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AND OTHER TALES.

BY MRS. S.C. HALL.

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URNS OF FORTUNE

CHAPTER I.

"Hush, Sarah!" exclaimed old Jacob Bond, as he sat up in his bed, while the wind clattered and whistled through the shivering window frames. "Hush! Is that Brindle's bark?"

"No, father; it is one of the farm dogs near the village. Lie down, dearest father; it is a cold night, and you are trembling."

"I don't know why I should feel cold, Sarah," he replied, pointing his shadowy fingers towards the grate, where an abundant fire blazed; "I am sure you have put down as much wood as would roast an ox."

"It is so very cold, father."

"Still, we must not be wasteful, Sarah," he answered; "wilful waste makes woful want." Sarah Bond covered the old man carefully over, while he laid himself stiffly down upon his pallet, re-muttering his favourite proverb over and over again.

She then drew the curtains more closely, and seated herself in an old-fashioned chair beside a little table in front of the fire.

The room had been the drawing-room of the old house in which Mr. Bond and his daughter resided, but for the sake of saving both labour and expense, he had had his bed removed into it; and though anything but comfortable, a solitary, impoverished, and yet gorgeous appearance pervaded the whole, such as those who delineate interiors, loving small lights and deep shadows, would covet to convey to their canvass. The bed upon which the old man lay was canopied, and of heavy crimson damask. In the dim light of that spacious room, it looked to the worn-out eyes of Sarah Bond more like a hearse than a bed. Near it was an old spinnet, upon which stood a labelled vial, a tea-cup, and a spoon. When Sarah seated herself at the table, she placed her elbows upon it, and pressed her folded hands across her eyes; no sigh or moan escaped her, but her chest heaved convulsively; and when she removed her hands, she drew a Bible toward her, trimmed the lamp, and began to read.

The voice of an old French clock echoed painfully through the chamber. Sarah longed to stop it, and yet it was a companion in her watchings. Once, a shy, suspicious, bright-eyed mouse rattled among the cinders, and ran into the wainscot, and then came out again, and stared at Sarah Bond, who, accustomed to such visits, did not raise her eyes to inquire into the cause of the rustling which in a few more moments took place upon a tray containing the remnants of some bread and cheese, her frugal supper.

"Sarah," croaked Mr. Bond; "what noise is that?"

"Only the mice, father, as usual; do, father, try to sleep. I watch carefully; there is nothing to fear."

"Ay, ay, men and mice all the same; nothing but waste. When I am gone, Sarah, keep what you will have; it won't be much, Sarah, my poor girl, it won't be much; just enough to need care; but KEEP IT; don't lend it, or give it, or spend it; you are fond of spending, my poor girl; see that huge fire, enough for three nights; early bad habits. When we lived in a small house and were poor, it was then you learned to be extravagant; I had no money then, so did not know its value."

"But we were happier then, father," said Sarah Bond; "we were so cheerful and happy then, and so many poor people blessed my dear mother, and Mary"—

"Hiss—ss," uttered the dying miser; "don't dare mention your sister, who disgraced me by marrying a pauper; a pauper who threatened my life, because I would not give him my money to save him from starving; but he *did not* get the old father-in-law's gold; no; he *starved, and*"—

The words thus uttered by her father, who she knew had not many hours to live—uttered, too, with such demoniac bitterness—forced the gentle, patient woman to start from her seat, and pass rapidly across the room to the side of his bed, where she sank upon her knees, and seized his shrunken hands in hers. "Father!" she exclaimed, "I have been your child for forty years, and you have said, that during that period, by no act of my own, have I *ever* angered you. Is it not so?" The old man withdrew one hand gently, turned himself round, and looked in her face: "Forty years! Is it forty years?" he repeated; "but it must be; the fair brow is wrinkled, and the abundant hair grown thin and gray. You were a pretty baby, Sarah, and a merry child; a cheerful girl, too, until that foolish fancy. Well, dear, I'll say no more about it; good, dutiful girl. You gave it up to please your father full twenty years ago, and when he dies, you shall have *all* his gold—there's a good father! You must *keep* it, Sarah, and not give it, nor lend it. I know you won't marry, as *he* is dead; nor see your sister—mind that; if you see *her*, or serve her, the bitterest curse that ever

rose from a father's grave will compass you in on every side."

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"My father!" she said, "oh! in mercy to yourself, revoke these words. She knew nothing of her husband's conduct; he used her even worse than he used you. Oh! for my sake say you will forgive Mary. It is all I ask. Do what you please with your wealth, but forgive my sister."

"You were always a fool, Sarah," he replied faintly and peevishly. "If I could do as I please, I would take my property with me, for you will surely spend it. But there is another condition, another promise you must give me. Now, don't interrupt me again. We will talk of *her* by-and-bye, perhaps. As long as you live, Sarah, *as you value my blessing*, you must not part with anything in this room. You will live on in the old house, or perhaps sell it, and have a smaller; yet don't spend money in new furnishing—don't; but never part with anything in *this room*; never so much as a stick."

This promise was willingly given; for, independently of her love for her father, Sarah Bond had become attached to the inanimate objects which had so long been before her. Again she endeavoured to lead her father away from that avarice which had corrupted his soul, and driven happiness and peace from their dwelling. She urged the duty of forgiveness, and pleaded hard for her sister; but, though the hours wore away, she made no impression upon him. Utterly unmindful of her words, he did not either interrupt her or fall into his former violence. On the contrary, he seemed involved in some intricate calculation—counting on his fingers, or casting up lines of imaginary figures upon the coverlit.

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Sarah, heart-broken, and silently weeping, retreated to the table, and again, after turning the fire, betook her to her solace—the precious volume that never fails to afford consolation to the afflicted. She read a few passages, and then, though she looked upon the book, her mind wandered. She recalled the happy days of her childhood, before her father, by the extraordinary and most unexpected bequest of a distant relative, became possessed of property to what extent she could form no idea. She knew that this relative had quarrelled with the heir-at-law, and left all to one he had never seen. This bequest had closed up her father's heart; instead of being a blessing, so perfectly avaricious had he grown, that it was a curse. Previously, he had been an industrious farmer; and though a thrifty one, had evinced none of the bitterness of avarice, none of its hardness or tyranny. He could then sleep at nights, permit his wife and children to share their frugal stores with those who needed, troll "Ere around the huge oak," while his wife accompanied him on the spinnet, and encourage his daughters to wed men in what was their then sphere of life, rather than those who might not consider the gentle blood they inherited, and their superior education, a sufficient set-off to their limited means and humble station. Suddenly, riches poured in upon him: his eldest daughter, true to the faith she plighted, would marry her humble lover, and her father's subsequent harshness to her favourite child broke the mother's heart. Sarah not only had less firmness of character than her sister, but loved her father more devotedly, and gave up the affection of her young heart to please him. His narrow nature could not understand the sacrifice: and when her cheek faded, and her really beautiful face contracted into the painful expression of that pining melancholy which has neither words nor tears—to lull his sympathy, he muttered to himself, "good girl, *she* shall have *all* I have."

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No human passion grows with so steady, so imperceptible, yet so rampant a growth as avarice. It takes as many shapes as Proteus, and may be called, above all others, the vice of middle life, that soddens into the gangrene of old age; gaining strength by vanquishing all virtues and generous emotions, it is a creeping, sly, keen, persevering, insidious sin, assuming various forms, to cheat even itself; for it shames to name itself unto itself; a cowardly, darkness-loving sin, never daring to look human nature in the face; full of lean excuses for self-imposed starvation, only revelling in the impurity and duskiness of its own shut-up heart. At last the joy-bells ring its knell, while it crawls into eternity like a vile reptile, leaving a slimy track upon the world.

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The inmates of the mansion enclosed in its old court-yard had long ceased to attract the observation of their neighbours. Sometimes Sarah called at the butcher's, but she exchanged smiles or greetings with few; and the baker rang the rusty bell twice a-week, which was answered by their only servant. When Mr. Bond first took possession of the manor-house, he hired five domestics, and everybody said they could not do with so few; and there were two men to look after the gardens; but after his daughter's elopement and his wife's death, three were discharged, and he let the lands and gardens; and then another went, and Sarah felt the loneliness so great, that she made the remaining one sleep in her own room. The house had been frequently attacked; once, in a fit of despair, her brother-in-law had forced his way in the night to the old man's side, and but for her prompt interference, murder would have been done. No wonder, then, that her shattered nerves trembled as she watched the shortening candle, and heard the raving of the wind, saw the spectral shadows the broken plumes that ornamented the canopy of the bed cast upon the fantastic walls, *felt* that *his* hour was at hand, and feared that "he would die and make no sign;" still, while those waving fantasies passing to and fro through her active but weakened mind, made her tremble in every limb, and ooze at every pore; and though unable to read on steadily, her eyes continued fixed upon the book which her hand grasped, with the same feeling that made those of old cling to the altar of their God for sanctuary. Suddenly her father called—and she started as from a dream—"Sarah!"

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She hastened to his side; "Dear father, what do you want?"

"Child, the room is dark; and you had so much light just now. All is dark. Where are you? But it

was better, after all, to put out the light; wilful waste makes"—

Before the miser had concluded his proverb, the light of *his* existence was extinguished for ever!

CHAPTER II.

Several weeks elapsed before Sarah Bond recovered sufficiently from the shock, ay, and genuine grief, occasioned by her father's death, so as to investigate her affairs; the hardness and the tyranny she had borne for so many years had become habitual, and her own will was absolutely paralysed by inaction. Jacob Bond had always treated his daughter as if she were a baby, and it was some time before she could collect herself sufficiently to calculate upon her future plans. She had no friends; and the sister to whom, despite her father's cruel words, her heart clung so fondly, was far from her, she knew not where. The mourning for herself and her servant was ordered from a neighbouring shop, with a carelessness as to expense which made people say that Sarah was of habits different from her father.

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The rector and curate of the parish both called, but she shrunk from strangers. The very first act, however, of her liberty, was to take a pew at church, a whole pew, to herself, which she ordered to be curtained all round. Some said this indicated pride, some said ostentation; but it was simply shyness. And soon after she placed in the aisle a white marble tablet, "To the memory of Jacob Bond, who died in the seventy-eighth year of his age, deeply lamented by his sorrowing daughter."

Some ladies connected with a society for clothing the poor, called upon and explained to her their object; she poked five old guineas into the hands of the spokeswoman, but forbade the insertion of her donation in the visitor's book. During the following week she had numerous applications from various charitable bodies, to whom she gave generously, they said, while she reproached herself with narrowness; to all, however, she positively refused to become a yearly subscriber; and when closely urged by the rector to be one of the patrons of his school, she answered, "Sir, my father received his property suddenly, and I may be as suddenly deprived of it. I will give, but I will not promise." Her impulse was to give, her habit to withhold.

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She added one more servant to her establishment; and as she did not send out cards returning thanks for the 'inquiries,' which increased daily, Sarah Bond was a very lonely woman; for though some, from curiosity, others from want of occupation, others, again, from the unfortunately universal desire to form acquaintance with the rich, would have been glad, now the solitary old miser was gone, to make fellowship with his gentle-looking and wealthy daughter, yet her reserve and quietness prevented the fulfilment of their wishes. Weeks and months rolled on; the old house had been repaired and beautified. Mr. Cramp, Sarah's law agent and 'man of business,' advised her to let the house, of which she occupied about as much as a wren could fill of the nest of an eagle; and, strangely enough, finding that the house of her childhood was to let, she took it, removing thither all the furniture which her father made her promise never to part with. The ceiling of the best bed-room was obliged to be raised to admit the lofty bed with its plumes, and the spinnet was assigned a very comfortable corner in a parlour, where the faded stately chairs and gorgeous furniture formed a curious contrast to the bright neatly-papered walls and drugget-covered floor; for in all matters connected with her own personal expenses, Sarah Bond was exceedingly frugal.

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After her removal, though shy and strange as ever, still she *looked* kind things to her rich, and *did* kind things to her poor neighbours, only in a strange, unusual way; and her charity was given by fits and starts—not continuously. She moved silently about her garden, and evinced much care for her plants and flowers. Closely economical from long habit, rather than inclination, her domestic arrangements were strangely at variance with what could not be called public gifts, because she used every effort in her power to conceal her munificence. She did not, it is true, think and calculate, how the greatest good could be accomplished. She knew but one path to charity, and that was paved with gold. She did not know how to offer sympathy, or to enhance a gift by the manner of giving. Her father had sacrificed everything to multiply and keep his wealth; all earthly happiness had been given up for it; and unsatisfying as it had been to her own heart, it had satisfied his. Inclination prompted to give, habit to withhold; and certainly Sarah Bond felt far more enjoyment in obeying inclination than in following habit; though sometimes what she believed a duty triumphed over inclination.

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If Sarah Bond ministered to her sister's necessities, she did so secretly, hardly venturing to confess she did so, but shielding herself from her father's curse, by sending to her sister's child, and not her sister. Receiving few letters, the village postman grumbled far more at having to walk out to Greenfield, than if he was accustomed to do so every day; and one morning in particular; when he was obliged to do so while the rain poured, he exhibited a letter, sealed with a large black seal, to the parish-clerk, saying he wished with all his heart Miss Bond had remained at the old manor-house up street, instead of changing; and where was the good of taking her a mourning letter such a gloomy day? it would be very unkind, and he would keep it "till the rain stopped;" and so he did, until the next morning; then taking back word to the village postmaster that Miss Bond wanted a post-chaise and four horses instantly, which intelligence set not only the inn, but the whole village in commotion. She, who had never wanted a post-chaise before, to want four horses to it now, was really wonderful.

"Which road shall I take, Miss?" inquired the post-boy, turning round in his saddle, and touching his cap.

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"On straight," was the answer. Such a thrill of disappointment as ran through the little crowd, who stood at the door to witness her departure. "On straight!" Why, they must wait the post-boy's return before they could possibly know which way she went. Such provoking suspense was enough to drive the entire village demented.

Miss Bond remained away a month, and then returned, bringing with her her niece, a girl of about eight years old—her deceased sister's only child, Mabel Graham.

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The following Sunday Sarah Bond went to church, leading her young companion by the hand; both were in deep mourning, and yet the very least observant of the congregation remarked, that they had never seen Miss Bond look so happy as when, coming out after service, and finding that the wind had changed to the north-east, she took off her scarf in the church porch, and put it round the neck of the lovely girl, who strongly remonstrated against the act. It was evident that Mabel had been accustomed to have her own way; for when she found her aunt was resolved her throat should be protected, she turned round, and in a moment tore the silk into halves. "Now, dear aunt, neither of our throats will suffer," she exclaimed; while Sarah Bond did not know whether she ought to combat her wilfulness or applaud the tender care of herself. It was soon talked of throughout the village, how wonderfully Sarah Bond was changed; how cheerful and even gay she had become. Instead of avoiding society, how willingly, yet how awkwardly, she entered into it; how eagerly she sought to learn and to make herself acquainted with every source and system of education. No traveller in the parchy desert ever thirsted more for water than she did for knowledge, and her desire seemed to increase with what it fed upon. The more she had the more she required; and all this was for the sake of imparting all she learned to Mabel. She fancied that teachers might not be kind to this new-found idol; that she could transfer information more gently and continuously; that the relative was the best instructress; in short, the pent-up tenderness of her nature, the restrained torrent of affections that had so long lain dormant, were poured forth upon the little heiress, as she was already called; and captious and determined she was, as ever heiress could be; but withal of so loving a nature, and so guileless a heart, so confiding, so generous, and so playful, and overflowing with mirth and mischief, that it would have been impossible to fancy any living creature who had felt the sunshine of fourteen summers more charming or tormenting.

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"I wish, dear aunt," exclaimed Mabel, one morning, as she sat at her embroidery, the sun shining through the open window upon the abundant glories of her hair, while her aunt sat, as she always did, opposite to her, that she might, when she raised her eyes from off the Italian lesson she was conning for her especial edification, have the happiness of seeing her without an effort; "I wish, dear aunt, you would send that old spinnet out of the room; it looks so odd by the side of my beautiful piano."

"My dear Mabel," replied her aunt, "I have put as much *new* furniture as you wished into this room, but I cannot part with the old"—

"Rubbish!" added Mabel, snapping her worsted with the impatience of the movement.

"It may be rubbish in *your* eyes, Mabel, but I have told you before that my dear father desired I should never part with the furniture of the room he died in."

Mabel *looked* the truth—"that she was not more inclined toward the old furniture on that account;" but she did not say so. "Have you got the key of the old spinnet, aunt? I should like to hear its tone."

"I have never found the key, my dear, though I have often looked for it; I suppose my father lost it. I have danced to its music before now to my mother's playing; but I am sure it has not a tone left."

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"I wish you would dance now, dear aunt," exclaimed Mabel, jumping up at the idea; "you never told me you could dance; I never, somehow, fancied you could dance, and I have been obliged to practise my quadrilles with two high-backed chairs and my embroidery frame. Do, dear aunt; put by that book, and dance." It would be impossible to fancy a greater contrast than aunt and niece. Sarah Bond's erect and perfectly flat figure was surmounted by a long head and face, round which an abundance of gray hair was folded; for by no other term can I describe its peculiar dress; her cap plain, but white as snow; and a black silk gown, that had seen its best days, was pinned and *primmed* on, so as to sit as close as possible to a figure which would have been greatly improved by heavy and abundant drapery. Mabel, lithe and restless, buoyant and energetic, unable even to wish for more luxury or more happiness than she possessed, so that her active mind was *forced* to employ its longings on trifles, as it really had nothing else to desire; her face was round as those faces are which become oval in time; and her bright laughing eyes sparkled like sunbeams at the bare notion of making "aunt Sarah" take either the place of a high-backed chair, or the embroidery frame in a quadrille. "Do dance," she repeated.

"My dear child, I know as little of your quadrilles as you do of my country dances and reels. No, Mabel; I can neither open the spinnet nor dance quadrilles; so you have been twice refused this morning; a novelty, is it not, my dearest Mabel?"

"But why do you not break open the spinnet? Do break it open, aunt; I want to see the inside of it so much."

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"No, Mabel; the lock is a peculiar one, and could not be broken without defacing the marquetre on the cover, which I should not like to do. My poor mother was so proud of that cover, and used to dust and polish it with her own hands."

"What! herself?" exclaimed the pretty Mabel; "why did not her servants do it?"

"Because, my dear, she had but one."

"But one! I remember when my poor mamma had none," sighed Mabel, "and we were *so* miserable."

"But not from lack of attendants, I think," answered Sarah Bond. "If they *are* comforts, they are careful ones, and sadly wasteful. We were never so happy as we were then. Your mother and I used to set the milk, and mind the poultry, and make the butter, and cultivate the flower-garden, and help to do the house work; and then in the evening we would run in the meadows, come home laden with wild flowers, and tired as we were by alternate work and play, my dear mother would play on that old instrument, and my poor father sing, and we sisters wound up the evening by a merry dance, your mother and myself trying hard which could keep up the dance longest."

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Mabel resumed her embroidery without once speaking. Sarah Bond laid down the book she had been reading, and moved restlessly about; her manner, when either thoughtful or excited, prevented her features from being disturbed; so her feelings were soothed by wandering from place to place, or table to table; but after a considerable pause, she said—"I wish you were a little older, Mabel; I wish you to be older, that I might convince you, dear, that it is in vain to expect happiness from the possession of wealth, unless we circulate it, share it with others, and yet do so prudently and watchingly. Yet, my poor dear father would be very angry if he heard me say that, Mabel."

"Yes, I know," interrupted the thoughtless girl, "*for he was a miser.*"

"Hush, Mabel!" exclaimed her aunt; "how can you say anything so harsh of him from whom we inherit all we have. He was careful, peculiar, very peculiar; but he saved all for me; and may God judge mercifully between him and me if I cannot in all things do as he would have had me," and then she paused, as if reasoning and arguing with herself; apologising for the human throes in her own bosom that led her to act so frequently in direct opposition to her father's desires; so that to those who could not understand her motives and feelings, she appeared every day more inconsistent. "It is difficult to judge of motives in any case. I am sure, if he had only gone abroad into the world, and seen distress as I have seen it, he could not have shut his heart against his fellow-creatures: but his feelings were hardened against some, whom he considered types of all, and he shut himself up; and seeing no misery, at last believed, as many do, whom the world never dreams of calling as you called him, Mabel—seeing no misery, believed that it only existed in the popular whine. I am sure, if he had seen, he would have relieved it. I always think *that* when I am giving; it is a great blessing to be able to give; and I would give more, were I not fearful that it might injure you."

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"Injure me, dear aunt, how?"

"Why, Mabel, my heart is greatly fixed upon seeing you a rich heiress, and, in time, suitably established."

"You have just been saying how much happier you were when you were all poor together, and yet you want to make me rich."

"People may be very happy in poverty before they have known riches; but having once been rich, it would, I think, be absurd to suppose we could ever be happy again in poverty."

"I saw," replied the girl, "two children pass the gate this morning while I was gathering flowers—bunches of the simple white jessamine you love so much, dear aunt—and they asked so hard for bread, that I sent them a shilling."

"Too much," interrupted Sarah Bond, habitually rather than from feeling; "too much, dear Mabel, to give to common beggars."

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"There were two, you know, and they looked wan and hungry. About three hours after, I was cantering my pony down Swanbrook Lane—the grass there is so soft and green, that you cannot hear his feet, while I can hear every grasshopper that chirps—suddenly, I heard a child's voice singing a tune full of mirth, and I went softly, softly on; and there, under a tree, sat one of my morning acquaintances, making believe to sing through a stick, while the other danced with bare feet, and her very rags fluttered in time to the tune. They looked pale and hungry, though a thick crust of bread upon the grass proved that they were not the latter; but I never saw more joy in well-fed, well-clothed children, for they paused and laughed, and then began again. Poverty was no pain to *them*, at all events."

"My dear," said Sarah Bond, "you forget the crust of bread was their riches, for it was a

superfluity."

"And is it not very shocking that in England a crust of bread *should be* a superfluity," inquired Mabel.

[pg 30] "Very, dear; *but a shilling was a great deal to give at the gate,*" observed her aunt, adding, after a pause, "and yet it shows how little will make the poor happy. I am sure, if my father had looked abroad, instead of staying at home to watch his—his—money, he would have thought it right to share what he had. It is an unnatural thing to shut one's self up from the duties of life; one gets no interest for any other outlay to do the heart service; but though those poor children danced their rags in the sunshine, and felt not the stones they danced on, yet my dear Mabel could not dance with poverty as her companion—my blessed, blessed child!"

"I'd rather dance a jig with mirth than a minuet with melancholy," laughed the girl; "and yet it would take a great deal to make me miserable if I were with you, and you loved me, my dear aunt. Still, I own I like to be rich, so as to have everything I want, and give everybody what they want; and, aunt Sarah, you know very well I cannot finish this rose without the pale floss silk, and my maid forgot both that and to order the seed pearl."

Mabel's complaint was interrupted by the entrance of the servant, who told Miss Bond that Mr. Cramp, her attorney, wished to see her.

"Show him in," said Miss Bond.

"He wishes to see you alone, ma'am."

"His wife is going to die, and he will want you to marry him!" exclaimed Mabel, heedless of the servant's presence. "Do, dear aunt, and let me be bride's-maid."

Sarah Bond changed colour; and then, while stooping to kiss her wayward niece, she called her "a foolish child."

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CHAPTER III.

Mr. Cramp, whom we introduced at the conclusion of the last chapter, as Miss Bond's man of business, was a plain little man, skilled in the turnings and windings of the law, beside which he could not be said to know distinctly any other code of morals.

On this particular morning, after a few common-place observations, Mr. Cramp made a somewhat strange inquiry. "Had Miss Bond heard that Mr. Alfred Bond had come over to England?" No; she had not heard it. It was, Mr. Cramp *insinuated* (for he never *said* anything directly)—it was rather an awkward circumstance Mr. Alfred Bond's coming to England. He thought—he believed—he *hoped* it would make no difference to Miss Bond.

[pg 32] Miss Bond opened her wide eyes still more widely. She knew that Mr. Alfred Bond was the heir-at-law to the property bequeathed her father; but what of that? he had never, that she heard of, dreamed of disputing the will; and she had never felt one pang of insecurity as to the possessions which had of late grown so deeply into her heart. At this unexpected intimation she felt the blood rush through her veins in a wild untameable manner. In all her trials—and they had been many—in all her illnesses—not a few—she had never fainted, never fallen into that symptom of weak-mindedness, a fit of hysterics; but now she sat without power of speech, looking at Mr. Cramp's round face.

"My dear Miss Bond, you are not ill, I hope?" exclaimed Mr. Cramp. "I pray you to bear up; what has been said is doubtless wrong—must be wrong; a threat of the opposite party—an undefined threat, which we must prepare ourselves to meet in a lawyer-like way. Hope for the best, and prepare"—

"For what, sir?" inquired Miss Bond, gaspingly.

"For any—anything—that is my plan. Unfortunately, the only way to deal with the world, so as to meet it on equal terms, is to think every man a rogue. It is a deeply painful view to take of human nature, and it agonizes me to do so. Let me, however, entreat you to bear up"—

"Against what, sir?" said Sarah Bond abruptly, and almost fiercely, for now Mr. Cramp's face was reduced to its original size, and she had collected her ideas. "There are few things I could *not* bear up against, but I must know what I have to sustain."

[pg 33] "Your father's will, my dear lady, is safe; the document, leaving everything to you, that is safe, and all other documents are safe enough except Cornelius Bond Hobart's will—a will bequeathing the property to your uncle. *Where* is that will to be found? for if Alfred Bond proceeds, the veritable document must be produced."

"Why, so it can be, I suppose," said Sarah Bond, relapsing in some degree into agitation; "it was produced when my father inherited the property, as you know."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bond," he answered; "certainly not as I *know*, for I had not the honour

of being your father's legal adviser at that time. It was my master and subsequent partner. I had not the privilege of your father's confidence until after my colleague's death."

"No one," said Miss Bond, "ever had my father's *confidence*, properly so called; he was very close in all money transactions. The will, however, must be, I think, in Doctors' Commons! Go there immediately, Mr. Cramp; and—stay—I will go with you; there it is, and there are the names of the witnesses."

"My dear lady!" expostulated the attorney, in the softest tones of his soft voice, "I *have* been there already. I wished to spare a lady of your sensibility as much pain as possible; and so I went there myself, with Mr. Alfred Bond's man of business, whom I happened to know; and I was grieved—cut up, I may say, to the very heart's core, to hear what he said; and he examined the document very closely too—very closely; and, I assure you, spoke in the handsomest, I may say, the *very* handsomest manner of you, of your character, and usefulness, and generosity, and Christian qualities; he did indeed; but we have all our duties to perform in this world; paramount things are duties, Miss Bond, and his is a very painful one."

"What need of all these words to state a simple matter. Have you seen the will?" said Sarah Bond.

"I have."

"Well, and what more is there to see, unless Mr. Alfred Bond denies his relative's power to make a will?"

"Which, I believe he does not do. He says he never made a will; that is all."

"But there *is* the will," maintained Sarah Bond.

"I am very sorry to wound you; but cannot you understand?"

"Speak plainly if you can, sir," said Sarah Bond sternly; "speak plainly if you can; I listen."

"He maintains, on the part of his client, that the will is a forgery."

"He maintains a falsehood, then," exclaimed Miss Bond, with a firm determination and dignity of manner that astonished Mr. Cramp. "If the will be forged, who is the forger? Certainly not my father; for he inherited the property from his elder brother, who died insane. The will is in *his* favour, and not in my father's. Besides, neither of them held any correspondence with the testator for twenty years; he died abroad, and the will was sent to England after his death. Would any one there do a gratuitous service to persons they had never seen? Where could be the reason—the motive? How is it, that, till now, Alfred Bond urged no claim. There are reasons," she continued, "reasons to give the world. But I have within me, what passes all reason—a feeling, a conviction, a true positive knowledge, that my father was incapable of being a party to such a crime. He was a stern man, loving money—I grant that—but honest in heart and soul. The only creature he ever wronged was himself. He did *that*, I know. He despoiled himself of peace and comfort, of rest and repose. In *that* he sinned against God's dispensation, who gives that we may give, not merely to others, but lawfully to ourselves. After all, it would have been but a small thing for him to have been without this property, for it gave him no one additional luxury. I wonder, Mr. Cramp, that you, as a man, have courage to stand before me, a poor unprotected woman, and dare to say, that will is forged."

While she spoke, Sarah Bond stood forth a new creature in the astonished eyes of the sleek attorney. He absolutely quailed before the vehemence and fervour of the usually mild woman. He assured her she was mistaken; that *he* had not yielded to the point that the will was a forgery; that he never would confess that such was the case; that it should be his business to disprove the charge; that he hoped she did not suppose he yielded to the plaintiff, who was resolved to bring the matter into a court of justice. He would only ask her one little question; had she ever seen her father counterfeit different hands? Yes, she said, she had; he could counterfeit, copy, any hand he ever saw, so that the real writer could not tell the counterfeit from the original. Mr. Cramp made no direct observation on this, except to beg that she would not mention that "melancholy circumstance" to any one else.

Sarah Bond told him she should not feel bound to make this talent of her father's a crime, by twisting into a *secret* what he used to do as an amusement. Mr. Cramp urged mildly the folly of this, when she had a defence to make; but she stood all the more firmly upon what she fearlessly considered the dignity of right and truth; at the same time assuring him, she would to the last contest that *right*, not so much for her own sake, or the sake of one who was dear to her beyond all power of expression, but for the sake of *him* in whose place she stood, and whose honour she would preserve with her life. Mr. Cramp was a good, shrewd man of business. He considered all Miss Bond's energy, on the subject of her father's honour, as romance, though he could not help believing *she* was in earnest about it. He thought it was perfectly in accordance with the old miser's character, that he should procure or make such a document; though he considered it very extraordinary, for many reasons, that it should have imposed upon men more penetrating and learned than himself.

Sarah Bond, after his departure, endeavoured to conceal her anxiety from her niece; but in vain. Mabel was too clear-sighted; and it was a relief, as much as an astonishment to her aunt, to see

how bravely she bore up against the evil news. Miss Bond did not remember that the knowledge of the *power* of wealth does not belong to sixteen summers. Mabel knew and thought so little of its artificial influence, that she believed her happiness sprang from birds and flowers, from music, and dancing, and books—those silent but immortal tongues that live through centuries, for our advantage; besides, her young heart welled forth so much hope, that she really did not understand, even if they lost their fortune, their "troublesome fortune," as she called it, that it would seriously affect their happiness. There was no philosophy, no heroism in this; it was simply the impulse of a bright, sunny, beautiful young mind.

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The course of events promised soon to strip Mabel of all except her own bright conceptions. Mr. Alfred Bond urged on his plea with all the energy and bitterness of one who had been for many years despoiled of his right. His solicitor, soon after his claim was first declared, made an offer to Sarah Bond to settle an annuity on her and her niece during the term of their natural lives; but this was indignantly spurned by Sarah; from him she would accept no favour; she either had or had not a right to the whole of the property originally left to her uncle. Various circumstances, too tedious to enumerate, combined to prove that the will deposited in Doctors Commons was not a true document; the signature of Cornelius Bond Hobart was disproved by many; but second only to one incident in strangeness was the fact, that though sought in every direction, and widely advertised for in the newspapers of the day, the witnesses to the disputed document could not be found—they had vanished.

The incident, so strange as to make more than one lawyer believe for a time that really such a quality as honesty was to be found in the world, was as follows:—Sarah Bond, be it remembered, had never seen the disputed will; she was very anxious to do so; and yet, afterwards, she did not like to visit Doctors Commons with any one. She feared, she knew not what; and yet, above all things, did she desire to see this will with her own eyes.

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Mr. Cramp was sitting in his office when a woman, muffled in a cloak, and veiled, entered and seated herself without speaking. After a moment she unclasped her cloak, loosened the wrapping from her throat, threw back her veil, and asked for a glass of water.

"Bless me, Miss Bond, is it you? I am sure I am much honoured—very much!"

"No honour, sir," she replied, "but necessity. I have been to Doctors Commons; have seen the will—it is my father's writing!"

"You confess this to me?" said Mr. Cramp, drawing back on his chair, and almost gasping for breath.

"I do," she answered; "I proclaim it; it is my father's *copy* of the original will. But how the copy could have been substituted for the real will, I can only conjecture."

"Surmise is something," replied the lawyer, a little relieved; "conjecture sometimes leads to proof."

"My father and uncle lived together when the will came into their possession. They were in partnership as farmers. My father's habits were precise: he always copied every writing, and endorsed his copies with a large *C*; the very *C* is marked upon the will I have just seen at Doctors Commons."

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"That is singular," remarked Cramp; "but it does not show us the way out of the difficulty; on the contrary, that increases. *Somebody*—I don't for an instant suppose Mr. Jacob Bond—in proving the will must have sworn that, to the best of their knowledge and belief, those were the real, which are only copies of the signatures."

"True—and such a mistake was extremely characteristic of my uncle, who performed many strange acts before he was known to be insane. This was doubtless one of them."

"But *where* is the original?" inquired the man of business.

"Heaven knows! I cannot find it; but I am not the less assured of its existence."

"Then we must persist in our plea of the truth of the document in Doctors Commons."

"Certainly not," said Sarah; "you must not persist in a falsehood in my name. If you do, I shall rise up in court, and contradict you! I feel it my duty, having seen the will, to state my firm belief that it is a copy of the original will, and nothing more."

Poor Mr. Cramp was dreadfully annoyed. He could, he thought, manage all sorts of clients. He reasoned, he proved, he entreated, he got her counsel to call upon her, but all was in vain. She would go into court, she said, herself, if her counsel deserted her. She would *not* give up the cause; she would plead for the sake of her father's honour. She was well assured that the real will was still in existence, and would be discovered—found—sooner or later—though not, perhaps, till she was in her grave.

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The senior counsel was so provoked at what he called his client's obstinacy, that he threw up his brief, and the junior took advantage of the circumstance to make a most eloquent speech,

enlarging upon the singularity of no appeal having been previously made by the plaintiff—of the extraordinary disappearance of the witnesses—of the straight-forward, simple, and beautiful truthfulness of the defendant; in short, he moved the court to tears, and laid the foundation of his future fortune. But after that day, Sarah Bond and her niece, Mabel, were homeless and houseless. Yet I should not say that; for the gates of a jail gaped widely for the "miser's daughter," but only for a few days; after which society rang with praises, loud and repeated, of Mr. Alfred Bond's liberality, who had discharged the defendant's costs as well as his own. In truth, people talked so much and so loudly about this, that they altogether forgot to inquire what had become of Sarah and Mabel.

CHAPTER IV.

[pg 42] The clergyman of the parish was their first visiter. He assisted them to look into the future. It was, he who conveyed to Sarah Bond Alfred's determination that she should be held scatheless. The good man delivered this information with the manner of a person who feels he comes with good news, and expects it will be so received; but Sarah Bond could only regard Alfred as the calumniator of her father's memory, the despoiler of her rights. The wild expression of joy in Mabel's face, as she threw herself on her aunt's bosom, gave her to understand that she ought to be thankful for what saved her from a prison.

Words struggled for utterance. She who had borne so much and so bravely, was overcome. Again and again she tried to speak, but for some hours she fell from one fainting fit into another. She had borne up against all disasters, until the power of endurance was overwhelmed; and now, she was attacked by an illness so violent, that it threatened dissolution. At this very time, when she needed so much sympathy, a stern and severe man, in whom there was no pity, a man who had received large sums of money from Miss Bond as a tradesman, and whose account had stood over from a particular request of his own, believing that all was gone, and that he should lose, took advantage of her illness to levy an execution upon the goods, and to demand a sale.

[pg 43] At this time her reason had quite deserted her, and poor Mabel was incapable of thought beyond her duty to her aunt, which made her remove her to a cottage-lodging from the turmoil of the town. No one distinctly knew, except Mabel, why Sarah Bond was so attached to the old furniture, and few cared. And yet more than one kind heart remembered how she had liked the "rubbishing things," and bought in several, resolved that, if she recovered, and ever had "a place of her own again," they would offer them for her acceptance. Her illness was so tedious, that except the humble curate and the good rector, her inquirers had fallen off—for long sickness wears out friends. Some would pause as they passed the cottage window, where the closely-pinned down curtain told of the caution and quiet of sickness; and then they would wonder how poor Miss Bond was; and if they entered the little passage to inquire, they could scarcely recognise in the plainly-dressed, jaded, bent girl, whose eyes knew no change but from weeping to watching, and watching to weeping, the buoyant and beautiful heiress whose words were law, and who once revelled in luxury. The produce of the sale—though everything, of course, went below its value—left a small surplus, after all debts and expenses were paid; which the clergyman husbanded judiciously, and gave in small portions to Mabel. Alfred Bond himself called to offer any assistance that might be required, which Mabel declined, coldly and at once.

[pg 44] Patiently and devotedly did she watch beside the couch of her poor aunt; one day suffering the most acute anxiety if the symptoms became worse than usual; the next full of hope as they abated. Did I say that one day after another this was the case? I should have written it, one hour after another; for truly, at times she fluctuated so considerably, that no one less hopeful than Mabel could have continued faithful to hope. As Sarah Bond gained strength, she began to question her as to the past. Mabel spoke cautiously; but, unused to any species of dissimulation, could not conceal the fact, that the old furniture, so valued by her uncle, and bequeathed with a conditional blessing, was gone—sold! This had a most unhappy effect on the mind of Sarah Bond. She felt as if her father's curse was upon her. She dared not trust herself to speak upon the subject. When the good rector (Mr. Goulding) alluded to the sale, and attempted to enter into particulars, or give an account of the affairs he had so kindly and so ably managed, she adjured him in so solemn a manner never to speak of the past, if he wished her to retain her reason, that he, unconscious of the motive, and believing it arose entirely from regret at her changed fortunes, avoided it as much as she could desire; and thus she had no opportunity of knowing how much had been saved by the benevolence of a few kind persons. Sarah Bond fell into the very common error of imagining that persons ought to *know* her thoughts and feelings, without her explaining them. But her mind and judgment had been so enfeebled by illness and mental suffering, that, even while she opposed her opinions, she absolutely leaned on Mabel—as if the oak called to the woodbine to support its branches. What gave Mabel the most uneasiness, was the determination she had formed to leave the cottage as soon as she was able to be removed; and she was seriously displeased because Mabel mentioned this intention to Mr. Goulding. Despite all poor Mabel could urge to the contrary, they quitted the neighbourhood—the sphere of Sarah Bond's sudden elevation, and as sudden depression—alone, at night, and on foot. It was a clear, moonlight evening, in midsummer, when the twilight can hardly be said to give place to darkness; and when the moon shines out so very brightly, that the stars are reduced to pale lone sparks of *white* rather than *light*, in the blue sky. It was a lovely evening; the widow with whom they had lodged was not aware of their intention until about an hour before their departure. She was very poor and ignorant, but her nature was kind; and when Sarah Bond pressed upon her, out of her own scanty store, a little present of money beyond her stipulated rent, she would not

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take it, but accompanied them to the little gate with many tears, receiving charge of a farewell letter to the rector. "And haven't you one to leave me for the curate?" she inquired. "Deary me! but I'm sure for every once the old gentleman came when Miss Bond was so bad, the curate came three times; and no letter for him! deary, oh, deary me!"

"Why did you not put me in mind to write to Mr. Lycight, Mabel?" inquired her aunt, after the gate, upon which the poor woman leaned, had closed.

Mabel made no reply; but Sarah felt the hand she held tightly within hers tremble and throb. How did she then remember the days of her own youth, as she thought, "Oh! in mercy *she* might have escaped from what only so causes the pulses to beat or the hand to tremble!" Neither spoke; but Sarah had turned over the great page of Mabel's heart, while Mabel did not confess, even to herself, that Mr. Lycight's words, however slight, were more deeply cherished than Mr. Goulding's precepts. They had a long walk to take that night, and both wept at first; but however sad and oppressed the mind and spirits maybe, there is a soothing and balmy influence in nature that lulls, if it does not dispel, sorrow; every breeze was perfumed. As they passed the hedges, there was a rustling and murmuring of birds amongst the leaves; and Mabel could not forbear an exclamation of delight when she saw a narrow river, now half-shadowed, then bright in the moonbeams, bounding in one place like a thing of life, then brawling around sundry large stones that impeded its progress, again subsiding into silence, and flowing onward to where a little foot-bridge, over which they had to pass, arched its course; beyond this was the church, and there Mabel knew they were to await the coach which was to convey them to a village many miles from their old homes, and where Sarah Bond had accidentally heard there was a chance of establishing a little school. Mabel paused for a moment to look at the venerable church standing by the highway, the clergyman's house crouching in the grove behind. The hooting and wheeling of the old owls in the ivied tower was a link of life. Sarah Bond passed the turn-stile that led into the church-yard, followed by Mabel, who shuddered when she found herself surrounded by damp grass-green graves, and beneath the shadows of old yew-trees.

She knew not where her aunt was going, but followed her silently. Sarah Bond led the way to a lowly grave, marked by a simple head-stone. She knelt down by its side, and while her bosom throbbed, she prayed earnestly, deeply, within her very soul—she prayed, now a faded, aged woman—she prayed above the ashes, the crumbling bones of him she had loved with a love that never changes—that is green when the head is gray—that Mabel might never suffer as she had suffered. Relieved by these devotional exercises, Sarah rose, and the humble and stricken pair bade adieu to the melancholy scene, and betook themselves to their toilsome journey. Fortunately the stage soon overtook them, and having, with some difficulty, obtained seats, they were in due time deposited in a village, where Sarah felt there would be no eyes prying into their poverty, no ears to hear of it, no tongue to tell thereof, and point them out "as the poor ladies that once were rich." This was a great relief, though it came of pride, and she knew it; and she said within herself, When health strengthens my body, I will wrestle with this feeling, for it is unchristian. She never even to Mabel alluded to what was heaviest on her mind—the loss of the old furniture; though she cheered her niece by the assurance that, after a few months, if the Almighty blessed the exertions they must make for their own support, she would write to their friend Mr. Goulding, and say where they were; by "that time," she said, she hoped to be humble, as a Christian should be. After this assurance was given, it was astonishing to see how Mabel revived. Her steps recovered their elasticity, her eyes their brightness. Sarah Bond had always great superiority in needlework, and this procured her employment; while Mabel obtained at once, by her grace and correct speaking, two or three day pupils. Her wild and wayward temper had been subdued by change of circumstances; but if she had not found occupation it would have become morose Here was not only occupation, but success; success achieved by the most legitimate means—the exertion of her own faculties; there were occasionally bitter tears and many disappointments; and the young soft fingers, so slender and beautiful, were obliged to work in earnest; and she was forced by necessity to rise early and watch late; and then she had to think, not how pounds could be spent, but pennies could be earned. We need not, however, particularize their labours in this scene of tranquil usefulness. It is sufficient to say that Mabel's little school increased; and both she and her aunt came at length to feel and speak thankfully of the uses of adversity, and bless God for taking as well as for giving.

CHAPTER V.

Though Sarah Bond had used every means within her power to conceal her place of retreat, yet she often felt bitterly pained that no one had sought her out. She said she wished to be forgotten, unless she had the power to clear away the imputation on her father's name. And yet, unknown to herself, she cherished the hope, that some one would have traced them, though only to say one cheering word of approbation regarding their attempt at self-dependence. Sarah thanked the Almighty greatly for one thing, that Mabel's cheerfulness was continued and unfluctuating, and that her mind seemed to have gathered strength by wholesome exercise. She believed her affections, if not free, were not entangled, and that her pride had risen against her imagination; and it was beautiful to see how, watching to avoid giving each other pain, striving continually to show the bright side of every question, the one to the other, and extract sweets instead of bitters from every little incident, led to their actually enjoying even the privations which exercised their tenderness towards each other.

Time wore away many of their sorrows, which old father Time always does; a kindness we forget

to acknowledge, though we often arraign him for spoiling our pleasures. Sarah and Mabel had been taking an evening walk, wondering how little they existed upon, and feeling that it was a wide step towards independence to have few wants.

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"I can see good working in all things," said Mabel; "for if I had obtained the companionship of books, which I so eagerly desired at first, I should not have had the same inducement to pursue my active duties, to read my own heart, and the great book of nature, which is opened alike to peer and peasant; I have found so much to learn, so much to think of by studying objects and persons—reading persons instead of books."

"Yes," added Sarah Bond; "and seeing how much there is to admire in every development of nature, and how much of God there is in every human being."

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As they passed along the village street, Mabel observed that the cottagers looked after them, and several of her little pupils darted their heads in and out of their homes, and laughed; she thought that some village fun was afloat, that some rural present of flowers, or butter, or eggs, had been sent—a little mysterious offering for her to guess at; and when she turned to fasten the wicket gate, there were several of the peasants knotted together talking. A sudden exclamation from her aunt, who had entered the cottage, confirmed her suspicion; but it was soon dissipated. In their absence, their old friends Mr. Goulding and the curate had arrived by the coach, and entered their humble dwelling. From a wagon at the same time were lifted several articles of old furniture, which were taken into the cottage, and properly arranged. There were two old chairs, an embroidered stool, a china vase, a cabinet, a table, and the spinnet. Strangely the furniture looked on the sanded floor, but never was the spiciest present from India more grateful to its receiver than these were to the eyes of Sarah Bond. She felt as if a ban was removed from her when she looked upon the old things so valued by her father. Absorbed in the feelings of the moment, she did not even turn to inquire how they had so unexpectedly come there. Nor did she note the cold and constrained greeting which Mabel gave to Mr. Lycight. She herself, after the first self-engrossed thoughts were past, turned to give both gentlemen the cordial reception which their many former kindnesses, not to speak of their apparent connexion with the present gratifying occurrence, deserved. From Mr. Goulding she learnt that the furniture had been bought up by a few old friends, and committed to him to be sent to her as a mark of their goodwill; he had only delayed bringing it to her, till she should have proved, as he knew she would, superior to her misfortunes, by entering upon some industrious career.

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As the evening closed in, and the astonishment and feelings of their first meeting subsided, Sarah Bond and Mr. Goulding conversed apart, and then, indeed, she listened with a brimming heart and brimming eyes. He told of his young friend's deep attachment to Mabel; how he had prevailed upon him to pause before he declared it; to observe how she endured her changed fortune; and to avoid engaging her affections until he had a prospect of placing her beyond the reach of the most harrowing of all poverties, that which keeps up an appearance above its means. "Her cheerfulness, her industry, her goodness, have all been noted," he continued. "She has proved herself capable of accommodating herself to her circumstances; the most difficult of all things to a young girl enervated by luxury and indulgence. And if my friend can establish an interest in her affections, he has no higher views of earthly happiness, and I think he ought to have no other. You will, I am sure, forgive me for having counselled the trial. If deep adversity had followed your exertions—if you had failed instead of succeeded—I should have been at hand to succour and to aid."

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Sarah Bond had never forgotten the emotion of Mabel, caused by the mention of the curate's name when they quitted their old neighbourhood, and the very reserve Mabel showed proved to Sarah's searching and clear judgment, that the feeling was unchanged. Truly in that hour was her chastened heart joyful and grateful. "Mabel must wait," she said, "until the prospect of advancement became a reality; for it would be an ill return of disinterested love for a penniless orphan to become a burden instead of a blessing. Mabel would grow more worthy every day; they were doing well; ay, he might look round the white-washed walls and smile, but they *were* prosperous, healthful, happy, and respected; and if she could only live to see the odium cast upon her father's memory removed, she would not exchange her present poverty for her past pride." She frequently afterwards thought of the clergyman's rejoinder—"That riches, like mercy, were as blessed to the giver as to the receiver, and that they only created evil when hoarded, or bestowed by a heedless hand."

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They certainly were a happy group in that lowly cottage room that evening. Mabel's proud bearing had given place, as if by magic, to a blushing shyness; which she tried to shield from observation by every possible attempt at ease. She talked to Mr. Goulding, and found a thousand uses for the old furniture she had once so heartily despised. "She would sit in the great high chair at the end of that table, with her feet on the stool, and the china vase in the midst, filled with humble cottage flowers—meadow-sweet and wild roses, and sweet-williams, sea-pinks, woodbine, and wild convolvulus! Did Mr. Goulding like cottage flowers best?" No; the clergyman said he did not, but he thought Mr. Lycight did, and the young man assured her that it was so; and then gazed on the only love his heart, his deep, unworn, earnest heart, had throbbled to, with an admiration which is always accompanied by fear, lest something should prevent the realization of the one great earthly hope. And Mabel was more fitful than her aunt had ever seen her. Fearful lest her secret, as she thought it, should be discovered, she made as many turns and windings as a hare; and yet, unskilled in disguising her feelings, after spending many words in arranging and re-arranging, she suddenly wished that the spinnet could be opened, "If," she exclaimed, "*that*

could be opened, I should be able to teach Mary Godwin music; and her mother seemed to wish it so much: surely we can open the instrument?"

"It has not been opened for years," replied Miss Bond; "and I remember, once before, Mabel wished it opened, and I refused, lest forcing the lock might harm the marquetre, of which my poor mother was so fond. It has never been opened since her death." But Mabel's desire was of too much consequence, in her lover's eyes, to be passed over, although all seemed agreed that if it were opened it could not be played upon; so in a few minutes he procured a smith, who said he would remove the hinges, and then unscrew the lock from the inside, which would not injure the cover. This was done; but greatly to poor Mabel's dismay, the cavity, where strings once had been, was filled with old papers.

"Now, is not this provoking?" said Mabel, flinging out first one and then another bundle of letters. "Is not this provoking?"

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"No, no," exclaimed Sarah Bond, grasping a lean, long, parchment, round which an abundance of tape was wound. "No. Who knows what may be found here?" At once the idea was caught, Mabel thought no more of the strings. "I cannot," said Sarah Bond to Mr. Goulding, "untie this; can you?" Her fingers trembled, and she sank on her knees by the clergyman's side. The eyes of the little group were fixed upon him; not a word was spoken; every breath was hushed; slowly he unfastened knot after knot; at last the parchment was unfolded; still, neither Sarah Bond nor Mabel spoke; the latter gasped for breath—her lips apart, her cheeks flushed; while Sarah's hands were clasped together, locked upon her bosom, and every vestige of colour had deserted her face.

"Be calm, my dear friend," he said, after glancing his eyes over the parchment; "be calm. You have experienced enough of the changes and chances of this world not to build too quickly upon any foundation but the one—the goodness of God; I do believe this is an especial proof of His Providence, for I do think this is Cornelius Bond Hobart's original will in your uncle's favour."

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It would be useless to attempt a description of the scene that followed; but the joy at the *reality* of the discovery was a heartfelt temperate joy—the joy of chastened hearts. Sarah Bond, blessing God, above all things, that, go the law as it would, her father's memory would now be held as the memory of an honest man; that he had, as she had said, copied, not forged the will. Mr. Goulding declared he should find it difficult to forgive himself for having so long prevented the old furniture from being sent, assuring her, the dread that Mabel was unfit to contend with the privations to which the lives of humble men are doomed, made him tremble for the happiness of the young friend who had been consigned to his care by a dying mother; he feared to renew the intercourse, until her character was developed; while poor Mabel had little thought how closely she was watched along the humble and thorny paths she had to traverse.

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Sarah Bond's spirit was so chastened, that she regretted nothing save the shadow cast upon her father's grave; and now that was removed, she was indeed happy. She assured the rector how useful adversity had been to them—how healthful it had rendered Mabel's mind—and how much better, if they recovered what had been lost, they should know how to employ their means of usefulness. Mr. Lycight's congratulations were not so hearty as Mr. Goulding's; he felt that *now* he was the curate and Mabel the heiress; and he heard the kind good night which Mabel spoke with a tingling ear. *He*, was proud in his own way; and pride, as well as his affection, had been gratified by the idea of elevating her he loved. Mabel saw this, and she wept during the sleepless night, that he should believe her so unworthy and so ungrateful.

There was much to think of and to do; the witnesses were to be found, and lawyers consulted, and proceedings taken, and much of the turmoil and bitterness of the law to be endured, which it pains every honest heart to think upon; and Mr. Cramp was seized with a sudden fit of virtuous indignation against Mr. Alfred Bond, after Sarah Bond's new "man of business" had succeeded in producing the only one of the witnesses in existence, who, he also discovered, had been purposely kept out of the way, on a former occasion, by some one or other. The delays were vexatious, and the quirks and turns, and foldings, and doubles innumerable; but they came to an end at last, and Mr. Alfred Bond was obliged in his turn to vacate the old mansion, in which he had revelled—a miser in selfish pleasures.

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I have dwelt longer than was perhaps necessary on the *minutiæ* of this relation, the principal events of which are so strongly impressed upon my memory. But the more I have thought over the story, the more I have been struck with the phases and impulses of Sarah Bond's unobtrusive, but deep feeling mind; her self-sacrificing spirit, her devotion to her father's will, her dread, when first in possession of the property, that any *one* act of liberality on her part might be considered a reproach to his memory; her habits struggling with her feelings, leading me to the conclusion that she would never have become, even with the expanding love of her niece to enlarge her views, thoroughly unmanacled from the parsimonious habits of her father, but for her lesson in adversity, which, instead of teaching as it does a worldly mind, the *value of money*, taught her higher nature *its proper uses*.

It was beautiful to see how Mabel grew into her aunt's virtues; and even Mr. Goulding was startled by the energy and thoughtfulness of her character. She soon convinced Mr. Lycight that her prospects grew brighter in his love; and for a time he was romantic enough to wish she had continued, penniless, and he had been born a peer, to prove his disinterested affection. This,

however, wore away, as man's romance always does, and he absolutely became reconciled to his bride's riches. Sarah Bond was living a very few years ago, beloved and honoured, the fountain of prosperity and blessing to all who needed. There was no useless expenditure, no show, no extravagance in "the establishment" at the old manor house; but it was pleasant to perceive the prosperity of the poor in the immediate neighbourhood; there was evidence of good heads and kind hearts, superintending all moral and intellectual improvements; there were flourishing schools, and benevolent societies, and the constant exercise of individual charities; and many said that Sarah Bond, and niece, and nephew, did more good with hundreds than others did with thousands. From having had practical experience of poverty, they understood how to remedy its wants, and minister to its sorrows. And to the last hour of her prolonged life, Sarah Bond remembered

THE USES OF ADVERSITY.

ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"There they go!" exclaimed old Mrs. Myles, looking after two exceedingly beautiful children, as they passed hand in hand down the street of the small town of Abbeyweld, to the only school, that had "Seminary for Young Ladies," written in large hand, on a proportionably large card, and placed against the bow window of an ivied cottage. "There they go!" she repeated; "and though I'm their grandmother, I may say a sweeter pair of children than Helen Marsh and Rose Dillon never trod the main street of Abbeyweld—God bless them!" She added earnestly, "God Almighty bless them!"

"Amen!" responded a kind voice; and turning round, Mrs. Myles saw the curate of the parish, the Reverend Mr. Stokes, standing just at the entry of her own house. To curtsy with the respect which in the "good old times" was customary towards those who "meekly taught, and led the way," and invite the minister in, was the work of a moment; the next beheld Mrs. Myles and her visiter *tete-a-tete* in the widow's small parlour. It was a cheerful, pleasant room, such as is often met with in the clean villages of England. There were two or three pieces of embroidery, in frames of faded gilding; an old-fashioned semicircular card-table stood opposite the window, and upon it rested a filagree tea-caddy, based by a mark-a-tree work-box, flanked on one side by the Bible, on the other by a prayer-book; while on the space in front was placed "The Whole Art of Cookery," by Mrs. Glasse. High-backed chairs of black mahogany were ranged along the white-washed walls; a corner cupboard displayed upon its door the magnificence of King Solomon, and the liberality of the Queen of Sheba, while within glittered engraved glasses, and fairy-like cups and saucers, that would delight the hearts of the fashionables of the present day. Indeed, Mrs. Myles knew their value, and prided herself thereon, for whenever the squire or any great lady paid her a visit, she was sure, before they entered, to throw the cupboard door slyly open, so as to display its treasures; and then a little bit of family pride would creep out—"Yes, every one said they were pretty—and so she supposed they were—but they were nothing to her grandmother's, where she remembered the servants eating off real India *chaney*." The room also contained a high-backed sofa, covered with chintz; very stately, hard, and uncomfortable it was to sit upon; indeed, no one except visitors ever did sit upon it, save on Sundays, when Helen and Rose were permitted so to do, "if they kept quiet," which in truth they seldom did for more than five minutes together. "Moonlight"—Mrs. Myles's large cat—Moonlight would take a nap there sometimes; but as Mrs. Myles, while she *hushed* him off, declared he was a "clean creature," it may be said that Moonlight was the only thing privileged to *enjoy* the sofa to his heart's content. Why he liked it, I could not understand. Now she invited Mr. Stokes to sit upon it; but he knew better, and took the window seat in preference.

"They are fine children—are they not, sir?" inquired the good old lady, reverting in the pride of her heart to her young charges. "Rose, poor thing, will be obliged to shift for herself, for her father and mother left her almost without provision: but when Helen's father returns, I do hope he will be able to introduce her in the way she seems born for. She has the heart of a princess—bless her!" added Mrs. Myles, triumphantly.

"I hope, my good friend, she will have a Christian's heart," said Mr. Stokes.

"Oh, certainly, sir, certainly, we all have that, I hope."

"I hope so too; but I think you will act wisely in directing the proud spirit of Helen into an humbler channel, while you rouse and strengthen the modest and retiring one of Rose."

"They are very, very different, sir," said the old lady, looking particularly sagacious; "I don't mean as to talent, for they are both very clever, nor as to goodness, for, thank God, they are both good; but Helen has such a *noble* spirit—such an uplooking way with her."

"We should all look up to God." said the minister.

"Oh, of course we all do." Mrs. Myles paused. "She has such a lady-like, independent way with her, I'm sure she'll turn out something *great*, sir. Well, there's no harm in a little ambition now and then; we all, you know" want to be a little bit better off than we are."

"We are too apt to indulge in a desire for what is beyond our reach," said the minister, gravely; "if every one was to reside on the hills, who would cultivate the valleys? We should not forget that godliness, with contentment, is great gain. It would be far better, Mrs. Myles, if, instead of struggling to get *out* of our sphere, we laboured to do the best we could in it."

"Ah, sir, and that's true," replied Mrs. Myles; "just what I say to Mrs. Jones, who *will* give bad sherry at her little tea-parties; good gooseberry, I say, is better than bad sherry. Will you taste mine, sir?"

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"No, thank you," said the good man, who at the very moment was pondering over the art of self-deception, as practised by ourselves *upon* ourselves. "No, thank you; but do, my dear madam, imbue those children with a contented spirit; there is nothing that keeps us so truly at peace with the world as contentment—or with ourselves, for it teaches peace—or with a Higher Power, for it is insulting to His wisdom and love to go on repining through this beautiful world, instead of enjoying what as Christians we can enjoy, and regarding without envy that which we have not."

"Exactly so, good sir. 'Be content,' I said to Helen only this very morning—'be content, my dear, with your pink gingham; *who knows but by and by you may have a silk dress for Sundays?*'"

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Myles, you are sowing bad seed," said the clergyman.

"What, sir, when I told her to be content with the little pink gingham?"

"No; but when you told her she might have a silk one hereafter. Don't you see, instead of uprooting you were fostering pride?—instead of directing her ambition to a noble object, and thereby elevating her mind, you were lowering it by drawing it down to an inferior one?"

"I did not see it," observed Mrs. Myles, simply; "but you know, sir, there's no more harm in a silk than a cotton."

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"I must go now, my good lady," said the minister; "only observing that there *is* no more harm in one than in the other, except when the desire to possess anything beyond our means leads to discontent, if not to more actively dangerous faults. I must come and lecture the little maids myself."

"And welcome, sir, and thank you kindly besides; poor little dears, they have no one to look after them but me. I daresay I am wrong sometimes, but I do my best—I do my best."

The curate thought she did according to her knowledge, but he lamented that two such exquisitely beautiful children, possessed of such natural gifts, should be left to the management of a vain old woman—most vain—though kindly and good-hearted—giving kindness with pleasure, and receiving it with gratitude—yet totally unfit to bring up a *pair of beauties*, who, of all the female sex, require the most discretion in the management.

"I wonder," thought the Reverend Mr. Stokes—"I wonder when our legislature will contrive to establish a school for mothers. If girls are sent to school, the chances are that the contamination over which the teacher can have no control—the contamination of evil girls—renders them vicious; if, on the contrary, they are kept at home, the folly of their mothers makes them fools—a pretty choice!" Mr. Stokes turned down a lane that ran parallel with the garden where the children went to school; and hearing Helen's voice in loud dispute, he paused for a moment to ascertain the cause.

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"I tell you," said the little maid, "Rose may be what she likes, but I'll be queen."

"How unfit," quoth the curate to himself—"how utterly unfit is Mrs. Myles to manage Helen!" The good man paused again; and to the no small confusion of the little group, who had been making holiday under the shadow of a spreading apple-tree, suddenly entered amongst them, and read her a lecture, gently, kindly, and judicious. Having thus performed what he conceived his duty, he walked on; but his progress was arrested by a little hand being thrust into his; and when he looked down, the beaming, innocent face of Rose Dillon was up-turned towards him.

"Do please, sir," she said, "let Helen Marsh be queen of the game; if she is not, she won't play with a bit of heart—she won't, indeed, sir. She will play to be sure, but not with any heart."

"I cannot unsay what I have said, little Rose," he answered; "I cannot; it is better for her to play without heart, as you call it, than to have that heart too highly uplifted by play."

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Happy would it have been for Helen Marsh if she had always had a judicious friend to correct her dangerous ambition. The good curate admonished the one, and brought forward the other, of the cousins; but what availed his occasional admonishing when counteracted by the weak flattery of Mrs. Myles?

CHAPTER II.

Years passed; the lovely children, who tripped hand in hand down the street of Abbeyweld, grew into ripe girlhood, and walked arm in arm—the pride and admiration of every villager. The curate became at last rector, and Mrs. Myles's absurdities increased with her years. The perfect beauty

of the cousins, both of face and form, rendered them celebrated far and near. Each had a separate character as from the first; and yet—but that Rose Dillon was a little shorter than her cousin Helen Marsh, and that the *expression* of her eyes was so different that it was almost impossible to believe they were the same shape and colour, the cousins might have been mistaken for each other—I say *might*, because it is rather remarkable that they never were. Helen's fine dark eyes had a lofty and forbidding aspect, while Rose had not the power, if indeed she ever entertained the will, of looking either the one or the other. I thought Rose the most graceful of the two in her carriage, but there could be no doubt as to Helen's being the most dignified; both girls were almost rustic in their manners, but rusticity and vulgarity are very distinct in their feelings and attributes. They *could not* do or say aught that was vulgar or at variance with the kindnesses of life—those tender nothings which make up so large a something in the account of every day's existence. Similar, withal, as the cousins were in appearance, they grew up as dissimilar in feelings and opinions as it is possible to conceive, and yet loving each other dearly. Still Helen never for a moment fancied that any one in the village of Abbeyweld could compete with her in any way. She had never questioned herself as to this being the case, but the idea had been nourished since her earliest infancy—had never been disputed, except perhaps when latterly a town belle, or even a more conceited specimen, a country belle, visited in the neighbourhood; but popular voice (and there *is* a popular voice, be it loud or gentle, everywhere) soon discovered that blonde, and feathers, and flowers, had a good deal to do with this disturbing of popular opinion; and after a few days, the good people invariably returned to their allegiance. "Ah! ah!" old Mrs. Myles would observe on these occasions—Ah! ah!"—I told you they'd soon find the fair lady was shaded by her fine laces. I daresay now she's on the look-out for a good match, poor thing! Not that Helen is handsome—don't look in the glass, Helen, child! My grandmother always said that Old Nick stood behind every young lady's shoulder when she looked in the glass, with a rouge-pot all ready to make her look handsomer in her own eyes than she really was; which shows how wicked it is to look much in a glass. Only a little sometimes, Nell, darling—we'll forgive her for looking *a little*; but certainly when I looked at the *new* beauty in church the other day, and then looked, I know where, I thought—but no matter, Helen, no matter—I don't want to make either of my girls *vain*."

Why Mrs. Myles so decidedly preferred Helen to Rose, appeared a mystery to all who did not know the secret sympathy, the silent unsatisfied ambition, that lurked in the bosoms of both the old and the young. Mrs. Myles had lived for a long time upon the reputation of her own beauty; and whenever she needed *sympathy* (a food which the weak-minded devour rapidly,) she lamented to one or two intimates, while indulging in the luxury of *tea*, that she was an ill-used person, simply because she had not been a baronet's lady at the very least. Helen's ambition echoed that of her grandmother; it was not the longing of a village lass for a new bonnet or a brilliant dress—it was an ambition of sufficient strength to have sprung up in a castle. She resolved to be something beyond what she was; and there are very few who have strength to give birth to, and cherish up a resolve, who will not achieve a purpose, be it for good or bad, for weal or for wo. Rose was altogether and perfectly simple and single-hearted: conscious that she was an orphan, dependent upon her grandmother's slender annuity for support, and that Helen's father could not provide both for his daughter and his niece, her life was one of patient industry and unregretted privation. Before she was fifteen, she had persuaded her grandmother to part with her serving maiden, and with very little assistance from Helen, she performed the labours of their cottage, aided twice a-week by an elderly woman, who often declared that such another girl as Rose Dillon was not to be found in the country. Both were now verging on seventeen, and Helen received the addresses of a young farmer in the neighbourhood—a youth of excellent yeoman family, and of superior education and manners.

The cousins walked out one evening together, and Rose turned into the lane where they used frequently to meet Edward Lynne.

"No, Rose," said Helen, "not there; I am not in a humour to meet Edward to-night."

"But you said you would," said Rose.

"Well, do not look so solemn about it. I daresay I did—but lover's promises—if indeed we are lovers. Do you know, Rose, I should be very much obliged to you to take Edward off my hands—he is just the husband for you, so rustic and quiet."

"Edward to be taken off your hands, Helen!—Edward Lynne!—the protector of our childhood—the pride of the village—the very companion of Mr. Stokes—why, he dined with him last Sunday! Edward Lynne! You jest, cousin! and"—Rose Dillon paused suddenly, for she was going to add, "You ought not to jest with me." She checked herself in time; stooped down to gather some flowers to hide her agitation; felt her cheeks flush, her heart beat, her head swim, and then a chill creep through her frame. Helen had unconsciously awoke the hope which Rose had never dared to confess unto herself. The waking was ecstatic; but she knew the depth of Edward's love for Helen. She had been his confidant—she believed it was a jest—how could her cousin do otherwise than love Edward Lynne? And with this belief, she recovered the self-possession which the necessity for subduing her feelings had taught her even at that early age.

"And Rose," said Helen, in a quiet voice, "did you really think I ever intended to marry Edward Lynne?"

"Certainly, cousin. Why, you love him, do you not! Besides, he is rich—very rich in comparison to

you—very, very rich. And if he were not—oh, Helen!—is he not in himself—but I need not reason—you are in your usual high spirits, and say what you do not mean."

"I do not, Rose, now, at all events. Last evening, Edward was so earnest, so affectionate, so very earnest, it is pleasant to have a true and faithful lover; but I should not quite like to break his heart—it would not be friendly, knowing him so long; for indeed," she added, gaily, "though I don't like Edward Lynne well enough to marry him, I like him too well to break his heart in downright earnest."

There are women cold and coquettish by nature. The disposition flourishes best in courtly scenes, but it will grow anywhere, ay, and flourish anywhere. It unfortunately requires but little culture; still Helen was in her novitiate. If she had not been so, she would not have cared whether Edward broke his heart or not.

"But Helen," stammered Rose, "surely—you—you have been very wrong."

"I know it—I know—there, don't you *hear me* say I know it, and yet your lecturing face is as long as ever. Surely," she continued pettishly, "I confess my crime; and even Mr. Stokes says, when confessed it is amended."

"Helen!" exclaimed Rose suddenly; "Helen!—if what you have now said is really true, you have only told me half the truth. Helen Marsh, you have seen some one you like better than Edward Lynne."

"No!" was Helen's prompt reply, for she would not condescend to a falsehood—her own pride was a sufficient barrier against that. "No, Rose, I have not seen any one I like better than Edward. But, Rose"—She buried her face in her hands, and as suddenly withdrew them, and shaking back her luxuriant ringlets, while a bright triumphant colour mounted to her cheeks, added—"There is no reason *why* I should be ashamed. I saw, last week, at Mrs. Howard's, one whom I would rather marry."

"I always thought," murmured Rose, weeping in the fulness of her generous nature, as the idea of Edward's future misery came upon her—"I always thought no good would come of your visiting a lady so much above us." It would be impossible to describe the contemptuous expression of Helen's finely moulded features, while she repeated, as if to herself, "Above *us!*—above *me!*" And then she added aloud, and with what seemed to Rose a forced expression of joy, "But good *will* come of it, Rose—good will surely come of it; never fear but it will—it *must*. And when I am a great lady, Rosey, who but you, sweet cousin, will be next my heart?"

"I am satisfied to be *near*, even without being *next* it, Helen," she replied mournfully; "but why have you kept this matter concealed from me so long? Why have you"—

"Found!" interrupted a well-known voice; and at the same moment Edward Lynne shook a shower of perfumed hawthorn blossoms from the scattered hedge which he struggled through; and repeating "Found!" in his full echoing voice, stood panting before the startled girls. "I have had such a hunt!" he exclaimed joyfully—"such a hunt for you, Helen! I have been over Woodland brook, and up as far as Fairmill, where you said you would be—oh, you truant! And I doubt if I should have caught you at last, but for poor Dash"—and the sagacious dog sprung about, as if conscious that he deserved a large portion of the praise. Rose was astonished at the perfect self-possession with which, after the first flush of surprise, Helen received her lover. Nor was poor Rose unconscious that she herself occupied no portion of his attention beyond the glance of recognition which he cast while throwing himself on the sward at Helen's feet.

"We must go home," said the triumphant beauty, after hearing a few of those half-whispered nothings which are considered of such importance in a lover's calendar; "the dew is falling, and I may catch cold."

"The dew falling!" repeated Edward.—"Why, look, the sky is still golden from the sun's rays; do not—do not, dearest Helen, go home yet. Besides," he added, "your grandmother has plenty of employment; there is Mrs. Howard's companion, and one or two strangers from the hall, at your cottage—so she is not at all lonesome."

"Who did you say?" inquired Helen, eagerly, now really losing her self-command.

"Oh, some of Mrs. Howard's fine friends. I never," he continued, "see those sort of people in an humble village, without thinking of the story of the agitation of all the little hedgerow birds, when they first saw a paroquet amongst them, and began longing for his gay feathers. Do not go, dear Helen—they will soon be gone; and I do so want you to walk as far as Fairmill Lawn. I have planted with my own hands this morning the silver firs you said you admired, just where the bank juts over the stream. Do come."

"Rose will go, and tell me all about it, but *I* must get home. Granny cannot do without me; besides, Mrs. Howard is so kind to me, that I cannot suffer *her* friends to be neglected. Nay, Edward, you may look as you please, but I certainly *shall* go." Edward Lynne remonstrated, implored, and, finally, flew into a passion. At any other time Helen's proud spirit would have risen so as to meet this outburst of temper with one to the full as violent; but the knowledge of what had grown to maturity in her own mind, and the presence of Rose, restrained her, and she

continued to walk home without reply.

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"And I shall go also," he said, bitterly, "but not with you." Even at that moment Helen Marsh exulted in her own mind to find his words and his steps at variance; he was still by her side. The most perilous of all triumphs is the knowledge of possessing power over the affections of our fellow creatures; it is so especially intoxicating to women as to be greatly dangerous, and those who do not abuse such power deserve much praise. Rose walked timidly behind them, wondering how Helen could have imagined any alliance in the world more brilliant—but no, that was not the idea—any alliance in the world so *happy* as that with Edward Lynne must be. When they reached the commencement of the village, Edward said, for the fifth or sixth time, "Then you will go, Helen?"

"Certainly."

"Very well, Helen. Good evening."

"Good evening, Edward," was the cool reply. Not one word of adieu did he bestow on Rose as he dashed into another path; while his dog stood for a moment, uncertain as to whether his master would return or not, and then rapidly followed.

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"Oh, Helen! what have you done?" murmured Rose. Helen replied by one of those low murmuring laughs which sound like the very melody of love; and the two girls, in a few moments more, were in their own cottage, where Rose saw that evening, for the first time, the gentleman whom Helen had declared she did not prefer to Edward, though she would rather marry him.

CHAPTER III.

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I think I have said before that the most trying and dangerous position a young woman can occupy, is that where her station is not defined—where she considers herself above the industrious classes by whom she is surrounded—and where those with whom her tastes and habits assimilate, consider her greatly beneath them. Superficial observers (and the great mass of human beings are nothing more) invariably look for happiness in the class one or two degrees above their own. They would consider themselves absurd if they *at once* set their minds upon being dukes and princes; they only want to be a *little* bit higher, only the *smallest bit*, and never for a moment look to what they call "*beneath* them" for happiness. This was particularly the case with these young girls. Their station was not defined, yet how different their practice! One was ambitious of the glittering tinsel of the world—the other, refined but not ambitious, sought her happiness in the proper exercise of the affections; neither could have described her particular feelings, but an accurate observer could not fail to do so for them. That night neither girl had courage to speak to the other on the occurrences of the past day, and yet each thought of nothing else. They knelt down, side by side, as they had done from infancy, repeating the usual prayers as they had been accustomed to do. Helen's voice did not falter, but continued its unvaried tone to the end: Rose (Helen thought) delivered the petition of "lead us not into temptation" with deeper feeling than usual; and instead of rising when Helen rose, and exchanging with her the kiss of sisterly affection, Rose buried her face in her hands; while her cousin, seated opposite the small glass which stood on their little dressing-table, commenced curling her hair, as if that day, which had completed a revolution in her way of thinking, had been as smooth as all the other days of her short calendar. The candle was extinguished, and Helen slept profoundly. The moon shone in brightly through the latticed window, whose leaden cross-bars chequered the sanded floor. Rose looked earnestly upon the face of the sleeper, and so bright it was, that she saw, or fancied she saw, a smile of triumph curling on her lip. She crept quietly out of bed, and leaned her throbbing temples against the cool glass. How deserted the long street of Abbeyweld appeared; the shadows of the opposite trees and houses lay prostrate across the road—the aspect of the village street was lonely, very lonely and sad—there was no hum from the school—no inquisitive eyes peeped from the casements—no echoing steps upon the neatly-gravelled footpath—the old elm-tree showed like a mighty giant, standing out against the clear calm sky—and there was one star, only one, sparkling amid its branches—a diamond of the heavens, shedding its brightness on the earth. The stillness was positively oppressive. Rose felt as if every time she inhaled the air, she disturbed the death-like quiet of the scene. A huge shadow passed along the ledge of the opposite cottage; her nerves were so unstrung that she started back as it advanced. It was only their own gentle cat, whose quick eye recognised its mistress, and without waiting for invitation, crawled quickly from its eminence, and came rubbing itself against the glass, and then moved stealthily away, intent upon the destruction of some unsuspecting creature, who, taught by nature, believes that with night comes safety.

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Almost at the end of the street, the darkness was as it were divided by a ray of light, that neither flickered nor wavered. What a picture it brought at once before her!—the pale, lame grandchild of old Jenny Oram, watching by the dying bed of the only creature that had ever loved her—her poor deaf grandmother. And the girl's great trouble was, that the old woman could neither see to read the Word of God herself, nor hear her when she read it to her; but the lame girl had no time to waste with grief, so she plied her needle rapidly through the night-watches, not daring to shed a tear upon the work, or damp her needle with a sigh. Rose was not as sorry for her as she would have been at any other time, for individual sorrow has few sympathies; but the more she thought of the lonely lame girl, the less became her own trouble, and she might have gone to bed with the consciousness which, strange to say, brings consolation, that there was one very near more

wretched than herself, had she not seen the form of Edward Lynne glide like a spectre from beneath the old elm-tree, and stand before the window. Rose retreated, but still observed him; the moon was shining on the window, so he must have seen the form, without, perhaps, being able to distinguish whose it was. Rose watched him until his silent death-like presence oppressed her heart and brain, and she closed her eyes to shut out what had become too painful to look upon. When she looked again, all was sleeping in the moonlight as before; but he was gone. At the same moment Helen turned restlessly on her pillow, and sobbed and muttered to herself. Rose felt that pillow wet with tears. "Helen!" she exclaimed; "Helen, dear Helen! awake! Awake, Helen!" Her cousin, at length aroused, flung her arms around her neck; and the proud lip which she had left curled with the consciousness of beauty and power, quivered and paled, while she sank awake and weeping on Rose's bosom.

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CHAPTER IV.

Never had the bells of Abbeyweld, within the memory of living man—within the memory of old Mrs. Myles herself, and *she* was the oldest living woman in the parish—rung so merry a peal as on the morning that Helen Marsh was married to the handsome and Honourable Mr. Ivers. He was young as well as handsome—honourable both by name and nature—rich in possession and expectancy. On his part it was purely and entirely what is called a "love match"—one of the strangest of all strange things perpetrated by a young man of rank and fashion. His wealth and position in society enabled him to select for himself; and he did so, of course, to the disappointment of as many, or perhaps a greater number of mothers than daughters, inasmuch as it is the former whose speculations are the deepest laid and most dangerous in arts matrimonial.

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Every body was astonished. Mrs. Howard—Helen's "kind friend"—Mrs. Howard, little short of distracted for three weeks at the very least, did nothing but exclaim, "Who would have thought it!" "Who, indeed!" was the reply, in various tones of sympathy, envy, and surprise. Poor Mrs. Howard, to the day of her death, never suffered another portionless beauty to enter her doors while even the shadow of an eldest son rested on its threshold. Mrs. Myles was of course in an ecstasy of delight; her prophecy was fulfilled. Helen, *her* Helen, was the honourable wife of a doubly honourable man. What triumphant glances did she cast over the railings of the communion-table at Mr. Stokes—with what an air she marched down the aisle—how patronising and condescending was her manner to those neighbours whom she considered her inferiors—how bitterly did she lament that the Honourable Mr. Ivers would not have any one to breakfast with them but Mr. Stokes—and how surpassingly, though silently, angry was she with Mr. Stokes for not glorying with her when the bride and bridegroom drove off in their "own carriage," leaving her in a state of prideful excitement, and Rose Dillon in a flood of tears.

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"Well, sir!" exclaimed the old lady—"well, sir, you see it *has* turned out exactly as I said it would; there's station—there's happiness. Why, sir, if his brother dies without children, his own valet told me, Mr. Ivers would be a lord and Helen a lady. Didn't she look beautiful! Now, please, reverend sir, do speak, didn't she look beautiful?"

"She did."

"Ah! it's a great gift that beauty; though," she added, resorting to the strain of morality which persons of her character are apt to consider a salve for sin—"though it's all vanity, all vanity. 'Flesh is grass'—a beautiful text that was your reverence preached from last Sunday—'All flesh is grass.' Ah, well-a-day! so it is. We ought not to be puffed up or conceited—no, no. As I said to Mrs. Leicester, 'Don't be puffed up, my good woman, because your niece has what folk call a pretty face, nor don't expect that she's to make a good market of it—it's but skin deep; remember our good rector's sermon, 'All flesh is grass.' Ah, deary me! people do need such putting in mind; and, if you believe me, sir, unless indeed it be Rose, poor child, who never had a bit of love in her head yet, I'll be bound every girl is looking above her station—there's a pity, sir. All are not born with a coach and horses; no, no;" and so, stimulated a little, perhaps, by a glass of *real*, not gooseberry, champagne, poor Mrs. Myles would have galloped on with a strange commentary upon her own conduct (of the motives to which she was perfectly ignorant,) had not the rector suddenly exclaimed, "Where is Rose?"

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"Crying in her own room, I'll be bound; I'm sure she is. Why, Rose—and I really must get your reverence to speak to her, she is a sad girl—Rose Dillon, I say—so silent and homely-like—ah, dear! Why, granddaughter—now, is it not undutiful of her, good sir, when she knows how much I have suffered parting from my Helen. Rose Dillon!"

But Rose Dillon was not weeping in her room, nor did she hear her grandmother's voice when the carriage, that bore the bride to a new world, drove off. Rose ran down the garden, intending to keep the equipage in sight as long as it could be distinguished from an eminence that was called the Moat, and which commanded an extensive view of the high road. There was a good deal of brushwood creeping up the elevation, and at one side it was overshadowed by several tall trees; in itself it was a sweet, sequestered spot, a silent watching place. She could hardly hear the carriage wheels, though she saw it whirled along, just as it passed within sight of the tall trees. Helen's arm, with its glittering bracelet, waved an adieu; this little act of remembrance touched Rose, and, falling on her knees, she sobbed forth a prayer, earnest and heartfelt, for her cousin's happiness.

"God bless you, Rose!" exclaimed the trembling voice of the discarded lover, who, pale and worn, had been unintentionally concealed among the trees—"God bless you, Rose!—that prayer has done me good. Amen to every word of it! She is quite, quite gone now—another's bride—the wife of a gentleman—and so best; the ambition which fits her for her present station unfitted her to be my wife. I say this, and think this—I know it! But though I do know it, her face—that face I loved from infancy, until it became a sin for me to love it longer—that face comes between me and reason, and its brightness destroys all that reason taught."

Rose could not trust herself to reply. She longed to speak to him, but she could not; she *dared* not. He continued—"Did she leave no message, speak no word, say nothing, to be said to me?"

"She said," replied her cousin, "that she hoped you would be happy; that you deserved to be so"—

"Deserved to be so!" he repeated bitterly; "and that was the reason why *she* made me miserable. Oh! the folly, the madness of the man who trusts to woman's love—to woman's faith! But the spell *once* broken, the charm once dispelled, that is enough!" And yet it was not enough, for Edward talked on, and more than once was interrupted by Rose, who, whenever she could vindicate her cousin, did so bravely and generously—not in a half-consenting, frigid manner, but as a true woman does when she defends a woman, as, if she be either good or wise, she will always do.

Rose did not know enough of human nature to understand that the more Edward complained of Helen's conduct and desertion, the less he really felt it; and the generous portion of his own nature sympathised with the very generosity which he argued against. He had found one, who while she listened sweetly and patiently to his complaints, vindicated, precisely as he would have desired, the idol of his heart's first love. What we love appears so entirely our own, that we question the right of others to blame it, whatever we may do ourselves. If he had known the deep, the treasured secret that poor Rose concealed within the sanctuary of her bosom, he would have wondered at the unostentatious generosity of her pure and simple nature.

"It is evident," said Rose Dillon to herself, when she bade Edward adieu; "it is quite evident he never will or can love another. Such affection is everlasting." How blind she was! "Poor fellow! he will either die in the flower of his age of a broken heart, or drag on a miserable existence! And if he does," questioned the maiden, "and if he does, *what is that to me?*" She did not, for a moment or two, trust herself to frame an answer, though the tell-tale blood, first mounting to and then receding from her cheek, replied; but then she began to calculate how long she had known Edward, and thought how very natural it was she should feel interested, deeply interested, in him. He had no sister; why should she not be to him a sister? Ah, Rose, Rose! that sisterly reasoning is of all others the most perilous.

Time passed on. The bride wrote a letter, which, in its tone and character, sounded pretty much like a long trumpet-note of exultation. Mrs. Myles declared it to be a dear letter, a charming letter, a most lady-like letter, and yet evidently she was not satisfied therewith. She read scraps of it to all the neighbours, and vaunted Mrs. Ivers, the Honourable Mrs. Ivers, up to the skies. Like all persons whose dignity and station are not the result of inheritance, in the next epistle she was even more anxious to impress her humble relatives with an idea of her consequence. Mingled with a few epithets of love, were a great many eulogiums on her new station. She was too honest to regret, even in seeming, the rural delights of the country, (for Helen could not stoop to deceit,) but she gave a list of titled visitors, and said she would write more at length, were it not that every spare moment was spent in qualifying herself to fill her station so as to do credit to her husband." This old Mrs. Myles could not understand; she considered Helen fit to be a queen, and said so.

CHAPTER V.

For more than two months, Rose and Edward did not meet again; for more than four after that, he never entered the cottage which had contained what he held most dear on earth; but one evening he called with Mr. Stokes. The good rector might have had his own reasons for bringing the young man to the cottage; but if he had he kept them to himself, the best way of rendering them effective.

After that, Edward often came, sometimes with a book from the rectory, sometimes with a newspaper for Mrs. Myles, sometimes to know if he could do anything for the old lady in the next town, where he was going, sometimes for one thing, sometimes for another, but always with some excuse, which Rose was happy to accept as the true one; satisfied that she could see him, hear him, know that he was there.

It so chanced that, calling one evening (evening calls are suspicious where young people are concerned,) Edward was told that Mrs. Myles had gone over to Lothery, the next post town, and that Miss Rose was out. The servant (ever since Helen's marriage, Mrs. Myles had thought it due to her dignity to employ such a person) said this with an air of mystery, and Edward inquired which way Miss Rose had walked. Indeed, she did not know.

Edward therefore trusted to chance, and he had not gone very far down a lane leading to the common of Abbeyweld, when he saw her seated under a tree (where heroines are surely found at some period or other of their life's eventful history) reading a letter. Of course he interrupted her, and then apologised.

"The letter," said Rose, frankly, "is from poor Helen."

"Why do you call her poor?" he inquired.

"Because she is very ill; and I am going to her to-morrow morning."

"Ill!—to-morrow!—so suddenly—so soon!" stammered Edward.

Rose turned homewards with an air of cold constraint. She could not attribute Edward's agitation to any other cause than his anxiety on Helen's account, and the conviction gave her intense pain.

"Stay, Rose," he said. Rose walked steadily forward. "There is," he continued bitterly, "a curse, a spell upon this place. Do you not remember that it was here—*here*, within five yards of where we stand—that *she* first—. But where's the use of thinking of *that*, or any thing else," he exclaimed with a sudden burst of passion, "where a woman is concerned? They are all, *all* alike, and I am a double fool! But go, Rose, go—enjoy her splendour, and lie in wait, as she did, for some rich idiot!"

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It was now Rose's turn to interrupt. Turning upon Edward, with an expression of deeply insulted feeling, "Sir," she said; and before she proceeded the cold monosyllable had entered his heart; "Sir, my cousin Helen did *not* lie in wait; a woman's beauty may be called a snare, if you please, but it is not one of her own making; she was sought and won, and not by an *idiot*; and it is ungenerous in you to speak thus now, when time, and her being another's wife"—

Poor Rose had entered on perilous ground, and she felt it, and the feeling prevented her proceeding. She trembled violently; and if Edward could have seen her blanched cheek and quivering lip, he would have checked his impetuosity, and bitterly reproached himself for the rash words he had uttered. If he could but have known how devoutly the poor fond beating heart loved him at that moment, he would, rustic though he was, have fallen at her feet, and entreated her forgiveness. Doubtless it was better as it was, for if men could see into women's hearts, I very much fear their reliance on their own power would increase, and *that* would be neither pleasant nor profitable to themselves or others; the very existence of love often depends on its uncertainty. Some evil star at that moment shed its influence over them, for Edward Lynne, catching at Rose's words, answered,

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"You need not, I assure you, entertain your cousin with an account of how I grieve; and remember, believe me, I take good care to prevent any woman's caprice from having power over me a second time."

"You do quite right," replied Rose—"quite right." They walked on together until they arrived within sight of the cottage door, but neither spoke.

"I have a great deal to do—much to prepare. I must wish you good-night. Good-bye, and a kinder—temper." She faltered.

"Going," said Edward—"going away in such haste; and to part thus. There must be some mistake. I have watched you narrowly, suspiciously, as men do who have been once deceived; and I have seen no trace of unwomanly ambition in you; I little thought you would, on the slightest hint, so willingly embrace the first opportunity of entering into the sphere I thought you dreaded—as I do."

"I told you Helen was ill."

"A megrim—a whim—a"—

"You do her wrong; she has been a mother, and her child is dead."

"A blow to her ambition," said Edward, so coldly that Rose (such is human nature) breathed more freely. Was it possible, then—*could* it be possible—that his feelings had been excited not by the remembrance of Helen, but the thought of her own departure? Yet still her simple sense of justice urged her to say, "Again you do her wrong; Helen has a great deal of feeling."

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"For herself," he answered tersely, "I dare say she has."

"I did not think you could be so unjust and ungenerous," replied Rose; "but you are out of sorts to-night, and will be sorry before morning. You were always hasty, Edward. Good-night—good-bye."

"Good-bye, then, Rose—good-bye;" and without taking her hand, without one kind word, one sign of love, Edward Lynne rushed through the garden gate and disappeared.

Rose entered the little parlour, which of late had been well cared for. The old sofa, though as stiff and hard as ever, triumphed in green and yellow; and two cushions, with large yellow tassels, graced the ends, and a huge square ottoman, which every country visitor invariably tumbled over, stood exactly in front of the old seat. Upon this Rose flung herself, and, covering her face with her hands, bent down her head upon the stately seat. Her sobs were not loud but deep; and as she was dealing with feelings, and not with time, she had no idea how long she had remained in that state, until aroused by a voice, whose every tone sent the blood throbbing and tingling

through her veins.

"Rose—dear Rose!"

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Blushing—trembling—ashamed of an emotion she had not the power to control—Rose could not move, did not at all events, until Edward was on his knees beside her—until he had poured forth his affection—had assured her how completely she had possessed herself of his respect and admiration; that his feelings towards her not being of that passionate nature which distracted him with love for Helen, he had not truly felt her value until the idea of losing her for ever came upon him; that then he indeed felt as though all hope of happiness was to be taken away for ever—felt that he should lose a friend, one on whose principles and truth he could rely—felt that in *her* his all was concentrated. It is only those who, having loved long and hopelessly for years, find that love returned, and at the very moment when they were completely bowed down by the weight of disappointment, can understand what Rose experienced. She did not violate any of the laws of maiden modesty, because she was pure in heart and single of purpose; but she was too truthful to withhold the confession of her love, and too sincere to conceal her happiness.

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"I will give you a promise; but receive none," said the generous lover. "I should be indeed miserable if I, for a moment, fancied you were controlled only by a *promise. I rely upon you solely and entirely*; no matter with what temptations you may be surrounded. If Helen is so much admired, you must be admired also; but I do not fear you will forget me; for now my only astonishment is how I could have preferred the spirit and power of the one to the tender and womanly grace of the other." In the midst of these effusions, so dear to lovers' hearts, Mrs. Myles entered. Many and many a time had she prayed that Edward Lynne might transfer his affections to Rose Dillon; it would be such "a capital match for her, poor thing." She would repeat to herself, "Yes, quite the thing for *her*, though, of course, for Helen I could not hear of it—yet quite the thing of all others for her." This frame of mind continued until the invitation arrived, and it was determined that Rose should visit her cousin. "It is," argued the good woman in her own way, "it is only to nurse her strong and well again, I dare say; but yet, who knows, she may see some one, or some one may see her? She certainly is a very pretty, modest-looking girl; and I have heard say that modest-looking girls are sometimes greatly admired among the grandes in fashionable places, because of their rarity. I shall certainly show the cold shoulder to Edward Lynne the next time he comes, and give him a hint as to the expectations I have for Rose. I must not suffer the poor child to throw herself away—oh no!—oh no! Edward Lynne is a very nice young man certainly; and if Rose had not been going to London"— She opened the parlour door as she so reasoned; and the peculiar expression which passed over the countenances of both, convinced her that every thing was proceeding in opposition to her "prudential motives." Edward frankly expounded all, to her entire dissatisfaction. "She did not," she said, "at all approve of engagements; she would not sanction any engagement except at the altar; she thought *Mr. Lynne* (Mr. Lynne! she had never in her life before called him any thing but "Ned") she thought he ought to have spoken to *her* first as became a *gentleman*." And Edward, provoked beyond bearing at what always upstirs a noble soul—mere worldly-mindedness—replied, "that he never professed to be a *gentleman*; he was, and ever would be, a farmer, and nothing more; and for all that, he thought a farmer—an honest, upright, English farmer—might have as correct ideas as to right and wrong as any gentleman." At this Mrs. Myles became very indignant; like the frog in the fable, she endeavoured to think herself an ox, and talked and looked magnificence itself, until at last she felt as if being *her* grand-children was enough to entitle Helen and Rose to sit before a queen. She talked of Edward,—his occupation, his barns, his cows, horses, and sheep—until Rose, all gentle as she was, roused, and said, that for herself she had no ambition beyond that of being the useful wife of an honest man; that Edward had honoured her, and, sorry as she should be to displease the only parent she had ever known, she had plighted her faith in the temple of her own heart to him—and as long as the plight was of value in his eyes, it could not be withdrawn. How truly did Edward Lynne feel that she indeed would be a crown of glory to his old age, as well as to his manhood's prime!

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The scene—for there are "scenes" wherever human passion runs wild—ended by Mrs. Myles working herself into the belief that she was the most ill-used old lady in the British dominions. She commanded Edward from her presence; and though Rose wept and knelt at her feet, she refused to be pacified, declaring that if it had not been for the rheumatism, she would herself act as nurse to Helen, and not suffer so low-minded a creature as Rose Dillon to look on the splendour of her cousin's house. What she thought of that splendour, an extract from a letter—not the first or second—which replied to those she had received from Edward, will best tell:

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"I have seen a great deal to astonish—every thing seems wonderful in London—only I wish the people seemed more really happy. I have been thinking that happiness is not a sudden thing like joy; it is more quiet—*it takes time to be happy*—and the people here have no time. In the midst of the gayest party, they do not suffer themselves to enjoy it, but keep hurrying on to the next. I remember when we were children, Helen and I, we have sat an hour over a bunch of wildflowers, yet not discovered half their beauties; surely excitement and happiness are not twin-born. Since Helen has been better, numbers of ladies have called, so beautifully dressed, and so gentlemanly and reserved, one so very like the other, that they might have all been brought up at the same school. They never appear to confide in each other, but make a talk, after their own calm fashion, about small things. Still, when they talk, *they do not say much*, considering how highly bred they are. I have listened throughout an entire morning (a fashionable morning, Edward, does not begin until three o'clock in the afternoon), and really could not remember a

single observation made by a drawing-room full of ladies. *We* could not talk ten minutes with dear Mr. Stokes, without hearing something that we could not help remembering all the days of our lives. It is wonderful how superior Helen is (I am not afraid to tell you so) to every one around her; there is a natural loftiness of mind and manner visible in her every movement, that carries off her want of those pretty accomplishments which the ladies value so highly. And then she is so beautiful, and her husband is so proud of having the handsomest woman in London for his wife; and one artist begs to model her ear, another her hand—you cannot think how fair and soft and 'do-nothing' it looks,—and as to her portraits, they are in all those pretty painted books which Mr. Stokes calls 'vanities.' There is a queer, quirky, little old gentleman who visits here, who said that Helen owed her great success in society to her 'tact.' Oh! Edward, she owes her sorrow to her *ambition*. Would you believe it possible that she, the beauty of Abbeyweld, who for so long a time seemed to us satisfied with that distinction, is not satisfied now. Why, there is not such an establishment, no, not at Mrs. Howard's, as that which she commands. Oh! Edward, to have once loved Helen, is to be interested for her always; there is something great in her very faults; there is nothing poor or low about her. That little cranky old gentleman said the other evening while looking at her, 'Miss Rose, a woman, to be happy, should either have no ambition, or an ambition beyond this world.' Do ask Dr. Stokes if that is true."

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CHAPTER VI.

After she had been a little longer in town, Rose saw more clearly the workings of that ambition which had undermined her cousin's happiness. She saw where the canker ate and withered, but she did not know how it could be eradicated. Something which women understand, prevented her laying open the secrets of the house to Edward; and yet she desired counsel. Possessing much observation as to the workings of the human heart, she had but little knowledge as to how those feelings might be moulded for the best; and she naturally turned for advice, and with the faith of a Christian spirit, to the pastor who had instructed her youth. He had loved them both, and she longed for his counsel, in the—alas! vain—hope that she, a right-minded but simple girl—simple as regards the ambition of life's drama—might be able to turn her cousin from the unsatisfied, unsatisfying longings after place and station. The difference in their opinions was simply this—Rose thought that Helen possessed everything that Helen could desire, while Helen thought that Helen wanted all things.

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It was morning—not the morning that Rose had described to her lover, but not more than seven o'clock—when Rose, who had been up late the previous night, was awoken by her cousin's maid. On entering Helen's dressing-room she found her already dressed, but so pale and distressed in her appearance, that she could hardly recognise the brilliant lawgiver of the evening's festivities in the pale, languid, feverish beauty that was seated at her desk.

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"Dear Helen, you are weary; ill, perhaps," exclaimed her gentle cousin. "You have entered too soon into gay society, and you suffer for the public restraint in private."

Her cousin looked steadily in her face, and then smiled one of those bitter disdainful smiles which it is always painful to see upon a woman's lip.

"Sit down, Rose," she said; "sit down, and copy this letter. I have been writing all night, and yet cannot get a sufficient number finished in time, without your assistance."

Rose did as she was desired, and, to her astonishment, found that the letters were to the inhabitants of a borough, which Mr. Ivers had expressed his desire to represent. Rose wrote and wrote; but the longest task must have a termination. About one, the gentleman himself came into the room, and, as Rose thought, somewhat indifferently, expressed his surprise, that what he came to commence, was already finished. Still he chid his fair wife for an exertion which he feared might injure her health, and evinced the strongest desire to succeed in rescuing the people of L— from the power of a party to which he was opposed; hinting, at the same time, that the contest would drain his purse and many of his resources.

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"And let it," exclaimed Helen, when he left the room, "let it. I care not for *that*, but I will overturn every thing that interposes between me and the desire I have to humble the wife of the present representative. Look, I would hold this hand in the fire, ay, and suffer it to smoulder into ashes, to punish the woman who called me a proud *parvenue*! She did so before I had been a week in London. Her cold calm face has been a curse to me ever since. She has stood, the destroying angel, at the gate of my paradise, poisoning every enjoyment. Let me but humble *her*," she continued, rising proudly from the sofa upon which she had been resting; "let me but humble *her*, and I shall feel a triumphant woman! For that I have watched and waited; *anxiety for that caused me the loss of my child*; but if Ivers succeeds, I shall be repaid."

Rose shuddered. Was it really true, that having achieved the wealth, the distinction she panted for, she was still anxious to mount higher? Was it possible that wealth, station, general admiration, and the devoted affection of a tender husband did not satisfy the humbly-born beauty of an obscure English village? Again Helen spoke; she told how she had at last succeeded in rousing her husband to exertion—how, with an art worthy a better cause, she had persuaded him that his country demanded his assistance—how he had been led almost to believe that the safety of England was in the hands of the freeholders of L—; and then she pictured her own triumph, as the wife of the successful candidate, over the woman who had called her a *parvenue*. "And,

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after all," murmured poor Rose, "and after all, dear Helen, you are really unhappy."

"Miserable!" was the reply—"no creature was ever so perfectly miserable as I am! The one drop of poison has poisoned the whole cup. What to me was all this grandeur, when I felt that *that* woman looked down upon me, and induced others to do the same; that though I was with them, I was not of them; and all through her means. Ivers could not understand my feeling; and, besides, I dare not let him know what had been said by one of his own clique, lest *he should become inoculated by the same feeling.*"

"Another fruit," thought Rose Dillon, "of the evil which attends unequal marriages."

"But *my* triumph will come!" she repeated; "Ivers must carry all before him; and *who knows what may follow?*"

"Still unsatisfied!" thought Rose, as she wandered through the splendid rooms and inhaled the perfume of the most expensive exotics, and gazed upon beautiful pictures, and listened to the roll of carriages, and heard the kind fond voice of Helen's devoted husband urging the physician, who made his daily calls, to pay his wife the greatest attention. "Still unsatisfied!" she repeated; and then she thought of one of Edward's homely but wise proverbs—"All is not gold that glitters;" and she thought how quite as beautiful, and more varied by the rich variety of nature, was the prospect from the parlour-window of the farm-house, that was to be her own. "And woodbine, roses, and mignonette breathe as sweet odours as exotics, and belong of right to the cottages of England. Ah!" continued the right-minded girl, "better is a little and content therewith, than all the riches of wealth and art without it. If her ambition had even a *great* object I could forgive her; but all this for the littleness of society." This train of thought led her back to the days of their girlhood, and she remembered how the same desire to outshine manifested itself in Helen's childhood. If Mr. Stokes had been there he could have told her of the pink gingham, with her grandmother's injudicious remark thereupon—"Be content with the pink gingham *now*, Helen—the time will come when you shall have a better;" instead of—"Be always content, Helen, with what befits your sphere of life."

That day was an eventful one to Rose. In the evening she was seated opposite the window, observing the lamplighter flying along with his ladder and his link through the increasing fog, and wondering why the dinner was delayed so much beyond the usual hour—when the little old cranky gentleman, whose keen and clever observations had given Rose a very good idea of his *head*, and a very bad one of his heart, stood beside her. In a few brief words he explained, that seeing she was different to London ladies, he had come to the determination of making her his wife. He did not seem to apprehend any objection on her part to this arrangement; but having concluded the business in as few words as possible, stood, with his hands behind him, very much as if he expected the lady he addressed to express her gratitude, and suffer him to name the day. Firmly and respectfully Rose declined the honour, declaring "she had no heart to give," and adding a few civil words of thanks to the old gentleman, who would have evinced more sense had he proposed to adopt, not marry her. Without a reply, the old gentleman left the room; but presently her cousin entered, and in terms of bitter scorn, inquired if she were mad enough to refuse such an offer—one that would immediately take her out of her humble sphere, and place her where she might be happy. Rose replied, with more than usual firmness, that she had learned, since she had been with her, the total insufficiency of rank and power to produce happiness. "I am convinced," she continued, "that it is the most likely to dwell where there are the fewest cares, and that the straining after distinction is at variance with its existence. To be useful, and fulfil well the duties of our native sphere, is the surest way to be happy. Oh! Helen, you do not know what it is; you look too much to the future to enjoy the present; and I have observed it ever since you threw away the handful of jessamine we had gathered at the grey fountain of Abbeyweld, because you could not have moss roses like the squire's daughter."

"Foolish girl!" she answered, "has not perseverance in the desire obtained the moss roses?"

"Yes," said her cousin, sadly, "but now you desire exotics. I should despise myself if it were possible that I could forget the affection of my heart in what appears to me the unsubstantial vanities of life. Dear Helen, in sickness or sorrow let me ever be your friend; but I must be free to keep on in my own humble sphere."

It seemed as if poor Rose was doomed to undergo all trials. Helen was not one to yield to circumstances; and though her physician prescribed rest, she lived almost without it, avoiding repose, laying herself under the most painful obligations to obtain her end, and enduring the greatest mental anxiety. Not only this; she taunted poor Rose with her increased anxieties, affirming, that if she had not rendered the old gentleman her foe by the ill-timed refusal, he would have assisted, not thwarted, her cherished object; that his influence was great, and was now exerted against them. "If," she added, "you had only the common tact of any other girl, you might have played him a little until the election was over, and then acted as you pleased."

This seemed very shocking to Rose, and she would have gone to Abbeyweld immediately, but that she thought it cruel to leave her cousin while she felt she was useful to her. "Ah, Rose!" she said, when poor Rose hinted that in a short time she must return, "how can you think of it?—how can you leave me in an *enemy's country*? I dare not give even my husband my entire confidence, for he might fancy my sensitiveness a low-born feeling. I can trust you, and none other." Surrounded, according to the phrase, "with troops of friends," and yet able to *trust* "none other" than the

simple companion of her childhood! "And yet," murmured the thoughtful Rose, "amongst so many, the blame cannot be all with the crowd; Helen herself is as incapable of warm, disinterested friendship as those of whom she complains."

Rose Dillon's constancy was subjected to a still greater trial. Amongst the "troops of friends" who crowded more than ever round Mr. Ivers while his election was pending, was a young man as superior to the rest in mind as in fortune, and Rose Dillon's ready appreciation of the good and beautiful led her to respect and admire him.

[pg 110] "Is it true, Miss Dillon," he said to her one morning, after a lagging conversation of some twenty minutes' duration—"is it true, Miss Dillon, that you have discarded altogether the attentions of Mr. ——" and he named the old gentleman whose offer had been so painful to Rose, and who was now made painfully aware that the subject had been publicly talked of. This confused her. "Nay," he continued, "I think you ought to be very proud of the fact, for he is worth two hundred thousand pounds."

"If he were worth ten hundred thousand, it would make no difference to me," was the reply.

"Then, you admit the fact."

Rose could not tell a falsehood, though she confessed her pain that it should be known. "I intend," she added, "to remain in my own quiet sphere of life; I am suited for no other."

[pg 111] The gentleman made no direct reply, but from that hour he observed Rose narrowly. The day of the election came, with its bribery and its bustle. Suffice it, that the Honourable Mr. Ivers was declared duly elected—that the splendour of the late member's wife's entertainments and beauty, were perfectly eclipsed by the entertainments and beauty of the wife of the successful candidate—that every house, *except* one, in the town was splendidly illuminated—and that the people broke every pane of glass in the windows of that house, to prove their attachment to the great principle of freedom of election. "God bless you, cousin!" said Rose; "God bless you—your object is attained. I hope you will sleep well to-night."

"Sleep!" she exclaimed; "how can I sleep? Did you not hear the wife of a mere city baronet inquire if late hours did not injure a country constitution; and see the air with which she said it?"

"And why did you not answer that a country constitution gave you strength to sustain them? In the name of all that is right, dearest Helen, why do you not assert your dignity as a woman, instead of standing upon your rank? Why not, as a woman, boldly and bravely revert to your former position, and at the same time prove your determination to support your present? You were as far from shame as Helen Marsh of Abbeyweld, as you are as the wife of an honourable member. Be yourself. Be simply, firmly yourself, my own Helen, and you will at once, from being the scorned, become the scorner."

"This from you, who love a lowly state?"

"I love my own birthright, lowly though it be. No one will attempt to pull me down. I shall have no heartaches—suffer no affronts?"

"Oh!" said Helen, "if I had but been born to what I possess."

"Mr. Stokes said if you had been born an honourable, you would have grasped at a coronet."

[pg 112] "And I *may* have it yet," replied the discontented beauty, with a weary smile; "I *may* have it yet; my husband's brother is still childless. If I could be but certain that the grave would receive him a childless man, how proudly I would take precedence of such a woman as Lady G——"

Rose looked at her as she spoke. In the glorious meridian of her beauty—a creature so splendid—of such a fair outside—with energy, and grace, and power—married by a weak ambition—an ambition achieved by the accident of birth—an ambition having neither honour, nor virtue, nor patriotism, nor any one laudable aim, for its object. And she sorrowed in her inmost soul for her cousin Helen.

CHAPTER VII.

[pg 113] Rose never, of course, made one at the brilliant assemblies which Mrs. Ivers gave and graced; she only saw those who breakfasted or lunched in the square, or who, like the little old gentleman, and one or two others, joined the family circle. The excitement of an election, and the (*pro tem.*) equality which such an event creates, brought her more into contact with her cousin's acquaintances than she had yet been, and gave the gentleman, who evidently admired her, an opportunity of studying her character. There was something strange in a young woman, situated as was Rose, preserving so entirely her self-respect, that it encircled her like a halo; and wherever it is so preserved, it invariably commands the respect of others. After the first week or two had passed, Rose Dillon was perfectly undazzled by the splendour with which she was surrounded, and was now engaged in watching for a moment when she could escape from what she knew was splendid misery. If Helen had been simply content to keep her own position—if she had, as Rose's wisdom advised, sufficient moral courage to resent a slight openly, not denying her humble birth, and yet resolved to be treated as became her husband's wife—all would have

been happiness and peace. Proud as Mr. Ivers was of her, her discontent and perpetual straining after rank and distinction, watching every body's every look and movement to discover if it concealed no *covert* affront, rendered him, kind and careful though he was, occasionally dissatisfied; and she interpreted every manifestation of his displeasure, however slight, to contempt for her birth. Rose suffered most acutely, for she saw how simple was the remedy, and yet could not prevail on Helen to abate one jot of her restless ambition. The true spirit of a Christian woman often moved her to secret earnest prayer, that God, of His mercy, would infuse an humbler and holier train of thought and feeling into Helen's mind; and, above all, she prayed that it might not come too late.

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"You do not think with Mrs. Ivers in all things, I perceive," said the gentleman I have twice alluded to.

"I am hardly, from my situation," replied Rose, "privileged to think her thoughts, though perhaps I may think of them."

"A nice distinction," he answered.

"Our lots in life are differently cast. In a week I return to Abbeyweld; I only came to be her nurse in illness, and was induced to remain a little longer because I was useful to her. They will go to the Continent now, and I shall return to my native village."

"But," said the gentleman, in a tone of the deepest interest, "shall you really return without regret?"

"Without regret? Oh yes!"

"Regret nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Suppose," he continued, in a suppressed tone of deep emotion—"suppose that a man, young, rich, and perfectly aware of the value of your pure and unsullied nature, was to lay his hand and heart"—

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"I pray, I entreat you, say not another word," interrupted Rose, breathlessly. "If there should be any such, which is hardly possible, sooner than he should deign to make a proposal to me, I would tell him that before I came to visit my cousin, only the very night before, I became the betrothed of another."

"Of some one, Rose, who took advantage of your ignorance of the world—of your want of knowledge of society?"

"Oh no!" she replied, covering her face with her hand; "oh no! he is incapable of that. He would have suffered me to leave Abbeyweld free of promise, but I would not."

"And do you hold the same faith still Rose? Think, has not what you have seen, and shared in, made you ambitious of something beyond a country life? Your refined mind and genuine feeling, your taste—do not, I implore you, deceive yourself."

"I do not, sir; indeed, I do not. Pardon me; I would not speak disrespectfully of those above me. Of course, I have not been admitted into that familiarity which would lead me to comprehend what at present appears to me even more disturbed by the littleness of life than a country village. Conventional forms have, I fear, little to do with elevation of mind; they seem to me the result of habit rather than of thought or feeling. I know this, at least, 'All is not gold that glitters.' I have seen a tree, fair to look at in the distance, and covered with green leaves, but when approached closely, the trunk was foul and hollowed by impurities, and when the blast came, it could not stand; even so with many, fair without and foul within, and the first adversity, the first great sorrow, over-throws them."

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"But this may be the case with the poor as well as the rich, in the country as well as the town."

"I am sure of it, sir. No station can be altogether free from impurity; but in the country the incitements to evil seem to me less numerous, and the temptations fewer by far; the most dangerous of all, a desire to shine, to climb above our fellows, less continual. The middle class is there more healthy and independent."

"And all this owing to the mere circumstance, think you, of situation?" interrupted the gentleman.

"I am only country bred, sir, as you know," replied Rose, earnestly but meekly; "and the only advantage I have had has been in the society of one you have heard me mention before now—our worthy rector—and he says it would make all that is wrong come right, if people would only fear God and love their neighbour."

"I believe," said the gentleman, "he is right, quite right; for out of such religion springs contentment, and all the higher as well as the humbler virtues. Yes, he is quite right." Much more he urged Rose, with all the persuasive eloquence of warm affection, to discover, if it were possible, she could change. He tried her on all points, but she replied with the clear

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straightforward truthfulness that has nothing to conceal. She wavered in nothing: firm to her love, steady to her principles, right-thinking and clear-sighted, he felt that Rose Dillon of Abbeyweld would have added the dignity of virtue to the dignity of rank, but that her mind was of too high an order to bend to the common influences that lead women along the beaten track of life.

They parted to meet no more; and Rose shed tears at their parting. "I did not wish you to make a declaration that did me too much honour," she said; "but I entreat you to say nothing of it to Mrs. Ivers. My own course is taken, and God knows how earnestly I will pray that you may find one in every way worthy your high caste of mind and station."

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I wonder would Edward Lynne have quite approved of those tears; I wonder would he have been pleased to have observed the cheek of his affianced bride pressed against the drawing-room window, to catch a last glimpse of the cab which dashed from Mr. Ivers' door. Perhaps not—for the generous nature of woman's love and woman's friendship, is often beyond man's comprehension—but he would have been pleased to see, after she had paced the room for half an hour, the eagerness with which she received and opened a letter from himself; to have witnessed the warm kiss impressed upon his name; to hear the murmured "dear, *dear* Edward!" Her heart had never for a moment failed in its truth—never for an instant wavered.

That day week the cousins separated. "You must come to me when I return, Rose," said Helen—"you must come and witness my triumphs. My husband's brother is very ill—cannot live long—but *that* is a secret. I trust Ivers will make a figure in the lower, before called to the upper house; if he does not, it will break my heart. There, God bless you, Rose; you have been very affectionate, very sweet to me, but I do, I confess, envy you that cheerful countenance—cheerful and calm. I always think that contented people want mind and feeling; but you do not, Rose. By the way, how strangely Mr. — disappeared; I thought you had clipped his wings. Well, next season, perhaps. Of course, after this, you will think no more of Edward." Fortunately for Rose, Helen expected no replies, and after a few more words, as I have said, they parted.

In little more than three months, Rose Dillon and Edward Lynne were married.

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CHAPTER VIII.

"It's a decent match enough," said old Mrs. Myles to the rector when two years had elapsed, and she had become reconciled to it. "Of course Rose never could have taken the same stand as Helen, who has been a lady now more than a year; though she's a good, grateful girl, and Edward very attentive—very attentive indeed—and I must say more so than I expected. Helen, I mean my lady, you know, has, as she says in her last letter, a great deal to do with her money—of course she must have; and so, sir, pray do not let any one in Abbeyweld know that the little annuity is not continued—regularly, I mean," she added, while a certain twitching of her features evinced how much she felt, though she did not at the moment confess it, the neglect of one she so dearly loved. Like most talkative people, she frequently talked away her sorrows; and, thinking she would be better if she opened her heart, she recommenced, after wiping away a few natural tears: "You see, sir, Helen—I mean her ladyship—said she would make it up by-and-bye to me, and so she ought, poor dear thing; for I sacrificed both myself and her cousin Rose for her advancement; and really I cannot tell how the money goes with those great folk. Only think," proceeded the old lady, bringing her face close to Mr. Stokes, and whispering—"only think, she says she never has five pounds she can call her own. Now, as I told Rose, this is very odd, because my lord is so very rich since the death of his brother, ten times as rich as he was at first, and yet Rose says they are poor now to what they used to be—is not that very strange? She says it is because of the increased expenditure, and that I don't understand; but it's very hard, very hard in my old days. If she can't live upon thirty thousand a-year, I wonder how she expects her poor old grandmother to live upon thirty pounds, for that's all my certainty; and the little farm, I must say, would have gone to destruction, but for Edward Lynne—he does every thing for it, poor fellow. She never sends me a paper now, with her presentations, and dresses, and fine parties, printed in it at full-length; she's ashamed of her birth, that's it; though sure you and your lady, sir, noticed them both like equals, and I never even asked to go near her, though his lordship invited me more than once—and he even came to see Rose, as you know, ay, and a good ten mile out of his way it was to come—a good ten mile—and kissed her baby, and said he wished he had one like it, which they say Helen never will have. Oh, it was a pity that first one of her ladyship did not live! It is so cruel of her not to let me see the papers with an account of her fine doings, all in print—very cruel—I who loved her so, and took care of her—I never could find out from Rose whether or no she thought her happy. Ah, Rose is a good girl! not, however," added the old lady, again wiping away her tears—"not, however, to be compared to her ladyship; and I would not say what I have done to any one in the world but you, sir, who have known them all their lives."

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So talked old Mrs. Myles, and so she continued to talk at intervals, during the next five years, growing weaker in mind and body, until at last she took to her bed. "I could die happy," said the old woman, "if I were to see Helen once more; write to her, Rose, and tell her so; she will not refuse to see me, her first friend—only once."

Communications between the cousins had ceased for a long time, but Rose wrote. Mrs. Myles sent twice every day to the post-office—and her hopes, so constantly disappointed, increased her

fever; at the end of a week, a letter came.

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"Give it me, Rose, give it me!" exclaimed Mrs. Myles, "it is from my own darling child, bless her!—my beauty! Oh, deary me! I'm sure that's a beautiful seal, if I could only see it; prop me up—there. How the jessamine blinds the window—now my spectacles—so"—She tried hard to read, but the power of sight was gone. "She used to write the best hand in the school, but this fashionable writing is hard to make out," observed the old woman; "so do you read it, Rosy."

"Here is ten pounds to begin with," said Rose, placing the gossamer note before her.—Mrs. Myles mechanically took up the money, and played with it as a child plays with a toy, and Rose read the few words that accompanied the gift:—"Grieved to the heart to hear of the illness of her ever dear relative—would be miserable about her but from the knowledge of Rose being the best nurse in the world—begs she will let her know how the dear invalid is by return of post, and also if there is any thing she could send to alleviate her sufferings."

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While Rose was reading the letter, Mrs. Myles's long thin feeble fingers were playing with the note, her dim eyes fixed upon the window; large round tears coursed each other down her colourless cheeks. "No word about coming, Rose—no word about coming," she muttered, after a pause; "send her back this trash," she added, bitterly—"send her back this trash, and tell her the last tears I shed were shed not for my sins, but for her cruelty." She continued to mutter much that they could not understand; but evening closed in, and Rose told Edward that she slept at last; she did certainly, and Rose soon discovered that it was her last sleep. The money was returned; and again five years elapsed without Rose hearing, directly or indirectly, from her rich and titled cousin. In the mean time, Edward and Rose prospered exceedingly; three handsome, happy children blessed their home. Their industry perfected whatever Providence bestowed; nothing was wasted, nothing neglected; the best farmers in the neighbourhood asked advice of Edward Lynne; and the "born ladies," as poor Mrs. Myles would have called them, would have forgotten that Rose was only a farmer's wife, if wise Rose had been herself disposed to forget it. But great as their worldly prosperity had been, it was nothing to the growth and continuance of that holy affection which cheered and hallowed their happy dwelling—the chief characteristic of which was a freedom from pretension of all kinds. Rose suffered appearances to grow with their means, but never to precede them; and though this is not the world's practice, the duty is not on that account the less imperative. They were seated one evening round their table, Edward reading, while his wife worked, when the master of the post-office brought them a letter.

"It has lain two days, Measter Lynne," said the man, "for you never send but once a-week; only, as I thought by the seal it must be something grand, whoy I brought it down myself."

It was from Helen!—from the ambitious cousin—a few sad, mournful lines, every one of which seemed dictated by a breaking heart.

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She was ill and wretched, and the physician had suggested change of air; but above all her native air. Would Rose receive her for a little time, just to try what its effect might be?—she was sure she would, and she would be with her immediately.

"Strange," said Edward, "how nature will assert and keep its power; when luxury, art, skill, knowledge, fail to restore health, they tell you of native air, trusting to the simple, pure restorative, which is the peasant's birthright, as infallible. I wonder, Rose, how those fine people like to be thrown back upon the nature they so outrage."

"Poor Helen!" exclaimed Rose, "how dispirited she seems—how melancholy! I ought to feel afraid of your meeting her, I suppose, Edward; but I do not—you have grown satisfied with your poor Rose. We shall be able to make her very comfortable, shall we not?"—and then she smiled at the homeliness of the phrase, and wondered what Helen would say if she heard her.

It was not without sundry heartbeatings that Rose heard the carriage stop, and assisted Helen to alight; nor could she conceal her astonishment at the ravages which not past years but past emotions had wrought on her once beautiful face.

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The habit of suppressing thoughts, feelings, and emotions, had altogether destroyed the frank expression of her exquisitely chiselled mouth, which, when it smiled now, smiled alone; for the eyes, so finely formed, so exquisitely fringed, did not smile in unison; they had acquired a piercing and searching expression, altogether different from their former brilliancy.

The elevated manners, the polished tone which high society alone bestows, only increased the distance between the two cousins, though Rose was certainly gratified by the exclamation of pleasure which told how much better than she anticipated were the accommodations prepared by her humble relative.

"Such pretty rooms—such beautiful flowers! Rose, you must have grown rich, and without growing unhappy. Strange, you look ten years younger than I do!"

"Late hours, public life, and anxieties," said Rose.

"Yes, that last appointment his lordship obtained, the very thing above all others I so desired for him, has completely divided him from his home. We hardly ever meet now, except at what I may call our own public dinners."

"And he, who used to be so affectionate, so fond of domestic life!" involuntarily exclaimed Rose.

"And is so still; but the usages of society, the intrigues and bustle of public business, quite overthrow every thing of that kind. Oh, it is a weary, wearying world!"

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"But to a mind like yours, the achieving an object must be so delightful!"

"Ay, Rose, so it is; but that sort of thing soon passes away, and we have no sooner obtained possession of one, than another still more desirable presents itself. How peaceful and happy you seem. Well, an idle mind must be a perpetual feast."

"But I have not an idle mind, not an idle moment," replied Rose, colouring a little; "my husband, my children, my humble household, the care of the parochial schools, now that poor Mr. Stokes has grown so infirm"—

"Yes, yes!" interrupted Helen; "and yet, Rose, when I look at you, even now, I cannot but think you were fitted for better things."

"Better than learning how to occupy time profitably, and training souls for immortality!" she replied; "but you are worn and tired, let me wait upon you this one night, as I used long, long ago to do—let me wait upon my own dear cousin, instead of a menial, this one night, and to-morrow you shall see Edward and the children."

The worn-hearted woman of the great world laid her face upon her cousin's shoulder, and then fairly hid it in her bosom. Why it was, He only, who knows the mysterious workings of the human heart, can tell; but she wept long and very bitterly, assigning no cause for her tears, but sobbing and weeping like a sorrowing child, while the arms she had flung round her cousin's neck prevented Rose from moving. Their tears once more mingled, as they had often done in childhood—once more—but not for long.

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"Leave me alone for a little, and I will ring for my maid," she said at last; "I am too artificial to be waited upon by you, Rose. It was otherwise when you used to twine gay poppies and bright flowers in my hair, telling me, at the same time, how much wiser it would have been to have chosen the less fading and more fragrant ones."

"Her husband—and her children!" thought Helen; "if she had neither children nor husband, she would have been of such value to me now; noisy children, I dare say, troublesome and wearying. Native air! native air, indeed, *ought* to work wonders." It would be hardly credited that Helen—the beauty—the admired—the woman of rank—bestowed quite as much trouble upon her morning toilette as if she had been in London. Such was her aching passion for universal sway, that she could not bear to be thought faded by her old lover, though he was only a farmer; and this trouble was taken despite bodily pain that would have worn a strong man to a skeleton.

It would be difficult to say whether Helen was pleased or displeased at finding Edward Lynne what might, without any flattery, be termed a country gentleman, betraying no emotion whatever at the sight of one who had caused him so much suffering, and only anxious to gratify her because she was his wife's relative. She thought, and she was right, that she discovered pity, and not admiration, as he looked upon her.

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"You think me changed," she said.

"Your ladyship has been ill and harassed."

"Ah! we all change except Rose."

"Ah!" replied the country bred husband, "she, indeed, is an exception; she could not even change for the better."

And then the children, two such glorious boys, fine, manly fellows. "And what will you be?" inquired her ladyship of the eldest.

"A farmer, my lady."

"And you?"

"A merchant, I hope."

"Your boys are as unambitious as yourself, Rose."

"I fear not," she answered; "this fellow wants to get into the middle class; but Mr. Stokes says the prosperity of a country depends more upon the middle class than upon either the high or the low."

To this Helen made no reply, for her attention was occupied by the loveliness of Rose's little girl. The child inherited, in its perfection, the beauty of her family, and a grace and spirit peculiarly her own. Rose could not find it in her heart to deprive her cousin of the child's society, which seemed to interest and amuse her, and the little creature performed so many acts of affection and attention from the impulse of her own kind nature, that Helen, unaccustomed to that sort of

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devotion, found her twine around her sympathies in a novel and extraordinary manner; it was a new sensation, and she could not account for its influence. After a week had passed, she was able to walk out, and met by chance the old clergyman. He kissed the child, and passed on with a bow, which, perhaps, had more of bitterness in its civility than, strictly speaking, befitted a Christian clergyman; but he thought of the neglect she had evinced towards old Mrs. Myles, and if he had spoken, it would have been to vent his displeasure, and reprove the woman whose rank could not shield her from his scorn. She proceeded towards the churchyard. "Look, lady!" said little Rose; "father put that stone over that grave to please mother. The relation who is buried there took care of my mother when she was a *littler* girl than I am now, and he told me to strew flowers over the grave, which we do. See, I can read it—'Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Margaret Myles, who died the seventeenth of June, eighteen hundred'—and something—I can hardly read figures yet, lady. 'This stone was placed here by her grateful relatives, E. and R.S.,' meaning Rose and Edward Lynne."

[pg 130] The coldness of the clergyman was forgotten in the bitterness of self-reproach. "I was a fool," she thought, as she turned away, "to fancy that my native air could be untainted by the destiny which has mocked me from my cradle."

"Ah! lady dear," exclaimed a crone, rising from a grave where she had been sitting, "don't you remember old Betty? They all said in the village you'd be too proud to look on your grandmother's grave; but you're not, I see. Well, that's good—that's good. We had a funeral last week, and the vault of the old earl was broken in. The stupid sexton stuck his pick in amongst the old bricks, and so the great man's skull came tumbling out, and rolled beside the skull of Job Martin, the old cobbler; and the sexton laid them both on the edge of the grave, the earl's skull and the cobbler's skull, until he should fetch a mason to mend the vault, and—what do you think?—when the mason came, the sexton could not tell which was the earl's skull and which was the cobbler's! Lady, you must understand how this is—it's all the same in a hundred years, according to the saying; and so it is. None of them could tell which was the earl's, and which the cobbler's. My skull may lie next a lady's yet, and no one tell the difference."

[pg 131] The lady and child hastened from the churchyard, and the old woman muttered, "To see that! She's not half as well to look at now as the farmer's wife. Ah! 'All is not gold that glitters!'" How happy it is for those who believe in the truth of this proverb, and from it learn to be content!

It might be a week after this occurrence that Helen sent for Rose. The lady either was, or fancied herself better, and said so, adding, it was in her (Rose's) power to make her happier than she had ever been. Reverting to the period when her cousin visited her in London, she alluded to what she had suffered in becoming a mother, and yet having her hopes destroyed by the anxiety and impetuosity of her own nature. "At first," she said, "the trouble was anything but deep-rooted, for I fancied God would send many more, but it was not so; and now the title I so desired must go to the child of a woman—Oh, Rose, how I *do* hate her!—a woman who publicly thanks God that no plebeian blood will disgrace *my* husband's title and *her* family. I would peril my soul to cause her the pain she has caused me."

"You do so now," said Rose, gently but solemnly. "Oh! think that this violence and revenge sins your own soul, and is every way unworthy of you."

[pg 132] Helen did not heed the interruption. "To add to my agony," she continued, "my husband cherishes her son as if it were his own; the boy stands even now between his affections and me. He has reproached me for what he terms my insensibility to his perfections, and says I ought to rejoice that he is so easily rendered happy—only imagine this! Rose, you must give me your daughter, to be to me as my own. Her beauty and sweetness will at once wean my husband's love from this boy; and, moreover, children brought up together—do you not see?—that boy will become attached to one of the 'plebeian blood,' and wedding *her* hereafter, scald to the core the proud heart of his mother, as she has scalded mine!"

"I cannot, Helen," replied Rose, after a pause, during which her cousin's glittering inquiring eyes were fixed upon her face—"I cannot; I could not answer to my God at the last day for delivering the soul he gave to my care to be so tutored (forgive me) as to forget Him in all things."

"Forget God!" repeated Helen once or twice—"I forget God! Do you think I am a heathen?"

"No, cousin—no—for you have all knowledge of the truth; but knowledge, and profiting by our knowledge, are different. My little gentle-hearted girl will be happier far in her own sphere. I could not see her degraded to bait a trap for any purpose; she will be happy, happier in her own sphere."

[pg 133] The lady bit her compressed lips; but during her whole life she never gave up a point, nor an object, proving how necessary it is that the strong mind should be well and highly directed. Small feeble minds pass through the world doing little good and little harm, but to train a large mind is worth the difficulty—worth the trouble it occasions: its possession is either a great blessing or a great curse. To Helen it was the latter, and curses never fall singly. "You have boys to provide for," she said, "and if I adopted that child, I would not suffer their station to disgrace their sister."

"I am sure you mean us kindly and generously; nor am I blind to the advantages of such an offer for my boys. Their father has prospered greatly, and could at this moment place them in any

profession they chose—still influence would help them forward; but the advancement of one child must not be purchased by"—Rose paused for a word—she did not wish to hurt her cousin's feelings—and yet none suggested itself but what she conceived to be the true one, and she repeated, lowly and gently, her opinion, prefacing it with, "You will forgive in this matter my plain speaking, but the advancement of one child must not be purchased by the sacrifice of another."

"Your prejudices have bewildered your understanding," exclaimed the lady. "Whatever my ambition may be, my morality is unimpeached; a vestal would lose none of her purity beneath my roof."

[pg 134] "Granted, fully and truly; woman's first virtue is untainted, but that is not her only one; forgive me. I have no right to judge or dictate, nor to give an unasked opinion; I am grateful for your kindness; but my child, given to me as a blessing for time and a treasure for eternity, must remain beneath my roof until her mind and character are formed."

"You are mad, Rose; consider her future happiness"—

"Oh, Helen! are you more happy than your humble cousin?"

"She would be brought up in the sphere I was thrust into, and have none of the contentions I have had to endure," said Helen.

"A sphere full of whirlpools and quicksands," replied the mother. "The fancy you have taken to her might pass away. She might be taught the bitterness of eating a dependant's bread, and the soft and luxurious habits of her early days would unfit her for bearing so heavy a burden; it would be in vain then to recall her to her humble home; she would have lost all relish for it. It might please God to take you after a few years, and my poor child would be returned to what she would then consider poverty. Urge me no more, I entreat you."

[pg 135] Helen's face grew red and pale by turns. "You mock at and mar my purposes," she said. "My husband was struck by the beauty of that child, and I longed to see her; but I am doomed to disappointment. I never tried to grasp a substance that it did not fade into a shadow! What am I now?" Her eyes rested upon the reflection, given by the glass, of the two cousins. "Look! that tells the story—worn in heart and spirit, blighted and bitter. You, Rose—even you, my own flesh and blood—will not yield to me—the only creature, perhaps, that could love me! Oh! the void, the desert of life, without affection!—a childless mother—made so by"—She burst into tears, and Rose was deeply affected. She felt far more inclined to yield her child to the desolate heart of Helen Marsh, than to the proud array of Lady —; but she also knew her duty.

"Will you grant me this favour," said Helen at last; "will you let the child decide"—

"I would not yield to the child's decision, but you may, if you please, prove her," answered her mother.

The little girl came softly into the room, having already learned that a bounding step was not meet for "my lady's chamber."

"Rosa, listen; will you come with me to London, to ride in a fine coach drawn by four horses—to wear a velvet frock—see beautiful sights, and become a great lady. Will you, dear Rosa, and be my own little girl?"

[pg 136] "Oh, yes!" exclaimed the child, gleefully; "that I will; *that* would be so nice—a coach and four—a velvet frock—a great lady—oh! dear me!" The mother felt her limbs tremble, her heart sink. "Oh! my own dear mother, will not *that* be nice? and the beautiful sights you have told me of—St. Paul's and Westminster—oh! mother, we shall be so happy!"

"Not *me*, Rosa," answered Mrs. Lynne, with as firm a voice as she could command. "Now, listen to me: you might ride *in* a coach and four, instead of *on* your little pony—wear velvet instead of cotton—see St. Paul's and Westminster—but have no more races on the downs, no more peeping into birds' nests, no more seeing the old church, or hearing its Sabbath bells. You *may* become a great lady, but you must leave and forget your father and me."

"Leave you, and my father and brothers! You did not mean *that* surely—you could not mean that, my lady—could they not go with me?"

"That would be impossible!"

"Then I will stay here," said the little girl firmly; "I love them better than every thing else in the world. Thank you, dear lady, but I cannot leave them."

"Leave *us*, then, Rosa," said Helen, proudly. The child obeyed with a frightened look, wondering how she had displeased the "grand lady."

[pg 137] If Helen had been steeped to the very lips in misery, she could not have upbraided the world more bitterly than she did, giving vent to long pent-up feelings, and reproaching Rose, not only for her folly in not complying with her wish, but for her happiness and contentment, which, while

she envied, she affected to despise.

"You cannot make me believe that the high-born and wealthy are what you represent," said her cousin. "A class must not be condemned because of an individual; and though I never felt inclined to achieve rank, I honour many of its possessors. It is the unsatisfied longing of your own heart that has made you miserable, dear Helen; and oh! let me entreat you, by the remembrance of our early years, to suffer yourself to enjoy what you possess."

"What I possess!" she repeated; "the dread and dislike of my husband's relatives—the reputation of 'she was very handsome'—a broken constitution—nothing to lean upon or love—a worn and weary heart!"

"You have a mine of happiness in your husband's affection."

"Not now," she answered bitterly; "not now—not now." And she was right.

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The next day she left the farm, where peace and prosperity dwelt together; despite herself, it pained her to witness such happiness. It is possible that the practical and practised theories she had witnessed might have changed her, had she not foolishly thought it too late. Her disappointment had been great; from the adoption of that child she had expected much of what, after all, is the creating and existing principle of woman's nature—natural affection; but this was refused by its mother's wisdom. Her worldly prospects had been doomed to disappointment, because she hungered and thirsted after vanities and distinctions, which never can afford sustenance to an immortal spirit; and even when she desired to cultivate attachment, it did not proceed from the pure love of woman—the natural stream was corrupted by an unworthy motive.

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Again years rolled on. In the records of fashionable life, the movements and fetes of Lady — continued to be occasionally noted as the most brilliant of the season; then rumours became rife that Lord and Lady — did not live as affectionately as heretofore; then, after twenty years of union, separation ensued upon the public ground of "incompatibility of temper"—his friends expressing their astonishment how his lordship could have so long endured the pride and caprice of one so lowly born, while hers—but friends! she had no friends!—a few partizans of the "rights of women" there were, who, for the sake of "the cause," defended the woman. She had been all her life too restless for friendship, and when the sensation caused by her separation from her husband had passed away, none of the gay world seemed to remember her existence. Rose and her husband lived, loved, and laboured together. It was astonishing how much good they did, and how much they were beloved by their neighbours. Their names had never been noted in any fashionable register, but it was engraved upon every peasant heart in the district. "As happy as Edward and Rose Lynne," became a proverb; and if any thing was needed to increase the love the one felt for the other, it was perfected by the affection of their children.

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"I think," said the old rector, as they sat round the evening tea-table, "that our school may now vie with any in the diocese—thanks to the two Roses; twin roses they might almost be called, though Rosa hardly equals Rose. I wonder what Mrs. Myles would say if she were to look upon this happy group. Ah dear!—well God is very good to permit such a foretaste of heaven as is met with here." And the benevolent countenance of the good pastor beamed upon the happy family. "I have brought you the weekly paper," he continued; "the Saturday paper. I had not time to look at it myself, but here it is. Now, Edward, read us the news." The farther people are removed from the busy scenes of life, the more anxious they are to hear of their proceedings; and Edward read leading articles, debates, reviews, until, under the head of "Paris," he read as follows — "Considerable sensation has been excited here by the sudden death of the beautiful Lady —."

Rose screamed, and the paper trembled in Edward's hand. "This is too horrid," he said.

"Do let me hear it all!" exclaimed his wife.

It was many minutes before Edward Lynne could tell her, that there was more than an insinuation, that, wearied of existence, she, the brilliant, the beautiful, the *fortunate* Lady —, wearied of life, had abridged it herself.

Before they separated that evening, the Holy Word was read with more than usual feeling and solemnity by Mr. Stokes, and yet he could not read as much as usual. "All flesh is grass," brought tears into his eyes. His prayer that all might long enjoy the perpetual feast of a contented mind, was echoed by every heart; and the gratitude all felt for God's goodness to them was mingled with regret for Helen; all intermediate time was forgotten, and the elders of that little party only remembered the bright and beautiful girl, the pride of Abbeyweld.

"God bless my beloved pupil!" said the venerable clergyman, as he departed; "without a holy grace all is indeed vanity. May Rosa learn, as early as her mother did, that

'ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.'

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THERE IS NO HURRY.

CHAPTER I.

I do not tell you whether the village of Repton, where the two brothers, John and Charles Adams, originally resided, is near or far from London: it is a pretty village to this day; and when John Adams, some five-and-thirty years ago, stood on the top of Repton Hill and looked down upon the houses—the little church, whose simple gate was flanked by two noble yew trees, beneath whose branches he had often sat—the murmuring river in which he had often fished—the cherry orchards, where the ripe fruit hung like balls of coral; when he looked down upon all these dear domestic sights—for so every native of Repton considered them—John Adams might have been supposed to question if he had acted wisely in selling to his brother Charles the share of the well-cultivated farm, which had been equally divided at their father's death. It extended to the left of the spot on which he was standing, almost within a ring fence; the meadows, fresh shorn of their produce, and fragrant with the perfume of new hay—the crops full of promise, and the lazy cattle laving themselves in the standing pond of the abundant farmyard; in a paddock, set apart for his especial use, was the old blind horse his father had bestrode during the last fifteen years of his life; it leant its sightless head upon the gate, half up-turned, he fancied, to where he stood. It is wonderful what small things will sometimes stir up the hearts of strong men, ay, and what is still more difficult, even of ambitious men. Yet he did not feel at that moment a regret for the fair acres he had parted with; he was full of the importance which the possession of a considerable sum of money gives a young man, who has been fagging almost unsuccessfully in an arduous profession, and one which requires a certain appearance of success to command success—for John Adams even then placed M.D. after his plain name; yet still, despite the absence of sorrow, and the consciousness of increased power, he continued to look at poor old Ball until his eyes swam in tears.

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With the presence of his father, which the sight of the old horse had conjured up, came the remembrance of his peculiarities, his habits, his expressions; and he wondered, as they passed in review before him, how he could ever have thought the dear old man testy or tedious; even his frequent quotations from "Poor Richard" appeared to him, for the first time, the results of common prudence; and his rude but wise rhyme, when, in the joy of his heart, he told his father he had absolutely received five guineas as one fee from an ancient dame who had three middle-aged daughters (he had not, however, acquainted his father with *that* fact,) came more forcibly to his memory than it had ever done to his ear—

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"For want and age save while you may,
No morning sun shines all the day."

He repeated the last line over and over again, as his father had done; but as his "morning sun" was at that moment shining, it is not matter of astonishment that the remembrance was evanescent, and that it did not make the impression upon him his father had desired *long* before.

A young, unmarried, handsome physician, with about three thousand pounds in his pocket, and "good expectations," might be excused for building "des chateaux en Espagne." A very wise old lady said once to me—"Those who have none on earth may be forgiven for building them in the air; but those who have them on earth should be content therewith." Not so, however, was John Adams; he built and built, and then by degrees descended to the realities of his position. What power would not that three thousand pounds give him! He wondered if Dr. Lee would turn his back upon him now when they met in consultation; and Mr. Chubb, the county apothecary, would he laugh and ask him if he could read his own prescriptions? Then he recurred to a dream—for it was so vague at that time as to be little more—whether it would not be better to abandon altogether country practice, and establish himself in the metropolis—London. A thousand pounds, advantageously spent, with a few introductions, would do a great deal in London, and that was not a third of what he had. And this great idea banished all remembrance of the past, all sense of the present—the young aspirant thought only of the future.

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CHAPTER II.

Five years have passed. Dr. John Adams was "settled" in a small "showy" house in the vicinity of Mayfair; he had, the world said, made an excellent match. He married a very pretty girl, "highly connected," and was considered to be possessed of personal property, because, for so young a physician, Dr. Adams lived in "a superior style." His brother Charles was still residing in the old farm-house, to which, beyond the mere keeping it in repair, he had done but little, except, indeed, adding a wife to his establishment—a very gentle, loving, yet industrious girl, whose dower was too small to have been her only attraction. Thus both brothers might be said to be fairly launched in life.

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It might be imagined that Charles Adams, having determined to reside in his native village, and remain, what his father and grandfather had been, a simple gentleman farmer, and that rather on a small than a large scale, was altogether without that feeling of ambition which stimulates exertion and elevates the mind. Charles Adams had quite enough of this—which may be said, like fire, to be "a good servant, but a bad master"—but he made it subservient to the dictates of prudence—and a forethought, the gift, perhaps, that, above all others, we should most earnestly covet for those whose prosperity we would secure. To save his brother's portion of the freehold from going into the hands of strangers, he incurred a debt; and wisely—while he gave to his land all that was necessary to make it yield its increase—he abridged all other expenses, and was ably seconded in this by his wife, who *resolved*, until principal and interest were discharged, to live quietly and carefully. Charles contended that every appearance made beyond a man's means was

an attempted fraud upon the public; while John shook his head, and answered that it might do very well for Charles to say so, as no one expected the sack that brought the grain to market to be of fine Holland, but that no man in a profession could get on in London without making "an appearance." At this Charles shrugged his shoulders, and thanked God he lived at Repton.

The brothers, as years moved rapidly on—engaged as they were by their mutual industry and success in their several fields of action—met but seldom. It was impossible to say which of the two continued the most prosperous. Dr. Adams made several lucky hits; and having so obtained a position, was fortunate in having an abundance of patients in an intermediate sort of state—that is, neither very well nor very ill. Of a really bland and courteous nature, he was kind and attentive to all, and it was certain that such of his patients as were only in moderate circumstances, got well long before those who were rich; his friends attributed this to his humanity as much as to his skill; his enemies said he did not like "poor patients." Perhaps there was a mingling of truth in both statements. The money he had received for his portion of the land was spent, certainly, before his receipts equalled his expenditure; and strangely enough, by the time the farmer had paid off his debt, the doctor was involved, not to a large amount, but enough to render his "appearance" to a certain degree fictitious. This embarrassment, to do him justice, was not of long continuance; he became the fashion; and before prosperity had turned his head by an influx of wealth, so as to render him careless, he got rid of his debt, and then his wife agreed with him "that they might live as they pleased."

It so happened that Charles Adams was present when this observation was made, and it spoke well for both the brothers that their different positions in society had not in the smallest degree cooled their boyhood's affection; not even the money transactions of former times, which so frequently create disunion, had changed them; they met less frequently, but they always met with pleasure, and separated with regret.

"Well!" exclaimed the doctor triumphantly, as he glanced around his splendid rooms, and threw himself into a *chaise longue*—then a new luxury—"well, it is certainly a charming feeling to be entirely out of debt."

"And yet," said his wife, "it would not be wise to confess it in our circle."

"Why?" inquired Charles.

"Because it would prove that we had been in it," answered the lady.

"At all events," said John, "now I shall not have to reproach myself with every extra expense, and think I ought to pay my debts first; now I may live exactly as I please."

"I do not think so," said Charles.

"Not think so!" repeated Mrs. Adams in a tone of astonishment.

"Not think so!" exclaimed John; "do I not make the money myself?"

"Granted, my dear fellow; to be sure you do," said Charles.

"Then why should I not spend it as pleases me best? Is there any reason why I should not?"

As if to give the strongest dramatic effect to Charles's opinion, the nurse at that moment opened the drawing-room door, and four little laughing children rushed into the room.

"There—are four reasons against your spending your income exactly as you please; unless, indeed, part of your plan be to provide for them," answered Charles very seriously.

"I am sure," observed Mrs. Adams, with the half-offended air of a weak woman when she hears the truth, "John need not be told his duty to his children; he has always been a most affectionate father."

"A father may be fond and foolish," said Charles, who was peculiarly English in his mode of giving an opinion. "For my part, I could not kiss my little Mary and Anne when I go to bed at night, if I did not feel I had already formed an accumulating fund for their future support—a support they will need all the more when their parents are taken from them, as they must be, in the course of time."

"They must marry," said Mrs. Adams.

"That is a chance," replied Charles; "women hang on hands now-a-days. At all events, by God's blessing, I am resolved that, if they are beauties, they shall never be forced by poverty to accept unworthy matches; if they are plain, they shall have enough to live upon without husbands."

"That is easy enough for you, Charles," said the doctor, "who have had your broad acres to support you, and no necessity for expenditure or show of any kind; who might go from Monday morning till Saturday night in home-spun, and never give any thing beyond home-brewed and gooseberry wine, with a chance bottle of port to your visitors—while I, Heaven help me! was obliged to dash in a well-appointed equipage, entertain, and appear to be doing a great deal in my profession, when a guinea would pine in solitude for a week together in my pocket."

"I do not want to talk with you of the past, John," said Charles; "our ideas are more likely to agree now than they were ten or twelve years ago; I will speak of the future and present. You are now out of debt, in the very prime of life, and in the receipt of a splendid income; but do not, let me entreat you, spend it as it comes; lay by something for those children; provide for them either by insurance, or some of the many means that are open to us all. Do not, my dear brother, be betrayed by health, or the temptation for display, to live up to an income the nature of which is so essentially precarious."

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"Really," murmured Mrs. Adams, "you put one into very low spirits."

Charles remained silent, waiting his brother's reply.

"My dear Charles," he said at last, "there is a great deal of truth in what you say—certainly a great deal; but I cannot change my style of living, strange as it may seem. If I did, I should lose my practice. And then I must educate my children; *that* is an imperative duty, is it not?"

"Certainly it is; it is a *part* of the provision I have spoken of, but not the whole—a portion only. If you have the means to do both, it is your duty to do both; and you *have* the means. Nay, my dear sister, do not seem angry or annoyed with me; it is for the sake of your children I speak; it is to prevent their ever knowing practically what we do know theoretically—that the world is a hard world; hard and unfeeling to those who need its aid. It is to prevent the possibility of their feeling *a reverse*."

Mrs. Adams burst into tears, and walked out of the room. Charles was convinced that *she* would not uphold his opinion.

"Certainly," said John, "I intend to provide for my children; but *there is no hurry*, and"—

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"There should be no hesitation in the case," interrupted Charles; "every man *intends* to provide for his children. God forbid that I should imagine any man to be sufficiently wicked to say—I have been the means of bringing this child into existence—I have brought it up in the indulgence of all the luxuries with which I indulged myself; and now I intend to withdraw them all from it, and leave it to fight its own way through the world. No man could look on the face of the innocent child nestling in your bosom and say *that*; but if you do not appropriate a portion of the means you possess to save that child from the 'hereafter,' you act as if you had resolved so to cast it on the wild waters of a turbulent world."

"But, Charles, I intend to do all that you counsel; no wonder poor Lucy could not bear these words, when I, your own and only brother, find them stern and reproachful; no wonder that such should be the case; of course I *intend* to provide for my children."

"Then DO IT," said Charles.

"Why, so I will; but cannot in a moment. I have already said there is no hurry. You must give a little time."

"The time may come, my dear John, when TIME will give you no time. You have been spending over and above your debt—more than, as the father of four children, you have any right to spend. The duty parents owe their children in this respect has preyed more strongly on my mind than usual, as I have been called on lately to witness its effects—to see its misery. One family at Repton, a family of eight children, has been left entirely without provision, by a man who enjoyed a situation of five hundred a-year in quarterly payments."

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"That man is, however, guiltless. What could he save out of five hundred a-year? How could he live on less?" replied the doctor.

"Live upon four, and insure his life for the benefit of those children. Nay," continued Charles, in the vehemence of his feelings, "the man who does not provide means of existence for his helpless children, until they are able to provide for themselves, cannot be called a reasonable person; and the legislature ought to oblige such to contribute to a fund to prevent the spread of the worst sort of pauperism—that which comes upon well-born children from the carelessness or selfishness of their parents. God in his wisdom, and certainly in his mercy, removed the poor broken-hearted widow of the person I alluded to a month after his death; and the infant, whose nourishment from its birth had been mingled with bitterness, followed in a few days. I saw myself seven children crowd round the coffin that was provided by charity; I saw three taken to the workhouse, and the elder four distributed amongst kind-hearted hard-working people, who are trying to inure the young soft hands, accustomed to silken idleness, to the toils of homely industry. I ask you, John Adams, how the husband of that woman, the father of those children, can meet his God, when it is required of him to give an account of his stewardship?"

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"It is very true—very shocking indeed," observed Dr. Adams. "I certainly will do something to secure my wife and children from the possibility of any thing like *that*, although, whatever were to happen to me, I am sure Lucy's family would prevent"—

Charles broke in upon the sentence his brother found it difficult to complete—"And can you expect distant or even near relatives to perform what you, whose duty it is, neglect? Or would you leave those dear ones to the bitterness of dependence, when, by the sacrifice or curtailment

of those luxurious habits which, if not closely watched, increase in number, and at last become necessities, you could leave them in comfort and independence! We all hope for the leisure of a death-bed—awful enough, come as it may—awful, even when beyond its gloom we see the risen Sun of Righteousness in all his glory—awful, though our faith be strong in Him who is our strength; but if the consciousness of having neglected those duties which we were sent on earth to perform be with us then, dark, indeed, will be the Valley of the Shadow of Death. I do not want, however, to read a homily, my dear brother, but to impress a truth; and I do hope that you will prevent the possibility of these dear children feeling what they must feel, enduring what they must endure, if *you* passed into another world without performing your duty towards them, and through them to society, in this."

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Mrs. Adams met her brother-in-law that day (people five-and-twenty years ago did dine by day) at dinner, with an air of offence. She was, of course, lady-like and quiet, but it was evident she was displeased. Every thing at table was perfect according to its kind. There was no guest present who was not superior in wealth and position to the doctor himself, and each was quite aware of the fact. Those who climb boldly sometimes take a false step, but at all times make dangerous ones. When Charles looked round upon the splendid plate and stylish servants—when the children were ushered in after dinner, and every tongue was loud in praises of their beauty—an involuntary shudder passed through his heart, and he almost accused himself of selfishness, when he was comforted by the remembrance of the provision made for his own little ones, who were as pretty, as well educated, and as happy in their cheerful country home.

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CHAPTER III.

The next morning he was on his return to Repton, happy in the assurance his brother had given him before they parted, that he would really lay by a large sum for the regular insurance of his life.

"My dear John," said the doctor's wife, "when does the new carriage come home? I thought we were to have had it this week. The old chariot looked so dull to-day, just as you were going out, when Dr. Fitzlane's new chocolate-colour passed; certainly that chocolate-coloured carriage picked out with blue and those blue liveries are very, very pretty."

"Well, Lucy, I think them too gay—the liveries I mean—for an M.D.; quieter colours do best; and as to the new carriage, I had not absolutely ordered it. I don't see why I cannot go on with the jobs; and I almost think I shall do so, and appropriate the money I intended for *my own* carriage to another purpose."

"What purpose?"

"Why, to effect an insurance on my life. There was a great deal of truth in what Charles said the other day, although he said it coarsely, which is not usual with him; but he felt the subject, and I feel it also; so I think of, as I said, going quietly on with the jobs—at all events till next year—and devoting this money to the insurance."

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It is difficult to believe how any woman, situated as Mrs. Adams was, could have objected to a plan so evidently for her advantage and the advantage of her family; but she was one of those who never like to think of the possibility of a reverse of fortune—who thrust care off as long as they can, and who feel more pleasure in being lavish as to the present than in saving for the future.

"I am sure," she answered, in the half-petted half-peevisish tone that evinces a weak mind—"I am sure if any thing was to happen to you, I would break my heart at once, and my family, of course, would provide for the children. I could not bear the idea of reaping any advantage by your death; and really the jobs are so very inferior to what they used to be—and Dr. Leeswor, next door but one, has purchased such a handsome chariot—you have at least twice his practice; and—Why, dear John, you never were in such health; there will be no necessity for this painful insurance. And after you have set up your *own* carriage, you can begin and lay by, and in a few years there will be plenty for the children; and I shall not have the galling feeling that any living thing would profit by your death. Dear John, pray do not think of this painful insurance; it may do very well for a man like your brother—a man with out refinement; but just fancy the mental torture of such a provision."

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Much more Mrs. Adams talked; and the doctor, who loved display, and had no desire to see Dr. Leeswor, his particular rival, or even Dr. Fitzlane, better appointed than himself, felt strongly inclined towards the new carriage, and thought it would certainly be pleasanter to save than to insure, and resolved to begin immediately *after* the purchase of his new equipage.

When persons are very prosperous, a few ten or twenty pounds do not much signify, but the principle of careless expenditure is hard to curb.

Various things occurred to put off the doctor's plan of laying by. Mrs. Adams had an illness, that rendered a residence abroad necessary for a winter or two. The eldest boy must go to Eton. As their mamma was not at home, the little girls were sent to school. Bad as Mrs. Adams's management was, it was better than no management at all. If the doctor had given up his entertainments, his "friends" would have said he was going down in the world, and his patients

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would have imagined him less skilful; besides, notwithstanding his increased expenditure, he found he had ample means, not to lay by, but to spend on without debt or difficulty. Sometimes his promise to his brother would cross his mind, but it was soon dispelled by what he had led himself to believe was the impossibility of attending to it then. When Mrs. Adams returned, she complained that the children were too much for her nerves and strength, and her husband's tenderness induced him to yield his favourite plan of bringing up his girls under his own roof. In process of time two little ones were added to the four, and still his means kept pace with his expenses; in short, for ten years he was a favourite with the class of persons who render favouritism fortune. It is impossible, within the compass of a tale, to trace the minutiae of the brothers' history; the children of both were handsome, intelligent, and in the world's opinion, well educated; John's eldest daughter was one amongst a thousand for beauty of mind and person; hers was no glaring display of figure or information. She was gentle, tender, and affectionate; of a disposition sensitive and attuned to all those rare virtues in her sphere, which form at once the treasures of domestic life and the ornaments of society. She it was who soothed the nervous irritability of her mother's sick chamber and perpetual peevishness, and graced her father's drawing-room by a presence that was attractive to both old and young, from its sweetness and unpretending modesty; her two younger sisters called forth all her tenderness, from the extreme delicacy of their health; but her brothers were even greater objects of solicitude—handsome spirited lads—the eldest waiting for a situation, promised, but not given; the second also waiting for a cadetship; while the youngest was still at Eton. These three young men thought it incumbent on them to evince their belief in their father's prosperity by their expenditure, and accordingly they spent much more than the sons of a professional man ought to spend under any circumstances. Of all waitings, the waiting upon patronage is the most tedious and the most enervating to the waiter. Dr. Adams felt it in all its bitterness when his sons' bills came to be paid; but he consoled himself, also, for his dilatoriness with regard to a provision for his daughters—it was impossible to lay by while his children were being educated; but the moment his eldest sons got the appointments they were promised, he would certainly save, or insure, or do something.

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People who only *talk* about doing "something," generally end by doing "nothing." Another year passed; Mrs. Adams was still an invalid, the younger girls more delicate than ever, the boys waiting, as before, their promised appointments, and more extravagant than ever; and Miss Adams had made a conquest which even her father thought worthy of her.

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The gentleman who had become really attached to this beautiful girl was of a high family, who were sufficiently charmed with the object of his affections to give their full sanction, as far as person and position were concerned; but the prudent father of the would-be bridegroom thought it right to take an early opportunity of waiting upon the doctor, stating his son's prospects, and frankly asking what sum Dr. Adams proposed settling on his daughter. Great, indeed, was his astonishment at the reply—"He should not be able to give his daughter anything *immediately*, but at his death." The doctor, for the first time for many years, felt the bitterness of his *false position*. He hesitated, degraded by the knowledge that he must sink in the opinion of the man of the world by whom he was addressed; he was irritated at his want of available funds being known; and though well aware that the affections of his darling child were bound up in the son of the very gentlemanly but most prudent person who sat before him, he was so high and so irritable in his bearing, that the fathers parted, not in anger, but in any thing but good feeling.

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Sir Augustus Barry was not slow to set before his son the disadvantages of a union where the extravagant habits of Miss Adams had no more stable support than her father's life; he argued that a want of forethought in the parents would be likely to produce a want of forethought in the children; and knowing well what could be done with such means as Dr. Adams had had at his command for years, he was not inclined to put a kind construction upon so total a want of the very quality which he considered the best a man could possess; after some delay, and much consideration of the matter, he told his son that he really could not consent to his marriage with a penniless bride. And Dr. Adams, finding that the old gentleman, with a total want of that delicacy which moneyed men do not frequently possess, had spoken of what he termed too truly and too strongly his "heartless" want of forethought, and characterised as a selfishness the indulgence of a love for display and extravagance, when children were to be placed in the world and portioned—insulted the son for the fault of the father, and forbade his daughter to receive him.

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Mary Adams endeavoured to bear this as meekly as she had borne the flattery and the tenderness which had been lavished on her since her birth. The bitter, bitter knowledge that she was considered by her lover's family as a girl who, with the chance of being penniless, lived like a princess, was inconceivably galling; and though she had dismissed her lover, and knew that her father had insulted him, still she wondered how he could so soon forget her, and never write even a line of farewell. From her mother she did not expect sympathy; she was too tender and too proud to seek it; and her father, more occupied than ever, was seldom in his own house. Her uncle, who had not been in town for some years, at last arrived, and was not less struck by the extreme grace and beauty of his niece, than by the deep melancholy which saddened her voice and weighed down her spirits. He was evidently anxious to mention something which made him joyous and happy; and when the doctor entered the library with him, he said, "And may not Mary come in also?" Mary did come in; and her gentle presence subdued her uncle's spirits. "I had meant to tell the intended change in my family only to you, brother John; but it has occurred to me we were all wrong about my niece; they said at home, 'Do not invite my cousin, she is too fine, too gay to come to a country wedding; she would not like it;' but I think, surrounded as she is by

luxuries, that the fresh air of Repton, the fresh flowers, fresh fields, and fresh smiles of her cousins would do my niece good, great good, and we shall be quite gay in our own homely way—the gaiety that upsprings from hearts grateful to the Almighty for his goodness. The fact is, that in about three weeks *my* Mary is to be married to our rector's eldest son! In three weeks. As he is only his father's curate, they could not have afforded to marry for five or six years, if I had not been able to tell down a handsome sum for Mary's fortune; it was a proud thing to be able to make a good child happy by care in time. 'Care in time,' that's my stronghold! How glad we were to look back and think, that while we educated them properly, we denied ourselves to perform our duty to the children God had given to our care. We have not been as *gay* as our neighbours, whose means were less than ours; we could not be so, seeing we had to provide for five children; but our pleasure has been to elevate and render those children happy and prosperous. Mary will be so happy, dear child—so happy! Only think, John, she will be six years the sooner happy from our *care in time!*" This was more than his niece could bear. The good father was so full of his daughter's happiness, and the doctor so overwhelmed with self-reproach—never felt so bitterly as at that moment—that neither perceived the death-like paleness that overspread the less fortunate Mary's face. She got up to leave the room, staggered, and fell at her father's feet.

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"We have murdered her between us," muttered Dr. Adams, while he raised her up; "murdered her; but *I* struck the first blow. God forgive me! God forgive me!"

That night the brothers spent in deep and earnest converse. The certainty of his own prosperity, the self-gratulation that follows a just and careful discharge of duties imposed alike by reason and religion, had not raised Charles above his brother in his own esteem. Pained beyond description at the suffering he had so unconsciously inflicted on his niece—horror-struck at the fact, that thousands upon thousands had been lavished, yet nothing done for hereafter, the hereafter that *must* come, he urged upon John the danger of delay, the uncertainty of life. Circumstances increased his influence. Dr. Adams had been made painfully aware that gilding was not gold. The beauty, position, and talents of his beloved child, although fully acknowledged, had failed to establish her in life. "Look, Charles," he said, after imparting all to his brother, absolutely weeping over the state of uncomplaining but deep sorrow to which his child was reduced, "if I could command the necessary sum, I would to-morrow insure my life for a sum that would place them beyond the possible reach of necessity of any kind."

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"Do not wait for that," was the generous reply of Charles Adams; "I have some unemployed hundreds at this moment. Come with me to-morrow; do not delay a day, no, nor an hour; and take my word for it you will have reason to bless your resolve. Only imagine what would be the case if God called you to give an account of your stewardship." But he checked himself; he saw that more was not necessary; and the brothers separated for a few hours, both anxious for the morning. It was impossible to say which of the two hurried over breakfast with the greatest rapidity. The carriage was at the door; and Dr. Adams left word with his butler that he was gone into the city on urgent business, and would be back in two hours.

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"I don't think," exclaimed Charles, rubbing his hands gleefully, "I don't think, that if my dear niece were happy, I should ever have been so happy in all my life as I am at this moment."

"I feel already," replied John, "as if a great weight were removed from my heart; and were it not for the debt which I have contracted to you—Ah, Charles, I little dreamt, when I looked down from the hill over Repton, and thought my store inexhaustible, that I should be obliged to you thus late in life. And yet I protest I hardly know where I could have drawn in; one expense grows so out of another. These boys have been so very extravagant; but I shall soon have the two eldest off; they cannot keep them much longer waiting."

"Work is better than waiting; but let the lads fight their way; they have had, I suppose, a good education; they ought to have had professions. There is something to me awfully lazy in your 'appointments;' a young man of spirit will appoint himself; but it is the females of a family, brought up, as yours have been, who are to be considered. Women's position in society is changed from what it was some years ago; it was expected that they must marry; and so they were left, before their marriage, dependent upon fathers and brothers, as creatures that could do nothing for themselves. Now, poor things, I really don't know why, but girls do not marry off as they used. They become old, and frequently—owing to the expectation of their settling—without the provision necessary for a comfortable old age. This is the parent of those despicable tricks and arts which women resort to to get married, as they have no acknowledged position independent of matrimony. Something ought to be done to prevent this. And when the country steadies a little from the great revolution of past years, I suppose something may be thought of by improved teaching—and systems to enable women to assist themselves, and be recompensed for the assistance they yield others. Now, imagine your dear girls, those younger ones particularly, deprived of you"—

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"Here is the patient upon whom I must call, *en route*" interrupted the doctor.

The carriage drew up.

"I wish," said Charles, "you had called here on your return. I wanted the insurance to have been your first business to-day."

"I shall not be five minutes," was the reply. The servant let down the step, and the doctor

bounded up towards the open door. In his progress, he trod upon a bit, a mere shred, of orange-peel; it was the mischief of a moment; he slipped, and his temple struck against the sharp column of an iron-scraper. Within one hour, Dr. John Adams had ceased to exist. What the mental and bodily agony of that one hour was, you can better understand than I can describe. He was fully conscious that he was dying—and he knew all the misery that was to follow.

CHAPTER IV.

"Mary my dear niece," said Charles Adams, as he seated himself by her side; "my dear, dear niece, can you fix your thoughts, and give me your attention for half an hour, now that all is over, and the demands of the world press upon us. I want to speak about the future. Your mother bursts into such fits of despair that I can do nothing with her; and your brother is so ungovernable—talks as if he could command the bank of England, and is so full of his mother's connexions and their influence, that I have left him to himself. Can you, my dear Mary, restrain your feelings, and give me your attention?"

Mary Adams looked firmly in her uncle's face, and said, "I will try. I have been thinking and planning all the morning, but I do not know how to begin being useful. If I once began, I could go on. The sooner we are out of this huge expensive house the better; if I could get my mother to go with the little girls to the sea-side. Take her away altogether from this home—take her"—

"Where?" inquired Mr. Adams; "she will not accept shelter in my house."

"I do not know," answered his niece, relapsing into all the helplessness of first grief; "indeed I do not know; her brother-in-law, Sir James Ashbroke, invited her to the Pleasaunce, but my brother objects to her going there, his uncle has behaved so neglectfully about his appointment."

"Foolish boy!" muttered Charles; "this is no time to quarrel about trifles. The fact is, Mary, that the sooner you are all out of this house the better; there are one or two creditors, not for large sums certainly, but still men who will have their money; and if we do not quietly sell off, they will force us. The house might have been disposed of last week by private contract, but your mother would not hear of it, because the person who offered was a medical rival of my poor brother."

Mary did not hear the concluding observation; her eyes wandered from object to object in the room—the harp—the various things known from childhood. "Any thing you and your mother wish, my dear niece," said her kind uncle, "shall be preserved—the family pictures—your harp—your piano—they are all hallowed memorials, and shall be kept sacred."

Mary burst into tears. "I do not," she said, "shrink from considering those instruments the means of my support; but although I know the necessity for so considering, I feel I cannot tell what at quitting the home of my childhood; people are all kind; you, my dear uncle, from whom we expected so little, the kindest of all; but I see, even in these early days of a first sorrow, indications of falling off. My aunt's husband has really behaved very badly about the appointment of my eldest brother; and as to the cadetship for the second—we had such a brief dry letter from our Indian friend—so many first on the list, and the necessity for waiting, that I do not know how it will end."

"I wish, my dear, you could prevail on your mother, and sister, and all, to come to Repton," said Mr. Adams. "If your mother dislikes being in my house, I would find her a cottage near us; I will do all I can. My wife joins me in the determination to think that we have six additional children to look to. We differ from you in our habits; but our hearts and affections are no less true to you all. My Mary and you will be as sisters."

His niece could bear no more kindness. She had been far more bitterly disappointed than she had confessed even to her uncle; and yet the very bitterness of the disappointment had been the first thing that had driven her father's dying wail from her ears—that cry repeated so often and so bitterly in the brief moments left after his accident—"My children! My children!" He had not sufficient faith to commit them to God's mercy; he knew he had not been a faithful steward; and he could not bring himself from the depths of his spiritual blindness to call upon the Fountain that is never dried up to those who would humbly and earnestly partake of its living waters.

It was all a scene as of another world to the young, beautiful, petted, and feted girl; it had made her forget the disappointment of her love, at least for a time. While her brothers dared the thunder-cloud that burst above their heads, her mother and sisters wept beneath its influence. Mary had looked forth, and if she did not hope, she thought, and tried to pray; now, she fell weeping upon her uncle's shoulder; when she could speak, she said, "Forgive me; in a little time I shall be able to conquer this; at present, I am overwhelmed; I feel as if knowledge and sorrow came together; I seem to have read more of human nature within the last three days than in all my past life."

"It all depends, Mary, upon the person you meet," said Mr. Adams, "as upon the book you read; if you choose a foolish book or a bad book, you can expect nothing but vice or foolishness; if you choose a foolish companion, surely you cannot expect kindness or strength." The kind-hearted man repeated to her all he had before said. "I cannot," he added, "be guilty of injustice to my children; but I can merge all my own luxuries into the one of being a father to the fatherless."

But to all the plans of Charles Adams, objections were raised by his eldest nephew and his mother; the youth could not brook the control of a simple straight-minded country man, whose only claim to be considered a gentleman, in his opinion, arose from his connexion with "his family." He was also indignant with his maternal uncle for his broken promise, and these feelings were strengthened by his mother's folly. Two opportunities for disposing of the house and its magnificent furniture were missed; and when Mrs. Adams complained to her nearest and most influential connexions that her brother-in-law refused to make her any allowance unless she consented to live at Repton—expecting that they would be loud in their indignation at his hardness—they advised her by all means to do what he wished, as he was really the only person she had to depend upon. Others were lavish of their sympathy, but sympathy wears out quickly; others invited her to spend a month with them at their country-seat, for change of air; one hinted how valuable Miss Adams' exquisite musical talent would be *now*. Mary coloured, and said, "Yes," with the dignity of proper feeling; but her mother asked the lady what she meant, and a little scene followed, which caused the lady to visit all the families in town of her acquaintance, for the purpose of expressing her sympathy with "those poor dear Adamases, who were so proud, poor things, that really there was nothing hut starvation and the workhouse before them!" Another of those well-meaning persons—strong-minded and kind-hearted, but without a particle of delicacy—came to poor Mary, with all *prestige* of conferring a favour.

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"My dear young lady, it is the commonest thing in the world—very painful but very common; the families of professional men are frequently left without provision. Such a pity!—because, if they cannot save, they can insure. We *all* can do *that*, but they do *not* do it, and consequently everywhere the families of professional men are found in distress; so, as I said, it is common; and I wanted you to suggest to your mother, that, if she would not feel hurt at it, the thing being so common—dear Dr. Adams having been so popular, so very popular—that while every one is talking about him and you all, a very handsome subscription could be got up. I would begin it with a sum large enough to invite still larger. I had a great regard for him—I had indeed."

Mary felt her heart sink and rise, and her throat swell, so that she could not speak. She had brought herself to the determination of employing her talents for her own support, but she was not prepared to come with her family before the world as paupers. "We have no claim upon the public," she said at last. "I am sure you mean us kindly, but we have no claim. My dear father forwarded no public work—no public object; he gave his advice, and received his payment. If we are not provided for, it is no public fault. Besides, my father's children are able and willing to support themselves. I am sure you mean us kindly, but we have no claim upon public sympathy, and an appeal to it would crush us to the earth. I am very glad you did not speak first to my mother. My uncle Charles would not suffer it, even suppose she wished it."

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This friend also departed to excite new speculations as to the pride and poverty of "poor dear Dr. Adams's family." In the world, however—the busy busy London world—it is idle to expect any thing to create even a nine days' wonder. When the house and furniture were at last offered for sale, the feeling was somewhat revived; and Mary, whose beauty, exquisite as it was, had so unobtrusive a character as never to have created a foe, was remembered with tears by many: even the father of her old lover, when he was congratulated by one more worldly-minded than himself on the escape of his son in not marrying a portionless girl, reproved the unfeeling speaker with a wish that he only hoped his son might have as good a wife as Mary Adams would have been.

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CHAPTER V.

The bills were taken down, the house purified from the auction-mob—every thing changed; a new name occupied the doctor's place in the "Court Guide"—and in three months the family seemed as completely forgotten amongst those of whom they once formed a prominent part, as if they had never existed. When one sphere of life closes against a family, they find room in another. Many kind-hearted persons in Mrs. Adams's first circle would have been rejoiced to be of service to her and hers, but they were exactly the people upon whom she had no claim. Of a high but poor family, her relatives had little power. What family so situated ever had any influence beyond what they absolutely needed for themselves? With an ill grace she at last acceded to the kind offer made by Mr. Charles Adams, and took possession of the cottage he fixed upon, until something could be done for his brother's children. In a fit of proud despair the eldest son enlisted into a regiment of dragoons; the second was fortunate enough to obtain a cadetship through a stranger's interference; and his uncle thought it might be possible to get the youngest forward in his father's profession. The expense of the necessary arrangements was severely felt by the prudent and careful country gentleman. The younger girls were too delicate for even the common occupations of daily life; and Mary, instead of receiving the welcome she had been led to expect from her aunt and cousins, felt that every hour she spent at the Grange was an intrusion.

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The sudden death of Dr. Adams had postponed the intended wedding of Charles Adams's eldest daughter; and although her mother agreed that it was their duty to forward the orphan children, she certainly felt, as most affectionate mothers whose hearts are not very much enlarged would feel, that much of their own savings—much of the produce of her husband's hard labour—labour during a series of years when her sister-in-law and her children were enjoying all the luxuries of life—would now be expended for their support; this to an all-sacrificing mother, despite *her sense of the duty of kindness*, was hard to bear. As long as they were not on the spot, she theorised continually, and derived much satisfaction from the sympathising observations of her neighbours,

and was proud, *very* proud, of the praise bestowed upon her husband's benevolence; but when her sister-in-law's expensive habits were in daily array before her (the cottage being close to the Grange,) when she knew, to use her own expression, "that she never put her hand to a single thing;" that she could not live without port wine, when she herself never drank even gooseberry, except on Sundays; never ironed a collar, never dusted the chimney-piece, or ate a shoulder of mutton—roast one day, cold the next, and hashed the third. While each day brought some fresh illustration of her thoughtlessness to the eyes of the wife of the wealthy tiller of the soil, the widow of the physician thought herself in the daily practice of the most rigid self-denial. "I am sure," was her constant observation to her all-patient daughter—"I am sure I never thought it would come to this. I had not an idea of going through so much. I wonder your uncle and his wife can permit me to live in the way I do—they ought to consider how I was brought up." It was in vain Mary represented that they were existing upon charity; that they ought to be most grateful for what they received, coming as it did from those who, in their days of prosperity, professed nothing, while those who professed all things had done nothing. Mary would so reason, and then retire to her own chamber to weep alone over things more hard to bear.

It is painful to observe what bitterness will creep into the heart and manner of really kind girls where a lover is in the case, or even where a common-place dangling sort of flirtation is going forward; this depreciating ill nature, one of the other, is not confined by any means to the fair sex. Young men pick each other to pieces with even more fierceness, but less ingenuity; they deal in a cut-and-hack sort of sarcasm, and do not hesitate to use terms and insinuations of the harshest kind, when a lady is in the case. Mary (to distinguish her from her high-bred cousin, she was generally called Mary Charles) was certainly disappointed when her wedding was postponed in consequence of her uncle's death; but a much more painful feeling followed, when she saw the admiration her lover, Edwin Lechmere, bestowed upon her beautiful cousin. Mary Charles was herself a beauty—fair, open-eyed, warm-hearted—*the* beauty of Repton; but though feature by feature, inch by inch, she was as handsome as Mary, yet in her cousin was the grace and spirit given only by good society; the manners elevated by a higher mind, and toned down by sorrow; a gentle softness, which a keen observer of human nature told me once no woman ever possessed unless she had deeply loved, and suffered from disappointed affection; in short, she was far more refined, far more fascinating, than her country cousin: besides, she was unfortunate, and that at once gave her a hold upon the sympathies of the young curate: it did no more: but Mary Charles did not understand these nice distinctions, and nothing could exceed the change of manner she evinced when her cousin and her betrothed were together.

Mary thought her cousin rude and petulant; but the true cause of the change never occurred to her. Accustomed to the high-toned courtesy of well-bred men, which is so little practised in the middle class of English society, it never suggested itself, that placing her chair, or opening the door for her to go out, or rising courteously when she came into a room, was more than, as a lady, she had a right to expect; in truth, she did not notice it at all; but she did notice and feel deeply her cousin's alternate coldness and snappishness of manner. "I would not," thought Mary, "have behaved so to her if she had been left desolate; but in a little time, when my mother is more content, I will leave Repton, and become independent by my talents." Never did she think of the power delegated to her by, the Almighty without feeling herself raised—ay, higher than she had ever been in the days of her splendour—in the scale of moral usefulness; as every one must feel whose mind is rightly framed. She had not yet known what it was to have her abilities trampled on or insulted; she had never experienced the bitterness consequent upon having the acquirements—which in the days of her prosperity commanded silence and admiration—sneered at or openly ridiculed.—She had yet to learn that the Solons, the law-givers of English society, lavish their attentions and praise upon those who learn, not upon those who teach.

Mary had not been six months fatherless, when she was astonished, first by a letter, and then by a visit, from her former lover; he came to renew his engagement, and to wed her even then if she would have him; but Mary's high principle was stronger than he imagined. "No," she said, "you are not independent of your father, and whatever I feel, I have no right to draw *you* down into poverty. You may fancy now that you could bear it; but a time would come—if not to you, to me—when the utter selfishness of such conduct would goad me to a death of early misery." The young man appealed to her uncle, who thought her feelings overstrained, but respected her for it nevertheless; and in the warmth of his admiration, he communicated the circumstance to his wife and daughter.

"Refuse her old lover under present circumstances," repeated her cousin to herself as she left the room; "there must be some other reason than that; she could not be so foolish as to reject such an offer at such a time." Unfortunately, she saw Edwin Lechmere walking by Mary's side, under the shadow of some trees. She watched them until the foliage screened them from her sight, and then she shut herself into her own room, and yielded to a long and violent burst of tears. "It is not enough," she exclaimed, in the bitterness of her feelings, "that the comforts of my parents' declining years should be abridged by the overwhelming burden to their exertions—another family added to their own; it is not enough that an uncomfortable feeling has grown between my father and mother on this account, and that cold looks and sharp words have come where they never came before, but my peace of mind must be destroyed. Gladly would I have taken a smaller portion, if I could have kept the affections which I see but too plainly my cousin has stolen from me. And my thoughtless aunt to say, only yesterday, that 'at all events her husband was no man's enemy but his own.' Has not his want of prudent forethought been the ruin of his own children? and will my parents ever recover the anxiety, the pain, the sacrifices, brought on by one man's

culpable neglect? Oh, uncle! if you could look from your grave upon the misery you have caused!"—and then, exhausted by her own emotion, the affectionate but jealous girl began to question herself as to what she should do. After what she considered mature deliberation, she made up her mind to upbraid her cousin with treachery, and she put her design into execution that same evening.

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It was no easy matter to oblige her cousin to understand what she meant; but at last the declaration that she had refused her old lover because she had placed her affections upon Edwin Lechmere, whom she was endeavouring to "entrap," was not to be mistaken; and the country girl was altogether unprepared for the burst of indignant feeling, mingled with much bitterness, which repelled the untruth. A strong fit of hysterics, into which Mary Charles worked herself, was terminated by a scene of the most painful kind, her father being upbraided by her mother with "loving other people's children better than his own," while the curate himself knelt by the side of his betrothed, assuring her of his unaltered affection. From such a scene Miss Adams hastened with a throbbing brow and a bursting heart. She had no one to counsel or console her; no one to whom she could apply for aid. For the first time since she had experienced her uncle's tenderness, she felt she had been the means of disturbing his domestic peace; the knowledge of the burden she and hers were considered, weighed her to the earth; and in a paroxysm of anguish she fell on her knees, exclaiming, "Oh, why are the dependent born into the world! Father, father, why did you leave us, whom you so loved, to such a fate!" And then she reproached herself for having uttered a word reflecting on his memory. One of the every-day occurrences of life—so common as to be hardly observed—is to find really kind, good-natured people not "weary of well-doing." "Oh, really I was worn out with so-and-so; they are so decidedly unfortunate that it is impossible to help them," is a general excuse for deserting those whose continuing misfortunes ought to render them greater objects of sympathy.

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Mr. Charles Adams was, as has been shown in our little narrative, a kind-hearted man. Estranged as his brother and himself had been for a number of years, he had done much to forward, and still more to protect, his children. At first, this was a pleasure; but somehow his "benevolence," and "kindness," and "generosity," had been so talked about, so eulogised, and he had been so seriously inconvenienced by the waywardness of his nephews, the thoughtless pride of his sister-in-law, the helplessness of his younger nieces, as to feel seriously oppressed by his responsibility. And now the one who had never given him aught but pleasure, seemed, according to his daughter's representations, to be the cause of increased sorrow, the destroyer of his dear child's happiness. What to do he could not tell. His daughter, wrought upon by her own jealousy, had evinced, under its influence, so much temper she had never displayed before, that it seemed more than likely the cherished match would be broken off. His high-minded niece saved him any farther anxiety as far as she was concerned. She sent for and convinced him fully and entirely of her total freedom from the base design imputed to her. "Was it likely," she said, "that I should reject the man I love lest I should drag him into poverty, and plunge at once with one I do not care for into the abyss I dread? This is the common sense view of the case; but there is yet another. Is it to be borne that I would seek to rob *your* child of her happiness? The supposition is an insult too gross to be endured. I will leave my mother to-morrow. An old school-fellow, older and more fortunate than myself, wished me to educate her little girl. I had one or two strong objections to living in her house; but the desire to be independent and away has overcome them." She then, with many tears, entreated her uncle still to protect her mother; urged how she had been sorely tried; and communicated fears, she had reason to believe were too well founded, that her eldest brother, feeling the reverse more than he could bear, had deserted from his regiment.

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Charles Adams was deeply moved by the nobleness of his niece, and reproved his daughter more harshly than he had ever done before, for the feebleness that created so strong and unjust a passion. This had the contrary effect to what he had hoped for: she did not hesitate to say that her cousin had endeavoured to rob her both of the affection of her lover and her father. The injured cousin left Repton bowed beneath an accumulation of troubles, not one of which was of her own creating, not one of which she deserved; and all springing from the unproviding nature of him who, had he been asked the question, would have declared himself ready to sacrifice his own life for the advantage of that daughter, now compelled to work for her own bread. To trace the career of Mary Adams in her new calling, would be to repeat what I have said before. The more refined, the more informed the governess, the more she suffers. Being with one whom she had known in better days, made it even more hard to bend; yet she did her duty, and *that* is one of the highest privileges a woman can enjoy.

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CHAPTER VI.

Leaving Mary for a moment, let us return to Repton. Here discord, having once entered, was making sad ravages, and all were suffering from it. It was but too true that the eldest of the Adamses had deserted; his mother clinging with a parent's fondness to her child, concealed him, and thus offended Charles Adams beyond all reconciliation. The third lad, who was walking the London hospitals, and exerting himself beyond his strength, was everything that a youth could be; but his declining health was represented to his uncle, by one of those whom his mother's pride had insulted, as a cloak for indolence. In short, before another year had quite passed, the family of the once rich and fashionable Dr. Adams had shared the fate of all dependents—worn out the benevolence, or patience, or whatever it really is, of their "best friends." Nor was this the only consequence of the physician's neglect of a duty due alike to God and society; his brother had really done so much for the bereaved family, as to give what the world called "just grounds"

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to Mrs. Charles Adams's repeated complaints, "that now her husband was ruining his industrious family to keep the lazy widow of his spend-thrift brother and her favourite children in idleness. Why could she not live upon the 'fine folk' she was always throwing in her face?" The daughter, too, of whose approaching union the fond father had been so proud, was now, like her cousin whom she had wronged by her mean suspicions, deserted; the match broken off after much bickering; one quarrel having brought on another, until they separated by mutual consent. Her temper and her health were both materially impaired; and her beauty was converted into hardness and acidity.

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Oh! how utterly groundless is the idea, that in our social state, where one human being must so much depend upon another, any man, neglecting his positive duties, can be called only "his own enemy." What misery had not Dr. Adams's neglect entailed, not alone on his immediate family, but on that of his brother. Besides, there were ramifications of distress; he died even more embarrassed than his brother had at first believed, and some trades-people were consequently embarrassed; but the deep misery fell upon his children. Meanwhile, Mrs. Dr. Adams had left Repton with her younger children, to be the dependants of Mary in London.

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It was not until a fatal disease had seized upon her mother, that Mary ventured to appeal again to her uncle's generosity. "My second brother," she said, "has out of his small means remitted her five pounds. My eldest brother seems altogether to have disappeared from amongst us; finding that his unhappy presence had occasioned so fatal a separation between his mother and you—a disunion which I saw was the effect of many small causes, rather than one great one—he left us, and we cannot trace him. This has broken my poor mother's heart; he was the cherished one of all her children. My youngest brother has been for the last month an inmate of one of the hospitals which my poor father attended for so many years, and where his word was law. My sister Rosa, she upon whom my poor father poured, if possible, more of his affection than he bestowed upon me—my lovely sister, of whom, even in our poverty, I was so proud—so young, only upon the verge of womanhood—has, you already know, left us. Would to God it had been for her grave, rather than her destroyer!—a fellow-student of that poor youth, who, if he dreamt of her dishonour, would stagger like a spectre from what will be his death-bed to avenge her. Poverty is one of the surest guides to dishonour; those who have not been tempted know nothing of it. It is one thing to see it, another to feel it. Do not think her altogether base, because she had not the strength of a heroine. I have been obliged to resign my situation to attend my mother, and the only income we have is what I earn by giving lessons on the harp and piano. I give, for *two shillings*, the same instruction for which my father paid half a guinea a lesson; if I did not I should have no pupils. It is more than a month since my mother left her bed; and my youngest sister, bending beneath increased delicacy of health, is her only attendant. I know her mind to be so tortured, and her body so convulsed by pain, that I have prayed to God to render her fit for Heaven, and take her from her sufferings. Imagine the weight of sorrow that crushed me to my knees with such a petition as that. I know all you have done, and yet I ask you now, in remembrance of the boyish love that bound you and my father together, to lessen her bodily anguish by the sacrifice of a little more; that she, nursed in the lap of luxury, may not pass from life with starvation as her companion. My brother's gift is expended; and during the last three weeks I have earned but twelve shillings; my pupils are out of town. Do, for a moment remember what I was, and think how humbled I must be to frame this supplication; but it is a child that petitions for a parent, and I know I have never forfeited your esteem. In a few weeks, perhaps in a few days, my brother and my mother will meet my poor father face to face. Oh! that I could be assured that reproach and bitterness for the past do not pass the portals of the grave. Forgive me this, as you have already forgiven me much. Alas! I know too well that our misfortunes drew misfortunes upon others. I was the unhappy but innocent cause of much sorrow at the Grange; but, oh! do not refuse the *last* request that I will ever make." The letter was blotted by tears.

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Charles Adams was from home when it arrived, and his wife, knowing the handwriting, and having made a resolution never to open a letter "from that branch of the family," did not send it after her husband "lest it might tease him." Ten days elapsed before he received it; and when he did, he could not be content with writing, but lost not a moment in hastening to the address. Irritated and disappointed that what he really had done should have been so little appreciated, when every hour of his life he was smarting in one way or other from his exertions—broken-hearted at his daughter's blighted health and happiness—angered by the reckless wildness of one nephew, and what he believed was the idleness of another—and convinced that Rosa's fearful step was owing to the pampering and mismanagement of her foolish mother—Charles Adams satisfied himself that, as he did not hear to the contrary from Mary, all things were going on well, or at least not ill. He thought as little about them as he possibly could, no people in the world being so conveniently forgotten (when they are not importunate) as poor relations; but the letter of his favourite niece spoke strongly to his heart, and in two hours after his return home he set forth for the London suburb from whence the letter was dated. It so chanced, that to get to that particular end of the town, he was obliged to pass the house his brother had occupied so splendidly for a number of years; the servants had lit the lamps, and were drawing the curtains of the noble dining-room; and a party of ladies were descending from a carriage, which prevented two others from setting down. It looked like old times. "Some one else," thought Charles Adams, "running the same career of wealth and extravagance. God grant it may not lead to the same results!" He paused, and looked up the front of the noble mansion; the drawing-room windows were open, and two beautiful children were standing on an ottoman placed between the windows, probably to keep them apart. He thought of Mary's childhood, and how she was occupied at that moment, and hastened onward. There are times when life seems one mingled dream, and it is not

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easy to become dispossessed of the idea when some of its frightful changes are brought almost together under our view.

"Is Miss Adams at home?" inquired her uncle of a woman leaning against the door of a miserable house.

"I don't know; she went to the hospital this morning; but I'm not sure she's in; it's the second pair back; it's easy known, for the sob has not ceased in that room these two nights; some people do take on so"—

Charles Adams did not hear the concluding sentence, but sought the room; the door would not close, and he heard a low sobbing sound from within; he paused, but his step had aroused the mourner—"Come in, Mary; come in; I know how it is," said a young voice; "he is dead; one grave for mother and son—one grave for mother and son! I see your shadow, dark as it is; have you brought a candle? It is very fearful to be alone with the dead—even one's own mother—in the dark."

[pg 193] Charles Adams entered the room; but his sudden appearance in the twilight, and evidently not knowing him, overcame the girl, his youngest niece, so much, that she screamed, and fell on her knees by her mother's corpse. He called for lights, and was speedily obeyed, for he put a piece of gold in the woman's hand. She turned it over, and as she hastened from the room, muttered, "If this had come sooner, she'd not have died of starvation or burdened the parish for a shroud; it's hard the rich can't look to their own."

When Mary returned, she was fearfully calm. "No, her brother was not dead," she said; "the young were longer dying than those whom the world had worn out; the young knew so little of the world, they thought it hard to leave it;" and she took off her bonnet, and sat down; and while her uncle explained why he had not written, she looked at him with eyes so fixed and cold, that he paused, hoping she would speak, so painful was their stony expression; but she let him go on, without offering one word of assurance of any kind feeling or remembrance; and when she stooped to adjust a portion of the coarse plaiting of the shroud—that mockery of "the purple and fine linen of living days"—her uncle saw that her hair, her luxuriant hair, was striped with white.

[pg 194] "There is no need for words now," she said at last; "no need. I thought you would have sent; she required but little—but very little; the dust rubbed from the gold she once had would have been riches: but the little she did require she had not, and so she died; but what weighs heaviest upon my mind was her calling so continually on my father, to know *why* he had deserted her: she attached no blame latterly to any one, only called day and night upon him. Oh! it was hard to bear—it was very hard to bear."

"I will send a proper person in the morning to arrange that she may be placed with my brother," said Charles.

Mary shrieked almost with the wildness of a maniac. "No, no; as far from him as possible! Oh! not with him! She was to blame in our days of splendour as much as he was; but she could not see it; and I durst not reason with her. Not with him! *She would disturb him in his grave!*"

Her uncle shuddered, while the young girl sobbed in the bitter wailing tone their landlady complained of.

"No," resumed Mary, "let the parish bury her; even its officers were kind; and if you bury her, or they, it is still a pauper's funeral. I see all these things clearly now; death, while it closes the eyes of some, opens the eyes of others; it has opened mine."

[pg 195] But why should I prolong this sad story. It is not the tale of one, but of many. There are dozens, scores, hundreds of instances of the same kind, *arising from the same cause*, in our broad islands. In the lunatic asylum, where that poor girl, even Mary Adams, has found refuge during the past two years, there are many cases of insanity arising from change of circumstances, where a fifty pounds' insurance would have set such maddening distress at defiance. I know that her brother died in the hospital within a few days; and the pale, sunken-eyed girl, whose damp yellow hair and thin white hand are so eagerly kissed by the gentle maniac when she visits her, month by month, is the youngest, and, I believe, the *last* of her family, at least the last in England. Oh, that those who foolishly boast that their actions only affect themselves, would look carefully abroad, and if they doubt what I have faithfully told, examine into the causes which crowd the world with cases even worse than I have here recorded!

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