurdities, and trussed with obstinacy, of all of which, more especially the latter, his poor wife and daughter have the full benefit."

A smile on Rupert's face seemed to acknowledge the likeness of the portrait, while Bussy exclaimed—

"An amiable personage, truly; who, no doubt, wishes to impress on his female vassals, like *Arnolphe* in the play, that we are going to see, *que leur*

'*Sexe n'est là, que pour la dépendance :  
Du côté de la barbe, est la toute puissance.*'"

Here a stamping of feet and knocking of canes in the pit, announced that that portion of the audience thought it high time the play should begin, and these sounds were presently taken up by the public boxes and the gallery; for the *Petit Bourbon*, like our modern theatres, had about four private boxes on each side, except that they were not walled off with high partitions as ours are, but merely by a low barrier to lean the arm on; between each, these private boxes were lined with crimson velvet, with large mirrors at the back of them, and draperies of white *moire*, fringed with gold, and rejoiced in the luxury of *fauteuils* and footstools, while the public boxes had merely benches covered with red Utrecht velvet.

"*Poquelin, mon Ami! Messieurs les quinze sous s'empatentent!*" said Bussy, as the shuffling of feet and the thumping of canes increased, amid which the curtain rose and discovered Moliere, and La Grange, whereupon the murmurs of impatience were exchanged for rounds of applause.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE play was "*L'Ecole des Femmes*." La Grange\* being the "*Chrysalde*," Moliere "*Arnolphe*," and Armande "*Agnèse*." La Grange was finished, natural, and effective, and embodied thoroughly the *sensé* straightforward, dispassionate character of *Chrysalde*; but Moliere was *literally himself*, and consequently electrified the audience; for every word almost, in the part of *Arnolphe*, was but the hoarded essence of his own heart, wrung out by the strong pressure of increasing wrong. Moreover, the play had all the charm of novelty, this being only the second time it had been acted. Armande was standing in the wing; and Moliere, who knew she was not wont to be ready so long beforehand, in turning to cough, glanced from the Duc de Lauzun to her, as much as to say—*I see the reason of your empressement to-night*. But Armande, nothing daunted, quietly arranged the strings of the close coif, in which she was to act *Agnèse*, and then affected to be busy studying her part. Chapelle, who was seated in the orchestra, and had observed this almost imperceptible scene between the husband and wife, never took his eyes off of them during the rest of the play; and in the beginning of the first act, where *Arnolphe* is recapitulating to *Chrysalde* all the arts and *ruses* by which some women deceive their husbands, remarked, though no one else who had not, like him, been acquainted with the *dessous des cartes* of the Moliere *menage*, could have remarked it, so subtle and almost imperceptible was the action, that Moliere drove another look into Armande's conscience, had she had one, as he repeated the lines:

"L'une, de son galant, en adroite femelle.  
Fait fausse confidence, à son époux fidèle."

"My poor Moliere!" groaned Chapelle internally, "you will not accept the panacea of a single delusion, and you are wrong; for every illusion is a drapery thrown by mercy round the deformity of reality."

The play proceeded amid unanimous applause, for the audience were charmed by its wit, and penetrated by its truth; but poor Chapelle heard nothing but the sweetness of the dying Swan, and saw

\* For Baron, afterwards so celebrated an ornament to Moliere's company, was at that time only eleven years old, though already reaping the benefit of the protection and tuition of the former.

only the brilliancy of the expiring Dolphin! And again he sighed; for through the painted face of the actor, he looked into the aching heart of the man. And where, in the fifth scene of the third act, this passage occurs:—

“ Je sais que, pour punir son amour libertin,  
Je n'ai qu'à laisser faire à son mauvais destin,  
Que je serais vengé d'elle, par elle même;  
Mais il est bien fâcheux de perdre ce qu'on aime!

Ciel! puisque pour un choix, j'ai tant philosophé,

Faut-il de ses appas—être si fort coiffé!  
Elle n'a ni parents, ni support, ni richesse;  
Elle trahit mes soins, mes bontés, ma tendresse:

Et cependant *je l'aime!* après ce lâche tour,  
Sot! n'as—tu point de honte! ah! je crève  
j'enrage.

Et je souffletterois mille fois mon visage:”

the pathos of Moliere's tones, and the depth and truth of their expression, made the audience cry as with one voice:—

“That's fine!”

Chapelle covered his face with his hands, and murmured—“Sad! sad!”

When *Agnès* was not on the stage, but still standing in the wing, it was easy to perceive that all the tender speeches which *Horace* repeated to *Arnolphe*, as having been said to him by her, *Armande* indorsed by glances to the gay and heartless *Lauzun*, who quite answered the description of the worthless *Blondins* she had been so often warned against in the play. If *Chapelle* could hate anything, he thoroughly hated *Armande* that night, but thought it was fortunate, or perhaps unfortunate, that men had not eyes in the back of their head, for then Moliere might have hated her too. “Yet no,” thought he, “for extremes meet; and the uttermost extremity of his hatred of that woman would be to arrive at loving her over again.”

The play\* over, *Chapelle* was joined

\* It was upon this play, when Moliere was attacked on all sides on account of it, that Boileau, with generous enthusiasm (the best of all enthusiasm, that which is roused by a sense of outraged justice) addressed those charming lines to him, in which he compares him to Terence: though at other times he evinced his friendship quite as much by the acumen, the rigor of his criticism, and the manner in which he often cavilled at, and objected to Moliere's profusion of detail, but not after the ordinary fashion of friends, for when he complained in

#### LES FEMMES SAVANTES

that the following couplet was doggerel:—

“Quand sur une personne on prétend s'ajuster,  
C'est par leur beaux côtés qu'il lui faut imiter.

by Boileau, and they both repaired to Moliere's dressing-room; discussing its merits as they went, and the still greater merit of the acting, they forgot to knock at the door. Moliere was leaning with both arms on the table in an attitude of prostration, with his face hidden by them; at the sound of the two voices he hastily raised his head, and as hastily wiped the rouge off his face, through which *Chapelle's* quick eye had detected, on each cheek, the trace of two large tears, like the bed of a river whose waters had been dried by external influences, but whose source was too deep to be exhausted.

“Ah! come in, my dear friends; delighted to see you,” said Moliere, assuming a gay smile, “tell me, is it not terribly warm to-night? for I never remember to have felt so tired. I was almost asleep when you came in, and was debating whether I was succumbing under the weight of my years, or the weight of the atmosphere; but of course I decided it was the latter; so, pray confirm me in this more agreeable opinion.”

“Neither the one, nor the other,” said Boileau; “but the constant excursions you make to the Temple of Fame, which would tire even an eagle's wings.”

“*Mais où diable! trouvez vous la rime!*”

“Ah! mon cher Nicholas, puisque vous avez toujours raison, laissez moi ma rime,” laughed Moliere.

“Not if I could help it,” rejoined Boileau; “but as I can't, needs must, provided you continue to let me hear it as often as possible; you really outdid yourself to-night, my dear Poquelin. Mind, I am not giving you this as a friendly testimonial, but merely retail it, as the opinion of the critics.”

“Critics are not popes,” replied Moliere, “and, even against myself, I think their infallibilities are wrong, for it seems to me, from my bodily lassitude, that I never acted worse.”

“On the contrary,” rejoined Boileau, “you never acted with more energy.”

“Aye, there it is; that's exactly what I complain of—fearing to be tame and languid, I overdid it, and took *Arnolphe's* love for *Agnès* too much *au grand sérieux*,” and Moliere bit his lip, as he proceeded to disencumber himself of his

He changed it to the following, as it now stands:—

“Quand sur une personne, on prétend se régler,  
C'est par ses beaux endroits, qu'il lui faut imiter.”

stage costume; Josselin having now entered with hot water, and his master's every day attire. Chapello, perceiving his poor friend's drift, and his nervous susceptibility, lest others should suspect "the secrets of the prison-house," kindly came to the rescue, and said:

"Well, do you know, my dear Boileau, I am rather of Poquelin's opinion; I think some of Arnolphe's soliloquy he perhaps *did* give a little too intensely; but that's always the way, when one does not do a thing *con amore* one is nearly sure to overshoot the mark, from the very fear of falling short of it."

"Some one knocks, see who it is," said Moliere to Josselin, casting a grateful glance at Chapelle, as he looked up out of the towel, with which he was rubbing his face, and conveniently hiding it, at the same time.

"I wonder," said Rohault, putting in his head, as soon as Josselin had opened the door, "if a poor d—l of a doctor might venture his person into this den of iniquity, without being poisoned by some venomous satire, or bow-strung by a lampoon."

"Lampoons and satires, indeed, set you up!" laughed Moliere; "*those* are cates to set before a king; and what all good Christians can swallow with avidity, and never reject—unless, indeed, the person taking them finds the ingredients to consist of their own individual follies; but they are far too dainty fare for such fellows as you of the death's-head and cross-bones brigade. Josselin, seize and bind that fellow, and then gag him with those two boxes of pills, which he sent me last week; you will find them intact—for am I not *alive* to give the order?—tied by way of knobs to Sganarelle's cudgel, so as to convert it into a *deadly* weapon."

"My young friend," cried Rohault, laughing, as he dragged Rupert into the room after him, "draw and defend me, or that villain Poquelin will murder me in cold pills!"

"Well, Doctor, you will have one great advantage in dying by such hands," said Rupert, bowing to Moliere, "for each of your order that Monsieur Moliere sacrifices he renders immortal!"

"Yes, the wretch! that is the worst of it. However, I always return good for evil; so, friend Poquelin, allow me to present Monsieur Singleton to you; a young Englishman, who has brought you a letter from some friend of yours in London. Moreover, I beg leave to add, a

*convalescent patient* of mine! And now, having produced six feet of *vital* matter, in refutation of the long-buried calumnies you are always excavating against us, I leave you to the reproaches of your conscience—if, indeed, such a twin monster as an author and actor growing upon one trunk have such a rarity as a conscience between them," said Rohault, with a mock heroic air, as he flung himself into a chair, and extended one hand to Boileau and the other to Chapelle, who were both laughing; while Moliere, having returned Rupert's salutations, and learnt that the letter of which he was the bearer, was from Tom Pepys, asked permission to read it.

The honest *Sartor* was eloquent in the praise of young Singleton, and gave a concise account (but quite sufficiently detailed to interest Moliere) of Rupert's love for Lucy, the reason of their engagement being broken off, and the unfeeling manner in which Sir Gilbert had ended, after so long a time encouraging it, and his sudden crotchet of taking his daughter to Paris, with his professed intention of marrying her to a Frenchman; and concluded by entreating Moliere to use his influence in trying to get the young man some civil appointment about the French court, as the peculiar circumstances of his uncle's death seemed to exclude him for the present from anything like a career in England.

"Poor young man! So he, too, loves, and is miserable!" thought Moliere, as he raised his large, melancholy eyes, full of kindness, to Rupert's face; but all he said was, as he held out his hand to him—

"My good friend, Master Tom Pepys, tells me, young sir, that you and I are to be great friends; so the sooner we begin the better. And, perhaps, after all, a poor actor may be as good a *cicerone* as any other, for letting you *behind the scenes* of our great town. At all events, *this*, pray, believe, that whatever I can do, to be of use to you in any way, I will do. The great may have friends, as they have everything else—on credit; but humbler individuals must pay as they go, and *deeds* are the only currency of a poor man's friendship. So, if you will breakfast with me the day after to-morrow, I will let you know what I have *done*."

Rupert cordially pressed the hand so kindly offered to him, and was profuse in the expressions of his very sincere gratitude.

The conversation again became gene-

ral; and, as Boileau, Chapelle, and Rohault, all three returned to their praises of Moliere's acting on that evening, in which Rupert now most enthusiastically joined, the object of their panegyric accused them, one and all, of flattery.

"Well, then, the public is the flatterer," said Boileau, "for we are but its echoes."

"Bah! on the contrary, the public is the 'myriad echo of every ass that brays;' *Poquelin, tu es un ingrat!* for the public it is, after all, who make reputations," said Chapelle.

"Ay, but it's the public of the long run, of the future and not of the present, which stamps them," rejoined Moliere; "for every talent, however small, may, and most generally does in its own time have sufficient *claqueurs* and *prôneurs* to inflate the bubble of contemporaneous reputation, and the same spirit of *caméradie* quite as often combines to roll a stone over the well of real genius; but impartial posterity is just as sure to burst the former, as it is to excavate the latter. The great thing in which posterity errs, is in measuring everything by its own standard, and viewing the ruins of a former fabric by the floods of light which time is sure to let through its crumbling fissures, forgetting that human passions are always the same, though the *fashion of showing* or of *concealing* them (but chiefly the latter) is sure to be different in each succeeding age; for instance, I can imagine, though it is so distant that I cannot foresee it, a time when it may not be the fashion to flatter kings or patrons, or when there may be no kings and no patrons to flatter! and lo! that miraculous age would be sure to exclaim—'What a contemptible, servile set those must have been in the days of *Louis Quatorze!* especially that Moliere! What a scurvy knave he was! Why, a king or any other great personage *now!* (for the now has always two quotable extremes—the one of superiority to the past, the other of degradation *from it*); no, no great personage in *these days* would endure the fulsome dedications with which he crawled up the slippery steeps of court favor.'

"Very likely not, my good *Madame la Posterité!* but, nevertheless, perhaps the very essence of *your* soul may crawl, cringe, and grovel lower, ay! and pander more to the great, of *your* times, even if the fashion of your day should be to affect, to despise, and abuse them, than ever that of the poor actor did to the

*Grande Monarque!* for, after all, let me tell you, that he did not wriggle in the mire quite so much as you may imagine, but had the stilts of gratitude to carry him high and dry, even through some of the least clean paths. I think I see you, too, *ma bonne Madame La Posterité,* shuddering with virtuous horror (as well you may) at the atrocities of the St. Bartholomew; and yet, the blood equally measured, the butcheries equally counted, you yourself, perhaps, will give Death quite as monstrous a saturnalia, under *some other name;* and *your* great-great-granddaughter will turn up *her* eyes, shrug *her* shoulders, and exclaim: What barbarous times, of *your* pattern age, just as you have done of mine. Then, for the social and domestic virtues, the morality of citizenship, which like an aloe puts forth fresh blossoms every century. How shocked you doubtless will be at the *lèze morale* of the seventeenth century; and, also, that a man should insult, degrade, and in every way maltreat the best of wives, as Monseigneur Le Prince de Condé does, and yet be called 'GREAT!' merely from being a great destroyer of human life! but worst of all, will you think it, that such craven wretches should have existed, as to curry favor with this great man, by meanly helping him to oppress his legal victim; for, of course, none of these abominations will exist in *your time,* *ma très Chère Madame La Posterité!* or, if they do, it will be under a *different phase,* and time will have done as much to mellow, tone down, and embellish them, as it does for most other old pictures; for, believe me, *human nature* is the most celebrated of all the old masters."

"Ah! my dear Poquelin," said Boileau, rising and looking at his watch: "You know that said human nature so thoroughly that *Madame la Posterité,* toute précieuse qu'elle peut être, cannot fail to recognize you as one of the brightest ornaments of her ancestral glory; but I must say *adieu,* for I sup at *Ninon's* to-night."

"And I," said Rohault, "must take my patient home; for it would be too great a triumph to you, if he were to get a relapse and die under my hands after all; besides, I have another invalid to go and see—a poor Marchand de Quincallerie\* in the Rue St. Denis."

"Nay," said Moliere, "give the poor d——l a chance; let him live a little longer, and come home and sup with me;

\* A hardware man.

for though Monsieur Singleton has promised to breakfast with me the day after to-morrow, I would rather get better acquainted with him before then, and a breakfast is but a cold tortoise sort of hospitality after all, whereas a petit souper fin, with a sparkling bottle of Aie for a spur, always clears a ten years' barrier on the road to intimacy. So, my young friend, you say yes, don't you?" added Moliere, holding out his hand, which Rupert, with the invitation to supper, was eagerly accepting, when Rohault interfered—

"No, no," said he, "not this evening, my dear Poquelin; jesting apart, remember this is the first time of his being out at night since a severe illness (for the worthy Doctor knew nothing of the evening ramble in the gardens of the Ecuelle d'Or), and it is high time he should be at home and in bed."

"Well, I am always ready to hear reason, even when it is against myself; and as what you have just said, savors more of common sense than of the Pharmacopœia, far be it from me to gainsay it, so au revoir, sans adieux: Josselin, light these gentlemen out; and let me know when my wife is ready."

Once more alone with Chapelle, Moliere could again throw aside his comic mask, and no wonder; a sigh escaped his friend, as with the closing door and the departing footsteps of Rupert and the Doctor, he saw the face, so brilliant the moment before, suddenly change, the jaw drop, the cheeks look hollow, and the eyes grow dim, like to a corpse that had been animated by enchantment for a prescribed period, and then was doomed to lapse into "cold obstruction."

"Thank you—thank you," said Moliere, in a low voice, as he leaned his left elbow on the mantel-piece, put his hand to his forehead and held out the other to Chapelle, whose hand he pressed; and then, for a few seconds, both were silent—a silence which Chapelle was the first to break.

"Believe me, my dear friend," said he, "it would be better for your soul's health, as well as your body's, if you would not inflict this supererogation of martyrdom upon yourself every night. Let La Grange play those parts, all rôles are alike to you, for, in a double sense, you create them equally."

"Chapelle," answered Moliere, in a sort of husky, dry, hollow whisper, as he impatiently loosened his long laced cra-

vat, "I must speak sometimes, or I should suffocate."

"Speak! speak, man, and welcome, but can't you speak to me? Is my ear so dull, or my heart so cold, that your words (that is your *woes*, for they are one), would not have at least as good a resting-place in them, as scattered to the winds by the breath of public plaudits, or derision, for every carrion bird to peck at. Moliere, be a man! draw out this envenomed shaft, even if part of your heart comes with it; but *don't* hug it to your bosom, like a poor maniac that knows no better than to doat upon destruction! I am not Bourdaloue, to preach to you; but *this* I tell you, because I *feel* it to be the *truth*, that when God plants thorns in our path, he does it that we should walk the more carefully, *not* that we should cultivate them with unwearied assiduity, and irrigate them with ceaseless tears, till what *He* in his wisdom meant for a sufficient obstruction to wean us from earth, *we*, in our folly, never stop till we magnify into a wilderness so dense, that it shuts out heaven from our view. But *you*, so equal, so clear-sighted, so *rangé* on all other points, on *this*, confound my judgment! It must be that on this you are a contradiction to yourself; for it is not even as if your position had overtaken you unawares, as you both anticipated and feared it, so long beforehand, that surely you might by this time have been *resolved*, either on *resignation*, or resentment, and not thus agitate your life like a pendulum, between two opposing feelings, always striking against both without ever being able to dwell upon either; and"—

"My dear Chapelle," interrupted Moliere, "all you say is so true, that it has not a single novelty, for I have said the same things to myself over and over again; but there *are* cases so exceptional—(and mine is one of them)—that all gradations, all intermediate and antecedent stages disappear, and the great monstrous solitary *fact* stands out alone, and must be dealt with abstractedly; just as there are outrages so terrible, that equity itself could only decide upon avenging them, without superfluously searching the genealogical archives of the provocations that may have engendered them. *You* argue that black is black, and white is white; *ergo*, that I should not suspect my wife, without proving her culpability, and, that once proved, I should cast her off to perdition, and let

her destruction avenge mine—that is one side of your argument; the other is, that if I am such an uxorious fool that my love is stronger than mine honor, why then, e'en let this fell tyrant, Love, take my poor pusillanimous honor, manacle and make a slave of it. Not so, friend Chapelle; here's how the game stands between me and Fate.—I love, because I cannot help it; I doubt, and fear, and madden! for the same reason; those are the fearful odds Fate has against me. Here is my vantage ground: Moliere, the poor player—to whom those who call themselves the servants of God will refuse Christian burial, and so force his soul to slink to heaven some bye-way—Moliere, the son of the poor cabinet-maker, whom the magnates of the land combine to incense as a demi-god, yet cannot condescend to treat as an equal! Moliere, the deified player, and the despised *Roturier*, aspires to be a *Christian!* and to hold the balance even; to do as he would be done by. Were our positions reversed, and my wife were jealous of me—ay, by the mass! with thousand-fold cause, who would shield or spare, or pity her! Would not her most sacred feelings be a world-wide jest? Nay, if she but breathed to her gossips the slightest of her wrongs, would she not, instead of sympathy, be lapidated with her duties to bear and to forbear? For, mark you, what are called marriage vows—though God enjoined them equally—we have decided are for women to keep, and for men to break. But could she write plays, and were she only to let one of her lacerated feelings writhe through them, as I let all mine, she would be branded as an outlaw from all conventional propriety at the galleys of public opinion. Yet, still, all our injustice is not towards women, although we bestow upon them the larger portion; for we are almost equally unjust to each other; as we all exercise a self-constituted hereditary charter, for demoralizing society, calling it a *bonne fortune* when we vitally injure our neighbor; but, suddenly discovering that this is a crime of the blackest dye (as it most assuredly is), when our neighbor returns the compliment, and injures us! And have I not labored in my vocation to contribute to this false, this unjust, this iniquitous state of things? I have—and, verily, it has come home to me! And think you it would mend the matter, and bleach my own sins white, that I should remorselessly hurl my young wife down the fearful precipice,

to the brink of which I have brought her? No, Chapelle; but I'll tell you what I'll do—ay, if I die in the desperate struggle! I'll watch over her honor, not because it is mine, but because it is a woman's only safeguard. Alas! am I not old enough to be her father? Let me, at least, act as such!"

"My poor, noble-minded friend!" said Chapelle, passing one hand over his eyes, as he placed the other on Moliere's shoulder, while the latter flung himself, exhausted, into a chair. "I have no doubt but that, in time," recommenced Chapelle; but here Josselin returned, and announced that *Madame* was ready, and that the coach was at the door.

Moliere rose, put his gloves leisurely on, slouched his broad-leafed hat somewhat over his face, and, taking Tom Pepys' letter in his hand, *pour se donner un contenance*, as the French say, repaired with Chapelle to the stage-door.

Armande was already seated in the carriage, and Chapelle was seized with a nervous trépitation, when he perceived the Duc de Lauzun (who did not see him, and Moliere) step up to the coach door.

"Fear nothing," said Moliere, in a low voice, pressing his arm; and then he cried out, in a loud, *debonnaire* manner: "Perhaps *Monseigneur* has sent away his coach? Can we be of any use in setting him down?"

"*Mille grâces!*" stammered the *beau Lauzun*, much taken aback, at the sudden apparition of the husband, when he had made up his accounts for a *tête-à-tête* with the wife. "I—a—why—a—the fact is, *mon cher Poquelin*, that I was just about to offer *Madame* the homage of a little bouquet; for I never saw her act better—but—a—pray get in, and I will present my little ovation after."

Moliere did as he was desired, followed by Chapelle; and as he got in, the light of the link fell upon the flowers that Lauzun held, and he perceived that the hero of the *Pigrole* was twisting a *billet doux* round the stems.

"Have the goodness, *mon cher Poquelin*," said Lauzun, with an *air fat*, "to pass these to your *belle moitié*."

Moliere took the flowers, but had no sooner done so, than he said, as Armande held out her hand for them: "Wait a minute, *m'amie*, they are all wet, and will spoil your gloves; I'll just put another piece of paper round them."

"No, no; they will do very well so," said she.

But the next moment Lauzun had the

inexpressible mortification of seeing his *poulet* flung out of the window, and fall at his feet; while Armande received the cover of Tom Pepys' letter carefully rolled round the flowers!

Chapelle, who had seen the whole transaction, and was delighted with Moliere's sleight of hand, said maliciously:

"*Monseigneur* has bestowed very just praise upon *Madame's* acting; but, to my mind, Poquelin never acted better than he has done to night! *Bon soir, Monsieur le Duc.*"

"*Diantre!*" exclaimed Lauzun, as the coach drove off, and he fished his ill-fated billet doux out of the mud with the point of his sword, *jamais declaration n'a plus mal tombée!*

## CHAPTER XV.

By ten o'clock the next morning, Moliere was on the road to Versailles, where he had his *entrees*; for *Louis Quatorze*, then only twenty-five years in the world, and though *nominally* eleven years a king, yet in *reality* only *one* year such (for till Mazarin's death, he felt he had no *real* power), had, if possible, more taste for the pleasures of life than for its splendors; at all events, the "*mor*" that was so strong in him was quite as omnipotent to make him dispense with the rigidity of court etiquette as to exact it; and he was always imping the newly-fledged wings of his regality in the wide regions of autocratic power, the more effectually to shuffle off the remaining sensation of his adult trammels, and the chafed feeling of the early parsimonious clippings of Mazarin, and the more remote, but more stringent, political fetters of Richelieu. He was impatient, too, of the antiquated etiquette of the Court of Anne of Austria; and as the hot blood of youth, whether in kings or serfs, is ever a *frondeur*, he first kicked through it, by exhibiting in a *maillot* and spangled tunic on the stage of Versailles, and dancing through a whole *ballet*, to the great scandal of the Queen mother and her Court, and indeed not much to the edification of his own, whose covert contempt he had penetration enough to discover, and sufficient tact to respect; for he did not repeat the mountebank *spectacle*, notwithstanding that the Mazarins, De Grammonts, Villarceaux, De la Feuillades, De Chevereuses, De Nevers,

and De la Tremouilles, assured him that Jupiter was still Jupiter, whatever disguises he might condescend to assume; for once that he had deigned to quit the high clouds of his Imperial Olympus, in order to divert himself among mortals, rank lost its grade, since *all*, even the highest, was equally beneath him. Being quite of their opinion in this respect, it was, that induced the *Grand Monarque* to go all lengths, and franchise all barriers, in his patronage of Moliere; while his courtiers preserved an infinitely greater distance between the poor player and their nobility. Yet, notwithstanding this prodigality of condescension on the part of the greatest sovereign in Europe, *Louis Quatorze* found that the balance of the account was in his favor; for despite all his splendor, all his power—nay, despite even his exuberance of health and youth, and his plethora of conquest, both on the plains of Mars and in the bowers of Paphos, the *Grand Monarque* was not exempt from that king's evil of *KINGS—ENNUI*; and no one dissipated this fearful malady like Moliere; consequently (though as civilization advanced monarchs left off keeping a fool, doubtless finding that they were quite competent to play the fool themselves) Moliere had the freedom of Versailles and the Louvre—not, indeed, as king's jester, but as his Majesty's *Chasse Vapeurs*.

Arrived at the gilded gates of Versailles, he left the vehicle he had come in, outside, and traversed the numerous courts on foot, till he gained the grand entrance, where he had his hand on the gilt balustrade of the large marble staircase, and was about to ascend, having taken off his hat in return for the military salute of the company of *Mousquetaires Gris*, which always lined the vestibule, and were relieved every hour, when the Swiss came forward, and informed him that his Majesty was in the octagon garden in the Temple of Psyche, by the *Bosquet* of Myrtles; that their *consigne* was, that they were not to admit any one, even the ministers; but as they had received no orders about him, he might of course proceed. Again saluting the *Mousquetaires*, who returned to their contraband games of cards and dice, Moliere passed out, and descended a flight of steps on the right hand side, where the first terrace now stands; and although at that time the millions had not been sunk, which, from a flat swamp, converted Versailles into an earthly paradise, yet, still



its gardens and its bosquets, even then, were of no mean order.

"Ah! poor Madame de la Valiere," sighed Moliere, as he passed the *bosquet* of Woodbine, in which Louis had first overheard Mademoiselle de la Valiere's avowal of her admiration for him, "poor soul! he had better have quietly let her remain at the Carmelites, when she took refuge there; however, no doubt the next time she takes flight, he will make no opposition to her desire for a conventual life, but let her expiate in penances, as rigorous as she pleases, her sins and his own." This threw Moliere into his usual train of thought, which was so sombre, that, notwithstanding the brilliant sun, which lit up the leaves like emeralds, and sparkled on the fountains till their waters seemed turned to diamond showers, he appeared to be benighted, and to lose his way, for he not only passed the Temple of Psyche, and the *Bosquet* of Myrtilles, but through the Octagon garden into another, and might have wandered on, heaven only knows how much farther, had not Cardinal de Retz's repeater struck twelve, and recalled him to a recollection of his errand.

"Ah! *ce bon vieux Cardinal, qui m'emoustille à son tour,*" cried Moliere, as he turned about, and retraced his steps to the Temple of Psyche; he ascended the marble steps and stood for a moment under the portico. The doors of the temple itself were of lapis-lazuli, with two small quivers of pure gold, full of arrows, which served for knockers, as they descended upon a thick plate of the same metal; these knockers were so constructed that upon the first stroke given by them, the doors turned on invisible hinges, and opened of themselves. This temple was circular, the ceiling being painted with the history of Cupid and Psyche, and the twelve niches round the walls containing Parian marble statues, illustrating episodes of the same myth. All the tables, couches, chairs, footstools, girandoles, and tripods, were of Grecian forms, and one large golden boat shaped Greek lamp was suspended from the ceiling. There was a high window, circular at the top; between each niche the frames of these windows were of silver, the draperies of sky blue velvet embroidered with silver lilies, lined with white Florence silk and fringed with silver, while the blinds were of rose-colored *gros des Indes*, and diffused the most lovely glow, like a universal blush, round the room, which deepened, or paled, accord-

ing to the refractions of light from without.

When the door opened, *Louis Quatorze*, who was habited in a rich suit of polyanthus-colored velvet, the cloak of which was embroidered in gold and small seed pearls, and lined with white satin, was seated at a table, writing out of an inkstand which was composed of one immensely large golden rose, with a spray of emerald leaves branching from it, and two ruby buds; while the pen he used was a golden arrow, feathered with pearls; nevertheless, his Majesty seemed to be laboring under the most terrible difficulties of composition; for there were little Pelions upon Ossa of cancelled paper, torn up beside him; though it was not so much the construction of his sentences that baffled him, as that *exigeant* delegate from the republic of letters, which pedagogues call orthography; for, touching the art of spelling, his royal opinions were well known to be so vacillating and undecided, that an anecdote was current at the time of that inveterate old courtier, the Duc d'Antin, having said upon one occasion, that his Majesty had condescendingly appealed to his arbitration, as how the word *omoplate* ought to be spelt? He had replied:—

"That entirely depends upon how your Majesty chooses it should be spelt; as, indeed, it rests with your pleasure, Sire, whether people should have any *omoplates* or not."

At this time, *Louis Quatorze* was really handsome, as he inherited all his mother's beauty; and, though naturally there was much of the eagle in his dark and brilliant eyes, yet had they the power of veiling themselves in the most dove-like softness; and, except that his nose was rather large, the rest of his features were also handsome; but above all, even when most abjectly playing the slave at a lady's feet, there was a sort of atmosphere of royalty diffused around him, to which all succumbed; the very blood seemed to flow royally in his veins, whether it meandered languidly in azure grooves through the milky-way of his anointed hands, which were too delicate ever to exceed their mission, and do anything beyond press a woman's, and grasp a sceptre, or whether it mantled in regal purple over his lips and cheeks; in short, *Louis the Fourteenth* could not have been anything but a king; so it was lucky that revolutions and republics were not the fashion in those days. When the door opened he raised his head.

"Ah! cest toi, Molière; je travaille!"\* and he held up his forefinger to enjoin silence, and then scrawled upon a piece of paper.

"Laissez entrer J. B. P. Molière à mon en cas de nuit ce soir. Athen.

Louis,  
ce 30 Juillet, 1662."

That is:—

"Admit J. B. P. Molière to my *En cas de nuit*† to-night.

Athen. Louis,  
July 30th, 1662."

The word "*Athen*," blotted out, was the beginning of *Athenais*, Madame de Montespan's name, for indeed it was to her he was writing. Of her his head was full; and she it was who had prevented his giving audience to any of his ministers that morning, and that made him now dismiss Molière, and dignify his labor of love with the imposing name of business!

"There!"—

And he held out the paper without uttering another word. Molière advanced, took it, bowed down to the ground, and withdrew. On regaining the garden, he said to himself: "So, here is a morning gone for nothing; but never mind; this is the first *en cas de nuit* I have ever been admitted to: that is indeed something like having the ear of the king. And I must try and improve the occasion to this poor young Englishman's advantage; for is he not poor and in love? either of which disasters are quite enough to drive a man mad; but both together must be *the very d—l!*"

As his Majesty's dinner hour was one o'clock, it is to be hoped he completed his *poulet* to Madame de Montespan before that time. He had also one to write to Madame de la Valière; but that gave him much less trouble, for two reasons. First—because he did not care what effect his *griffonnage* produced upon her, or whether it produced any; and next—because it consisted of a tissue of those glib falsehoods which men are in the habit of writing on such occasions, and all those flrid commonplaces by which they try to disguise their want of feeling and want of faith. However, this day passed heavily enough for Louis; for Monsieur de Montespan had not yet adopted his exiles to the country, as a *mezzo termine*; neither had the Royal Giovanni publicly avowed

his new sin, for he was young then, and had some vestiges of conscience, which he had not yet rendered invulnerable by a Stygian plunge into the regal omnipotence of his will; so that he had a few lingering scruples about openly outraging his queen, and compromising those whom he preferred to her. Consequently, ten o'clock that night found him pacing his magnificent bed-room at Versailles, in not the most enviable of moods. Within an enclosed dais, of twenty feet square raised upon a platform of three steps, covered with crimson velvet, and surrounded by silver gilt railings, with little gates, stood a gorgeously carved and gilt bedstead, with a cupola top: the hangings were of crimson velvet *fleur de lysee* in gold, with the royal arms of France embroidered in the same in the centre of each curtain. The top of the bedstead was lined with white velvet, also embroidered in gold *fleur de lys*, and at each corner outside were *aigrettes* of snowily white ostrich feathers, which were changed every week. The curtains themselves were lined with white *gros des Indes*, and the *prie Dieu* and *tabourets* were of course also of crimson velvet; the snowy sheets and pillow-cases were trimmed with the finest Dresden lace; and on the wall, at each side of the bed, was a brilliant escutcheon of a shield, and those costly Damascined weapons, with which Francis the First used to delight in decorating the great gallery of the Louvre, from whence *Louis Quatorze* had had them transported. Upon the gilded railing, at the foot of the bed, had been hung by Hudinôt, the *premier valet de chambre*, one of his Majesty's "seven hundred and sixty-five" fine laced shirts, of historical celebrity; and outside this railing was placed a long narrowish table, like a sofa-table, which was covered with a fine Hambrough damask cloth, also trimmed with Dresden lace, as was the napkin; and on this table was laid the *en cas de nuit*, consisting of four dishes of cold viands; but this being a repast confined exclusively to the king, the plates and dishes were of pure gold, the latter being also of a circular form, while the covers were in the shape of *couronnes fermées*, or royal crowns, studded with jewels; the goblet, or covered cup, was the same, and the decanters were of rock-crystal, with a golden trellis-work over them, the grapes of which were composed of purple amethysts. Opposite to this table was the gorgeous toilette, to decorate which, every mine, from those of Golconda to those of Guinea

\* Ah! it's you, Molière; I'm busy.

† See page 60.

and Siberia, had been laid under contribution. Between these two tables now paced Louis Quatorze, disencumbered of his personal paraphernalia. He wore a green velvet dressing-gown, trimmed with miniver, lined with white taffeta, and confined round the waist with a gold cordeliere. As he walked, knitting his brows, and with his hands behind his back, he muttered:

“Aux diable les affaires!”

Then, suddenly stopping, he drew from his bosom a purple velvet jewel case and opened it. It contained a magnificent diamond bracelet of an allegorical design, according to the fashion of the time—this one consisted of a large thick serpent, in splendid brilliants, holding a large heart of purple enamel, transfixed with a diamond arrow; upon touching a spring, this heart opened and discovered a most exquisite portrait, by Petitot, of himself—this was intended for Madame de Montespan; and if she only gazed at it with half the tender complacency that the original did, his Majesty must have had every reason to be satisfied; but, in the midst of this pleasing contemplation, the doors opened, and Hudinôt, the first valet de chambre, announced—

“Monsieur Colbert.”

Louis hastily re-plunged the bracelet into his bosom; but still keeping his right hand there, he drew himself up to the uttermost height of his kingly inches, and said, with a haughty frown, as soon as Colbert stood in the presence—

“Monsieur!—J’ai failli attendre!”\*

“Sire, des affaires d’état,” commenced the minister, with profound humility.

“Faut il encore vous dire que L’ÉTAT c’est moi! Monsieur?”† thundered the King.

“No, Sire, the prosperity of France sufficiently reminds all your Majesty’s subjects of that happy fact.”

“Voyons?” said Louis, somewhat mollified, as he extended his hand for the paper Colbert held.

“I have endeavored,” said the Minister of the Marine, mildly (as he handed to the King one of those many large and enlightened measures, by which he so

long and so miraculously contrived to keep poised the balance of national prosperity, amid the most reckless disorders and ruinous expenditure of the crown), “but I know not with what success, Sire, to embody your Majesty’s admirable views upon the present agricultural distress.”

The truth is, that the only portion of the agricultural distress which Louis Quatorze had troubled his head about, was a very small one, namely, an ear—that Madame de Montespan had lost—off of a wreath of diamond wheat which she had worn at a *ballet* at Fontainebleau the week before, and for which loss he had of course consoled her by a whole harvest of brilliants; but Colbert had adopted the wise plan, in order to prevent any opposition to his schemes, of always persuading the King, that they had emanated from himself.

“Yes,” said Louis, glancing over it in a cursory manner, for he had at least the sagacity to know that he might perfectly trust to Colbert’s astute and high intelligence—“yes, I think that will do very well.”

“But still, Sire,” rejoined the minister, “we shall be obliged to have the collection in all the churches; not only because the exchequer is at such a very low ebb, but because the light of your Majesty’s august countenance shining on this work of charity, will tend to ripen the harvest for these poor destitute masses of your Majesty’s subjects more than anything else can do.\* And, Sire, would you be graciously pleased to decide this evening, on what day you would choose this collection positively to take place (as the rumor of it has so long been bruited about), and would deign to assist at it in Nôtre Dame, with their Majesties the Queen and the Queen mother? The new bishop of Meaux† waits without, to know when he may announce it officially in his own church, and cause it to be announced in every other, throughout the kingdom.”

Louis Quatorze, who had no great fancy for perambulating in state round that immense church, with his Queen in one

\* This from the great (ay, the really great) Colbert. Then surely the fulsomeness of poor Moliere’s dedications may be forgiven him, even by the present age, which is only mean in parsimony, peculation, and self-interest—though not in that particular species of servility, called adulation.

† Bossuet.

\* Sir, I have almost had to wait!

† This celebrated fiat of Louis Quatorze he first issued when only twenty, upon the occasion of Cardinal de Richelieu’s death: when the ministers were asking how the business of the State could then be carried on, the young King exclaimed, “I AM THE STATE!”

hand and a gold plate in the other, made a sort of grimace, as he said :

"*Diantrel!* we are only three ; a brace of queens and a king ; now don't you think that a couple of dozen of the prettiest women in France would get more money, even out of the doctors of the Sorbonne, to say nothing of all the ecclesiastical bodies ?"

Colbert, who saw his drift was to include Madame de Montespan, if possible, in the pageant of this state charity, which would completely have defeated its end, by reminding the people too vividly for what purposes *they* were ground down, and left no corn to grind, resolved to parry the attack, and said with a smile :

"I have no doubt, Sire, that your battalion of beauties would have all the desired effect upon those particular bodies, but we are sure of *them* ; the Sorbonne will give, as a sort of scientific experiment, to analyze what charity consists of, and how the gold extorted from the rich will act upon the bones, nerves, and sinews of the poor ; and the ecclesiastics, it is to be hoped, will give for the love of heaven, if not for the love of humanity. But *all the world*, Sire, more especially the fairer portion of it, will give for the love of your Majesty ; and all the world it is that we want to give."

"Well," said the king, laughing, as he took up a little golden bell off the supper-table, and rang it, "you may let loose the bishop on me."

"His Majesty rang?" inquired Hudinôt, again making his appearance.

"Yes, let the Bishop of Meaux enter."

"Sire, Monsieur de Soyecourt, the Vicomte de Brajilone, and Poquelin Moliere, also, request an audience of your Majesty ; all three having your Majesty's *passee*."

"Well, well, the Bishop first."

The first valet-de-chambre withdrew, and the next moment again opened wide the doors, and announced *Monseigneur L'Eveque de Meaux*."

"Ah! voila un véritable *bon mot*," cried Louis Quatorze, who sometimes left his more kingly vices, to indulge in the meaner one of punning. "My Lord Bishop," added he, extending his hand to this most apostolic-looking prelate ; "this is the first time we have seen you since you have been inducted into your new see ; having from the moment of your appointment, felicitated France, and myself, now allow me to congratulate you."

"Sire," replied Bossuet, raising the

Royal hand to his lips, "I am indeed to be congratulated, that being a dignitary of the church, approaches me nearer to your Majesty's most sacred person."

"Knowing, my Lord, that your time must be more precious than ever ; and as it is now late, and we have several persons waiting an audience, we will only detain you to say that you may announce the general collection for the bread scarcity in all the churches, for this day month ; when we, and her Majesty, and the Queen mother, will ourselves collect at Nôtre Dame ; unless, indeed, my Lord Bishop, you think that, by so doing, we shall be infringing upon *your* territories ? For, I believe, there is no precedent for kings usurping dominion over the rites of the altar," concluded Louis Quatorze, with a laugh.

"Pardon me, Sire ; of old, the kings of Egypt were priests : and from thence, *Idem rex hominum Phoebique sacerdos*—and perhaps your Majesty intends restoring those heroic times ?" said Bossuet.

"No," replied the King, laughing, "I shall leave *that* to your order, whose *metier* it is to *spoil the Egyptians*."

The bishop perceived, by the bow that concluded this speech, that he was dismissed ; so, with many profound salutations, backed out of the room. Colbert remained, wishing, if possible, to get an opportunity of slipping in a few more words of *business* !

Again Louis rang ; and when Hudinôt reappeared, he was ordered to admit Monsieur de Soyecourt, the Vicomte de Brajilone, and Moliere.

"Sire," said the *Grand Veneur*, with all his usual or rather more than his usual pomposity, "I come to know whether it is your Majesty's pleasure to hunt the stag at Compeigne or at Fontainbleau, the week after next ?"

"*Ma foi!*" said the King, with a malicious look at Colbert, Moliere, and the Vicomte de Brajilone, that his wit at the Grand Veneur's expense might not be lost : "*Ma foi! mon cher Marquis, j'aimerais tout autant faire courir la grande Bête!* However, Fontainbleau be it : and now you may depart thence, as soon as you please, with my respects to all that remains of *Diane de Poitiers*."

The next moment, Monsieur de Soyecourt had *butted* himself out of the room, and the door was scarcely closed upon him before the King set up a loud laugh ; in which, of course, all the others joined.

"Now, Vicomte *à vous!*"

"Sire, I come," said Monsieur de Brajilone, "on the part of a poor Venetian jeweller, of the name of Beppo Jacquin, who has made a most curious discovery, by which he also hopes to make his fortune, if he can insure your Majesty's patronage for it. It is this: he found out, entirely by accident, that the scales of a small, long fish, of the Adriatic, called *spiccolo*, possessed the property of communicating a pearly hue to water; and, on further experiment, he perceived that beads dipped in this water assumed, when dry, the appearance of pearls. It seemed, however, that this pearly coat, when placed outside, was easily rubbed off; so the next improvement he adopted, was to make the beads hollow; and each bead is blown separately by means of a fine tube, and the insides then coated with the pearly liquid, and a wax coating is placed over that.\* It requires the scales of four thousand fishes, to produce half-a-pint of this pearly liquid, to which small quantities of sal-ammonia and isinglass are then added. And, I assure you, sire, none but a jeweller could tell them from real pearls. This poor devil has been for six years struggling with the most abject poverty, unable to bring his discovery into notice; although he has applied to Mesdames de Nevers, de Longuevilles—in short, to all the repentant Magdalens of the Fronde, who are now so ultra-devout, but in vain."

"Ah!" said Colbert, "c'est qu'il y'a si peu de Vraies perles parmi les dévotes!"

"Well, Colbert, see that this poor Jacquin's patent be made out as Venetian pearl-maker to their Majesties and the Queen Mother; and I will order that at the next *ballet* none of the ladies shall be seen with any ornaments but these Venetian beads; or, if they are, I will neither dance *branle nor coranto* with them. Will that do, Vicomte? For if this don't send Signor Beppo's pearls rolling from one end of Europe to the other, I know not what will."

"Sire," said the Vicomte de Brajilone, with the *obligato* hyperbole of Versailles, clasping his hands and bowing down to the ground, "the merchants of Borsora† may, from this out, consider themselves ruined."

"And now, my poor Molière, what are your wants?" asked the King, turning on his heel from the Vicomte de Brajilone; "I hope the Hôtel de Bourgogne has not been plaguing you again?"

"Oh no, Sire; for whom your Majesty deigns to protect, who would dare to mo-

\* What are now called Roman pearls; but should, by right, be called Venetian.

† Where the finest, Oriental pearls come from.

lest? The matter I come about, though it does not relate to myself, is of a strictly private and personal nature, and, if it were not taking too great a liberty," hesitated Molière, "I would crave your Majesty's private ear."

"Surely," said Louis, walking to the other mantel-piece at the opposite end of the enormous room; "this way, provided it is nothing dolorous and likely to give me the nightmare."

"No, Sire, it will only give your Majesty another opportunity of being God's vicergerent upon earth, of becoming a deputy Providence, and raising up one whom fortune has cast down." Molière then as briefly, but as energetically as possible, told the history of Rupert's ill-fated love, dwelling strongly upon the oddities and absurdities of Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, as described by Tom Pepys in his letter, and hinting at the probability of the knight's figuring, in person, at the French court, as his intention was to marry his daughter to a French noble; for Molière knew full well, that Louis Quatorze would do rather more, in the hope of deriving amusement from the father, than from a wish to serve the daughter; not but what, at that time, he was very capable of feeling a genuine sympathy for a beautiful girl, and a disappointed lover.

"By all means," said the King, "we must do everything that can be done to circumvent *ce Pâcheux de père*, and the first thing is to provide for the lover; suppose we say a commission in the *Mousquetaires noir—not gris*, as he is still so young."

"I had the honour of observing to your Majesty, that young Singleton would not, so my correspondent informs me, accept any military appointment in this country, for that would be like taking up arms against his own; though in every other respect, he is ready to serve your Majesty to the last drop of his blood."

"True, I forgot that; let me see; 'pon my word I don't know: there is no civil appointment vacant that I can give him. I don't see though, why I should not *invent* one; I have a *Grand Veneur*, a *PANTIER*, a cup-bearer, every sort of thing, in fact, that is of no use to me; why should I not have a *Piqueur*, called *Piqueur de se Majestié même*? all those English are good riders: but, stay, as he's a gentleman, he may not like the name of *Piqueur*. What think you of a new office called, 'Gold Spur in Waiting,' salary, 10,000 livres a year?"

"Nothing can be better, Sire."  
"Well, then, let a suit of forest-green velvet, à la Palefrenier, be made for him, with a gold spur embroidered on the cuff of the right sleeve, and a pair of boots with

real gold spurs in them, which you can present to him as the patent of his appointment, and when he is equipped, bring him and present him to me."

Molière was profuse in his thanks for the prompt kindness with which his boon had been granted, and then said—

"If not encroaching too long on your Majesty's patience, Sire, I have an idea."

"Only one?" laughed the Monarch. "My dear Molière, wherever you get them! generally you have a great many; but let us hear this poor solitary one."

Molière then spoke so low, that it was evident he intended this part of his communication to be secret, therefore we cannot think of prying into it; but whatever it was, it seemed to tickle his Majesty's fancy, for, at its termination, he rubbed his hands, and exclaimed—

"Capital! *un Impromptu de Versailles!* Eh? suppose you write a comedy to that title?" and then they both returned to the other end of the room, and Louis Quatorze seating himself at the supper table, while Molière, Colbert, and the Vicomte de Brailone fell back, cried, "*Allons Poquein,*" as he unfolded his napkin—took the cover off one of the dishes, and stuck his fork into a galentine de poulet truffé à la Turenne, "place yourself there, opposite to me, you shall sup with me, though my nobles don't think you good enough to sit at the same table with them."

There is a nobler blood even than that of kings, and it now suffused Molière's pale face, as he obeyed, and took the seat indicated; for the poor player would have gladly dispensed with the honour, to have escaped the coarseness and ill-breeding of his speech; and Colbert, who coloured quite as much, if he did not wince equally under it with Molière, replied quickly, as he stood behind the royal chair:

"The reason of that is, Sire, that they find it impossible to bring Molière down to their level, but you Sire, resemble Archilaus, King of Macedon, who would not voluntarily sup without Euripides."

The delicate irony of Colbert, all wrapped up in flattery as it was, awakened Louis Quatorze (who was neither a fool, nor intentionally unfeeling) to a sense of his ill-breeding, so with an infinite grace of manner, which none were more master of, he said, as he filled his golden cup with wine, and passed it to Molière,

"And if my memory does not fail me, Archilaus drank to Euripides, and then gave him his golden cup; *delectatus poetar suavi sermone*—was it not so? And I don't see why the tragic poet of Greece should be better treated by the Macedonian king, who was a stranger, than the Aristophanes

of France, by his own king; so you also keep the cup, friend Molière, and every day drink to the success of our new comedy to — *L'Impromptu de Versailles!* Ha, ha, ha! and if it is only half as successful, as all your others have been, we shall have no reason to complain."

As nothing touches a generous mind like generosity, Molière, while he felt a glow of gratitude to Colbert for the delicacy, and tact, with which he had so dexterously exalted his humiliation, could not but be touched by the frank sincerity with which the king had atoned for his ill-judged speech.

"Ah! Sire," said he, as the latter rose from the table, and they all prepared to depart, "this costly cup, like your royal condescension, is far beyond the deserts of your poor servant, and your Majesty is determined, as Cyprian hath it, that I shall be '*troubled in my abundance,*' that I shall, in fact, become *Timidus Plutus.*"

"No," rejoined Louis, as he courteously returned their parting salutations, "I would only have you, my good Aristophanes, become as rich."

## CHAPTER XVI.

THOUGH it is easy to perceive by his sneer in the preface to "*LES PRECIEUSES RIDICULES*" at *une épître dédicatoire bien sturie*" that no one estimated those fulsome effusions at their proper value more than Molière, yet, independent of adulation of the great, being the epidemic of the age, and that the atmosphere of the court of Versailles—from the refinement of its almost fabulous splendours, was quite sufficient to have predisposed all humbler mortals to take the virus naturally, Molière's feeling towards Louis Quatorze was not only one of profound gratitude, but it was also one of admiration and affection, for finely constituted minds always have an affection for their early dreams, however widely their waking object may differ from the dreamt divinity,—and in looking back to his own childhood, when he used to be found straying in nooks and corners of the Louvre, and when he accompanied Louise Treize, with his father, the cabinet-maker, to Narbonne,—that young Prince, the hope of the nation, the rising star of France, had been Molière's special admiration; even the reckless profusion of this modern Cæsar, which his judgment condemned, and his patriotism deplored; his partiality and his associations admired as a magnificent reaction of the sordid parsimony of Mazarin, and from the El Dorado ex-

hausted to embellish Versailles, down to the seven hundred and sixty-five cambric lace ruffled shirts, he still could perceive but "the gorgeous winged wonder," which had burst from the chrysalis of the penurious Italian's stint of clean linen and weed-cumbered gardens. Then, too, it must be confessed, that the attentions of royalty are very intoxicating, being a species of mental *gul-attar*, or costly and rarified essence of the sweetest flower in the world's parterre, the Rose of its social garden, KINDNESS! Yet never was there less of a *Plagiatide*, or Parasite, than Molière, for no man ever felt more intensely, to the very innermost recesses of his being 'Juvenal's *Miserum est aliena vivere quadra*,' than he did. But what perhaps really attached him more than anything else to *Louis Quatorze* was, that although the mighty monarch often wounded unintentionally, with right royal want of consideration, the feelings of others, yet the atonement always followed so *immediately* in the wake of the aggression, manifesting a cordiality of *intention*, that was as winning, as it was unmistakable, so that if the original offence was remembered at all, it was more with a feeling of pleasure than anything else, at its having been the cause of such agreeable results.

Determined that the King's prompt generosity in befriending Rupert should tell with the full force of fruition, Molière wrote to his new friend postponing the breakfast engagement till that day week (the exact time it would take to get the costume for his new appointment in the royal household\* ready); but telling him to be of good cheer the while, as he was quite sure he should have glad tidings for him.

It must not, however, be supposed that Rupert's was the *only* costume preparing to appear at Versailles, or the only one whose preparation gave rise to all the pleasing anxieties of hope; for Sir Gilbert Hawthorne now considered that the few infantile phrases of the French language which Madame de Sévigné had confided to his care, were sufficiently robust, steady, and weaned from all Anglo-mispronunciation to go alone, even among the highly-polished, and consequently very slippery, *parquets* of a court.

Never had Monsieur Jourdain more

\* Louis the Fourteenth *did* once improvise an office of this kind in his household, not, indeed, for a young Englishman, but for a young Austrian, the exiled *Cadet* of a noble family; so that I have only transferred the boon to Rupert Singleton; for, like Molière himself, "Je prends mon bien partout où je le trouve;" but, I acknowledge my obligations,—a thing not customary among my contemporaries.

conferences with his tailors, or more confidence in their taste; and Sir Gilbert's *sartors*, though not then acquainted with the "*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," which was not acted till 1667, yet seemed by intuition to detect and forestall the likeness between the Knight and Monsieur Jourdain, "that was to be;" therefore they did not fail, with all their national *espiglerie*, to carry on the resemblance to his costume; for his coat and cloak, which were of bright purple velvet, with buttons of rubies and diamonds, they had not only overrun with more knots and *canons*\* than had ever overwhelmed one poor coat and cloak before, but they had selected them of a flaming cherry-colour; doubtless, to assimilate with Sir Gilbert's complexion, so that when at last, by the united efforts of a brace of tailors and his own man, Launcelot, he was shampooed into his court-p paraphernalia, a broad cherry-coloured baldric, embroidered in gold, marking out in bold relief the mountainous *contour* of his figure in front, like a diagonal brass belt dividing a terrestrial globe, the worthy knight had marvellously the appearance of wearing a bishop's livery; and a fertile imagination might have supposed that (*during Lent*), with the livery, the right reverend prelate had also bestowed upon him his no longer seemly carnival *embonpoint*. The bows on his shoes, which were also cerise, were, to keep pace with the liberal scale of the rest of his dress, at least two inches broader than the very broad ones then worn; and the fall of lace from his knees, though of the most costly *point d'Alençon*, was put on so full, as not only to look ugly, but ridiculous; while round the leaf of his hat, instead of the usual wreath of white ostrich feathers, was a garland of scarlet and white ones, which had all the effect of an enormous balsam running to seed round his beaver; and, that nothing might be omitted, *Martial* had furnished a pair of white doeskin gloves to order, with scarlet satin gaunlets, and a large posy of poppies and blue corn flowers embroidered on the backs of them. As each separate wedge of Sir Gilbert was inducted into this charming costume, the unprincipled tailors would start back in mock admiration, and exclaim:—

"Ah! comme c'est beau! nest ce pas Monsieur?"

Sir Gilbert replying (still intent upon studying his court ritual):—

"Oui Sire! non Sire!" and then bursting into a hoarse laugh, in which the tailors joined with a *sincerity* that almost

\* The gilt tubes, with which the ribbon streamers of knees and shoulder-knots were tagged at the time.

redeemed their former duplicity, if, indeed, a virtue ever can atone for a vice!

It was the evening before the morning upon which Rupert Singleton was to breakfast with Molière, that all these great preparations were taking place in Sir Gilbert Hawthorne's room, at the *Ecuelle d'Or*; which we are happy to inform the reader, was his original one, in the front of the house, whither he had returned, complaining that the one opening into the garden was so dull, and one saw nothing but birds and flowers; and he liked to see the postillions and couriers with their cargoes, to say nothing of his being able, from his original chamber, to keep an eye upon the kitchen, and see, as he expressed it, that there was no *foul* play with the cats and frogs, by making them do duty for chickens and other poultry; and this last motive it was, that dominated all the rest, and gave Lucy the no small pleasure of regaining her little blue and white sunny room in the garden, which, since the evening of her unexpected, and therefore doubly-happy meeting with Rupert, became hallowed ground to her.

Sir Gilbert was at length under way; and Bussy Rabutin, who understood, and spoke English, and who never lost an opportunity of amusing himself, had disputed, with the Marquis de Sévigné, the office of being Bear-leader to the Knight, on the occasion of his presentation at court, was, with Madame de Sévigné, already in waiting below; for Monsieur de Sévigné was not sufficiently removed from the ridiculous, by nature, ever to run any unnecessary risks of having it incontinently thrust upon him, and therefore he only too gladly resigned the penance (which his mother had said at one time he must undergo) to his cousin, Bussy.

Lady Hawthorne complained of so bad a headache, that she consigned Lucy to Madame de Sévigné's kind care, though the truth might be, that the poor lady had an indigestion of her lord and master's absurdities at home, and did not care to see a public exhibition of them.

Poor Rupert! It was lucky he was not there; for never had Lucy looked so lovely.

"Oh! she indeed, was passing fair!  
Her charms can ne'er be told;  
The trembling lustre of her hair  
Was radiant—radiant gold.  
Her mouth was like a rose-bud wet  
In summer's softest showers;  
Her eyes among the stars seemed set,—  
Her feet among the flowers!"

The severe vestal simplicity of her dress, might almost have been taken for a refine-

ment of coquetry; and yet it was merely the result of her own, and her mother's good taste. Her wondrous beauty constituted her only splendour. Her *pardessus* was of one of those inordinately thick, creamy, white satins, so soft that they cannot crease, and which still may be seen in Lely, Vandyck, and Mignard's pictures; and in the yet older and more gorgeous ones of Titian and Georgioni, but seldom out of them, unless it be in the exquisite creations of Chalon, who, like these, his great predecessors, also seems to have fairy looms, and immortal colours, at his command. It being the fashion then, as now, to wear several tunics, or shorter skirts, over the principal one, Lucy had three, of the most snowy, vapoury-looking white *tulle* imaginable, the whole three being looped up at the right knee, with a bouquet of flowering myrtle, the stems of which were concealed within a diamond cornucopia, or *porte-bouquet*. The folds of her Sévigné boddice were also of the same soft vapoury-looking *tulle*, fastened in front, with another bouquet of myrtle also in a cornucopia of brilliants, while a large diamond bee fluttered in each of the smaller bouquets that looped up her sleeves. This, with a wreath of flowering myrtle round the thick cable of hair at the back of her head, completed her toilet.

"Heavens!" whispered Bussy Rabutin admiringly to his cousin, when Lucy entered the room, "one would say, an angel that had lost its way, with enough of its own celestial atmosphere still floating about it to exist in this grosser orbit."

"*N'est-ce pas?*" said Madame de Sévigné, "you see I did not exaggerate her beauty."

"Exaggerate! No.—anything but that; but it's quite impossible the father can be such a boor as you say he is; at all events, I am prepared to do him homage as the author of the most perfect *chef d'œuvre* I ever beheld."

"Won't you take some coffee, *chère Marquise? et vous, Monsieur?*" asked Lucy, advancing with a cup in her hand.

"*Non, chère belle:* you know I have not yet got into coffee. You don't much like it either, Bussy—do you?"

"I should like poison from such a hand," bowed the latter, gallantly, as he took the cup Lucy still held in abeyance.

"Only one sort, it is to be presumed," laughed Madame de Sévigné, "bella donna, I suppose you mean."

"Lucy, love," said Lady Hawthorne, "go and tell Winifred to see if your father is ready, and to say that Madame de Sévigné and the Comte de Bussy Rabutin are waiting."



"D'honneur, ma cousine," said Bussy, as the door closed upon Lucy, "I look upon the story of Orpheus and Eurydice no longer as a myth, for if that young girl was mine, and I had the misfortune to lose her, I'd go twenty times over to the same place to regain her."

"Well now, do you know, cousin," rejoined Madame de Sévigné, with an arch smile, "I should have expected something more arduous from your chivalry, for considering you know every step of the way so well, you would find the journey very easy."

"Marie, tu es méchante!" sighed Bussy in a low voice, "you drove me there long ago, and now you make a jest of it."

"Ah! Bussy, if it was really me. Au revoir."

"Not a bit of it, Marie," said Rabutin, with a ghastly grotesque smile, "for no doubt at the last, I shall find you, as La Fontaine did his wife, *au salut*, and so miss you after all!"

Lady Hawthorne was busy between the coffee-cups, and giving the last finishing touch to the ruche and little silver cord and tassels round the tops of Lucy's gloves; so that one of memory's silent rivers, bearing on its current fragments of the wrecks, and stray leaves of the long-withered flowers of the past, which so often roll between two persons in society, unheard and unseen by every other eye and ear, might have continued to flow on between the two cousins, had not a great noise without given notice of the arrival of Sir Gilbert in all his glory, and the next moment the doors were thrown open wide, and from the lights held above his head by two grinning tailors, and one on each side by Launcelot and one of the waiters, his sword had the appearance of answering the double purpose of a steed and a spit, for from the twin air of jauntiness and dignity with which the knight contrived at once to hop, and yet to strut, into the room, he seemed to use that weapon after the same equestrian fashion that witches do their broom-sticks.

"Oh! the incomparable personage! the King of Clubs realized!" exclaimed Bussy, *sotto voce*.

"Allow me to present my cousin to you, Sir Gilbert, who will have the honour of presenting you to their Majesties, the Comte de Bussy Rabutin."

"Ah! oh!—yes, how d'y do, Musseer? Oui Sire! non Sire! You see it's all right; I've got it at last; and egad, it's the hardest fox I ever unearthed—ha, ha, ha! Come, sweetheart, a cup of coffee, quick; and mind there's a substantial supper by the time we return, for I take it court air

ain't more fattening than any other; has Madame de Sevenknees had any coffee, eh?"

"She won't have any."

"Oh, that's another affair; where's Luce? *aint* she ready yet? Well it *do* take a wondrous long time to dress for court, I'll allow; I know something about it now. *Oui Sire! non Sire!* ha, ha, ha! Confound it, the French, or the coffee has burnt my throat. Mind, Dinah, that they don't over-roast the green goose to-night for supper."

And here Sir Gilbert was seized with a fit of coughing, which imminently endangered the splendour both of his baldric, and his magnificently laced cravat; during the paroxysm, Lucy returned to the room.

"Why, Luce! hast got no finer smock nor that to go to court in?" said he as soon as he could speak. "Did I grudge it thee, wench? on the contrary, did I not tell thee to be as fine as a peacock? I mean to make a she marquis of thee, at the very least; and egad! thou shouldst have shown them that I could afford it, and not have gone as plain as a pike-staff; look at me," and Sir Gilbert turned himself slowly and majestically round, holding out his arms at their full length from his sides, so that none of the view might be intercepted.

"Yes, Sir Gilbert," said his wife, soothingly, "but *you*, you know, are the head of the family, and Lucy is only a young girl, and it is not the fashion here, for unmarried women to dress richly."

"Oh well, if it's the *fashion*, it's all right; we mustn't run counter to the *oui sires!* and *non sires!* or even to the *Mounseers*, as long as we're amongst 'em. Now, Madame Sevenknees, *Je sus Pray*. So mind, Dinah, that we don't *fast* too, when we come back. Now, *sire*; ha, ha, ha!" again roared Sir Gilbert, as he offered his arm *à l'Anglaise* to Madame de Sévigné, and strutted majestically out of the room, while Bussy presented his hand to Lucy, saying to himself, as her mother bestowed a parting kiss upon her—

"Humph! that I should live to wish myself an elderly gentlewoman! *mais tout de même*; decidedly at this moment, I should have no objection to be my Lady Hawthorne."

Madame de Sévigné and Lucy seated themselves with their faces to the horses, leaving the other side of the carriage to the two men. As Sir Gilbert used a fine gilt coach that he had ordered from *Valtarnier*, the king of France's coach-maker, on this auspicious occasion, and his four high-bred English bay horses were as fine as their long tails and manes, being tied with bows and streamers of cherry-co-

loured, white, green, and silver ribbons, could make them, he was much annoyed that it was not daylight, by which to display his magnificence, and therefore ordered the outriders, with their *flambeaux* to keep as near the carriage as possible, so as to throw all the glare of the torches upon his new equipage; but he felt somewhat indemnified, when he saw the immense crowd that had collected to witness his departure from the Golden Porringer; while, perceiving the cook plucking the identical green goose which he had ordered for his supper, he put his head out of the window, and nodded almost affectionately to that functionary, as he said—

“Ah!—oui—bien!—bon—tout droit!—c'est ça.”

And then in a continuation of the same choice French (which for the future we will spare the reader), he appealed to Madame de Sévigné, to know if *roi* did not mean goose, as well as king.

“Very often,” said Bussy, “only the name of the bird is spelt differently, being O—I—E.”

Lucy, who had no vanity, or else she might have derived ample consolation from that source, which is generally inexhaustible where it exists, had, in its absence, three causes of unhappiness. Firstly, and secondly,—she was away from the two beings she loved best on earth, Rupert, and her mother; and thirdly, notwithstanding the strong citadel of duty within her, she could not help feeling ashamed of her father; and a portion of this shame having exhaled in a sigh, Madame de Sévigné sympathetically pressed the little hand she was holding in hers—as in some measure divining the cause of this sigh—she endeavoured to prevent any farther brilliant sallies on the part of Sir Gilbert, by addressing the following remark to her cousin.”

“Do you know I think Colbert begins to look terribly old already.”

“*Dame! ma Cousine,*” replied Bussy, “that is very likely, ministers are the vestments of the State, and the more they are used, of course the faster they wear! but if his daughter Melanie marries the Duc de Chevereuse, as is the *on dit*, he will at all events have worked for something more substantial than mere personal renown. I never can decide whether that said Demoiselle Melanie has a heart or not. Sometimes I think no, decidedly; and that this little omission in her organization, comes either from the calculating caution of her father’s Scotch origin, or from the refrigerating properties of the Le Tellier blood, on the mother’s side; for, with all Colbert’s contraction for finance,

(which is very useful in a minister of marine), and despite the narrowing influence of that particular talent, he has on other points, an expansion of mind, and a universality of perception, which uniting, might well have descended in *hearts*, to his children. Then again, there are moments when I should say Melanie Colbert was the victim of an almost morbid sensibility, for I have seen the colour curdle in her cheek, her lip quiver, and her eyes fill with tears, under the influence of music; yet, generally speaking, ice is not colder, nor a statue more passionless than that girl.”

“Many persons,” said Madame de Sévigné, “are overflowing with sentiments and emotions, who yet have little feeling, and no affections, just as many possess the superfluities of lace, brocade, and jewels, who lack the necessaries of linen, woollen, and prunella; but, even, as the mass of mankind always sets a higher value upon the most ordinary civilities of the great, than upon the friendship of the humble, so sentiments, and emotions, make an infinitely finer figure in the world than genuine feeling and affection, which, indeed, are so little appreciated or comprehended by it, that they are seldom to be found in it; not that I mean to say, that Melanie Colbert is devoid of feeling. I have never probed her enough to be warranted in making any such assertion: simply, I do not feel drawn towards her, and for that very reason, am, perhaps, unjust to her; for we are all so apt to estimate people more for what they are worth to us, than for their intrinsic value.”

“That is very true,” said Bussy; “look, for instance, at the poor Duchesse de Grammont (I mean the Dowager); can any one possess more intrinsic merit, more ennobling virtues than that woman? and yet, from her keeping aloof, as it were, from people, and, therefore, preventing their personally benefiting by her good qualities, few persons are less popular than she is, with all her great virtues.”

“Voilà pour quoi,” rejoined Madame de Sévigné, “for it is never by the display of great virtues (which are rarely understood) that people get on in the world, but by concealing little faults and small vices, which society is too good a judge of not to be critical, and even hypercritical about.”

“And yet,” said Lucy, “society, *chère marquise*, seems very good-naturedly to have overlooked your great virtues, for you are as popular as if you had none.”

“That,” laughed Madame de Sévigné, “is because my good qualities are very doubtful, and a long traffic with the world

has made me an expert *Contrabandista*, and enabled me to conceal my faults and follies so as either to meet or elude its customs."

"Then, indeed," said Lucy, "you do conceal them so effectually, that I defy the most minute scrutiny to detect them."

"Here is one that I cannot conceal, for I own I am enchanted with your flattery, belle Lucie," and Madame de Sévigné imprinted a kiss on Lucy's fair forehead.

"Ah! ma cousine," said Bussy, with that double-barrelled gallantry of his countrymen, which has the happy art of paying two compliments at a time, and never flattering one woman at the expense of another, "the fact is, that everything that comes from such lips must be embellished; so that even the bluntest or most simple truth, such as that which Made-moiselle has just uttered, becomes so charming that it has almost the appearance of flattery."

Sir Gilbert, who was getting bored by hearing (as he himself would have expressed it) so much talk that he could not understand, (not that the language made any difference, for he would not have comprehended it a bit better in English,) here broke in, as he suited the action to the word, and placed both his enormous hands upon Madame de Sévigné's knees—with

"Come, Madame de Sevenknees! you'll have to do all the talk at court, on *count* of my French being rather skittish and apt to shy, ha! ha! ha! and egad! afore I'm half way up the hill to oui Sire! and non Sire! I'm afraid it'll gib; so you must try and make yourself very agreeable, for I hear as your *Levis Carte Oars* likes agreeable people."

"Mon Dieu! Monsieur, I never can be agreeable 'to order;' nothing makes one so stupid and *ennuieux* as being obliged to be entertaining!"

"Luckily," said Bussy, "agreeability forms no part of presentations at court."

"Oh! they're dull and stupid, are they?"

"As possible."

"Dang it, though, that's a pity; and I wonder some of you gay gallants don't prevent it's being dull."

"It's meant to be so," fatised Bussy, with a laconic grunt.

"Oh, well," rejoined Sir Gilbert, "in course, what's meant's intended, and what's intended is understood, so that's another guess matter."

It is very seldom that the advent of a private individual can excite a sensation, much less an expectation, even at a petty court; nevertheless, Sir Gilbert Hawthorne had the signal honour of doing both, not

only at the greatest court, but in the greatest Monarch in the world; for Louis Quatorze had been well primed, both by Molière and Bussy Rabutin (who was one of his chief caterers for amusement); as to the *comédie improvisée* he might expect from the presentation of the Knight—the former having made him *au fait* to his matrimonial schemes touching his daughter and his consequent designs upon the French Peerage, and the latter having put him *au courant* to Sir Gilbert's personal absurdities. The great gallery of Versailles was splendidly illuminated, and Louis the Fourteenth was surrounded by his brilliant court, and undergoing the penance of presentations, previous to adjourning to the theatre, where a new ballet was to be performed by a celebrated company of Neapolitan Dancers; while the young Queen, and the Queen Mother remained seated on their chairs of state, which were on each side, and only one step lower than the throne. The King, having received a new Nuncio and the credentials of a new Spanish Ambassador, had risen, and descending the three steps from the throne, was conversing with his usual grace and affability with those around him,—it might be, casting an occasional glance at the living parterres of Maids of Honour, and Ladies of the Bedchamber, who stood grouped at either side, round the two Queens; among which, though sufficiently in the background to preserve the etiquette of decency, rose the Juno-like head of the beautiful and imperious Montespan, which lovely head was upon this occasion, according to the Royal command, diademed with the lucky Jacquini's fabricated pearls: but too insincere in herself to trust to anything else that was false, every moment a beautiful hand was raised to arrange them, and the delicately rounded wrist of this hand was circled with the diamond serpent, which the reader last saw in the King's possession. Once, as she lowered her hand from arranging the pearls in her hair, she cast her eyes upon the bracelet, and appeared to gaze fondly at it; this action did not escape Louis, who turned away radiant with delight, and said (grown doubly amiable from the exuberance of his own happiness)—

"Ah! Boileau, we are happy to see you; they tell us you have been at *Saint Mery's*; if so, you ought to be able to give us some news of the two cleverest madmen in our dominions, the Duc de Mazarin, and Santeuil."

\* The Duc de Mazarin had not only been the most brilliantly witty, but the most agreeable of all the courtiers of Louis the Fourteenth, and a great favourite of his, being almost as

"Sire," bowed Boileau, "the Duke is certainly madder than ever, and Santeuil little less so."

"Then pray let us hear their last specimens?"

"The Duke, Sire, wanted, right or wrong, the other day, to have all those very beautiful teeth of his youngest daughter the Comtesse Sophie extracted, because the Marquis de Vilarceaux had admired them, and her father said they would make her vain."

"*Diantre!*" cried the King, "but that, exceeds the license which even madmen are allowed; we must let him know, that he is *only* Duc de Mazarin, and not *Prince de Sédan!* (*Ses dents!*)"

Of course, there was a universal smile at the royal *Calembourg*, and even Boileau said—

"Sire, le mot est charmant!"

"Now for Santeuil," said Louis.

"Why really, Sire, there is such a harvest of his absurdities, that I hardly know which to glean; but here are two of the very latest: one day last week at Saint Mery, when there was no other preacher to be had, they were obliged very reluctantly to have recourse to the *Sous Diacre*; however, Santeuil had no sooner ascended the pulpit, than he completely lost sight of his subject, and forgot all he intended to say, after the first few opening sentences, so clearing his voice in the most sonorous manner, raising his right arm, and pointing with his forefinger upwards, like a St. John preaching in the Wilderness, he said slowly, shaking his head at them, 'I had a great many more things to say, but it is useless to say them, for were I to preach

magnificent and princely in his expenditure as the *Grand Monarque* himself, till bigotry turned his brain, when he got *chassé* from court, on account of his boring Louis with his (Mazarin's) pretended visions, upon the terrible torments that awaited the King, on account of his immoralities. When living in retirement on his own estates, he passed his time in mutilating and disfiguring the most costly statues, and pictures, and tried hard also to disfigure his daughters, who were very beautiful, lest, as he said, they should be vain. He was always going to law, and delighted when he was cast, as he said it was evident he had no right to what he possessed, or God would not have let his adversary win. And on one occasion, when one of his *châteaux* took fire, and his servants and labourers were exerting themselves to put it out, he exclaimed in a great passion, "*Drive away those rascals who dare to oppose the will of God!*" Santeuil was a Victorian monk, and a poet of no mean order; he wrote some very fine verses in Latin, and some magnificent hymns, but was an oddity of the first water, which prevented his ever rising in the church, of which his talents might have rendered him an ornament.

to you till doomsday, you would never become any better.' And so saying, he pronounced the benediction, and dismissed the congregation."

"At all events," laughed the King, "that's what may be called preaching the truth. If the other *historiette* is as good, pray let us have it!"

"Two days, Sire, after the sermon scene, he had ensconced himself in a confessional, neither to say his vespers, nor to confess his sins, but to commit the sin (as he himself owned to me) of making Latin verses. However, he did not find that unmolested quiet, and seclusion, which he had so profanely hoped; for soon in came a lady, who took possession of the other side of the confessional, and began unburdening her heart. In the midst of all these sad realities, the poet only tried to cling more tightly and abstractedly to his fictions; but he was soon *au bout de son latin*, and became insensibly interested in the lady's narration, and even, at some parts of it, with difficulty suppressed his laughter, and murmured,—'*O! diable!*' a very unfitting place, your majesty will allow, to invoke such a personage; but the poor lady mistaking these sounds for murmurs of reproach, burst into tears, and said,—'*Ah! mon père!* do not.—pray do not, refuse to give me absolution;' whereupon Santeuil, rushing out of the confessional, said:—

"Am I a priest, that I *can* give you absolution?"

"Wretch!" cried the lady, 'how then dare you hear my confession?"

"*Dame! ma belle,* why did you tell it to me?"

"I will instantly go and lodge a complaint against you with your Prior,' said the fair penitent furiously. 'And I,' rejoined Santeuil, with perfect *sang froid*, 'as your husband is a lawyer, will go to him, and after giving him all the particulars of the case, with which you have favoured me, shall engage him to defend me.'

"The lady retracted her threats, and Santeuil and she parted, with a suddenly acquired knowledge of each other, that may be useful to both hereafter."

When the king had ceased laughing heartily at this anecdote, which at that time, was just the kind of story he enjoyed, he said to Boileau:

"What a pity it is that Santeuil should be such a *mauvaise tête*, for he has great talents—has he not?"

"Immense capabilities of every kind, Sire."

"But which of all the great writers, who adorn our reign (yourself of course, Monsieur Boileau, excepted; for we need no further assurance with regard to your future

fame), will descend with the most undiminished popularity to posterity, think you?"

"Molière, Sire, unquestionably."

"Indeed!" said Louis Quatorze, "I shouldn't have thought so; but of course you know best. Ah! Madame," added he, advancing a step or two up the circle to the right, and bowing to Madame de la Sablière, "as we are speaking of originals, we must inquire after yours;—your *bonhomme*, La Fontaine, how is he?"

"Sire, you do him much honour: he is very well; but he has been in grief lately."

"Nothing serious, we hope. Has his wife thought it necessary to return his visit, and been to see him?"

"No, not as bad as that, Sire," smiled Madame de la Sablière; "but perhaps I had better explain the disaster in the *bonhomme's* own words."

"By all means."

"Your Majesty must know, then, that I met him the other day crossing the court as I was going out, in a state of great affliction: in fact he was crying. 'My good La Fontaine,' said I, 'what on earth is the matter?' He was a long time before he would answer; but when I had repeated my question several times, he at length sobbed out, clasping his hands,— 'Ah! Madame, you know all the philosophers were in the oven, and doing remarkably well, when that imbecile Grégoire opened the door, put in that little Aphrodite; and oh! oh! it's too bad—Socrates melted, and all is lost!' The said philosophers, I should tell you, Sire (including Socrates), were in that most fragile of all clay—terra cotta, which poor La Fontaine had got an itinerant Italian to mould for him." The king was still laughing most heartily at Socrates' degeneracy, and La Fontaine's discomfiture, when a certain commotion at the other end of the gallery, among the chamberlains, gave notice of an arrival; and the next moment, Sir Gilbert, who seemed even more overblown than when he had first set out, accompanied by Bussy Rabutin, looking like the shadow of that great substance, and preceded by two chamberlains, commenced their progress up the room.

"Ah! here comes our man, the king of the originals," said Louis Quatorze to the Duke de la Tremouille. "D'honneur, they have not deceived us. One seldom sees so large a space of absurdity monopolised by one individual."

If Sir Gilbert excited a scarcely-suppressed titter, it was changed into the most vivid and audibly-murmured admiration, as Lucy followed her father, her eyes bent

on the ground, abashed at the trying ordeal she was undergoing of her parent's public absurdity; while Madame de Sévigné kindly pressed her arm, and as she nodded to her numerous acquaintances on both sides, said, *en passant*, in answer to their admiring looks, as she glanced from Lucy to them,— "Nest-ce-pas?"

Bussy, with all his inordinate love of fun, had been rather nervous lest Sir Gilbert should outrage, not only court etiquette, but all decorum, by his loud horse-laugh; however, he need not have been alarmed, for nothing awes vulgar minds so much as pomp and external grandeur, and consequently the almost fabulous magnificence of Versailles had caused the Knight suddenly to subside, as when the wind drops, and the hurricane ceases; and for *him*, he was almost pale, his knees actually knocked together, and set his canons, that is, the tags of his ribbons, jingling; not only his courage, but his self-importance—the very last thing that forsakes those who possess it—began to ooze out at every pore, and when Bussy turned to look at the embodied earthquake beside him, to his astonishment, he saw that the Hawthorne was plentifully bedewed.

"How now, *beau sire*?" said he, humorously putting his shoulder against Sir Gilbert, to prop him up, "courage, *Nobilitas sine re projecta*, vilior algâ; and have you not more money than any of us? and consequently, are you not more noble? *Egregium verò laudem*."

"Good lack!" muttered the Knight, clutching Bussy's arm with his trembling hand, "now don't ee talk Latin, don't ee, there's a good young sir, or I shall fancy myself witch-rid in good earnest."

"Well, then, in my best English, Sir Hawthorne, take courage, and be comforted: you have every authority for brunting the world with the *cuirasse* of your gentility. What says Agrippa touching parchment gentry? That the institution is a sanctuary for knavery and naughtiness, a cloak for wickedness, and the execrable vices of pride, fraud, boasting, contempt, gluttony, malice, ignorance, and a great many others, so *universal*, that it might seem *personal* to mention them. That's *your* side of the ditch; now here's ours; according to Cabinet du Roi, our own historian, who has labelled us all as follows. The nobles of Turenne, he says, are thieves; those of Narbonne, covetous; those of Berry, more gallant than discreet; those of Provence, Atheists; of Rheims, superstitious; of Lyons, treacherous; of Normandy, proud; and those of Picardy, insolent. So you see you are a match for

us, and we for you; therefore hold up your head, man!"

"Good lack! you don't say so? and which be you among all that precious lot?" asked Sir Gilbert.

"I," said Bussy, rising on the points of his feet, and twirling his moustache with an air of mock self-sufficiency and superiority, which made every one laugh, who had overheard the catalogue raisonné, he had given his fat companion, "I, my dear sir, am a citizen of the world; equally at home everywhere!"

Seeing the knight now almost conveyed into the presence, the King advanced a few steps further round the circle,\* all of whom he had already spoken to, and said to the English ambassador:

"Your excellency has seldom had an opportunity of presenting to us such an epitome of Great Britain."

"Sire, your Majesty must remember," smiled Lord Gerard, waving the magnificent diamond ring, with which Louis XIV. had recently presented him, "that in order faithfully to represent Great Britain, the *Aldermanic Corporation*, as your Majesty now perceives, must also be represented."

Louis was still laughing at this explanation of Sir Gilbert, when the latter almost pitched on his head before him, at the same time nearly upsetting two maids of honour in the rear (for the two queens had approached to examine the strange animal). The King, with admirable command of his risible muscles, extended his hand right royally; the knight took it, and at once, to Bussy's relief and disappointment, imprinted his voluminous lips upon it, without any sonorous accompaniment; for indeed poor Sir Gilbert was dumb-founded; — he had seen Flemish pictures realized in the coarse junkettings and still coarser wooings of Whitehall, — but he had never even dreamt of the courtly splendours and idealized refinement of Versailles.

"We are happy," said Louis Quatorze, with inimitable mock heroic, "to have the opportunity of welcoming so great a man as Sir Hawthorne to our dominions, and of offering him the *entrée* to our

\* At all foreign courts then, as now, it is the reverse of our own, where the monarch remains stationary, and the mass pass before them, and are presented to her or him. On the continent an immense circle is formed of the visitors, each being placed according to their rank, and the king and queen, emperor and empress, or grand duke and duchess, as the case may be, walk round, and speak to each in their turn, strangers being of course presented by their own ambassadors.

court, of which he will be so vast an ornament."

"We — we — we — our SIRE?" stammered, yet vociferated Sir Gilbert, whereupon every handkerchief was crammed into every mouth present, the King himself passing his own lightly to and fro under his imperial nose, and embalming the air with the rose de cythere, as he did so.

"And we further understand," resumed Louis, "that it is your intention to honour our noblesse by selecting a son-in-law from amongst it?"

"OUI, SIRE!" responded Sir Gilbert, nodding his head, and winking his right eye, while poor Lucy, as she stood on one side with Madame de Sévigné, became alternately as scarlet, and white, as the feathers round her father's hat.

"Then we must ourselves see that your fair daughter be fairly matched. But we would see this peerless beauty, of whom we have heard so much."

Madame de Sévigné retreated a step or two, and Lord Gerard presented Lucy.

"We hope, Madame,"\* said Louis, with a look of astonished admiration, as he gallantly raised Lucy's hand to his lips, instead of allowing her to kiss his, "that you may only find our belle France half as fair as it finds you, and you will have no cause to repent having embellished it with your presence."

"Sire," said Lucy, modestly, "who could ever repent living in so fine a country, governed by so great a King."

"Whose ambition will be, Madame, to confirm your flattering opinion of both," bowed the youthful monarch, with all the grace of an Antinous, and all the dignity of a demi-god.

"We think, Marquise," added he, turning to Madame de Sévigné, but glancing back at Lucy, "that Socrates would be in great danger of melting again? Madame de la Sablière, will tell you how weak philosophy is, in the presence of beauty, as we have no doubt you have often personally experienced."

Meanwhile Lord Gerard had presented Sir Gilbert to the Queen, and the Queen Mother, Bussy Rabutin keeping close in his wake, not only to pick up any stray flowers of eloquence which might fall from him; but also to support him in case his physical strength, as well as his moral courage, should fail him; but there was not much fear of that, for had he not

\* It was always the etiquette at the French court, and even continued such under the reign of the citizen-king, to address young ladies as Madame instead of Mademoiselle.

weathered the King? and Sir Gilbert, according to the fashion of his countrymen, was so duly imbued with a conviction of the inferiority of the female sex, that it was not very likely his masculine superiority would be awed by any member or members of it, even though they bore the name of Queen. The Queen Consort bowed coldly enough upon the Knight's presentation, for she did not half like the fresh importation of beauty he had brought to Court: but the Queen Mother, who from her youth up, ever since she had played off that never forgotten, or forgiven, and dearly avenged trick upon the ambitious Cardinal,\* and made him play the mountebank for her amusement, had, despite the many sorrows of her life, a latent love of the ridiculous, and consequently she received him in her most gracious and graceful manner; indeed the French accused her of an undue partiality for the English in general, on account of her whilom *tendresse* for the handsome Duke of Buckingham, in particular, so hard is it for Royal personages, like painters, to please everybody. There was still great remains of beauty about Anne of Austria, for it was four years before that fearful complaint of which she died† had manifested itself; and the sybarite refinement of her habits (which had caused Mazarin to say, that if ever she was d—d, her punishment would be to lie in coarse Holland sheets), had greatly contributed to preserve in her, the most attractive, because the most feminine part of beauty—delicacy. She had learnt English, and was always glad of an opportunity of displaying her slight knowledge of that language, and for that period her unusually accurate information respecting English manners and customs, therefore she now addressed the Knight as "Sir Gilbert Hawthorne," and not as Sir Hawthorne; nevertheless, he having learnt his *Court Guide* in French, dared not trust his monosyllables to any other tongue.

\* The Duchesse de Chevereuse, in order to divert her royal mistress, had persuaded Richelieu, then not a very young man, that Anne of Austria was in love with him; but she would never let it appear, unless he, the Cardinal, did something very signal to prove that there was *nothing* he would *not* do, to obtain the Queen's favour. The test the Duchesse was cruel enough to decide upon, was that Richelieu, dressed in a spangled jacket, and *Maillet*, should be smuggled into her apartments, and there dance a *ballet*, of which the Queen was to be an invisible spectator. He agreed, but in the midst of his performance, was startled by peals of the most convulsive laughter behind the arras, whereupon he discovered the hoax, and history bears record, how severely he made the Queen through life, pay for her frolic.

† Cancer.

"How *ver* beautiful Mistress Hawthorne, your daughter, is, Sir Gilbert," said the Queen Mother, blandly.

"*OUI SIRE REINE!*"\* (Sirene),† butted the knight.

In the teeth of etiquette, the laugh, though suppressed, was universal.

"Madame," said Colbert, bowing to the Queen Mother, "the compliment is charming, and though *accidental*, well merited; we have all long *thought* it, but dared not express it."

"And now that the fact *has* transpired," said the King, laughing, "we think it dangerous, and a breach of good faith, to subject a stranger to any such sorceries, so we will adjourn to the theatre, and hope to see Sir Hawthorne and his pretty daughter, soon again at Versailles."

So saying (the presentations being over, and having received several broad hints in looks, from Madame de Montespan), Louis gave his hand to his Queen, which was the signal for the general company to depart, while the court followed the royal *cortège*, and the magnificent band in the orchestra, led by Lully, played that fine anthem of his composition, which Handel pirated, and which we are now acquainted with, under the title of

#### GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

To these stately strains, Sir Gilbert strutted on in an opposite direction to his Majesty, looking several inches (*not broader*, for *that* would have been impossible, but certainly taller); for now that the king was gone, he seemed to feel as if the surrounding splendour was not only all his own, but that it was his due, and made an appropriate frame for so great a personage. While Lucy, truly thankful that the *pleasure* was over, said to Bussy Rabutin, as he handed her into the coach:

"How very handsome the Queen Mother still is."

"*Oui, il y'a encore du Buckingham dans son regard!*" rejoined he carelessly.

But as the diamond *ferets* that Anne of Austria had given Buckingham, were only at that time, traditional scandal, and court gossip, and had not yet become history, the meaning of Bussy's speech was lost upon Lucy, though Madame de Sévigné laughed, and said—

"*Cela ne vous regard pas.*"

\* One of the grand Duchesses of Russia, once told the author, that this *Oui Sire Reine*, had been said by an Englishman, who was as good a linguist as Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, to the beautiful Queen of Prussia; so that in fact, it was very *appropriate*, despite the violation of etiquette.

† Siren.

## CHAPTER XVII.

SINCE the night that the Duc de Lauzun had had his *billet-doux* so unceremoniously flung out of the window, Molière had not made the slightest allusion, either to this circumstance or to him; and Armande had redoubled in those little nameless attentions and negative kindnesses, which consist more in abstaining from saying, and doing, what is unpleasant, than in putting one self out of the way to confer any positive benefit, and which for that reason, tend more to render the home atmosphere calm, and genial, than more brilliant and positive virtues; add to which, one of those unforeseen turns of fate that sometimes convert the injurer into the injured, and so recal them from the exile of displeasure, to the triumph of pardon and affection, had occurred in Armande's favour. Madeleine had, the very day before that on which Rupert Singleton was to breakfast with Molière, made such a scene with her in every way more fortunate sister, that she had left her in strong hysterics—and where should Armande's tears fall but in Molière's bosom? To do her justice, she not only remembered all she owed him, but fully appreciated the noble and generous devotion of his nature—that nature which was for ever exercising towards her the most difficult, because the passive, and least dazzling part of generosity, FORBEARANCE, while he, at those times forgot everything, but that she was his wife—the chosen idol of his heart.

"Perhaps, *pauvre amie*," said he, as her sobs became fainter and further between on his shoulder, and he still continued to chafe her temples with Hungary water, "I had better put off those people, and not have them to breakfast to-morrow morning."

"On no account, *mon ami*," said she, pressing his hand, "they are all your friends, and therefore I shall be glad to see them; besides, you have, put off that poor young Englishman once already, and you must not disappoint him a second time; and you say he has been crossed in love, and surely that is quite disappointment enough."

"In truth,"—sighed Molière.

The next morning Armande was up with the dawn. Molière awoke soon after, and calling to her to know how she had slept, and receiving no answer, he rose, and put aside the curtains of her bed; he opened the door and called her, but still received no answer; he looked at his watch, it wanted a quarter to six, and none of the servants were yet stirring;—where could Armande be? Molière felt every species of torture beginning to rack him, the mad-

dening doubt of jealousy linked again to the mere abstract fear of evil, and circled by that blank aching despair which follows the conviction of having irrevocably lost all we love on earth. He paced the room—then he sat down on Armande's bed.

"My God!" he exclaimed, burying his face in her pillow, "must I pay so dearly? those few happy hours yesterday when I almost thought she loved me—thought—oh! it was more than that, I felt she did; no, no, impossible—she would not, she could not be so base! so monstrous! as to commit such a sacrilege upon her own soul, and turn her warm kisses into curses, by deceiving me so soon. No, no, no: the thing is too base, too horrible! so horrible, that it is IMPOSSIBLE!" and he drew a long breath, and as he rose up seemed to grow into a giant, both in stature and strength. "No, no," added he calmly, "for a moment to suppose such a thing was to slander her, to vilify myself, and to blaspheme the God who made us; pardon, pardon, my God!" and he knelt down and prayed. After which he dressed himself slowly, and carefully, and then descended to the dining room; as he entered it, a clock on the mantle piece struck half-past seven. The porter, with his shoes off, and a brush attached to each foot, was polishing the inlaid floor, while Josselin, with a duster and long feather brush, preparatory to laying the breakfast, was dusting all the furniture, and La Forêt was walking up and down, fulfilling her usual avocations of knitting and scolding.

"Do you know where your mistress is?" inquired Molière of the latter.

"*Dame!* do I keep her in my knitting basket with my ball of cotton? or do I know whence the wind comes, or whither it goes, that you should ask me, Monsieur Poquelin? All I know is, that she is out gadding as usual!"

It was lucky for the old woman that the lightnings of the human eye, like those of the heavens, do not leave their impress where they fall,\* or else she must have carried the withering glance Molière cast on her, to her grave.

"*Mais non Monsieur,*" said Josselin,

\* The *Leeds Mercury*, a short time since, stated the following curious circumstance:—"Some children were playing in a cottage called 'The Old Barhouse,' adjoining Hawcliffe Wood, near Keightly, when the lightning struck an ash-tree, and piercing through the wall, struck three of the children, two of whom were not expected to survive; and the one least hurt, when picked up, was found to have an exact representation of the ash-tree on its back, with the branches and leaves as complete, as if had been burnt in with an iron stamp."



shrugging his shoulders, and giving a contemptuous waive of his duster in the direction of La Forêt,—“*Madame* is gone to Auteuil, and will be back before breakfast.”

Molière felt as Atlas might have done, had the world been suddenly removed from his shoulders; but the next moment, with that proneness to self-torture, which is one of the most mortal symptoms of jealousy, he thought “perhaps she told the servants she was going to Auteuil; but this might be only a pretext to get out;” and although he almost instantaneously repudiated the unworthy suspicion, he nevertheless could not resist the temptation of putting the circumstance beyond a doubt. So affecting to examine assiduously the under part of his left hand ruffle, as he held up his arm, he said to Josselin, with a perfectly assumed indifference:

“Did she go out on foot?”

“*Mais non*. I just had the honour of telling Monsieur, that *Madame* was gone to Auteuil. She went in the cabriolet, and Jaques drove her.”

It is only on the stage that masters embrace their servants, or else Josselin would have stood a good chance of being hugged; but repressing this impulse, it took another direction, for three minutes after, Molière suddenly stopped as he was walking up and down the room, and said:

“Apropos, my good Josselin, I remember that you wished to go to the fair of St. Germain. I cannot spare you to-morrow, because I have a large party to supper at La Colombière; but the day after, you can go, and here is a fairing for you,” added he, giving him a Louis.

“Monsieur is too good,” bowed Josselin. “Humph! fools and their money soon parted,” muttered La Forêt; while Molière passed the next half-hour in a state of placidity bordering on beatitude, which evaporated in the most amiable courtesies to his servants. He complimented the porter upon the exquisite polish of the floor, Josselin upon the punctuality with which he regulated the time-piece, and expressed his surprise and admiration to La Forêt, that three hundred and sixty-five days, of only twelve hours each, suffice for knitting the innumerable pairs of stockings, which she achieved! “which proves your superiority, La Forêt, to us poets; for we constantly come to a stand still with *our feet*, but you never with *your stockings*.”

Just as the clock struck eight, a ring at the door of the ante-room announced an arrival of some sort. Molière’s heart beat violently. Had he been sure that it was

Armande, he would have gone to the door himself; but not being so, he said to Josselin, who was now laying the cloth, the porter having finished his work, and descended to his lodge: “You had better go to the door, Josselin;” and as he went, Molière kept looking after him till he reached it. It was no sooner open, than he perceived Armande laden with fruit and flowers, and fresh as the morning itself. From the time she had been gone, he knew she could not possibly have been anywhere but to Auteuil and back, for she must have made good haste (considering the time necessary to collect the fruit and flowers) even to have accomplished the double journey in that time; but he need not have been under any apprehension. Armande had not acted for three nights, and was by far too finished and consummate a coquette, not to tantalize Lauzun with as long an absence as possible; consequently from vanity alone, if, alas! from no better motive, she was neither likely to seek an interview, nor to run in his way.

“Ah? *chère amie*,” cried Molière, advancing to meet her, and disencumbering her of some of her fragrant burden, “how kind—how amiable of you to go all the way to La Colombière this morning to get fruit and flowers for my friends. Ten thousand thousand thanks.”

“Your friends, indeed, Monsieur; you overrate my amiability. I did not go all the way to Auteuil, at this early hour, to get fruit for your friends,” said Armande, with one of her irresistible little pouts.

“No! for whom then did you go?” replied he, trying to speak gaily, as he saw she was in jest; but an almost imperceptible shade of sadness stealing over his face the while.

“For my friend, sir, who is very fond of figs, so fond, that if I were Pomona, I should be jealous; and Pierrot told me last week, that perhaps there might be a few ripe to-day, at the very earliest, but certainly not before; and here are the fruits of Pierrot’s promises,” added she, holding up a large black fig covered with purple bloom before Molière’s mouth.

“Dear, dear Armande,” cried he, covering her hand with kisses, “you are a thousand times too good.”

“No, not too good, but not quite as bad as you sometimes think me.”

“Oh, Armande, can I believe?”

“Not if you go on doubting,” whispered she, as she pointed to Josselin and La Forêt in the dining-room, as much as to say, “hush! they will hear you.”

“And as long ago as last week, you recollected my liking for figs?” said Molière

in a low voice, patting and kissing her hand.

"Oh, much longer than that, don't you know, *petit mari*," said she, in a caressing tone, as she put another fig into his mouth, "that ten years ago, you loved figs—and me."

Here La Forêt passed through the ante-room, and muttered as she passed:

"It seems that the Devil is out of apples, as he now uses figs."

At sight of the old woman, Molière lingered in the ante-room no longer, but passing his wife's arm through his, returned to the dining-room.

"Will Monsieur use the service of jewelled *sevres* his Majesty gave him; and the golden *écuelles* of Cardinal de Retz, this morning?" asked Josselin.

Armande sighed, for both had been christening presents to their first child, and the poor infant had returned to Heaven three months after.

"Yes," said Molière, "of course; for I am to receive an officer of His Majesty's household; and, therefore, should do him all due honour; and mind—Josselin—when that young English gentleman, Master Singleton, comes, that you don't show him in here, but call me out." Molière's motive for this was, that he might announce to Rupert the good news of his appointment in private, and give him time to don his official costume, before he presented him to the rest of his guests.

"Apropos," said Armande, "how many have you to breakfast? for, as I have brought the flowers, I may as well put a bouquet on each napkin."

"Let me see; first, there is the hero of the feast, young Singleton; or, I should say, His Majesty's Gold-Spur-in-Waiting; then there are Chapelle, Boileau, Despréaux, Bernier—who has just returned from England—and also his travelling companion, the Comte de Fouraille, the Prince de Condé's Premier Gentilhomme, Fieubet, old Courtin, Rohault, and Malebranche, I believe—but the latter two are uncertain—and little Baron, of course, poor child."

"Why on earth, *mon ami*, do you ask that horrid, stupid, miserly old Courtin?"

"Partly, *chère amie*, because, in spite of his millions, the poor d—l cannot afford himself a breakfast at home; and, partly, because he is that prince of oddities, Fieubet's pet plastron, who is always playing off some of his extraordinary practical jokes upon him."

"The latter, is the only good reason," replied Armande, "for he deserves to starve in the midst of his gold."

She then made the bouquets of which

Rupert's was the most choice, and old Courtin's, the miser's, the least so—if bouquet it could be called—as it only consisted of a piece of rue, old man, and bramble, tied together with a piece of long grass. Her task completed, Armande went and changed her dress for a peignoir of fine white batiste, with a pattern of little rose-buds all over it; slippers of pink satin, covered with muslin, also embroidered in rose buds, with rosettes of Valenciennes lace and pale pink ribbon; a little cap (one of those witcheries of lace and embroidery, which only Paris can produce) completed her toilette; and nothing could look prettier or fresher than both she, and it. When she returned to the *Salle à manger*, she cast an admiring look at her own reflection in the glass. As she arranged some flowers in her girdle, and smiled complacently while she did so—"How do you like my dress?" asked she, as the first ring came to the door.

"Charming!" said Molière; but he did not smile—he sighed?

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE first arrival was Rupert. Molière went out to meet him, and took him to his dressing-room, where the rich, but simple, suit of forest green velvet was spread out, so as to display it to the best advantage.

"What a beautiful dress!" exclaimed Singleton, on entering the room.

"I am glad you like it."

"Is it for one of your new characters?"

"No; for one of His Majesty's creation for his *Épéron d'Or*; a post filled, for the first time in the royal household, by a Foreigner: one Master Rupert Singleton."

Rupert could scarcely believe his ears. And when Molière had repeated to him the gracious manner in which Louis Quatorze had created the office, and made the appointment, and ended by telling him that he was to go that morning to Versailles to kiss hands, it is easy to imagine the young man's gratitude and joyful surprise, but not so easy to describe it; therefore it is best left to the reader's imagination. When Rupert had equipped himself in his new costume, it became him so excessively, that his first wish was, that his mother and his good friend, Tom Pepys, could see him: for he did Lucy the justice to believe, that his improved good looks would not have increased her affection one hair's breadth; however, it might have augmented her pride in him, and he wished the day, with all its bright hopes

and glowing pleasures, over, that he might write to his mother, and to the humble, but zealous, friend to whom he owed so much.

"Ah!" sighed Molière, as he looked at Rupert's perfect beauty and manly grace—that grace of strength which is repose,—  
 "Were I like *him*! then she would love me: then I need fear no rivals!" and again he sighed, as he caught the reflection of his own pale, care-worn face in the glass, and contrasted it with the young Hyperian beside him; but self is but a little wave in the great ocean of fine natures, and, however lashed, it still rolls on to mingle with its fellows and merge in the universal tide of humanity's unfathomable depths, and Molière had made his young protégé too happy, not to be happy himself. So linking his arm in Rupert's, they descended together to the dining-room, where they heard a babel of voices, for all the guests were arrived except Chapelle, who, having supped with his old friend and patroness, Mademoiselle Chouars, two nights before, had found her wine so excellent, that, having testified his approbation of it rather too profusely, he had found some difficulty in getting home, and, mistaking a cart laden with timber, between the contending lights of night and morning, for his own stairs, had given it a severe blow with his head, and received a black eye in exchange, which confined him to the house for a day or two.

Molière introduced Rupert, by his official title, to all his friends, and having received and acknowledged their congratulations, they all seated themselves and commenced breakfast. Malebranche alone seemed undecided where to place himself, and hovered between Armande on the one hand, and Boileau on the other.

"Allons!" laughed Molière, "Ma femme n'est point du tout moutonnaire! you may with safety sit beside her."

Every one was still laughing at this, when Fieubet, taking a pack of cards out of his pocket, placed them, at one throw, in a circular form before Malebranche—who was now seated next to Armande—and said,

"Ou, voulez vous *des cartes*?"

Every one roared at this pun *en action*, and Boileau said to the ratorian philosopher—"à propos, mon cher Malebranche, when are we to have the 'Search after Truth'?"

"Oh! it will not be finished these ten years," replied Malebranche, "so you see I shall only exceed the golden rule by one year, for 'Nonumque prematur in annum,' you know," and so saying he dived into a

pâté de foie gras, which Josselin had just handed to him, fishing out a truffle with as much eagerness as if it had been another truth, which he had for the first time discovered, and was determined to lose no time in seizing.

"Ten years! *diantre!* that is a very short time to finish a search after truth—I have been thirty years seeking it, and have not found it yet," said Bernier the traveller.

"Depend upon it," laughed Despréaux, "it was lurking in some corner of that Republic, which you so generously bestowed upon His Majesty the other day."

"Well," rejoined Bernier, innocently, "he asked me which form of government I thought the best, and I told him."

When the universal laugh had subsided, which the *naïveté* of this speech occasioned, Molière said, "Well, tell me what you think of England."

"Why, I think with the Duc de Rohan, that it is a great animal that will never die till it commits suicide,\* but I also think I can prophecy, that, suffering from an indigestion of wealth and arrogance, it will commit suicide before the year nineteen hundred."

"I," said the Comte de Fouraille—with an air of mock solemnity, and a look half modest, half conceited, "have not, like my friend Bernier, studied that country statistically; but," added he, putting his hand into his pocket, "its *beau ciel!* fired my poetic vein, and I wrote an epic upon it, which, with permission, I will read to you."

Every one looked frightened.

"Madame, et Messieurs, don't be alarmed," said the Comte, "it is a *chef d'œuvre* of brevity! Self-praise is offensive, but still, I defy even you, Monsieur Boileau, to produce anything more terse,

\* It is to be feared that the suicidal operation has commenced, for the dreadful pauperism on the one hand, and the hardening and corrupting luxury on the other, is fast eating into the very vitals of the country; and every day the poison circulates more perceptibly, without any antidote being found for it. But the source of this public evil is in the private and home influences, which for the most part are shallow, ignorant, sordid, and selfish. A few more Cornelias in England would, as a matter of course, produce a few more Gracchi, but as the supply of a thing is always in proportion to the demand for it, it would be utterly impossible that the present age could produce great men, for its two and only ruling passions being try-to-get-on-ativeness, or self-aggrandisement and Mammon-worship, it is not of course merit that advances any one, but "casus plerumque ridiculus multas elevavit," and sometimes the more ridiculous the chance the better; but truckling, not talent, is the test of cleverness now-a-days.

and to the point; or you, Père Malebranche, anything more true; and yet I believe the one to be so inimitable a poet, and the other so profound a philosopher, that I shall venture, without any fear of concurrence, du Métier, to submit it to your generous approbation. Hem! ahem! added he, clearing his voice, and unfolding an enormous roll of paper, which he held out with both hands at some distance before him, and read as follows:—

“THE ARGUMENT.

“With regard to Spring, the charm of this season is alone known in Asia Minor, on the coast of the Mediterranean, and in the Grecian Archipelago. While then the Greeks have taught the poets of all ages to sing the beauties of the spring, the dense fogs, the howling winds, the ceaseless rains—falling continually upon the devoted heads of the inhabitants of Great Britain, have taught them to dispense with that delightful season, or only to seek it in the aforesaid Greek poets; and at the same time, these atmospheric variations have inspired me, the very humblest of Gallic bards, at once to immortalize the English spring, and to enrich the literature of my own country, by this nonpareil

“EPIC.

“CHANT PREMIER, ET DERNIER”\*

“De la pluie, et du vent,  
Du vent, et de la pluie.

“It is not for me,” said the Comte, modestly lowering his eyes, “to insist upon the beauties of the versification; but you will allow, Madame et Messieurs, that the most cavilling critic that ever snarled, and growled, the changes on the dog’s letter R, could not find one word to curtail.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Boileau, taking the paper out of Monsieur de Fouraille’s hand, when they had all ceased laughing, “it is always advisable to gag a young author, with the omnipotent W of criticism; therefore, we opine, that the new Epic by Monsieur le Comte de Fouraille, Premier Gentilhomme de Monseigneur S. A. S. Le Prince de Condé, otherwise possessing the merit of being admirably true to nature, is too long by one half, as everything was comprehended, and expressed in the first line—

\* Canto first and last:  
Rain and wind,  
Wind and rain.

“De la pluie, et du vent.”

“Remorseless wretch!” laughed Monsieur de Fouraille, as he held up a glass of Chamberin, and challenged Boileau, “here is something that will defy your criticism.”

“I think,” said Molière, as Boileau was about to fill his glass, in order to pledge the Comte, “this is a wine you will like better, I took half a piece\* of it with the Duc d’Antin the other day.”

“Ah!” cried Boileau, making his tongue resound against the palate of his mouth, when he had drunk it, and repeating those complimentary lines of La Fontaine’s to Molière—

“C’est une pièce de Molière  
Cet écrivain par sa manière  
Charme à present toute la cour.”

“That is the worst of the trade,” laughed Molière. “Authors are such barefaced mutual flatterers; they are all Jodelets on that score. The you shall be Horace, and Tibullus I, never ceases.”

“My dear Poquelin you forget,” said Boileau, quoting from La Fontaine’s panegyric—

“Nous avons changé de méthode.  
Jodelet—N’est plus à la mode,  
Et maintenant il ne faut pas  
Quitter la Nature d’un pas.”

Here old Courtin, the miser, was seized with such a fit of coughing, from having swallowed the bone of a lamprey, that he ran great risk of dying a royal death, which might have furnished an epigram for his epitaph.

“I fear, *mon pauvre* Monsieur Courtin,” said Molière, as soon as Josselin, by dint of thumping the old man’s back (which he did *CON AMORE*) had reduced him to silence—“that the Comte de Fouraille’s torrents of rain, and hurricanes of wind, have given you a terrible cold?”

“Bah!” cried Fieubet, before the old man could answer, (for he was telling Josselin not to strike so hard, or he would tear his old threadbare brown serge coat!) “Bah, it is only that good things are such strangers in his mouth that they don’t know the way down his throat.”

“No, no; but Monsieur Molière is right,” wheezed the old man, as he wiped his eyes with a blue and white checked cotton handkerchief. “I have a very bad cold, all occasioned by one of the diableries of ce mauvais drôle de Fieubet.”

“Par exemple!” said Fieubet, “the company shall be judge if I was not per-

\* What in England would be called a pipe of wine, is in France called a piece.

fectly in the right, and did my best, late in the day as it is, or rather late in the night as it was, to instil into you some practical lessons of justice and morality; you must know Madame et Messieurs."

"No, no, there is no use in plaguing the company with all your deviltries; they know very well what you are capable of in the way of every sort of wickedness," interrupted Courtin, putting out his skinny, withered hand, to try and stop Fieubet's mouth; but that was not so easy, for the other continued in a loud voice—

"Now you shall decide, my dear Madame Molière, if I was not quite right? there is a poor widow Gassin, who is even poorer, without being half so handsome, than the widow Scarron, and therefore ten times more to be pitied, for beauty is a trump that may always win the game at last, so *passé encore pour la veuve Scarron*; but my poor Gassin, who is of an irreproachable ugliness, and has all the virtues thick as the hieroglyphics on Cleopatra's needle, tattooed in wrinkles on her face, has, thanks to her own, no hope of obtaining anybody else's countenance; so I, who (though I did not graduate at the Sorbonne) am rather an amateur of monsters, have long been undergoing a course of Gassin; but alas! in the long run, I found how inefficient I was, solo, to get her out of her difficulties; for like all poor devils afflicted with an *enlargement of the heart*, the contraction of my *chest* is chronic. Therefore I said to myself, Fieubet, *mon ami*, don't rest satisfied with sending paving-stones to the Infernal regions; good intentions won't save La Gassin's furniture from being seized if she cannot make up five hundred crowns, to pay that old debt of her husband's, by next Thursday, *que faire?* when lo! like one of those little wizen infernal angels, which hover about Cimilène's sketches of Purgatory—the amiable countenance of our friend Monsieur Adolphe Courtin there, rose up before my mental vision. 'Poor gentleman!' said I, 'there he is, in his miserable attic and narrow bed (both far too small for him and his immense wealth), suffering from that terrible complaint, plethora of the chest; would it not be a charity, and much conduce to his soul's health, to go and bleed him a little—it would.' No sooner, therefore, had I decided on this prescription, than I rose (for it was then two in the morning) to carry it into effect; and, for that purpose, went to the Rue Croquemort, and climbed to the eaves of No. 40, where I knocked vigorously at that good Monsieur Courtin's door, who responded to my amiable visit by a furious cry of 'Thieves!' I observed to him, that

it was both ungrateful and uncourteous, to designate a friend, who had taken the trouble of leaving his bed to come and see him, by such an appellation; yet, with a want of faith in the disinterestedness of human nature, beneath even Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, he still more impolitely vociferated:—

"Get out of your bed, indeed, to come and see me! I doubt that. Like the Seine, you never leave your bed without working mischief."

"But meekly turning my other cheek to the door to receive any further civilities M. Courtin might choose to bestow upon me, I spent full half an hour in imploring him (but in vain) to open the door and let me in. At length I said,—

"What I have to propose to you, M. Courtin, is so much to your advantage, that, rather than you should not hear it, I will give you a Louis if you will let me in."

"*Bien sûr?*" said he.

"Parole d'honneur," replied I; whereupon he got up, unlocked the door, and cautiously put out his hand to receive the money, which I had placed within it; having struck a light and satisfied himself that the Louis was a good one, he then reopened the door to admit me, whereupon (for you know all is fair in love and war, and you are aware how I love my Courtin! and as he had placed himself in a state of siege my proceeding was doubly admissible), I cried out, 'Oh, how unfortunate, I have dropped a Louis in your entry.' I knew this bait could not fail, so out he rushed, *en* or rather *sans chemise* as he was, to look for it, and in I darted and double locked the door upon him. He howled, he cried, he implored me to let him in; I did not meanly retaliate and call him a thief, but I remained deaf and dignified, as those who have the power in their own hand generally do, to the voice of pity or entreaty. My Courtin, my Adolphe! then resorted to tender reproach. 'In the name of Heaven, Monsieur Fieubet, open the door—I shall get my death of cold! remember I have nothing on.'—'So you came into the world, and so you are all ready equipped for going out of it,' said I, doing a little bit of Bourdaloue, as I gathered my own cloak about me.

"Ah! Fieubet, how can you be so ungrateful as to leave me shivering here, when I, against my will, so kindly yielded to your entreaties."

"Oh! now you speak so reasonably, I am quite ready, my dear friend, to open the door to you, on the same terms that you did to me; give me back my Louis,

and you may return to bed as soon as you please."

"Now, Madame, et Messieurs, I appeal to you, could any proposition be fairer? and was it my fault if, instead of acceding to it, *ce bon Monsieur Courtin* preferred, for half an hour longer, wooing a catarrh, to returning me my money? Such, however, was actually the case, till, at nearly the expiration of an hour, when the day was beginning to dawn, and he recollected that I was locked in, tête-à-tête with the object of his idolatry—his coffer!—he thought fit to capitulate; and I, in my turn, putting out my hand cautiously, and making sure of my Louis, readmitted him; but would you believe it? although I then broached the subject of his lending the widow Gassin five hundred crowns, for which I offered to be security, and to pay him moreover the most usurious interest, he returned to bed with teeth chattering, and said he would sooner lend his money to the d— than to me, which I could not but acknowledge was just, seeing that it is from *that* power he derives, and by it, that he retains his wealth—but mind you, Maitre Courtin, I always bide my time; I have not yet done with you, and as you would not pay me those five hundred crowns, I'll watch my opportunity to pay them to you."

"Heaven protect me! my good Monsieur Molière, he is quite capable of robbing me," said Courtin, trembling, while every one else could scarcely restrain their laughter, and Josselin had to cram a napkin into his mouth to prevent him from bursting forth, which Fieubet observing, tossed him a six-livre piece, saying—

"There, Josselin, *mon ami*; Monsieur Courtin has begged me to give you that, as you will certainly burst your coat laughing at him, and will have to get it mended, and he is much too generous to let you be at any such expense on his account."

"No, no, fear nothing Monsieur Courtin," said Molière, laughing, as he drew out his purse, and laid five Louis upon the table, "you know you are coming out to La Colombière to-morrow night, with Chapelle, Despréaux, and Fieubet, to sup with me; and, in order that the latter may have no incitement to rob you, here are five Louis to begin a collection for his protégée, the Widow Gassin."

"Bravo! Poquelin," cried all his guests, immediately adding their five Louis to his. Rupert wished to give more—so grateful was he for his own good fortune—but he felt it would look like ostentation to exceed the others; and, consequently, he bad taste, till he hit upon the following expedient; after having put down his own five

Louis, he handed Molière five more, saying:

"You must allow me to give you these on my mother's account, whom, I know, will be too glad to join in your charitable undertaking."

"A thousand thanks, my young friend, to you and to your mother," said Molière, adding them to the heap.

"Pardon, Monsieur," bowed Josselin, advancing from the side-table, and offering his master the six-livre piece which Fieubet had just given him, "but, if it is not taking too great a liberty, perhaps Monsieur would have the goodness to add this trifle to the rest?"

"With pleasure, Josselin, and I thank you sincerely."

"And so do I, my good Josselin, for I look upon your conduct as the more *handsome*, considering the widow is so *ugly*;\* but it seems to me we have been very remiss, my dear Monsieur Courtin," added his relentless tormentor, "considering that you are the *cause*, though not the *object*, of this charity; nay, almost unpardonable, I should say, in putting down our quota before you have given yours. However, to atone for the oversight, you can give *double*, if you please, and that will be equivalent to having given first."

"Eh bien," said Courtin, with a cunning twinkle of his small, cold gray eyes, as if he thought that he was now cleverly turning the tables upon Fieubet; "you said I sent that six-livre piece to Josselin, and as he has just given it to Poquelin, that is my contribution, ha! ha! ha!" concluded the old wretch, rubbing his skinny hands.

Disgusted as everybody was at this display of his ruling passion, yet, as it was in her own house, Armande did not like him to be too much badgered; so, to prevent Courtin any longer being the *point de mire*, she said to her husband, again taking out her purse, and rolling him over three more Louis:

"*Mon ami*, Monsieur Chapelle, is not

\* If this appears to be a large sum, considering the circumstances of the persons by whom it was given, it must be recollected that the scene is laid at an actor's house in the seventeenth century, not in a Court of the nineteenth. Moreover, the only answer I can give to any modern cavillers is, that it actually took place as above described. It certainly would neither be natural nor *vraisemblable*, in the present age, whose only standard of greatness (?) is to get money, and whose only criterion of virtue is to keep it; and as the standard is certainly a low one, perhaps it argues that peculiar species of "meekness" which, we are told, "shall inherit the earth;" it must be so, as St. Augustin expressly says, "Poverty is the way to Heaven, the mistress of philosophy, and the mother of religion."

here; but I'm sure I may go as far as three Louis for him, and if, after all, he *should* demur, why, it is only a whisk, or a Berthe, or a Drageoir, the less for my wardrobe."

"*Merci, chère bonne!*" said Molière, looking a whole drama of love, devotion, and admiration at her. "I'm sure Chapelle will be as grateful to you as I am, for thinking of him; at all events, it is much better that his three Louis should go to the widow, than to the wine."

"Truly, my dear Poquelin, you would say so," said Malebranche, "if you could have witnessed the ridiculous scene that I did, the other night."

Despréaux felt exceedingly uncomfortable, and would have given the best stanza he ever wrote, to have ascertained whether Malebranche was becoming personal, or, in other words, whether he was an habitué of the Café de la Sagesse!

"I don't doubt it," said Molière, "for poor Chapelle has furnished France with more comic scenes than—"

"Even Molière," interrupted Boileau.

"Than even Molière, as you truly say," re-echoed their host; "but where, *mon père*, was this scene that you saw?"

"Why," said Malebranche, "the other evening, as I was coming from the Oratory, I recollected that it was a long time since I had been to see poor old Mademoiselle Chouars; so, as I was passing near her Hôtel, I thought I would call. I found her sitting on one side of the sofa with Sardanapalus, her large white Persian cat, whose great-great-great-great-grandmother, she always informs one, was the favourite feline Sultana of Cardinal de Richelieu; and Chapelle on the other. It seems that Sardanapalus had been ill, or, at least, had evinced an indifference to chicken, and a positive aversion to milk; and his mistress was discussing the probability of your being offended, instead of flattered, as you ought to be, Rohault, at her sending for you to feel the Sybarite grimalkin's paw, and elucidate the mysteries of his tongue; when Chapelle said" ("It shows the bad company he keeps," parenthesised Boileau, glancing at Molière) "that the most skilful physician in the world was only an ignoramus. Recollect," said he, rising with his subject, "how Pindar, a genius that otherwise might have lived for ever, fell a victim to their quackery!"

"Ah! ç'est vrai! et çela pourait arriver a Sardanapale!" shrieked Madlle. Chouars, clasping her darling in her arms; such was the touching scene I interrupted. You know the poor Chouars is very *précieuse*; so directly I arrived, after she had

made tender inquiries respecting the progress of my Search after Truth; she then begged me to explain to her the problem Des Cartes had solved, when he was in the garrison at Breda. I endeavoured to do so. She next had actually the modesty to ask me to give her a *résumé* of his 'Methodo recte, regendar rationés;' que ça! So my patience and my philosophy being both exhausted, I hinted to her that his declination of magnetic attraction, would be much more in *her* way, as most vestals of fifty-six make admirable practical illustrations of that fact. Luckily for me, supper was announced, she pressed me to stay: I accepted. You may be sure that during the repast, the Burgundy was not spared, and Chapelle was retrograding fast to Bœotia; the horrible mismanagement of Pindar by the attic charlatans, as he called them, again became his theme, till he himself inflamed into a *Chapelle-ardante!* for the remains of the great lyric poet.

"Only imagine, *ma chère demoiselle*," said he, rising hastily from table, and wringing his hands, while the tears rolled down his cheeks, "the wretches! poisoning him, killing him piecemeal, with their infernal drugs, that were not only not suitable, put positively diametrically opposite to his disease; and then," continued he, seizing Madlle. Chouars' scarf to dry his eyes with, and nearly strangling her as he did so, while he sobbed himself into a perfect convulsion, "fancy, I say, fancy, if you can, and if the thing is not too, too horrible! *such a man!* dying by inches; such a light diminishing by lampfuls! and finally going out in the theatre at Athens. Oh! oh! oh! Pindar! Pindar! never shall we see your like again; and murdered by those rascally doctors," howled Chapelle, while poor Mademoiselle Chouars cried from the pain of her strangulation, and the fright of seeing Chapelle in such a state, and I laughed till I cried. To complete the scene, Nanon, Mademoiselle Chouars' maid, hearing such terrible yells, had rushed into the room, in time to hear Chapelle's graphic, and heart-rending description of the mortal agonies of Pindar!

"Eh! the poor dear *ger.deman!*" said the tender-hearted Nanon, bursting into sympathetic tears, and seeing that I was the only one not too much overwhelmed with sorrow to give a coherent answer, she asked—

"Has he been long dead?"

"Only three thousand years,\* or there-

\* It was this ridiculous scene of Chapelle's uncontrollable grief for the death of Pindar.

abouts, my good girl; and now, if you do not wish to see your mistress strangled, you had better send for a chair, and have Monsieur Chapelle conveyed home.' ”

Malebranche had so graphically acted this scene, that every one was convulsed with laughter, as they could so perfectly represent Chapelle's gestures and appearance, except Rupert, who laughed quite enough at the absurdity of the story. While they were still laughing, Josselin returned to the room, and announced,

That one of his Majesty's carriages was in waiting to convey Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or to Versailles.

For Molière had omitted nothing that could do his young friend honour. This was the signal for the party to break up, the most of whom were to meet again at Auteuil on the following evening. In taking leave, Rupert came under the influence of Armande's fascination, as with graceful cordiality she offered him her hand, and assured him, in her peculiarly sweet voice, every inflection of which seemed not only to have the honey, but also the perfume of flowers, that she fully participated in all her husband's good wishes for his success in their native, and his adopted country.

“ Ah! madame,” said he, as he raised her hand to his lips, “ for you to wish me success is to insure it; like that golden oracle at Thebes, which upon the rare occasions it could be got to speak, poured forth such celestial harmony, that the fates were compelled to grant whatever it deigned to ask.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

RUPERT had been about a month in the household of Louis Quatorze, who was well satisfied with his *savoir faire* tact, and agreeable deportment, but would have been quite as well pleased (notwithstanding that he was in love with Lucy Hawthorne, and she with him, and so far disposed of) that he had not been quite so handsome; for extensive as the Grand Monarque's experience was in the *grande passion*, it was more extensive than profound, or he would have known that one real love leaves no room for any other, even though Venus and the Graces were to become candidates for the very smallest corner of a heart so preoccupied. How-

after supper one night, at Mademoiselle Chouars, that gave rise to M. Carmontelle's charming Proverbe, called “ *Les Pleureurs d'Homère.* ”

ever, as prevention is better than cure, it was so arranged that in all the Royal progresses to and from Fontainebleau, Chambord, Compiègne, and elsewhere, the Gold Spur, instead of riding at the side of his Majesty's carriage, which was always occupied with the reigning favourite, should ride on in advance of all the guards and outriders, to clear the way, returning from time to time, to report upon the state of the roads, which although one boasted a signpost, bearing the grandiloquent announcement *TO SPAIN*, another *TO ITALY*, a third *TO RUSSIA*, and a fourth *TO GERMANY*, &c. &c. &c., were nevertheless none of the safest, or in the best repair. Rupert, we need scarcely say, had on the very day of his inauguration, written to his mother and Tom Pepys; he had also written a volume to Lucy, telling her to hope and to keep up her spirits, as he was now on the road to fortune, and it would be his own fault if he did not come safe into port, and anchor at last in the haven of her love. Fearing to distress her, he did not again avail himself of the pass key into the garden, but went to Martial's, and buying a dozen of the prettiest and most fragrant *peau d'Espagne* gloves, he placed his packet in the midst of them, and repairing to the Golden Porringer sufficiently late in the evening for Lucy to have retired to her room, he bought a camelot cloak, and a plain high-crowned felt hat, like those worn by apprentices and the *bourgeoisie*, and, so equipped, he boldly asked for Madame Hawthorne's *Femme de Chambre*, and when Winifred made her appearance, and he with his hat much slouched over his eyes, put the glove-box into her hands, merely saying—

“ *Pour Mademoiselle; du Magasin Martial.* ”

So far was the worthy damsel from recognizing her prime favourite Master Singleton, that she rated him soundly in her best bad French, for bringing parcels at that time of night, and not having sent it before. Rupert said he was very sorry, and meanly laid all the fault at his Master Martial's door, who, poor dear man, Heaven knows was not in the least to blame; but so goes the world; and if blame always fell where blame was due, why there would not be saddles enough to saddle all the right horses; and the poor delinquents would have to perform many an equestrian feat *à la Mazeppa*.

It was a bright, crisp, September morning, the first of the month, and the great court at Versailles was gorgeous with gilt coaches, royally caparisoned horses, beautiful women, graceful pages, and magnificent courtiers, among whom Rupert Single-



ton, mounted on Zara, was neither the least handsome, the least graceful, nor the least magnificent; as, besides the snow-white plumes of his hat, a costly diamond loop and button (the first earnest of the king's favour) now sparkled in it; while Zara's saddle-cloth was of purple velvet, embroidered with gold *fleurs-de-lys*, and the royal arms of France at each corner, purple and gold being the colours of Louis Quatorze; even the royal tent in battle was composed of alternate broad stripes of gold tissue, and purple velvet; at least, such was the exterior coverings always laid over the canvass, that none of the "glorious pomp and circumstance of war" might be omitted, when the king in person did battle. Zara's bridle, which was covered with purple velvet, was also studded with *fleurs-de-lys* of pure gold, as were her snaffle and martingale, while on her forehead fell, like the medallions of a Bayadere, innumerable flat *fleurs-de-lys*, and royal crowns, of the same precious metal; and if women are fond of dress, so decidedly are horses, especially those of Arabia and Andalusia, for no young beauty, adorned for a *festa*, evinces, whatever she may feel, half so much vanity as those noble animals when richly caparisoned; nor did Zara belie her race on the present occasion; for as she pawed the earth, with her delicate right foot, distended her proud nostrils, to sniff the morning air, and turned her beautifully curved neck, and small, fine head, gracefully on one side, she looked as finished a coquette as any in Paris, ay, or even at Versailles, though Athanas de Montespan, like the sun, shone out with all her radiance on that day.

The occasion of the present assemblage was that Louis was about to repair to Petit Bourg, the Château of his Surintendant des Batimens, the Duc d'Antin, that inveterate courtier, who not only gave *fêtes* to his royal master little less regal than those of Versailles, but once nearly lost his life through a piece of practical flattery, which did not however correct him; it was this: on one occasion that his Majesty had honoured him with a visit, he had had very unsightly wedges put between the soles of a whole gallery of statues, knowing very well that the King would find fault with them, which would give him an opportunity of exclaiming in a paroxysm of mock admiration, that Louis understood everything, which did not fail to fall out as he had planned; but in his garden was the statue of a Flora, which he said he would not unweave for any one. The King having heard this, and delighting in tormenting him, and putting his ridiculous

flattery to the test, cried out, as he passed it—

"What a pity that that beautiful statue should be marred by that abominable wedge."

He had no sooner uttered the words, than Monsieur d'Antin rushed to the pedestal, pulled the wedge from under it, and down fell the statue, nearly crushing him in its fall; but, perceiving he was only slightly hurt, having got out of the way in time, Louis, amid the laughter of the other courtiers, merely said, as he turned away, in a contemptuous voice—

"Une pierre dans votre jardin, Monsieur le Duc!"

On another occasion, there was a whole avenue of Spanish chestnuts, which, because they happened to be the greatest ornament to that side of the château, the King maliciously observed to Monsieur d'Antin, that, in his opinion they quite spoil the view; thinking that, that would bring his flattery to a stand-still, as he could not make *them* disappear. But Louis literally reckoned without his host, who, in the night, had every one of them felled to the ground.

"Heavens! what has become of that beautiful avenue of Spanish chestnuts?" asked the King, on the following morning.

"Sire," replied this incorrigible *flagorneur*, "how dare those trees reappear in your Majesty's presence, since they had the misfortune to displease you?"

"For that matter," said the Monarch, really angry at the folly of such bare-faced sycophancy, "that wood yonder, that skirts Petit Bourg, I think much uglier than the avenue; but you will hardly pretend to demolish that."

"Alas! Sire, I have not the power; but depend upon it the Sylvan Deities will not let a forest remain, which has been guilty of displeasing so great a King!"

It was for one of these *fêtes* of the Duc d'Antin's that Louis Quatorze and his brilliant court were setting out. The ladies were all seated in their respective coaches, but the men, for the most part, were not yet mounted, waiting for the King's arrival, and employing the time by leaning upon the doors of the carriages, talking to les dames de leurs pensées. The fact was, that Madame de Montespan, being duly installed in his Majesty's coach, the Queen consort had pleaded indisposition, as she often did, to avoid being one, of similar parties of pleasure! and it was astonishing how kind and tender Louis always was to her, when she laboured under these impromptu maladies. He never set out on these occasions without first saying the most tender things to his Queen, and en-

joining her to take the greatest possible care of her health; for Louis Quatorze piqued himself upon being more even of a gentleman than a king, and, therefore, he never added the slightest want of courtesy, much less of brutality, to those more serious wrongs, which all men, whether monarchs or mendicants, think themselves privileged to inflict upon their wives. Consequently, as Louis was still saying the most amiable things to Maria Theresa, Madame de Montespan had full time to admire the rich costume of his Majesty's twelve trumpeters, with their silver trumpets, mounted on magnificent chargers, all milk white; six of which were stationed at one side of the coach, and six at the other. They wore purple velvet jockey caps, with a closed, or royal, crown at the top instead of a tassel; their jackets were composed of alternate stripes of gold-coloured and purple silk, with a silver-gilt badge of the royal arms in a garter round their right arm, while the banner that descended from their trumpets was of purple silk, *fleur-de-lysée*, and fringed with gold.

"Ah? ça Monsieur d'Estoublon," said the Queen Mother, leaning out of her coach window, and beckoning to a tall, dark, bony-looking man of an olive complexion, who, notwithstanding a most saturnine countenance, had an expression of sly humour lurking at the corner of his eye; nor did the expression belie him, for that said humour it was, which for thirty years had made him an all-privileged person at the court of Anne of Austria, and at the same time the favourite aversion of the old Duchesse de Chevereuse, and all the other antiquated ladies of the bed-chamber belonging to the Queen Mother; from his constant, and not very measured, practical jokes upon them.

"D'Estoublon, do you hear me?" said the Queen. "What have you done with my coach, that you asked me to lend you the other day, to take your wife home, for they tell me it has never come back yet?"

"Your Majesty is too reasonable to expect that it could in so short a time," said D'Estoublon, advancing hat in hand, and bowing down to the very ground.

"Nonsense! D'Estoublon; as usual, you are imposing upon our good nature; six days is surely time enough to go from the Louvre (for it was there I lent it to you) to the Rue Jaques Cœur, and back; take care that you have not to pay a visit to the Châtelet at last."

"*Permettez Madame*," replied he, without moving a muscle of his countenance, "your Majesty was graciously pleased, if

you recollect, to lend me one of your royal coaches to convey my wife home? Now, my estates are in Provence, consequently, Madame d'Estoublon's home is there; so thither I have sent her, and that is what has become of your Majesty's coach."

The Queen laughed, and everybody else did the same, except the old Duchesse de Chevereuse, who, turning up her eyes, and shaking her hands, exclaimed—

"*Le Monstre!* he is capable of anything! and I'm not so sure now, that it was not he who stole my jewels, and put it upon Cartouche."

There is no knowing how many more sins the Duchesse might have supposed and recapitulated of D'Estoublon's, had not the silver trumpets sounded to announce the King's arrival. As Louis appeared on the steps of the palace, taking off his hat, he bowed gracefully to the right and left, and then entered the coach in which Madame de Montespan was seated; the next moment every one of the suite had vaulted into their saddles, all remaining uncovered till the royal carriages moved on, when Rupert, digging his spurs into Zara's flanks, was out of sight in a moment. Through every village that the royal cortège passed, might be heard "the trumpet's lordly blowing," and the peasantry, half-starved for the most part, rushed to their cottage doors to gaze at it. After all, human nature is not so selfish; for these poor creatures felt almost a pleasure in starving for so handsome and graceful a monarch; and above all, one who bowed to the meanest of them, as graciously as if he had been a brother King, or sister Queen. The fact is, the people in all countries treat their prodigal sovereigns much in the same way that weak parents do their prodigal sons; that is, they derive a sort of fond, foolish pride, out of the very thing that is ruining them, provided, in both instances, the son and the monarch be amiable; for a gracious manner covers and gilds a multitude of sins, which an ungracious one not only reveals, but irritates and festers past endurance, and often renders the knife necessary in the end, where at first, a little bread and water would have healed and sufficed.

"*Comme il est beau!*" said a poor, weather-beaten skeleton of a woman, with an emaciated infant tied to her back, who was weeding in a field. This was addressed to her less laborious lord and master, who was sitting down under a tree regaling himself with some raw turnips.

"I wonder if he has his gibelottes stewed in gold?" said the husband, holding the half-eaten turnip bashfully behind his back,

till the royal carriage had passed; feeling, intuitively, that it was not *exactly* the sort of "dainty dish to set before a king."

"To be sure—and precious stones too," rejoined the wife, authoritatively, growing classical and historical unawares.

Here Colbert brought up the rear in a plain gray, or slate-coloured, coach, with silver mouldings, and black, gray, and silver liveries—for he not only wished to keep a watch upon the King, that he might not forget the charity sermon that was to take place at Notre Dame, three days from that, and remain at the Duc d'Antin's amusing himself, but he had also to meet Courtin, the miser, who was going with a party to stay a few days at a country house of La Grange, the actor, which was within half a league of Petit Bourg; for, with him, he had contrived to effect a somewhat considerable loan of fifty thousand Louis at a most usurious interest; and now, as usual, this great man and indefatigable minister, was absorbed in his accounts; so much so, indeed, that although they cheered him loudly as he passed, he never raised his eyes, or thought of taking it to himself, till after the cries of

"Vive le Roi!"

"Vivent les Reines!"

Came vociferous cries of "Vive Colbert!" which, at length, he acknowledged by taking off his hat; but, far from bowing with the deliberate and popularity-wooing grace of the King, he nodded hastily to the mob, as much as to say,

"There, that's enough, my good people," and then returned to his papers.

"*Tiens! that Colbert? ma foi!* he is very little to be le grand Colbert!" said the wife in weeds. "Ah! he looks as yellow as gold. I've no doubt it's *he* that keeps all the money, and the corn too, and makes the scarcity—he looks like a miser; and what a shabby coach! while the King looks not only as glorious, but as generous, as the sun. And what a beautiful lady the Queen is—and how fond he seems of her, Guillot!"

"*T'es bête, Goton!* that's not the Queen."

For Guillot, though he *did* lead a pastoral life, and eat crude vegetables, knew better than *that*.

"How do *you* know that it's not?" said Goton, by no means liking her spouse to disbelieve in so high an example of conjugal affection.

"*Cause!*" rejoined Guillot, with the air, and perhaps with the wisdom, of a Solomon; "he could kiss his wife's hand at home; he need not come out a pleasuring to do *that*."

"Eh! mauvais drôle! tu t'y connais donc!" cried Goton, flinging a handful of

groundsel in his face, as she stooped down and resumed her occupation.

It was about sunset when Rupert, always in advance of the cavalcade, and only a league from Petit Bourg, was looking intently at the clouds of crimson and gold, which seemed to float like the banners of the sun marching on in pomp to meet the night; and, as he looked, of course he thought of Lucy—for *every* thing brought her image before him—all that was beautiful reminded him of her, and all that was not, he contrasted with her, till one golden cloud he piled upon another—his aerial structure growing higher and higher—he peopling it with sweet thoughts to the very summit, and *she* the radius of each, and all; but, unfortunately, the infallible result of getting into the clouds is, that something is sure to occur to make one fall from them; that something now appeared to Rupert in the shape of six armed, masked, and mounted highwaymen, who, emerging from the little wood that skirted the roadside, surrounded him; and, after they had seized Zara's bridle, under which she winced, reared, and snorted not a little, eyeing the royal arms on her caparisons, they all took off their hats in the most deferential manner, and cried,

"Vive le Roi!"

"*Tout de même, Monsieur, we must trouble you to dismount,*" said they to Rupert; "we will not detain you long, for with six *valets de chambre*, a gentleman is soon disencumbered of his attire; the cut of your clothes outside is irreproachable, we merely wish to see whether the lining corresponds; but we beg to assure you, that we would not, for the world, be guilty of *lèze Majesté*; so, any papers or other matters you may have belonging to the King, shall be left in your charge; but our affection to his sacred person impels us, as loyal subjects, to endeavour to possess ourselves of his august image, wherever we find it represented in gold or silver."

Rupert, whose courage was always as cool, and as much up, as a flask of champagne that had been two hours in ice, felt it was useless to contend against six men armed to the teeth, and that if anything was to be done, it must be by stratagem; therefore, in reply to this harangue, he merely uncovered to return their mock courtesy, and said, as he sprang to the ground—taking care all the while, to keep his hand on the holster, so as to be near his pistols—

"A votre service, Messieurs."

The robber, who had been spokesman, having, with the greatest possible courtesy, then proceeded to take off his baldric, which being heavy with gold and pearl

embroidery, he balanced on his hand, and said, as he tossed it to one of his comrades:—

“By St. Anthony! that alone is worth an evening’s ride.” he next proceeded to unbutton the gold frogs of Rupert’s close riding-coat.

“Ho! Juan,” said he, addressing another of the gang, as he affected to examine the lace on Singleton’s shirt, “you, being the Freloquet of our family, are a connoisseur in lace and frippery, cast an eye here, and tell us if this is Dresden or Flanders?”

“Neither, *Nigaud*,” rejoined the gentleman accosted as Juan, as he took the frill in his hand, “but *Point d’Alençon*, worth, at least, six Louis an ell.”

As he was still examining the lace, and Rupert had just succeeded in grasping one of his pistols, the front of his shirt came open, and the little parchment medallion protruded, which the man in the wax mask had put round his neck three months back, at the *Pré-aux-Clercs*, on his first arrival at Paris, and which he had continued to wear, partly on the principle of doing at Rome as Rome does, and partly from the just conclusion that he had come to, that a thing of apparently no value, so strangely given, must have some meaning in it; nor was he mistaken—for as the robber opened the bosom of his shirt, and this piece of parchment, with the little silken cord to which it was attached, became visible—he shouted:—

“Ah! San Antonio! Juan!” and holding it up to the rest of his companions, they took up the cry, some whistling, and some singing the burden of the same old drinking song, that the man in the wax mask had sung on the morning he accosted Rupert in the *Pré-aux-Clercs*.

“Cr—é non!” muttered the first robber, between his teeth—he who had been spokesman all along—as he refastened Rupert’s coat, and again put on his baldric—“that was what you call a work of supererogation! Sorry, *mon beau Monsieur*, to have given you the trouble of dismounting. As I perceive you have the honour—to say nothing of the singular good fortune—of being under the protection of St. Antony of Padua—allow me?” added he, obsequiously holding the stirrup, while Rupert, not a little astonished, vaulted into his saddle. Another robber lifted up Zara’s feet, to look to her shoes; a third took out the pistols, and after a careful examination, replunged them into the holsters; while a fourth tightened the girths and shortened the rein.

All these little attentions completed, the whole six mounted their horses, which

they placed abreast, and taking off their hats, at exactly the same moment, with the precision of a military manœuvre, the original spokesman said:—

“Sir, we have the honour of wishing you a very good evening, and a pleasant journey.”

“Gentlemen, good evening,” rejoined Rupert, taking off his hat, and remaining uncovered till they were out of sight.

“Ah!” laughed the first robber, as they all set spurs to their horses, and disappeared through the wood—“it is always adieu! *our* friends never say—*au revoir*!”

“Commend me to men of wax,” said Rupert, as he wheeled about and galloped back to inform the King of his strange adventure and miraculous escape.

## CHAPTER XX.

WHILE Rupert galloped back to meet the royal cortège, the robbers pursued their way towards *Petit Bourg*, through the wood, trusting to fortune to fall in with some other travellers, who should be under *her* especial patronage, without at the same time, being such monopolists as to be under that of St. Antony! And as Fortune, however blind she may be, is *not* deaf, and therefore *seldom* disappoints those, who in praying *trust* to her, the gentlemen of the road had eventually no reason to complain of the fickle goddess; for at about a mile from the *Duc d’Antin’s*, where the road turned off into a narrow lane, dark as midnight, even in noonday, from the spreading branches of the wood on each side, and leading to *Le Mare au Serpolet*, *La Grange*, the actor’s country house, slowly jumbled over ruts and stones, an immense mass of leather and brown-painted wood, with a lofty, raised, and dome-like top, called, in those days, a coach. It had fixed steps at either door, like those of a bathing machine; there was no outside lamps, but, front and rear, was a circular bull’s-eye receptacle for light; open within, so as to illumine the coach, and enable those inside to see each other perfectly, or even to read, while from without they were of a bright, ruby red, like the chemically-coloured waters in an apothecary’s window, which, in the darkness, gave to this ponderous vehicle the appearance of some antediluvian monster of the Cyclops genus.

The occupants of this machine were *Chapelle*, *Boileau*, *Fieubet*, *Bernier*, and *Courtin*, the miser; for it contained five, and could with equal ease have accommodated seven, seeing that none of the space was curtailed by any luxurious

squabs, springs, or other modern effeminacies.

The conversation among the four (for Courtin, as usual, was indulging in his golden dreams) had turned upon what was then making a great noise in Paris, namely, one Monsieur Neufvillennaine, having pirated an entire play of Molière's, printed, published, and dedicated it to Molière, as his (*Neufvillennaine's*) own production! for, at this time, the former had not published any of his plays; and this cool theft of Neufvillennaine's it was, which made Poquelin's friends tease him into printing and publishing; for he only laughed heartily at the original idea of dedicating to him his own production; and he thanked the thief most courteously for the compliment!

"Instead of Neufvillennaine," said Fieubet, "the fellow ought to be called *Neuvevilnie!*"

"Oh, I'm very glad it has happened," said Chapelle; "for if Molière don't want Europe to be overrun with Neufvillennaines, he *must* publish his plays *now*, or he will have every apprentice from the Rue St. Denis, coming, night after night to learn them by heart, and then dedicate them to him!"

"Du moins c'est se connaitre en procédés," laughed Boileau; "but what I cannot understand is, Molière's so tamely submitting to the misquotations, and total changes of wording, that *must* frequently occur in a whole play plagiarised from memory;

"Cur ego, si nequeo ignoroque, poeta salutor?"

"No, no; no fear of your missing your aim in marking nicer shades, my dear Boileau," said Chapelle, with a laugh, "for you are far too nice in marking them.

"Indignatur item privatis ac prope socce,  
Dignis carminibus narrari cœna Thyestar."

But this I do think; that both you and Racine would have gone raving mad, had such a mischance happened to either of you; not so much at the theft even as at the mutilation."

As Boileau could not but agree to the truth of this, he thought it more prudent to return to Molière, than to let the conversation dwell upon himself and Racine, and those lofty strains about which both were so feverishly sensitive, perhaps quite as much from the almost impalpable susceptibilities of the French language, which possesses more delicate *shadows of shades* than any other, as from the proverbial irritability of poets.

"The greatest anomaly about Molière

to me is," said he, "that although indisputably the most welling, sparkling, and overflowing comic poet since Terence and Aristophanes; yet, in the man himself, there should be such a vein, nay more, I should say, such a sub-stratum of profound melancholy, with all that tenderness and delicacy of feeling, which is so often akin to it; do you know, it frequently occurs to me that he is not happy in his *ménage*; and yet Madame Molière is a charming person, and he seems to live but in the air she breathes; you are more *intimately intimate* with him than I am, Chapelle; what is your opinion?"

But Chapelle (whose fealty touching the secrets of his poor friend's heart, was almost sacerdotal; for, like the Priests of Isis, even in his orgies, from habit, he drew the curtain before those mysteries which had been confided to him as sacred; and at other times never allowed any probing to reach it) merely replied, as he shifted his position slightly on his very uncomfortable seat,

"No; I don't think there is anything of that sort. I should say it was partly constitutional, and partly the result of early terrible impressions, which in young hearts always cast a dense and mighty shadow, that no after sunshine can entirely dispel; and recollect, on his return from Narbonne with the late king, when he was not quite a child though not yet a man, he witnessed the executions of De Thou and Cinq Mars; one cannot pity a traitor; Cinq Mars deserved his fate; but poor François! it was a terrible ending for his father's son."

"I don't doubt but you are right," said Boileau, "for a young spirit to be steeped in the tricklings from a scaffold, is certainly enough to darken the very brightest that was ever wedged in human clay."

"I wonder," said Courtin, pompously, "what time Monsieur Colbert will come over to Le Mare au Serpolet\* to-morrow? for my time is precious."

"Of course," rejoined Fieubet, "and his is not the least so! But tell us, my Courtin, how many gallons of blood has he taken from you? Vulgo, how many millions of livres has he been able to extract, or extort, from you?"

"Millions! Whew! Hear how he talks!" squeaked Courtin, as he tied up his head with the cousin-german of the old blue and white checked cotton handkerchief that had been on active service at Molière's breakfast, only this one was red and white. "Where would I get millions, I should like to know?"

\* Literally the Pool, or Pond, of wild thyme; that is, wild thyme growing on its borders.

"So should I," said Fieubet, "but I don't know where you get them. I only know *how* and where you *keep* them."

"*Maudit farceur!*" muttered the old man, and then added aloud, "No, Monsieur Colbert is only coming to consult me about some government business. Ah ça, Messieurs," said he, rapidly changing the subject, and addressing Chapelle, Boileau, and Bernier, "have you seen Don Juan, at the Hôtel de Bourgogne? and by the Troupe de Mademoiselle, that statue that walks! is really wonderful! *ma foi!* Molière has given us nothing like it yet!"

"Bah!" said Boileau, contemptuously. "Don't you think that Molière, who can create such men and women, if he would condescend to turn showman, could also set puppets in motion?"

"And he *shall* condescend," cried Chapelle, "for it is generally out of the mire, that one must pick up the suffrages of the populace, we will *make* him give us a Don Juan at the Petit Bourbon."\*

"But do you think he will degrade his genius to a mere pageant of that sort?" asked Boileau.

"My dear Boileau, *real* genius can never be degraded by treating even the most puerile and insignificant subjects, for *it* does not stoop to *them*, but raises them to its own standard; to wit, Montaigne wrote an essay on *couches* and another on *thumbs*; but was not one whit the less Montaigne on that account; and nothing can more vividly and comprehensively demonstrate the two vast extremes of Molière's capacity, and the infinite variety and versatility of talent, that fills the intermediate space, than your name for him, and that of the *Duchesse Palatine d'Orléans*; you call him *le-contempleteur*, and she always speaks of him *ce génie, si franc du Collier*, and depend upon it, it is the treasures he amasses as the former, that enables him so lavishly to reproduce all grades of men and all shades of human nature as the latter, and to bestow on them so profusely his own wealth."

"Ah! my Adolphe," said Fieubet, laying his hand upon Courtin's shoulder, and shaking him, "would that *any* power visible or invisible, could compel or even induce you to do the same, and be equally lavish of your talents of silver."

"Be quiet, do," growled Courtin, "one might as well be in a den of thieves as within ten miles of you."

Here the coach suddenly stopped, the report of a pistol, the tramping of horses, feet, and the piteous supplications of the

coachman for mercy, too plainly told the cause of stoppage.

"By Jupiter! to talk of thieves is to invoke St. Cartouche; and as sure as you are a living miser, and will soon be a dead one, here he is, my Courtin!" cried Fieubet.

"Lord have mercy upon me!" howled the old man, crouching down to the bottom of the coach, and telling his beads with all his might.

"Couldn't you say Lord have mercy upon us! as well as upon *'me?'* *vieux ladre.* It wouldn't cost more, for don't you know there is no money in heaven," said Fieubet trying to drag him back to his seat.

"I hope you are armed?" whispered Boileau to Chapelle, cocking his own pistol.

"Not I; but here is an empty bottle that will at least cut one of their faces for them;" and he excavated it out of a small hamper.

The coachman having been reassured upon his personal safety,—for the firing of the pistol was merely a sort of military salute, to announce the arrival of the six mounted gentlemen, who had surrounded Rupert, and who now, in two battalions of three, opened each of the coach doors; taking off their hats, they said blandly;—"Sorry to disturb you, gentlemen, but the little examination we have to make will not detain you ten minutes, unless, indeed, you raise any unnecessary obstacles, which we are sure you have *trop d'usage* to do; for of course you are aware that his Majesty has ordered a general collection all over the kingdom, on account of the scarcity,—and *we* collect for the highways and byeways, and for the department of the woods and forests."

"Pon my word, gentlemen," said Boileau, presenting the spokesman with a Louis, and all the loose silver he had in his pocket,—“here is all that I have about me. I am sorry that chance should have so ill directed you, as to light upon three poets; for who ever heard of a poet with money?"

"Here, Eustache," said the robber, passing the trifling amount to one of his comrades,—“Here is Monsieur Boileau's last *satire*—five-and-thirty livres amongst six of us!"

"A poor one truly for so great an author," laughed Eustache: "apparently he is not a poet of the *golden* age."

"If that's all you can get from our Triton,—what can you, expect from us minnows?" said Chapelle, pointing to himself and Bernier.

"Not much certainly," laughed the

\* Which he did in the space of five days.

robber, "for every one knows, Monsieur Chapelle, that *you* are more given to *pour boires* than *déboires*; but if our muster-roll is correct," continued he, taking a paper out of his pocket, and examining it, "the rich Monsieur Courtin, of the sixth chimney-pot, No. 40, Rue Croquemort, should be your *compagnon du voyage*, and it was to *him* chiefly that the civilities of our visit were intended. Have I the honour of addressing that illustrious millionaire?" added he, bowing to Fieubet.

"Really, gentlemen," said the latter, "you take an unfair advantage of us, without profiting by it; for you wear masks, and we don't; therefore, if we, not being able to see your honest faces, mistook you for brigands, there might be some excuse for *us*. But look at me! and then tell me, with that *franc parler* for which you are so distinguished, whether I have the slightest appearance of either a millionaire, or a miser! if indeed, they are not synonymous; on the contrary," continued he, turning all his pockets inside out, as fast as possible, one after the other, "I grieve to say, that being destitute of money is constitutional, and therefore, alas! hereditary in our family, and everything in *my* education and habits, has tended to increase this most painful, because most pitiable of all complaints."

"Sorry to have reminded you of your misfortunes," laughed the highwayman. "If indeed, my good sir, you are not hypochondriacal, and don't fancy yourself worse than you really are, have the goodness to bare your bosom, that I may examine your chest."

"Willingly," replied Fieubet, holding open his waistcoat and shirt, "I have no concealments from my *friends*, (!) but as for showing you my chest, as you perceive, that is but an empty compliment."

"Well, but," resumed the robber, "where is this Monsieur Courtin? for he should be amongst you."

"Ah! that is another affair," said Fieubet, pointing down all the time he spoke (like the countryman to the poor fox in the fable) at the place of Courtin's concealment, "but you see, that worthy and most generous of men does not occupy a seat in this coach."

"Perhaps not," said the robber, dismounting, "for there is no accounting for taste; and so maybe the gentleman prefers a place under the seat;" and so saying, and beckoning to his companion to assist him, he excavated the unhappy Courtin, more dead than alive, from his hiding-place.

"Indeed, indeed, my good gentlemen, I

am a poor man and have nothing—look at my clothes? do they look like wealth?" said he, falling upon his knees and clasping his hands.

"Well, we are very sorry that report should so calumniate you, Monsieur Courtin, as to give you millions that you don't possess, but that is an additional reason for your submitting to the same investigation as your fellow-travellers, and if we find you are really as destitute as you say, why, in that case, we will e'en bestow our charity upon you."

"Good luck! good luck! am I not to be pitied? to be robbed and murdered in cold blood?" said the poor wretch, resisting to the uttermost—but in vain—their attempts to search him.

"Murdered, indeed, you may be, if you have any particular fancy for it," retorted the highwayman, "but you belie yourself, my good sir, when you talk about being robbed. Ha! what have we here?" added he, fishing up a meagre, attenuated looking leathern purse, out of one of the pockets of Courtin's *haut de chausse*, containing one Louis, two livres, and some half-dozen large sou pieces. "Not indeed, as much as we hoped, and had been led to expect; but still it is better than nothing!"

"Oh! for heaven's sake! for pity's sake! my good gentlemen, it is all I have," cried Courtin, trying with his skinny hands, now convulsively twitching, to clutch back his purse.

"All, or not all, my good Monsieur Courtin," said the robber, "as you rated it at nothing, you lose nothing, and that's as good logic as you'll get at Picpus or Claremont, and where this purse came from, perhaps there may be more," and forthwith they renewed their search, till Courtin was nearly frantic.

"No, no, no, upon my honour, I have not another *denier*!" said he.

"We could not think of doubting so honourable a gentleman's honour; so we will wish you good evening, M. Courtin," rejoined the robber, closing the coach door; "but *au revoir*; and another time we hope to find you in more flourishing circumstances."

The brigands were scarcely mounted, before Courtin, drawing a long breath, and patting the sides of his coat, said, "Ah! how fortunate they did not know of the *bons* for fifty thousand Louis, that I have stitched in here!"

He had no sooner uttered these words, than Fieubet, putting his head out of the window, and waving his handkerchief, cried, "Ho! hist! Messieurs les Brigands,

come back, if you please; here is something you have forgotten."

"*Plait il,*" said the first robber, returning.

"Gentlemen!" replied Fieubet, plunging his left hand into his bosom, and assuming an oratorical air and tone, while his right remained free to point to Courtin, "I saw by your deportment that you were honest fellows! believing people on their word, in all good faith; but *that gentleman there*, has swindled you; however, I won't be his accomplice. Search him again, between the lining of his coat, and you will not have your trouble for nothing."\*

"Mille remerciemens, de votre complaisance, Monsieur," said the robber, taking off his hat, and then drawing forth a knife, and despite kicks, bites, and struggles of every description, ripping up the lining of Courtin's coat, and extracting therefrom two bank post bills for twenty-five thousand Louis-d'ors each. "Ah! by St. Antony," said the brigand, his eyes sparkling as he read the amount; "the bank of France is as good a one as any in Europe to open such a charming correspondence with. Monsieur Courtin, *bien le bon soir*; we shall not fail to drink your health till we have the pleasure of meeting you again, as one of the most liberal contributors to the charity now collecting all over the kingdom; and you, Monsieur," added he, turning to Fieubet, "pray again accept our best thanks, for having helped us to work so rich a mine, in return for which, of *you*, we will only take—our leave."

And so saying, the robbers galloped off, making the wood resound with their laughter, in which Fieubet joined.

"Mais diable! C'était par trop fort!" said Boileau, trying to lift up Courtin, who lay faintly groaning at the bottom of the coach, "I really am afraid you have killed him."

"Not a bit of it. Your bottle, Chapelle; not the empty one," said Fieubet, taking it, and pouring some of the contents into his victim's mouth. "Come, come, Courtin, rouse yourself, it's all your own fault; five hundred crowns lent to the widow Gassin a month ago, and paid with due interest, would have saved your fifty thousand Louis-d'ors to-night; but don't fret; you have still plenty of fifty thousands left; and if the thing were possible, which I really don't think it is, you must only cling the closer to those you have left, or better

\* Messieurs, j'ai vu à vos manières, que vous étiez d'honnêtes gens, croyant galamment les gens sur parole. Monsieur là vous a Escroqué! Je ne veux pas être son complice moi! fouillez; entre la doublure de son habit; et vous ne perderez pas vos peines."

still, part with them more freely, and not doat upon them so fondly."

"Oh! oh! bear witness, all of you," gasped Courtin, "that that villain, Fieubet, has robbed me. I will denounce him to the commissary of police! I'll have his life for it—I will! He—he—he shall be branded at the galleys first! And hu—hu—hung, drawn, and quartered, as a public example! afterwards—oh! oh! oh! I am the most unfortunate man that ever lived!"

"My dear Monsieur Courtin," said Fieubet, phlegmatically folding his arms as the coach jerked and jumbled through the large wooden gates of the back entrance to the Mare au Serpolet, "*you are far, very far*, from being one of the Gracchi, and I, thank Heaven, am equally far from being your mother; but still, to parody the illustrious Roman lady's speech on a more memorable occasion, and concerning an infinitely more worthy subject, I must say, that *no man can be called unfortunate who, like you, ever had fifty thousand Louis-d'ors EVEN TO LOSE!*"

## CHAPTER XXI.

As all reputation in this world depends infinitely more upon chance than desert, Rupert did not fail to rise at once into a hero, upon the strength of his having, single-handed, dispersed six armed brigands; for, without any boasting on his part, so the story ran: as, having promised the man in the wax mask to keep secret their meeting, he thought (although he had now no doubt that, if not Cartouche himself, he was certainly one of the gang) that, as there is said to be honour *among* thieves, so ought there to be honour *towards* them; especially, after the peculiar favour they had shown to him. Nevertheless, being the depositary of the pearl bracelets, they became more and more irksome to him, and he began to long for the collection at Nôtre-Dame; not only that they might fulfil the charitable mission for which they were destined, but, also, that he might be rid of them; as he by no means relished the involuntary office he had been entrapped into, of almoner to Cartouche and his "merry, merry men!"

Valour, next to beauty, being Louis Quatorze's ruling passion, he was so charmed with Rupert's encounter with the robbers, that he not only shook hands with him, but christened him *Le Condé du Grande Chemin*,\* and ordered him to ride close by the royal carriage till they reached

\* The Condé of the highway, or road.



Petit Bourg. When they at length arrived at that part of the wood which skirted the Duc d'Antin's estate, night had set in, but there was not the more darkness on that account, as this inveterate courtier had had the whole of this portion of the wood illuminated in coloured lamps representing Oriental birds of the most brilliant plumage, while from the trees themselves appeared to hang clusters of fruit, made of precious stones, like those of Aladdin's garden, and over the great entrance-gates were illuminated golden eagles, holding each in their beaks the extreme end of a magnificent rainbow, also represented in coloured lamps,—the colours so perfectly shaded and blended into one another, that it really was a first-rate work of art. This rainbow, of course, served as a triumphal arch, and under it blazed, in purple and white lamps, meant to imitate sapphires and brilliants: "WELCOME LOUIS, STAR OF FRANCE! BEFORE WHOSE SUPERIOR SPLENDOR THE STARS OF HEAVEN GROW PALE!"

"So it would appear," said the King, laughing, as he looked up into the sky, "for there is not one to be seen to-night."

But no sooner had they reached the grounds, than the scene of enchantment increased; the various fountains (which had been augmented for the occasion), having different coloured chemical compositions burnt behind their waters, made them appear to well forth showers of rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and topazes, while beneath every fountain was also a concert of the most fairy-like music imaginable; so that the jets seemed to pour out harmony as well as jewels. The Château itself was one blaze of light, but of white lamps, all except two escutcheons in front, over the great entrance door, one of which was in purple and gold-coloured lamps, representing the royal arms of France; and the other in ruby and white lamps, displaying those of D'Antin. A broad double flight of steps led up to the Château, with wide stone balustrades; these steps were now entirely covered with purple velvet, and the balustrades had first eider-down cushions placed on them, and then a superb gold brocade, embroidered in purple *fleurs-de-lys* strained over them. The Duke, of course, was standing uncovered at the foot of the steps, to officiate as lacquey, and open the door of the royal carriage.

"*Monsieur le Duc*," said Louis, graciously accepting his proffered arm in order to alight, "you are so magically splendid, that we really shall be afraid after this to invite you even to the terrestrial humilities of Versailles."

"Sire," bowed the Duke, "Versailles

must always be the most wonderful thing in creation, since your Majesty, who is the sun of the universe, shines out there."

"Nay, my dear Duke, you give me rather too much to do; for at the gates of your Château. I was a star! and now I am the sun!—really," laughed the King, "I'm afraid you will have more difficulty in establishing your astronomical theories, than even Galileo found in proving his."

"By no means, Sire, since all the world are agreed, that your Majesty shines with equal lustre in every sphere."

"Ah, à la bonneheur," said Louis, with another laugh, as he held out his hand to help Madame de Montespan from the carriage; "and I suppose, Marquise, you are the evening star?"

"Without doubt, Sire, for it happens this month to be Venus."

"Oh, how beautiful! you really must keep a score or two of necromancers, Monsieur d'Antin," said Madame de Montespan, looking round, "for this is perfect enchantment!"

"There can be no doubt of the enchantment now," rejoined the gallant host, bowing as profoundly as he would have done to the King himself, "for everything must be enchanted, upon which *les beaux yeux* de Madame de Montespan deigns to look."

"D'honneur il n'est pas tant bête," whispered the King as he pressed his fair companion's hand, while they ascended the purple steps, and entered the house, followed by the Duke.

The arrangements in the rest of the Château were equally splendid; especially the apartments allotted to the King; and as soon as the royal suite had changed their dress, supper was served in the great banquetting hall, evincing a magnificence worthy of Versailles, and achieving triumphs of gastronomy, that might have even satisfied Apicius in the chamber of Apollo. Among the many guests to meet the King, were Madame de Sévigné, and Bussy Rabutin. Lady Hawthorne having told the former all about Lucy's and Rupert's attachment, she made Bussy (who had known him since he had been in the royal household) present him to her; and he took her out to supper, Bussy and the lively and agreeable little Duchesse de Bourgogne sitting on the other side. Madame de Sévigné had too much tact and good taste to allude directly to Rupert's former engagement to Lucy, but in the most natural way in the world, she contrived to talk to him so exclusively of her, praising her so cordially, and giving him so many minute details about her, that it is no wonder, if before supper was half over, he even went beyond the rest of the world,

in thinking Madame de Sévigné the most charming and agreeable woman that ever existed; while Bussy, who was an all-privileged person with the Duchesse de Bourgogne, kept her royal Highness in such convulsions of laughter, with his collection of anecdotes, *historiettes*, and scandal, that she could not eat her supper: at length she called Madame de Sévigné to the rescue, "for," said she, "your *mauvais sujet* of a cousin will be the death of me!"

"One minute, Ma Cousine," said he. "I wish to tell her Royal Highness, how Mademoiselle Desorages tossed her lover the President out of the window, for fear her other adorer, the Fermier Général, should discover him behind the curtain, which the wind kept every now and then blowing aside; I tell it to you, Mesdames, because I know that really correct women are never so prudish and squeamish, as ladies of equivocal reputation; besides, when there are two to listen to it, it will only appear half as *libre* as it otherwise might;" and Bussy proceeded, embellishing the anecdote with his own annotations, till Madame de Sévigné, put her fan before her mouth, as she laughingly cried out—

"Prenez garde, Bussy! I'm afraid by your story becoming so very *décolletée*, that you take her highness and me, to be even more correct than we are!"

"At all events, chère Marquise," laughed the Duchesse de Bourgogne, "he can never take you to be more witty than you are. But is it true," added she, turning to Bussy: "that Monsieur le Prince, has split with the Maréchale de Richelieu, on account of his jealousy about the Comte de Roucy?"

"Not exactly," said Rabutin; "he was jealous, as every one knows, of De Roucy. So jealous, that the Maréchale de Richelieu, not liking to lose so rich and munificent an adorateur, as M. le Prince, had the infamy to tell him, that to reassure him for the future, she would write to the Comte, giving him a rendezvous for the next day; and that then, the Prince might hire some *sbirri* to despatch him as he entered; the gallant blood of the Condés overflowed in indignation at so dastardly and diabolical a proposition. M. le Prince rushed out of the house, and vowed he would never see the Maréchale again."

This horrible story, recalled to Rupert the affair of Lady Shrewsbury, holding the Duke of Buckingham's horse, while he fought with and killed her husband, and certainly the Duke d'Enghein, or Monsieur le Prince as he was called, rose nobly by the comparison.

"The wretch!" exclaimed the Duchess and Madame de Sévigné in one breath.

"I shall *now* like Monsieur le Prince better than ever," said the Duchesse de Bourgogne; "and, do you know, he sometimes says very good things. Here is a *mot* of his:—The other morning he was sitting with me when Moreau\* came in dressed exceedingly fine, and with a sword, above all things in the world. Seeing a smile pass over the Prince's face as he eyed the weapon, Moreau thought it best to begin the laugh against himself; so he said, taking up his sword,—'Monsieur le Prince no doubt thinks that I am very like Spezza-Ferro, in the Italian comedy, thus formidably accoutred.'

"Not in the least, my dear Monsieur Moreau," said the Prince, 'for, recollect, poor Spezza-Ferro never killed anybody!'"

Hearing them so merry at that end of the table (for, in those days, it was the fashion to be agreeable even in the presence of Royalty; and, indeed, Royalty itself set the example), the King cried out:—

"Bussy, as you are the best authority for everything that ought not to be known, and that is not fit to be told; what is this story about the Abbé Dangeau's† jealousy of the Chevalier de Motery, and his quarrel with the Comtesse de Chaveau on account of it?"

"Not the least jealous of the Chevalier, as your Majesty will allow, when you hear the particulars, Sire; indeed, he is so little troubled with that *roturier* complaint, that I have no doubt he would allow her to make a lottery of her lovers, as the Duc de Mazarin does of his servants, by which delightful arrangement he sometimes gets his cook for a valet-de-chambre, and a groom for a cook; or, I dare say, he might have even been capable of getting the Chevalier to make love for him, as the Abbé de Pompadour thinks he is going to Heaven by proxy, in making his *lacquey* say his breviary for him every day."

"Well, but," interrupted Louis, "the

\* He was first physician to the Duchesse de Bourgogne; and doctors did not then generally wear swords.

† This was the Abbé Dangeau, who was mad upon the subjects of grammar and orthography; he it was, who once exclaimed, wringing his hands: "No! no! particules are not understood in France!" and upon another occasion, when the country was deemed on the eve of a revolution, he replied: "That may be, but come what will, thank Heaven! I have in my portfolio thirty-six complete conjugations." He was brother to the Marquis Dangeau, who wrote a stupid and prolix diary, in which he bequeathed to posterity the interesting information of the days that Louis Quatorze sneezed or coughed more than usual.

story goes, that the Abbé Dangeau intercepted a *billet doux* of the Chevalier de Motery's, and that he had a violent quarrel with Madame de Chaveau on account of it.

"Alas! Sire, the sage counsel, only to believe half that one hears, ought to have this clause added to it:—and when the tale heard includes the acts of persons, transpose the facts: For instance, Sire, were you to be told to-morrow, that I, Bussy Rabutin, was dying for love of such or such a lady; it would be safer, or, at all events, more probable, to suppose that the case was *vice versa*."

When the laugh had subsided, which this sally of Bussy's had given rise to, he continued:

"The exact history, Sire, of the Dangeau and Chaveau feud is this—for I had it from the lady herself—it is so far true that the *poulet* to the Chevalier had been written; and, moreover, that it was the *cause* of the quarrel between the Comtesse and the Abbe, for he happened to come in just as she had folded, directed, and was about to seal it; he read it, and had no sooner done so, than, slapping his forehead with his clenched hand, and stamping his foot, he exclaimed:

"Heavens! Is it possible that a woman who calls herself a gentlewoman can be so lost to all propriety—so totally devoid of shame—so insensible to common decency—as to send such a letter as this?"

"Only hear me, Gontrin," cried Madame de Chaveau, bursting into tears, which process she had often before found to produce the chemical effect of making black appear white to the Abbé; 'only hear me, and you will find I am not so culpable as you imagine.'

"Not so culpable as I imagine!" repeated the Abbé, crushing the billet with convulsive phrensy in his trembling hand. 'And you *dare* make such an assertion, Madame, in the *teeth* of three grammatical errors, and five misspelt words! From this out I decline the verb "to love;" for what dependence could I place on a woman who has no fixed principles of grammar, and turns the Alphabet into a raffle!"

"Now you perceive, Sire," concluded Bussy, amid the laughter of the whole party, "jealousy, the Chevalier, and even Madame de Chaveau, were for nothing in all this: it was only the outraged honour of grammar and orthography that the indignant Abbé avenged."

A brilliant ball, or ballet, as they were then called, concluded the evening; and Monsieur d'Antin was in his element, adulating the king and receiving himself really well-merited compliments upon the

magnificence of his taste, and what is more rare, and therefore more to be admired—the *taste* of his magnificence.

The next morning the sun itself seemed to vie with the gorgeous owner of Petit-Bourg—to do homage to the Grand Monarque—for it shone out with more than usual splendour. Louis and his whole court were walking on the terrace, when the Duc d'Antin said:

"Is your Majesty always of the same opinion touching the ugliness of that wood?"

"Well," replied the King, "after the beautiful reception it gave us last night, it would almost be ungrateful of us to disparage it; but as we are very certain, Monsieur le Duc, that even *your* loyal *empressement* to oblige us, cannot go the lengths of demolishing *that*, we fear we must still say that we do not admire it!"

"Then Heaven forbid!" said the Duke, "that it should *presume* to offend your Majesty's august vision one moment longer!" And, so saying, he clapped his hands, and blew a shrill whistle, when, with one tremendous crash, every tree fell, and the whole wood disappeared at the same moment!\*

The ladies screamed; and the Duchesse de Bourgogne said:

"Ah, mesdames! how lucky it was that the King did not wish for our heads! or Monsieur d'Antin would have lopped them off with equal alacrity!"

"No," whispered Louis to Madame de Montespan, as he followed the other ladies, who were repairing to the murdered wood, to honour it with a funeral oration of regrets, "I only want *ONE* heart."

"And," smiled the beautiful Athanais, "that one, you know, you have long possessed, without the interference of Monsieur d'Antin."

To ordinary mortals it is difficult to look tender and triumphant at the same time; but Louis Quatorze was so accustomed to come off victorious at all these physiological *Ramillies* and *Malplaquets*, that he

\* In order to achieve this piece of practical sycophancy, the Duc d'Antin had had the axe laid to the root of every tree during the night, even while the poor trees blazed with light, decked like victims, as they were, for the sacrifice. Next, a rope was passed round each tree, while twelve hundred ropes were collected to one point, tarred over, and then, at the signal agreed upon, pulled by twelve hundred men: when the whole of the little wood fell at one swoop, as above described; and the Duchesse de Bourgogne, turning to the other ladies who were walking with the King, exclaimed: "Ah, mesdames, si le roi avait demandé nos têtes, Monsieur d'Antin les fesait tomber de meme!"

contrived to do both, as he pressed Madame de Montespan's arm, then linked within his own, and turned down the bosquet that led to the fallen wood.

## CHAPTER XXII.

BUT life is not made up of pleasures and pageants, but of "hopes deferred that maketh the heart sick,"—of fears realized, that maketh it sad,—of feelings bright and pure, that gush forth on their way rejoicing, but being driven back, recoil upon the source from whence they issued, in cold, palsied petrifications, which give no other evidence of their presence than the weariness of their weight, and the deadly chill of their contact; and so it was with Molière,—his hopes had been so blighted—his best affections so chilled, that he did not so much live as drag existence about with him, like an insupportable burden. Chapelle urged him to take refuge in his fame; but fame, like every other effect, is always less ascertained and understood by its immediate cause, than by others; and fame at best is but a myth; and the heart is *material*, and therefore craves a *substance*, which no mere *shadow* can supply.

Molière's love for Armande—to use his own words—had arrived at such a climax, as actually to make him sympathize with her, and defend her against himself and his own interests, till he found he was no longer in a condition to blame, but only to compassionate and to excuse. "There is but one sort of love," he would argue; "and if it is *genuine*, it will even sacrifice itself to itself. Why do I love her? Because she is all that is loveable and attractive; and if she does not—if she cannot, love me, it is because I am neither the one nor the other; and yet, and yet, she *does* love me sometimes. Oh! yes; I know she does, though not perhaps as I want to be loved; but how could she love me so? Am I not old and ugly? though, if she had not some affection for me, she would not be so angelically kind to me as she is at times; for Armande is no hypocrite; and if she is a coquette, why, she cannot help it, any more than she can help having beautiful hair and eyes, a bewildering voice, or any other spell that nature has endowed her with. Oh! no; I do *not* delude myself; she *does* love me sometimes;" and then he repeated those lines from his own *Don Garcie*, the tenderness and delicacy of which Racine might have envied, without being able to emulate:—

"Un soupir, un regard, une simple rougeur,  
Un silence est assez pour expliquer un cœur.  
Tout parle dans l'amour, et sur cette matière  
Le moindre jour doit être un grand lumière!"

He had been one morning indulging in one of these reveries, or rather inquisitorial citations and self-tortures, to the great detriment of the fifth act of "The Misanthrope," which remained in abeyance, as he could get no farther than the first line of Arsinoë's speech, in the sixth act:—

"Certes, voila le trait du monde le plus noir!"

when Josselin entered, and announced that the Duc de Lauzun wished to speak with him.

"With *me*?" repeated Molière, involuntarily emphasizing the *me*, as he became suddenly sick and faint at the name of Lauzun.

"Yes, it was for Monsieur, Monseigneur asked, and with him he wished to speak."

"Show him in," said Molière, now growing as hot and flushed as the minute before he had been cold and pale. "What spring is this?" muttered he, biting his under lip, as soon as Josselin had left the room; "what can he pretend to want with me? Ah! no doubt the old story; became the husband's friend, in order the more commodiously to make love to the wife. Softly, Monseigneur le Duc de Lauzun! m'archand d'aignons s'y connait en Ciboules."

"Ah! Poquelin mon ami," said Lauzun, entering with his usual jaunty air, and extending his delicate hand, covered with costly rings, to Molière, who however, instead of taking it, joined his own, and stood making a series of the most profound and respectful bows.

"I am charmed with my good fortune in finding you at home; as the fact is—a—this a—is not so much a visit of ceremony, or a—even a visit of friendship, a—as a—a visit of business, confound it!"

"Business; I thought Monseigneur's business was always pleasure."

"Well a—yes—yes—a—certainly, it is a pleasure to a—have to—a—transact business—with—a—Molière,—the Aristophanes of France—as his Majesty calls you, Aristophanes—was an actor in Rome, I suppose,—a—forgive my ignorance if I am wrong,—but—a—I—a—don't affect letters, beyond *lettres des cachets* and *lettres d'amour*—which *d'honneur*!—are quite as much and sometimes rather more, than I can manage;—ha! ha! ha! *au sage un demi mot*," and Lauzun drew forth his laced and ambrosial handkerchief, and

flipped the large crimson bows upon his shoes.

"I am at a loss to know what business Monseigneur can possibly intend doing me the honour of transacting with me; unless indeed," added Molière, with a smile so satirical that Boileau might have despaired of rendering it in verse, "he means kindly to furnish me with a scene for my new play here."

"Ah, well—a—I—a—should have no objection whatever," said Lauzun, elongating his right leg, and casting a complacent glance at himself in an opposite mirror, as he put aside over his right shoulder the mass of auburn curls that fell on it, "not the—a—slightest, to take the rôle of the *jeune première*, provided—a—that—a—the *Du Gazon* was flagitiously pretty; for confound it, I hate ugly women. Where do you think I would send them all, Poquelin, if I was King of France? why, to the Bastille or the Châtelet."

"And the pretty ones to the d—I, I suppose, Monseigneur."

"Ha! ha! ha! well—a—you know—a—my dear Poquelin, there is no preventing them if they will go."

"In doing so they have one consolation, however, that considering the fools and villains they generally go there for, they cannot go further and fare worse. But I am anxious to know what is the business with the communication of which Monseigneur means to honour me?"

"Why a—the fact is a—my dear Poquelin, it is not—a—entirely a matter of business, it is more a—a—sort of favour I have to ask you."

"Monseigneur speaks riddles. I am more and more puzzled to imagine in what way so insignificant a personage as myself can have it in his power to be agreeable or serviceable to so great a personage as the Duc de Lauzun."

"Why, a—" said the Duke, turning his hat in all directions, and examining the feathers round the border as minutely as if he had been a *plumassier* or a hatter, "a mere bagatelle—and yet at this moment, a signal service—I—a—that is—the fact is—my—dear Molière, I had a confounded run of ill luck last night at Gleeke, playing against the old Duc de Bouillon, who always seems to have soup tureens of gold\* at his command, hang him!—

\* This Duc de Bouillon was superintendent during the regency of Anne of Austria, and it was under his administration that Louis were first coined in France, though their original value was but eleven livres (francs). This coin was at its first issue so unpopular that it was refused everywhere, and would not pass; so the Duc de Bouillon, in order to make it the

and—and—as when you play, my dear Poquelin, you are sure to win—I thought perhaps—you would have the—kindness—the extreme kindness—a—to lend me a matter of two hundred Louis d'Or!" (At the commencement of the reign of Louis Quatorze the value of the Louis had increased to twenty-four livres.)

For months Molière had not breathed so freely; for, to a generous nature, the sweetest, keenest, and most satisfactory of all revenge is, for Fate to place one on the vantage ground, to confer on one's enemy a benefit; and while he could not but despise the meanness of the Grand Seigneur, who could, all circumstances considered, apply to the poor actor, yet he felt almost grateful to the man for so varying his tactics as to have placed him in an honourable, instead of a dishonourable position.

"With the greatest pleasure! Monseigneur," said he, "my purse is perfectly at your service;" and he walked over to a *secrétaire* to get the money.

"*D'honneur!* You are an excellent fellow, my dear Molière! Is there anything you wish me to do for you?"

"Nothing—literally nothing, Monseigneur. Will two hundred be enough!?"

"Well," said Lauzun, unable to resist the temptation, "three is, certainly, a more lucky number, if you could, without inconvenience, my dear Molière."

"Certainly; four, if Monseigneur wishes it."

"No, no," said Lauzun, faintly; for even he was ashamed to accept a larger sum, the payment of which, he knew to be so very apocryphal; "non mille graces, and—a—my dear Poquelin, any amount of interest—a—that—a—you may require."

"Monsieur le Duc," interrupted Molière, almost fiercely, "I am neither a usurer nor a money-changer. You asked me for three hundred Louis; and I have lent them, or given them to you, whichever you choose."

"Ah, well—yes, clearly—I was wrong; one don't talk of interest among friends," said Lauzun, laying a stress upon the last word; which condescension he intended as a receipt in full for any obligation, a roturier could confer upon such nobility as

*fashion*, and consequently become current, invited all the *élite* of the court to a grand dinner, and the whole table was covered with immense soup tureens, and nothing else; every one, especially the ladies, wondered what could be the meaning of so strange a dinner; when the covers were taken off they saw that they were filled with the new Louis, which their host invited them to scramble for, an invitation which they lost no time in availing themselves of.

his; especially as, in saying so, he held out his hand to the plebeian. But Molière contrived neither to see it nor to take it; as he suddenly stooped down, and became very busy in picking up some cancelled sheets of the "Misanthrope," which he had thrown under the library table half an hour before.

"I fear, my good Molière," said Lauzun, pocketing the three rouleaux, "I came at a mal-apropos moment, and interrupted you?"

"To tell you the truth, Monseigneur, I am rather busy just now," replied Molière, impatient to be rid of him.

"Ah, well then, *au revoir*; sans adieu, for I shall hope to be at the *Petit Bourbon* to-night. Madame is well, I hope? If I were not so confoundedly pressed for time, I would request permission to have the honour of paying my *devoirs* to her; but, perhaps, you will be my *Chargé d'Affaires*, and present them."

"With pleasure," replied Molière, opening the door to conduct him through the ante-room. "Nothing could distress me more than that Monseigneur should ever give himself the least trouble on her account."

"No, no; I insist," said Lauzun, pushing Molière back, so as to prevent his coming any further. "I have trespassed on your time quite long enough, already."

But the real cause of so much consideration on his part was, that he espied Lisette, Armande's maid, at work in the room beyond; and Lisette was a young and pretty *Bourdeaulaise*, of not more than nineteen; but not having been more than six weeks in Paris, she had all sorts of country notions about her; among others, that great Lords had no more right to presume than little *Bourgeois*, so the consequence was, that when Lisette put down her lace pillow, and rose up very civilly to open the door for him, and found that, instead of walking out and bowing to her, as he ought to have done, he put his arm round her waist and attempted to kiss her, Lisette screamed out, in a voice that was far from being as sweet as that of her mistress—

"Finissez donc, mauvais drôle!" and stereotyped her command by a sonorous slap on the face. This little *émeute* brought Molière into the ante-room.

"Hey day! What is all this noise about? What is the matter?" said he to Lisette, who was now crying with indignation, as Lauzun rapidly disappeared through the door, and was clearing the stairs four steps at a time.

"The matter is, Monsieur," replied Lisette, now wiping her eyes, and disentan-

gling the bobbins of her lace, as she reseated herself in the window, "that Monseigneur did me the honour of being too impertinent! and so I gave myself the trouble of slapping his face."

"And you did well, Lisette," said Molière, passing his hand over his mouth to hide a smile of satisfaction he could not suppress; "but be sure, my good girl, that you never conceal anything from your mistress. I am sure she will be pleased with your conduct on this occasion; but, do you know the gentleman's name that offered you this affront? for it would not be fair to let her suspect any one else."

"Ah, to be sure, I know his name. It was that *vau rien*, the Duc de Lauzun."

"What do you call him, Lisette?"

"*Dame!* Monsieur, it may be wrong in a poor girl like me, to call a grand Seigneur like him, a *vau rien*. But it was still more wrong of him, and he deserves the name when he attempted to kiss me."

"Quite true, my good little Lisette; and be sure you call him a *vau rien*, when you complain of him to your mistress, as it will give her a better opinion still of your discretion."

"Never fear, Monsieur, he shall lose nothing by the manner in which I shall settle his accounts."

Molière was again on the point of applauding and encouraging Lisette, in her resolves of denouncing Lauzun to her mistress, when Rupert made his appearance; he came partly to give an account of the *fête* at Petit Bourg, and of the robbery of Courtin; the news of which, with a letter to Colbert, Boileau had brought from that unhappy personage to the Duc d'Antin's on the day after it had occurred; but the real object of Rupert's visit (who had ridden on to Paris after leaving the King at Versailles) was, we are sorry to say, a more personal and selfish one; for Madame de Sévigné had told him that Lucy was sitting to Petitot for her picture; and, as Molière had often promised to take him there, and to his friend, Mignard's, Rupert thought that very day and hour would be the very best in the whole year to make him fulfil his promise.

"Well," said Molière, after he had done both laughing at, and lamenting over poor Courtin's misfortunes; "suppose we go now to Mignard's."

"If it is the same to you," replied Rupert, colouring violently, "I would rather go to Petitot's first."

Molière looked at him with his large, earnest, penetrating eyes.

"I may as well tell you," said Rupert, colouring even more violently than before; "for, after your more than kindness to me,

I ought to have no secrets from you. Madame de Sévigné told me yesterday, that she, Mistress Haw—”

“No, no—no necessity for the name, my young friend,” interrupted Molière. “Every one of common capacity knows who *she* means. The world, it is true, is full of she’s; but then, to each man there is, or ought to be, but ONE. So to Petitot’s we will go, and try to get a look at *her* portrait,” added he, taking up a velvet brush to brush his coat, and then putting on his hat and gloves.

“Thank you, thank you, ten thousand times,” cried Rupert, seizing his hand. “And yet how on earth can I get a copy of the picture? For it would be horrible if any man could walk into Petitot’s, or Mignard’s atelier, and get her—indeed—get any woman’s portrait.”

“You may set your mind at rest,” said Molière; “neither Petitot nor Mignard are the men to suffer such a thing, so you must only trust to my diplomacy to get you the picture.”

When they got to the Rue Bois Robert, they found Petitot at home, and in his studio, in a long mulberry-coloured velvet dressing-gown and cap; the room had that peculiarly hot, close smell, that the studios of enamel painters have, when their furnaces are annexed to them. He laid down the magnifying glass, with which he was looking at a very small copper oval, on which he was at work, and rose up to welcome Molière.

“I hope, my dear Jean,” said the latter, “that we don’t interrupt you?”

“Not the least in the world. I am always happy to see you.”

“Allow me, Monsieur L’Épéron d’Or, to present to you one of our most distinguished artists, at least, we call him ours, as he is far too splendid a one for a trumpery little republic like Geneva; and you are aware, that he was also a *protégé* of your late King, Charles the First.”

“A first-rate talent, and a European reputation like Monsieur Petitot’s, need no patronage,” bowed Rupert.

“There! after so handsome a compliment, Jean, you cannot refuse to produce some of your most beautiful faces.”

“With pleasure,” said the artist, “and Mesdames de Grignon, and de Longueville, Ninon de l’Enclos, Mesdemoiselles de Fontanges, de La Valière, de Montpensier, and divers others, were produced, and admired in their turn.

“But,” said Petitot, going to a drawer, and taking out a small, oval plate, like the one he had been at work on when they came in; “here is, I think, my *chef d’œuvre*, for I took great pains with it; the original

is so very beautiful; it is a young English lady—I have drawn her in a sort of Greek dress, a mere drapery, holding a dove in her bosom, and although her hair is the most beautiful I ever saw, I preferred letting only one long thick mesh of it come down over her neck; and taking all the rest off her face, so as not to hide the beautiful contour of it. This portrait has been so much admired, that I have done one, as a St. Cecilia for the lid of a snuff-box, for the old Duc de Mazarin, and Cardinal de Retz has got Mignard to copy it as a St. Veronica with lilies, for an altar piece for the Carmelites; there is a larger one than this, but Bordier\* has not yet finished the drapery; but here is a very strong glass,” added he, handing one with the exquisite little enamel to Rupert, “with which I think Monsieur will be able to follow all the details of the portrait; for *this*, as a work of art, is of course, superior to the larger ones.”

Rupert took the magnifying glass, and indeed beheld the lovely face of Lucy in its most minute perfection; the colours seeming to glow and soften into the warm and living elasticity of flesh and blood, as he looked at them.

“Wonderful!” exclaimed he, unable to un rivet his eyes from the picture.

“*Voyons?*” said Molière, looking over his shoulder. “Heavens! how beautiful!” added he; “decidedly, Jean, *coûte qui! coûte*; you must let me have one of these for a bracelet clasp for my wife.”

“Well, you shall have that one,” replied Petitot, “if Madame Molière will do me the honour of accepting it.”

“Not so, Jean; I cannot allow my wife to accept hundred Louis presents from any one but me; but I shall be too happy to purchase it.”

“You jest, friend Molière; *est ce que pa se fait entre artistes?* No, no; you shall give my wife a box at the Petit Bourbon. So, now, you see, we are quits.”

“*Sou!*” said Molière, shaking hands with his friend. “Now give me a case to put my gem in, till I get it set; and then we won’t plague you any longer; for I saw that you were busy when we came in.”

Petitot put the enamel into a small, purple velvet box, or case, like those made in Morocco for jewellery now a-days; and, again thanking him, Molière and Rupert departed.

No sooner were they in the passage, than Molière handed the portrait to his young companion.

\* Petitot only painted the heads and necks of his portraits, his brother-in-law, Bordier, always painted the hands and draperies.

"I think," said he, "no plot was ever more successful than *that*!"

"Or no friend ever so generously, actively, and thoughtfully kind," as you," cried Rupert, grasping his hand.

Poor Rupert! He was *too* happy! The world seemed all sunshine! He actually felt drunk with prosperity. But *that* is a species of intoxication from which mortals are sooner sobered than any other. And so, alas! Rupert Singleton found.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

HAD it merely depended upon his fellow-mortals, his most Christian Majesty, Louis the Fourteenth, might have easily been led to believe that he was *not* human but divine, a belief to which the Duc d'Antin would have been but too happy to have enacted bishop, and confirmed, but he did not; and nature, who is a rigid tax-gatherer, and exacts her dues alike from high and low—the very morning after his return from Petit Bourg, visited the Grand Monarque with a malignant fever, as a kind of peremptory notice for the arrears on much dissipation, and pills and potions, which are no flatterers, convinced him that he was, if anything (*pro-tempore*, at least, rather below, than above the level of ordinary men; a truth that was not without its salutary effect, while he continued under its awakening influence; although, even during this illness, the most fulsome adulation continued to pour in upon him from all quarters, in the shape of odes and other complimentary verses, which his attendants did not fail to read to him, whenever the intervals between the paroxysms of the disease permitted his listening to them, and on one occasion, when the Poetaster had, according to the *obligato* custom, compared him to the sun, and described all Europe as being in eclipse, on account of his Majesty's glorious countenance, which shed splendour on the world, and vivified all creation! being veiled by the passing clouds of indisposition; the sick man—for while thus suffering the penalties of nature's laws, he felt he *was but a man*—crumpled the fulsome mockery in his attenuated hand, and pointing to the array of phials beside his bed, said:

"Bah! my good Monsieur de Soyecourt"—for it was the Grand Veneur who had been booming out this effusion in his most pompous voice,—“all Helicon could not dilute one of the bitter realities contained in yonder potion; neither can Parnassus itself prevail against a single pill-box; it is lucky that the author is not within reach,

or I should be tempted to box his ears for his *l'èze Majesté*, in taking me for a fool; and, perhaps, he might not exactly like such a *coup de soleil*!”

In consequence of this illness, the collection at *Nôtre Dame*, so long talked of, and so eagerly expected, had to be postponed for three months; that is, till the King's convalescence. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to leave his room and take some air and exercise, Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, as the newest and most original butt, was in constant requisition to amuse his Majesty; and then rumours began to be rife at court that, in order to oblige the knight, Louis had actually fixed upon a Comte de Belviane Quatorze, a Bearnais, of very old family, and good estates, to be the husband of Lucy; and, in order to carry out that system of arbitrary and absolute command, which Sir Gilbert so much admired, *he* having been perfectly satisfied both as to the Comte's titles and title-deeds, it was decided that Lucy was not even to see her intended till the day upon which he was to bestow his name and hand upon her. The state of mind that this report threw Rupert into, may be easily imagined; although Bussy Rabutin, who was the first to inform him of it, added,

“For my own part, I don't believe a word of it; and am strongly inclined to think that it is merely some hoax that the King wishes to play off upon his *plastron*, Sir Gilbert, for, if I am not mistaken, the title of Belviane Quatorze is extinct, or, at least, that of Belviane; for I never before heard of Belviane Quatorze. There *was* a great *Béarn* family of the name of Belviane, in the time of Henry the Fourth; but, to the best of my knowledge, it became extinct at the commencement of the reign of Louis Treize; at all events, no Belviane, male or female, has ever been heard of, either at the Louvre or Versailles since. So take my advice, and don't fret yourself about it.”

But when did a lover ever yet take such advice? and Rupert, in a fever of doubt, and yet in an agony of despair, solicited an audience of the King, to whom, in the most respectful terms, he communicated the mutual attachment that had so long subsisted between Lucy and himself, further imploring His Majesty's good offices to prevent, instead of to promote, Sir Gilbert's ambitious schemes, respecting the marriage of his daughter with this Comte de Belviane Quatorze. But, instead of that courteous graciousness, and prompt protection which he had always experienced from him, he found Louis cold and impassible, nay, almost disdainful. He said that Rupert must be aware, that *marriage*



*ages de convenance* were the custom of the country, for which reason it would be indecorous to obtrude the interference of even the Royal prerogative, the more especially as Sir Gilbert Hawthorne was not a French subject. From the chilling negation of this Imperial veto, he knew there was no appeal, and he flew for consolation to the ever active and genial kindness of Molière; but even the latter did not quite come up to his expectations in the way of sympathy and assistance. What other heart ever does honour the enormous amount to which we draw upon it during the exaggerated pressure of a great sorrow. It is true that Molière promised, that as far as he dared venture to do so, he would endeavour to shake the King's resolution of not interfering to prevent Lucy's being sacrificed to her father's ambition; but what he chiefly urged upon Rupert was, that if anything could either compel or cajole her into marrying any one but himself, she was not worth caring about.

"Ah!" groaned Rupert, "you talk at your ease!"

"Well, but," rejoined Molière, "have you no faith in God, that you trust nothing to His providence? Do you think that He, or it, ever sleeps?"

"He did, once, on earth," said Rupert, mournfully; "and while He slept, the storm raged!"

"And when He awoke, He reproved his nominal followers for their want of faith," replied Molière, "for even though the storm *did* rage, *was He not always there?*"

"Yes; but, but," persisted Rupert, "while He slept, the storm raged."

"Well, then even do as the disciples did; vent your fears in prayer, and depend upon it, the calm will ensue, and He will not let you perish."

"I know," said Rupert, "that after God's signal mercies to me, and the oasis and many springs I have already found in that life, which at its commencement threatened to be so arid a desert, it is both wicked and ungrateful in me for a moment to doubt either His mercy or His providence; nor in reality do I; but nevertheless I feel independent of all volition, bowed to the earth by a presentiment of evil that I can neither conquer nor account for."

"Ah! my young friend," replied Molière, "how often do our most sanguine hopes and our most brilliant expectations crumble into nought, or cloud into darkest night! but to poise the equilibrium, Fate has decreed that, on the other hand, our fears and forebodings should be

equally uncertain and contrary in their issue; and that the blackest clouds should often have the most silver lining. Try then, and adopt the angler's motto—it is, depend upon it, not only the most prudent, but the most consolatory under all circumstances—WAIT, and HOPE."

This conversation had taken place in Molière's garden, at Auteuil; it was a bright evening at the beginning of February, and despite his cough, which was every day becoming more troublesome, he was enjoying the fresh air, and the delicious perfume of the Neapolitan violets, whose fragrance perfectly embalmed the atmosphere. It is only the unhappy who are capable of a *real* affection for the beauties of Nature, for affection clings to what it loves, but the happy have many *things* to love, and have therefore no time to listen to the babblings of the stream, the whisperings of the wind, or the sweet voiceless words of flowers, but to the wretched, and the lonely, these gentle affinities soothe like the caresses of a mother, when all else has wounded or betrayed; and as Molière shared with the leaves and flowers their banquet of sweet air, he felt sufficiently calm to talk to his young companion, *that hope*, which he had long ceased to feel. As they were again making the tour of the garden, Boileau and Rohault made their appearance; the latter announced that the King was now perfectly convalescent, and that the collection at Notre Dame was at length definitely fixed for the following Thursday, that day week; and Boileau gave Molière a packet of letters, for which he had called in the Rue de Richelieu. One of them was from Tom Pepys.

"Pon my word," said Molière, as soon as he had read it, "Master Pepys gives a most deplorable account of the necessities of his Majesty, King Charles the Second. He says that the other day, when he held a privy council at Whitehall, there was not a single scrap of paper for him to write upon, which made him very angry; but upon sifting the matter, it appeared that the court stationer was owed so large a bill, that, till it was paid, he refused to furnish another sheet! and in point of linen, he says the king is reduced to three shirts and a-half, the ruffles of which have more open work about them, than the lace-maker ever intended!"

"Is it possible!" said Boileau. "King Charles is too classical by half; for you know Æschylus finds fault with Euripides for introducing his kings in rags; and I really think our king ought to play

the *Æschylus* to the English people, for letting their king so appear,—with this difference, that Louis Quatorze should wrap up his censure in a few of his super-numerary shirts, for the benefit of his brother of England."

"The fact is," said Rupert, "I suppose the Stuarts are so tired of being put to their shifts, that Charles the Second is glad to see daylight even through his torn ruffles!"

Like all persons not happy in their home, Molière was rejoiced when any one dropped in to prevent a tête-à-tête meal with Armande. He therefore pressed Boileau, Rupert, and Rohault, to remain to supper, as it was then past six o'clock; an invitation which the former and the latter willingly accepted; but Singleton was too anxious to get back to Paris, in order to write to Lucy, warning her of the schemes Sir Gilbert had in view with regard to the Comte de Belviane Quatorze; and it must be confessed, that considering he had never seen the latter gentleman, he was somewhat bitter and intemperate in the epithets he bestowed upon him—treating him freely to wretch! fool! and knave of a Gascon; also metamorphosing him, without the slightest data, into a Methusela, and completing this tolerably apocryphal memoir, by calling him a vile, unprincipled old tool of Louis the Fourteenth's. For the delivery of this letter, he trusted to the sundry branch posts at his command, in the shape of gloves, flowers, well-disposed waiters, always amenable to a golden rule; and Turlupin, the cosmopolite poodle! who made no bones of accepting a *poulet* in any shape; though of course, like every other lucky dog, he had a preference.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

THE sun shone out in all his glory, as if thoroughly awakened for the first time during the yet early year by the thrilling *réveil* of the silver trumpet's courtly blowing. Noble horses, with their rich trappings, impatiently pawed the flower-strewed earth, while ponderous gilt coaches extracted their fragrance as they crushed them beneath their triumphant wheels. Rich tapestry and brocades floated from every window. Here, the army of martyrs was represented by long processions of various religious orders, from the bare-footed Cordeliers, up to the white-hooded Carmelites; and there, the French Army, by detachments of cavalry and infantry, with their silken banners and burnished

arms; while everywhere, the people, in their holiday gear, lined the streets of Paris, to see his Most Sacred Majesty, Louis the Fourteenth, proceed in state to Notre-Dame, to collect, for his starving people, a few of those moneys which he so liberally extracted from them. However, it cannot be denied that he had the royal virtue of profusion in giving as well as taking. And it is a virtue, as some monarchs only exercise the royal prerogative on the latter occasion, while they preserve the strictest and most plebeian economy on the former; so common an error is it among mortals (even among such as have the good fortune to be the Lord's anointed!) to seize hold of a virtue at the wrong end; and virtues out of place, like footmen, not only never appear to advantage, but are of no earthly use. Enthusiastic as Louis's reception always was in public, the enthusiasm, on account of his recent indisposition, now amounted to a perfect delirium, as the royal *cortège* defiled from the Louvre. It was lucky that the streets were strewed knee-deep with flowers; for the people, not content with waving their caps and handkerchiefs, and making one deafening shout of the myriad echoes of *VIVE LE ROI!*—for the most part knelt down to bless him as he passed;—and, certainly, their semi-adoration seemed, in some degree, justified by the appearance of their idol. All that Louis Quatorze had ever wanted to make his beauty indisputable, was a certain delicacy; and this his illness had now given to his really handsome face. The dress he wore was also peculiarly becoming, as it was that sort of half-armour worn by great military commanders at the time, consisting of a mailed and jewelled steel corselet, over a rich *grenat* velvet tunic, and a falling collar of magnificent *point d'Alençon*, the cords and tassels of which were of small strung pearls, rubies, and brilliants; the studdings of the corselet or *cuirasse*, were also of brilliants and sapphires, as well as the aiguillettes, while a large diamond sun blazed in the centre of it; and the gauntlets of his mailed gloves, which came nearly to the elbows, were also of brilliants and sapphires. As a King, he had, of course, the privilege of remaining covered; but, with so many women kneeling—although they were but Dames de la Halle and Lavandières—he felt, as a gentleman, he had not, and "être gentilhomme avant tout" was his motto; and, therefore, the youthful monarch rode on, hat in hand, bowing to the right and to the left, and even, occasionally, when he espied a more than usually pretty face at a window, letting the reins fall on his

horse's neck, as he pressed his hat with both hands to his heart, and bowed to it *specialty*,—while the very airs of heaven seemed to join in the universal adulation, by lifting his ambrosial curls upon their pinions, as if they feared their weight might add too much to his jewel-laden shoulders. At length, after a two hours' snail-like progress through this sea of people, whose tide seemed ever flowing in, the procession came in sight of the old towers of *Nôtre-Dame*: and, as Sir Gilbert Hawthorne's coach turned the corner of the quay into the great Place before the church, he suddenly exclaimed, drawing his head in at the window,

"Good luck! never see such a likeness in all my days! Only the thing's *impossible*, I'd swear it."

"What is it, Sir Gilbert?" ventured Lady Hawthorne.

"An impossibility, I tell you, wife!—but, odds life! a queer one, for all that. One of them great lords, a-riding along with the King, as like to that regicide chap, Rupert Singleton, as two peas."

"Don't you remember, Sir Gilbert," replied she, turning very pale, "that picture Sir Richard Browne has of the Duc de Laval Montmorency, we always used to think the nose so exactly like Master Singleton's."

"Tut, tut, sweetheart, all nonsense. A nose is one thing, and a *picter* is another; but this French *Marcus*, or whatever he is, that I see just now, has got the whole face-range, eyes, nose, mouth, and other fixtures, such as hair and complexion, complete! never *did* see such a likeness in all my life, egad! If he had been as like Sir Henry Vane, I could have sworn that, when he parted with his head, this here French *Marcus* took his face at a *vallyation*; ha! ha! ha! Luce, girl, you had better look out for this French likeness of your old servant; for, I can tell you, it's the last you're likely to see of the Singleton build; for I may as well let you know now—that the honour mayn't take you too much by surprise, *like*—that the French King and I have another master in store for you;—one as can put a coronet on your head, instead of putting his own head, mayhap, on a block."

"He would indeed be a blockhead, if he did, sir," answered Lucy, almost contemptuously, for even she was roused into resentment at her father's coarseness and total want of feeling; and while her mother was trembling and turning alternately red and pale at the idea of Rupert being discovered, she was more wisely rejoicing in the saving fact of Sir Gilbert's persisting in mistaking his identity, all in recognising

the likeness; for she knew, by experience, that when once he *did* get an idea into his head, there was no evidence, however irrefragable, could achieve the miracle of getting it out; and having adopted the notion that Rupert was his own likeness, and not his own self, she knew her father would continue to swear an alibi for him, in the teeth of the parish-register, flanked by his mother and all his sponsors.

As the coach slowly approached the great entrance of *Nôtre Dame*, Sir Gilbert, who had resolved to keep pace, or rather to outdo the court in the munificence of his charity (!), and give two hundred Louis d'ors to the necessities of the French people, presented his wife and daughter with fifty each, as their quota of the largess, which they slipped into a little silk and gold net-worked *aumonière*, which each lady wore at her girdle on the present occasion. Nothing could be more picturesquely magnificent than the *coup d'œil* the aisle of *Nôtre Dame* presented on that day; the great altar decorated with a magnificence, which, if it equalled Solomon's Temple, certainly could not have surpassed; the Catholic hierarchy in their gorgeous pontificals within the altar rails, Louis Quatorze and his splendid court, waving and glittering without, like a forest of gems and snow-white plumes, the dense mass of well-dressed citizens, crowding to suffocation the immense nave and spacious aisles of the church; the "dim religious light" coming gently and humbly, like a silent prayer, through the high painted windows, and toning down the pomps of earth into a heavenly ovation, which heaven seemed to acknowledge, through the celestial strains of one of Palestrina's motets, wonderfully played by Lully on the magnificent organ, and accompanied by the deep-toned chaunt of the monks. After high mass was celebrated, and the *Gloria in Excelsis* had been sung, Bourdaloue ascended the pulpit. It was with reason supposed that this collection would be so enormous, that it was Colbert's intention, after relieving the immediate agricultural distress, to devote a portion of the products to building a new *Halle aux Bles* on a more extensive and convenient scale; it was a fine stroke of policy, when the people were suffering from the failure of the crops, and the scarcity of bread, at one and the same time to *hide* the real cause of this charity; and to give them the bright hope of a future superabundance, by making the *ostensible* motive for the collection, seem the enlargement of the public granary; consequently Bourdaloue took his text from the second chapter of Nehemiah, and the xviii verse—

"Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me: as also the King's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."

Orators, like poets, are born—not made: those whom nature intends for instruments of eloquence, to pour out the euphonies of her high mysteries, she has attuned to such perfect harmony of voice, manner, and action, such omnipotence of glance, and flexibility of expression, as at once to awaken and blend with those sacred chords and subtle modulations, which form the gamut of her universal arpeggio—the heart: and, according to this standard, Bourdaloue *was* an orator in the most minute as well as the most extended acceptation of the term. Having given out his text with that clear and mellow inflection of voice, which is not the less audible for being low, owing to a rare and masterly distinctness of enunciation, which insinuates itself through the interstices of the most dense crowd—over a widely extended space—he then paused, and looking round at the immense congregation, beginning with the greatest of earthly Monarchs, and graduating downwards to the poorest of this world's mendicants—yet all, for the time being, framed together by the mediæval splendours of that antique fane—he seemed by the electric eloquence of this inspired look, to penetrate his motley audience with the magnetic influence of his own holy zeal; and then he commenced his stirring appeal to the sympathies, or, in other words, to the coffers of those present, after duly, yet delicately adulating the King, according to the tariff of the times, beginning in the gentlest manner and with a magnificent simplicity—for he seemed thoroughly imbued with Horace's judicious council—

Nic sic incipies, ut Scriptor cyclicus olim :

He gradually swelled into a more lofty strain, as he rose and warmed with his subject; he told them that the crowd there assembled was typical of Heaven, where there was no distinction of persons, but he also added that the last here might chance to be first there: for "oh! my poorer brethren," continued he, "have we not God's own word for it, that blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted! are we not told that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth? And the reason is obvious; suffering is the *only* thing that *really approaches* us to Him; the happy who inherit it, naturally cling to the earth, but the poor and the desolate, the persecuted and the oppressed, who have no

footing thereon, make to themselves a ladder of faith which reacheth unto Heaven, and their prayers ascending by it, and the peace they receive in exchange, are indeed as angels ever ministering to and fro upon its steps. I am well aware, my brethren, that one of our hardest trials here below is the triumph, or at least the apparent and temporary triumph of the evil-doer; not only do we writhe under it, but we are apt impiously to question God's justice, in thus prospering his enemies, and crushing the hearts of them that love, and are lifted up to him. Ah! my brethren, it is this very *crushing* that renders the incense holy and the sacrifice acceptable; in the ark of the covenant it was not only costly perfumes, rare gums, and precious unguents, with which the High Priests compounded the incense, but bitter herbs, yea, *most* bitter! nor was this yet sufficient till all these precious things had been *crushed*, and their very *essence* extracted and blent with these bitter ingredients; for it was not till then that the sacred fire was communicated to them, and that thus purified and consecrated the *crushed and lacerated offerings of earth* could rise up a sweet, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to Heaven.

"Think of these things, ye that mourn and are heavy laden—ponder them, ye who are emphatically called the *poor*, and you will feel that ye are in reality the *rich*, for *your* heritage is ABOVE! it is not *you*, then, oh! poor of *this* world, who so much need counsel and consolation; for, like Enoch, ye walk with God! and when ye are weary, and ready to faint by the way, ye have ever HIM to lean on, a very present help in time of trouble. But the perilencompassed *rich* it is who *most* require our pity and our prayers; for *they*, indeed, are drunk with the wine of prosperity, and forget the fearful account they will have to give of their stewardship, since it is God's treasure that they squander, or that they hoard—the wealth which He entrusted to them to supply the wants and alleviate the afflictions of their fellow-creatures. *All we have is the Lord's*; and when we do not use our possessions for the ends for which He entrusted them to us, we are guilty of no less heinous a crime than sacrilegious peculation! neither do stone and steeple piety, nor brick and mortar morality—that is, the building of churches on the one hand, or even the erection of whole villages and manufactories on the other—constitute a faithful stewardship to the Most High. To be God's almoners, like His, our ear and our *spirit* should be equally open to the most obscure appeal of individual want, as to the loud cry of national

distress; although to redress the latter, is to insure a plaudit from the latest posterity: while it is true, that the former has no echo but in our own hearts, no record save *above*; and yet, to you, my wealthier brethren, Sybarite votaries of luxury! true descendants of that Eastern king, who offered an immense reward to whoever should discover a new pleasure, I bring glad tidings! for I tell you the talisman of this new pleasure is in your own possession; and its simple secret, that of doing good to your fellow-creatures! Try it; and you will find that there is no pleasure like it; for it has this advantage over all others, which, however bright and alluring, quickly perish, like summer flowers, leaving only seared regrets in their stead; whereas, benevolence is the bee of the soul, and hives for *all seasons*, enduring sweets from what, to isolated selfishness, would merely have been an ephemeral enjoyment. But, if among my auditors there be any of those miserable gold lepers, called misers, or those iron vices, called usurers, to *them*, I say, that *nowhere* will they find their gold to fructify, as in the hand of the poor; and that no money returns such immense and *sure* interest as that which is invested in Heaven! But, then, perchance, your narrow hearts may think the time long before your souls can foreclose such a mortgage? Not so; time and space are always, in reality, the same; though, by a psychological optical illusion, to look back into innumerable ages, is the work of a moment; while, to look forward into a single year, is an impossibility! But, recollect, my brethren, that, *hereafter*, all that will remain to us of *this* world is the good or evil which we have done in it. Cast your mental vision back through the night of ages, and you will see Tyre and her magnates arrayed in purple; Sidon, with her wondrous fabric of mirrors: Thebes, with its gates of burnished brass, stand before you; Thapsacus and Anatoth on the right hand, and Palmyra, the magnificent amazon of empires! in the foreground; turn again, and you may also behold the Phœnician fleet, silken sailed and gilded prowed, on the level azure of the Mediterranean waves, transporting to the ports of Idumæa, and from thence to Jerusalem, for the decoration of her daughters, the gold of Ophir, and the turquoise, emerald, and ruby offerings, which the fabled Hydaspes had washed upon the walls of Nyssa! Yet, all these things, great and gorgeous as they were, with the exception of the deep sea and the wide ruins, *where are they now?* NOWHERE! While not a SOUL that joyed, or grieved, sinned, revelled, or prayed, in those great

cities, or sailed, with all their hopes and fears, upon those bounding waves! but are as much alive and as responsible now as they were THEN! And so, in its turn, it shall be, my brethren, with this mighty empire, and this great king, who has come forth this day to '*strengthen*,' by his august example, '*your hands for this good work*.' He, *IT*, and you *shall all pass away!* but the good or evil of your hearts and deeds is *even now rearing in Heaven, as an eternal monument, FOR or AGAINST YOU.* Oh, my brethren, let it not be the latter; but *give*, and give largely, this day, to the poorer children of your Heavenly Father, not only out of your superfluities, but *from* your own necessities; that that which you now *lend* to the Lord, may be returned to you in blessings here, and in salvation hereafter!"

Before the sermon began, while Sir Gilbert was still wondering at Rupert's extraordinary likeness to himself, Lucy and he had established in full force the aboriginal electric telegraph of glances, and it is astonishing the volumes they transmitted to each other by this medium, exceeding in number, I verily believe, those issued by Messrs. Colburn and Bentley, including their puffs, which are unquestionably *far greater* than the aforesaid works, there being a bold, daring, and unscrupulous originality in the latter, which is nowhere to be found in the books themselves. Well, then, Lucy and Rupert continued to annihilate time and space; for lovers' looks are like light, and it has been computed, that were an infant to be sent by an express train, going at a hundred miles an hour incessantly, and without making any stoppages, the infant would grow to be a boy, the boy to be a man, and the man grow old and die, without seeing the sun, for it is distant more than a hundred years from us; and Neptune's distance is still greater; for, had Adam and Eve started by the same express train at the creation, to go from Neptune to the sun, at the rate of fifty miles an hour, they would not have arrived there yet, in this present year 1852; Neptune being more than six thousand years from the centre of our system—and yet light travels from the sun to the earth in eight minutes; eight minutes, then, counting by light, are equivalent to a hundred years railway speed; and eight minutes, counting by the celestial telegraph of luminous glances, are, to those who truly love, equivalent to a hundred years of the most rapid progress of ordinary existence; as those few minutes suffice to convey floods of light from the centre of one heart to that of another; and so Lucy and Rupert found; for, notwithstanding, that that im-

mense Cathedral was crowded to suffocation, they had contrived to see in its vast space none but themselves; and, during the ten minutes which had elapsed previous to the commencement of the sermon, they had not only retraced the two past years of their lives, but had gone forward to the end of them; and, seeing Rupert's alarm at Sir Gilbert's close vicinity, she had even managed to convey to him by a few short-hand sentences on her fingers, her father's firm conviction of his non-identity. Singleton, much relieved, took the hint, and all, in looking the most tender vows of eternal love at Lucy, drew himself up with an air of the most stilted importance, so as to answer the scrutinizing demands Sir Gilbert's eyes were making upon his nobility; and when the sermon began, and during the time Bourdaloue's singularly mellow and musical voice continued to insinuate itself through every orifice of the sacred pile, they still unsuspectingly appealed to each other's sympathy and admiration at all the finer passages, and more touching truths of his discourse. While Sir Gilbert, not understanding a word of it, had been lulled into a peaceful slumber by the silvery murmur of the preacher's tones, during which, having leant back in his chair, and interlaced his fingers, with the exception of his two thumbs, which remained in a close perpendicular salute, and might have been considered either as an inverted representation of the letter V or of a triumphal arch, according as the beholder's imagination was literary or architectural; he at rare intervals opened one eye, and fixed it for half a second upon Rupert, but then reclosed it, to finish his nap, muttering the following litany, which was not exactly either Catholic or Apostolic.

"Woundy like Singleton! that French *Marcus*, to be sure; but like all regicides, 'spose as Master Rupert is among the scaffolds afore this: Lord have mercy upon us! and incline our hearts to keep this law." And the lid of his left eye once more closing, another ten minutes would elapse without the worthy Knight's uttering any other sound, but that somnolent species of elocution, vulgarly called a "*snore!*" When, however, he was finally awakened by the cessation of Bourdaloue's voice, and the solemn silence that reigned throughout the church, his curiosity was roused also; and he resolved, as he himself afterwards expressed it to his wife and daughter, to *step up to the French Marcus*, and tell him he was the born image of one Rupert Singleton that he had known in England, and see what he would say then.

But Sir Gilbert had to wait some little

time before he could carry this brilliant idea into execution, as he could not make a dart across the King; therefore, till the collection commenced, and the court moved on round the church, he was *volens volens*, compelled to remain still. After the silent prayers of the congregation, Bourdaloue descended from the pulpit, and took his station with the other clergy within the altar-rail, the King graciously turning to him, and paying him the self-same compliment that thirty years later he also bestowed upon Massillon, for royal compliments, like the collars and insignia of the different orders which kingly favour confers, serve one man's lifetime as a distinction, and then are transferred to another.

"*Mon Père,*" said Louis, "when I hear other preachers, I go away much pleased with them, but when I hear you, I go away displeased with myself."

"Then, *Sire,*" bowed Bourdaloue (for even the steps of the altar were profaned with incense to the King), "I have caused your Majesty to exercise a truly royal prerogative, for no one else can go away and do likewise."

Here, the Archbishop of Paris and the new Bishop of Meaux (Bossuet) presented the Two Queens, and Louis Quatorze, with a golden basket each, which had been made for the occasion, as the usual plates were deemed too shallow, and four acclites followed in the wake of each, with large purple velvet bags to receive the money, as soon as the baskets should be too heavy for the Royal almoners. Two pages next held up the two Queens' trains; and all things being now ready, the great organ, with innumerable lutes, viol de gambas, and theorbos, pealed forth the fine old feudal air of *Vive Henri Quatre*. Louis offered his hand with as much grace, and gallantry, to his young, pale Queen, as if she had really been his heart's temporary idol, the blooming, and the brilliant Athenais de Montespan; and the procession moved on. Anne of Austria and her daughter-in-law, presenting their baskets only to the men, and Louis offering his solely to the women, a piece of diplomacy that fully answered their most sanguine expectations, for not only whole purses of gold, but watches, rings, bracelets, and rich carcanets found their way eagerly into the royal *corbeilles*. In order not to incommode the people, and also to show their perfect confidence in them, the two Queens, and the King, made the tour of the church, only accompanied by the Bishops and their pages; so that all the ladies of the court, and the great officers of state, remained ranged round the outside of the altar, which tallied admirably

with Sir Gilbert's plans; but as he, from his position (not in society, but in the church, on *that* occasion only!), saw that he would be one of the very first to whom their Majesties would apply, he was obliged to remain in his place till they had passed; but, as they approached, a conscious pride manifested itself over his whole deportment, which, settling ultimately on his countenance, gave him the appearance of suddenly labouring under that particularly painful and peculiarly unbecoming complaint, a swelled face, the climacteric paroxysm of which took place, as he presented one rouleau of fifty Louis to the Queen, and another of a similar amount to the Queen Mother; both of whom acknowledged the largesse of the sum by a most gracefully gracious inclination of the head,—for Sir Gilbert was not constructed upon the scientific principles requisite for creating one of *the heart*. Lady Hawthorne, and Lucy, having also placed their offering in the King's basket, the royal *cortège* then proceeded, and when they were half way down the centre aisle, Sir Gilbert was about to dart forward to inform Rupert of his extraordinary likeness to himself, when Molière, advancing a few paces from the place where he had been seated, leaving little Baron to keep his chair for him, after having first given the child a Louis to put into the basket, said something to Singleton in a low voice.

"Humph!" muttered the Knight, "first come, first served; *however*, here goes." And forthwith he strode forward, fanning himself with his hat, and accosted His Majesty's Gold Spur in Waiting, in what he intended to be a whisper, with—

"*Servetoor Musseer, pardony me*, but you're very like a chap of my acquaintance, one Master Singleton."

Rupert, drawing himself up to his full height, placing his left hand upon his hip, and assuming a slight squint, (probably not to lose caste,) said with a booming pomposity of voice, of which even the *Grand Veneur* might have been proud, as he stared Sir Gilbert heroically in the face:

"Nullum simile quod idem est!"\*

a truth which he perorated by as profound a bow to his interrogator as if he had been paying him the most fallacious compliment in the world.

"Oh! dang the Latin, that's sure to get me aground, beg your *pardony, me messeer*," muttered Sir Gilbert, scraping to Rupert, in return for his courtly salutation, as he backed to his place, and whispered his wife, to her ineffable relief, "I know'd it,

\* Nothing is like that is the same.

Dinah, it's *not* Master Singleton, though *uncommon* like him, only *this* one squints when you're nigh to him; but he's some foreign grandee fast enough, some Greek or Latin nobleman, no doubt, for I don't think he's a French *Marcus* after all, by his speaking the dead languages like a native. Luce, girl, look out, and tell me if you don't think yonder green and gold chap, with the white feathers, and diamond band round his hat, there, *that* one, with the gold spur embroidered on his right sleeve, *prodigious* like your old servant, Master Singleton."

"Why, really, Sir," whispered the little Jesuit, "*that* gentleman looks to me as if he squinted."

"Ay," chuckled Sir Gilbert, "while *t'other* chap only squinted at you, I *s'pose*? Nathless, I never *see* such a likeness in all my born days, and but that *this* one is in the French King's Household, and therefore it's *impossible*, I could, with a clear conscience, swear it was *t'other* one."

"It only shows, sir," sighed Lucy, "how one may be deceived."

"Deceived, quotha! no, no, girl. I saw and knew, and *said* from the *first*, as he rode along the quay  *afore* the King, as it *warn't* Singleton; deceived, indeed; day-break is a pretty early riser, but *them* as would try to take me in, must get up an hour  *afore* it, so curl that up with your hair, Mistress, that you may get it well into your head."

True is it, that we are even oftener our own dupes than the dupes of others, and self-sufficiency is a sort of moral glow-worm that never shines out but amid the surrounding darkness of ignorance. It was a great relief to Lucy to find her father in this ridiculous conviction of his own infallibility, as obstinate as usual, for she thought such stubborn security almost deserved to be deceived;—had he ever enforced her obedience to his commands, unreasonable as they were, by an appeal to her sense of duty, and a confidence in her promise, had she died in the struggle, she would not, or at least she *thought* she would not, have deviated from either; for we are all prone to believe that when we err the origin of our fault is in *another*, and that the first links of our transgressions have been forged for us, and riveted on us by circumstances.

The royal progress round the church occupied rather more than an hour and a half, and a little episode had occurred in it, which had performed the supererogatory work of increasing the King's popularity tenfold; it was but a mere trifle, yet one of those trifles which amount to, because they evince, greatness.

In passing down one of the side aisles an old man, in a friese coat and *sabots*, with long white hair and a grizzled beard, a beggar himself, to judge by the numerous patches on his clothes, who stood in the background against the wall, with three or four rows of people between him and the royal almoners, stretched through the crowd a trembling hand with three *gros sous* (those enormous copper *sous* still current in France), in it as his offering; but was immediately pulled back by the bystanders, whereupon, Louis Quatorze, not lifting over his basket, but stretching out his own ungloved hand to the old man, said—

“Here friend, *now* we shall be able to manage it; give your money to me, and I will put it into the basket for you, and I thank you in the name of the new *Halle aux Blés*.”

A murmur of admiration ran all down that aisle, and quickly spread, with the anecdote, through the others, the women wiped their eyes, the men twirled their moustachios, and said:

“*C'est beau!*”

And had it not been for the sanctity of the place, the *Vives le Roi* would have been deafening; but they lost none of their enthusiasm for waiting till they rent the air on the Place Notre Dame.

At length, returning to the point from whence they had set out, their Majesties received the contributions of the Court, and Rupert, after laying down five Louis as his own especial donation in the Queen's basket, placed within that of Anne of Austria, the costly Oriental pearl bracelets with emerald clasps, which the man in the wax mask at the *Pré-aux-Clercs* had entrusted to him for that purpose, so many months before; but he had no sooner done so, than the old Duchesse de Chevereuse uttered an exclamation of—

“Heavens! my bracelets!” and involuntarily stretched out her hand to seize them; but the Queen Mother, drawing herself up to the fullest extent of her queenly dignity, put it aside with a haughty gesture and a remonstrative, yet peremptory—

“MADAME!”

In a moment, Louis' quick eye had taken in the whole scene, and while a malicious little smile lurked in the corners of his mouth at the Duchess's amazement and discomfiture, he cast an angry glance of interrogation at his Gold-spur-in-Waiting.

“Tiens, mon cher,” whispered Bussy Rabutin, nudging the latter, “Voilà le Roi, qui vous lance des lettres de cachets.”

But Rupert, who, because he knew he was innocent of any misdemeanour, foolishly imagined that he was in no danger, replied:

“I think you must be mistaken, Count; I don't suppose his Majesty did me even the honour of looking at me.”

When, however, the ceremonies were at length concluded, and the Royal *cortège* prepared to depart, in the same order in which it had arrived: after Louis had handed the two Queens into their respective coaches, when Rupert led up his charger, and held it for him to mount, he said to him in a low but severe voice, holding the horse's mane, preparatory to springing into the saddle:

“We know not, Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or, whether you were *aware* that those pearl bracelets which you so *liberally* bestowed in charity to-day, are the property of Madame La Duchesse de Chevereuse? we neither judge, nor condemn, any one unheard; but till this extraordinary occurrence is cleared up, it is due to Madame La Duchesse, that we should dispense with your attendance on our person.”

And without another word to Rupert, Louis Quatorze regained his saddle, kindly saying, in a loud voice, *pro bono publico*, as he gathered up the reins,

“You will attend to our commands, Monsieur?”

So that the assembled crowd merely thought, as the King good-naturedly intended they should, that the Gold-spur had been dismissed upon some special mission of His Majesty's. Not so, poor Rupert, upon whom all the complicated horrors of his position flashed at once, as he stood for some seconds uncovered, after the King had ridden off; but every tangle of his dilemma resolved itself into *this one Gordian knot, what would Lucy think? or rather, what would she feel?* (for he knew very well *she* would never think ill of him) when she heard of his being looked upon as a common thief! Verily, the luck of the Vanes pursued him! and prisons and scaffolds seemed part of the family escutcheon. He stood so long pondering these agreeable thoughts, that the immense mob had dispersed, and his page leading up Zara, respectfully inquired if *Monsieur* would mount?

“Yes,” said Rupert, abstractedly giving the lie to this affirmative, by passing the bridle round his arm and walking on, as he said to the page, “you may return to the Louvre, Arnolphe,” and then he continued his walk, with his eyes bent on the ground, for, indeed, he had the whole space to himself, as the streets were as clear, as if the mob had literally been



swept from them. Just as he turned down the quay, he heard a voice at his elbow say,

"Nay, *beau sire*, cheer up! never think for one adverse cast of the die, that you have lost your last stake, or your whole fortune."

"One cannot lose what one has not got; and I have *no* fortune," said Rupert, looking at the speaker, whose face was perfectly unknown to him, and yet the voice was not quite unfamiliar.

"Yes you have: *L'Espoir c'est la fortune de celui qui n'a rien*,"\* said, or rather sung, the stranger, as he descended some steps at the opening down to the river, and hailed a *Débardeur*, into whose boat he sprang.

"*Au revoir, mon Blondin quand même, vous êtes brun!*" said the stranger, kissing his hand, as the boat pushed off.

Rupert looked over the parapet at the speaker; and what was his amazement at seeing the man in the wax mask!

"Ho! *Débardeur!* stop the boat: I have business with that man," cried he; but the mask, on the other hand, held up a gold piece to the boatman, who rowed away as if for life and death. The next moment Rupert was in his saddle; and the sparks flew round Zara, as both horse and rider dashed along the echoing pavement swift as a whirlwind, giving chase to that particular boat, which shot all the bridges with incredible velocity, like a phantom barque upon some enchanted lake.

## CHAPTER XXV.

RUPERT spurred, and Zara went at the top of her speed, till from black she almost became white, so covered was she with foam; but still *the* boat was always in advance, as the current of the river and a brisk wind were with it. At length it put into a little creek at the steps of a landing at the other—that is, on the Louvre side of the Pont-Neuf, when the man in the wax mask sprang on shore, and ran up the steps. Rupert did not lose a moment in crossing the bridge; but as everything in the world seems to make a point of standing still whenever people are in a desperate hurry, the bridge was of course more than usually cumbered with horses, coaches, and carts, of every description—especially two large timber carts, with enormous projecting planks, which completely blocked up the way at

\* Hope is the fortune of him who has nothing.

the very centre of the bridge, so that when Rupert, at the expiration of three minutes, succeeded in forcing a passage, he had the ineffable disappointment of not being able to perceive the slightest trace of the man in the wax mask; and even the boat which had landed him, was now rowing rapidly back, while the *débardeur*, to add to Singleton's annoyance, was grinning at his discomfiture, and shaking his head as he struck out into the middle of the river, as much as to say:—"it's no use: you won't find him."

"Confound the fellow!" muttered Rupert, dismounting, in order to let both his horse and himself take breath,—“Is he the devil in person? or am I the Wild Huntsman of the Hartz? for decidedly one or the other of us is bewitched—so ho! steady, Zara,” added he, patting the animal's neck, as with distended nostrils and inflamed eyes she began neighing, and looking back,—“there's a pet—there; it's over now, and I'll take you to the stable;” and so saying, he led her on towards the Louvre. “'Pon my word” thought he, as he walked slowly beside his horse,—“it is a *pleasant* predicament to be in, to be made the receiver and retailer of stolen goods! and to be able to give no more account of the matter than the man in the moon! My poor mother! and *this* is the end of all your sacrifices,—of all your high hopes and fond dreams about your son, to have him sent to prison perhaps like a common felon, for stealing an old woman's jewels; for who will believe the real truth of the matter? I can scarcely believe it myself, it seems so absurd; for in all the *contretemps* and injustices of life, TRUTH is always stranger and more *invraisemblable* than falsehood; then, to add to my comfort, out of a misplaced punctilio of honour to an unknown personage, whom I now verily believe to be a highwayman, I have never mentioned even to Lucy, or Molière, the circumstance of having these bracelets in my possession; so even *they* may doubt my statement: Oh! no, not Lucy! but what a triumph to that narrow-minded mule, Sir Gilbert, when he finds out that Rupert Singleton, the King's Gold Spur in Waiting, and the pilferer of the Duchesse de Chevereuse's pearls, are one and the same unlucky wight! *D'honneur!* this Comte de Belviane Quatorze will have *beau jeu!*” But this last thought was so insupportable, that Rupert stamped his spurred heel on the paved court of the Louvre (into which he had just turned), till it rang again, and bit his nether lip through, till the blood came. As he was crossing the great court, he was met and accosted by a Ger-

man page of the Queen Mother's, of the name of Caspar Hausen, who said he was commissioned by her Majesty to seek him, and command his immediate attendance in her private apartments, whither he would conduct him.

"Now for it!" thought Rupert, "the plot thickens. No doubt that old dragon, her first lady of the bedchamber, has lodged her complaint about her bracelets in form, and insisted upon a private *auto-da-fé*."

But all he said to Caspar Hausen was,—"If you will wait for me at the foot of the great staircase, I will attend her Majesty as soon as ever I have led my horse to the stable."

"Monsieur will have the goodness to come to the small private staircase leading to her Majesty's apartments," said the page, "for the great entrance is crowded, as his Majesty has given a sudden order that the Court should sup at Versailles, whither they depart in an hour."

"Oh, very well," said Rupert, who then continued his way to the stable, having consigned Zara to the care of a groom; he was about to return, when a head popped up from behind the holsters of a ready-saddled horse, in the next stall: it was Bussy, Rabutin's.

"Your most obedient, Monsieur l'Épé-ron d'Or," said the latter, joining Rupert. "It seems that his Majesty already languishes for the *bosquets* and *charmilles* of Versailles, after a six hours' absence; so, as we are for the road in an hour, I was just looking to my pistols."

"A very necessary precaution," replied Singleton abstractedly, as they re-crossed the quadrangle.

"My dear fellow," said Bussy, looking round to see that there was no one within hearing, "this affair of the bracelets."

"What then!" interrupted Rupert, "you have *already* heard of it, and yet do not look upon me as a thief! this is indeed kind of you."

"Bah! my dear fellow," cried Bussy, putting out his hand, and shaking Singleton cordially; "do I not know you to be *really a gentleman*; therefore, of course, I also know you could not be a thief; the Chevereuse has been open-mouthed about her lost pearls; ere this, perhaps, ground down into oaten bread for plebeian palates! but I saw directly the whole state of the case, and have set a truer counter statement spinning immediately."

"Why, what do you imagine the real history of those bracelets to be?"

"A hoax! of course, upon the proverbial parsimony of the Duchesse de Chevereuse, and that you were determined to make

her contribute magnificently to a charity for the first and last time in her life; in the face of all Paris, *diantre!* I envy you the idea, it was capital!"

"Alas! my dear Comte, I am in no way entitled either to your envy or your admiration, and am equally undeserving of the Duchess's opprobrious suspicions; for here are the *real* facts, however incredible they may appear." And Rupert then recited his first meeting with the man in the wax mask at the Pré-aux-Clercs, down to his fruitless pursuit of him, that very hour, on his return from Notre Dame.

"*Peste!*" said Bussy, twirling his monstache, "that's unlucky, for now that it is certain you are not the least to blame, you have everything to fear; be a knave and welcome, *that* is only a proof of cleverness, but be a *dupe*, and out of an asylum for idiots there is no mercy for you. Upon the same principle, that no matter how dishonourably a fortune is gained, its possessor will always be courted and upheld by the world, whereas, no matter how nobly one is loet, the beggar will have but the beggar's lot—contumely and neglect; so take my advice, keep the truth you have just told me to yourself, and let my version of the matter take its course."

"Thank you, my dear Comte, all the same," said Rupert, grasping his hand, "but you see, you were a true prophet this morning, when you said the King was looking *lettres de cachet* at me, for I now begin to perceive that the Bastille will be the end of it."

"Well, well," rejoined Bussy, "if it should be so, I assure you there are worse places wherein to indulge the *dolce far niente*, and I myself have composed so many discourses in praise of solitude in half the Chateaux Forts of France, that I have christened the Pignerole the Hotel Bussy, and the Bastille the Hotel Rabutin; but—but—" added he, looking somewhat sheepish—for fine natures are always more ashamed, and timorous, in conferring an obligation, than coarse ones are in asking twenty—"a thought strikes me, my dear fellow, that with such an old *tirelire*\* as the Chevereuse, her pearls returned to her in money might appease her. Now, it is true I am not over-burdened with that *deorum munus*, but still, the resources of my purse, such as they are, are heartily at your service."

"Thank you ten thousand times, my dear friend, for a friend in need, is a friend indeed; should I require any aid of the sort, there is no one I would so soon owe a debt of gratitude to as yourself, as it is an Epicurean pleasure to be indebted to

\* Money box.

the truly generous; for in accepting their kindness one seems to be impregnated with their magnificent spirit. There is indeed *one* favour I would ask of you," added Rupert, lowering his voice, "and that is—should the Bastille be my destination, and—and—should this Comte de Belviane Quatorze arrive at Versailles, before I am again at large, will you kindly keep me *au courant* to his proceedings?"

"*Mille grâces* for the sinecure," said Bussy, "depend upon it; you have nothing to fear from that quarter, as I told you before; I could with a safe conscience, take my oath that his Majesty is merely fooling *ce gros papa d'Anglais* to the top of his bent; he sometimes affects the learned, and I suppose, he has been studying Tycho Brahé's Chorography of the Isle of Huena, and the Castle of Uraniberge, wherein the sage astronomer sets down his nets, and manner of catching small birds; or, perhaps, he is trying to recreate himself according to the fashion of the Persian Kings, who hawk after butterflies with tame sparrows tutored to the sport; but whatever game *they* start, you may reckon upon me as your retriever."

Singleton, once more, cordially thanked his kind-hearted companion, as he shook hands with him at the foot of the private staircase that led to the Queen Mother's *petits appartemens*.

"I should like, amazingly," said Bussy, "to know the result of your interview."

"Where can I find you to tell it you?"

"Well, I'll wait here till you return; it can't be very long, for the coaches will be round in half-an-hour."

"Oh, thank you."

"There, never look so dismal, man! on the contrary, *Buckinghamiséz vous*," said Bussy, slapping Rupert's shoulder, as the latter followed Caspar Hausen up the winding staircase.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN Rupert was ushered into the presence of Anne of Austria, he found her—though ready dressed for her departure for Versailles—reclining on a *lit de repos*, evidently much fatigued by her morning's exertion; it was then about three o'clock, and as her Majesty had dined in her own apartment, the dessert was still on the table; for the fashion then existed, which has now again become customary, of placing the fruit on the table from the first, and leaving it to the last, while the dinner was only handed round. The old Duchesse de Chevereuse was seated in a window, a round osier

gilt basket on her lap, lined with a cushion of quilted white satin, on which was curled up, in a profound slumber, a very beautiful specimen of the King Charles's breed, with a collar of gold bells round his neck, intersected by little rosettes of *ponceau*-coloured velvet. Upon Caspar Hausen's having put aside the heavy crimson-velvet *portière*, and announced Rupert, the Queen Mother half-raised herself on her elbow to receive him, while the Duchesse de Chevereuse—setting down Fidelio's basket upon an adjoining *tabouret*—folded her arms ready for action, pursed up her mouth, and uttered an "*Enfin!*" as sharp and shrill as the north wind whistling through a key-hole.

"Monsieur," said Anne of Austria—looking gravely, but kindly at Rupert—"we have sent for you, before this affair of Madame la Duchesse de Chevereuse's bracelets becomes public; because extraordinary as the matter now appears, we do you the justice to believe, from what we have observed of your conduct and deportment, since you have been in his Majesty's household, that you can give some more satisfactory account of it, than the tale which Monsieur le Comte de Bussy Rabutin has propagated, of its having originated in an idle—and if so, I must add, very unworthy and ungentlemanlike—frolic; one which even Monsieur d'Estoublon, supported as he is, by the long enjoyment of our favour, and protection, would scarcely have dared to venture upon."

By way of accompaniment, the Duchess shook her head incredulously, for d'Estoublon and devil, were synonymous in her vocabulary.

"Madame," bowed Rupert, "I am both at a loss to acknowledge my deep sense of your Majesty's goodness and condescension, and to express my regrets, that I can give no explanation of this unfortunate business, that will I fear be satisfactory either to your Majesty, or to Madame la Duchesse."

"No doubt," muttered the latter, bridling.

"But," continued Rupert, "the truth, strange as it is, and detrimental as it may be to me, I feel is alike due to your Majesty, to Madame la Duchesse, and to myself; and, with your august permission, I will state it in its uttermost exactness."

"*Continuez, Monsieur*," said the Queen, whereupon Rupert narrated every detail of his first, and last, meeting with the man in the wax mask.

"*Ah! ça sent le Cartouche!*" exclaimed Anne of Austria, as soon as Rupert had

finished; "you see, Duchesse," added she, leaning forward out of the bed, and addressing her first lady of the bed-chamber, "it is Cartouche, and not d'Estoublon, or Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or, who is at the bottom of all this; for if you recollect, all your jewels, including these bracelets, were stolen one night at Versailles, by Cartouche (for as usual with him, he wrote to tell you so), long before Monsieur ever appeared at court."

"*Dame! votre Majesté,*" rejoined the Duchesse, looking insolently at Rupert—so insolently—that for a moment, he almost forgot that she was a woman, and that he was in the presence, "who knows how long Monsieur may have been in France, or what his antecedents were, before he appeared at Versailles? As long as the best appointments in his Majesty's household are given to foreigners, it is impossible to be aware how many adventurers there may be amongst them."

"Madame!" said the Queen haughtily, "you aim too wide of the mark to hit Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or; nor is that your only *maladresse*, for you seem also to forget our presence, for which reason, till you can remember it, we would suggest that you might find a *fauteuil* by your own fireside, more suitable to you than a *tabouret à la cour!*"

The old Duchesse began to cry, for if she had a sensitive point, it was her dignity, and her importance in the Queen Mother's household; and this broad hint that her attendance could be dispensed with, really wounded, because it humiliated her.

"Nay, Hortense," said Anne of Austria, kindly holding out one of those exquisite hands, so long and so justly, celebrated for their beauty, and which, though somewhat more shadowy than of yore, had lost none of their claims to admiration, "we did not mean to wound, neither can we suffer others to do so, Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or," added she, courteously turning to Rupert, so as not to dwell upon, and make prominent, this little rebuff to her old favourite. "We have written to the Archbishop of Paris, announcing our intention to purchase back those bracelets of Madame la Duchesse's, at their full value, so that the poor may lose nothing; and every moment we expect them here. Once more in possession of them, we think we may answer for Madame de Chevereuse's burying the matter in oblivion, and soliciting his Majesty not to take any further notice of it; for we, Monsieur, implicitly believe in the scrupulous truth of your statement."

"Ah! Madame, how can I ever suffi-

ciently express my gratitude to your Majesty, for the honour you do me, in not doubting mine!"

"The justice, you mean, Monsieur," retorted the Queen; "but, after all, perhaps you are right; for justice is, or at least *should be*, the honour of Monarchs."

The sound of wheels and the tramping of horses were now heard in the court below, and the Queen expressed her surprise, that her messenger had not returned from Notre Dame; but, while she was speaking, Caspar Hausen again entered with a letter in a purple velvet envelope, bordered with gold and buttoned with the same, on a gold salver, which he handed to the Duchesse de Chevereuse, who, taking the letter out of the velvet case, laid it again upon the salver, and presented it to Anne of Austria.

"No packet?" asked the latter, impatiently breaking the seal; "how very unfortunate," exclaimed the Queen, as she finished reading the Archbishop's note. "Monseigneur says, that immediately after our departure from Notre Dame, almost before the church was quite empty, a gentleman came, apparently a Grand Seigneur by his mode of acting, and brought two jewellers to value those bracelets, who did so, at twenty thousand crowns, whereupon, the gentleman in question offered a thousand livres in addition for them, and the Archbishop, not thinking it right to deprive the poor of this additional boon, agreed to the arrangement, and the gentleman carried them off. Decidedly, Duchesse," added the Queen, trying to smile, "Cartouche has a *tendresse* for you, that he tries to possess himself of some memorial of you on all occasions, for I shrewdly suspect that the Archbishop's Grand Seigneur is none other than that *Grand Voleur.*"

"Cartouche!" repeated the lady of the bed-chamber, contemptuously shrugging her shoulders, as she flung another insolent look at Rupert, unperceived by the Queen, "your Majesty may remember when the Comte de Grammont was last over here, he told us, that he had not seen any very fine pearls in England; perhaps they may have a few there soon."

As it was impossible for Anne of Austria to mistake the malicious import of this speech, and equally impossible to notice it without reprimanding the Duchesse more severely, and favouring Rupert more pointedly than she deemed politic, she merely said to the latter—"Monsieur, we will not detain you longer, and can only hope that his Majesty will not deem it requisite to take any further steps in this matter, as we are perfectly convinced that no further blame can be imputed to you in it, than a

slight degree of imprudence and scarcely that."

And, so saying, she extended her hand to him, which he raised to his lips with the most profound respect, and bowing almost to the ground, backed out of the room, without vouchsafing the most transitory glance at his determined calumniator.

"Well," said Bussy Rabutin, eagerly, from the foot of the stairs, as soon as Rupert appeared at the first turn.

"Well—and ill," replied the latter, "for nothing could be kinder than the Queen Mother; but I greatly fear things remain much as they were, and that I am as deep in the mire as ever."

"*Allons donc!*" said Bussy.

"Yes, really," rejoined Rupert, who then related all that had taken place.

"The old dragon!" said Bussy, stamping his foot, "always the Duchess of pearls, for she never will be the pearl of Duchesses. I have a great mind to go and have ten thousand *affiches* struck off and placarded all over Paris, and the provinces, offering a free pardon to Cartouche if he will only carry off the Chevereuse, instead of her jewels, the next time, and have her stewed down into a *consommé* for his gang, whom I am sure are too good Christians, *quand même*, not to abstain from flesh during Lent, and of *that* there is not the smallest reminiscence on her bones. *Peste!* there go the silver trumpets, whose summons, like that of the last trump, we must obey whether we are prepared or not," but seeing how blank Rupert looked at this herald of disgrace, for hitherto it had been part of his duty to give the signal for their sounding, Rabutin took out a pocket book and wrote something on one of the leaves, which he then tore off and gave to Singleton, saying—

"There, my dear fellow, should they billet you on the Hôtel Rabutin, give that paper to my *custode*, Dupuis he is commonly called, but I christened him Louche-trou, on account of a certain obliquity of vision that he has contracted by a habit of mistaking key holes for spy-glasses; but on the whole, he is a good fellow enough and always understands reason," added Bussy, tapping his pocket, "and if you give him that paper from me he will look upon it in the light of a *menu du dîner* for you, and it will insure you against any *salmis* whose antecedents may be apocryphal, or any *potages* in which the meats, like the Chevereuse pearls, may be absent without leave, and now, *vale risum teneatis amici! courage! et Cartouche!*" and shaking him cordially by the hand, Rabutin sprang into his saddle, and was out of sight in a

moment, while poor Rupert, as soon as the last of the royal carriages had driven out of the quadrangle, pursued his solitary way to the Rue de Richelieu, to his best comforter and counsellor, Molière.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

As Rupert turned into the Rue de Richelieu, a sudden faintness reminded him that he had eaten nothing since eight that morning, and as the hospitable doors of the Café de la Sagesse, where Boileau and Chapelle had found such excellent Burgundy, stood invitingly open, he entered, and called for a *côtelette à la minute* to appease his hunger which, in less than that time, he discussed, and then proceeded to Molière's, which was only six doors further on. La Forêt, looking as amiable as usual, opened the door to him.

"Is your master at home?" asked Rupert.

"Yes, he is."

"Is he in the *salon* or in his own room?"

"In neither; he is at the Theatre."

"Why, I thought you said just now that he was at home?"

"Ay, marry did I; for is not the theatre his home? It was his cradle, and is like to be his coffin—and as good a one too as any other. We must all die somewhere—the *where* matters little; the *how* is everything: And if all the priests in France, the Archbishop of Paris at their head, were to swear to the contrary, I wouldn't believe but what *pe pauvre Poquelin!* will have as good a *how* as any of them. At all events, *martyrs* are sure to go to heaven—so *he's* safe."

"Is there no one at home, then?" re-interrogated Rupert.

"Yes, *le petit* is in the sitting-room."

Singleton entered, thinking he should glean more from the answers of this intelligent child, than from the crabbed brevities of the old woman; and he did not like following Molière to the Petit Bourbon, as he fancied that by this time, the garbled history of the bracelet was blazoned all over Paris.

He found little Baron seated before a table, building up a magnificent structure, almost as high as the Tower of Babel, with two packs of cards.

"Take care! shut the door gently," cried the child, "or you will make my château fall;" and as he spoke, he held out his little hands on either side to shelter it from any insidious currents of air. Rupert knew very well that it was vain to try to lure child or adult from castle-building,

without offering them some substantial reality in its stead. So, taking a *bonbonnière* that he espied on the chimney-piece, he said:

"Look here, Michel; see what fine *pralines* there are in this box. Who do you think they are for?"

"Perhaps for me, if I am good," said the child, jumping down off his chair, putting his hands behind his back, and walking over to Rupert.

"Well, I think you *look* as if you were very good; so here is a burnt almond for you," and he put it into his mouth.

"Now tell me, my little man, do you know what the play is to-night, and whether Molière will be detained late at the theatre?"

"The play," replied little Baron, who kept his dilating eyes fixed steadily on the *bonbons*, while he assiduously crunched the *praline* Rupert had already given him, "I believe—indeed, I'm *sure*—is '*Les Précieuses*;' but Papa (for so he always called Molière) don't act, only Mademoiselle Molière; so he said he should be soon back; and he told me, whoever came, I was to keep them to supper—so you *must* stay."

"*Voyons la carte*," said Rupert, with a smile, drawing a chair to the table, and taking up some of the cards which had not yet been employed in building, and at the same time placing the sugar-plums in the centre of the table. "Now let us see, Michel, which, you or I, will build the highest castle; and whoever does, shall have this box of bonbons."

"What! the whole box?" asked Baron, clapping his hands.

"The whole box."

"Ah! but I forgot; it is papa's box, and neither you nor I have any right to it."

"Well thought of, my little fellow; and you shall lose nothing for being honest. So, instead of the *bonbonnière*, here is a *piastre*, which will buy you quite as good a one, if you win."

"Yes; but if I lose, how am I to pay you?"

"Decidedly, you have a design to supersede Monsieur Colbert! my little financier," laughed Rupert. Well, if you lose, you shall pay me in kisses. You have plenty of *them*, it is to be hoped?"

"Oh! as many as you like," cried the little fellow, again clapping his hands in a perfect ecstasy, as he drew his chair to the table, knocked down the old castle, and made an equal division of the cards; "but *mind*, you must not speak a word while we are placing the cards; for often a mere breath pulls them all down."

"Ah!" thought Rupert, "these are not

the only castles that a mere breath destroys!"

And enchanted at the dead silence his little companion so scrupulously preserved, which enabled him unmolestedly to pursue his own thoughts, he continued mechanically to pile up his pack of cards, but so carelessly and unartistically, that, being for the most part a set of ill-assorted couples, they soon separated; which Rupert troubled himself as little about as if he had been their dearest friend, or nearest relation. Not so his little rival, who could not suppress a look of silent triumph at his own superior skill; and by the time the sun's last ray had faded from the narrow street, and La Forêt had brought in lights, he got gently off his chair, and going to the extreme end of the large room, clapped his hands, and cried out—

"Look! Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or! look at my castle!"

"It is indeed very magnificent! and you have fairly won the prize," said Rupert, giving him the *piastre*."

Here, La Forêt who continued to flit about the room like a bat, doing those sundry nothings, that don't require doing, but which servants find indispensable, when they prefer staying, to going, suddenly stopped opposite to Rupert, and putting her arms akimbo, said,

"Et vous mon beau Monsieur, vos châteaux sont ils tous en Espagne?"\*

"All! *ma bonne* La Forêt," smiled Rupert, "where you are quite welcome to go and be the Duenna!"

"Humph! if *that* is the only post you have to offer me, I can fill it far better *here*."

Rupert who was not without his suspicions of Molière's domestic unhappiness, felt there would be something treacherous, and dishonourable, in letting the old woman (whose hatred of Armande always made her open-mouthed) specify any of its details, especially before that other object of her master's bounty, for all children are *enfants terribles*, as far as understanding, and repeating, everything that they should not, goes. So rubbing his hands, he said—

"Really it is very chilly! I think *ma bonne*, we should be all the better for a little fire."

"*Apropos!*" cried the old woman bustling off to do so, "that reminds me I was to light one, Monsieur Poquequin can seldom leave them off, before May, on account of his cough."

The fire kindled, Rupert drew his chair to it, and placing his feet on one of the dogs, began watching the bright sparks of

\* And you, Sir, are all your castles in the air!

the dry, and fragrant pine wood, as they flew up the chimney, while little Baron, coming and standing beside him, he placed his arm round the boy's neck, who lost no time in asking him if he knew any *good Fairy Tales?* for children, of any intellect at all, are quite as particular, in the quality of their fictions, as epicures are in that of their viands, and selfishness strange to say, forming no part of Singleton's nature, although he had for the last three years attached to manhood! he quitted the Duchesse de Chevereuse's bracelets, the Bastille, and even Lucy! and set off at a brisk pace, through the Forest, with Poucette, and his brothers, with whom he had just arrived at the Ogre's Castle, when a loud ring at the ante-chamber door, announced the return of Molière.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"HA! HA! HA! Si Mundus vult dicipi decipiatur,"\* laughed the Duc de la Rochefoucauld.

"Amen," said Boileau, on whom he was leaning, as they entered the room where Rupert and little Baron were sitting, while Molière, Chapelle, and the Duc de Guiche, brought up the rear.

"Ah! Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or! delighted to see you," said the host; "you see *je fais le Diable à quatre*, for these gentlemen have done me the honour of returning to sup with me; *et toi mon enfant*," added he stooping down to kiss little Baron, who was clinging round him, "how have you been?"

"Only imagine," said Boileau, "what they have set about now."

"It is not easy to guess," said Rupert, who could think of nothing more agreeable than the eternal bracelets.

"Why, that I write half Molière's plays, on the strength, I suppose, of my furnishing him with some of his dog Latin."

"Well," said Chapelle, "as Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld said just now, if the world *likes* to be gulled, let it be gulled."

"Of course it likes to be gulled, when, by being so, it gains, or thinks it gains, Monsieur Despreaux, as well as Molière," said Rupert.

"Ah!" laughed Boileau, "one may perceive you have not lost your time at court, Monsieur, you sprinkle *l'eau bénite de la cour* so gracefully."

"Without having been to court, I must

\* Since the world wishes to be gulled, let it be gulled.

say," said Chapelle, "I never saw Poquelin act so well as to-night. The old man in the pit was right."

"I thought you were not to act to-night, *petit papa!*" said young Baron.

"I did not intend to act when I went to the theatre, but Duparc was taken ill, and I was obliged to do so."

"And it would be a thousand pities if you had not," said the Duc de la Rochefoucauld; for I consider, my dear Molière, that, to-night, you received the *quintessence* of the immortality of your fame, in *one sentence*. Were I an actor, I would rather have received such comprehensive and *genuine* homage, than the echoed plaudits of all posterity."

"What was it?" asked Rupert, eagerly.

"Why," said the Duke, "in that delicious scene between *Cathos*, *Madelon*, and *Mascarille*, where the latter says:—

"Il est vrai qu'il est honteux de n'avoir pas des premiers, tout ce qui se fait; mais ne vous mettez pas en peine; je veux établir chez vous une académie de beaux esprits," &c., &c., &c.,

"Molière was troubled by his cough, when an old man in the pit got up, and cried out, '*Courage! courage, Molière! voilà la bonne comédie!*'"\*

"Yes," said Boileau; "and what do you think was Poquelin's ingratitude to those great models who have made him what he is? Why, the moment he got to the wing, he exclaimed, 'Je n'ai plus que faire d'étudier Terence, et Plaute, et d'éplucher les fragments de Ménandre; je n'ai qu'à étudier le monde.'"<sup>†</sup>

"And he was right," said Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld; "for the world only can convey a knowledge of itself. Seeking it in books, is as wise as it would be for a surgeon to study anatomy upon a shadow, instead of upon the substance that reflected that shadow."

"Then, Monseigneur," rejoined Boileau, "what becomes of the poet's advice—

\* "Vos exemplaria Græca  
Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ!"

"Why, temper it, of course, with his own profound truth, which he utters a little further on:

"Ficta voluptatis causâ sibi proxima veris:  
Ne, quodcumque volet, poscat, sibi falcula  
credi;"

\* Courage! courage, Molière! that is genuine comedy.

<sup>†</sup> "I have no longer any business to be studying Plautus and Terence, and to be picking fragments of Menander. I have only to study the world." And, certainly, it was by his study of it, that he so completely mastered his knowledge of it.

"Besides, if I recollect rightly," added the Duke, "a scarcely inferior authority to our friend Horace, one Sieur Boileau Despréaux, after expatiating upon barbaric tragedy, which at its origin was but a rude and monotonous chorus, observes, with much truth,

"*THESPIS fut le premier, qui, barbouillé de lie,*

*Promèna par les bourgs, cette heureuse folie ;  
Et d'acteurs mal ornés chargeant un tombéreau,  
Amusa les passans d'un spectacle nouveau.  
ÆSCHYLE dans le chœur jetta les personnages  
D'un masque plus honnête habilla les visages :  
Sur les ais d'un Théâtre en public exhausé,  
Fait paraître l'acteur d'un brodequin chaussé.*

"Now, if Thespis had not dared to innovate,—that is, to progress,—the drama would still have been in a state of barbarism. So e'en let Poquelin be our modern Thespis."

"At all events," laughed Molière, "had Thespis never existed, in due time, Quintileuses would have been as plentiful as mushrooms; and each in his vocation, when he heard you aught recite, would have cried,

"Prithee, alter this, and make *that* right!"

The Duc de Guiche, who thought he ought to take some part in the conversation—and yet did not very well know how—for he had invited himself to supper more for the sake of the wife than the husband, so, in order to be at once kind, *complementary*, and politic, he now hazarded the unpromising observation of,

"Mon cher, Monsieur de Molière, you appear tired!"

Thinking that the patrician "*de*," which he had so delicately insinuated into this short sentence, far outweighed, in magnitude and grace, any of the many compliments his host was continually receiving.

"I fear, Monseigneur, that *I have tired you*; and that makes you imagine I am tired."

"Not the least in the world, I assure you."

"Could any one ever be tired of Molière?" said Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, blushing for his brother peer's *gâcherie* and inanity.

"Truly, as my brother Duke says," rejoined de Guiche, "could one ever be tired of Molière?"

"Duc, tant que vous voulez mon cher; maison pas *pair!* (*paire*) de grace?" exclaimed Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, goaded into a pun, while Boileau and Chappelle were laughing. Molière, who had not so long studied the great volume of human nature, without being able to read fluently in every edition of it, perceived

by Rupert's face, that he was disappointed at their not being alone, as he had, evidently, something to say to him.

"Gentlemen," said he, "will you excuse me for a few minutes? I have a little business to transact with Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or; but it will not detain us long."

Gratefully taking the hint, Rupert followed their amphytrion out of the room.

"Well?" asked Molière, as soon as they were in the ante-room.

"I hardly know how to tell you the dilemma I am in," said Singleton, "it seems such a bad return for all your friendship, to have got into such an asinine scrape; and yet, when I did so, I had not even seen you."

"*Allons donc!*" interrupted Molière, "and if you had, what is the use of friendship, if it don't get one out of scrapes, or, at least, try to do so? at all events, I hope you don't pay mine the bad compliment of thinking it is like the fine gilt goblets, given at christenings, only for show; but if you do, you never were more mistaken; as I assure you, there never was better or stronger huckaback for every-day wear and tear, than the sort of friendship I feel for you my young friend: so now for your budget."

"You are independent of friendship," said Rupert, pressing the hand which Molière had placed in his, "but no one is beyond affection, especially you, who are always subjecting yourself to it."

He then related, from beginning to end, the whole history of the pearl bracelets.

"*Diantre! c'est grave!*" exclaimed Molière, stroking his chin, "and I have no better advice to give you than the Comte de Bussy Rabutin's, which I think excellent. Let the Court and the town think it was a practical joke upon the Duchesse de Chevreuse, you need not tell them so, but let them think it, it is always better to be laughed *with* than *at*; and now, we must only wait the arrival of events, which, for the most part, bring their own plan of action with them, and render all preconceived projects futile; indeed, it is quite impossible either to advise or determine, till we know what the King will do in the business; so now, let us return to our friends in the drawing-room, but, mind; not a word to them."

Soon after they had entered the *salon*, Josselin announced supper, and Baron wished them good night.

"I suppose," said Molière, "we shall find my wife in the *salle à manger?*"

But instead of Armande, he only found a note from her on his napkin, it ran as follows:



"*Mon Ami,*

"As the Duc de Guiche sups with you to-night, I shall not come down to supper. Indeed, I have a bad headache, which you can make my excuse.

"*A Toi de Cœur,*  
"ARMANDE."

An almost imperceptible expression of contempt curled Molière's lip, as he read this note; but, rolling it quietly up, he lit it at the candle, and then gave it to Josselin, to put in the fire; while, bowing round the table, he said:

"Gentlemen, Madame Molière begs you will have the goodness to excuse her; as she has a bad headache."

At this, the customary and *obligato* regrets were, of course, expressed, and then the conversation became general and animated, turning first upon the loves of the King, in particular, and then upon love, in general.

"I think, Monseigneur," said Molière, to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, "you have been rather severe on the sex."

"As how, pray? If you mean *individually*, I plead not guilty; if collectively, as part of the *genus* man, *guilty*, decidedly; for since the creation, man has been, in one shape or other, the natural enemy of woman, for which she is indeed to be pitied, for *misierum est ab eo lardi, quo non possis queri*."

"No, no," said Chapelle, quickly; who by the deepening shade on Molière's countenance, feared he might be drawn into speaking too openly on this favourite topic of his. "What Poquelin means, Monseigneur, is, that *one* half of the sex at least, will never forgive you."

"Which half? and why?" asked the Duke.

"You say, Monseigneur, that there are many women who never had a lover; but there is no woman who never had but one. Now, you certainly cannot expect that the *many* will pardon you."

"You should look to Chapelle, my dear Boileau," laughed the Duke, "or he will take the trade out of *your* hands!"

"What a pity," said Boileau, "that Racine is not here; you should hear him on the chapter of Love's Omnipotence! No girl of fifteen, hood-winked for the first time, ever thought, talked, or looked more nonsense."

"And the cause?" asked Molière.

"Some say it is Ninon, some the magnificent Dupare, some the Circean Champ-méslé."

"Bah! the fact is," rejoined Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, "that he is only echoing his prototype, Eurypides, who

gave a legal opinion long ago about this said *amor vivorum rex*; that he was the god of the gods and the governor of men, to whom we must all do homage, keep holiday for him, worship in his temple, and adore at his shrine."

"*D'accord*," lisped the Duc de Guiche.

"Silence! thou Cupid's whirligig, and let thy betters speak. Despréaux, we are among friends, and the matter shall go no further; but *confess*," added Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, "*have* you any secret yearnings towards this said little great Deityship?"

"Me!" said Boileau, cutting with great energy into a *faisan en surprise*, "having no personal knowledge whatever on the subject, I cannot give an original verdict; but from all I have ever heard or seen of Dan Cupid and his doings, I am quite of the opinion of Cæcillus, in Tully's Tusculans, who held him to be no better than a fool and an idiot, and would never acknowledge Love to be a great god."

"Choke the heretic!" laughed La Rochefoucauld, putting a large Frontignac grape into a goblet of champertin, and passing it to Boileau.

"Nay, Monseigneur," cried Chapelle, "the potion is too costly for him; he'll fancy that rich grape Cleopatra's union."

"Hardly," said Boileau, "for *it*, like all other unions, was dissolved in vinegar!"

"Enough of his blasphemies!" said the Duke, with a mock-heroic air, as he turned from Boileau to Molière. "What says our good host? who sits there like Socrates, in that choice dialogue of Plato's, waiting for his turn to speak?"

"Why I, of course," said Molière, with a forced smile, as he filled another tumbler of water, in answer to the wine Chapelle held up to pledge him in, "am in duty bound to agree with Aristophanes, that he was scornfully rejected from the council of the gods: and after having his wings clipped, that he might not return to heaven, was banished to earth, that he might do as much mischief as he could among mortals, a mission which he has scrupulously fulfilled."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, shaking his hands and throwing up his eyes. "I find I have got into a perfect hornet's nest of infidels. It is to be hoped, at least, that there is *one* true believer. Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or, *you*, at least, are of the age to have faith?"

"I certainly am of opinion," said Rupert, "that Phædrus was right, and that the fire that Prometheus brought from Heaven, and Love, are one and the same: but I differ from him in thinking that Love was born of Chaos, for, on the contrary,

Chaos is generally born of Love; another version, perhaps, Monseigneur, of 'Plus on aime une mait, resse, et plus on est près de la hair.'

"*A la bonneheure!* that is something like the true creed," said Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld. "Then, of course, you prefer Love's bondage to all the freedom or all the splendour upon earth?"

"I don't know; I'll tell you when I'm captured," equivocated Rupert.

"The retort is courteous," bowed the Duke, "but I did not mean to be personal; I merely meant that, as an article of faith, you thought as Seneca did of the prison of the Evangelists, 'career illorum emni curia sanctor,' and that in like manner, the poorest heart in which love is imprisoned is more sacred than the greatest mind in which intellect holds its court. Boileau, *mon cher*, I must also disclaim anything like personality to *you* in the last sentence."

"No apologies, Monseigneur, pray; to be accused of a regal amount of intellect domiciled in a great mind, are among those sort of accusations which a man can always submit to, provided he only possess as much resignation and equanimity of temper as a beggar who has unexpectedly come into a large fortune," said Boileau.

"By the by," said the Duc de Guiche, "as you are all wits and *savants*, what is your real opinion of Racine? Madame de Sévigné says she thinks the taste for him will go by, like the fashion of Fontange petticoats."

"I don't think it ever will in France," replied Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, "but his tragedies being essentially French, grafted upon Greek models, I do believe that they will never have a European popularity."

"Ah! *vraiment*; then what will become of our friend Poquelin, for his plays are also essentially French?" sapiently, and not with the best taste in the world, asked Monsieur de Guiche.

"I'll tell you what will become of them," said La Rochefoucauld, "till nature, genuine wit, and fine satire are banished from the stage as common sense and courtesy are from the noddles of some individuals, the plaudits Molière's plays excite will echo, and their brilliant coruscations will flash from pole to pole of the dramatic hemisphere."

"*D'honneur!* I believe you are right," said De Guiche; "I never heard a dissentient voice about Poquelin, except a German acquaintance of mine—the Baron Von Schwillingstoupe, who says he don't quite understand Molière's plays."

"Ah! friend Poquelin," laughed Boileau, "I fear German lead will be forever forged into bullets against you for the slight gibe you have put into the mouth of your pedant, *Caritides*, against the Germans; for solemn dulness ne'er forgives a jest."\*

"Well, it can't be helped," laughed Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld; "there will still be bright stars to the remotest posterity to run their glorious course round Molière's golden sun; so it matters little if that said sun should get slightly obscured in the Black Forest. One can't have everything; and it would be too much to expect that a people who excel as the Germans do, in sentiment and sausesages, should throne it equally in criticism and quickness of comprehension: and now let us drink to the Fatherland of thought, which, if it be slow, will not be the less sure to arrive at great pre-eminence in the world's history; and if," added the Duke, draining a glass of Johannisberg, in which the rest followed his example,—“there *be* truth in wine, there can be no doubt of its superiority.”

They had scarcely set down their glasses before a loud knocking, as with the butt-end of a musket, was heard at the dining-room door, and a gruff voice said—

"OPEN IN THE NAME OF THE KING!"

Rupert justly surmising who were the applicants, and for whom they came, was perfectly calm, and a muscle of his face never moved. Not so the Duc de Guiche, who, having risked a *poulet* on a voyage of discovery that morning to Madame de Montespan, to console her during the King's temporary absence, had strange misgivings that this might be the answer to it,—not exactly the one he should have liked,—while Molière rose at the impe-

\* Boileau, it would appear, was a true prophet; for nothing but this sort of stolid rancour, worthy of German phlegm, can account for Schlegel's injustice to Molière, who awards him only a kind of prosaic claim to comedy, or rather to burlesque, such as would have been the just meed of Scarron or Rabelais; while, on the other hand, he extols with a sort of mystic ecstasy, and truly heavy brigade of German enthusiasm, the squibs and crackers of Calderon de la Barca! though, after all, he may have done so in perfect good faith; for the inflated and coarse diction of the Spanish dramatist, perhaps, was more congenial to, and penetrated more easily the density of German apprehension than the fine subtleties, glowing humour, and keen satire of Molière; therefore, it may be as unreasonable to expect Schlegel to have appreciated the French Aristophanes, as to expect a heavy wagon to keep pace with the high pressure and accelerated speed of an express train.

rious summons and opened the door, when a party of twelve *Mousquetaires* entered and surrounded Rupert, presenting him with a *lettre de cachet*; while their chief handed a letter of another description to Molière, civilly saluting him, *à la militaire*, and saying—

“De sa Majesté même, Monsieur,”\* and then the detachment of *Mousquetaires*, as well as the assembled guests, fell back, while Molière read it. Folding it up with a kind of half smile, and putting it into his pocket, he said aloud, for the benefit of those present, as soon as he had perused it,

“It is true that young men *will be* young men; but you are likely to pay dearly, Monsieur, for your frolic. A rare jest, gentlemen; you must know that Monsieur l’Épéron d’Or took the liberty of making Madame la Duchesse de Chevereuse both charitable and munificent in the true gospel acceptance of charity, that of literally not letting her left hand know what her right gives, or indeed either of them, know one word of the matter! by putting a very costly pair of pearl bracelets of hers into the plate at Notre Dame this morning; Versailles, with the exception of Madame la Duchesse, is still holding its sides at the freak; but she insists that the Bastille should hold Monsieur l’Épéron d’Or, to teach him not to confound piety with pearls! for the future.”

“Ha! ha! ha! capital!” laughed all the assembled guests. “You ought,” said the Duc de Guiche, “to have a vote of public thanks for having played that execrable old woman so excellent a trick.”

And Rupert, not to belie Molière’s statement, received with a somewhat melancholy smile all the compliments and congratulations which he by no means deserved.

“Courage my young friend,” said Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, laying his hand on Rupert’s shoulder, “You are now on the high road to fortune and to fame; for a young man is never considered really *lancé* at court till he has matriculated at the Bastille! ha! ha! ha! you said a while ago you would tell me when you were captured; so I shall expect some news when I go and see you next week, and there are no visits I pay with more pleasure than those to the Châtelet, and the Bastille, because one is *sure* of finding one’s friends *at home*.”

“Ah! Monseigneur, how the world mistakes you!” said Boileau, “for it imagines that you always try to find *your friends out*!”

\* From the King himself, sir.

“*That*, my dear Despréaux, for the most part is so easy that I have no occasion to *try*.”

Rupert then shook hands with them all round, and accompanied the *Mousquetaires*, and as Molière followed him to the head of the stairs, Singleton said to him in a whisper—

“I fear, then, that the King is *very* much displeased with me, since he sends me to the Bastille, without even vouchsafing me an audience to explain the history of those confounded bracelets!”

“On the contrary,” replied Molière, “he is *very* well disposed towards you; *very* well; for the Comte de Bussy Rabutin has explained the whole affair to him; but it is necessary to make this parade of anger to appease the Duchesse de Chevereuse. But you may trust me,” concluded he, between the parenthesis of his troublesome cough, “to keep you *au courant* to all that takes place, and to watch over your interests.”

“God bless you! my dear kind friend; there, pray don’t stand any longer in the draught,” said Rupert, pushing Molière back into the room with one hand, while he motioned to the *Mousquetaires* with the other, that he was ready to attend them.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

As great captains, and conquerors, and that sort of obsolete gentry, used to introduce their own laws and customs into a captured country, thereby remodelling the said country, so as to suit their own views and vanities, just as Mrs. Primrose remodelled her own gowns, after a fashion that at once awed and astonished the beholders at a church of a Sunday: with this difference, that that worthy woman and her daughters that “flourished upon cat-gut,” while the aforesaid “great captains” flourished upon catastrophes; so in like manner, do great gastronomes bring mighty changes into strange kitchens. and by dint of sending cooks back to the d—, from whence they are said to come, work great culinary revolutions, which, like most other revolutions, causes the “madness of many for the gain of a few,” so at least it fell out in the offices of the “Golden Porringer,” where the waiters and *Marmitons* for a long time complained with that wholesale sinner and retail penitent, King David, that “their souls were full of the mocking of the wealthy and the despitfulness of the proud;” for it was many a long and weary day before the dishes they placed before him, could

find favour in Sir Gilbert Hawthorne's sight; often, indeed, did he threaten to demolish cooks, drawers, landlord, and all, for *daring* to suppose that *he*, an English knight of the shire, used to Christian food, could eat such messes, fit only for poodles and papists; and we verily believe that he would have carried his threat into execution, and have got up a little domiciliary St. Bartholomew, but that like Adrian the Sixth, restrained by Lodovicus Suessanus from burning the statue of Pasquin, lest frogs should spring from its ashes. Similar fears restrained Sir Gilbert's vengeance; for what *could* French cooks and waiters—according to his version of Pythagoras—transmigrate into, but frogs; and where would frogs *so* generated, leap, but down *his* throat! Therefore, all things well weighed, both cooks and waiters were let to live; and as forbearance (!) seldom goes unrewarded, they lived and learned, so that in due time the Knight could "rise and greet the morn," with the certainty of sitting down to as handsome a chine, or as stupendous a swan pie as he could have done at Hawthorne Glen; and as Launcelot always himself superintended the toast that was to make mellow his morning's draught of ale—which ale—(the strongest *audit*) arrived duly every month from England. Sir Gilbert Hawthorne was at length able to feed as became a man! that is, an Englishman; for of course *there are no other men in other countries*—at least, such was, and indeed is, pretty much the Anglo-Saxon belief. Sir Gilbert, therefore, had now for some time past, discarded the frequent use of the word *Gargotte*, as opprobriously applied to the *cuisine* of the Golden Porringer (that being the only French word he had thoroughly mastered), and was spread out one morning about two months after Rupert Singleton's retirement to the Bastille, before an almost equally voluminous venison pasty, as the King, who delighted to honour so honourable a personage, during the week had sent him half a buck from Fontainbleau.

"Odds! merry thoughts, wife, but this business goes bravely on!" cried the Knight, accompanying himself with variations on the tankard, while almost simultaneously, he rubbed his hands, and forced back a mutinous mouthful of pasty, as Lady Hawthorne sat sipping her coffee opposite to him at breakfast.

"What business, Sir Gilbert?"

"What business, good lack! to hear the woman, one would think that Comtesses were as plentiful as cowslips, and to be cropped by meadows full. What business, indeed! why what business should it be, but the business of making our girl, Luce

Hawthorne, Countess of Belviane, *Cart-oars*?"

"Ah! Sir Gilbert, and can you answer it to your conscience, after so cruelly separating the poor child from the first, and I am sure the only man she ever loved, or ever will love, to go and marry her to one whom she has never even seen, and therefore does not know, if she could barely esteem, much less love him; and it is indeed a fearful thing," added poor Lady Hawthorne, as the tears filled her eyes, "to be tied for life to a man one can neither love, nor esteem."

"Love and esteem, indeed! fiddlesticks, and fiddle-strings! what has love or esteem to do with a good husband; that is, with an old title and an unmortgaged estate? You women-kind talk of love as if it was as essential to marriage as the wedding ring, and made of metal as lasting: whereas, love, gadzooks! I'll tell you what love is—it's like, mayhap, Tom Killigrew's plays, which

"Boast a black swan, and give us a black cat!"

Ay, marry, and one that, for the most part, ends by scratching our eyes out—ha, ha, ha! So, depend upon it wife, the less caterwauling there is afore folks come to the scratch, the less scratching there is like to be after, ha, ha, ha!" And again Sir Gilbert roared and panted, much after the fashion of a high-pressure steam engine, while Lady Hawthorne turned aside to dry her eyes, and conceal her disgust.

"Well; but surely, Sir Gilbert," said she, as soon as he had roared himself tired, "if you do not think it necessary that *Lucy* should see this Comte de Belviane Quatorze, before she is led like a victim to the stake, don't *you* intend to do so; for how do you know whether *you* will approve of him for a son-in-law?"

"No," replied the knight, plunging his right hand into the thickets of his shirt frills, as if he had been going to spout nonsense in the senate, instead of merely to talk it at his own breakfast table, "I mean to set the wench a befitting example of implicit obedience to her *superers*. Now the king being *my superer*, as I am *Lucy's*, I leave all things to him, and do not presume to interfere, it shall be entirely *ally fransay*, for there are good customs in every country, if one has but the gump-tion to know how to chuse 'um, and none better I'll maintain, in the Grand Monarque's dominions than these MARRIAGES DE CONVENIENCE (!), for as marriage is a convenience and nothing else, in course it stands to reason that it should be made

as convenient as possible; and *this* his Majesty was graciously pleased to explain to me the other day, once for all, through the interpretation of the Count de Bushy Rabbit-skin (!), and so what is to be *will be*, and what *must be can't be* helped, and *that's* as good logic as you'll get, my Lady Hawthorne, in any college at this or 'tother side of the Channel."

And after this flow of rhetorical small beer, Sir Gilbert condescended to ask why his daughter was not at breakfast, but before her mother could answer, he added—

"Seeing as we are only a getting on toward the fag end of April, she's never a gone looking for the Elves' Cosmetic\* surely, besides fair play is a jewel, and what's sauce for the goose, is sauce for the gander, and she's *no call* to trouble about her looks, which are well enough, for she takes after the Hawthornes, who were always a comely race, but if she was as sour-visaged as the virgin-thron'd Queen Bess, in Moltano's puppet show, and farthingaled out, and ruffed, quilled and porcupined, like *that* ere Miss Harry the Eighth, the Count de Belviane *Cart oars* is bound to take her all the same, and no thanks to him; and if *he* was as old and as ugly as the devil Dr. Faustus went out a riding on, when he never *come* back, but kept his wife and *family* a waiting dinner for him to this day, *that's* nothing to *her*, he'll make a Countess of her, and all she'd a choice of in her own country, was stuff, cloaks, and patterns, within the sound of Bow, or gilt spoons, green china, and a damaged reputation at Whitehall—but where is the girl?"

"In bed with a bad headache, Sir Gilbert, for the poor child can't sleep o'nights, but cries her eyes out at the thoughts of this marriage."

"Tut, tut, the silly wench, let her keep her tears till after she is married, and then if she has the misfortune to displease her husband it will be time enough for her to cry. Ring, sweetheart, for some more ale, and tell the girl not to make a greater fool of herself than all women *nat'ly* are."

"Who argueth with a fool writeth upon water," says the Arabian proverb; and Lady Hawthorne had not writhed for two-and-twenty years under the amalgamation of ass and mule, which constituted her lord and master, without being fully im-

bued with that profound truth; so she obeyed in silence, and as sensible people are always calm under the irrevocable, she uttered no further remonstrance; for though, generally speaking, patience and gentleness are as monster-taming as Hercules, yet marriage, being the Olympic game of our social system, a husband always plays the Jupiter therein, to whom *all things* must yield, for *nil juvat immensos cratero promittere montes*.

While Lady Hawthorne was performing her daily task in the conjugal tread-mill, Madame de Sévigné, who had just arrived from Meudon with a basket of the freshest and sweetest violets that ever grew out of Eden, was sitting by Lucy's bedside pouring into her ear the vague, but still incomparable cordial of HOPE! which, like that mysterious but delicious elixir of the *grande Chartreuse*, keeps death itself at bay—for a time.

With her national notions of marriage and filial submission, the *spirituelle Marquise*, under ordinary circumstances, would have thought it tantamount to sacrilege, to have encouraged a daughter in disobedience to a parent's will, but *knowing* Sir Gilbert, and having been told by Lady Hawthorne how he had encouraged Rupert's love for Lucy, till he had discovered that he was Sir Henry Vane's nephew, and then how summarily and cruelly he had dismissed him, and that he now wanted to force Lucy to marry a man whom she was never to see till she met him at the altar.

"Decidedly," said Madame de Sévigné, "it is *too* monstrous; there is nothing more unjust, unnatural, romantic, and ridiculous in all Madeleine de Scudery's romances; and I cannot conceive how the King, usually so kind and amiable to all, at least, that wears such a beautiful form as *la jeune* Hawthorne, can lend himself to the plans of that old *Sapajou*, Sir Gilbert.

"My dear child, you must not, indeed, you must not fret in this way," said Madame de Sévigné, after having kissed away "the trembling gold" of Lucy's radiant hair off her forehead to make way for the fresh cool violets, which she now piled in heaps upon its burning surface, "as Bourdaloue said to me, the other day, '*non est reluctandum cum Deo*,' that is, we must not struggle against God: No, on the contrary, we must submit to him, and when we do, depend upon it, he will have mercy on us, and *can* make the burden heavier than we can bear."

"Oh! if it were *only* my burden, indeed I would *try* and bear it without a murmur," sobbed Lucy, "but poor Rupert, his prospects are now for ever blighted;

\* Formerly it was the custom in England for the women to begin their Maying by getting up by day-break on the first day of that "merry month" to bathe their faces in May dew, which was supposed to be a great beautifier, and was poetically called "the Elves' cosmetic."

if, instead of this disgraceful imprisonment, he had been forced to marry a great lady, and it was for his good; that is, for his advancement, I think I *could* have borne it; at least, it would have been a consolation almost amounting to happiness, to have suffered, that he might succeed; but now all is over! my only hope for him—for us—was in the King's favour and protection, and since he has incurred his Majesty's displeasure, and that the latter sides with my father, there is no hope."

"*Ecoutez chère*, in the first place, you must not look upon it in the light of a *disgrace* to be sent to the Bastille; on the contrary, our young *Fréloquets* seem to consider the being so as positively part of their nobility; in the next place, you—yes, *even you*—must own that it was a monstrous foolish frolic about the Duchesse de Chevereuse's bracelets."

But Rupert, having found means to acquaint Lucy with the real history of the bracelets, she merely gfoaned, and covered her face with her hands.

"But," resumed Madame de Sévigné, "you must not imagine that Monsieur Singleton has at all incurred his Majesty's displeasure. It was due to Madame de Chevereuse, that he should make this parade of anger at the transaction, and that is all; and, in the third place, as for siding with Sir Gilbert about your marriage with this Comte de Belviane Quatorze, that, you know, he did before 'this bracelet affair.'"

"I don't care," broke in Lucy, "they may, indeed, drag me to the altar; but the King, or no earthly power, shall force me to marry this Monsieur de Belviane Quatorze. My father told me yesterday, that they intended that Mademoiselle de Colbert should marry the young Duc de Chevereuse the same day. I am glad of this, for I have great faith in Monsieur Colbert, and if the King *won't* have mercy on me, why, then, I will appeal to *him*; he is used to redressing all the wrongs in France, surely, he will not turn a deaf ear to mine!"

"*A la bonneheure*," said Madame de Sévigné, "resist, appeal, resolve as much as you please; do *anything but despair*; for, as a poor beggar said to me this very morning, whom I saw fainting by the way-side, at the *barrière*, in the last stage of exhaustion and destitution, 'Mais Madame, il ne faut pas se désespérer; car désespérer, c'est boulder le bon Dieu.\* There! there is *true faith* for you; and, as Molière said to the mendicant who brought him back

\* "But, Madame, we must never despair, for to despair is to sulk with the Almighty." This a poor Piedmontese beggar actually said to the author, during the Exhibition of 1851.

the Louis he had given him in mistake for a *sou*, 'Où la vertu va-t-elle se nicher?' say I."

"Not only in these poor beggars' hearts," said Lucy, "for, indeed, indeed, I *do* trust in God; who else have I, or have any of us to trust to?"

And Lucy spoke from the sincerity of her heart. Yet still she wept; so difficult is it for the afflicted to remember, while they are goading them on—

"That sorrows are but angel guides,  
To worlds where sorrows never come!"

Soon after, Lady Hawthorne came into the room, her eyes red and swollen, for her heart had also been finding egress at them. And, as Madame de Sévigné silently took her hand, and pressed it within both her own, she *thought* in plain prose, what a modern poet has expressed in the following lines:—

"Oh! for a law to noose the villain's neck,  
Who wrongs his own, who persecutes the blood  
He gave them, in his children's veins; and  
hates,  
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to  
love."

But considering who it is that frame and administer the laws, such a law, no doubt, notwithstanding all the pother made about "*progression(?)*" is as far off as ever, from being passed.

## CHAPTER XXX.

"THAT is a divine poem! that 'Troilus and Cressida,'" said Molière, laying down a manuscript translation of Chaucer's exquisite tale, that Bernier had lent him, after he had returned one morning from seeing Rupert, who was still not exactly enjoying, but enduring the *otium cum dignitate* of the Bastille; he had brought the prisoner so far good tidings, that he had announced a term to his imprisonment, as he said it was the King's intention to have all his household present on the occasion of Mademoiselle de Colbert's marriage with the Duc de Chevereuse, which was to take place in a month. Generally speaking, Molière was always happy when he had, in any degree, made others so; but, somehow or other, there was an unusual weight upon his spirits on this day; and, when he came home, he flung himself into an easy chair, and tried to read, but he only coughed; he next took up a pen and attempted to write: but Boileau, had he been there,

certainly would not have asked where he found his rhymes *that morning*—for he could not find one—so he flung away the pen—turned his chair to the fire, and fell into a reverie, which may have begun in things temporal, but which certainly, ended in things spiritual; for he said aloud, at the end of half an hour,

“Yes, Heaven must be the best place; for there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage, there.”

“Poquelin mon ami?” said Chapelle, knocking at the door, and putting in his head before Molière had time to say come in; “can you receive a leash of Dukes, and a *Roturier*?”

And, as he asked the question, he entered the room, followed by the Dukes of la Rochefoucauld, de la Tremouille, and de Guiche.

“We are come *en masse*,” said Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, “to ask you, my dear Molière, to change the play to-night to ‘L’ECOLE DES MARIS?’”

“Willingly, Monseigneur, if you wish it.”

“The fact is,” said the Duc de la Tremouille, “we wish to finish De Chevereuse’s education before he joins the worshipful company of Benedicts.”

“Well, I can tell you,” said Monsieur de Guiche, arranging the points of his collar in the glass,—“that he is past making, or marrying, for de Chevereuse and *la petite Colbert* doat upon each other, to as great an excess as if they never were to be man and wife.”

“Indeed! that’s a pity,” said Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld. “Car çe que porte malheur, dans les mariages *d’inclination*, *ç’est qu’on exige trop, et pardonne trop peu.*”\*

“Bah! Liencourt—that is the maxim of a heartless sensualist, who knows nothing of the divinity of love, but only its distractions, like those apostate Egyptian priests who ministered in the Temple of Isis, not to offer up sacrifices, but to commit sacrilege! and who knelt at the altar only for the sake of its spoils. Any soul capable of *real love* would reverse your aphorism, and say that it *exact*s nothing, and forgives everything; but then, indeed, it depends whether your devotion is to *yourself*, or for *another*. If for the former, your maxim would be certainly true; but if for the latter, it would be as false, hollow, and selfish as the heart that could exact so much, and forgive so little.

\* This thoroughly “*homme blasé*” maxim was lately done into English, in a Scotch Magazine, and, of course, duly puffed by the “*Morning Post*,” as being so original (!) and profound (!). “Oh! British public! British public! oh! why let that venal press-gang hum you so?”

Don’t you think so, Molière?” concluded the Duc de la Tremouille.

“I certainly agree with you, Monseigneur,” replied Molière; “for though it is quite true that love exacts sacrifices, it exacts them of, and from, *itself*; but then, as the world has its sacred and profane history, so has the heart. The former is the love that emanates from, and will take us back to heaven, and immolates none but *SELF* on its altars; but this is rare: the latter is the more universal egotism, which men profane with the name of love! and is the selfish and sensual feeling which a Pacha or Bashaw entertains towards a favourite slave in his harem, of whom he certainly would exact much, and forgive little; or, more properly speaking—nothing, *self* being the only idol that such natures bow to.”

“There!” cried the Duc de la Tremouille, “I’m glad to have nature’s high priest, Molière, on *my* side; for as for *you* Liencourt, you are a perfect spider, and extract poison from everything.”

“Very likely; but if the poison did not exist, I could not extract it,” rejoined Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, “and as Poquelin acknowledges, the selfish feeling is the more universal one: it is a strange anomaly *that*, in human nature, that people should think worse of those who detect, and proclaim a fault, than of those who possess it, or do the evil; but this no doubt is the world’s cheap left-handed way of *appearing* amiable, as but for the varnish of fine sentiments, how would men ever hide the cross-grained, gnarled defects of their nature. But we are interrupting Molière,” added he, “and as like the beggars we have now got all we want, we had better go; so *à l’Ecole des Maris* this evening.”

So saying, they took their departure, dragging Chapelle along with them, who would much rather have remained where he was; perhaps it might have been better if he had; yet who can analyze a *perhaps*?

“Perhaps Armande is at the theatre; I must write, and tell her that the play is changed; or she may be at home; and perhaps I had better go and look for her;” thought Molière. Which of these two *perhaps*’s would have been the best to act on, it is impossible to say, but their propounder pulled down his ruffles, and chose the latter: as he passed to the door, he caught the reflection of his own figure in the glass; the lace falls at his knees, the tassels of his collar, and even the *canons*, and points, on his shoulders, all seemed to hang lankily and listlessly about him, like the deep lines in his face, those ravines, by which care and sorrow, had traced their outward progress. He be-

stowed upon himself a wan smile, and slowly nodded his head several times, as he said, in answer to his own thoughts.

"Is it likely that she should?" Then giving a deep sigh, he mechanically arranged the details of his dress, and walked on. When he got to the middle of the large ante-room he stopped, and looked round. Lisette generally sat at work there, her work was in the window-seat, and her chair by the window; but she was not there then: it is true, that the chair was not the galleys, that she should be chained to it: still, he wished she had not been absent, for he would have sent her with a message to her mistress. Molière was always nervous at the idea of being alone with Armande; the fact was, he wanted some one to protect him against himself; he might certainly have rang—and for a moment he thought of doing so, and moved back one step for the purpose, but the next returned, for he was in that state of deliberation which is said to lose a woman, and which certainly does not save a man.

"I wonder if she is up stairs, or down," thought he. However, there stood the drawing-room door; and it was in the way, at least, to seek her *there* first. There were, in fact, two drawing-rooms, only divided from each other by a velvet *portière*. Molière turned the handle, and entered; his footsteps fell noiselessly on the Tournais carpet. He walked on, and put aside the curtain. Had it depended upon his volition, he would have dropped it instantly; but it did not; and its folds and his grasp, seemed to grow into each other, and to become one; while his throat became suddenly hot, and parched as a furnace. If the utterance of a single word could have saved a life, or gained a world, he could not have pronounced it. His eyes, too, burnt fiercely, and seemed fixed like stars in their orbit, for he could not move them; and the noise of a thousand torrents was foaming and dashing in his ears, and carrying away his senses, in a fearful whirlpool! for there sat Armande, and there knelt the Duc de Lauzun, her hand unresistingly in both of his. She raised her eyes, but seeing Molière, she gave a piercing shriek, and rushed out of the room by another door, while Lauzun sprang to his feet, and drew his sword, exclaiming "Mais quoi mon ange?" for his back being to the door, he had not seen who was there. Instantly Molière, noble, and generous to the last, even under the lashings of his own mortal agony, resolved upon a plan to shield the reputation of his worthless wife, he, therefore, affecting to think that Lauzun had attempted to insult Armande, without her being a consenting

party, also drew, and rushing upon the Duke, shivered, with one blow, his sword, which he dashed from his hand broken in two.

"Monseigneur le Duc de Lauzun!" thundered Molière, glaring upon his contemptible rival, "you have dared to insult the poor actress. Were you not her husband's debtor, I would kill you. Had we witnesses I would, at least, see the colour of a villain's blood, even though it flowed in royal veins! But we are *alone!* so I offer you the sovereign mercy of my contempt—make the most of it; to quit this house now, and *for ever!*" added he, pointing to the door with his sword, "But harkee, Monseigneur le Duc de Lauzun, KEEP YOUR OWN SECRET, for let but a word, a look, a *breath!* tarnish the good name of Mademoiselle Molière; and the next time this sword points out your way, it shall be through your heart!"

Lauzun made a faint effort at *nonchalance*, and was beginning—"My dear Molière, the a—fact a—you a—are quite a mistaken; and a—that is—the a—money you a—were good enough to lend me a—"

"I will send you a receipt for it to-morrow—*Sortez Monsieur!*"

And as Molière stood pointing to the door, Lauzun slunk out of it, while the former, now burying the point of his sword in the carpet, leant on it, as he bent forward to try and catch the sound of the Duke's retreating footsteps, and in this attitude he remained, till he heard the ponderous *porte cochère* slam to, when he rushed to the window; and when he was sure his foe was in the street, he drew forth his handkerchief, and, previous to sheathing his sword, wiped it as savagely, as if it had been really reeking with Lauzun's blood.

"And now for another scene in this drama, this comedy! as the actor just gone out no doubt will call it. But, courage! courage! Molière! it will be the last—the last! Oh, no; not yet. This is only the beginning of the struggle with that Nemean lion, Despair! which must be driven further, further still, into its own dark den, the heart, before the Hercules, Death, can crush out its raging vitality! '*Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord;*' which means, that mortals are not to meddle with it; nor will I, let all the sin be *HERS*, all the sorrow *mine*, and Heaven the umpire!"

And so saying, he folded his arms within his cloak, and, pale, cold, and fearfully calm, he betook himself to Armande's room, which he entered without knocking. She was seated before a table,



her face buried in her hands, sobbing. At his entrance, she raised her head, and, seeing who it was, was about to fling herself at his feet exclaiming,

"Oh! Molière, *don't* condemn; before you hear me?"

"Madame," said he coldly, but without the slightest tone of irony, or taunt, as he prevented her kneeling, and forced her back into her chair, "make neither confessions, nor excuses, till *you* have heard *me*. The former I would rather not hear; the latter I would rather you did not utter." And seating himself at a considerable distance from her, after, for less than an instant, concealing his face in his handkerchief, as he wiped the cold dews off his forehead, he continued, "I believe you will acquit me of the master-foolly of ever having deluded either you, or myself, as to the likelihood of such a one as I am being capable of inspiring a young, beautiful, and attractive girl of your age, with what is emphatically called LOVE? If you recollect, I even *warned*, and pointed out to you its impossibility, with the consequent risks and drawbacks, before our union—I—I should say, our marriage; if therefore I have erred, it has been in three instances: first, in allowing you, under *any circumstances*, to sacrifice your youth, your beauty, your talents, or, in one word, your fascination, to bearing a name whose owner had nothing but that name, which you could deem worthy to accept, or to retain; secondly, I have erred most grievously, in supposing that *any other* sort of affection, however woofed with the shreds and patches of duty, conventionalities, or even the still firmer web of early associations, could ever equal, much less replace, the golden tissue of real love! whose softness is its strength; and whose costliness is its durability; thirdly, I have perhaps erred more, and most unpardonably of all, in exacting from you a steadiness of principle, and an austerity of prudence, which your nature, your education, and your all-demoralising profession rendered so difficult;—not to say so impossible. Since then, so great have been my errors, great be my punishment; but whatever I am, and whatever *you* are, even as such, am I bound to protect you! Do not, however, mistake me, Madame," added Molière, rising, and plunging his right hand into his bosom, as he paced the room, for his heart burnt, and beat as if it would have burst its fleshly bonds, "by for a *moment* supposing that I tamely accept the *honourable position* you would perhaps assign me. No, by heaven!" and his clenched hand came down with such force upon a small *marqueterie* table,

that he shivered a costly Venice glass, containing two sprays of Lily of the Valley, into a thousand pieces; his own sudden phrensy recalled him to reason, and he continued calmly, and with a sort of solemn gloom, "I only accept the responsibility which God delegated to me when at His altar I swore to—I—love, that is, to cherish, to guard, and to protect you, till death shall absolve me from my oath. And although *from this hour we in reality part!* and shall for the future be as much separated as if the grave yawned between us, *your honour and mine* still are, and ever must be, ONE. Then by that honour, and for it, I am still bound to shield you by my presence, and to shelter you with my roof. By convention, marriage annihilates a woman's power, and renders her a nullity; this disfranchisement from all individual privilege and independence, has not, and cannot have a moral tendency, for it is unjust; since then, her sphere is placed within the orbit of that of her husband, it is but fair that the circle which so stringently *binds*, should at least, by the same immutable laws, be compelled as eternally to *protect*. The world is a ruthless monster, which has no mercy on those who are thrown upon it, and either tears them to pieces at once, or goads them to death piecemeal: *no one human being, has a right to fling another to this minotaur, and when they fling themselves, the suicide should be pardoned in the insanity!*

"You can form little idea of the *chevaux de frise* of subtle tortures, that compass a woman in that most false of all false positions, that of being fettered, yet abandoned! she is a living target for every villain to aim at, for every calumny to pierce, for every knave to juggle with, and for every fool to scoff at. God keep *me!* from the unshriveable sin of ever converting *you* into such; if I could not win your love, I will not at least poison your existence at every source, till its bitter floods return in hourly, though perhaps, unuttered curses, to overwhelm my own soul; for Nemesis, though oft a laggard, never fails, at *last*, to gather in for us the harvest we have sown. Now, Madame, you know my resolve; I will religiously do *my* part; no breath shall assail, no evil shall beset, no contumely shall wither *you*, that *I* can ward off; but *this* is but the outward varnish of fair things; their more precious substance rests with you; guard them strictly, truly, for your own sake, and for Heaven's! for to Heaven you must render your account; may it guide you *better*; it cannot pardon you *more* than I have done! And," added Molière, in a voice so faint, and so hoarse, as to be almost inarticulate,

“Should the Duke de Lauzun not come here again, to—to—insult you, and to outrage me—you will not be surprised; for I have forbidden him the house; it was due to *our* honour that I should do so; heartless, vain and unprincipled as he is, *yours* is safe from his boasting, for I have set an iron seal upon his lips, which his cowardice will hardly allow him to break. I have only further to inform you, that at the particular request of the Ducs de la Rochefoucauld, de la Tremouille and de Guiche, the play is changed to-night to ‘l’Ecole des Maris;’ and now, Madame, although we must continue to meet daily and hourly, and though we may vow much eternal love on the *stage!* FAREWELL FOR EVER! My last legacy to you shall be a counsel in the words of an old English poet—and like myself a poor player—of the name of Shakspeare; you would do well to bear it in mind, for your *own* sake; *mine* is now without the pale; he puts this truth into the mouth of his Prince of Denmark, who, being a man, thus speaks of men,

“*We are arrant knaves all! believe none of us.*”

Even Armande, giddy as she was, from the whirl of a thousand follies, could not but feel what a gem she had cast away, for the most worthless tinsel by which she was surrounded.

“Molière!” gasped she, stretching out her arms till her fingers touched, without being able to clutch his cloak; but slight and almost imperceptible as the contact was, it thrilled through his very marrow with a sort of electric agony! and he bounded from her as if he had been lashed by a Torpedo, and never stopped till he reached his own room, where he locked himself in. Several hours passed away, for the obsequies of the heart take longer to perform than any other—because hope never survives affection, but is, indeed, the dead burying its dead!

### CHAPTER XXXI.

If the world were to pause, or to vary, but a hair's breadth from its usual routine for every heart that aches, or breaks, its changes would be even more sudden and astounding! than those of Modern Patriots (?) who foam Free Traders, to subsidize Protectionists, or vice versa, as the case may be, and its progress would be more dilatory if possible! than the proceedings of the aforesaid rogues in grain and rogues at sea, but luckily it does not,

but adopts what may be called the jolly school of philosophy of the celebrated miller of the river Dee, that is, the lion's share of this philosophy, for the miller only reciprocated Nobody's carelessness, because Nobody cared for him! While the world cares for nobody, probably because everybody cares for it, at least with a very few sensible exceptions, and these, the said world, always revenges itself upon in the most signal and vindictive manner, for no one can disregard it with impunity unless they set it boldly at defiance, and *then* it is often not only bullied into the most unaccountable complaisance, but actually becomes an accomplice and a partisan, but like a heartless old coquette as it is, *indifference* is what it *never* does forgive. Well, then, though Moliere still adorned the stage like a painted sepulchre, recording life without, and containing death within; and, although Lucy steeped her pillow in the prodigal tears of a first great grief; and Rupert, like Job, cursed the hour he was born between his prison walls; the world jogged on precisely the same, with absolutely nothing changed—unless, indeed, it might be that La Fôret looked less spiteful, and Madeleine Bejart more so—for they both divined Molière's dark secret; and while the former, after her surly fashion, grieved at it: the latter, with the malice of a demon, gloried in it; and, perhaps, it is that the wicked *may* rejoice (for there must be something for every one) that there is so much misery up and down, and round about the world. Be this as it may, Rupert was one evening pacing his narrow cell at the Bastille, more desponding and impatient even than usual; for, not only did he feel outraged and aggrieved at being so long incarcerated, and at the King's obstinate refusal to hear his vindication, or to abridge the term of his confinement, but he was so indignant at Louis Quatorze's inhumanity in insisting on his being present at the marriage of Lucy with the Comte de Belviane Quatorze, that he had that morning, through Bussy Rabutin, tendered the resignation of his appointment in the royal household; and had, moreover, written a strong appeal to Maria Theresa, for Louis was generous in the extreme in granting his Queen all that she had no absolute right to; and, therefore, her intercessions in any one's behalf but her own were seldom disregarded. So Rupert had written to try and enlist her womanly sympathies for Lucy against this compulsory marriage. And Bussy, who was here, and there, and everywhere, like a will-of-the-wisp, when a service was to be rendered, or a good-natured thing to be done, had promised to return again that

night to report the success or failure of his embassy. The cell that Rupert occupied in the Bastille, not being a felon's, consisted of a round turret; the walls of which, instead of being bare, were hung with an old arras considerably the worse for wear—for it was ripped in sundry places as with the point of a sword—while in other less damaged parts of it, were scrawled epigrams upon the Fronde, and profiles and full faces of Madame de Longueville; and, if the ink that had executed them did not tell a black falsehood, there certainly was nothing in that lady's eyes to justify any man on their account, *de vouloir faire la guerre aux dieux!* The one grated window that lit this tower by day was so high up that, to see through it, the inmate must have put a chair upon the oak table beneath it, and clambered upon the chair; an iron lamp was suspended from the ceiling, which was now lit; and, as the flare of its double flame was unconfined by a glass, it cast a red glare upon the gloomy walls; and, on the *lit de sanglé* in one corner, which, with two old high-backed arras chairs, and the before-mentioned long oak table, constituted the whole of the furniture. Rupert was still pacing with folded arms and set teeth this narrow den, when he heard the ponderous key turn and the bolts roll back in the door; his heart beat violently, thinking it was Bussy returned: but when the heavy door suddenly opened and as suddenly shut, a very different personage stood before him, for it was a friar, so sleek and comely, that he might have joined the Canterbury pilgrims at the Tabard, and sat to Chaucer for the picture of his monk, for like him this one was also "a bold rider, fond of hunting, a manly man, and worthy to have been an abbot." Many a capital horse had he in his stall, and as he rode along one could hear his bridle jingling in the whistling wind like the distant chapel bells,\* and if this one's sleeves were not embroidered with the finest gray fur, and his hood was not fastened under the chin with a golden true-lover's knot, it was fastened with an exquisite little Petitot of a lady in a black lace half mask, so that only a most lovely mouth and teeth were to be seen, but that was quite enough, for if the rest of the face was only half as beautiful it would have been too much.

"Ha, ha, ha! *beau Sire*; have you no better greeting for your old friends than

\* Or, as Spencer hath it, in the "Faery Queene," the

"Wanton palfrey all was overspread  
With tinsell trappings, woven like a wave,  
Whose bridle rung with golden bells, and  
bosses brave."

to open your eyes and mouth at them, instead of opening your arms or at least your heart to them?" said the monk, with a laugh so joyous and mellow, that a similar one had rarely, if ever, echoed within those walls.

"Friend! it's hard to know one's friends in this world, and I certainly don't know you, holy father," replied Rupert.

"Ah! I see how it is," replied the friar; "the most retentive memory can hardly take cognizance of an old friend with a new face," and as he spoke he put his hands to his head, and slipped off his whole disguise, consisting of a most jovial life-like mask and a false cranium of ivory, the polished surface of which, surrounded as it was by curled crisp dark hair, in which a few gray ones were artistically interspersed, simulated to perfection the monastic tonsure; and the man who had accosted Singleton on the Place Nôtre Dame the day of the collection, and who had so dexterously given him the slip by jumping into a boat, now stood before him.

"Villain!" exclaimed Rupert, collaring him, "now I have you, and you shall no longer escape the laws of your country."

"Ta, ta, ta! my young friend; you are now quite as much too demonstrative as you were before too apathetic," said the monk—not shaking off, but actually flipping off Rupert, as if he had been a feather; and coolly taking a small silver pipe from his girdle, with a chain of the same metal attached to it; which pipe he filled with Latakai, and pressed down with a gilt Turkish pastille, and holding it up to the lamp for a moment, then put it in his mouth, and began puffing away, folding his arms, and leisurely seating himself on a corner of the oak table,—“So you mean to denounce me to the laws of my country, do you? Ha! ha! ha! but *who* do you mean to denounce, eh? for *that* is one of the few occasions upon which it is admissible to call a gentleman names;” and he replaced his pipe and whiffed away vigorously, while Rupert, with his eyes glaring, thundered out,—

"CARTOUCHE! but for whose abominable practises, and my own confounded folly, I should not now be incarcerated in this accursed place."

"Hush! softly, my good young sir, as you value those dainty limbs of yours; for as the firing of cannon is apt to set the heavens a weeping, so the careless use of the name you have just uttered is very apt to bring walls,—more especially prison walls,—about one's ears. What you say touching your own folly, that of course you must be the best judge of; but with

regard to the *abominable practices* of the gentleman whose name you have made so free with—allow me to observe to you, that the epithets are ill-chosen and ill-advised”—Pu-pu-puff! “I hope my smoking don’t incommode you; but the fact is, that most things in this world end in smoke—even the virtuous indignation of an amateur Lycurgus. Pray proceed. I am all attention”—pu-pu-puff!

Doubly exasperated at the fellow’s imperturbable nonchalance, Rupert clenched his powerless hands, and shaking them, said,—

“What have you done with the Duchesse de Chevereuse’s pearl bracelets, for which I am so disgracefully imprisoned?”

“Pon my word, considering you fill a post in the finest and most *recherchée* court in Europe, I must say I am astounded at your ill-breeding; for there is *nothing* so vulgar as curiosity, and so like a commissary of police as asking questions. Faugh! *ça sent l’Hôtel de Ville à dix lieues!* but it is always my plan to confound coarseness by courtesy; so, in reply to your anything but polite inquiries, I have transferred those bracelets, first from Madame la Duchesse de Chevereuse’s jewel-box; and secondly, I purchased them for somewhat more than their full value, for the sake of *charity*, from the Archbishop of Paris, as I intend to give them as a bridal present to Mademoiselle de Colbert; for her father is a fine fellow, and the race ought to be encouraged.”—Pu-pu-puff!

“Good heavens! and could you not do all this without making *me* pass for a thief?”

“Not conveniently. My delegating the business to you was one of those unscrupulous necessities of *scapegoatism* which great legislative measures always entail; and though rather late in the day, I have undertaken the education of the government; and as ever since the first d—l looked in uninvited, when Adam and Eve were at breakfast, example has been stronger than precept, I wished, by a practical illustration, to demonstrate to the Court and the Bar, that it is quite possible for a man to appear virtually guilty, without being morally so; and when the young Duchesse de Chevereuse receives these bracelets from *me*, which she would never have done from her old screw-the-air of a mother-in-law, she shall at the same time receive a little *procès verbal* of these facts, which will entirely exonerate you, *beau sire*.”

“A plague on your mendacious sophistry,” cried Rupert. “I will adopt a much speedier method of clearing myself;

for I will this very night, as soon as the jailor brings my supper, denounce you.”

“Whew! softly—not so fast—qui trop embrasse, mal treint—which will you denounce?”

And as he spoke with a rapidity that completely mystified Singleton (for though the changes were effected before his eyes, he could not follow them), the monk became a *Mousquetaire*—the *Mousquetaire*—a grave doctor of the *Sorbonne*—and finally, the *muguet*, or fop, in the wax mask, with mild blue eyes and auburn hair, whom he had first encountered at the *Pré-aux-Clercs* on the morning of his arrival in Paris,—stood, or rather sat, before him.

“Well, *which* do you mean to denounce, *beau sire!*” asked this Proteus; and before Singleton could answer for astonishment, the monk again sat before him, leisurely whiffing his pipe; while, after a few puffs, he added, as he folded his arms,—“Take an old soldier’s advice, my young friend. *Never waste your ammunition*, but always ascertain first how many charges your *cartouche* contains. *Certes* the vigilance of the French police is great; but you may rely upon this, that the vigilance of those who evade it is *greater*.”

“But again, let me ask you,” said Rupert, but now quietly, without threat or menace, for he felt that species of moral exhaustion and listlessness which ensues when one is baffled at every point, and can grasp but the one *fact*, that of one’s own utter helplessness, “*why*, of all people in the world, you should have fastened upon *me*, (whom you never saw before, and met by a mere chance) to carry out your plans?”

“Yes, by a chance, which, like all other chances, are pre-ordained, beyond and independent of our control,” rejoined the monk with a sigh, replacing the short silver pipe in his girdle, and with it, putting up his bantering manner, as he continued in an earnest and natural voice, “All things in creation, both in the moral and physical world, move in a circle, and are sure to come round some time or other, but always at the most unexpected times and places, and so we call these *umbri, chance*. This much of my history, I will tell you. I was born as *good* a gentleman as you, for no one, in *courtesy*, is better born than those they are addressing. You doubtless know that your uncle, Sir Henry Vane, was partly educated in France. For three years, he and I were fellow-students at the college of Clermont, and two as mad rufflers as ever broke bounds, or scandalized a parish; but that’s neither here nor there now, except that your uncle, in a foolish

brawl, once saved my life, near the very spot, at the Pré-aux-Clercs, where I first met you; and better still, helped me to evade Richelieu's stringent laws against duelling. This, it was, I verily believe, that first gave me a taste for that sort of thing; for, by dint of duping, one becomes expert. The only difference in this universal game that all the world plays is, the relative positions, for success *masks* men, and failure *unmasks* them. Well, soon after this duel, Sir Henry Vane and I separated, and turned down our different paths in life; he became a patriot, and I a public robber; and, if you will analyse the history of nations as closely as I have done, you will find that, though patriot *sounds* much finer than public robber, (were it only from being more terse,) yet they are pretty generally synonymous. The result of our two careers has been that your uncle lost his head, and I my footing in what is called society; that is, in the select circle which makes laws to punish the mass for doing *openly* those things which they do *privately*. A man is hanged if he steals a silver dish, but a gentleman(?) may buy a dozen and never pay for one. But let that pass: reflections like these are the thistles of experience that border all the highways and byways of life, and which every ass may crop for himself as he goes. ONE event, which bends with irresistible force the twig of every destiny, was strong as death and dark as night, in my case; the tree has borne much bitter fruit, but which only will be gathered for the great graveyard banquet of God's last judgment. So no more of that, but back to Sir Harry Vane—he crossed the sea, and went his way; I, the country, and went mine.

That was seven-and-twenty years ago, and I heard no more of *brown Sir Harry*, as we used to call him at Cleremont, till one evening last June, business called me, and some of the *gentleinen at arms*, in my volunteer corps, to the other side of St. Denis; in fact, why should I conceal from you, that the business was to escort Sir Gilbert Hawthorne's coach into Paris, on his first visit to *la Belle France*, but owing to his having over-eaten, or over-slept himself, or both, at *Montreuil*, and so delayed a day longer on the road, it quite put us out in our calculations, and poor Master Hans Hallyburton gave up for Sir Gilbert even more than we intended the Knight should have given up for himself—for he gave up the ghost—poor fellow! his being shot was all a mistake, for had he submitted quietly to being searched, when I had seen his papers he would not even have lost the little money he possessed; but he defended the former so

valiantly, that in the struggle Juan's pistol went off and wounded him mortally. Upon searching him previous to burying him (which we did by torch-light, with all the honours of the road), I for the first time for seven-and-twenty years, heard tidings of my old college chum, Sir Henry Vane; alas! thought I, how men change, not only in their most confirmed opinions, but in their most inveterate habits. Poor Harry Vane! seven-and-twenty years ago! when you and I first braved the world together, and flung care to the winds to snatch pleasure from every breeze in return; you were always losing your heart; a loss that never does a man any harm, as it is but lending his affections out on usury, which though it may ruin the *lender*, only enriches the lender: but losing one's head, *diantre!* that is more serious, less agreeable, and less profitable. Who knows but that the day *may* come when heads will not be subject to these sort of casualties; this, I know, sounds visionary now, but not the more likely to happen on that account; for every thing in heaven and earth, from the God-head downward is trihedral; one age is the dreamer, the next the seer, that interprets its dreams, and the next after that, the fulness of time, that realizes them, and transforms the scoffed at Chimera, into a daily and common-place fact. Poor Sir Harry Vane! in our *profession* one has not much time to look after one's own soul, much less after another man's. So my requiem for the companion of my youth, was a sigh, and my funeral oration, a *Pax vobiscum*, and though he scoffed at our faith, and cursed with Calvin, homilied with Huss, and lapidated with Luther, yet fearing that where he is gone, he might be tempted as far as the fire and fagot of the former, I have exhausted a little exchequer in holy water to slake, and masses to moderate their fury for the last year. Well, hearing from poor Master Hallyburton before he expired, that you were Sir Henry Vane's nephew, and were to have met him at the Pré-aux-Clercs the next day, to receive these ill tidings, and that your fortunes in life were compromised by the manner of your uncle's death, I resolved to go myself and keep the trust—you know the rest; except that *before* I saw you, I thought of offering you a place in our *troupe* of gentlemen highwaymen, it being a first-rate career for destitute *Damoiseaux* to fall back upon, but after I *had* seen you there was too much of the silken web of gentle blood about you, with its educational prejudices touching *meum and tuum*, and I thought the delicious delinquencies of a drawing-

room, or the vulpine velvetisms of a court, would suit you better than the rough and ready rascality of the road—no offence to what doubtless you call your honour! that great shadow! that stalks before the substance of every man's good opinion of himself, but as the old women truly say, every one must eat a peck of dirt before they die, and this is more true, even morally than physically, and the only difference is, that some men can *digest* it, and thrive into successful villains upon it, while your weaker consciences reject it, and dwindle down into undistinguished nobody's, or starve as honest fools. The bracelets I gave you, as one sends up a straw to see which way the wind blows, and as I have had my eye upon you ever since, I could easily have withdrawn them, but not being able regularly to attend the Petit Bourbon, and see honest Poquelin, *de qui je raffole!* I wished to see my own little comedy of the bracelets out."

"Comedy! do you call it!" broke in Rupert. "Comedy indeed! to mar and blast all my dearest prospects in life, by having me incarcerated in a jail like a common thief."

"Thief! the word is scarcely courteous, my dear sir, considering my *liens de famille!* but with regard to the *pith* of your last observation, as some Roman emperor (or celebrated robber, I really forget which), observed, never call a man's life happy till it is ended; and in like manner, one certainly cannot decide, whether a drama be a tragedy or comedy, till it reaches its last act. However, should the bracelets turn out to be the former, as you seem to forebode, I can only repeat my offer of a company in our *troupe*, or (as to judge from the knitting of your brows, you don't seem to affect *that* much), I will be generous, and shall certainly not leave you unprovided on the world, but will give you, as a sort of fortune, the gold you might in the course of years have earned with us."

"Gold! do you think I'd take a coin of the crime-gilt, gold, extorted by force, and fraud, and even blood!" said Rupert indignantly.

"Softly! softly! my esteemed young friend. I fear me, you are much given to hypercriticism, which leads to those illogical syllogisms called distinctions without a difference: you would not for the world take a coin of that crime-gilt gold, extorted by force, and fraud! would you not? and yet, if I don't greatly mistake, my dainty Daniel! you have been for several months past, in the receipt of a government salary—and how, think you,

royal coffers are filled? ha! ha! ha! If people should be 'just' before they are generous, by St. Anthony! they should also be logical as well as loyal," and again Cartouche put on his cowl, as he descended from the table, where he had been sitting, while Rupert shrugged his shoulders, and folded his arms, as he paced the cell.

"Pray," said he, suddenly stopping, "may I ask how you contrived to gain access to me here?"

"Bah! don't you know that any fool can get into prison, so it was no great exploit for a man who like me, has contrived to get out of all the prisons in France; the *how* is no matter, here I am. I feared you might be dull, and as I was—as you have so often reminded me—the cause of your being here, why, I thought it was only fair to come and see you, and ask you if you would like to come and take a turn in the forest with me, will you? the air is freer, and fresher there, than here, and better for an honest man's lungs—come, try it?"

"Rupert's only reply, was to stamp his foot, and bite his lip."

"Oh! well, *chacun a son goût*; but *chacun n'a pas son cou* very long in this confounded place!" said the robber, taking his rosary in his hand, and asking Rupert in a nasal tone; if there was nothing he could do for him? "for, *mon fils*," added he, "I must be going."

"Nothing," said Singleton, "but to restore the Duchesse de Chevereuse her bracelets, this very night, and exonerate me from the odious stigma under which I am labouring."

"Ah! my son!" cried the pretended monk, still more nasally than before; "your impatience argues a non-reliance on Providence; *sunt superis sua jura*, and mortals may not interfere with them, but as far as conveying a letter for you to any given place or person, eh?"

For a moment Rupert felt tempted to write a few lines to Lucy; words of entreaty, affection, and despair; but the next, he recoiled from the idea of making a man stained with a thousand crimes, the medium of communication with her. "No, nothing," said he, shaking his head mournfully.

"Ah! well, I see how it is; you think me a sad dog, and perhaps I am; but *Turlupin!* *Turlupin's* a good dog! isn't he?" added the Monk, wagging his head, and putting his fore-finger to the side of his nose, as he repeated—

"*Latrai a i ladri, a i amanti tacqui,  
Così a massere, e a madonna, piacqui.*"\*

"So you know Turlupin?" said Rupert, opening his eyes.

"Do not all the civilized world, that is, all the Parisian world, know that illustrious dog? a phoenix among poodles—and, and a poodle among phoenix! which is better still. Dupuis, *Ho! Louche trou, mon ami*, as the *beau Bussy* calls you; to your post, open the door," cried Cartouche, in a loud voice, knocking against the iron nailed door with his knuckles. And the next moment, the bolts again rattled, the key grated in the wards, the door turned upon its ponderous hinges, and the grim visage of Dupuis, with his bleary eyes and grizzled hair, surmounted by a striped blue and white woollen night-cap, appeared poked in on one side, as he held the door itself tightly towards him.

"*Hein! plaît-il mon père?*" said he—

"*Louchetrou mon gar!* exercise all those amenities and ingratiating little amiabilities, towards this youth, for which you are at once so celebrated and so beloved."

"*Laissez donc!* growled the jailor.

"For," resumed Cartouche, "I find his sins are only venial; and therefore," added he, apostolically extending his arms in benediction, "I leave *him* my blessing, and you, worthy Dupuis, my profound respects, and this broad piece to buy lavender to lay them up in, which will give *them* an odour of sanctity, and prevent *your* being *en mauvaise odeur* with the gentleman whose personal safety you superintend, and to whom you so vigilantly play the guardian angel, and yet with a charming modesty that never lets the *angel* in any way appear!"

And, with this banter, he stalked with a measured pace out of the cell, Dupuis, by way of an act of devotion, crossing himself as the false friar passed, and, the next moment, slamming to and securing the heavy door; so that Rupert once more found himself alone, with his heart even heavier and more desponding than before.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

It was full an hour after the departure of Cartouche, and Rupert was still pacing up and down, alternately biting his lips, clenching his hands, and stamping his feet,—in short, going through all the gym-

\* "At thieves I barked and made a fuss,  
To beaux I wagged my tail,  
My master, and my mistress thus,  
To please, I could not fail."

nastics of impotent rage which persons suffering from great and active mental distress, and compulsory bodily inactivity, are apt to indulge in, when the door again opened, with all its usual lugubrious sounds, and this time ushered in Bussy Rabutin.

"Well?" exclaimed Rupert, darting forward, not only his every feature, but actually every hair, looking like so many animated notes of interrogation.

"In the first place," said Bussy, handing him a letter sealed with the royal arms, "her Majesty Marie Thérèse has done you the honour of sending you an autograph reply; and here it is."

Rupert tore it open. It contained but a few lines; but they were neither cold nor constrained, but, on the contrary, both gracious and kind. Yet still, when we are suffering from great sorrow, fear, or anxiety, all kindness that comes short of extricating or relieving us from it falls on our hearts like rain-drops into a rapid river, which only swell and render it more troubled. The Queen expressed the deepest sympathy for Lucy and Rupert, but urged them to trust to the depth and sincerity of their own love, and to the King's good heart being ultimately softened by their distress, but said that, at this juncture of the business, their cause would be only injured by her intercession, as his Majesty would not brook any interference with his plans.

In less than an instant, Rupert's ravenous eyes had devoured every word in this letter, and his heart heaved and recoiled, as if he had swallowed poison. He raised his right arm to his head, and convulsively grasped his hair for a second, and then his hand fell heavily by his side, and he groaned aloud.

"*Hein! ça ne va pas, eh?*" said Bussy, "perhaps this may do better, it's a *petit mot*, from My Lady Hawthorne, that my cousin Marie gave me to give you."

Rupert snatched the note eagerly; the direction was indeed in Lady Hawthorne's hand, but the inclosure was Lucy's writing; he kissed it passionately, and then read as follows:—

"Rupert, dear Rupert!

"Do not let any one, on any circumstance, however extraordinary or suspicious, for a moment persuade you, that all the kings on earth can ever force me to marry *any one but you*. Let this Comte de Belviane Quatorze be whom or what he will, he cannot *force* an assent from my tongue, that no human power shall make it utter; therefore, for Heaven's sake, do not attempt to resist the King's mandate,

to be present at the marriage of Mademoiselle de Colbert; for, remember, it is the only chance we have of meeting. My sole hope is in *you*; so do not fail me, and above all, *don't despair*; for salvation, like death, generally comes 'IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT.' My mother has allowed me to write this to you, for I have just been bled, and Dr. Rohault said I must not be agitated; and nothing agitates a woman (as my father would say) like not letting her have her own way! and my way is always where you are; so our dear mother has let me go thus far; but I am too weak to go any further now, so good night, and may God bless you! dear, dear Rupert, dream of me, and don't dare to doubt me, for it is with my blood that I sign myself, now and for ever, your own

"Lucy"

It was the first letter Rupert had ever received from Lucy; he kissed it again and again, and the discoloured red signature, bearing too palpable evidence of her illness; he plunged the letter into his bosom, covered his face with his hands, and, for a few minutes, cried like a child; but recollecting Bussy Rabutin's presence, he dried his eyes, and stretching out his hand to him, said—

"My dear *Comte*, how can I ever thank you for such kindness?"

"Oh! is that all? I was afraid it was something worse!" said Bussy, "but since that last prescription seems to have agreed with your complaint, I hope it will have given you an appetite, for I am as hungry as a lion, or an abbot, after a three hours' fast, and have ordered *Maitre Pierreffite\** to send us a supper fit for *Amitre*, and champagne that Jupiter himself should not know from nectar; and that everything should be in keeping, I have ordered it to be iced as solidly as the bars of the Bastille."

As he was speaking, Dupuis, with *Pierreffite's* men, entered with the supper, the wine of which would have been enough for half-a-dozen; the table was soon laid, and the two guests seated.

"You may go, my friends," said Bussy to the waiters, as they drew over the basket of champagne from the wall, and placed it beside him; "*Je ferais sauter les bouchons moi*; every one has a talent for something, they say; and that is mine."

"Let me send you some of these *Tendrons à la Parvenue!*" said Bussy, "the mushrooms are excellent; and you are wasting your time trying to dissect that *canard au navets*, for I plainly perceive it must have been a contemporary of Ma-

\* A celebrated restaurant. The *Lointier* of the Paris of that day.

dame la Duchesse Douairière de Chevereuse. *Ah! par bleu!* I forgot to tell you, that to-morrow it is, you are to be liberated; so let us drink to the auspicious event! Mademoiselle de Colbert is to be married next week; and no doubt his Majesty fears that if you were only released from prison for that occasion, you might have a *constrained* air, which one is apt to acquire in the Bastille, and he wishes you, I suppose, to re-seize a little *dégagée* Parisian grace, not to discredit the *bridals*."

"Oh!" said Rupert, as a cloud passed over his face, and he laid down, untasted, the glass he was carrying to his lips, "let me ask you—did you succeed in getting an audience of the King? You were good enough to say you would endeavour to do so."

"No," replied Bussy; "it was latish when I arrived at Versailles; and, by the time I had delivered your missive to the Queen and got her answer, twilight had set in; having no faith in lords-in-waiting, I lingered about in the back corridors leading to his Majesty's *petits appartements*, in the hope of falling in with my particular friend, Coulange, now *premier valet de chambre*; at length I did so, and entreated his good offices to get me an audience—he promised me his *protection!* But, powerful as his patronage is, he soon returned to say that his Majesty could not receive me, as he was suffering from a headache."

"Bah! do you believe it?"

"Oh! certainly," said Bussy, with great solemnity; "for, while I was leaning against the embrasure of a window awaiting Coulange's return, I saw the headache run down the stairs leading from the gallery where the maids of honour sleep; and, flitting past me in blue satin, it entered the King's apartment."

Rupert laughed, and then said.

"But why, on earth, since the Queen-Mother informed him at once that Cartouche was the purloiner of the bracelets—and even Madame de Chevereuse did not affect any longer to think me the culprit—has it pleased his Majesty to keep me all this while under arrest?"

"*Dame! que sais-je moi?* Some men have strange notions about vindicating their honour—like La Fontaine's duel—ha, ha, ha!"

And Bussy leaned back in his chair, and laughed till he cried.

"La Fontaine's duel! is that some new fable he has written?" asked Rupert.

"Fable! no—it's a true history—and about the most ridiculous (even for him) that ever was. It's easy to see that you have been in the Bastille, my dear fellow, for Paris and Versailles have laughed at



nothing else but the Bonhommes Menelaus misfortunes for the last ten days—which is one day more than the ordinary longevity allotted to wonders."

"Pray, enlighten me," said Rupert, "and don't let me go back into the world to expose my ignorance."

"Well—but fill your glass first—for, as you are likely to choke with laughter, drink while you can. You must know that D'Estoublon, Fieubet, and several other *mauvais plaisants*, laid a wager that they would make La Fontaine fight a duel about his wife. Molière having been made a party to the trick, set his face against it, saying, it might compromise poor Madame La Fontaine's reputation; and, as she was an excellent woman, and the Hericards, her family, highly respectable, he thought it would be most unpardonable; but Fieubet, who was the originator of the plot, said he would take very good care that nobody should be victimised but La Fontaine. 'Well,' said Molière, 'you must have your own way; I shall not interfere further—not out of connivance, but because I believe it to be quite impossible that you should ever succeed in any such absurdity. If you intended making him walk into a pond, and stand there all night, thinking he had stepped into his bed, that I have no doubt you would find easy enough. But fight a duel! and about his wife! no, no—the thing is impossible!' The very word was a spur and a defiance; and, accordingly, the conspirators commenced their operations immediately. Fieubet would have been suspicious even to the unsuspecting La Fontaine, but D'Estoublon, with his olive complexion and long, lachrymose face—though he is always planning mischief—looks as if he had compounded for the privilege of attending funerals as an amateur mourner and mute, called upon La Fontaine the next day—whom, of course, he found scribbling as usual.

"Ah! it's you, Monsieur d'Estoublon?" said he, looking up from his paper, and extending his left hand while he went on writing with the other.

"It's me," echoed D'Estoublon, slowly and solemnly, with a profound sigh, squeezing the poet's hand the while, as if it had been in a vice; the pain of which compelled him to look up, when he beheld D'Estoublon, grinding his teeth, and rolling his eyes fearfully.

"Heavens!" cried the *bonhomme*, now in reality laying down his pen, 'what is the matter, my good Monsieur d'Estoublon? Madame is not worse, I hope?' D'Estoublon shook his head in negation. 'No bad news from your son?' Another

shake. 'You had no shares in that expedition to the Gold Coast?' Shake the third. 'Oh! then, decidedly, you have been eating unripe cherries, and a *petit verre de Cognac*, is the very best thing you can take,' said La Fontaine, about to ring the bell.

"Ah! my dear La Fontaine, it is not a case either of cherries, or of brandy," groaned D'Estoublon, flinging himself into a chair, and covering his face with his hands, as he rocked himself to and fro.

"Then perhaps it is plums?" said La Fontaine, 'yet no—I believe they are only in blossom yet; and I don't think the blossoms *could* do any harm.'

"No, no, pray resume your writing," said D'Estoublon captiously, at the same time, mysteriously, and majestically. La Fontaine not desiring better, reseated himself; but every scratch of his pen was not only accompanied by a deep groan, from D'Estoublon, but also by 'Rascally Poignan! detestable villain! to take advantage of an honest man's absence, to blast his wife's reputation, and dishonour him in the eyes of the world! for he is dishonoured, if he don't avenge it, yet how tell him all the odium he is labouring under?' *Gr-r-r-edin de Poignan!*

"*Mais que se que s'est que se Poignan* that you are muttering about?" said La Fontaine, roused out of himself at last.

"What is he? A villain!"

"There are so many," shrugged La Fontaine, 'that that is scarcely a description—who is he, and where is he?'

"Who is he? The man, my dear La Fontaine, who has dishonoured and made you contemptible in the eyes of the whole world! Where is he? At Château Thierry, taking *your* place, beside your wife.'

"*Plait il?*" said poor La Fontaine, bewildered, as if just waking from a dream.

"It's not what I please; but alas! the terrible fact remains, my dear La Fontaine, that you are dishonoured by this Poignan's assiduities to your wife.'

"Poignan, Poignan?" said La Fontaine, putting his forefinger to his forehead, 'where have I heard that name? Ah! *j'y suis*, is he not an old *pi devant* Captain of Dragoons, with a cast in his right eye, and a scar across his nose?'

"Yes, he is a Cavalry officer, and they are always the worst in these sort of affairs, for they gallop over every barrier rough shod, and that is the reason that all the world are open-mouthed about this Poignan's attentions to your wife.'

"Ah, he's attentive to my wife; I'm very glad," said La Fontaine, who could not concentrate his ideas any longer, for

what D'Estoublon was saying, but was now looking wistfully towards the pen and ink.

"Very glad, but *malheureux!* you ought to be very sorry!" cried D'Estoublon, taking him by the shoulders and shaking him.

"Ought I?"

"Ought you, my dear La Fontaine! when I tell you that Poignan's attentions to your wife—"

"Well but," interrupted La Fontaine, impatiently, for *one* thing he *did* clearly perceive, which was, that D'Estoublon was about to take up too much of his time, 'what do my wife and this Poignan wish me to do?"

"*Est il possible!*" said D'Estoublon, 'that a *bel esprit* can be such an ass!—why, my dear La Fontaine, it is what the world wish, and expect, you to do; that you should ask, and *that* I promise you is very different from what Le Capitaine Poignan would like you to do.'

"Well, and what *does* the world wish, or expect me to do?" said La Fontaine, with a vacant stare.

"To run this villain Poignan through the body, to be sure," thundered D'Estoublon.

"*Le pauvre homme!*" sighed La Fontaine, clasping his hands; and at length beginning to have some perceptions of the gist of the matter, he added, 'if I remember right, *pe pauvre diable de Poignan* is near seventy, squints, has a scar across his nose, and is rather lame; *s'est un drôle de séducteur, ou bien, ma femme d'un fichu goût!*'

"My dear La Fontaine, do you not at least know enough of the world to be aware, that for *les mauvaises langues* there is neither age, ugliness, squinting, limping, or any other infirmity that holds good, when a reputation is to be destroyed; on the contrary, there is an alchemy in scandal that converts the most repulsive defects into loves and graces, and all I have to say is, that if you *don't* add another scar to the one on his nose, by running this Poignan through the body, you will stand eternally disgraced! degraded!! and dishonoured!!! in the eyes of the world!"

"Well, well," sighed poor La Fontaine, resigning himself to his fate, and gathering up all his papers which he buried in a drawer, with almost tears in his eyes, 'how long will it take me to do?"

"Why *that* entirely depends upon whether you have a supple wrist, and a quick eye, for planting your thrusts, and upon whether you are in the habit of killing rivals, or even of spitting geese; for *that* would do just as well.'

"Me!" said La Fontaine,—'I never either killed a rival, or spitted a goose; and indeed I'd rather not do either; but as you say *I must*, I hope it is not a thing that will take me long, for I am very busy just now.'

"The sooner you begin, of course the sooner it will be over," replied D'Estoublon logically. *Bref! le bonhomme prend la poste*, travels all night, and arrives at *Château-Thierry* by day-break. He instantly knocks up the innocent Poignan, and thrusts a long spit of a rapier, that he had bought for the sanguinary occasion,—into his hand.

"*Quoi faire?*" asked the *çi devant* captain of dragoons.

"They say," said La Fontaine, 'that your attentions to my wife are such, that I am dishonoured if I don't fight you.'

"My dear Monsieur La Fontaine," said the cavalry officer, going off into a laugh, to which his horse had evidently stood sponsor,—'examine me. *Do* I look the least like a hero, likely to trouble your or any other husband's repose?"

"Clearly not, my good Monsieur Poignan, and in that sentry-box of a night-cap, you even look ridiculous; but that is neither your fault nor mine. I am grieved to the heart to disturb you at such an hour: but come," as Monsieur d'Estoublon here says,—'the sooner we begin the sooner it will be over.'

Poignan shrugged his shoulders, dressed himself, and with another laugh followed La Fontaine and d'Estoublon into an adjoining field, taking a cow-boy, whom he met getting over a stile, for his second! but when they came to measure the ground, which d'Estoublon did in the most mock heroic style, the captain was seized with another uncontrollable fit of laughter, which caused him to stand somewhat after the fashion of the Colossus of Rhodes; whereupon La Fontaine made one or two passes at the air through this moveable arch, in affecting to parry which, to dash his sword from the *bonhomme's* hand, was the affair of an instant for the practised Poignan.

"Hold!" cried D'Estoublon,—'I declare Monsieur La Fontaine's honour to be perfectly satisfied.'

"As you please, my dear Monsieur d'Estoublon; but I must say honour is not very *exigeant*," cried the *bonhomme*; 'but still I wish it had even been less so, and had not compelled me to disturb this worthy gentleman at so unseasonable an hour. I only hope, Monsieur le Capitaine, that you won't owe me a grudge for it, for it was sorely against *my* will; but they told me *I must* on account of my honour;

but now I suppose that's safe, and I presume I need never fight another duel; for you will do me the favour of continuing to visit my wife—won't you? that they may not talk of her with any one else; and, indeed, I wish they would let her and me alone; and now I hope you will give me the pleasure of your company at breakfast, at the *Café Condé*.'

"*That*, my dear Monsieur de La Fontaine," said Poignan, 'is a challenge that I have much more pleasure in accepting than the other,—*et comme j'ai fait sauter votre épée; je ferai sauter les bouchons de votre vin de Bourgogne.*' Accordingly to the *Café Condé* they repaired, and La Fontaine acquitted himself much better as an amphytrion, than he had done as a knight-errant; but D'Estoublon, who told me the story, added—that on their return, as they rattled through the narrow ill-paved streets of Château-Thierry, the *bonhomme* put his head out of the window, and told the postilion to turn down the close where Madame La Fontaine lived.

"You are not going to reproach your wife, I hope?" cried D'Estoublon in some alarm.

"No, no, you'll see," said La Fontaine, nodding his head, and looking very sagacious,—*Je m'y connais en procédés.*

When they arrived at the house, La Fontaine himself got out and rang. 'You will tell your mistress,' said he as soon as the door was opened, 'that Monsieur Le Capitaine Poignan is not hurt, but will continue to call upon her as usual; that I have vindicated my honour, and silenced the *mauvaises langues*; but that as it is yet early, I will not disturb her, but hope she is quite well, and I am on my way back to Paris.'

When Rupert had ceased laughing at this anecdote, which had caused such universal mirth at the time, and seemed the apex of poor La Fontaine's inconceivable *naïvetés*,—Bussy said,—

"And now, my dear Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or, as it is a quarter past one, in the morning; and therefore too late for even a lover, or a madman, those amiable cousins-german, to do anything but go quietly to bed, I'll tell you what I would not tell you before; namely, that you are at liberty to leave the Bastille this very night, and my coach is below, to convey you to the Louvre, for his Majesty refuses to accept your resignation. Take my advice; wait patiently the arrival of events, which would oftener continue in the straight road, by which Providence sends them, if we, by rushing onward to meet them, did not put them out of the right line, and cause them to make some crooked turn.

To-morrow, we are all invited to sup with Molière at Auteuil. La Fontaine will be there, and so you can compliment him upon his feats of arms."

Rupert pressed Bussy Rabutin's hand cordially, but silently, for if, "out of the fulness of the heart, the mouth speaketh," from its overflowings the tongue often becomes mute.

A quarter of an hour after, Singleton had bade adieu to the black and ponderous pile of the Bastille, whose walls looked as if they had been hewn out of blocks of crime, and cemented with tears of blood.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

THAT dull uniform gray mist of utter hopelessness had fallen upon the life of Molière, which, like its atmospheric prototype in the physical world, left no chance of a ray of sunlight being able to pierce through its sullen density. The spirit was daily becoming more keen—more bright on the sharpening whetstone of misery; but the body has little sympathy with these subtle refinings, these taperings upwards, and has its own palpable and ungracious fashion of manifesting its sense of the neglect shown to it by its spiritual partner, for, instead of the elastic fluid mantling its way through the yielding veins, the interior strength rendered by fair proportions into outward grace, and pranked with the thousand coquetries of health, the flesh hangs loosely and listlessly on its framework like faded garments, whose fashion has passed away, and which only cumber, when they can no longer adorn. How many wretches have tried, are trying, and, alas! will still try, to *get out of themselves*; but without avail. They cannot do it till the soul shoots upwards, and re-mingles with the great fountain of its immortality; for as long as it walks the earth, the cold, dark shadow of its prison must be cast before. Molière knew this; we all know it; and yet, cynics that we are, we would command the autoerat Sorrow to stand out of our sunshine. As timorous children dread being left to themselves without a light, Molière dreaded being left alone, so haunted was he by the spectres of his own heart; therefore companionship was light and safety to him, the ghastly phantoms of his household gods, were, for the time being, kept at bay by this garish daylight of hollow conviviality. Well did he know its hollowness, and its fearful mortgage of tenfold after suffering; yet still he clung to it, for as an eloquent writer of the pre-

sent day\* truly observes, "There comes at length a sum total of oppressive burdens which is intolerable, which tempts the wisest towards fallacies for relief;" and as suffering, in one shape or other, is the source of all deep knowledge, who so wise as Molière? He continued, despite everything Chapelle (his only confidant) could say or do, to act, night after night, with Armande. It was as Chapelle truly remarked, as if a wretch whose all had gone down at sea, madly clung to the rock upon which he had split, in order to continue looking at the siren who had wrecked him.

"If I did not, my dear Chapelle," said he one day, in answer to this, while a wan, evaporated smile played like a grave-light round his melancholy face. "I might chance to forget what the bauble is like, and that would be a pity, considering all it has cost me."

But off the stage they never met; for although his breakfasts and suppers were more frequent than ever, fatigue always pleaded a good and plausible excuse for Armande's absence; and so naturally, and with so much *bonhomme* did he make it, that his most intimate friends never suspected the truth. Now, few intimate friends ever do; or many is the jovial banquet from which even the least scrupulous would be scared, could they surmise the skeletons that are stalking round it.

It was a glorious night in the sweet, leafy, loving month of June, when the angels seemed to look down through their starry eyes upon the earth, and the earth to blush into flowers at their gaze: and the breeze felt less like air, than like a soft perfumed breath, as if nature was sighing to think that there *should* be such a space between the great stars of heaven and the little flowers of earth; and on this night all keys of merry voices, and all tones of joyous laughs, resounded through Molière's garden at Auteuil, till their vibration seemed to bring down the moon and starlight in rippling gold upon the trembling waters of a marble fountain, which had been Louis Quatorze's latest gift to his favoured Aristophanes. The voices were those of Despréaux, Chapelle, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the Marquis de Villars, Bussy Rabutin, La Fontaine, Fieubet, the Abbé Boileau, cousin to the poet, Racine, little Baron, and Rupert Singleton, who were all to sup at *La Colombe*, the supper being given ostensibly in honour of the latter's liberation from the Bastille. The last peal of laughter had been occa-

\* Thomas Carlyle, in his "Life of John Sterling." Chapman and Hall.—1851.

sioned by a piscatory discussion between La Fontaine and Bussy Rabutin, and La Fontaine having, with his usual *naïveté*, asked what was the difference between an *Ombre Chevalier* and any other Chevalier? to which Bussy had replied with the greatest gravity—

"Chevaliers in general, my dear Monsieur de la Fontaine, are different altogether; for the Biped Chevalier is always *trying* to keep his head *above water*, which the *Ombre Chevalier* never does, unless he is fairly caught, but there is more and most difference of all between the *Ombre Chevalier* and the Chevalier d'Industrie, for the former feeds on gold,\* while the peculiar property,—that is the *specialité* of the latter, is to contrive to feed without it!"

"Ah, indeed!" said La Fontaine, "I'll make a memorandum of that; I don't doubt but it would make a pretty fable."

"There, *Bonhomme!* you have it ready made to your hand, as I am sure Bussy will generously make you a present of it," laughed the Duc de Rochefoucauld. "and to give your Pegasus a rest, my dear La Fontaine," added the Duke, "you can begin it in the words of your other fable of '*Le Cygne et la Cuisinier,*'

' Dans une ménagerie  
De volatiles remplie  
Vivaient le cygne et l'oïson.'

"Now, as every one knows, you are a swan, *mon cher Jean*, Bussy must be the goshing; so you might continue the fable in this way: à propos of the *ménagerie*—

' Et même elle était munie  
Des Chevaliers, non du *Toison*  
Mais mieux que ça d'industrie!  
Qui, vu leur but; et leur nombre  
Se tenaient sagement à l'ombre! "

"Ah! Messieurs," cried La Fontaine, joining in the laugh, which he now perceived was against himself, "as usual, you are laughing at *le bonhomme*. Well, so much the better. I'm glad of it; though it's rather a case of *Bertran et Raton*."

"Well, my dear Raton," said Molière, linking his arm through La Fontaine's, "the chestnuts are now ready, and we

\* There was formerly a belief rife that the *Ombre Chevalier*, or grayling, fed on gold; and Isaac Walton confirms this by mentioning some grains of gold that were found in the entrails of one. Where dear old "Isaac" fished up his French is not so clear, as he calls it *Umble Chevalier*, which smells rather of the garlic with which he recommends the dish, in which a roasted pike is placed, to be rubbed, to give it, as he says, a "*hogoo!*" vulgo, haut goût.

want your paw to help us to fish them out, or, in other words, supper is on the table.”

And leading the way to the dining-room, the windows of which opened into the garden, all the others followed. The room was brilliantly lighted, and there was that ceaseless struggle going on between the real and the ideal which now manifested itself in the conflicting odours of the rarest flowers, and the most *recherchée* viands; even Rupert was predisposed to the infection of convivial influences, for he had been to the *Ecuelle d'Or*, and, thanks to his garden key and the good offices of his amiable friend, Turlupin, had conveyed a letter to Lucy, and had ascertained that she had passed a good night, and was considerably better. All, therefore, were in high spirits, save the donor of the feast; but, if he was not, he appeared to be so; and, for all worldly purposes, appearances are all that is necessary.

“Here, Josselin,” cried Molière, while he brandished the golden goblet that the King had given him at his *en cas de nuit*, in true Olympian style; “take the Burgomaster-looking flask of *Monte Pulcicino* to Monsieur de la Fontaine. The Cardinal sent me a supply last week, and the Gondis are celebrated for their *Monte Pulcicino*, and everybody knows, my dear La Fontaine, that you are *Rabelaisien* in everything, and Rabelais you are aware, drank nothing else, when he could get it.”

“For Heaven’s sake,” said Racine, “don’t increase his disorder! What do you think this *diabre de bonhomme* has been doing? Bourdaloue lectured me for not reminding him *sometimes* to go to church; so, the other day, I took him to *Ténèbres* with me, though the odds were, as I told Bourdaloue, that, if he saw a picture of St. François de Sale, he would mistake it for one of St. François Rabelais, and begin muttering a *Punurge* and a *Pantagruel* before it. Nor was I far out; for this is the way he served me. I soon saw and heard, by his sonorous yawns, that he was much bored by the service; so, as I would have done to a child, I gave him a Bible with little pictures of the Prophets in it. He opened it at the prayer of the Jews, and presently the whole congregation were scandalized by hearing him exclaim, aloud:

“C’était un beau génie! que ce Baruch! qui était-il? And every one he has met since he accosts with, ‘Avez-vous lu Baruch? C’était un beau génie, presque aussi beau que Rabelais! lisez le.’”\*

\* A literal fact, as well as what follows about Saint Augustin.

As soon as the universal roar had subsided which this anecdote occasioned, La Fontaine looked round with an air of innocent stupification, and said—

“Well, now, really, I don’t see what there is to laugh at. Surely, it is a very common thing for people to compare one man of genius to another.”

“Whether they are to be compared or not,” put in Boileau.

“Never mind them, my dear La Fontaine,” said Chapelle; “that’s the way they are always laughing at me.”

“Very true,” rejoined Boileau; “and since you *have* dragged yourself forward, I don’t see why poor La Fontaine should be left alone on the laughing-stocks. So, though it certainly is great presumption to attempt to *outdo* RACINE, I will, gentlemen, with your permission, give you Monsieur Chapelle’s last. A fortnight ago, the Duc de Brissac—who, as you are all aware, is celebrated for the agreeability of his *ric de chateau*, from the constellations he makes a point of surrounding himself with—did Chapelle the honour of inviting him to Anjou; and Chapelle accepts. But, when he had arrived as far as Angers, he recollects that there was in this town an old *chanoine* of the cathedral, a friend of his,—a most excellent man; for he was renowned, like most of his order, for having most excellent wine. Well, Chapelle, ever alive to such excellence, goes to see him,—nay, more stays and dines with him—which the *chanoine* pressed him to do. He also slept there; but the wine was the occasion of this extension of hospitality. The next morning, on getting up, he finds on his table an old volume of Plutarch; and, on opening it, he reads this sentence:

“Who follows the great becomes a serf.”

And thereupon, instead of continuing his journey to Anjou, he writes off this charming and complimentary aphorism to the Duc de Brissac, as an ample apology and explanation for not fulfilling his promise of joining the party at the *Château de Cossé*. Instead of being offended, as well he might (except that the highest breeding is a sort of quintessence of courtesy that has more suavity than real amiability), he writes to assure Chapelle that he shall not only be his *own* master at *Cossé*, but *also its master’s*. But even this kindness could extort nothing from that great bear there but a reiteration of Plutarch’s maxim, which, at all events, must have inspired Monsieur de Brissac with the stoical simplicity of wishing to have as few followers as possible.”

“Well,” said Chapelle, solemnly, “it

is *Plutarch* who said that those who follow the great become slaves;—it was *not I*."

The uproar that this speech occasioned was even greater than that which ensued upon La Fontaine's parallel between Sacred History and Rabelais; and, as soon as he could speak, Boileau cried out—

"*Note the miracle, friends! I have borne off the palm from Racine!*"

"What a pity," said Bussy Rabutin, "that a marriage cannot be arranged between the *naivetés* of La Fontaine and those of Chapelle,—they would be such a charmingly well-assorted couple."

"Hear that, immoral Bussy! said the Duc de la Rochefoucauld; to even think of such a thing between such very near relations! I am sure *you* would be scandalized at the idea of such a marriage, my dear Jean!"

"Marriage!" muttered La Fontaine, in a brown study, vigorously tugging at his right eyebrow; "*invention mirifique!* as Rabelais calls it."

"Yes, *that* was Rabelais' opinion of the institution; but we want to know *yours*," said Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld.

"*Oh, Divine!*" said La Fontaine, completely pushing his wig to the back of his head, and pouring out another tumbler of wine.

"Exactly, my dear La Fontaine," broke in Bussy Rabutin; "and, therefore, like the devil, the less that is said about it the better."

"True," said Boileau, "for, as far as I can see, discord is generally the hyphen which links people together in *holy* matrimony."

Every one laughed at this but Molière, La Fontaine, and Chapelle, for it too deeply probed the gangrene in the heart of the former, while Chapelle, whose animal spirits were always of the wildest and maddest, while he was sober, only grew solemn and lachrymose as his potations began to take effect, or as Bussy Rabutin more tersely expressed it, Chapelle was never sober, but when he was drunk; and at this juncture he was trying might and main, to collect the pith of a theological discussion between the Abbé Boileau and the Marquis de Villarceaux, which he was listening to most attentively, without being able to understand; all that was intelligible to him was, that the name of St. Augustine occurred very often, accompanied by great eulogiums from the Abbe, till La Fontaine got a vague idea that the Saint was getting more praise than his due; so turning his chair gently round and looking the Abbé full in the face, he

said mildly and respectfully, but still firmly and decidedly—

"Mais croyez vous, Monsieur l'Abbé, que *pe* St Augustine avait plus d'esprit que Rabelais?"

Even Molière himself joined in the shouts of laughter by which poor La Fontaine was answered by all but Chapelle, who being now very much *elevated*, was getting some sublime ideas, Christian, moral, and philosophical; and after having, with much severity, reproved them for their unseemly levity, when *he*, the Marquis de Villarceaux, and l'Abbé Boileau were discussing subjects of such vital importance—fancying himself in a pulpit at last, he tried to rise, but it would not do, so he was fain to content himself with thumping the table, to the great danger of Molière's Venice and Persian glasses, as he spluttered out—

"No! there is nothing—*nothing* so terrible—so dangerous—as to be without true piety, that is without a re-re-re-re-ligion of se-se-some sort or other, and it is impe-pe-possible to live in the world and have re-re-re-ligion of *any* sort, and that is the re-re-reason the saints and the ma-ma-martyrs ge-ge-got out of the world, or at least were sent out of it, which does as well. Oh! how ge-ge-ge-glorious to be a martyr! a few moments of burning, stoning, bleeding, or hanging, sends them at once to Heaven! while it takes people, in an ordinary way, several years; and pe-pe-perhaps they miss the road after all, and never get there. My dear Marquis," cried he, flinging his arms round Monsieur de Villarceaux' neck, and sobbing on his shoulder, "let us go—now! directly! without a moment's delay! and preach the true faith in the East—I shall be impaled, you bowstrung! oh! think of the pleasure! the delight! the ecstasy! of this! for though we shall be murdered *Sinners* we shall be buried *Saints!*"

"How!" cried the Marquis, who was quite as tipsy as Chapelle, "*you!* petit roturier! dare to take precedence, and become a martyr before me! No! I shall first pull the Grand Turk's beard, and tell him he is an unbelieving dog, therefore I shall be first impaled, and you will only be allowed to look on; for am I not a Maréchal! and Peer of France?"

"*That!* for your nobility! what is a Duke and a Peer, pray, to a martyr: and a pe-pe-pe-poet?" thundered Chapelle, as he flung a glass of wine in the other noble martyr's face, and was about to send a plate after it, when the rest of the guests, who up to this point had been infinitely amused, interfered, and Josselin was ordered to perform his customary office of

forcibly carrying off. Chapelle to bed, the latter valiantly kicking, and biting, and vowing that he would not be dragged to the stake, but that he would walk to it joyfully! as became a man, and a martyr!"

Soon after Chapelle's and the Marquis' removal, little Baron slid himself into the chair of the latter, and looking up into the Abbé Boileau's face, said—

"Monsieur l'Abbé, is it not wicked to get tipsy?"

"Certainly it is, my little fellow, and I hope you will never be guilty of doing so."

"But what makes *them* do so then? For they are big men, and ought to know better."

"The devil makes them do so, my dear," responded the Abbé in his most orthodox voice.

"The devil! but cannot God do whatever He pleases? Papa says he can."

"Most assuredly he can."

"Then why don't God kill the Devil, and get rid of him at once, since he makes people do wrong?"

"Ah! Poquelin, mon ami," said the Abbé, covering his face with his hands. "C'est affreux comme vous avez donné des idées a cet enfant!"

"Yes," said the child, running over to Molière, "he gives me everything."

"Well now, Michel, I'll give you a kiss, and go to bed, there's a good child," said the latter.

"I don't give him ideas, my dear Abbé," added Molière, as soon as little Baron was gone, "having none to spare; but if it is wrong for a child to have ideas, no doubt the devil is again the culprit, unless indeed one chooses to become, as La Fontaine has it in his fable of '*Les deux Rats, le Renard, et l'Œuf*' disciples.

“De certaine philosophie,  
Subtile, engageante, et hardie  
On l'appelle nouvelle; en avez vous ou non  
Ouï parler? Ils disent donc  
Qui la bête est une machine;  
Qu'en elle tout se fait sans choix, et par res-  
sorts;  
Nul sentiment, point d'âme, en elle tout est  
corps.  
Telle est la Montre qui chemine  
A pas toujours égaux, aveugle, et sans dessein  
Ouvrez-la lisez dans son sein  
Mainte roue y tient lieu de tout l'esprit du  
monde;  
La première y meut la seconde.”

"Who knows?" said La Fontaine, with a sigh.

"Come, come, bonhomme," said the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, tapping him on the arm, "don't be coming Montaigne

over us; but do by his great name, as he in his quaint old phrase, says he did by other great names, chew it between your teeth, and make it resound in your ear."\*

"Ah! Monseigneur, you forget," said La Fontaine, who was never absent when among the great dead, with whom he felt much more at home than with the living, "that Montaigne also says—bees pillage here, there, and everywhere, from the flowers; but afterwards they make their thefts into honey, which is all their *own*, for it is no longer either thyme, marjoram, or roses; but *only* honey, and in like manner, Je m'abreuve de Montaigne, mais je ne l'imite pas."

"True, true,—well defined, my dear La Fontaine," replied La Rochefoucauld; "and I *will* do you the justice to say, that you make *the very best* honey, on this side Hybla."

Soon after, the Duke's coach was announced, and he offered La Fontaine a seat in it back to Paris. It was this last quotation from Montaigne that did it, for Fourier's *Atomes Crochus* are for ever impregnating the atmosphere. It is small sympathies of single words, looks, or tones, that approach people to one another—not great qualities, which for the most part are misunderstood, and consequently misinterpreted. The rest of the party also broke up at the same time, Rupert returning with Bussy Rabutin, Molière, however, taking the former aside, to entreat him not to run counter to the King's commands.

"I shall attend Mademoiselle de Colbert's marriage," said he,—“not because his most arbitrary Majesty, Louis the Fourteenth, has ordered me to do so, but because one, whose slightest word is law to me, wishes it;” and if the young man said this somewhat hastily, it was that he felt what the yet unborn, but still existing, Jean Paul, has since uttered, namely,—that “God, the purely free, educates only the free; the Devil, purely servile, educates only the servile.”

Molière was glad once more to be alone, not only that he might take off his harness, but that he might go out and bathe his burning temples in the cool night air, and like Enoch, “walk with

\* Montaigne says, speaking of celebrities,—“Il me plaist de considerer leur visage, leur port, et leur vêtements; ie remasche ces grands noms entre les dents, et les fais retenter à mes aureilles; ego illos venero et tanties nominibus semper assurgo: i'en admire les parties même communes; ie les veisse volontiers deviser, promener, et souper.” And again he modestly says (for really great minds have always little conceit): “Il fault avoir, les reins bien fermes, pour entreprendre ce marcher de front, avecques ces gens là.”

God." The reason that the presence of even those whom we love best, is insupportable to us during the paroxysms and crises of a chronic agony, is, that even those who profess to love us, and who do love us *most, don't know us*, but only know our *husk*, and that they either *over*, or *under-rate*, according as the atmospheric changes of the exterior world makes it appear fair and smooth, or dark and ungainly; while all inequalities or discrepancies, which cannot be accounted for, are never tolerated, but throw it out of the pale of its fellows; nor can we blame them. God who *made, alone knows*, and can *find*, the harmonizing power that can make, of the spiritual chaos of every suffering soul, a fair world, filled with *His Providence*; for at first, in the great struggle, our hearts are "without form, and void,—and darkness is upon the face" of the deeps of our sorrow; and it is not till the Almighty has divided the light, from the darkness, within us, by *great trials*, and separated the waters of affliction, that His Spirit begins to move on the face of those waters, and that He wills there should be LIGHT—such light, as can guide us through the chaos unto Him.

When Molière went into the garden, the glories of the heavens had passed away,—the night had grown old and gray,—the moon had waned, and the stars paled. "Truly," said he, looking up at the cold dull sky,—"*all things* are but for a season. How eternal seemed your beauty and your brilliancy a few short hours ago! and yet *now* they are no more. Courage! then, poor heart; for even *your* heaviness shall *not* endure for ever."

As he spoke, there was a sudden separation in the sky towards the east, and a bright red glow came on the blue dappled air, while the dark wreaths of vapour rolled slowly away. It was the morning advancing, like a fair young bride, to meet her gorgeous mate, the sun; while night, her deserted mother, was casting on both, one last sorrowful look!

"Another lesson!" sighed Molière, as he turned into the house. "Verily, night and morning may not dwell in the same hemisphere."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

If the beatings of all hearts were to become audible and sonorous, great as the discord that now reigns in the world is, it

would then be ten times greater! so great, indeed, that the crack of doom would be nothing to it, in point of terror and din. One heart beating high with the most swift-winged hopes; another with the low, dull, heavy, and unequal pulsations of despair! some few keeping the steady time, the equal flow of peace and joy, or executing the tumultuous beatings and chromatic thrillings of love—and divers more, the sharp fantasies of hatred and revenge, and yet, not one of these loves, hates, hopes, or fears, attuned in the same key! but transposed according to the high or low calibre of the heart that issued them! and, certes, on the morning of the 26th of June, 1663, although there seemed a gala in Heaven, which had caused the sky to don its brightest vestures of azure and of gold, and every breath of air was so perfumed and *point de vice*, that it was evident they congregated at Versailles, as so many *Chargés d'affaires* from the kingdom of flowers, and her most fragrant majesty, Queen Flora; still, the hearts of Rupert and Lucy, Lady-Hawthorne and Sir Gilbert, Molière, and even that of Louis Quatorze himself, would have added strange discords to a psychological *pot pourri*, could their *scénas* have become audible. Rupert, it must be confessed, was sullen and savage, for he thought that,—even if Lucy meant to resist her father's and the King's commands at the steps of the altar, and to publicly consign herself to him in spite of both,—still, that she appeared too placidly submissive under such circumstances; for there is one strong point of resemblance between young lovers and young turkeys, which is, that neither are ever satisfied—however much they get, each would still have more! However, Lucy had urged on him trust in and submission to the will of God; and his mother, from whom he had heard the night before, had done the same; but independent of every wish of theirs, always finding a responsive echo in his heart—no one who has been schooled by affliction, that profound teacher of moral philosophy, but seeks a solution for every problem of life's complicated trials, in the will of the ETERNAL, and a refuge from them in his mercy; for though

"When ranting round in Pleasure's ring,  
Religion may be blinded;  
Or if she give a random sting,  
It may be little minded.  
But when upon the world we're driven,  
A conscience but a canker,  
A correspondence fixed wi' Heaven  
Is sure a noble anchor!"\*

\* Burns.



And so Rupert found it, and when he remembered the signal mercies and great blessings that Providence had vouchsafed him within the last year, when he had arrived in that country where he now occupied so honourable a position, friendless, hopeless and penniless, he felt that the most solid foundation, whereon to build our hopes of Heaven's future protection, is gratitude for its past mercies. Under the influence of these better thoughts he became calmer, and when he opened his window to inhale the pure and balmy breath of the yet early morning, he even witnessed, with tolerable composure, the gardeners bearing to and fro large baskets of flowers to decorate the Royal chapel of Versailles, for the *two* *bridals* that were to take place in a few hours. While he was leaning pensively on his elbow, looking out of the window, watching these preparations, a knock came to the door. Thinking it was Arnolphe with the remainder of his things to dress, he said "Come in;" but, instead of the page, what should he see but the honest red shining face of Tom Pepys, the portal of which was extended from ear to ear by one of the broadest and most radiant of grins. Across his left arm was hung a new suit of forest green velvet—all be-daisied over with white *pompons*, or marriage favours—while from his red-heeled shoes up to his spruce Murray coloured velvet coat and its dainty gold buttons, looking like young moons, it was evident that the worthy *Surtor* had also been "trying his 'prentice hand" on his own costume.

"What! you here, Tom, my good fellow?" cried Rupert, starting from his seat and seizing Pepys by both hands, which he shook till he nearly dislocated his arms, "this is, indeed, a pleasure to see you again. Not that I ever *can* express to you half the gratitude I feel for all your kindness. Why, man, I owe you neither more nor less than *everything*. Molière is—"

"Ah?" interrupted Tom, who, to use his own phrase, felt *over trimmed* by Rupert's praises, "isn't he? *That* is real Genoa; no cotton nor rubbish there; as genuine, bright, and even a tissue as ever came out of Nature's choicest looms; he seems only sent into the world for the express purpose of helping every one else through it."

"Then, verily, here is a bale off the same piece," cried Rupert, again seizing the hand of his humble friend.

"No, no, Master Singleton; for dear heart! only look what a difference there is in the head-piece," rejoined Tom, pointing to his forehead, and shaking his head

solemnly, which gave to his very Listonian cast of countenance an irresistibly ludicrous expression.

"Well," said Rupert, laughing, "not being a professor of comparative anatomy, far be it from me to dash out your brains to see; but of what I *do* know I may speak, and I'll swear your heart is lined with the same material, and *à propos* of materials, I suppose, my dear Pepys, you have come to Paris on your annual visit in quest of the mode?"

"Why, not exactly, as for the nonce, I've brought the fashion *from* London, and made this coat on the model of a gold button coat which I made for my Lord Sandwich, and which, I assure you, Master Singleton, though I say it who should not say it, was so brave, that it set all the eyes staring and all the mouths gaping at Whitehall. The Duke of Bucks and Tom Killigrew ordered two like it immediately, and I'm sure the King would have done the same, if he could have afforded it, poor gentleman," said Tom, opening out the suit of green velvet with a sort of paternal look of mingled pride and affection.

"Why, my dear Pepys," said Rupert, examining the white knots and canons on the magnificently braided velvet coat, "what on earth have you been dreaming about, to fasten these *pompons* with a coronet and supporters that don't belong to me?"

"Oh!" said Tom, puffing out his cheeks like a trumpeter, elongating his right foot and pointing it, as if he was about to open a minuet, while he measured the whole of that side of his person by looking down at it over his right shoulder, with a jaunty and *dégage* air.

"On account of the Duc de Chevereuse's high rank, the Dowager's place about the Queen Mother, and Monsieur Colbert's high standing, his Majesty Louis Quatorze wished all the dresses and arrangements for Mademoiselle de Colbert's nuptials to be as splendid as possible; so not exactly knowing if you had any new quarterings since you became Gold-Spur in Waiting, I thought I might as well put on those fancy arms."

"Good heavens! my dear Tom," laughed Rupert. "do you want me to look like a lackey wearing another man's arms? and it seems you have been in Paris for some time, and never came near me till to-day,—go to, Tom, that was not kind of you."

"The truth is, my dear Master Singleton, I have only been here ten days. I wished to complete your suit for the wedding; and I knew if I saw you, I should

do nothing but idle away my time in talking over old times with you."

"Ah! my dear Pepys, if you knew the insults and injuries that I shall have to sustain at this marriage, you would not be so anxious to deck me out like a victim for it."

"Yes, yes, I know all about it, and it seems hard now; but patience, patience, and courage, my dear Master Singleton, for good or for evil, things seldom turn out as we expect them, and I often think fortune is like other spoilt children, used to having their own way; let her alone, don't oppose her, and she'll get out of her sulks, and give you an extra good turn in compensation for her froward conduct towards you."

"Ah!" sighed Rupert, turning away to the window, "it's easy to talk," and then he added, "did you see my mother before you left England?"

"I did, Master Singleton, and she was bravely, and talked of coming over into France to see you this summer."

"Poor soul!" murmured Rupert, and then said aloud, "Well, and how fares your cousin Sam of the Admiralty? is he always growing greater, and greater, like a Dutch cauliflower?"

"Well, I think he is; for all his talk do now run upon keeping a coach; and, good luck! to see how he do lace and button his boy against Sir William Battens, and vow that his livery is all to nothing the smartest. The other day, he and Madam came and dined at my father's; among other things, we had a mutton pie; but, to show his Whitehall breeding, he would call it a venison pasty, as if, forsooth, his palate had no meaner acquaintance, and when he had eaten some of it, he said, with a patronising air, 'That pie is good, cousin—none better; but the venison is palpable mutton, which I think shabby.'"

"So palpable, cousin Sam," retorted I, "that I do marvel, a man of your discernment should go a wool-gathering to the extent of calling it anything but mutton."

Rupert laughed heartily at Tom's anecdote and impersonation of his consequential cousin, the Secretary, and then said, "And poor Madame Pepys? Is she as jealous of her cumbersome, full-fledged Cupid as ever?"

"Just. She is given now, poor wretch, to locking herself up in closets, as if to show her lord and master, that she was one of his most valuable chattels that ought to be cared for, but was not; and there she will cry her pretty eyes out."

"Poor lady!" said Rupert, "surely, considering the Secretary's personal at-

tractions, one would think she would be safe from an attack of the green-eyed monster!"

"But you forget, Master Singleton, that there are Knipp, Mell, and Lord Oxford's Miss, and though there is no fear of *them* falling in love with her husband, there is every fear, or rather *certainly*, of his doing so with them! for it is astonishing how easily the tender passion penetrates into those porous-skinned sort of people; they seem equally susceptible to the fires of love and the fogs of earth, and suffer in similar proportions from both."

"Well, but I thought the Secretary was a model husband?" laughed Rupert.

"Oh! law, aye, to be sure, they are all models, till they are found out!" said Tom, winking his right eye, "and model no doubt he may be, as, of a surety, most of them are made on the same plan. Why, it was only the Sunday before I came away, that Sam gave his wife and her gentlewoman, Ashwell, forty shillings to take them into the country, and no sooner had he got them safe off, than he had Knipp to dinner, and spent five pound upon her, in junketing, before the night was over; and three to two, is, I believe, the average sliding-scale between a Miss and a wife, even with your model husbands! Good luck! I don't wonder at the poor creatures anchoring their affections upon parrots, and puppy dogs, as they most of them do; for there is no deception, at all events, about them, and what they pretend to love, they *do* love."

"You really astonish me," smiled Rupert, "for I cannot fancy good Mr. Pepys capering nimbly in a lady's chamber!"

"Capering, you may say, for the life! and sing, too, as he calls it! but I should say, bray like a donkey before rain; for, good luck, how he do tax his lungs, to be sure!"

"Indeed? I was not aware that he wooed all the nine. I have seen some of his poetry."

"Bless you, he'd woo a dozen, for that matter! if they would let him."

"And what songs does he sing; glees, madrigals, or catches?"

"Oh, no great catches, you may be sure! indeed, I have never heard him sing but two, both of his own composition; one, called 'Gaze not on Swans,' and the other, 'Beauty, Retire!'"

"Well," laughed Rupert, "I suppose he has sang it, till he has been obeyed, for all beauty has certainly retired from his face!"

Here, Arnolphe entering, and announcing that breakfast was ready in the next

room, by reminding Singleton that he must finish his toilet, effectually checked his transient mirth, and with a deep sigh and many wry faces, he proceeded to don Tom Pepys' last *chef d'œuvre*, not, however, without vehemently protesting against the usurpation of the anonymous arms, with which it was bedizened, and which he earnestly entreated Tom to take off; but the poor fellow looked so hurt at his taste being called into question, and at having a pair of sacrilegious scissors applied to the result of so many days' thought and toil, that Rupert was fain to waive his own objection, and said with a slight shrug, as he worked his arms into the sleeves—

"Well, my dear Tom, let them remain by all means; anything to please one who has done so much to serve me."

"Much! ah, Master Singleton, you only remind me of how far my power falls short of my wishes."

"Then your wishes must be most unconscionable, my dear Pepys; and as breakfast is ready I only hope your appetite may keep pace with them—come."

But honest Tom was shocked at the idea of Rupert's supposing that he would take such a liberty as to seat himself at the same table with him, and therefore with a deprecating gesture, said—

"After you, Master Singleton, after you."

"Nay, never stand on such ceremony with a friend, man, for as you have been so staunchly mine, I hope you don't doubt my being yours; and even on the score of conventionalities, surely my Lord Sandwich's cousin, and the kinsman of the great Mr. Pepys, of the Admiralty, who does him the honour of calling his mutton pies venison pasties, is good enough to take his morning's draught with the penniless son of an honest Cavalier." And so saying, Rupert dragged, *nolens volens*, the abashed but grateful Mr. Thomas Pepys into the adjoining room, where a breakfast was served, of such excellence, and in so *recherché* a manner, that the spirit, at least, of the murdered Vatel, seemed to have presided over it. Two chairs being placed at the table, Singleton pressed, by placing both his hands on the worthy tailor's shoulders, his humble friend down into one of them, and then, filling out a goblet of Chambertin, honest Tom proposed the following "sentiment,"

"TO WHAT YOU MOST WISH, MASTER SINGLETON; AND MAY IT ARRIVE SOON, AND NEVER FIND ITS WAY BACK, WHEN IT DOES COME."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

THE two friends had lingered for about three-quarters of an hour over their breakfast, exploring every nook, and corner of "long ago" with the divining rod of "don't you remember?" Pepys every instant becoming more jovial, and Rupert more sad, not that he for a moment doubted Lucy's determination of *not* marrying any one but him,—but then came the dark clouds—not only—of all she would sacrifice for him, but the still darker doubts of how they were actually to live? till Sir Gilbert's death, and of how he could reconcile it to his conscience, to become such an additional burden to his mother; till at length he heroically resolved that he would *not* be so selfish as to carry off Lucy—no, he would only prevent her marrying this rascally Gascon, as he persisted in disrespectfully designating the Comte de Belviane Quatorze. While deep in these meditations, which he contrived to pursue, athwart a cross-fire of Whitehall, and Seething Lane gossip from Tom Pepys, he was roused first by the sound of carriage wheels, and the trampling of horses, in the court below (for the windows of his apartment faced the great entrance gates of Versailles), and then by the sudden stoppage of the same; he arose, and went to the window; it was Sir Gilbert Hawthorne's coach, the four thorough bred horses of which were in all their gala caparisons, of platted, and ribboned manes, and tails. At this sight, Rupert's breath came thick, and fast—and as the heaviest missile in the world—he would like to have torn his heart from his breast and dashed it down upon the knight, who was now like Solomon (by reason of his being in all his glory!) alighting from his carriage. If he had been splendid in point of costume, on the night of his presentation at court, he was now positively stupendous! notwithstanding that the colours of his dress were of a more chaste, and subdued toning, as befitted this more domestic, and auspicious occasion, his coat being of white velvet, with ruby buttons, and a baldric shoulder-knots, and canons, plentifully studded with large rose-coloured and white favours, surmounted by a white *chapeau de poil*, or beaver, with a wreath of pink ostrich feathers round the leaf, so that as the Comte de Grammont, who had come over for the Duc de Chevereuse's marriage, observed, Sir Gilbert had every appearance of a moving panorama of one of the white cliffs of his native Isle, wreathed with holy-oaks!

"There, girl!" said he, majestically waving his hand, as his feet reached the ground, "go, and mind you behave your-

self as befits *my* daughter, and as obedience is the thing you most need to learn. I shall set you the example,—for in obedience to his Majesty's wishes—that I may not witness any of your silly whimperings, and refractory floutings, I shall not even see this Count, till he is my son-in-law, as fast as Prelates, Priests, and Ministers can bind him; I've seen his title deeds, and that's enough for me, and more than enough for you, for he settles two thousand pounds a year on you, so away with you, Luce Hawthorne! and never let me see that face again, till it belongs to the Countess of Belviane *Cartoars*."

And with this the Knight entered the palace, while the coach turned off to the Chapel Royal, which had a public and outward entrance. The occupants of the carriage were Madame de Sévigné, Lady Hawthorne, and Lucy. As it drove away, Rupert caught a momentary glance of Lucy. She looked more lovely than ever, in her bridal attire. *That* he could have easily pardoned, but her face was positively radiant with smiles, and all the loves and graces seemed congregated there to pelt each other with roses, of which there were innumerable reservoirs in the dimples round her mouth. Rupert stamped his foot and ground his teeth. Could it be; that the wealth and rank of this execrable Gascon, had at length reconciled her to the marriage? for if she meant to resist it to the last, as she had promised to do, surely there was no cause for this plethora of happiness, for should they not be outcasts on the world, with only that most meagre of all diets, love, to live on? "Oh! yes," muttered he, "I'm afraid Boileau is right, woman *have* no hearts!" and then thinking it would be at least a relief to knock Sir Gilbert down as he ascended the stairs, he rushed along the corridor, skirting his own apartments, forgetting that it abutted on a back staircase, and that the Knight would, of course, come up the great staircase. As he leant against the wall, like a man exhausted by an ineffectual chase, Arnolphe appeared on the landing, holding his sides with laughter.

"How now, Arnolphe, what on earth can you find to laugh at?" said his master, peevishly.

"*Pardon, Monsieur*,—but!"—and here the poor page was nearly choked by his ineffectual attempts to suppress a fresh burst,—"*that is, a gros seigneur Anglais*,—a Sir Hawthorne,—has just arrived, dressed—oh, but dressed as nothing but a summer-house ever was before; and his Majesty has given orders that he and Monsieur de Soyecourt are to remain together in the great gallery (and really the two

make a pair), to entertain one another till the weddings are over; though they say that this Sir Hawthorne is father to one of the brides, *La Comtesse de Belviane Quatorze*."

"*Sirrah!*" thundered Rupert, giving poor Arnolphe the first and last box on the ear that he had ever bestowed upon him, "don't presume to prate about what you are totally ignorant of; there is no such person, and never will be, as the *Comtesse de Belviane Quatorze*."

"*Cependant, Monsieur*," bowed Coulange, the King's first valet-de-chambre, as he advanced from an opposite corridor, "I am charged by his Majesty to desire your immediate attendance in the sacristy, to witness the signatures to the marriage-settlements of Monsieur le Comte et Madame la Comtesse de Belviane Quatorze."

Tom Pepys now appeared at the door of Singleton's room, looking anxious and inquisitive, and then approached timidly on tiptoe, but nevertheless asserted his law of copyright by the finishing touch he gave to the shoulder-knots of the suit of forest green.

"Tom!" gasped Rupert, clutching with a convulsive grasp his humble friend's hand, "there are others in the world besides those Athenian kings you used to read about at Cambridge, who are lashed by the furies from exile to exile, and who have no way of escaping their fate. Sir Gilbert Hawthorne used to call my uncle a regicide:—be it on his head, if he makes his nephew *really* one!"

"Hush, for heaven's sake, my dear Master Singleton," cried poor Tom Pepys, turning white as the ribbons he had just arranged; "hush! for don't you know that walls have ears, and *palace*-walls tongues also, that never fail to repeat the slightest breath of treason?"

"S'death, Tom, are *you*, too, turned to stone on this accursed morning, that you stand there, calmly looking on at my great wrong, and mouthing your small puerilities about treason?—ay, foul treason truly, but it is high treason, man, against God and nature; not *petty* treason against tyrants and fools!"

Tom interlaced his fingers, and fairly writhed, but suddenly added, "Good lack! I forgot they don't understand English: that's a comfort, anyhow;" and, that it might not be a solitary one, he fanned himself with his pocket-handkerchief.

While Coulange, very respectfully, but peremptorily, with another low bow, said to Singleton—

"Apparently, Monsieur l'Épéron d'Or forgets that he is running the risk of keeping his Majesty waiting."

Which having uttered, he raised his hand forward; and Rupert, glaring like a baited tiger, strode on, and traversed the endless galleries and passages of that magnificent edifice, followed by Coulange, till they reached the staircase that led down into the chapel. On reaching the foot of these stairs, Coulange proceeded along the corridor till he arrived at the door of the Sacristy, when, placing his hand on the lock, he paused before he turned it, and said to Rupert, who, with his arms tightly folded, was still grinding his teeth, and rolling his eyes in a fearful manner—

“Monsieur will have the goodness to compose himself before he enters the presence, for he must permit me to observe that he cannot appear before his Majesty in that disordered state.”

Biting his nether lip nearly through, and stamping his right foot, Singleton mechanically unfolded his arms, and let them fall heavily by his sides, while the hot blood which had the minute before suffused his cheeks, now receded to his heart, and left him pale, and cold as marble.

“That is better,” murmured Coulange, “and the next moment he had opened wide the vestry door, and Rupert found himself in the presence of *Louis Quatorze* and the whole of his gorgeous court. The atmosphere was heavy with perfume, not only from the clouds of incense which came from the adjoining chapel, but also with that Mosaic of fragrant odours which tessellates the air in Patrician crowds. Rupert almost reeled under the combined influences of these, and the glitter of gold, and blaze of jewels, which the rays of the meridian sun refracted in a thousand multiplex directions. On a crimson velvet throne-chair, at the back of which on either side, rose two gilt allegorical figures, one of *Fame*, the other of *Time*, holding a wreath of laurels, was seated the *Grand Monarque*, his dress on the occasion being violet velvet embroidered with pearls, and decorated with white satin *pompons* or marriage favours, fastened in the centre with large oriental pearls nearly the size of pigeons’ eggs, surrounded by brilliants, his *agulettes* and *croons* being of the same costly materials, while the star and collar of the *St. Esprit* blazed round his neck in brilliants and sapphires, and there was something so Olympian in the ambrosial cloud of curls of his peruke, and so imposingly regal in the turn of his fine head, that the laurel crown, which *Time* and *Fame* united to hold over it, appeared its legitimate right. One step below the throne on the right hand, in a high-backed arras chair, the pattern on which was gold fleur-

de-lys, with broad gold fringe falling round the seat, sat the old Cardinal de Retz, his head almost reclining on his left shoulder, and the sepulchral whiteness of his face, made to appear still whiter from the strong contrast of the vivid scarlet of his dress; and although an acolite was in attendance to hold his hat, Louis had insisted upon his keeping it on; saying jocularly, that it was dangerous to trust a *vacant* Cardinal’s hat within reach of two Bishops! for below de Retz on his right, sat the Bishop of Meaux (Bossuet), and below the King on his left, was the Archbishop of Paris; both prelates in full pontificals. Upon an oblong table at the foot of the Dais, covered with a sort of housing of crimson velvet (for it fitted it tightly, and the sides that descended to the ground were trimmed with a rich bullion fringe) rested the King’s sceptre, the great seal of state upon a purple *fleur-de-lyste* velvet cushion, and several skins of parchment; before which, on the outside stood in their official capacity, divers legal functionaries; while to the right, in the body of the vestry sat the two Queens, surrounded by all the ladies of their court, and on the opposite side, stood all the lords, gentlemen in waiting, and great officers of state. When Rupert entered, the King was giving to the *Procureur du Roi*\* a parchment with many seals appended to it, which he had just perused, and the *Procureur du Roi* handed it to the Cardinal de Retz, who, after holding it for some time with both his trembling and emaciated hands close to his left eye, till he had finished perusing it, had it passed on outside the table to the Archbishop of Paris, and as he laid it down for that purpose, the magnificent rings (little principalities in themselves) fell from his attenuated fingers; while the acolite was replacing them, and while the Archbishop of Paris was reading this document, which had again to make a semi-tour and return to Bossuet for his inspection, Rupert glanced round in quest of Lucy; she was standing quite at the back, behind *Mesdames de Cossé Brisac*, *de Cheveruse*, and *de Colbert*, and between her mother and *Madame de Sévigné*, but she had put down her magnificent point veil, and he could not distinguish even the outline of her face.

“Ah!” thought Rupert, “she may well be ashamed to look at me, the heartless jilt;” but *Lady Hawthorne*, it appeared, had no such compunctious scruples, for she slightly nodded to him, her face beaming with delight. “Oh! of course, the wealth of this Gascon has carried the

\* Chancellor.

day with *her*;" and instead of returning the poor lady's kind look, in kind, he turned away in disgust, and sent glances of discovery amid the group of courtiers on the other side, in quest of the execrable Belviane Quatorze; and at length espying an unknown face, of most satisfactory ugliness and repulsiveness, he decided that *that* must be *him*, and added in his own mind:—"Well, if she can marry *that*, she can do anything." The following being an inventory of the personal attractions of this individual, will account for this unuttered exclamation:—He was about five feet seven, but thin and shrunken like a half-filled sand-bag; a face the colour and texture of *Gruyère* cheese, the small-pox having rendered it equally perforated; his eyes were leaden, both in colour and expression; his nose aquiline, but exceedingly pinched; round his chin bristled an attempt at a forked beard, which, though his hair was of a darkish dusty brown, looked more like the choke of an artichoke, reddened by exposure to the sun, than human hair; in short, one would have said, from the painfully keen and cunning, yet miserably disappointed expression of his face, that it was an old rat, who, in the days of his youth, had been caught in a trap which had spared his life (not thinking it worth even the acceptance of a trap), but had left him nothing worth living for, from causing him to see, in all creation, but ONE universal TRAP! and in all earthly hopes, nothing but Circean segments of toasted cheese, which were only to be obtained at the cost of cropped ears, and mutilated tails!

"Yes, that *must* be him," thought Rupert; and upon the strength of this supposition he hurled a storm of ocular thunder and lightning at the unhappy biped rat, which however spent itself upon Molière, who, behind the dense crowd of courtiers, was leaning against the side of the open doorway that led into the chapel, looking with a sort of vacant melancholy stare at the king over the sea of heads before him; but happening to turn at the moment, he received in full force the falling sparks of Rupert's fiery glance, but in exchange kissed the tips of his fingers to him, accompanied by one of his kind pensive smiles. Singleton was commencing a very expressive interrogatory pantomime, by pointing to the rat, when the silence was suddenly interrupted by Louis Quatorze, who, having received back the parchment after Bossuet's perusal of it, leisurely descended the two steps of the dais, and after placing the deed on the table, looked round first to the right, where

the queens and the ladies of the Court were, and then to the left where the men stood, and announced that the contract of marriage between Henri Louis Anne, Duc de Chevereuse, and Melanie Clotilde de Colbert, second daughter of the Sieur Jean Baptiste de Colbert, Marquis de Seguelai, and Henriette, his wife, née Le Tellier, being all en règle, it only awaited the signatures of the fiancée and the fiancé, who were therefore requested to come forward and sign it; whereupon the young Duc de Chevereuse, stepping out of the place he occupied by the side of his future father-in-law, walked across, and presenting his hand to his fair betrothed, who was standing with her mother, led her to the table, where, after Monsieur de Chevereuse had appended his signature to the deed, the King, with his usual gallantry, himself dipped the pen into the ink, which he offered to Mademoiselle de Colbert to write her name; and after she had done so, he presented her with a superb *écriin* of brilliants, and then stepping back a few paces, she and her fiancé remained standing together, hand in hand.

As soon as the Duke and his bride-elect had retired, the Chancellor handed another parchment to the King, which opening out, he laid upon the table, placing his sceptre upon it, as it were to keep it open; after which, resting his left hand upon his hip, and placing his right within his bosom, he said,—“And now we have to witness the signature of another marriage contract—that of Monsieur le Comte de Belviane Quatorze (an old honourable title, which has been as some supposed, extinct since the League), and Mademoiselle Lucie Hawthorne, a young English lady; but as her father, Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, *Chevalier*, in the *Comté de Surrey près de Londres*, has on the one hand confided the negotiation of this marriage *entirely* to our pleasure and discretion, and Monsieur de Belviane Quatorze on the other, having, *much against his will*, been compelled to be absent during the arrangement of the preliminaries, the arbitration of the settlements has also devolved upon us. We therefore feel it behoves us to exert every precaution, that the nicest honour can require, in order that the marriage may be perfectly valid and indisputable; and for this reason we wish that none but those who are members of our household, and likely to continue such, should witness the signatures and ratification of this contract, in the event of its being at any time, or in any way disputed; and consequently, as we some time ago received, though we did not at *that* time see fit to accept the resignation of the Sieur Singleton, our *Épéron d'Or*, we now

want to know if he still persists in running counter to our wishes, touching this marriage of the Count de Belviane Quatorze, and Mademoiselle Hawthorne, and in tendering his resignation of the office of Gold-Spur-in-Waiting? If so, we now accept the latter."

The King ceased. There was a breathless silence, and every eye was turned on Rupert, who, before his Majesty had concluded, had wrenched off his spurs, and ungirded his sword; and without uttering a word, he walked over, and with a profound obeisance, which had at least as much stern resolution in it as respect, he laid them on the table before the King.

"Monsieur l'Epéron d'Or," said Louis Quatorze, "had we known that an office which we created for you, would have been so lightly resigned, it should not have been so lightly bestowed."

"Sire," replied Singleton, "no act of your Majesty's power, however arbitrary, can make me forget that act of your Majesty's munificent kindness; but had I not the feeling of a man, I should have been unworthy, Sire, to have had the honour of being in your service, even for the brief period I have enjoyed that enviable distinction."

"Enough!" interrupted the King, dipping the same pen into the ink which he had a few minutes before handed to Mademoiselle de Colbert, after having waved it toward Rupert to retire, "when you talk of service, young Sir,—all service requires obedience. Mademoiselle Hawthorne, you will understand this when you become a wife; and, as an earnest of your aptitude in that difficult art, we venture to hope that you, at all events, will not run counter to your father's will, and our pleasure; but, by appending your name to this document, ratify your engagement to the Comte de Belviane Quatorze."

The circle opened behind the two Queens, and Rupert's gaze, like that of a basilisk, plunged along the line to where Lucy stood. He fully expected to see her either fall back in a swoon, or look imploringly towards him for help; but she did neither, but rose calmly, and walked towards the King, who, in handing her the pen, which he held, said, as he glanced at Rupert, and emphasized the words, "but, recollect Madame, however arbitrary we may be, we are not quite so ungallant as to force a lady to do anything against her consent. Do you sign this contract with your own free will?"

Rupert's eyes seemed to pierce Lucy like burning daggers, while the King thus addressed her, and all his faculties, save the

one of hearing, were suspended, as she modestly, but in a firm, clear, voice (while she raised her eyes steadily to his Majesty's and received the pen from his hand) replied "Sire, your will is my pleasure."

"Then, Madame," bowed the youthful monarch, with even more than his usual grace, "it is but fair that for the future it should be our will to study your pleasure; but hold! we forgot: it is for Monsieur le Comte de Belviane Quatorze first to sign the contract; he will, therefore," added the King, looking all round, "have the goodness to come forward and do so."

But no one moved, and Singleton hurled another poignard of a look into the centre of the before-mentioned red rat's visage, but without bringing any blood to its surface, or causing him to move a muscle.

"It is true," resumed Louis, that *Béarn* is some distance from Paris, and Monsieur de Belviane's estates having been so long in abeyance, doubtless needed much putting in order—but by our lady! it is too great a gasconade to keep such a bride waiting, yet, as this new *Bearnois* so belies his country and his name, you must e'en, Madame, condescend to seek and bring him forward."

When the King ceased Lucy looked round with an angelic smile. Her mother was at her side. She placed one hand in hers, and then advancing with her to where Singleton was standing, held out the other to him, saying, while tears trembled in her eyes, and gladness in her voice:

"Monsieur Le Comte de Belviane Quatorze, his Majesty commands you to come forward and sign our marriage contract."

But Rupert neither spoke, nor moved, nor took the hand which Lucy extended to him, but stood staring widely, yet seeing nothing, like one in a dream or a supernatural vision, unable either to comprehend or to quit it.

"We see," resumed Louis Quatorze, smiling most benignly, "that, for the first time, the *dénouement* of one of Molière's dramas is so involved and obscure as to require an explanation; so stand forth friend Poquelin, and enlighten the audience, for though it is our firm belief that there are authors who don't always understand their own meaning any more than their readers do, yet that is an accusation that cannot be brought against you."

The crowd on the left hand side was now cleft, and Molière made his way through it from the chapel door, against which he had been leaning, and having first made a profound bow to the King,

and another to the Queens and their Court, he turned towards Rupert, and said :

“Monsieur Le Comte de Belviane Quatorze, it is an attribute of his most gracious Majesty Louis Quatorze, in common with the gods, to manifest himself to mortals only through the blessings he bestows upon them; and hence it arises, that it devolves upon an humble individual like myself to be at once the instrument of his favours, and their elucidator. When you arrived in this country last year, ready to take service under our great and gracious King, but still in that of an infinitely more despotic sovereign, namely, the Autocrat Dan Cupid, your interests in both matters had to be cared for by one whom you had honoured by accepting as your friend in your adopted country. Emboldened by his Majesty's almost providential kindness towards, and munificent patronage of myself, I ventured to draw upon the same inexhaustible source of goodness in your behalf, and I need not remind you, *Monsieur*, how freely our great Monarch's beneficence flowed for you, even to the extent of creating a new office on your account, as there were none of the usual ones vacant, and—”

“Hold!” cried the King, “you are forgetting your part, Molière, a rare, not to say unheard of thing with *you*; the facts are these, ‘*Ladies and Gentlemen!*’ as Poquelin *should* have said, but did not; he so eloquently pleaded his young friend's cause, and so logically demonstrated to us that gold spurs were excellent things for adorning the heels, and putting young horses on their metal; but that gold rings were far better for securing young ladies; while, on the other hand, there was a third interest to be consulted; namely, that of the young lady's father.—but luckily, while the unreasonable young couple, we have no doubt, had many wishes, this reasonable old gentleman had but *one!*—to secure a title for his daughter. Then would it not have been cruel to have thwarted him in so mere a trifle? Yet, still, the matter to be achieved was the world-old difficulty of *pleasing all parties*; but as our good friend Molière here, is in the daily habit of accomplishing that miracle! he soon smoothed this difficulty, by reminding us that we had only to confer upon our Gold Spur in Waiting, estates to which a title was appended,\* to convert the rejected English suitor, into the eagerly accepted son-in-law of Sir Gilbert Hawthorne! We then remembered that the old title and broad lands of Belviane, were still in

abeyance, and that the former was extinct, the last male heir having died about forty years ago; these lands and this title we now confer on *you*, Monsieur L'Épéron d'Or, only mortgaged with a wife! not in the present instance (as all must acknowledge) a very heavy incumbrance to the old and honourable name of Belviane (yes, honourable, in spite of the *Fronde*), we add that of Quatorze, as a mark of our especial favour, and in remembrance of our approval of the manner in which you have discharged the duties of your office about our person—here, then, are the title-deeds of Belviane,—but lest certain attributes should attach to the *name*, although the attainer is now removed, we would advise you, Monsieur le Comte, never to be a *Frondeur*, even to your wife!”

In taking the parchments which Louis held out to him, Rupert fell at the King's feet, but not one word could he utter.

“Nay, Monsieur le Comte,” said his Majesty, graciously raising him, and then taking Lucy's hand, “we cannot risk our popularity by allowing your loyalty to us to make you guilty of *Leze-Beauté*, here, only for the future will your allegiance be due; and if you *must* kneel, kneel at this lady's feet. We have two more matters to explain, one is, that having been entrusted with the sole and absolute control of all things concerning his daughter's marriage, by the worshiptul Knight, Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, we have deemed it our bounden duty to see that liberal settlements were made on the bride, for Monsieur de Belviane Quatorze; we feel certain of *your* concurrence beforehand, or you are no *Béarnois* even by adoption, for though the Gascons have the well-earned reputation of being *somewhat* addicted to bragging, yet, to do them justice, one of their proudest boasts is that of never acting unhand-somely to a woman, and the grandson of Henry the Fourth felt sure that on *this* point at least, Béarn would have no cause to disown you. It may be a matter of surprise to you how Mademoiselle Lucie was made so docile to our plans, simply by being let into the secret of them, for when we found that she obstinately persisted in wedding herself to beggary, in preference to the wealth her father's wisdom had selected for her; and preferred going into her grave rather than into the *Château de Belviane*; why then, not to see her health suffer, we empowered Molière to convince her that she need no longer wrestle with shadows, for that she was in reality the most dutiful of daughters, as her wishes and her father's *commands* perfectly coincided; for that Monsieur de Belviane Quatorze had it equally in his

\* Most estates in France at that time did confer a title.



power to bestow on her the coronet her father coveted and the heart she prized; but this good Molière, who thinks of everything, had an idea that, as the bride's father was not to be present at the marriage, the bridegroom's mother ought to be. And so my Lady Singleton arrived in Paris the evening before last; and now, Poquelin, you may beg of her, and the English Minister, who is to marry Monsieur de Belviane Quatorze, to enter, while we beg his fair *fiancée's* acceptance of that coronet to which she will add such additional lustre;" saying which, Louis presented Lucy with a superb *pareur* of brilliants. "You now perceive, *Monsieur le Comte*," added he, addressing Rupert, "how necessary it was for the *dénouement* of our little *pièce de circonstance*, that the Bastille should for a short time relieve us of the difficulty of your presence; for immediately after the collection at *Nôtre Dame*, Madame la Duchesse de Chevereuse knew the real history of her bracelets and—"

But here a page, making his way from the chapel, gave the Duc de la Tremouille a packet, which he presented to the King; it was tolerably large, about the size of a knitting-box, was enveloped in several papers, and finally in a violet velvet case, on the top of which lay a letter, sealed with an enormous seal, the device or armorial bearings of which appeared to cause his Majesty great amusement, for, as he described them aloud, they consisted of a Mercury for a crest, with a well-filled purse in one hand, and his caduces in the other, and a horse-pistol and dark lantern for supporters, a gibbet for a chevron quartered with a horse proper, and keys, chains, and handcuffs argent, on a ground, or, with this very appropriate motto—

*Alieni apertens sui profusus.*

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Louis Quatorze; "it seems a new potentate has sprung up, one whose power all France has felt, if they have not acknowledged it," and he read as follows:

"Sire and Brother—

Taking an interest in the marriages about to be celebrated this day at Versailles, we beg to offer, as a slight token of that interest, to the young Duchesse de Chevereuse *née de Colbert*, a rare pair of Oriental pearl bracelets; this we also intend as a mark of our respect for the character of her father which shows great generosity on our part, as there is or ought to be, but little sympathy between us, he being the *least* of a *Brigand* of any Minister of State, we ever

heard of. To Madame la Duchesse Douairière de Chevereuse, we beg to transmit the original case of those bracelets, so long, formerly in her possession, and likely to have continued so, had we not taken active measures to prevent it; and over this, alas, now empty case, she may daily pour out her ceaseless regrets, as our great Charlemagne did of old, over the coffin of the woman he had so madly loved; yes, like him, *she*, also may embrace this empty shell of her treasure! To Madame la Comtesse de Belviane Quatorze, we beg to offer a pair of bracelets, the twin brothers of those of Madame la Duchesse de Chevereuse, as she may like to preserve in the revived family of the Belvianes, a memorial of her husband's first interview at the *Pré-aux-Clercs*, with, next to yourself,

"Sire, and Brother,

"The greatest European power,  
"CARTOUCHE."

As soon as the nearly universal smile had subsided—quite as much as the old Duchesse de Chevereuse's impotently furious face, as at the cool *aplombe* of Cartouche's letter—the King perceiving that Rupert kept looking anxiously towards the door, and knowing that he could not embrace his mother in the presence, kindly said:

"Monsieur de Belviane Quatorze, it strikes us, that Molière is somewhat long in bringing my Lady Singleton; have the goodness to go and hurry them, you cannot fail to meet with them in some of the corridors through which you yourself passed, just now."

Deeply touched by this additional proof of the King's kindness, Rupert resigned Lucy's hand, which had been firmly pressed in his, and making a graceful bow to the throne, withdrew.

In the passage outside the Sacristy, not a hundred yards from the door, Rupert found his mother! good Mr. Cuthbert, the rector of *Chelsey*, and Molière, quietly conversing. Lady Singleton's dress for this memorable and happy occasion, was precisely the same as Madame de Sévigné's and Lady Hawthorne's, consisting of a silver-gray satin, looped with knots of pearl, and point lace rosettes, with a point lace whisk, or hood, and tippet. It is needless to say, that as soon as they perceived each other, the mother and son were locked in each other's arms.

"Oh! mother—dear—dear mother! I have so much to tell you," said Rupert, again hugging her.

"No, no, I know it all, and a great deal more than you know," replied Lady Sin-

gleton, wiping her eyes; but we have all the long summer days, and winter evenings, to talk over everything, and I am so happy now, too happy: for a life's misery is overpaid by a meeting like this. Oh! my dear boy, how well, and how handsome you look."

"When did you come, mother."

"I arrived ten days ago, with Tom Pepys for my escort, and a kinder, or more careful one. I could not have had."

"Ah! mother," said Rupert, turning to Molière, and placing her hand in his, "what do we not owe to this Deputy Providence here? Try and thank him, you, for I never can."

"Come, come, my good young friend," said Molière, "now that you begin to talk nonsense, I cannot allow you to keep your real benefactor, the King, waiting another moment; you, indeed, owe him much; for he, it was, who filled up my meagre outline, and planned everything, even to your meeting your mother here, that his presence might not retard your happiness of embracing her; this indeed is one of the days—that I am proud of being the subject and the *protégé* of such a King! and almost feel that the incense which is to him the atmosphere that he breathes, and the adulation on which he lives, are but his due."

Rupert, knowing from experience that thanks were the most distasteful of all things to Molière, after shaking hands with Mr. Cuthbert, gave his arm to his mother, and they returned to the Sacristy; on entering it, they found Louis and his whole court had just risen to proceed to the chapel, where the double marriage was celebrated with due pomp and solemnity, according to the respective rites of the Catholic and Lutheran Churches, and both the bridal parties had the honour of being invited to dine at the royal table, returning, however, previously to the vestry, to affix some more signatures to the marriage contracts.

"Now, Madame," said Louis Quatorze, addressing Lucy, "you are as firmly and indissolubly the wife of Monsieur de Belviane Quatorze, as Sir Gilbert Hawthorne can possibly desire. We hope it may never be more indissoluble than you yourself may wish; but we don't know 'that execrable old Gascon! that mean tool of the King's!' Eh, Monsieur le Comte?" added he slyly.

"Ah! Sir," exclaimed Rupert, "the ungrateful wretch deserved ten times more opprobrious epithets, for ever for a moment doubting such munificent goodness as that of your Majesty, who, however, may rest assured, that whatever were the

heresies of Rupert Singleton, they shall be amply atoned for by the unceasing devotion of the Comte de Belviane Quatorze."

"We accept the convert as we believe in the conversion," said the King, graciously holding out his hand to his new subject to kiss; "but one moment, we had nearly forgotten the marriage certificate for Sir Gilbert; who would not believe that his daughter was a bona-fide Countess, unless he saw it."

And so saying, Louis took from the *écrin* of diamonds that he had given Lucy, a magnificent coronet of brilliants, which he clasped round the plat of her hair, and then said, presenting his hand to her—

"You had also better accept our escort, Madame la Comtesse, as far as the great gallery; don't be afraid of offending your Lord and Master by deserting him so soon; he will bear it most submissively depend upon it; for the husband is generally only *incipient*, for the first three weeks, and seldom becomes *virulent*, under six months; but an angry father, *ventre sans gris!* as our grandfather used to say, is always an angry father; and now, as every one seems pleased with our *Impromptu de Versailles*, you, Poquelin, must write us another; and don't forget Sir Hawthorne! and the Grand Veneur! now enjoying each other's society in the gallery."

"Sire, you shall be obeyed," bowed Molière.

"A thought!" exclaimed the King. "We think it safer only to meet Sir Gilbert Hawthorne at dinner, which should now be ready; Monsieur de Grammont, have the goodness to make known to him our pleasure; one always finds so many things *en surprise!* at table, that this worthy gentleman will be better able to digest the surprise of his son-in-law!"

In the great banquetting room at Versailles, according to the Court etiquette of the time, the King's table was placed in the centre, while all along the four sides, by the wall, ran other tables for those members, and guests, of the household who did not dine at the royal table; and Sir Gilbert Hawthorne, having had due intimation from the Comte de Grammont, that he was to have the honour of being the King's guest, was, when his Majesty and suite entered, hovering closely round the scene of his approaching triumphs; and Monsieur de Soyecourt, having taken up one of the bills of fare from a napkin, upon which rested a slip of paper bearing the name of "Sare Hautton" inscribed on it, was in the act of trying to make him comprehend the nature of the cates he was about to consume; and even in an un-

known tongue they sounded so well, that the Knight was puffing out his cheeks, and, by anticipation, enlarging the lower part of his vest; for he was the "veriest butcher of a silk button" wherever feeding was concerned.

"So," said the King, in a low voice, turning round to speak to Rupert, who had orders to keep close behind him,—“the moment seems propitious for consulting the oracle: a man can swallow anything with his soup. Sir Gilbert,” added he aloud, advancing majestically towards that great man,—“we have the pleasure of presenting to you Madame la Comtesse de Belviane Quatorze. You see how well the coronet you had the wisdom to choose for her becomes her.”

“Oui, sire; bieng obligy, sire;” but Sir Gilbert’s French breaking off like the story of the bear and fiddle, just in the middle, he muttered in plain English, — “Good lack! to think as I should live to see the day as my daughter Luce is turned into a real live countess! The wench may well look as bright as patchwork.”

“N’est ce pas,” said the King, guessing at the nature of his soliloquy;—“and as long as one has the coronet, it is little matter who or what the Count may be. N’est ce pas? Tell him this, Bussy.” A command which Bussy lost *not* a moment in obeying.

“No, no—not a fig, sire,” rejoined Sir Gilbert, wagging his head.

“Ah! we knew *that* was exactly what a sensible man like Sir Hawthorne would think.”

Bussy again interpreted, and Sir Gilbert endorsed his former opinion.

“At that rate, then,” said Louis Quatorze,—“we have no scruple in presenting to you your son-in-law, Monsieur le Comte de Belviane Quatorze.”

And Rupert stood forward, made Sir Gilbert a profound bow, and respectfully asked his blessing. “What!” cried the knight, starting back, and letting his hands fly up like those of a puppet when the string is suddenly pulled,—“they’ve never gone and made a Count of that regicide chap, Rupert Singleton, sure—ly!”

“Regicide, sir, is certainly not *one* of the *Counts* in my indictment, and I can only assure you, that whatever his Majesty’s munificence has made, or may make me, my highest ambition, is to be Sir Gilbert Hawthorne’s son-in-law, and to convince him, and above all, the dear tenure by which I hold that title, that I am not unworthy of this best of privileges!”

“Well I never! did anybody ever? I suppose the coronet and the estates are all a hoax too?”

“No, sir, they are as real\* as my love for your daughter.”

“You be d——”

“I intend to be devoted to her, sir,” said Rupert, nearly laughing outright, at the oath his father-in-law was about so unceremoniously to rap out in such a place! while Sir Gilbert kept twitching his fingers with impotent rage, to think how completely he had been duped and defied, but having wit in his anger (though he had none at any other time) he reflected that the more stir he now made in the matter, the more he would publish his own non-infallibility, therefore it was no small relief to him that at this moment the King’s chief Maitre d’Hôtel proclaimed in a loud voice—

“*Sa Majesté est servie.*”

The two brides had the honour of being seated one on each side of the King. Lucy, as she passed her father, tried to take his hand, but he turned angrily away from her.

“Ah! Sir Gilbert,” said Madame de Sévigné, as she seated herself beside the at once ravenous and resentful Knight, “forgive her; we have not our children always with us, and recollect, poor girl, she is married now, and husbands are for life!”

Tom Pepys, who had got into the room to officiate behind Rupert’s chair, in changing his plate, whispered, as he glanced at Sir Gilbert’s grotesquely annoyed face, “Good lack! the *Comte de Belviane Quatorze*, turning out to be Master Singleton! methinks do go as hard with the Knight, as my cousin Sam’s venison, ending in palpable mutton!”

Great was the crowd assembled to see the *Grand Monarque*, eat that day,† and truly never had he looked more great, or more happy in his greatness, for he had done better than gain a victory, or convert a swamp into an Elysium, he had made many hearts glad.

Sir Gilbert, as soon as he had attended to the more important, and immediate point, of his own appetite, could not help saying to his wife, whom he had ordered to sit on one side of him, to ask for what he wanted, and interpret what was said to him—

“Humph! and what pray has become of that French Marcus, as was so like this

\* One of the “*great facts!*” of the present day.

† Up to the time of Louis the Eighteenth, the people were always admitted to see the Royal Family of France at dinner.

good-for-nothing Singleton? for I don't see him here, nowhere."

"Oh! don't you know, Sir Gilbert?" began Lady Hawthorne, with a smile that might have disarmed a less hungry, or a more happy man, for Lucy's happiness was shining out gloriously in her heart, and made her face radiant with its brightness. But Sir Gilbert began to suspect that he *dùl* know; and that he had been double duped in the most flagrant manner. So, interrupting her, with an impatient shrug, he muttered between some wedges of sturgeon, that he had just crammed into his mouth, "Well, if the *fortin* is a sham, as well as all the rest, they may just take the consequences — for *one* shilling of *my* money, they sha'n't see, till death hands it down,"—and notwithstanding that this resolve was launched on a flood of the most regal Burgundy that ever rejoiced a human palate, Sir Gilbert began to have doubts that absolute monarchs, who could make, and mar, destinies just as they pleased, was not such a desirable state of things after all; indeed, before he had struggled with the last course, he had almost arrived at the conviction, that a republic was better, where every man was his own monarch, and considered and treated the rest of his fellow-creatures like slaves and subjects; because, touching the Utopia of liberty and equality, people's ideas and aspirations are generally so exceedingly moderate, that they never extend *beyond themselves*; and, at the same time, so elevated, that they always *level upwards*.

"Pray, Monsieur de Grammont," said the King, "is it true that every dish the servitors bring to the King of England's table, they present kneeling?"

"Perfectly true, Sire; but, if your Majesty saw how *on traite ge pauvre Roi en gargotte!* you would at once understand, that the least they can do is to kneel down and beg his pardon, for giving him such execrable dinners."

Louis laughed heartily, and was altogether in such high spirits, and there was such drinking of bridal healths, that the dinner lasted to the then unusually late hour of two o'clock. When the Royal carriages came round, as after all the pomp and state of Versailles, on the occasion of these weddings, Louis Quatorze was going to solace himself with the solitudes of Compeigne, and the society of Madame de Montespan.

The brides also took their departure for their respective homes; Rupert insisting upon his faithful friend, Tom Peppys, accompanying him, Lucy, and his mother, to Béarn; and Molière, Madame de Sé-

vigné, and Bussy Rabutin promising to be at the Château de Belviane in a fortnight: while the poor Lady Hawthorne, as she pressed Lucy to her heart again, and again, tried to smile through her tears, and said she was sure Sir Gilbert would come round as soon as he was convinced that the Château de Belviane was *not* a castle in the air.

Amid this friendly and happy group, there was but one true honest face wanting; but its absence was not of long duration, for no sooner was the carriage door opened, and Rupert was about to hand Lucy into it, than out sprang Turlupin, bounding and barking with delight, and his coat as bridally white, as soap and water could make it; while a collar of blue and silver favours adorned his neck, and was exceedingly becoming to the beauty of his canine complexion, and the strong relief of his bright black eyes and nose.

"That dear dog!" said Lucy, pressing Rupert's hand, "he has been so kind and so useful to us, that I could not bear to part from him, so I bought him from the man of the hotel."

"My own little *wife!*" cried Rupert, rapturously kissing the hand he held, "begins by anticipating my wishes, for Turlupin is a dog for whom I have the highest respect, considering the obligations I am under to him."

It is a melancholy fact that *every* one cannot be pleased at the same time, for Master Fop, as he was handed out of the coach, at one corner of which he had lain curled up asleep, occasionally, however, opening one eye, and casting it at the French poodle, with as much contempt as Sir Gilbert himself could have done, under similar circumstances, now upon being transferred to the tender mercies of his mistress's "gentlewoman" gave a low growl, and looked askance at the new-married couple, in a way that indicated anything but wishing them joy.

"Ah!" laughed Bussy Rabutin, as the coach drove off, and he kissed his hand to the *literally* "Happy Pair," "he is not the only Fop that will be in despair!"

#### L'ENVOYE.

BIRTHS, marriages, and deaths! In those three fields are the history of the world and the harvest of eternity! We come now to glean in the latter. Ten years had passed away in happiness to Lucy and Rupert, and in additional fame

and fever to Molière. His health, but not his labours, declined; in vain both Chappelle and Boileau conjured him to repose upon the great celebrity he had so justly earned. But Molière was unhappy, and there is no rest for the wretched, so he persisted in dying in harness. Ten months before his death, through the intercession of mutual friends, he had become reconciled to his wife; and, believing in her strong protestations of innocence, he continued to give into her keeping all the fragments of the noble heart she had so completely broken. Baron was now become a fine young man, and an admirable actor; and Molière felt more pride in his rising reputation than he had ever done in his own. Often would Boileau urge that Baron was now quite equal to conducting the Petit Bourbon, and taking the onus off of its founder's shoulders; for, indeed, it was most repulsively painful to his feelings, to see a man of Molière's increasing age and infirmities desecrating the dignity that should have accompanied his celebrity, by nightly being stuffed into a sack, and receiving the blows of Sganarelle; but Molière, who knew that, as long as a spark of life remained in him, he was the attraction of his theatre, would only reply—

"What can I do? There are fifty poor artisans who have only their daily pay to exist upon; and they won't have that, if we don't act every night; and none of my plays can be properly cast without I fill my original rôles;" and then, after a paroxysm of coughing, he would add, "Nevertheless, what we must suffer, before we can succeed in dying!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Boileau, "the great heart of Molière has no mercy upon the rest of his poor frail body."

It was on Friday evening, the 17th of February, 1673, that Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, for the last time, trod those boards upon which he had gained so immortal a fame.

"Absence," says La Rochefoucauld, "extinguishes small passions, and augments great ones," and it is precisely the same with talents; small fictitious ones, however inflated by contemporary puffing, are sure to be extinguished by a blast from the passing wing of Time, while really great ones, like a conflagration, are fanned into additional brightness by the sweep of his transit.

Upon this memorable and fatal 17th of February, the play—as if in bitter mockery—was the *Malade Imaginaire*, which part was enacted by the really dying man, who with difficulty got through it; indeed,

the audience perceived that in pronouncing the word *jurò*, in the ceremony-scene, he was seized with a convulsion, and observing that they *did* remark it, he tried to hide it by a forced laugh. The play ended, he put on a furred *robe de chambre* and went into Baron's box, asking him what people thought of the play.

"Why, you know," said Baron, evasively, "there is or can be but one opinion of your plays, and the more they are acted, the more they are appreciated; but it seems to me that you really should begin to take care of your health, for you appear weaker than you were."

"That is true," replied Molière, "and at this moment I feel as if giant hands of ice were convulsively seizing me in all directions."

Baron took his hands and found, indeed, that they were as cold as death; he placed them in his own muff, and ran for a sedan chair, in which he had his first, best, but now evidently expiring friend conveyed to his house, in the Rue de Richelieu, where they put him into a warm bed, and La Fôret persuaded him to swallow a few spoonfuls of broth; but the exertion of doing so brought on another violent fit of coughing, which ended in his rupturing a blood-vessel. Nothing, perhaps, can bear so strong a testimony to the sincerity of La Fôret's grief, as the fact of her quietly kneeling beside and mingling her tears with those of Armande,—the murderess, as in her heart she was wont to call her,—and at this supreme moment, that thoughtless, heartless woman felt her self-reproach acknowledging the justice of the epithet.

"Oh! Molière," sobbed she, bathing his thin shadowy hand with her tears, "say you forgive me for all I have made you suffer."

"M'amie," said the dying man, in a hollow whisper, first fixing his glassy eyes on her, and then raising them for a moment to Heaven, "Sin and sorrow cannot enter *there*, but love and pardon do, and they are all I take with me, so I hope to gain admission, *quand même?* Adieu! Adieu!"

The next moment a fearful silence fell upon that large dim room, for *Death was there*, but *MOIÈRE WAS IN HEAVEN!* . . . .

Molière the poet still lived! but Molière the actor was dead, and therefore could no longer amuse Louis the Fourteenth; and, with increasing years, that hideous and colossal selfishness which St. Simon has bared to posterity, also increased, so that, although the widow of Molière addressed a petition to the Archbishop of Paris (Harlay de Champvallon), and

accompanied by the Curé of Auteuil, flew to Versailles to throw herself at the King's feet to implore Christian burial for her husband's remains, he brusquely dismissed both her and the curate, contenting himself with writing to the Archbishop, to try and adopt some middle course for the interment of his late *favorite!* between the unconsecrated ground allotted to criminals and actors, and the orthodox sepulture of the children of the Church. The result of this *gracious* interference was, that the Archbishop decided upon awarding a little earth (un peu de terre!) to that body, whose spirit had so long charmed all Europe; but upon the proviso that the body was to be thrust into this earth immediately, without, like those of the elect, being first presented and prayed over in the church, which is doubtless what is meant by ecclesiastical (though not exactly), by *Christian* charity.

It was a drizzling cold evening, on the 21st of February, 1673, that Rupert was entering Paris by the Barrière Montmartre, upon Zara, to pay his annual visit to his guardian angel, as he called Molière, —and more especially this time, to ask him to be godfather to his last-born son; when, on its way to the cemetery of Saint Joseph, he met an unpretending funeral cortège, accompanied only by two ecclesiastics, a young man, and an old woman, without even a single chaunt, and nothing to relieve the surrounding gloom, but the red glare of the torch that each of the mourners held. Rupert drew up, and taking off his hat while the pall-bearers passed, asked an old fish-wife whose funeral it was.

"Eh!" replied she with a shrug, "*c'est de Molière.*"

Upon which La Fôret, who was the old woman accompanying the funeral, turned round, and giving her a violent slap in the face, exclaimed indignantly,—

"Comment! malheureuse! il est bien *Monsieur* pour toi!"\*

This little scene between the two old women caused a noisy mob to collect, which for some time the two priests endeavoured in vain to disperse.

"So, you wretches! you are come to see *MOLIERE'S TRAGEDY*, are you?" cried La Fôret,—“well, at least behave yourselves. Surely he made you laugh enough during his life, that you might spare *one* tear for his death, or put on even a decent solemnity.”

Sickened at this scene, and grieved to the heart, Rupert gave the mob money to disperse quietly;† and then dismounting, and giving the reins to his servant, he helped to support the coffin, which was not half so heavy as his heart; and when it was lowered into the *peu de terre!* which had been awarded to it in the cemetery of Saint Joseph, the tears that fell from his eyes were at least as sincere, and as sacred, as any rites, however gorgeous, that could have been performed over it. And the first daisy had not sprung upon Molière's grave before ALL FRANCE! avenged the contumely of his obsequies, by the enthusiasm of its regret; and Boileau, true to the end, immortalized the foregone Immortal, by those sublime and magnificent lines, in his Epistle to Racine, beginning,—

“Avant qu'un peu de terre!” &c. &c.

Thus, his memory enshrined in every heart, and his fame in every country, ended

**MOLIERE!**

\* How, wretch! he is at least a gentleman to such as you!

† Which it was not so easy to make them do at Louis the Fourteenth's funeral.

FINIS.







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