Title: The Vicissitudes of Bessie Fairfax

Author: Holme Lee

Release date: November 17, 2005 [EBook #17086]
Most recently updated: December 12, 2020

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Bruce Albrecht, Martin Pettit and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at https://www.pgdp.net

THE

VICISSITUDES

OF

BESSIE FAIRFAX.

A NOVEL.

BY

HOLME LEE

(MISS HARRIET PARR),

AUTHOR OF "SYLVAN HOLT'S DAUGHTER," "KATHIE BRAND," ETC.

"Not what we could wish, but what we must even put up with."

PHILADELPHIA:

PORTER & COATES.

CONTENTS.

THE

Vicissitudes of Bessie Fairfax.

CHAPTER I.

HER BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

The years have come and gone at Beechhurst as elsewhere, but the results of time and change seem to have almost passed it by. Every way out of the scattered forest-town is still through beautiful forest-roads—roads that cleave grand avenues, traverse black barren heaths, ford shallow rivers, and climb over ferny knolls whence the sea is visible. The church is unrestored, the parsonage is unimproved, the long low house opposite is still the residence of Mr. Carnegie, the local doctor, and looks this splendid summer morning precisely as it looked in the splendid summer mornings long ago, when Bessie Fairfax was a little girl, and lived there, and was very happy.

Bessie was not akin to the doctor. Her birth and parentage were on this wise. Her father was Geoffry, the third and youngest son of Mr. Fairfax of Abbotsmead in Woldshire. Her mother was Elizabeth, only child of the Reverend Thomas Bulmer, vicar of Kirkham. Their marriage was a love-match, concluded when they had something less than the experience of forty years between them. The gentleman had his university debts besides to begin life with, the lady had nothing. As the shortest way to a living he went into the Church, and the birth of their daughter was contemporary with Geoffry's ordination. His father-in-law gave him a title for orders, and a lodging under his roof, and Mr. Fairfax grudgingly allowed his son two hundred a year for a maintenance.

The young couple were lively and handsome. They had done a foolish thing, but their friends agreed to condone their folly. Before very long a south-country benefice, the rectory of Beechhurst, was put in Geoffry's way, and he gayly removed with his wife and child to that desirable home of their own. They were poor, but they were perfectly contented. Nature is

sometimes very kind in making up to people for the want of fortune by an excellent gift of good spirits and good courage. She was very kind in this way to Geoffry Fairfax and his wife Elizabeth; so kind that everybody wondered with great amazement what possessed that laughing, rosy woman to fall off in health, and die soon after the birth of a second daughter, who died also, and was buried in the same grave with her mother.

The rector was a cheerful exemplification of the adage that man is not made to live alone. He wore the willow just long enough for decency, and then married again—married another pretty, portionless young woman of no family worth mentioning. This reiterated indiscretion caused a breach with his father, and the slender allowance that had been made him was resumed. But his new wife was good to his little Bessie, and Abbotsmead was a long way off.

There were no children of this second marriage, which was lucky; for three years after, the rector himself died, leaving his widow as desolate as a clergyman's widow, totally unprovided for, can be. She had never seen any member of her husband's family, and she made no claim on Mr. Fairfax, who, for his part, acknowledged none. Bessie's near kinsfolk on her mother's side were all departed this life; there was nobody who wanted the child, or who would have regarded her in any light but an incumbrance. The rector's widow therefore kept her unquestioned; and being a woman of much sense and little pride, she moved no farther from the rectory than to a cottage-lodging in the town, where she found some teaching amongst the children of the small gentry, who then, as now, were its main population.

It was hard work for meagre reward, and perhaps she was not sorry to exchange her mourning-weeds for bride-clothes again when Mr. Carnegie asked her; for she was of a dependent, womanly character, and the doctor was well-to-do and well respected, and ready with all his heart to give little Bessie a home. The child was young enough when she lost her own parents to lose all but a reflected memory of them, and cordially to adopt for a real father and mother those who so cordially adopted her.

Still, she was Bessie Fairfax, and as the doctor's house grew populous with children of his own, Bessie was curtailed of her indulgences, her learning, her leisure, and was taught betimes to make herself useful. And she did it willingly. Her temper was loving and grateful, and Mrs. Carnegie had her recompense in Bessie's unstinting helpfulness during the period when her own family was increasing year by year; sometimes at the rate of one little stranger, and sometimes at the rate of twins. The doctor received his blessings with a welcome, and a brisk assurance to his wife that the more they were the merrier. And neither Mrs. Carnegie nor Bessie presumed to think otherwise; though seven tiny trots under ten years old were a sore handful; and seven was the number Bessie kept watch and ward over like a fairy godmother in the doctor's nursery, when her own life had attained to no more than the discretion and philosophy of fifteen. The chief of them were boys—boys on the plan of their worthy father; five boys with excellent lungs and indefatigable stout legs; and two little girls no whit behind their brothers for voluble chatter and restless agility. Nobody complained, however. They had their health—that was one mercy; there was enough in the domestic exchequer to feed, clothe, and keep them all warm—that was another mercy; and as for the future, people so busy as the doctor and his wife are forced to leave that to Providence—which is the greatest mercy of all. For it is to-morrow's burden breaks the back, never the burden of to-day.

A constant regret with Mrs. Carnegie (when she had a spare moment to think of it) was her inability, from stress of annually recurring circumstances, to afford Bessie Fairfax more of an education, and especially that she was not learning to speak French and play on the piano. But Bessie felt no want of these polite accomplishments. She had no accomplished companions to put her to shame for her deficiencies. She was fond of a book, she could write an unformed, legible hand, and add up a simple sum. The doctor, not a bad judge, called her a shrewd, reasonable little lass. She had mother-wit, a warm heart, and a nice face, as sweet and fresh as a bunch of roses with the dew on them, and he did not see what she wanted with talking French and playing the piano; if his wife would believe him, she would go through life quite as creditably and comfortably without any fashionable foreign airs and graces. Thus it resulted, partly from want of opportunity, and partly from want of ambition in herself, that Bessie Fairfax remained a rustic little maid, without the least tincture of modern accomplishments. Still, the doctor's wife did not forget that her dear drudge and helpful right hand was a waif of old gentry, whose restoration the chapter of accidents might bring about any day. Nor did she suffer Bessie to forget it, though Bessie was mighty indifferent, and cared as little for her gentle kindred as they cared for her. And if these gentle kindred had increased and multiplied according to the common lot, Bessie would probably never have been remembered by them to any purpose; she might have married as Mr. Carnegie's daughter, and have led an obscure, happy life, without vicissitude to the end of it, and have died leaving no story to tell.

But many things had happened at Abbotsmead since the love-match of Geoffry Fairfax and Elizabeth Bulmer. When Geoffry married, his brothers were both single men. The elder, Frederick, took to himself soon after a wife of rank and fortune; but there was no living issue of the marriage; and the lady, after a few years of eccentricity, went abroad for her health—that is, her husband was obliged to place her under restraint. Her malady was pronounced incurable, though her life might be prolonged. The second son, Laurence, had distinguished himself at Oxford, and had become a knight-errant of the Society of Antiquaries. His father said he would traverse a continent to look at one old stone. He was hardly persuaded to relinquish his liberty and choose a wife, when the failure of heirs to Frederick disconcerted the squire's expectations, and, with the proverbial ill-luck of learned men, he chose badly. His wife, from a silly, pretty

shrew, matured into a most bitter scold; and a blessed man was he, when, after three years of tribulation, her temper and a strong fever carried her off. His Xantippe left no child. Mr. Fairfax urged the obligations of ancient blood, old estate, and a second marriage; but Laurence had suffered conjugal felicity enough, and would no more of it. It was now that the squire first bethought himself seriously of his son Geoffry's daughter. He proposed to bring her home to Abbotsmead, and to marry her in due time to some poor young gentleman of good family, who would take her name, and give the house of Fairfax a new lease, as had been done thrice before in its long descent, by means of an heiress. The poor young man who might be so obliging was even named. Frederick and Laurence gave consent to whatever promised to mitigate their father's disappointment in themselves, and the business was put into the hands of their man of law, John Short of Norminster, than whom no man in that venerable city was more respected for sagacity and integrity.

If Mr. Fairfax had listened to John Short in times past, he would not have needed his help now. John Short had urged the propriety of recalling Bessie from Beechhurst when her father died; but no good grandmother or wise aunt survived at Kirkham to insist upon it, and the thing was not done. The man of law did not, however, revert to what was past remedy, but gave his mind to considering how his client might be extricated from his existing dilemma with least pain and offence. Mr. Fairfax had a legal right to the custody of his young kinswoman, but he had not the conscience to plead his legal right against the long-allowed use and custom of her friends. If they were reluctant to let her go, and she were reluctant to come, what then? John Short confessed that Mr. Carnegie and Bessie herself might give them trouble if they were so disposed; but he had a reasonable expectation that they would view the matter through the medium of common sense.

Thus much by way of prelude to the story of Bessie Fairfax's Vicissitudes, which date from this momentous era of her life.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAWYER'S LETTER.

"The postman! Run, Jack, and bring the letter."

The letter, said Mr. Carnegie; for the correspondence between the doctor's house and the world outside it was limited. Jack jumped off his chair at the breakfast-table and rushed to do his father's bidding.

"For mother!" cried he, returning at the speed of a small whirlwind, the epistle held aloft. Down he clapped it on the table by her plate, mounted into his chair again, and resumed the interrupted business of the hour.

Mrs. Carnegie glanced aside at the letter, read the post-mark, and reflected aloud: "Norminster—who can be writing to us from Norminster? Some of Bessie's people?"

"The shortest way would be to open the letter and see. Hand it over to me," said the doctor.

Bessie pricked her ears; but Mr. Carnegie read the letter to himself, while his wife was busy replenishing the little mugs that came up in single file incessantly for more milk. A momentary pause in the wants of her offspring gave her leisure to notice her husband's visage—a dusk-red and weather-brown visage at its best, but gathered now into extraordinary blackness. She looked, but did not speak; the doctor was the first to speak.

"It is about Bessie—from her grandfather's agent," said he with suppressed vexation as he replaced the large full sheet in its envelope.

"What about *me*?" cried Bessie in an explosion of natural curiosity.

"Your mother will tell you presently. Mind, boys, you are good to-day, and don't tire your sister."

So unusual an admonition made the boys stare, and everybody was hushed with a presentiment of something going to happen that nobody would approve. Mrs. Carnegie had her conjectures, not far wide of the truth, and Bessie was conscious of impatience to get the children out of the way, that she might have her curiosity appeased.

The doctor discerned the insurrection of self in her face, and said, almost bitterly, "Wait till I am gone, Bessie; you will have all the rest of your life to think of it. Now, boys, you have done eating; be off, and get ready for school."

Jack and the rest cleared out of the parlor and pattered up stairs, Bessie following close on their heels, purposely deaf to her mother's voice: "You may stay, love." She was hurt and perturbed. An idea of what was impending had flashed into her mind. After all, her abrupt exit was convenient to her elders; they could discuss the circumstances more freely in her absence. Mrs. Carnegie began.

"Well, Thomas, what does this wonderful letter say? I think I can guess—Bessie is to go home?"

"Home! What place can be home to her if this is not?" rejoined the doctor, and strode across the room to shut the door on his retreating progeny, while his wife entered on the perusal of the letter.

It was from Mr. John Short, on the business that we wot of. To Mr. Carnegie it read like a cool intimation that Bessie Fairfax was wanted—was become of importance at Abbotsmead, and must break with her present associations. It would have been impossible to convey in palatable words the requisition that the lawyer was put upon making; but to Mrs. Carnegie the demand did not sound harsh, nor the manner of it insolent. She had always kept her mind in a state of preparedness for some such change, and the only sense of annoyance that smote her was for her own shortcomings—for how she had suffered Bessie to be almost a servant to her own children, and how she could neither speak French nor play on the piano.

The doctor pooh-poohed her remorse. "You have done the best for her you could, Jane. What right has her grandfather to expect anything? He left her on your hands without a penny."

"Bessie has been worth more than she costs, if that were the way to look at it. But she will have to leave us now; she will have to go."

"Yes, she will have to go. But the old gentleman shall never deny our share in her."

"The future will rest with Bessie herself."

"And she has a good heart and a will of her own. She will be a woman with brains, whether she can play on the piano or not. Don't fret yourself, Jane, for any fancied neglect of Bessie."

"I am sadly grieved for her, Thomas; she will be sent to school, and what a life she will lead, dear child, so backward in her learning!"

"Nonsense! She is a bit of very good company. Wherever Bessie goes she will hold her own. She has plenty of character, and, take my word for it, character tells more in the long-run than talking French. There is the gig at the gate, and I must be off, though Bessie was starting for Woldshire by the next post. The letter is not one to be answered on the spur of the moment; acknowledge it, and say that it shall be answered shortly."

With a comfortable kiss the doctor bade his wife good-bye for the day, admonishing her not to fall a-crying with Bessie over what could not be remedied. And so he left her with the tears in her eyes already. She sat a few minutes feeling rather than reflecting, then with the lawyer's letter in her hands went up stairs, calling softly as she went, "Bessie dear, where are you?"

"Here, mother, in my own room;" and Bessie appeared in the doorway handling a scarlet feather-brush with which she was accustomed to dust her small property in books and ornaments each morning after the housemaid had performed her heavier task.

Mrs. Carnegie entered with her, and shut the door; for the two-leaved lattice was wide open, and the muslin curtains were blowing half across the tiny triangular nook under the thatch, which had been Bessie Fairfax's "own room" ever since she came to live in the doctor's house. Bessie was very fond of it, very proud of keeping it neat. There were assembled all the personal memorials of no moneysworth that had been rescued from the rectory-sale after her father's death; two miniatures, not valuable as works of art, but precious as likenesses of her parents; a faint sketch in water-colors of Kirkham Church and Parsonage House, and another sketch of Abbotsmead; an Indian work-box, a China bowl, two jars and a dish, very antiquated, and diffusing a soft perfume of roses; and about a hundred and fifty volumes of books, selected by his widow from the rectory library, for their binding rather than their contents, and perhaps not very suitable for a girl's collection. But Bessie set great store by them; and though the ancient Fathers of the Church accumulated dust on their upper shelves, and the sages of Greece and Rome were truly sealed books to her, she could have given a fair account of her Shakespeare and of the Aldine Poets to a judicious catechist, and of many another book with a story besides; even of her Hume, Gibbon, Goldsmith, and Rollin, and of her Scott, perennially delightful. She was, in fact, no dunce, though she had not been disciplined in the conventional routine of education; and as for training in the higher sense, she could not have grown into a more upright or good girl under any guidance, than under that of her tender and careful mother.

And in appearance what was she like, this Bessie Fairfax, subjected so early to the caprices of fortune? It is not to be pretended that she reached the heroic standard. Mr. Carnegie said she bade fair to be very handsome, but she was at the angular age when the framework of a girl's bones might stand almost as well for a boy's, and there was, indeed, something brusque, frank, and boyish in Bessie's air and aspect at this date. She walked well, danced well, rode well—looked to the manner born when mounted on the little bay mare, which carried the doctor on his second journeys of a day, and occasionally carried Bessie in his company when he was going on a round, where, at certain points, rest and refreshment were to be had for man and beast. Her figure had not the promise of majestic height, but it was perfectly proportioned, and her face was a capital letter of introduction. Feature by feature, it was, perhaps, not classical, but never was a girl nicer looking taken altogether; the firm sweetness of her mouth, the clear candor of her blue eyes, the fair breadth of her forehead, from which her light golden-threaded hair stood off in a wavy halo, and the downy peach of her round cheeks made up a most kissable, agreeable face. And there were sense and courage in it as well as sweetness; qualities which in her peculiar circumstances would not be liable to rust for want of using.

The mistiness of tears clouded Bessie's eyes when her mother, without preamble, announced the purport of the letter in her hand.

"It has come at last, Bessie, the recall that I have kept you in mind was sure to come sooner or later; not that we shall be any the less grieved to lose you, dear. Father will miss his clever little Bessie sadly,"—here the kind mother paused for emotion, and Bessie, athirst to know all, asked if she might read the letter.

The letter was not written for her reading, and Mrs. Carnegie hesitated; but Bessie's promptitude overruled her doubt in a manner not unusual with them. She took possession of the document, and sat down in the deep window-seat to study it; and she had read but a little way when there appeared signs in her face that it did not please her. Her mother knew these signs well; the stubborn set of the lips, the resolute depression of the level brows, much darker than her hair, the angry sparkle of her eyes, which never did sparkle but when her temper was ready to flash out in impetuous speech. Mrs. Carnegie spoke to forewarn her against rash declarations.

"It is of no use to say you *won't*, Bessie, for you *must*. Your father said, before he went out, that we have no choice but to let you go."

Bessie did not condescend to any rejoinder yet. She was reading over again some passage of the letter by which she felt herself peculiarly affronted. She continued to the end of it, and it was perhaps lucky that her tenderness had then so far prevailed over her wrath that she could only give way to tears of self-pity, instead of voice to the defiant words that had trembled on her tongue a minute ago.

"I did hope, dear, that you would not take it so much to heart," said her mother, comforting her. "But it is mortifying to think of being sent to school. What a pity we have let time go on till you are fifteen, and can neither speak a word of French nor play a note on the piano!"

Bessie had so often heard Mr. Carnegie's opinion of these accomplishments that her mother's regrets wore a comic aspect to her mind, and between laughing and crying she protested that she did not care, she should not try to improve to please *them*—meaning her Woldshire kinsfolk mentioned in the lawyer's letter.

"You have good common-sense, Bessie, and I am sure you will use it," said her mother with persuasive gravity. "If you show off with your tempers, that will give a color to their notion that you have been badly brought up. You must do us and yourself what credit you can, going amongst strangers. I am not afraid for you, unless you set up your little back, and determine to be downright naughty and perverse."

Bessie's countenance was not promising as she gave ear to these premonitions. Her upper lip was short, and her nether lip pressed against it with a scorny indignation. Her back was very much up, indeed, in the moral sense indicated by her mother, and as these inauspicious moods of hers were apt to last the longer the longer they were reasoned with, her mother prudently refrained from further disquisition. She bade her go about her ordinary business as if nothing had happened, and Bessie did go about these duties with a quiet practical obedience to law and order which bore out the testimony to her good common-sense. She thought of Mr. John Short's letter, it is true, and once she stood for a minute considering the sketch of Abbotsmead which hung above her chest of drawers. "Gloomy dull old place," was her criticism on it; but even as she looked, there ensued the reflection that the sun *must* shine upon it sometimes, though the artist had drawn it as destitute of light and shade as the famous portrait of Queen Elizabeth, when she wished to be painted fair, and was painted merely insipid.

CHAPTER III.

THE COMMUNITY OF BEECHHURST.

The lawyer's letter from Norminster had thrust aside all minor interests. Even the school-feast that was to be at the rectory that afternoon was forgotten, until the boys reminded their mother of it at dinner-time. "Bessie will take you," said Mrs. Carnegie, and Bessie acquiesced. The one thing she found impossible to-day was to sit still. We will go to the school-feast with the children. The opportunity will be good for introducing to the reader a few persons of chief consideration in the rural community where Bessie Fairfax acquired some of her permanent views of life.

Beechhurst Rectory was the most charming rectory-house on the Forest. It would be delightful to add that the rector was as charming as his abode; but Beechhurst did not call itself happy in its pastor at this moment—the Rev. Askew Wiley. Mr. Wiley's immediate predecessor—the Rev. John Hutton—had been a pattern for country parsons. Hale, hearty, honest as the daylight; knowing in sport, in farming, in gardening; bred at Westminster and Oxford; the third son of a family distinguished in the Church; happily married, having sons of his own, and sufficient private fortune to make life easy both in the present and the future. Unluckily for Beechhurst, he preferred the north to the south country, and, after holding the benefice a little over one year, he exchanged it against Otterburn, a moorland border parish of Cumberland, whence Mr. Wiley had for some time past been making strenuous efforts to escape. Both were crown livings, but Otterburn stood for twice as much in the king's books as Beechhurst. Mr. Wiley was, however,

willing to pay the forfeiture of half his income to get away from it. He had failed to make friends with the farmers, his principal parishioners, and the vulgar squabbles of Otterburn had grown into such a notorious scandal that the bishop was only too thankful to promote his removal. Mrs. Wiley's health was the ostensible reason, and though Otterburn knew better, Beechhurst accepted it in good faith, and gave its new rector a cordial welcome—none the less cordial that his wife came on the scene a robust and capable woman, ready and fit for parish work, and with no air of the fragile invalid it had been led to expect.

But men are shrewd on the Forest as on the Border, and the Rev. Askew Wiley was soon at a discount. His appearance was eminently clerical, but no two of his congregation formed the same opinion of what he was besides, unless the opinion that they did not like him. It was a clear case of Dr. Fell; for there was nothing in his life to except to, and in his character only a deficiency of courage. *Only?* But stay—consider what a crop of servile faults spring from a deficiency of courage.

"He do so beat the devil about the bush that there is no knowing where to have him," was the dictum early enunciated by a village Solomon, which went on to be verified more and more, until the new rector was as much despised on the Forest as on the Border. But he had a different race to deal with. At Otterburn the rude statesmen provoked and defied him with loud contempt; at Beechhurst his congregation dwindled down to the gentlefolks, who tolerated him out of respect to his office, and to the aged poor, who received a weekly dole of bread, bequeathed by some long-ago benefactor; and these were mostly women. Mr. Carnegie was a fair sample of the men, and he made no secret of his aversion.

The Reverend Askew Wiley, see him as he paces the lawn, his supple back writhed just a little towards my lady deferentially, his head just a little on one side, lending her an ear. By the gait of him he is looking another way. Yes; for now my lady turns, he turns too, and they halt front to front; his pallid visage half averted from her observation, his glittering eyes roving with bold stealth over the populous garden, and his thin-lipped, scarlet mouth working and twisting incessantly in the covert of his thick-set beard.

My lady speaks with an impatience scarcely controlled. She is the great lady of Beechhurst, the Dowager Lady Latimer, in the local estimation a very great lady indeed; once a leader in society, now retired from it, and living obscurely on her rich dower in the Forest, with almsdeeds and works of patronage and improvement for her pleasure and her occupation. My lady always loved her own way, but she had worked harmoniously with Mr. Hutton through his year's incumbency. He was sufficient for his duties, and gave her no opportunity for the exercise of unlawful authority, no ground for encroachments, no room for interference. But it was very different with poor Mr. Wiley. Everybody knew that he was a trial to her. He could not hold his own against her propensity to dictate. He deferred to her, and contrived to thwart her, to do the very thing she would not have done, and to do it in the most obnoxious way. The puzzle was—could he help it? Was he one of those tactless persons who are for ever blundering, or had he the will to assert himself, and not the pluck to do it boldly? His refuge was in round-about manœuvres, and my lady felt towards him as those intolerant Cumberland statesmen felt before their enmity made the bleak moorland too hot for him. He was called an able man, but his foibles were precisely of the sort to create in the large-hearted of the gentle sex an almost masculine antipathy to their spiritual pastor. Bessie Fairfax could not bear him, and she could render a reason. Mr. Wiley received pupils to read at his house, and he had refused to receive a dear comrade of hers. It was his rule to receive none but the sons of gentlemen. Young Musgrave was the son of a farmer on the Forest, who called cousins with the young Carnegies. As the connection was wide, perhaps the vigorous dislike of more important persons than Bessie Fairfax is sufficiently accounted for. All the world is agreed that a slight wound to men's self-love rankles much longer than a mortal injury.

It is not, however, to be supposed that the Beechhurst people spited themselves so far as to keep away from the rector's school-treat because they did not love the rector. (By the by, it was not his treat, but only buns and tea by subscription distributed in his grounds, with the privilege of admittance to the subscribers.) The orthodox gentility of the neighborhood assembled in force for the occasion when the sun shone upon it as it shone to-day, and the entertainment was an event for children of all classes. If the richer sort did not care for buns, they did for games; and the Carnegie boys were so eager to lose none of the sport that they coaxed Bessie to take time by the forelock, and presented themselves almost first on the scene. Mrs. Wiley, ready and waiting out of doors to welcome her more distinguished guests, met a trio of the little folks, in Bessie's charge, trotting round the end of the house to reach the lawn.

"Always in good time, Bessie Carnegie," said she. "But is not your mother coming?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Wiley," said Bessie with prim decorum.

"By the by, that is not your name. What is your name, Bessie?"

"Elizabeth Fairfax."

"Ah! yes; now I remember—Elizabeth Fairfax. And is your uncle pretty well? I suppose we shall see him later in the day? He ought to look in upon us before we break up. There! run away to the children in the orchard, and leave the lawn clear."

Bessie accepted her dismissal gladly, thankful to escape the catechetical ordeal that would have ensued had there been leisure for it. She was almost as shy of the rector's wife as of the rector.

Mrs. Wiley had a brusque, absent manner, and it was a trick of hers to expose her young acquaintance to a fire of questions, of which she as regularly forgot the answers. She had often affronted Bessie Fairfax by asking her real name, and in the next breath calling her affably Bessie Carnegie, the doctor's step-daughter, niece or other little kinswoman whom he kept as a help in his house for charity's sake.

Bessie had but faint recollections of the rectory as her home, for since her father's death she had never gone there except as a visitor on public days. But the tradition was always in her memory that once she had lived in those pleasant rooms, had run up and down those broad sunny stairs, and played on the spacious lawns of that mossy, tree-shadowed garden. In the orchard had assembled, besides the children, a group of their ex-teachers—Miss Semple and her sister, the village dressmakers, Miss Genet, the daughter at the post-office, and the two Miss Mittens—well-behaved and well-instructed young persons whom Mr. Wiley's predecessors had been pleased to employ, but for whom Mrs. Wiley found no encouragement. She had the ordering of the school, and preferred gentlewomen for her lay-sisters. She had them, and only herself knew what trouble in keeping them punctual to their duty and in keeping the peace amongst them. There was dear fat Miss Buff, who had been right hand in succession to Mr. Fairfax, Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Hutton, who adored supremacy, and exercised it with the easy sway of long usage; she felt herself pushed on one side by that ardent young Irish recruit, Miss Thusy O'Flynn, whose peculiar temper no one cared to provoke, and who ruled by the terror of it with a caprice that was trying in the last degree. Miss Buff gave way to her, but not without grumbling, appealing, and threatening to withdraw her services. But she loved her work in the school and in the choir, and could not bear to punish herself or let Miss Thusy triumph to the extent of driving her into private life; so she adhered to her charge in the hope of better days, when she would again be mistress paramount. And the same did Miss Wort—also one of the old governing body—but from higher motives, which she was not afraid to publish: she distrusted Mr. Wiley's doctrine, and she feared that he was inclined to truckle to the taste for ecclesiastical decoration manifested by certain lambs of his flock who doted on private theatricals and saw no harm in balls. She adhered to her post, that the truth might not suffer for want of a witness; and if the rising generation of girls in preposterous hats had taken her for their pattern of a laborious teacher, true to time as the school-bell itself, Mrs. Wiley's preference for young ladies over young persons would have been better justified, and Lady Latimer would not have been able to find fault with the irregular attendance of the children, to express her opinion that the school was not what it might be, and to throw out hints that she must set about reforming it unless it soon reformed itself.

Bessie Fairfax was on speaking terms with nearly everybody, and Miss Mitten called her the moment she appeared to help in setting a ring for "drop hankercher." Two of the little Carnegies merrily joined hands with the rest, and they were just about to begin, Jack being unanimously nominated as first chase for his dexterous running, when a shrill voice called to them peremptorily to desist.

"Why have you fallen out of rank? You ought to have kept your ranks until you had sung grace before tea. Get into line again quickly, for here come the buns;" and there was Miss Thusy O'Flynn, perched on a mole-hill, in an attitude of command, waving her parasol and demonstrating how they were to stand.

"The buns, indeed! It is time, I'm sure," muttered Miss Buff, substantial in purple silk and a black lace bonnet. Her rival was a pretty, red-haired, resolute little girl, very prettily dressed, who showed to no disadvantage on the mole-hill. But Miss Buff could see no charm she had; she it was who had given leave for a game, to pass the time before tea. The children had been an hour in the orchard, and the feast was still delayed.

"Perhaps the kettle does not boil," suggested Miss Wort, indulgently.

"We are kept waiting for Miss O'Flynn's aunt," rejoined Miss Buff. "Here she comes, with our angelical parson, and Lady Latimer, out in the cold, walking behind them."

Bessie Fairfax looked up. Lady Latimer was her supreme admiration. She did not think that another lady so good, so gracious, so beautiful, enriched the world. If there did, that lady was not the Viscountess Poldoody. Bessie had a lively sense of fun, and the Irish dame was a figure to call a smile to a more guarded face than hers—a short squab figure that waddled, and was surmounted by a negative visage composed of pulpy, formless features, and a brown wig of false curls—glaringly false, for they were the first thing about her that fixed the eye, though there were many matters besides to fascinate an observer with leisure to look again. She seemed, however, a most free and cheerful old lady, and talked in a loud, mellow voice, with a pleasant touch of the brogue. She had been a popular Dublin singer and actress in her day—a day some forty years ago—but only Lady Latimer and herself in the rectory garden that afternoon were aware of the fact.

Grand people possessed an irresistible attraction for Mr. Wiley. The Viscountess Poldoody had taken a house in his parish for the fine season, and came to his church with her niece; he had called upon her, and now escorted her to the orchard with a fulsome assiduity which was betrayed to those who followed by the uneasy writhing of his back and shoulders. With many complimentary words he invited her to distribute the prizes to the children.

"If your ladyship will so honor them, it will be a day in their lives to remember."

"Give away the prizes? Oh yes, if ye'll show me which choild to give 'em to," replied the

viscountess with a good-humored readiness. Then, with a propriety of feeling which was thought very nice in her, she added, in the same natural, distinct manner, standing and looking round as she spoke:

"But is it not my Lady Latimer's right? What should I know of your children, who am only a summer visitor?"

Lady Latimer acknowledged the courteous disclaimer with that exquisite smile which had been the magic of her loveliness always. The children would appreciate the kindness of a stranger, she said; and with a perfect grace yielded the precedence, and at the same time resigned the opportunity she had always enjoyed before of giving the children a monition once a year on their duty to God, their parents, their pastors and masters, elders and betters, and neighbors in general. Whether my lady felt aggrieved or not nobody could discern; but the people about were aggrieved for her, and Miss Buff confided to a friend, in a semi-audible whisper of intense exasperation, that the rector was the biggest muff and toady that ever it had been her misfortune to know. Miss Buff, it will be perceived, liked strong terms; but, as she justly pleaded in extenuation of a taste for which she was reproached, what was the use of there being strong terms in the language if they were not to be applied on suitable occasions?

The person, however, on whom this incident made the deepest impression was Bessie Fairfax. Bessie admired Lady Latimer because she was admirable. She had listened too often to Mr. Carnegie's radical talk to have any reverence for rank and title unadorned; but her love of beauty and goodness made her look up with enthusiastic respect to the one noble lady she knew, of whom even the doctor spoke as "a great woman." The children sang their grace and sat down to tea, and Lady Latimer stood looking on, her countenance changed to a stern gravity; and Bessie, quite diverted from the active business of the feast, stood looking at her and feeling sorry. The child's long abstracted gaze ended by drawing my lady's attention. She spoke to her, and Bessie started out of her reverie, wide-awake in an instant.

"Is there nothing for you to do, Bessie Fairfax, that you stand musing? Bring me a chair into the shade of the old walnut tree over yonder. I have something to say to you. Do you remember what we talked about that wet morning last winter at my house?"

"Yes, my lady," replied Bessie, and brought the chair with prompt obedience.

On the occasion alluded to Bessie had been caught in a heavy rain while riding with the doctor. He had deposited her in Lady Latimer's kitchen, to be dried and comforted by the housekeeper while he went on his farther way; and my lady coming into the culinary quarter while Bessie was there, had given her a delicious cheese-cake from a tin just hot out of the oven, and had then entered into conversation with her about her likes and dislikes, concluding with the remark that she had in her the making of an excellent National School mistress, and ought to be trained for that special walk in life. Bessie had carried home a report of what Lady Latimer had said; but neither her father nor mother admired the suggestion, and it had not been mentioned again. Now, however, being comfortably seated, my lady revived it in a serious, methodical way, Bessie standing before her listening and blushing with a confusion that increased every moment. She was thinking of the letter from Norminster, but she did not venture yet to arrest Lady Latimer's flow of advice. My lady did not discern that anything was amiss. She was accustomed to have her counsels heard with deference. From advice she passed into exhortation, assuming that Bessie was, of course, destined to some sort of work for a living—to dressmaking, teaching or service in some shape—and encouraging her to make advances for her future, that it might not overtake her unprepared. Lady Latimer had not come into the Forest until some years after the Reverend Geoffry Fairfax's death, and she had no knowledge of Bessie's birth, parentage and connections; but she had a principle against poor women pining in the shadow of gentility when they could help themselves by honest endeavors; and also, she had a plan for raising the quality of National School teaching by introducing into the ranks of the teachers young gentlewomen unprovided by fortune. She advised no more than she would have done, and all she said was good, if Bessie's circumstances had been what she assumed. But Bessie, conscious that they were about to suffer a change, felt impelled at last to set Lady Latimer right. Her shy face mitigated the effect of her speech.

"I have kindred in Woldshire, my lady, who want me. I am the only child in this generation, and my grandfather Fairfax says that it is necessary for me to go back to my own people."

Lady Latimer's face suddenly reflected a tint of Bessie's. But no after-thought was in Bessie's mind, her simplicity was genuine. She esteemed it praise to be selected as a fit child to teach children; and, besides, whatever my lady had said at this period would have sounded right in Bessie's ears. When she had uttered her statement, she waited till Lady Latimer spoke.

"Do you belong to the Fairfaxes of Kirkham? Is your grandfather Richard Fairfax of Abbotsmead?" she said in a quick voice, with an inflection of surprise.

"Yes, my lady. My father was Geoffry, the third son; my mother was Elizabeth Bulmer."

"I knew Abbotsmead many years ago. It will be a great change for you. How old are you, Bessie? Fourteen, fifteen?"

"Fifteen, my lady, last birthday, the fourth of March."

Lady Latimer thought to herself, "Here is an exact little girl!" Then she said aloud, "It would have

been better for you if your grandfather had recalled you when you were younger."

Bessie was prepared to hear this style of remark, and to repudiate the implication. She replied almost with warmth, "My lady, I have lost nothing by being left here. Beechhurst will always be home to me. If I had my choice I would not go to Kirkham."

Lady Latimer thought again what a nice voice Bessie had, and regarded her with a growing interest, that arose in part out of her own recollections. She questioned her concerning her father's death, and the circumstances of her adoption by Mr. and Mrs. Carnegie, and reflected that, happily, she was too simple, too much of a child yet, for any but family attachments—happily, because, though Bessie had no experience to measure it by, there would be a wide difference between her position as the doctor's adopted daughter amongst a house full of children, and as heiress presumptive of Mr. Fairfax of Abbotsmead.

"Have you ever seen Abbotsmead, Bessie?" she said.

"No, my lady, I have never been in Woldshire since I was a baby. I was born at Kirkham vicarage, my grandfather Bulmer's house, but I was not a year old when we came away. I have a drawing of Abbotsmead that my mother made—it is not beautiful."

"But Abbotsmead is very beautiful—the country round about is not so delicious as the Forest, for it has less variety: it is out of sight of the sea, and the trees are not so grand, but Abbotsmead itself is a lovely spot. The house stands on a peninsula formed by a little brawling river, and in the park are the ruins that give the place its name. I remember the garden at Abbotsmead as a garden where the sun always shone."

Bessie was much cheered. "How glad I am! In my picture the sun does not shine at all. It is the color of a dark day in November."

The concise simplicity of Bessie's talk pleased Lady Latimer. She decided that Mrs. Carnegie must be a gentlewoman, and that Bessie had qualities capable of taking a fine polish. She would have held the child in conversation longer had not Mrs. Wiley come up, and after a word or two about the success of the feast, bade Bessie run away and see that her little brothers were not getting into mischief. Lady Latimer nodded her a kind dismissal, and off she went.

Six o'clock struck. By that time the buns were all eaten, the prizes were all distributed, and the cream of the company had driven or walked away, but cricket still went on in the meadow, and children's games in the orchard. One or two gentlemen had come on the scene since the fervor of the afternoon abated. Admiral Parkins, who governed Beechhurst under Lady Latimer, was taking a walk round the garden with his brother church-warden, Mr. Musgrave, and Mr. Carnegie had made his bow to the rector's wife, who was not included in his aversion for the rector. Mr. Phipps, also a gentleman of no great account in society, but a liberal supporter of the parish charities, was there—a small, grotesque man to look at, who had always an objection in his mouth. Was any one praised, he mentioned a qualification; was any one blamed, he interposed a plea. He had a character for making shrewd, incisive remarks, and was called ironical, because he had a habit of dispersing flattering delusions and wilful pretences by bringing the dry light of truth to bear upon them—a gratuitous disagreeableness which was perhaps the reason why he was now perched on a tree-stump alone, casting shy, bird-like glances hither and thither—at two children quarrelling over a cracked tea-cup, at the rector halting about uncomfortably amongst the "secondary people," at his wife being instructed by Lady Latimer, at Lady Latimer herself, tired but loath to go, at Bessie Fairfax, full of spirit and forgetfulness, running at speed over the grass, a vociferous, noisy troop of children after her.

"Stop, stop, you are not to cross the lawn!" cried Mrs. Wiley. "Bessie Carnegie, what a tomboy you are! We might be sure if there was any roughness you were at the head of it."

Lady Latimer also looked austere at the infringement of respect. Bessie did not hear, and sped on till she reached the tree-stump where Mr. Phipps was resting, and touched it—the game was "tiggy-touch-wood." There she halted to take breath, her round cheeks flushed, her carnation mouth open, and her pursuers baffled.

"You are a pretty young lady!" said Mr. Phipps, not alluding to Bessie's beauty, but to her manner sarcastically. Bessie paid no heed. They were very good friends, and she cared nothing for his sharp observations. But she perceived that the rout of children was being turned back to the orchard, and made haste to follow them.

Admiral Parkins and Mr. Musgrave had foregathered with Mr. Carnegie to discuss some matters of parish finance. They drew near to Mr. Phipps and took him into the debate. It was concerning a new organ for the church, a proposed extension of the school-buildings, an addition to the master's salary, and a change of master. The present man was old-fashioned, and the spirit of educational reform had reached Beechhurst.

"If we wait until Wiley moves in the business, we may wait till doomsday. The money will be forthcoming when it is shown that it is wanted," said the admiral, whose heart was larger than his income.

"Lady Latimer will not be to ask twice," said Mr. Musgrave. "Nor Mr. Phipps."

"We must invite her ladyship to take the lead," said Mr. Carnegie.

"Let us begin by remembering that, as a poor community, we have no right to perfection," said Mr. Phipps. "The voluntary taxes of the locality are increasing too fast. It is a point of social honor for all to subscribe to public improvements, and all are not gifted with a superfluity of riches. If honor is to be rendered where honor is due, let Miss Wort take the lead. Having regard to her means, she is by far the most generous donor in Beechhurst."

Mr. Phipps's proposal was felt to need no refutation. The widow's mite is such a very old story—not at all applicable to the immense operations of modern philanthropy. Besides, Miss Wort had no ambition for the glory of a leader, nor had she the figure for the post. Mr. Phipps was not speaking to be contradicted, only to be heard.

Lady Latimer, on her way to depart, came near the place where the gentlemen were grouped, and turned aside to join them, as if a sudden thought had struck her. "You are discussing our plans?" she said. "A certificated master to supersede poor old Rivett must be the first consideration in our rearrangement of the schools. The children have been sacrificed too long to his incompetence. We must be on the look-out for a superior man, and make up our minds to pay him well."

"Poor old Rivett! he has done good work in his day, but he has the fault that overtakes all of us in time," said Mr. Phipps. "For the master of a rural school like ours, I would choose just such another man—of rough common-sense, born and bred in a cottage, and with an experimental knowledge of the life of the boys he has to educate. Certificated if you please, but the less conventionalized the better."

Lady Latimer did not like Mr. Phipps—she thought there was something of the spy in his nature. She gazed beyond him, and was peremptory about her superior man—so peremptory that she had probably already fixed on the fortunate individual who would enjoy her countenance. Half an hour later, when Bessie Fairfax was carrying off her reluctant brothers to supper and to bed, my lady had not said all she had to say. She was still projecting, dissenting, deciding and undoing, and the gentlemen were still listening with patient deference. She had made magnificent offers of help for the furtherance of their schemes, and had received warm acknowledgments.

"Her ladyship is bountiful as usual—for a consideration," said Mr. Phipps, emitting a long suppressed groan of weariness, when her gracious good-evening released them. Mr. Phipps revolted against my lady's yoke, the others wore it with grace. Admiral Parkins said Beechhurst would be in a poor way without her. Mr. Musgrave looked at his watch, and avowed the same opinion. Mr. Carnegie said nothing. He knew so much good of Lady Latimer that he had an almost unlimited indulgence for her. It was his disposition, indeed, to be indulgent to women, to give them all the homage and sympathy they require.

Mr. Phipps and Mr. Carnegie quitted the rectory-garden, and crossed the road to the doctor's house in company. Bessie Fairfax, worn out with the emotions and fatigues of the day, had left the children to their mother and stout Irish nurse, and had collapsed into her father's great chair in the parlor. She sprang up as the gentlemen entered, and was about to run away, when Mr. Phipps spread out his arms to arrest her flight.

"Well, Cinderella, the pumpkin-coach has not come yet to fetch you away?" said he. The application of the parable of Cinderella to her case was Mr. Phipps's favorite joke against Bessie Fairfax.

"No, but it is on the road. I hear the roll of the wheels and the crack of Raton's whip," said she with a prodigious sigh.

"So it is, Phipps—that's true! We are going to lose our Bessie," said Mr. Carnegie, drawing her upon his knee as he sat down.

"Poor little tomboy! A nice name Mrs. Wiley has fitted her with! And she is going to be a lady? I should not wonder if she liked it," said Mr. Phipps.

"As if ladies were not tomboys too!" said she with wise scorn, half laughing, half pouting. Then with wistfulness: "Will it be so very different? Why should it? I hate the idea of going away from Beechhurst!" and she laid her cheek against the doctor's rough whisker with the caressing, confiding affection that made her so inexpressibly dear to him.

"Here is my big baby," said he. "A little more, and she will persuade me to say I won't part with her."

Bessie flashed out impetuously: "Do say so! do say so! If you won't part with me, I won't go. Who can make us?"

Mrs. Carnegie came into the room, serious and reasonable. She had caught Bessie's last words, and said: "If we were to let you have your own way now, Bessie dear, ten to one that you would live to reproach us with not having done our duty by you. My conscience is clear that we ought to give you up. What is your opinion, Mr. Phipps?"

"My opinion is, Mrs. Carnegie, that when the pumpkin-coach calls for Cinderella, she will jump in, kiss her hand to all friends in the Forest, and drive off to Woldshire in a delicious commotion of tearful joy and impossible expectation."

Bessie cried out vehemently against this.

"There, there!" said the doctor, as if he were tired, "that is enough. Let us proclaim a truce. I forbid the subject to be mentioned again unless I mention it. And let my word be law."

Mr. Carnegie's word, in that house, was law.

CHAPTER IV.

A RIDE WITH THE DOCTOR.

The next morning Mr. Carnegie was not in imperative haste to start on his daily circuit. The boys had to give him an account of yesterday's fun. He heard them comfortably, and rejoiced the heart of Bessie by telling her to be ready to ride with him at ten o'clock—her mother could spare her. Bessie was not to wait for when the hour came. These rides with her father were ever her chief delight. She wore a round beaver hat with a rosette in front, and a habit of dark blue serge. (There had been some talk of a new one for her, but now her mother reflected that it would not be wanted.)

It was a delicate morning, the air was light and clear, the sky gray and silvery. Bessie rode Miss Hoyden, the doctor's little mare, and trotted along at a brisk pace by his stout cob Brownie. She had a sense of the keenest enjoyment in active exercise. Mr. Carnegie looked aside at her often, his dear little Bessie, thinking, but not speaking, of the separation that impended. Bessie's pleasure in the present was enough to throw that into the background. She did not analyze her sensations, but her cheeks glowed, her eyes shone, and she knew that she was happy. They were on their way to Littlemire, where Mr. Moxon lived—a poor clergyman with whom young Musgrave was reading. Almost as soon as they were clear of the village they struck into a green ride through the beeches, and cut off a great angle of the high-road, coming out again on a furzy opening dotted with old oaks, where the black pigs of the cottagers would by and by feast and grow fat on their common rights. It was a lovely, damp, perilous spot, haunted by the ghost of fever and ague. The soft, vivid turf was oozy there, and the long-rooted stones were clothed with wet, rusted moss. The few cottages of the hamlet wore deep hoods of thatch, and stood amongst prosperous orchards; one of them, a little larger than the rest, being the habitation of Mr. Moxon, the vicar of Littlemire, whose church, dame-school, and income were all of the same modest proportions as his dwelling. He had an invalid wife and no attraction for resident pupils, but he was thankful when he could get one living not too far off. Young Musgrave walked from Brook twice a week—a long four miles—to read with him.

The lad was in the vicar's parlor when Mr. Carnegie and Bessie Fairfax stopped at the gate. He came out with flushed brow and ruffled hair to keep Bessie company and hold the doctor's horse while he went up stairs with Mr. Moxon to visit his wife. That room where she lay in pain often, in weakness always, was a mean, poorly-furnished room, with a window in the thatch, and just a glimpse of heaven beyond, but that glimpse was all reflected in the blessedness of her peaceful face. Mr. Moxon's threadbare coat hung loosely on his large lean frame, like the coat of a poor, negligent gentleman, such as he was. He had the reputation of being a capital scholar, but he had not made the way in the world that had been expected of him. He was vicar of Littlemire when the Reverend Geoffry Fairfax came into the Forest, and he was vicar of Littlemire still, with no prospect of promotion. Perhaps he did not seek it. His wife loved this buried nook, and he loved it for her sake. Mr. Carnegie took it often in his rides, because they called him their friend and he could help them. They had not many besides: Lady Latimer and Mr. Phipps did not forget them, but they were quite out of the way of the visiting part of the community.

"You have done with Hampton, then, Harry?" Bessie said, waiting with her comrade at the gate.

"Yes, so far as school goes, except that I shall always have a kindness for the old place and the old doctor. It was a grand thing, my winning that scholarship, Bessie."

"And now you will have your heart's desire—you will go to Oxford."

"Yes; Moxon is an Oxford man, and the old doctor says out-and-out the best classic of his acquaintance. You have not seen my prize-books yet. When are you coming to Brook, Bessie?"

"The first time I have a chance. What are the books, Harry?"

"All standard books—poetry," Harry said.

The young people's voices, chiming harmoniously, sounded in Mrs. Moxon's room. The poor suffering lady, who was extended on an inclined couch below the window, looked down at them, and saw Harry standing at Miss Hoyden's head, with docile Brownie's bridle on his left arm, and Bessie, with the fine end of her slender whip, teasing the dark fuzz of his hair. They made a pretty picture at the gate, laughing and chattering their confidences aloud.

"What did Harry Musgrave say to your news, Bessie?" her father asked as they rode away from the vicar's house.

"I forgot to tell him!" cried she, pulling up and half turning round. "I had so much to hear." But Mr. Carnegie said it was not worth while to bring Harry out again from his books. How fevered the lad looked! Why did not Moxon patronize open windows?

The road they were pursuing was a gradual long ascent, which brought them in sight of the sea and of a vast expanse of rolling heath and woodland. When they reached the top of the hill they breathed their horses a few minutes and admired the view, then struck into a bridle-track across the heath, and regained the high-road about a mile from Beechhurst. Scudding along in front of them was the familiar figure of Miss Wort in her work-a-day costume—a drab cloak and poke bonnet, her back up, and limp petticoats dragging in the dust. She turned swiftly in at the neat garden-gate that had a green space before it, where numerous boles of trees, lopt of their branches, lay about in picturesque confusion. A wheelwright's shed and yard adjoined the cottage, and Mr. Carnegie, halting without dismounting, whistled loud and shrill to call attention. A wiry, gray-headed man appeared from the shed, and came forward with a rueful, humorous twinkle in his shrewd blue eyes.

"Done again, Mr. Carnegie!" said he. "The old woman's done you again. It is no good denying her physic, for physic she will have. She went to Hampton Infirmary last Saturday with a ticket from Miss Wort, and brought home two bottles o' new mixture. So you see, sir, between 'em, you're frustrated once more."

"I am not surprised. Drugging is as bad a habit as drinking, and as hard to leave off. Miss Wort has just gone in to your wife, so I will not intrude. What is your son doing at present, Christie?"

"He's about somewhere idling with his drawing-book and bits o' colors. He takes himself off whenever it is a finer day than common. Most likely he's gone to Great-Ash Ford. He's met with a mate there after his own mind—an artist chap. Was you wanting him, Mr. Carnegie?"

"There is a job of painting to do at my stable, but it can wait. Only tell him, and he will suit his convenience."

At this moment Miss Wort reappeared in a sort of furtive hurry. She gave a timid, sidelong glance at the doctor, and then addressed Bessie. Mr. Carnegie had his eye upon her: she was the thorn in his professional flesh. She meddled with his patients—a pious woman for whom other people's souls and internal complaints supplied the excitement absent from her own condition and favorite literature. She had some superfluous income and much unoccupied time, which she devoted to promiscuous visiting and the relief (or otherwise) of her poorer and busier neighbors. Mr. Carnegie had refused to accept the plea of her good heart in excuse of her bad practice, and had denounced her, in a moment of extreme irritation, as a presumptuous and mischievous woman; and Miss Wort had publicly rejoined that she would not call in Mr. Carnegie if she were at death's door, because who could expect a blessing on the remedies of a man who was not a professor of religion? The most cordial terms they affected was an armed neutrality. The doctor was never free from suspicion of Miss Wort. Though she looked scared and deprecating, she did not shrink from responsibility, and would administer a dose of her own prescribing in even critical cases, and pacify the doubts and fears of her unlucky patient with tender assurances that if it did her no good, it could do her no harm. Men she let alone, they were safe from her: she did not pretend to know the queer intricacies of their insides; also their aversion for physic she had found to be invincible.

"Two of the pills ten minutes afore dinner-time, Miss Wort, ma'am, did you say? It is not wrote so plain on the box as it might be," cried a plaintive treble from the cottage door. The high hedge and a great bay tree hid Mr. Carnegie from Mrs. Christie's view, but Miss Wort, timorously aware of his observation, gave a guilty start, and shrieking convulsively in the direction of the voice, "Yes, yes!" rushed to the doctor's stirrup and burst into eager explanation:

"It is only Trotter's strengthening pills, Mr. Carnegie. The basis of them is iron—iron or steel. I feel positive that they will be of service to Mrs. Christie, poor thing! with that dreadful sinking at her stomach; for I have tried them myself on similar occasions. No, Mr. Carnegie, a crust of bread would not be more to the purpose. A crust of bread, indeed! Dr. Thomson of Edinburgh, the famous surgeon, has the highest opinion of Trotter."

Mr. Carnegie's face was a picture of disgust. He would have felt himself culpable if he had not delivered an emphatic protest against Miss Wort's experiments. Mrs. Christie had come trembling to the gate—a pretty-featured woman, but sallow as old parchment—and the doctor addressed his expostulations to her. Many defeats had convinced him of the futility of appealing to Miss Wort.

"If you had not the digestion of an ostrich, Mrs. Christie, you would have been killed long ago," said he with severe reprobation. "You have devoured half a man's earnings, and spoilt as fine a constitution as a woman need be blessed with, by your continual drugging."

"No, Mr. Carnegie, sir—with all respect to your judgment—I never had no constitution worth naming where constitutions come," said Mrs. Christie, deeply affronted. "That everybody's witness as knew me afore ever I married into the Forest. And what has kept me up since, toiling and moiling with a husband and boys, if the drugs hasn't? I hope I'm thankful for the blessing that has been sent with them." Miss Wort purred her approval of these pious sentences.

"Some day you'll be in a hurry for an antidote, Mrs. Christie: that will be the end of taking random advice."

"Well, sir, if so I be, my William is not the man to grudge me what's called for. As you *are* here, Mr. Carnegie, I should wish to have an understanding whether you mean to provide me with doctor's stuff; if not, I'll look elsewhere. I've not heard that Mr. Robb sets his face against drugs

yet; which it stands to reason has a use, or God Almighty wouldn't have given them."

Mr. Carnegie rode off with a curt rejoinder to Mrs. Christie that he would not supply her foolish cravings, Robb or no Robb. Miss Wort was sorry for his contempt of the divine bounties, and sought an explanation in his conduct: "Poor fellow! he has not entered a church since Easter, unless he walks over to Littlemire, which is not likely."

"If he has not entered Mr. Wiley's church, I'm with him, and so is my William," said Mrs. Christie with sudden energy. "I can't abide Mr. Wiley. Oh, he's an arrogant man! It's but seldom he calls this way, and I don't care if it was seldomer; for could he have spoken plainer if it had been to a dog? 'You'd be worse if you ailed aught, Mrs. Christie,' says he, and grins. I'd been giving him an account of the poor health I enjoy. And my William heard him with his own ears when he all but named Mr. Carnegie in the pulpit, and not to his credit; so he's in the right of it to keep away. A kinder doctor there is not far nor near, for all he has such an unaccountable prejudice against what he lives by."

"But that is not Christian. We ought not to absent ourselves from the holy ordinances because the clergyman happens to offend us. We ought to bear patiently being told of our faults," urged Miss Wort, who on no account would have allowed one of the common people to impugn the spiritual authorities unrebuked: her own private judgment on doctrine was another matter.

"'Between him and thee,' yes," said Mrs. Christie, who on some points was as sensitive and acute as a well-born woman. "But it is taking a mean advantage of a man to talk at him when he can't answer; that's what my William says. For if he spoke up for himself, they'd call it brawling in church, and turn him out. He ain't liked, Miss Wort; you can't say he is, to tell truth. Not many of the gentlemen does attend church, except them as goes for the look o' the thing, like the old admiral and a few more."

Miss Wort groaned audibly, then cheered up, and with a gush of feeling assured her humble friend that it would not be so in a better world; *there* all would be love and perfect harmony. And so she went on her farther way. Mr. Carnegie and Bessie Fairfax, riding slowly, were still in sight. The next visit Miss Wort had proposed to pay was to a scene of genuine distress, and she saw with regret that the doctor would forestall her. He dismounted and entered a cottage by the roadside, and when she reached it the door was shut, Brownie's bridle hung on the paling, and Bessie was letting Miss Hoyden crop the sweet grass on the bank while she waited. Miss Wort determined to stay for the doctor's exit; she had remedies in her pocket for this case also.

Within the cottage there was a good-looking, motherly woman, and a large-framed young man of nineteen or twenty who sat beside the fire with a ghastly face, and hands hanging down in dark despondency. He had the aspect of one rising from a terrible illness; in fact, he had just come out of prison after a month's hard labor.

"It is his mind that's worst hurt, sir," said his mother, lifting her eyes full of tears to Mr. Carnegie's kind face. "But he has a sore pain in his chest, too, that he never used to have."

"Stand up, Tom, and let me have a look at you," said the doctor, and Tom stood up, grim as death, starved, shamed, unutterably miserable.

"Mr. Wiley's been in, but all he had to say was as he hoped Tom would keep straight now, since he'd found out by unhappy experience as the way of transgressors is hard," the poor woman told her visitor, breaking into a sob as she spoke.

Mr. Carnegie considered the lad, and told him to sit down again, then turned to the window. His eye lit on Miss Wort Standing outside with downcast face, and hands as if she were praying. He tapped on the glass, and as she rushed to the door he met her with a flag of truce in the form of a requisition for aid.

"Miss Wort, I know you are a liberal soul, and here is a case where you can do some real good, if you will be guided," he said firmly. "I was going to appeal to Lady Latimer, but I have put so much on her ladyship's kindness lately—"

"Oh, Mr. Carnegie! I have a right to help here," interrupted Miss Wort. "A *right*, for poor Tom was years and years in my Sunday-school class; so he can't be very bad! Didn't Admiral Parkins and the other magistrates say that they would rather send his master to prison than him, if they had the power?"

"Yes; but he has done his prison now, and the pressing business is to keep him from going altogether to the deuce. I want him to have a good meal of meat three or four times a week, and light garden-work—all he is fit for now. And then we shall see what next."

"I wo'ant list and I wo'ant emigrate; I'll stop where I am and live it down," announced Tom doggedly.

"Yes, yes, that is what I should expect of you, Tom," said Miss Wort. "Then you will recover everybody's good opinion."

"I don't heed folks' opinions, good or bad. I know what I know."

"Well, then, get your cap, and come home to dinner with me; it is roast mutton," said Miss Wort, as if pleading with a fractious child.

Tom rose heavily, took his cap, and followed her out. Mr. Carnegie watched them as they turned down a back lane to the village, the lathy figure of the lad towering by the head and shoulders above the poke bonnet and drab cloak of Miss Wort. He was talking with much violent gesture of arm and fist, and she was silent. But she was not ruminating physic.

"Miss Wort is like one of the old saints—she is not ashamed in any company," said Bessie Fairfax.

"If justice were satisfied with good intentions, Miss Wort would be a blameless woman," said her father.

A few minutes more brought the ride to an end at the doctor's door. And there was a messenger waiting for him with a peremptory call to a distance. It was a very rare chance indeed that he had a whole holiday. His reputation for skill stood high in the Forest, and his practice was extensive in proportion. But he had health, strength, and the heart for it; and in fact it was his prosperity that bore half the burden of his toils.

CHAPTER V.

GREAT-ASH FORD.

A week elapsed. Lady Latimer called twice on Mrs. Carnegie to offer counsel and countenance to Bessie Fairfax. The news that she was going to leave the doctor's house for a rise in the world spread through the village. Mrs. Wiley and Miss Buff called with the same benevolent intentions as my lady. Mrs. Carnegie felt this oppressive, but tried to believe that it was kind; Bessie grew impatient, and wished she could be let alone. Mr. Phipps laughed at her, and asked if she did not enjoy her novel importance. Bessie rejoined with a scorny "No, indeed!" Mr. Phipps retaliated with a grimace of incredulity.

Mr. John Short's letter had been acknowledged, but it did not get itself answered. Mr. Carnegie said, and said again, that there was no hurry about it. In fact, he could not bear to look the loss of Bessie in the face. He took her out to ride with him twice in that seven days, and when his wife meekly urged that the affair must go on and be finished, he replied that as Kirkham had done without Bessie for fourteen years, it might well sustain her absence a little longer. Kirkham, however, having determined that it was its duty to reclaim Bessie, was moved to be imperious. As Mr. Fairfax heard nothing from his lawyer, he went into Norminster to bid him press the thing on. Mr. John Short pleaded to give the Carnegies longer law, and when Mr. Fairfax refused to see any grounds for it, he suggested a visit to Beechhurst as more appropriate than another letter.

"Who is to go? You or I?" asked the squire testily.

"Both, if you like. But you would do best to go alone, to see the little girl and the good people who have taken care of her, and to let the whole matter be transacted on a friendly footing."

Mr. Fairfax shrank from the awkwardness of the task, from the humiliation of it, and said, "Could not Short manage it by post, without a personal encounter?" Mr. Short thought not. Finally, it was agreed that if another week elapsed without bringing the promised answer from Mrs. Carnegie, they would go to Beechhurst together and settle the matter on the spot.

The doctor's procrastination stole the second seven days as it had stolen the first.

"Those people mean to make us some difficulty," said Mr. Fairfax with secret irritation.

Mr. John Short gave no encouragement to this suspicion; instead, he urged the visit to Beechhurst. "We need not give more than three days to it—one to go, one to stay, one to return," said he.

Mr. Fairfax objected that he disliked travelling in a fuss. The lawyer could return when their business was accomplished; as for himself, being in the Forest, he should make a tour of it, the weather favoring. And thus the journey was settled.

There was not a lovelier spot within children's foot-range of Beechhurst than Great-Ash Ford. On a glowing midsummer day it was a perfect paradise for idlers. Not far off, yet half buried out of sight amongst its fruit trees, was a farmhouse thatched with reeds, very old, and weather-stained of all golden, brown, and orange tints. A row of silver firs was in the rear, and a sweep of the softest velvety sward stretched from its narrow domain to the river. To watch the cattle come from the farther pastures in single file across the shallow water at milking-time was as pretty a bit of pastoral as could be seen in all the Forest.

Bessie Fairfax loved this spot with a peculiar affection. Beyond the ford went a footpath, skirting the river, to the village of Brook, where young Musgrave lived—a footpath overshadowed by such giant fir trees, such beeches and vast oaks as are nowhere else in England. The Great Ash was a storm-riven fragment, but its fame continued, and its beauty in sufficient picturesqueness for artistic purposes. Many a painter had made the old russet farmhouse his summer lodging; and one was sketching now where the water had dried in its pebbly bed, and the adventurous little bare feet of Jack and Willie Carnegie were tempting an imaginary peril in quest of the lily which

still whitened the stream under the bank.

It was not often that Bessie, with the children alone, wandered so far afield. But the day had beguiled them, and a furtive hope that Harry Musgrave might be coming to Beechhurst that way had given Bessie courage. He had not been met, however, when it was time to turn their faces towards home. The boys had their forest pony, and mounted him by turns. It was Tom's turn now, and Bessie was leading Jerry, and carrying the socks and boots of the other two in the skirt of her frock, gathered up in one hand. She was a little subdued, a little downcast, it might be with fatigue and the sultry air, or it might be with her present disappointment; but beyond and above all wearied sensations was the jar of unsettledness that had come into her life, and perplexed and confused all its sweet simplicities. She made no haste, but lingered, and let the children linger as they pleased.

The path by the river was not properly a bridle-path, but tourists for pleasure often lost their way in the forest, and emerged upon the roads unexpectedly from such delicious, devious solitudes. Thus it befell to-day when two gentlemen on horseback overtook Bessie, where she had halted with Tom and the pony to let Jack and Willie come up. They were drying their pink toes preparatory to putting on again their shoes and stockings as the strangers rode by.

"Is this the way to Beechhurst, my little gypsy?" quoth the elder of the two, drawing rein for a moment.

Bessie looked up with a sunburnt face under her loose fair hair. "Yes, sir," said she. Then a sudden intelligence gleamed in her eyes, her cheeks blazed more hotly, and she thought to herself, "It is my grandfather!"

The gentlemen proceeded some hundred paces in silence, and then the one whom Bessie suspected as her grandfather said to the other, "Short, that is the girl herself! She has the true Fairfax face as it is painted in a score of our old portraits."

"I believe you are right, sir. Let us be certain—let us ask her name," proposed the lawyer.

Bessie's little troop were now ready to march, and they set off at a run, heedless of her cry to stop a while behind the riders, "Else we shall be in the dust of their heels," she said. Lingering would not have saved her, however; for the strangers were evidently purposed to wait until she came up. Jack was now taking his turn on Jerry, and Jerry with his head towards his stable wanted no leading or encouraging to go. He was soon up with the gentlemen and in advance of them. Next Tom and Willie trotted by and stood, hand-in-hand, gazing at the horses. Bessie's feet lagged as if leaden weights were tied to them, and her conscious air as she glanced in the face of the stranger who had addressed her before set at rest any remaining doubt of who she was.

"Are you Elizabeth Fairfax who lives with Mrs. Carnegie?" he asked in an abrupt voice—the more abrupt and loud for a certain nervousness and agitation that arose in him at the sight of the child.

"Yes, sir, I am," replied Bessie, like a veritable echo of himself.

"Then, as we are travelling the same road, you will be our guide, eh?"

"The children are little; they cannot keep pace with men on horseback," said Bessie. They were a mile and a half from Beechhurst yet. Mr. John Short spoke hastily in an endeavor to promote an understanding, and blundered worse than his client: his suggestion was that they might each take up one of the bairns; but the expression of Bessie's eyes was a reminder that she might not please to trudge at their bridle, though the little and weak ones were to be carried.

"You are considering who is to take you up?" hazarded Mr. Fairfax.

Bessie recovered her countenance and said, as she would have said to any other strangers on horseback who might have invited her to be their guide on foot, "You cannot miss the way. It lies straight before you for nearly a mile over the heath; then you will come to cross-roads and a guide-post. You will be at Beechhurst long before we shall."

The gentlemen accepted their dismissal and rode on. Was Bessie mollified at all by the mechanical courtesy with which their hats were lifted at their departure? They recognized, then, that she was not the little gypsy they had hailed her. It did not enter into her imagination that they had recognized also the true Fairfax face under her dishevelled holiday locks, though she was persuaded that the one who had asked her name was her wicked grandfather: that her grandfather was a wicked man Bessie had quite made up her mind. Mr. John Short admired her behavior. It did not chafe his dignity or alarm him for the peace of his future life. But Mr. Fairfax was not a man of humor; he saw no fun whatever in his prospects with that intrepid child, who had evidently inherited not the Fairfax face only, but the warm Fairfax temper.

"Do you suppose that she guessed who we are?" he asked his man of law.

"Yes, but she did not add to that the probability that we knew that she guessed it, though she looks quick enough."

Mr. Fairfax was not flattered: "I don't love a quick woman. A quick woman is always self-willed and wanting in feminine sweetness."

"There was never a Fairfax yet, man or woman, of mean understanding," said the lawyer. "Since the little girl has the family features, the chances are that she has the family brains, and no lack

of wit and spirit."

Mr. Fairfax groaned. He held the not uncommon opinion that wit and spirit endanger a man's peace and rule in a house. And yet in the case of his son Laurence's Xantippe he had evidence enough that nothing in nature is so discordant and intractable as a fool. Then he fell into a silence, and turned his horse off the highway upon the margin of sward at one side of it. Mr. John Short took the other; and so Bessie and the boys soon lost sight of them.

It was a beautiful forest-road when they had crossed the heath. No hedges shut it in, but here and there the great beech trees stood in clumps or in single grace, and green rides opened vistas into cool depths of shade which had never changed but with the seasons for many ages. It was quite old-world scenery here. Neither clearings nor enclosures had been thought of, and the wild sylvan beauty had all its own perfect way. Presently there were signs of habitation. A curl of smoke from a low roof so lost in its orchard that but for that domestic flag it might have escaped observation altogether; a triangular green with a pond, geese and pigs; more thatched cottages, gardens, small fields, large hedges, high, bushy, unpruned; hedgerow trees; a lonely little chapel in a burial-ground, a woodyard, a wheelwright's shop, a guide-post pointing three ways, a blacksmith's forge at one side of the road, and an old inn opposite; cows, unkempt children; white gates, gravelled drives, chimney-pots of gentility, hidden away in bowers of foliage. Then a glimpse of the church-tower, a sweep in the road; the church and crowded churchyard, the rectory, the doctor's house, and a stone's throw off the "King's Arms" at the top of the town-street, which sloped gently all down hill. Another forge, tiled houses, shops with queer bow-windows and steps up to the half-glazed doors, where a bell rang when the latch was lifted. More white gates, more well-kept shrubberies; green lanes, roads branching, curving to right and left; and everywhere those open spaces of lawn and magnificent beech trees, as if the old town had an unlimited forest-right to scatter its dwellings far and wide, just as caprice or the love of beauty might dictate.

"This is very lovely—it is a series of delightful pictures. Only to live here must be a sort of education," said Mr. Fairfax as they arrived within view of the ancient church and its precincts.

Mr. John Short saw and smelt opportunities of improvement, but he agreed that Beechhurst for picturesqueness was most desirable. Every cottage had its garden, and every garden was ablaze with flowers. Flowers love that moist sun and soil, and thrive joyfully. Gayest of the gay within its trim holly hedge was the Carnegies. The scent of roses and mignonette suffused the warm air of evening. The doctor was going about with a watering-pot, tending his beauties and favorites, while he watched for the children coming home. His name and profession, set forth on a bright brass plate, adorned the gate, from which a straight box-edged path led to the white steps of the porch. The stable entrance was at the side. Everything about the place had an air of well-doing and of means enough; and the doctor himself, whom the strangers eyed observantly from the height of their saddles, looked like his own master in all the independence of easy circumstances.

Visitors to the Forest were too numerous in summer to attract notice. Mr. Carnegie lifted his head for a moment, and then continued his assiduities to a lovely old yellow rose which had manifested delicate symptoms earlier in the season. Next to his wife and children the doctor was fond of roses. The travellers rode past to the door of the "King's Arms," and there dismounted. Half an hour after they were dining in an up-stairs, bow-windowed room which commanded a cheerful prospect up and down the village street, with a view of the church opposite and a side glance of Mr. Carnegie's premises. They witnessed the return of Bessie and the boys, and the fatherly help and reception they had. They saw the doctor lift up Bessie's face to look at her, saw him pat her on the shoulder encouragingly as she made him some brief communication, saw him open the door and send her into the house, and then hurry round to the stable to prevent the boys lingering while Jerry was rubbed down. He had leisure and the heart, it seemed, for all such offices of kindness, and his voice was the signal of instant obedience.

Later in the evening they were all out in the garden—Mrs. Carnegie too. One by one the children were dismissed to bed, and when only Bessie was left, the doctor filled his pipe and had a smoke, walking to and fro under the hedge, over which he conversed at intervals with passing neighbors. His wife and Bessie sat in the porch. The only thing in all this that Mr. Fairfax could except to was the doctor's clay pipe. He denounced smoking as a low, pernicious habit; the lawyer, more tolerant, remarked that it was an increasing habit and good for the revenue, but bad for him: he believed that many a quarrel that might have ripened into a lawsuit had prematurely collapsed in the philosophy that comes of tobacco-smoke.

"Perhaps it would prepare me with equanimity to meet my adversary," said Mr. Fairfax.

Mr. John Short had not intended to give the conversation this turn. He feared that his client was working himself into an unreasonable humor, in which he would be ready to transfer to Mr. Carnegie the reproaches that were due only to himself. He was of a suspicious temper, and had already insinuated that the people who had kept his grandchild must have done it from interested and ulterior motives. The lawyer could not see this, but he did see that if Mr. Fairfax was bent on making a contest of what might be amicably arranged, no power on earth could hinder him. For though it proverbially takes two to make a quarrel, the doctor did not look as if he would disappoint a man of sharp contention if he sought it. The soft word that turns away anger would not be of his speaking.

"It will be through sheer mismanagement if there arise a hitch," Mr. John Short said. "You desire to obtain possession of the child—then you must go quietly about it. She is of an age to speak for

herself, and our long neglect may well have forfeited our claim. She is not your immediate successor; there are infinite possibilities in the lives of your two sons. If the case were dragged before the courts, she might be given her choice where she would live; and if she has a heart she would stay at Beechhurst, with her father's widow—and we are baulked."

"What right has a woman to call herself a man's widow when she has married again?" objected Mr. Fairfax.

"Mrs. Carnegie's acknowledgment of our letter was courteous: we are on the safe side yet," said the lawyer smoothly. "Suppose I continue the negotiation by seeking an interview with her to-morrow morning?"

"Have your own way. I am of no use, it seems. I wish I had stayed at Abbotsmead and had let you come alone."

Mr. John Short echoed the wish with all his heart, though he did not give his thoughts tongue. He began to conjecture that some new aspect of the affair had been presented to his client's mind by the encounter with Elizabeth in the Forest. And he was right. The old squire had conceived for her a sort of paradoxical love at first sight, and was become suddenly jealous of all who had an established hold on her affections. Here was the seed of an unforeseen complication, which was almost sure to become inimical to Bessie's happiness when he obtained the guidance of her life.

When Mr. Carnegie's pipe was out the sunset was past and the evening dews were falling. Nine had struck by the kitchen clock, supper was on the table, and the lamp was shedding its light through the open window.

"Come in, mother, come in, Bessie," said the doctor. "And, Bessie, let us hear over again what was your adventure this afternoon?"

Bessie sat down before her cup of new milk and slice of brown bread, and told her simple tale a second time. It had been rather pooh-poohed the first, but it had made an impression. Said Mr. Carnegie: "And you jumped to the conclusion that this gentleman unknown was your grandfather, even before he asked your name? Now to describe him."

"He came from Hampton, because he rode Jefferson's old gray mare, and the other rode the brown horse with white socks. He is a little like Admiral Parkins—neither fat nor thin. He has white hair and a red and brown color. He looks stern and as proud as Lucifer" (Mrs. Carnegie gave Bessie a reproving glance), "and his voice sounds as if he were. Perhaps he *could* be kind—"

"You don't flatter him in his portrait, Bessie. Apparently you did not take to him?"

"Not at all. I don't believe we shall ever be friends."

"Bessie dear, you must not set your mind against Mr. Fairfax," interposed her mother. "Don't encourage her in her nonsense and prejudice, Thomas; they'll only go against her."

"Now for your grandfather's companion, Bessie: what was he like?"

"I did not notice. He was like everybody else—like Mr. Judson at the Hampton Bank."

"That would be our correspondent, the lawyer, Mr. John Short of Norminster."

Mr. Carnegie dropt the subject after this. His wife launched at him a deprecating look, as much as to say, Would there not be vexation enough for them all, without encouraging Bessie to revolt against lawful authority? The doctor, who was guided more than he knew, thereupon held his peace.

CHAPTER VI.

AGAINST HER INCLINATION.

Mr. Fairfax was not a man of sentimental recollections. Nevertheless, it did occur to him, as the twilight deepened, that somewhere in the encumbered churchyard that he was looking down upon lay his son Geoffry and Geoffry's first wife, Elizabeth. He felt a very lonely old man as he thought of it. None of his sons' marriages were to boast of, but Geoffry's, as it turned out, was the least unfortunate of any—Geoffry's marriage with Elizabeth Bulmer, that is. If he had not approved of that lady, he had tolerated her—pity that he had not tolerated her a little more! The Forest climate had not suited the robust young Woldshire folk. Once Geoffry had appealed to his father to help him to change his benefice, but had experienced a harsh refusal. This was after Elizabeth had suffered from an attack of rheumatism and ague, when she longed to escape from the lovely, damp screens of the Forest to fresh Wold breezes. She died, and Geoffry took another wife. Then he died of what was called in the district marsh-fever. Mr. Fairfax was not impervious to regret, but no regret would bring them to life again.

The next morning, while the dew was on the grass, he made his way into the churchyard, and sought about for Geoffry's grave. He discovered it in a corner, marked by a plain headstone and shaded by an elder bush. It was the stone Geoffry had raised in memory of his Elizabeth, and below her name his was inscribed, with the date of his death. The churchyard was all neatly kept

—this grave not more neatly than the others. Mrs. Carnegie's affections had flowed into other channels, and Bessie had no turn for meditation amongst the tombs. Mr. Fairfax felt rather more forlorn after he had seen his son's last home than before, and might have sunk into a fit of melancholy but for the diversion of his mind to present matters. Just across the road Mr. Carnegie was mounting his horse for his morning ride to the union workhouse, and Bessie was at the gate seeing him off.

The little girl was not at all tired, flushed, or abstracted now. She was cheerful as a lark, fresh, fair, rosy—more like a Fairfax than ever. But when she caught sight of her grandfather over the churchyard wall, she put on her grave airs and mentioned the fact to Mr. Carnegie. Mr. John Short had written already to bespeak an interview with Bessie's guardian, and to announce the arrival of Mr. Fairfax at the "King's Arms." But at the same moment had come an imperative summons from the workhouse, and Mr. Carnegie was not the doctor to neglect a sick poor man for any business with a rich one that could wait. He had bidden his wife receive the lawyer, and was leaving her to appoint the time when Bessie directed his attention to her grandfather. With a sudden movement he turned his horse, touched his hat with his whip-handle, and said, "Sir, are you Mr. Fairfax?" The stranger assented. "Then here is our Bessie, your granddaughter, ready to make your acquaintance. My wife will see your agent. As for myself, I have an errand elsewhere this morning." With that, and a reassuring nod to Bessie, the doctor started off at a hard trot, and the two, thus summarily introduced, stood confronting one another with a wall, the road, and a gate between them. There was an absurdity in the situation that Bessie felt very keenly, and blushes, mirth, and vexation flowed over her tell-tale visage as she waited holding the gate, willing to obey if her grandfather called her, or to stay till he came.

By a singular coincidence, while they were at a halt what to do or say, Lady Latimer advanced up the village street, having walked a mile from her house at Fairfield since breakfast. She was an early riser and a great walker: her life must have been half as long again as the lives of most ladies from the little portion of it she devoted to rest. She was come to Beechhurst now on some business of school, or church, or parish, which she assumed would, unless by her efforts, soon be at a deadlock. But years will tell on the most vigorous frames, and my lady looked so jaded that, if she had fallen in with Mr. Carnegie, he would have reminded her, for her health's sake, that no woman is indispensable. She gave Bessie that sweet smile which was flattering as a caress, and was about to pass on when something wistful in the child's eyes arrested her notice. She stopped and asked if there was any more news from Woldshire. Bessie's round cheeks were two roses as she replied that her grandfather Fairfax had come—that he was *there* at the very moment, watching them from the churchyard.

"Where?" said my lady, and turned about to see.

Mr. Fairfax knew her. He descended the steps, came out at the lych-gate, and met her. At that instant the cast of his countenance reminded Bessie of her cynical friend Mr. Phipps, and a thought crossed her mind that if Lady Latimer had not recognized her grandfather and made a movement to speak, he would not have challenged her. It would have seemed a very remote period to Bessie, but it did not seem so utterly out of date to themselves, that Richard Fairfax in his adolescence had almost run mad for love of my lady in her teens. She had not reciprocated his passion, and in a fit of desperation he had married his wife, the mother of his three sons. Perhaps the cool affection he had borne them all his life was the measure of his indifference to that poor lady, and that indifference the measure of his vindictive constancy to his first idol. They had not seen each other for many years; their courses had run far apart, and they had grown old. But a woman never quite forgets to feel interested in a man who has once worshipped her, though he may long since have got up off his knees and gone and paid his devotions at other shrines. Lady Latimer had not been so blessed in her life and affections that she could afford to throw away even a flattering memory. Bessie's talk of her grandfather had brought the former things to her mind. Her face kindled at the sight of her friend, and her voice was the soul of kindness. Mr. Fairfax looked up and pitied her, and lost his likeness to Mr. Phipps. Ambitious, greedy of power, of rank, and riches—thus and thus had he once contemned her; but there was that fascinating smile, and so she would charm him if they met some day in Hades.

Bessie went in-doors to apprise her mother of the visitors who were at hand. Mr. Fairfax and Lady Latimer stood for a quarter of an hour or longer in the shade of the churchyard trees, exchanging news, the chief news being the squire's business at Beechhurst. Lady Latimer offered him her advice and countenance for his granddaughter, and assured him that Bessie had fine qualities, much simplicity, and the promise of beauty. Meanwhile Mrs. Carnegie, forewarned of the impending interview, collected herself and prepared for it. She sent Bessie into the rarely-used drawing-room to pull up the blinds and open the glass door upon the lawn; and, further to occupy the nervous moments, bade her gather a few roses for the china bowl on the round table. Bessie had just finished her task, and was standing with a lovely Devoniensis in her hand, when her grandfather appeared, supported by Lady Latimer.

Mr. Fairfax was received by Mrs. Carnegie with courtesy, but without effusion. It was the anxious desire of her heart that no ill-will should arise because of Bessie's restoration. She was one of those unaffected, reasonable, calm women whom circumstances rarely disconcert. Then her imagination was not active. She did not pensively reflect that here was her once father-in-law, but she felt comfortable in the consciousness that Bessie had on a nice clean pink gingham frock and a crimped frill round her white throat, in which she looked as pretty as she could look.

Bessie's light hair, threaded with gold, all crisp and wavy, and her pure bright complexion, gave her an air of health and freshness not to be surpassed. Her beauty was not too imposing—it was of everyday; and though her wicked grandfather seemed to frown at her with his bushy gray brows, and to search her through with his cold keen eyes, he was not displeased by her appearance. He was gratified that she took after his family. Bessie's expression as she regarded him again made him think of that characteristic signature of her royal namesake, "Yours, as you demean yourself, ELIZABETH," and he framed a resolution to demean himself with all the humility and discretion at his command. He experienced an impulse of affection towards her stronger than anything he had ever felt for his sons: perhaps he discerned in her a more absolute strain of himself. His sons had all taken after their mother.

Mrs. Carnegie's reception propitiated Mr. Fairfax still further. She said a few words in extenuation of the delay there had been in replying to his communication through Mr. John Short; and he was able to reply, even sincerely, that he was glad it had occurred, since it had occasioned his coming to the Forest. Bessie reddened; she had an almost irresistible desire to say something gruff—she abominated these compliments. She was vexed that Lady Latimer should be their witness, and bent her brows fiercely. My lady did not understand the signs of her temper. She was only amused by the flash of that harmless fire, and serenely interposed to soothe and encourage the little girl. Oh, if she could have guessed how she was offending!

"Can you spare Bessie for a few hours, Mrs. Carnegie? If you can, I will carry her off to luncheon at Fairfield. Mr. Fairfax, whom I knew when I was not much more than her age, will perhaps come too?" said my lady, and Mr. Fairfax assented.

But tears rushed to Bessie's eyes, and she would have uttered a most decisive "No," had not Mrs. Carnegie promptly answered for her that it was a nice plan. "Your dress is quite sufficient, Bessie," added my lady, and she was sent up stairs to put on her hat. Did she stamp her angry little foot as she obeyed? Probably. And she cried, for to go to Fairfield thus was horribly against her inclination. Nevertheless, half an hour later, when my lady had transacted the business that brought her to Beechhurst so opportunely, Bessie found herself walking gently along the road at her side, and on her other hand her wicked grandfather, chatting of a variety of past events in as disengaged and pleasant a fashion as an old gentleman of sixty-five, fallen unexpectedly into the company of an old friend, could do. As Bessie cooled down, she listened and began to speculate whether he might possibly be not so altogether wicked as his recent misbehavior had led her to conclude; then she began to think better things of him in a general way, but unfortunately it did not occur to her that he might possibly have conceived a liking to herself. Love, that best solvent of difficulties, was astray between them from the beginning.

Bessie was not invited to talk, but Lady Latimer gave her a kind glance at intervals. Yet for all this encouragement her heart went pit-a-pat when they came in sight of Fairfield; for about the gate was gathered a group of young ladies—to Bessie's imagination at this epoch the most formidable of created beings. There was one on horseback, a most playful, sweet Margaret, who was my lady's niece; and another, a dark-eyed, pretty thing, cuddling a brisk brown terrier—Dora and Dandy they were; and a tall, graceful Scotch lassie, who ran to meet Lady Latimer, and fondled up to her with the warmest affection; and two little girls besides, sisters to Dora, very frank to make friends. Each had some communication in haste for my lady, who, when she could get leave to speak, introduced her niece to Mr. Fairfax, and recommended Bessie to the attention of her contemporaries. Forthwith they were polite. Dora offered Dandy to Bessie's notice; Margaret courted admiration for Beauty; the others looked on with much benevolence, and made cordial remarks and lively rejoinders. Bessie was too shy to enjoy their affability; she felt awkward, and looked almost repulsively proud. The younger ones gradually subsided. Margaret had often met Bessie riding with Mr. Carnegie, and they knew each other to bow to. Bessie patted Beauty's neck and commended her—a great step towards friendliness with her mistress—and Margaret said enthusiastically, "Is she not a darling? She shall have sugar, she shall! Oh, Aunt Olympia, Beauty went so well to-day!" Then to Bessie: "That is a handsome little mare you ride: what a sharp trot you go at sometimes!"

"It is my father's pace—we get over the ground fast. Miss Hoyden, she is called—she is almost thoroughbred."

"You ride, Elizabeth? That is a good hearing," said Mr. Fairfax. "You shall have a Miss Hoyden at Abbotsmead."

Bessie colored and turned her head for a moment, but said nothing. Margaret whispered that *would* be nice. Poor Bessie's romance was now known to the young ladies of the neighborhood, and she was more interesting to them than she knew.

Lady Latimer led the way with Mr. Fairfax up the drive overhung with flowering trees and bushes. On the steps before the open hall-door stood Mr. Wiley, whom my lady had bidden to call and stay to luncheon when his pastoral visits brought him into the vicinity of Fairfield. He caught sight of his young neighbor, Bessie Fairfax, and on the instant, with that delicious absence of tact which characterized him, he asked brusquely, "How came *you* here?" Bessie blushed furiously, and no one answered—no one seemed to hear but herself; so Mr. Wiley added confidentially, "It is promotion indeed to come to Fairfield. Keep humble, Bessie."

"Wait for me, Miss Fairfax," said Margaret as she dismounted. "Come to my room." And Bessie went without a word, though her lips were laughing. She was laughing at herself, at her incongruousness, at her trivial mortifications. Margaret would set her at her ease, and Bessie

learnt that she had a rare charm in her hair, both from its color and the manner of its growth. It was lovely, Margaret told her, and pressed its crisp shining abundance with her hand delicately.

"That is a comfort in adverse circumstances," said Bessie with a light in her eyes. Then they ran down stairs to find the morning-room deserted and all the company gone in to luncheon.

The elders of the party were placed at a round table, a seat for Bessie being reserved by Lady Latimer. Two others were empty, into one of which dropt Margaret; the other was occupied by Mr. Bernard, the squire of the next parish, to whom Margaret was engaged. Their marriage, in fact, was close at hand, and Beechhurst was already devising its rejoicings for the wedding-day.

The little girls were at a side-table, sociable and happy in under tones. Bessie believed that she might have been happy too—at any rate, not quite so miserable—if Mr. Wiley had not been there to lift his brows and intimate surprise at the honor that was done her. She hated her exaltation. She quoted inwardly, "They that are low need fear no fall," and trembled for what he might be moved to say next. There was a terrible opportunity of silence, for at first nobody talked. A crab of brobdignagian proportions engrossed the seniors. Bessie and the younger ones had roast lamb without being asked what they would take, and Bessie, all drawbacks notwithstanding, found herself capable of eating her dinner. The stillness was intense for a few minutes. Bessie glanced at one or two of the intent faces preparing crab with a close devotion to the process that assured satisfaction in the result, and then she caught Lady Latimer's eye. They both smiled, and suddenly the talk broke out all round; my lady beginning to inquire of the rector concerning young Musgrave of Brook, whether he knew him. Bessie listened with breathless interest to this mention of her dear comrade.

"Yes, I know him, in a way—a clever youth, ambitious of a college education," said Mr. Wiley. "I have tried my best to dissuade him, but his mind is bent on rising in the world. Like little Christie, the wheelwright's son, who must be an artist."

"Why discourage young Musgrave? I heard from his father a few days ago that he had won a scholarship at Hampton worth fifty pounds a year, tenable for three years."

"That is news, indeed! Moxon has coached him well: I sent him to poor Moxon. He wanted to read with me, but—you understand—I could not exactly receive him while Lord Rafferty and Mr. Duffer are in my house. So I sent him to poor Moxon, who is glad of a pupil when he can get one."

"I wish Mr. Moxon better preferment. As for young Musgrave, he must have talent. I was driving through Brook yesterday, and I called at the manor-house. The mother is a modest person of much natural dignity. The son was out. I left a message that I should be glad to see him, and do something for him, if he would walk over to Fairfield."

"He will not come, I warrant," exclaimed Mr. Wiley. "He is a radical fellow, and would say, as soon as look at you, that he had no wish to be encumbered with patronage."

"He would not say so to Lady Latimer," cried Bessie Fairfax. Her voice rang clear as a bell, and quite startled the composed, refined atmosphere. Everybody looked at her with a smile. My lady exchanged a glance with her niece.

"Then young Musgrave is a friend of yours?" she said, addressing her little guest.

"We are cousins," was Bessie's unhesitating reply.

"I was not aware of it," remarked her grandfather drily.

Bessie was not daunted. Mrs. Musgrave was Mrs. Carnegie's elder sister. Young Musgrave and the young Carnegies called cousins, and while she was one of the Carnegies she was a cousin too. Besides, Harry Musgrave was the nephew of her father's second wife, and their comradeship dated from his visits to the rectory while her father was alive. She did not offer explanations, but in her own mind she peremptorily refused to deny or relinquish that cousinship. She went on eating in a dream of confusion, very rosy as to the cheeks and very downcast as to the eyes, but not at all ashamed. The little girls wondered with great amazement. Mr. Wiley did not relish his rebuke, and eyed Bessie with anything but charity. His bad genius set him expatiating further on the hazardous theme of ambition in youths of low birth and mean estate, with allusions to Brook and the wheelwright's shed that could not be misunderstood. Mr. Fairfax, observing his granddaughter, felt uneasy. Lady Latimer generalized to stop the subject. Suddenly said Bessie, flashing at the rector, and quoting Mr. Carnegie, "You attribute to class what belongs to character." Then, out of her own irrepressible indignation, she added, "Harry Musgrave is as good a gentleman as you are, and little Christie too, though he may be only a carpenter's son." (Which was not saying much for them, as Mr. Phipps remarked when he was told the story.)

Lady Latimer stood up and motioned to all the young people to come away. They vanished in retiring, some one road, some another, and for the next five minutes Bessie was left with my lady alone, angry and exquisitely uncomfortable, but not half alive yet to the comic aspect of her very original behavior. She glanced with shy deprecation in Lady Latimer's face, and my lady smiled with a perfect sympathy in her sensations.

"You are not afraid to speak up for an absent friend, but silence is the best answer to such impertinences," said she, and then went on to talk of Abbotsmead and Kirkham till Bessie was almost cheated of her distressing self-consciousness.

Fairfield was a small house, but full of prettiness. Bessie Fairfax had never seen anything so like a picture as the drawing-room, gay with flowers, perfumed, airy, all graceful ease and negligent comfort. From a wide-open glass door a flight of steps descended to the rose-garden, now in its beauty. Paintings, mirrors decorated the walls; books strewed the tables. There were a hundred things, elegant, grotesque, and useless, to look at and admire. How vivid, varied, delicious life must be thus adorned! Bessie thought, and lost herself a little while in wonder and curiosity. Then she turned to Lady Latimer again. My lady had lost herself in reverie too; her countenance had an expression of weary restlessness and unsatisfied desire. No doubt she had her private cares. Bessie felt afraid, as if she had unwittingly surprised a secret.

Visitors were announced. The gentlemen came from the dining-room. Mr. Bernard and Margaret appeared from the rose-garden. So did some of the little girls, and invited Bessie down the steps. There was a general hum of voices and polite laughter. More visitors, more conversation, more effort. Bessie began to feel tired of the restraint, and looked up to her grandfather, who stood in the doorway talking to Margaret. The next minute he came to her, and said, with as much consideration as if she were a grown-up person, "You have had enough of this, Elizabeth. It is time we were returning to Beechhurst."

Margaret understood. "You wish to go? Come, then; I will take you to my room to put on your hat," said she.

They escaped unnoticed except by Lady Latimer. She followed them for a hasty minute, and began to say, "Margaret I have been thinking that Bessie Fairfax will do very well to take Winny's place as bridesmaid next week, since Winny cannot possibly come."

"Oh no, no, no!" cried Bessie, clasping her hands in instant, pleading alarm.

Margaret laughed and bade her hush. "Nobody contradicts Aunt Olympia," she said in a half whisper.

"I will speak to Mr. Fairfax and arrange it at once," Lady Latimer added, and disappeared to carry out her sudden intention.

Bessie reiterated her prayer to be left alone. "You will do very well. You are very nice," rejoined Margaret, not at all understanding her objections. "White over blue and blue bonnets are the bridesmaids' colors. My cousin Winny has caught the measles. Her dress will fit you, but Aunt Olympia's maid will see to all that. You must not refuse me."

When they went down stairs Bessie found that her grandfather had accepted for her Lady Latimer's invitation, and that he had also accepted for himself an invitation to the wedding. Nor yet were the troubles of the day over.

"Are you going to walk?" said Mr. Wiley, coming out into the hall. "Then I shall have much pleasure in walking with you. Our roads are the same."

Bessie's dismay was so evident as to be ludicrous. Mr. Wiley was either very forgiving or very pachydermatous. Lady Latimer kissed her, and whispered a warning "Take care!" and she made a sign of setting a watch on her lips.

"So you will not have to be a teacher, after all, Bessie?" the judicious rector took occasion to say the moment they were clear of Fairfield. Mr. Fairfax listened. Bessie felt hot and angry: what need was there to inflict this on her grandfather? "Was it a dressmaker or a school-mistress Lady Latimer last proposed to make of you? I forget," said Mr. Wiley with an air of guileless consideration as he planted his thorn.

"I never heard that there was any idea of dressmaking: I am not fond of my needle," said Bessie curtly.

"Yes, there was. Her ladyship spoke of it to Mrs. Wiley. We hoped that you might be got into Madame Michaud's establishment at Hampton to learn the business. She is first-class. My wife patronizes her."

"I wish people would mind their own business."

"There is no harm done. But the remembrance of what you have been saved from should keep you meek and lowly in spirit, Bessie. I have been grieved to-day, *deeply grieved*, to see that you already begin to feel uplifted." Mr. Wiley dwelt in unctuous italics on his regret, and waved his head slowly in token of his mournfulness. Bessie turned scarlet and held her peace.

"You must be very benevolent people here," said Mr. Fairfax sarcastically. "Is Mr. Carnegie so poor and helpless a man that his kind neighbors must interfere to direct his private affairs?"

Mr. Wiley's eyes glittered as he replied, parrying the thrust and returning it: "No, no, but he has a large and increasing family of his own; and with little Bessie thrown entirely on his hands besides, friends might well feel anxious how she was to be provided for—Lady Latimer especially, who interests herself for all who are in need. Her ladyship has a great notion that women should be independent."

"My father is perfectly able and perfectly willing to do everything that is necessary for his children. No one would dream of meddling with us who knew him," cried Bessie impetuously. Her voice shook, she was so annoyed that she was in tears. Mr. Fairfax took her hand, squeezed it

tight, and retained it as they walked on. She felt insulted for her dear, good, generous father. She was almost sobbing as she continued in his praise: "He has insured his life for us. I have heard him say that we need never want unless by our own fault. And the little money that was left for me when my real father died has never been touched: it was put into the funds to save up and be a nest-egg for me when I marry."

Mr. Wiley's teeth gleamed his appreciation of this *naïve* bit of information. And even her grandfather could not forbear a smile, though he was touched. "I am convinced that you have been in good hands, Elizabeth," said he warmly. "It was not against Mr. Carnegie that any neglect of natural duty was insinuated, but against me."

Bessie looked down and sighed. Mr. Wiley deprecated the charge of casting blame anywhere. Mr. Fairfax brusquely turned the conversation to matters not personal—to the forest-laws, the common-rights and enclosure acts—and Bessie kept their pace, which quickened imperceptibly, ruminating in silence her experiences of the day. Mortification mingled with self-ridicule was uppermost. To be a bridesmaid amongst the grand folks at Fairfield—could anything be more absurdly afflicting? To be a seamstress at Madame Michaud's—the odious idea of it! Poor Bessie, what a blessing to her was her gift of humor, her gift for seeing the laughable side of things and people, and especially the laughable side of herself and her trials!

Mr. Wiley was shaken off on the outskirts of the village, where a ragged, unkempt laborer met him, and insisted on exchanging civilities and conventional objections to the weather. "We wants a shower, parson."

"A shower! You're *wet* enough," growled Mr. Wiley with a gaze of severe reprobation. "And you were drunk on Sunday."

"Yes! I'se wet every day, and at my own expense, too," retorted the delinquent with a grin.

Mr. Fairfax and Bessie walked on to the "King's Arms," and there for the present said good-bye. Bessie ran home to tell her adventures, but on the threshold she met a check in the shape of Jack, set to watch for her return and tell her she was wanted. Mr. John Short was come, and was with Mrs. Carnegie in the drawing-room.

"I say, Bessie, you are not going away, are you?" asked the boy, laying violent hands on her when he had acquitted himself of his message. "Biddy says you are. I say you sha'n't."

Mrs. Carnegie heard her son's unabashed voice in the hall, and opening the door, she invited Bessie in.

CHAPTER VII.

HER FATE IS SEALED.

Mr. John Short rose as Miss Fairfax entered, and bowed to her with deference. Bessie, being forbidden by her mother to retreat, sat down with ostentatious resignation to bear what was to come. But her bravado was not well enough grounded to sustain her long. The preliminaries were already concluded when she arrived, and Mrs. Carnegie was giving utterance to her usual regret that her dear little girl had not been taught to speak French or play on the piano. Mr. Fairfax's plenipotentiary looked grave. His own daughters were perfect in those accomplishments —"Indispensable to the education of a finished gentlewoman," he said.

Thereupon Bessie, still in excited spirits, delivered her mind with considerable force and freedom. "It is nonsense to talk of making me a finished gentlewoman," she added: "I don't care to be anything but a woman of sense."

Mr. John Short answered her shrewdly: "There is no reason why you should not be both, Miss Fairfax. A woman of sense considers the fitness of things. And at Abbotsmead none but gentlewomen are at home."

Bessie colored and was silent. "We have been proposing that you should go to school for a year or two, dear," said Mrs. Carnegie persuasively. Tears came into Bessie's eyes. The lawyer's letter had indeed mentioned school, but she had not anticipated that the cruel suggestion would be carried out.

"Shall it be an English school or a school in France?" said Mr. Short, taking the indulgent cue, to avoid offence and stave off resistance. But his affectation of meekness was more provoking than his sarcasm. Bessie fired up indignantly at such unworthy treatment.

"You are deciding and settling everything without a word to my father. How do you know that he will let me go away? I don't want to go," she said.

"That *is* settled, Bessie darling. *You have to go*—so don't get angry about it," said Mrs. Carnegie with firmness. "You may have your choice about a school at home or abroad, and that is all. Now be good, and consider which you would like best."

Bessie's tears overflowed. "I hate girls!" she said with an asperity that quite shamed her mother,

"they are so silly." Mr. John Short with difficulty forbore a smile. "And they don't like me!" she added with gusty wrath. "I never get on with girls, never! I don't know what to say to them. And when they find out that I can't speak French or play on the piano, they will laugh at me." Her own countenance broke into a laugh as she uttered the prediction, but she laughed with tears still in her eyes.

The lawyer nodded his head in a satisfied way. "It will all come right in time," said he. "If you can make fun of the prospect of school, the reality will not be very terrible to a young lady of your courageous temper."

Poor Bessie was grave again in an instant. She felt that she had let her fate slip out of her hands. She could not now declare her refusal to go to school at all; she could only choose what kind of school she would go to. "If it must be one or another, let it be French," she said, and rushed from the room in a tempestuous mood.

Mrs. Carnegie excused her as very affectionate, and as tired and overdone. She looked tired and overdone herself, and out of spirits as well. Mr. John Short said a few sympathetic words, and volunteered a few reasonable pledges for the future, and then took his leave—the kindest thing he could do, since thus he set the mother at liberty to go and comfort her child. Her idea of comforting and Bessie's idea of being comforted consisted, for the nonce, in having a good cry together.

When his agent came to explain to Mr. Fairfax how far he had carried his negotiations for his granddaughter's removal from Beechhurst, the squire demurred. The thorn which Mr. Wiley had planted in his conscience was rankling sorely; his pride was wounded too—perhaps that was more hurt even than his conscience—but he felt that he had much to make up to the child, not for his long neglect only, but for the indignities that she had been threatened with. She might have been apprenticed to a trade; he might have had to negotiate with some shopkeeper to cancel her indentures. He did not open his mind to Mr. John Short on this matter; he kept it to himself, and made much more of it in his imagination than it deserved. Bessie had already forgotten it, except as a part of the odd medley that her life seemed coming to, and in the recollection it never vexed her; but it was like a grain of sand in her grandfather's eye whenever he reviewed the incidents of this time. He gathered from the lawyer's account of the interview how little acceptable to Bessie was the notion of being sent to school, and asked why she should not go to Abbotsmead at once?

"There is no reason why she should not go to Abbotsmead if you will have a lady in the house—a governess," said Mr. John Short.

"I will have no governess in the house; I suppose she is too young to be alone?"

"Well, yes. Mrs. Carnegie would not easily let her go unless in the assurance that she will be taken care of. She has been a good deal petted and spoiled. She is a fine character, but she would give you nothing but trouble if you took her straight home."

Lady Latimer, with whom Mr. Fairfax held further counsel, expressed much the same opinion. She approved of Elizabeth, but it was impossible to deny that she had too much self-will, that she was too much of the little mistress. She had been sovereign in the doctor's house; to fall amongst her equals in age and seniors in school would be an excellent discipline. Mr. Fairfax acquiesced, and two or three years was the term of purgatory to which Bessie heard herself condemned. It was no use crying. My lady encouraged her to anticipate that she would be very tolerably happy at school. She was strong enough not to mind its hardships; some girls suffered miserably from want of health, but she had vigor and spirits to make the best of circumstances. Bessie was flattered by this estimate of her pluck, but all the same she preferred to avert her thoughts from the contemplation of the strange future that was to begin in September. It was July now, and a respite was to be given her until September.

Mr. John Short—his business done—returned to Norminster, and Mr. Fairfax and Mr. Carnegie met. They were extremely distant in their behavior. Mr. Carnegie refused to accept any compensation for the charges Bessie had put him to, and made Mr. Fairfax wince at his information that the child had earned her living twice over by her helpfulness in his house. He did not mean to be unkind, but only to set forth his dear little Bessie's virtues.

"She will never need to go a-begging, Bessie won't," said he. "She can turn her hand to most things in a family. She has capital sense, and a warm heart for those who can win it."

Mr. Fairfax bowed solemnly, as not appreciating this catalogue of homely graces. The doctor looked very stern. He had subdued his mind to the necessity, but he felt his loss in every fibre of his affections. No one, except Bessie herself, half understood the sacrifice he was put upon making, for he loved her as fondly as if she had been his very own; and he knew that once divided from his household she never would be like his own again. But her fate was settled, and the next event in her experience seemed to set a seal upon it.

The day Mr. John Short left the Forest, Beechhurst began to set up its arches and twine its garlands for the wedding of Lady Latimer's niece. Bessie made a frantic effort to escape from the bridesmaid's honors that were thrust upon her, but met with no sympathy except from her father, and even he did not come to her rescue. He bade her never mind, it would soon be over. One

sensible relief she had in the midst of her fantastic distress: Harry Musgrave was away, and would not see her in her preposterous borrowed plumes. He had gone with Mr. Moxon on a week's excursion to Wells, and would not return until after the wedding. Bessie was full of anxieties how her dear old comrade would treat her now. She found some people more distant and respectful, she did not wish that Harry should be more respectful—that would spoil their intercourse.

Jolly Miss Buff was an immense help, stay, and comfort to her little friend till through this perplexing ordeal. She was full of harmless satire. She proposed to give Bessie lessons in manners, and to teach her the court curtsey. She chuckled over her reluctance to obey commands to tea at the rectory, and flattered her with a prediction that she would enjoy the grand day of the wedding at Fairfield. "I know who the bridesmaids are, and you will be the prettiest of the bunch," she assured her. "Don't distress yourself: a bridesmaid has nothing to do but to look pretty and stand to be stared at. It will be better fun at the children's feast than at the breakfast—a wedding breakfast is always slow—but you will see a host of fine people, which is amusing, and since Lady Latimer wishes it, what need you care? You are one of them, and your grandfather will be with you."

Before the day came Bessie had been wrought up to fancy that she should almost enjoy her little dignity. Its garb became her well. The Carnegie boys admired her excessively when she was dressed and set off to Fairfield, all alone in her glory, in a carriage with a pair of gray horses and a scarlet postilion; and when she walked into church, one of a beautiful bevy of half a dozen girls in a foam of white muslin and blue ribbons, Mrs. Carnegie was not quick enough to restrain Jack from pointing a stumpy little finger at her and crying out, "There's our Bessie!" Bessie with a blush and a smile the more rallied round the bride, and then looked across the church at her mother with a merry, happy face that was quite lovely.

Mr. Fairfax, who had joined the company at the church door, at this moment directed towards her the notice of a gentleman who was standing beside him. "That is Elizabeth—my little granddaughter," said he. The gentleman thus addressed said, "Oh, indeed!" and observed her with an air of interest.

Then the solemnity began. There was a bishop to marry the happy couple (Bessie supposed they were happy, though she saw the blossoms quiver on the bride's head, and the bridegroom's hand shaking when he put the ring on her finger), and it was soon done—very soon, considering that it was to last for life. They drove back to Fairfield with a clamor of bells—Beechhurst had a fine old peal—and a shrill cheering of children along the roadside. Lady Latimer looked proud and delighted, and everybody said she had made an excellent match for her charming niece.

Bessie Fairfax was in the same carriage returning as the gentleman whose attention had been called to her by her grandfather in the church. He paid her the compliment of an attempt at conversation. He also sat by her at the breakfast, and was kind and patronizing: her grandfather informed her that he was a neighbor of his in Woldshire, Mr. Cecil Burleigh. Bessie blushed, and made a slight acknowledgment with her head, but had nothing to say. He was a very fine gentleman indeed, this Mr. Cecil Burleigh—tall and straight, with a dark, handsome face and an expression of ability and resolution. His age was seven-and-twenty, and he had the appearance of an accomplished citizen of the world. Not to make a mystery of him, *he* was the poor young gentleman of great talents and great expectations of whom the heads of families had spoken as a suitable person to marry Elizabeth Fairfax and to give the old house of Abbotsmead a new lease of life. He was a good-natured person, but he found Bessie rather heavy in hand; she was too young, she had no small talk, she was shy of such a fine gentleman. They were better amused, both of them, in the rose-garden afterward—Bessie with Dora and Dandy, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh with Miss Julia Gardiner, the most beautiful young lady, Bessie thought, that she had ever seen. She had a first impression that they were lovers.

Mr. Fairfax had been entirely satisfied by his granddaughter's behavior in her novel circumstances. Bessie was pretty and she was pleased. Nothing was expected of her either to do or to say. She had a frank, bright manner that was very taking, and a pleasant voice when she allowed it to be heard. Lady Latimer found time to smile at her once or twice, and to give her a kind, encouraging word, and when the guests began to disperse she was told that she must stay for a little dance there was to be in the evening amongst the young people in the house. She stayed, and danced every dance with as joyous a vivacity as if it had been Christmas in the long parlor at Brook and Harry Musgrave her partner; and she confessed voluntarily to her mother and Mr. Phipps afterward that she had been happy the whole day.

"You see, dear Bessie, that I was right to insist upon your going," said her mother.

"And the kettles never once bumped the earthen pot—eh?" asked Mr. Phipps mocking.

"You forget," said Bessie, "I'm a little kettle myself now;" and she laughed with the gayest assurance.

CHAPTER VIII.

BESSIE'S FRIENDS AT BROOK.

That respite till September was indeed worth much to Bessie. Her mind was gently broken in to changes. Mr. Fairfax vanished from the scene, and Lady Latimer appeared on it more frequently. My lady even took upon her (out of the interest she felt in her old friend) to find a school for Bessie, and found one at Caen which everybody seemed to agree would do. The daughters of the Liberal member for Hampton were receiving their education there, and Mrs. Wiley knew the school.

It was a beautiful season in the Forest—never more beautiful—and Bessie rode with her father whenever he could go with her. Then young Musgrave came back from Wells. Perhaps it is unnecessary to repeat that Bessie was very fond of young Musgrave. It was quoted of her, when she was a fat little trot of seven years old and he a big boy of twelve, that she had cried herself to sleep because he had refused her a kiss, being absorbed in some chemical experiment that smelt abominably when her mother called her to bed. The denial was singularly unkind, and even ungrateful that evening, because Bessie had not screamed when he electrified her round, wee nose. She was still so tender at heart for him that she would probably have cried now if he had roughed her. But they were friends, the best of friends—as good as brother and sister. Harry talked of himself incessantly; but what hero to her so interesting? Not even his mother was so indulgent to his harmless vanities as Bessie, or thought him so surely predestined to be one of the great men of his day.

It was early yet to say that Harry Musgrave was born under a lucky star, but his friends did say it. He was of a most popular character, not too wise or good to dispense with indulgence, or too modest to claim it. At twelve he was a clumsy lad, bold, audacious, pleasant-humored, with a high, curly, brown head, fine bright eyes, and no features to mention. At twenty he had grown up into a tall, manly fellow, who meant to have his share in the world if courage could capture it. Plenty of staying power, his schoolmasters said he had, and it was the consciousness of force in reserve that gave him much of his charm. Jealousy, envy, emulation could find no place in him; he had been premature in nothing, and still took his work at sober pace. He had a wonderful gift of concentrativeness, and a memory to match. He loved learning for its own sake far more than for the honor of excelling, and treated the favors of fortune with such cool indifference that the seers said they were sure some day to fall upon him in a shower. He had his pure enthusiasms and lofty ambitions, as what young man of large heart and powerful intellect has not? And he was now in the poetic era of life.

Bessie Fairfax had speculated much and seriously beforehand how Harry Musgrave would receive the news that she was going to be a lady. He received it with most sovereign equanimity.

"You always were a lady, and a very nice little lady, Bessie. I don't think they can mend you," said he.

The communication and flattering response were made at Brook, in the sitting-room of the farm—a spacious, half-wainscoted room, with dark polished floor, and a shabby old Persian carpet in the centre of it. A very picture-like interior it was, with the afternoon sun pouring through its vine-shaded open lattice, though time and weather-stains were on the ceiling and pale-colored walls, and its scant furniture was cumbrous, worn, and unbeautiful. The farm-house had been the manor once, and was fast falling to pieces. Mr. Musgrave's landlord was an impoverished man, but he could not sell a rood of his land, because his heir was a cousin with whom he was at feud. It was a daily trial to Mrs. Musgrave's orderly disposition that she had not a neat home about her, but its large negligence suited her husband and son. This bare sitting-room was Harry's own, and with the wild greenery outside was warm, sweet, and fresh in hot summer weather, though a few damp days filled it with odors of damp and decay. It was a cell in winter, but in July a bower.

And none the less a bower for those two young people in it this afternoon. Mr. Carnegie had dropped Bessie at Brook in the morning, and young Musgrave was to escort her home in the cool of the evening. His mother and she had spent an hour together since the midday dinner, and now the son of the house had called for her. They sat one on each side of the long oak board which served young Musgrave for a study-table and stood endwise towards the middle lattice. Harry had a new poem before him, which he was tired of reading. The light and shadow played on both their faces. There was a likeness for those who could see it—the same frank courage in their countenances, the same turn for reverie in their eyes. Harry felt lazy. The heat, the drowsy hum of bees in the vine-blossoms, and the poetry-book combined, had made him languid. Then he had bethought him of his comrade. Bessie came gladly, and poured out in full recital the events that had happened to her of late. To these she added the projects and anticipations of the future.

"Dear little Bessie! she fancies she is on the eve of adventures. Terribly monotonous adventures a girl's must be!" said the conceit of masculine twenty.

"I wish I had been a boy—it must be much better fun," was the whimsical rejoinder of feminine fifteen.

"And you should have been my chum," said young Musgrave.

"That is just what I should have liked. Caen is nearer to Beechhurst than it is to Woldshire, so I shall come home for my holidays. Perhaps I shall never see you again, Harry, when I am transported to Woldshire." This with a pathetic sigh.

"Never is a long day. I shall find you out; and if I don't, you'll hear of me. I mean to be heard of, Bessie."

"Oh yes, Harry, I am sure you will. Shall you write a book? Will it be a play? They always seem to walk to London with a play in their pockets, a tragedy that the theatres won't look at; and then their troubles begin."

Young Musgrave smiled superior at Bessie's sentiment and Bessie's syntax. "There is the railway, and Oxford is on the road. I intend always to travel first-class," said he.

Bessie understood him to speak literally. "First-class! Oh, but that is too grand! In the *Lives* they never have much money. Some are awfully poor—*starving*: Savage was, and Chatterton and Otway."

"Shabby, disreputable vagabonds!" answered young Musgrave lightly.

"And Samuel Johnson and ever so many more," continued Bessie, pleading his sympathy.

"There is no honor in misery; it is picturesque to read about, but it is a sorry state in reality to be very poor. Some poets have been scamps. I shall not start as the prodigal son, Bessie, for I love not swinish company nor diet of husks."

"The prodigal came home to his father, Harry."

"So he did, but I have my doubts whether he stayed."

There was a silence. Bessie had always believed in the prodigal as a good son after his repentance. Any liberty of speculation as concerning Scripture gave her pause; it was a new thing at Beechhurst and at Brook.

Young Musgrave furled over the pages of his book. A sheet of paper, written, interlined, blotted with erasures, flew out. He laid a quick hand upon it; not so quick, however, but that Bessie had caught sight of verses—verses of his own, too. She entreated him to read them. He excused himself. "Do, Harry; please do," she urged, but he was inexorable. He had read her many a fine composition before—many a poem crowded with noble words and lofty sentiments; but for once he was reserved, firm, secret. He told Bessie that she would not admire this last effort of his muse: it was a parody, an imitation of the Greek.

"Girls have no relish for humor: they don't understand it. It is sheer profanity to them," said he. Let him show her his prize-books instead.

Bessie was too humble towards Harry to be huffed. She admired the prize-books, then changed the subject, and spoke of Lady Latimer, inquiring if he had availed himself of her invitation yet to call at Fairfield.

"No," said he, "I have not called at Fairfield. What business can her ladyship have with me? I don't understand her royal message. Little Christie went to Fairfield with a portfolio of sketches in obedience to a summons of that sort, and was bidden to sit down to dinner in the servants' hall while the portfolio was carried up stairs. Her ladyship bought a sketch, but the money was no salve for Christie's mortification. I have nothing to sell. I took warning by my friend, and did not go."

Again Bessie was dumb. She blushed, and did not know what to say. She would not have liked to hear that Harry had been set down to dinner in the servants' hall at Fairfield, though she had not herself been hurt by a present of a cheese-cake in the kitchen. She was perfectly aware that the farmers and upper servants in the great houses did associate as equals. Evidently the conduct of life required much discretion.

Less than a year ago young Christie had helped at the painting and graining of Lady Latimer's house. Somebody, a connoisseur in art, wandering last autumn in the Forest, had found him making a drawing of yew trees, had sought him in his home at the wheelwright's, had told him he was a genius and would do wonders. On the instant young Christie expected the greatest of all wonders to be done; he expected his friends and neighbors to believe in him on the strength of the stranger's prediction. Naturally, they preferred to reserve their judgment. He and young Musgrave had learnt their letters under the same ferule, though their paths had diverged since. Some faint reminiscence of companionship survived in young Christie's memory, and in the absence of a generous sympathy at home he went to seek it at Brook. A simple, strong attachment was the result. Young Christie was gentle, vain, sensitive, easily raised and easily depressed, a slim little fellow—a contrast to Harry Musgrave in every way. "My friend" each called the other, and their friendship was a pure joy and satisfaction to them both. Christie carried everything to Brook—hopes, feelings, fears as well as work—even his mortification at Fairfield, against a repetition of which young Musgrave offered counsel, wisdom of the ancients.

"It is art you are in pursuit of, not pomps and vanities? Then keep clear of Fairfield. The first thing for success in imaginative work is a soul unruffled: what manner of work could you do to-day? You will never paint a stroke the better for anything Lady Latimer can do for you; but lay yourself open to the chafe and fret of her patronage now, and you are done for. Ten, twenty years hence, she will be harmless, because you will have the confidence of a name."

"And she will remember that she bought my first sketch; she will say she made me," said young Christie.

"You will not care then: everybody knows that a man makes himself. Phipps calls her vain-glorious; Carnegie calls her the very core of goodness. In either case you don't need her. There is

only one patron for men of art and literature in these days, and that is the General Public. The times are gone by for waiting in Chesterfield's ante-room and hiding behind Cave's screen."

Harry recited all this for Bessie's instruction. Bessie was convinced that he had spoken judiciously: the safest way to avoid a fall is not to be in too much haste to climb. It is more consistent with self-respect for genius in low estate to defend its independence against the assaults of rich patrons, seeking appendages to their glory, than to accept their benefits, and complain that they are given with insolence. It is an evident fact that the possessors of rank and money value themselves as of more consequence than those whom God has endowed with other gifts and not with these. Platitudes reveal themselves to the young as novel and striking truths. Bessie ruminated these in profound silence. Harry offered her a penny for her thoughts.

"I was thinking," said she, with a sudden revelation of the practical, "that young Christie will suffer a great deal in his way through the world if he stumble at such common kindness as Lady Latimer's." And then she told the story of the cheese-cake. "I beheld my lady then as a remote and exalted sphere, where never foot of mine would come. I have entered it since by reason of belonging to an old house of gentry, and I find that I can breathe there. So may he some day, when he has earned a title to it, but he would be very uncomfortable there now."

"And so may I some day, when I have earned a title to it, but I should be very uncomfortable there now. Meanwhile we have souls above cheese-cakes, and don't choose to bear my lady's patronage."

Bessie felt that she was being laughed at. She grew angry, and poured out her sentiments hot: "There is a difference between you and young Christie; you know quite well that there is, Harry. No, I sha'n't explain what it consists in. Lady Latimer meant to encourage him: to see that she thinks well enough of his sketches to buy one may influence other people to buy them. He can't live on air; and if he is to be a painter he must study. You are not going to rise in the world without working? If you went to her house, she would make you acquainted with people it might be good for you to know: it is just whether you like that sort of thing or not. I don't; I am happier at home. But men don't want to keep at home."

"*Already*, Bessie!" cried Harry in a rallying, reproachful tone.

"Already *what*, Harry? I am not giving myself airs, if that is what you mean," said she blushing.

Harry shook his head, but only half in earnest: "You are, Bessie. You are pretending to have opinions on things that you had never thought of a month ago. Give you a year amongst your grandees, and you will hold yourself above us all."

Tears filled Bessie's eyes. She was very much hurt; she did not believe that Harry could have misunderstood her so. "I shall never hold myself above anybody that I was fond of when I was little; they are more likely to forget me when I am out of sight. They have others to love." Bessie spoke in haste and excitement. She meant neither to defend herself nor to complain, but her voice imported a little pathos and tragedy into the scene. Young Musgrave instantly repented and offered atonement. "Besides," Bessie rather inconsequently ran on, "I am very fond of Lady Latimer; she has nobody of her own, so she tries to make a family in the world at large."

"All right, Bessie—then she shall adopt you. Only don't be cross, little goosey. Let us go into the garden." Young Musgrave made such a burlesque of his remorse that Bessie, wounded but skin-deep, was fain to laugh too and be friends again. And thereupon they went forth together into the bosky old garden.

What a pleasant wilderness that old garden was, even in its neglected beauty! Whoever planted it loved open spaces, turf, and trees of foreign race; for there were some rare cedars, full-grown, straight, and stately, with feathered branches sweeping the grass, and strange shrubs that were masses of blossom and fountains of sweet odors. The flower-borders had run to waste; only a few impoverished roses tossed their blushing fragrance into the air, and a few low-growing, old-fashioned things made shift to live amongst the weeds. But the prettiest bit of all was the verdant natural slope, below which ran the brook that gave the village and the manor their names. The Forest is not a land of merry running waters, but little tranquil streams meander hither and thither, making cool its shades. Three superb beeches laved their silken leaves in the shallow flood, and amongst their roots were rustic seats all sheltered from sun and wind. Here had Harry Musgrave and Bessie Fairfax sat many a summer afternoon, their heads over one poetry-book, reading, whispering, drawing—lovers in a way, though they never talked of love.

"Shall we two ever walk together in this garden again, Harry?" said Bessie, breaking a sentimental silence with a sigh as she gazed at the sun-dimmed horizon.

"Many a time, I hope. I'll tell you my ambition." Young Musgrave spoke with vivacity; his eyes sparkled. "Listen, Bessie, and don't be astonished. I mean some day to buy Brook, and come to live here. That is my ambition."

Bessie was overawed. To buy Brook was a project too vast for her imagination. The traditions of its ancient glories still hung about it, and the proprietor, even in his poverty, was a power in the country. Harry proceeded with the confession of his day-dreams: "I shall pull down the house—if it does not fall down of itself before—and build it up again on the original plan, for I admire not all things new. With the garden replanted and the fine old trees left, it will be a paradise—as much of a paradise as any modern Adam can desire. And Bessie shall be my Eve."

"You will see so many Eves between now and then, Harry, that you will have forgotten me," cried Bessie.

Harry rejoined: "You are quite as likely to be carried away by a bluff Woldshire squire as I am to fall captive to other Eves."

"You know, Harry, I shall always be fondest of you. We have been like real cousins. But won't you be growing rather old before you are rich enough to buy Brook?"

"If I am, you will be growing rather old too, Bessie. What do you call old—thirty?"

"Yes. Do you mean to put off life till you are thirty?"

"No. I mean to work and play every day as it comes. But one must have some great events to look forward to. My visions are of being master of Brook and of marrying Bessie. One without the other would be only half a good fortune."

"Do you care so much for me as that, Harry? I was afraid you cared for little Christie more than for me now."

"Don't be jealous of little Christie, Bessie. Surely I can like you both. There are things a girl does not understand. You belong to me as my father and mother do. I have told you everything. I have not told anybody but you what I intend about Brook—not even my mother. I want it to be our secret."

"So it shall, Harry. You'll see how I can keep it," cried Bessie delighted.

"I trust you, because I know if I make a breakdown you will not change. When I missed the English verse-prize last year (you remember, Bessie?) I had made so sure of it that I could hardly show my face at home. Mother was disappointed, but you just snuggled up to me and said, 'Never mind, Harry, I love you;' and you did not care whether I had a prize or none. And that was comfort. I made up my mind at that minute what I should do."

"Dear old Harry! I am sure your verses were the best, far away," was Bessie's response; and then she begged to hear more of what her comrade meant to do.

Harry did not want much entreating. His schemes could hardly be called castles in the air, so much of the solid and reasonable was there in the design of them. He had no expectation of success by wishing, and no trust in strokes of luck. Life is a race, and a harder race than ever. Nobody achieves great things without great labors and often great sacrifices. "The labor I shall not mind; the sacrifices I shall make pay." Harry was getting out of Bessie's depth now; a little more of poetry and romance in his views would have brought them nearer to the level of her comprehension. Then he talked to her of his school, of the old doctor, that great man, of his schoolfellows, of his rivals whom he had distanced—not a depreciatory word of any of them. "I don't believe in luck for myself," he said. "But there is a sort of better and worse fortune amongst men, independent of merit. It was the narrowest shave between me and Fordyce. I would not have given sixpence for my chance of the scholarship against his, yet I won it. He is a good fellow, Fordyce: he came up and shook hands as if he had won. That was just what I wanted: I felt so happy! Now I shall go to Oxford; in a year or two I shall have pupils, and who knows but I may gain a fellowship? I shall take you to Oxford, Bessie, when the time comes."

Bessie was as proud and as pleased in this indefinite prospect as if she were bidden to pack up and start to-morrow. Harry went on to tell her what Mr. Moxon had told him, how Oxford is one of the most beautiful of cities, and one of the most famous and ancient seats of learning in the world (which she knew from her geography-book), and there, under the beeches, with the slow ripple at their feet, they sat happy as king and queen in a fairy-tale, until the shadow of Mrs. Musgrave came gliding over the grass, and her clear caressing voice broke on their ears: "Children, children, are you never coming to tea? We have called you from the window twice. And young Christie is here."

Young Christie came forward with a bow and a blush to shake hands. He had dressed himself for Sunday to come to Brook. He had an ingenuous face, but plain in feature. The perceptive faculties were heavily developed, and his eyes were fine; and his mouth and chin suggested a firmness of character.

Mr. Musgrave, who was absent at dinner, was now come home tired from Hampton. He leant back in his chair and held out a brown hand to Bessie, who took it, and a kiss with it, as part of the regular ceremony of greeting. She slipped into the chair set for her beside him, and was quite at home, for Bessie was a favorite in the same degree at Brook as Harry was at Beechhurst. Young Christie sat next to his friend and opposite to Bessie. They had many things to say to each other, and Bessie compared them in her own mind silently. Harry was serene and quiet; Christie's color came and went with the animation of his talk. Harry's hands had the sunburnt hue of going ungloved, but they were the hands of a young man devoted to scholarly pursuits; Christie's were stained with his trade, which he practised of necessity still, wooing art only in his bye-hours. Harry's speech was decisive and simple; Christie's was hesitating and a little fine, a little over-careful. He was self-conscious, and as he talked he watched who listened, his restless eyes glancing often towards Bessie. But this had a twofold meaning, for while he talked of other things his faculty of observation was at work; it was always at work as an undercurrent.

Loveliness of color had a perpetual fascination for him. He was considering the tints in Bessie's hair and in the delicate, downy rose-oval of her cheeks, and the effect upon them of the sunshine flickering through the vine leaves. When the after-glow was red in the west, the dark green cloth of the window-curtain, faded to purple and orange, made a rich background for her fair head, and he beheld in his fancy a picture that some day he would reproduce. On the tea-table he had laid down a twig of maple, the leaves of which were curiously crenated by some insect, and with it a clump of moss, and a stone speckled in delicious scarlet and tawny patches of lichen-growth—bits of Nature and beauty in which he saw more than others see, and had picked up in his walk by Great-Ash Ford through the Forest to Brook.

"I live in hope of some lucky accident to give me the leisure and opportunity for study; till then I must stick to my mechanical trade of painting and graining," he was saying while his eyes roved about Bessie's face, and his fingers toyed first with the twig of maple and then with the pearled moss. "My father thinks scorn of art for a living, and predicts me repentance and starvation. I tell him we shall see; one must not expect to be a prophet in one's own country. But I am half promised a commission at the Hampton Theatre—a new drop-scene. My sketch is approved—it is a Forest view. The decision must come soon."

Everybody present wished the young fellow success. "Though whether you have success or not you will have a share of happiness, because you are a dear lover of Nature, and Nature never lets her lovers go unrewarded," said Mrs. Musgrave kindly.

"Ah! but I shall not be satisfied with her obscure favors," cried little Christie airily.

"You must have applause: I don't think I care for applause," said young Musgrave; and he cut Bessie a slice of cake.

Bessie proceeded to munch it with much gravity and enjoyment—Harry's mother made excellent cakes—and the father of the house, smiling at her serious absorption, patted her on the shoulder and said, "And what does Bessie Fairfax care for?"

"Only to be loved," says Bessie without a thought.

"And that is what you will be, for love's a gift," rejoined Mr. Musgrave. "These skip-jacks who talk of setting the world on fire will be lucky if they make only blaze enough to warm themselves."

"Ay, indeed—and getting rich. Talk's cheap, but it takes a deal of money to buy land," said his wife, who had a shrewd inkling of her son's ambition, though he had not confessed it to her. "Young folks little think of the chances and changes of this mortal life, or it's a blessing they'd seek before anything else."

Bessie's face clouded at a word of changes. "Don't fret, Bessie, we'll none of us forget you," said the kind father. But this was too much for her tender heart. She pushed back her chair and ran out of the room. For the last hour the tears had been very near her eyes, and now they overflowed. Mrs. Musgrave followed to comfort her.

"To go all amongst strangers!" sobbed Bessie; and her philosophy quite failed her when that prospect recurred in its dreadful blankness. Happily, the time of night did not allow of long lamentation. Presently Harry called at the stair's foot that it was seven o'clock. And she kissed his mother and bade Brook good-bye.

The walk home was through the Forest, between twilight and moonlight. The young men talked and Bessie was silent. She had no favor towards young Christie previously, but she liked his talk to-night and his devotion to Harry Musgrave, and she enrolled him henceforward amongst those friends and acquaintances of her happy childhood at Beechhurst concerning whom inquiries were to be made in writing home when she was far away.

CHAPTER IX.

FAREWELL TO THE FOREST.

A few days after his meeting with Bessie Fairfax at Brook, young Christie left at the doctor's door a neat, thin parcel addressed to her with his respects. Lady Latimer and Mrs. Wiley, who were still interesting themselves in her affairs, were with Mrs. Carnegie at the time, giving her some instructions in Bessie's behalf. Mrs. Carnegie was rather bothered than helped by their counsels, but she did not discourage them, because of the advantage to Bessie of having their countenance and example. Bessie, sitting apart at the farther side of the round table, untied the string and unfolded the silver paper. Then there was a blush, a smile, a cry of pleasure. At what? At a picture of herself that little Christie had painted, and begged to make an offering of. It was handed round for the inspection of the company.

"A slight thing," said Mrs. Wiley with a negligent glance. "Young Christie fishes with sprats to catch whales, as Askew told him yesterday. He brought his portfolio and a drawing of the church to show, but we did not buy anything. We are afraid that he will turn out a sad, idle fellow, going dawdling about instead of keeping to his trade. His father is much grieved."

"This is sketchy, but full of spirit," said Lady Latimer, holding the drawing at arm's length to admire.

"It is life itself! We must hear what your father says to it, Bessie," Mrs. Carnegie added in a pleased voice.

"If her father does not buy it, I will. It is a charming little picture," said my lady.

Bessie was gratified, but she hoped her father would not let anybody else possess it.

"A matter of a guinea, and it will be well paid for," said the rector's wife.

No one made any rejoinder, but Mr. Carnegie gave the aspiring artist five guineas (he would not have it as a gift, which little Christie meant), and plenty of verbal encouragement besides. Lady Latimer further invited him to paint her little friends, Dora and Dandy. He accepted the commission, and fulfilled it with effort and painstaking, but not with such signal success as his portrait of Bessie. That was an inspiration. The doctor hung up the picture in the dining-room for company every day in her absence, and promised that it should keep her place for her in all their hearts and memories until she came home again.

There are not many more events to chronicle until the great event of Bessie's farewell to Beechhurst. She gave a tea-party to her friends in the Forest, a picnic tea-party at Great-Ash Ford; and on a fine morning, when the air blew fresh from the sea, she and her handsome new baggage were packed, with young Musgrave, into the back seat of the doctor's chaise, the doctor sitting in front with his man to drive. Their destination was Hampton, to take the boat for Havre. The man was to return home with the chaise in the evening. The doctor was going on to Caen, to deliver his dear little girl safely at school, and Harry was going with them for a holiday. All the Carnegie children and their mother, the servants and the house-dog, were out in the road to bid Bessie a last good-bye; the rector and his wife were watching over the hedge; and Miss Buff panted up the hill at the last moment, with fat tears running down her cheeks. She had barely time for a word, Mr. Carnegie always cutting short leave-takings. Bessie's nose was pink with tears and her eyes glittered, but she was in good heart. She looked behind her as long as she could see her mother, and Jack and Willie coursing after the chaise with damp pocket-handkerchiefs a-flutter; and then she turned her face the way she was going, and said with a shudder, "It is a beautiful, sunny morning, but for all that it is cold."

"Have my coat-sleeve, Bessie," suggested Harry, and they both laughed, then became quiet, then merry.

About two miles out of Hampton the travellers overtook little Christie making the road fly behind him as he marched apace, a knapsack at his back and his chin in the air.

"Whither away so fast, young man?" shouted the doctor, hailing him.

"To Hampton Theatre," shouted Christie back again, and he flourished his hat round his head. Harry Musgrave repeated the triumphant gesture with a loud hurrah. The artist that was to be had got that commission for the new drop-scene at the theatre. His summons had come by this morning's post.

The toil-worn, dusty little figure was long in sight, for now the road ran in a direct line. Bessie wished they could have given him a lift on his journey. Harry Musgrave continued to look behind, but he said nothing. It is some men's fortune to ride cock-horse, it is some other men's to trudge afoot; but neither is the lot of the first to be envied, nor the lot of the last to be deplored. Such would probably have been his philosophy if he had spoken. Bessie, regarding externals only, and judging of things as they seemed, felt pained by the outward signs of inequality.

In point of fact, little Christie was the happiest of the three at that moment. According to his own belief, he was just about to lay hold of the key that would open for him the outer door of the Temple of Fame. After that blessed drop-scene that he was on his way to execute at Hampton, never more would he return to his mechanical painting and graining. It was an epoch that they all dated from, this shining day of September, when Bessie Fairfax bade farewell to the Forest, and little Christie set out on his career of honor with a knapsack on his back and seven guineas in his pocket. As for Harry Musgrave, his leading-strings were broken before, and he was in some sort a citizen of the world already.

CHAPTER X.

BESSIE GOES INTO EXILE.

The rapid action and variety of the next few days were ever after like a dream to Bessie Fairfax. A tiring day in Hampton town, a hurried walk to the docks in the sunset, the gorgeous autumnal sunset that flushed the water like fire; a splendid hour in the river, ships coming up full sail, and twilight down to the sea; a long, deep sleep. Then sunrise on rolling green waves, low cliffs, headlands of France; a vast turmoil, hubbub, and confusion of tongues; a brief excursion into Havre, by gay shops to gayer gardens, and breakfast in the gayest of glass-houses. Then embarkation on board the boat for Caen; a gentle sea-rocking; soldiers, men in blouses, women in

various patterns of caps; the mouth of the Orne; fringes on the coast of fashionable resort for sea-bathers. Miles up the stream, dreary, dreary; poplars leaning aslant from the wind, low mud-banks, beds of osiers, reeds, rushes, willows; poplars standing erect as a regiment in line, as many regiments, a gray monotony of poplars; the tide flowing higher, laving the reeds, the sallows, all pallid with mist and soft driving rain. A gleam of sun on a lawn, on roses, on a conical red roof; orchards, houses here and there, with shutters closed, and the afternoon sun hot upon them; acres of market-garden, artichokes, flat fields, a bridge, rushy ditches, tall array of poplars repeated and continued endlessly.

"I think," said Bessie, "I shall hate a poplar as long as I live!"

Mr. Carnegie agreed that the scenery was not enchanting. Beautiful France is not to compare with the beautiful Forest. Harry Musgrave was in no haste with his opinion; he was looking out for Caen, that ancient and famous town of the Norman duke who conquered England. He had been reading up the guide-book and musing over history, while Bessie had been letting the poplars weigh her mind down to the brink of despondency.

A repetition of the noisy landing at Havre, despatch of baggage to Madame Fournier's, everybody's heart failing for fear of that august, unknown lady. A sudden resolution on the doctor's part to delay the dread moment of consigning Bessie to the school-mistress until evening, and a descent on Thunby's hotel. A walk down the Rue St. Jean to the Place St. Pierre, and by the way a glimpse, through an open door in a venerable gateway, of a gravelled court-yard planted with sycamores and surrounded by lofty walls, draped to the summit with vines and ivy; in the distance an arcade with vistas of garden beyond lying drowsy in the sunshine, the angle of a large mansion, and fluttering lilac wreaths of wisteria over the portal.

"If this is Madame Fournier's school, it is a hushed little world," said the doctor.

Bessie beheld it with awe. There was a solemn picturesqueness in the prospect that daunted her imagination.

Harry Musgrave referred to his guide-book: "Ah, I thought so—this is the place. Bessie, Charlotte Corday lived here."

Above the rickety gateway were two rickety windows. At those windows Charlotte might have sat over her copy of Plutarch's "Lives," a ruminating republican in white muslin, before the Revolution, or have gazed at the sombre church of St. Jean across the street, in the happier days before she despised going to old-fashioned worship. Bessie looked up at them more awed than ever. "I hope her ghost does not haunt the house. Come away, Harry," she whispered.

Harry laughed at her superstition. They went forward under the irregular peaked houses, stunned at intervals by side-gusts of evil odor, till they came to the place and church of St. Pierre. The market-women in white-winged caps, who had been sitting at the receipt of custom since morning surrounded by heaps of glowing fruit and flowers, were now vociferously gathering up their fragments, their waifs and strays and remnants, to go home. The men were harnessing their horses, filling their carts. It was all a clamorous, sunny, odd sort of picture amidst the quaint and ancient buildings. Then they went into the church, into the gloom and silence out of the stir. The doctor made the young ones a sign to hush. There were women on their knees, and on the steps of the altar a priest of dignified aspect, and a file of acolytes, awfully ugly, the very refuse of the species—all but one, who was a saint for beauty of countenance and devoutness of mien. Harry glanced at him and his companions as if they were beings of a strange and mysterious race; and the numerous votive offerings to "Our Lady of La Salette" and elsewhere he eyed askance with the expression of a very sound Protestant indeed. The lovely luxuriant architecture, the foliated carvings, were dim in the evening light. A young sculptor, who was engaged in the work of restoring some of these rich carvings, came down from his perch while the strangers stood to admire them.

That night by nine o'clock Bessie Fairfax was in the *dortoir* at Madame Fournier's—a chamber of six windows and twenty beds, narrow, hard, white, and, except her own and one other, empty. By whose advice it was that she was sent to school a week in advance of the opening she never knew. But there she was in the wilderness of a house, with only a dejected English teacher suffering from chronic face-ache, and another scholar, younger than herself, for company. The great madame was still absent at Bayeux, spending the vacation with her uncle the canon.

It was a moonlight night, and the jalousies looking upon the garden were not closed. Bessie was neither timid nor grievous, but she was desperately wide-awake. The formality of receiving her and showing her to bed had been very briefly despatched. It seemed as if she had been left at the door like a parcel, conveyed up stairs, and put away. Beechhurst was a thousand miles off, and yesterday a hundred years ago! The doctor and Harry Musgrave could hardly have walked back to Thunby's hotel before she and her new comrade were in their little beds. Now, indeed, was the Rubicon passed, and Bessie Fairfax committed to all the vicissitudes of exile. She realized the beginning thereof when she stretched her tired limbs on her unyielding mattress of straw, and recalled her dear little warm nest under the eaves at home.

Presently, from a remote couch spoke her one companion, "I am sitting up on end. What are you doing?"

"Nothing. Lying down and staring at the moon," replied Bessie, and turned her eyes in the direction of the voice.

The figure sitting up on end was distinctly visible. It was clasping its knees, its long hair flowed down its back, and its face was steadily addressed to the window at the foot of its bed. "Do you care to talk?" asked the queer apparition.

"I shall not fall asleep for *hours* yet," said Bessie.

"Then let us have a good talk." The unconscious quoter of Dr. Johnson contributed her full share to the colloquy. She told her story, and why she was at Madame Fournier's: "Father's ship comes from Yarmouth in Norfolk. It is there we are at home, but he is nearly always at sea—to and fro to Havre and Caen, to Dunkirk and Bordeaux. It is a fine sailing ship, the Petrel. When the wind blows I think of father, though he has weathered many storms. To-night it will be beautiful on the water. I have often sailed with father." A prodigious sigh closed the paragraph, and drew from Bessie a query that perhaps she wished she was sailing with him now? She did, indeed! "He left me here because I was not well—it is three weeks since; it was the day of the emperor's *fête*—but I am no stronger yet. I have been left here before—once for a whole half-year. I hope it won't be so long this time; I do so miss father! My mother is dead, and he has married another wife. I believe she wishes I were dead too."

"Oh no," cried Bessie, much amazed. "I have a mother who is not really my mother, but she is as good as if she were."

"Then she is not like mine. Are women all alike? Hush! there is Miss Foster at the door—*listening*.... She is gone now; she didn't peep in.... Tell me, do you hear anything vulgar in my speech?"

"No—it is plain enough." It was a question odd and unexpected, and Bessie had to think before she answered it.

Her questioner mistook her reflection for hesitation, and seemed disappointed. "Ah, but you do," said she, "though you don't like to tell me so. It is provincial, very provincial, Miss Foster admits.... Next week, when the young ladies come back, I shall wish myself more than ever with father."

"What for? don't you like school?" Bessie was growing deeply interested in these random revelations.

"No. How should I? I don't belong to them. Everybody slights me but madame. Miss Hiloe has set me down as quite *common*. It is so dreadful!"

Bessie's heart had begun to beat very hard. "Is it?" said she in a tone of apprehension. "Do they profess to despise you?"

"More than that—they *do* despise me; they don't know how to scorn me enough. But you are not *common*, so why should you be afraid? My father is a master-mariner—John Fricker of Great Yarmouth. What is yours?"

"Oh, mine was a clergyman, but he is long since dead, and my own mother too. The father and mother who have taken care of me since live at Beechhurst in the Forest, and *he* is a doctor. It is my grandfather who sends me here to school, and he is a country gentleman, a squire. But I like my common friends best—*far*!"

"If you have a squire for your grandfather you may speak as you please—Miss Hiloe will not call you common. Oh, I am shrewd enough: I know more than I tell. Miss Foster says I have the virtues of my class, but I have no business at a school like this. She wonders what Madame Fournier receives me for. Oh, I wish father may come over next month! Nobody can tell how lonely I feel sometimes. Will you call me Janey?" Janey's poor little face went down upon her knees, and there was the sound of sobs. Bessie's tender heart yearned to comfort this misery, and she would have gone over to administer a kiss, had she not been peremptorily warned not to risk it: there was the gleam of a light below the door. When that alarm was past, composure returned to the master-mariner's little daughter, and Bessie ventured to ask if the French girls were nice.

The answer sounded pettish: "There are all sorts in a school like this. Elise Finckel lives in the Place St. Pierre: they are clock and watchmakers, the Finckels. Once I went there; then Elise and Miss Hiloe made friends, and it was good-bye to me! but clanning is forbidden."

Bessie required enlightening as to what "clanning" meant. The explanation was diffuse, and branched off into so many anecdotes and illustrations that in spite of the moonlight, her nerves, her interest, and her forebodings, Bessie began to yield to the overpowering influence of sleep. The little comrade, listened to no longer, ceased her prattle and napped off too.

The next sound Bessie Fairfax heard was the irregular clangor of a bell, and behold it was morning! Some one had been into the *dortoir* and had opened a window or two. The warm fragrant breath of sunshine and twitter of birds entered.

"So this is being at school in France? What a din!" said Bessie, stopping her ears and looking for her comrade.

That strange child was just opening a pair of sleepy eyes and exhorting herself by name: "Now, Miss Janey Fricker, you will be wise to get up without more thinking about it, or there will be a

bad mark and an imposition for you, my dear. What a blessing! five dull days yet before the arrival of the tormentors!" She slipped out upon the floor, exclaiming how tired she was and how all her bones ached, till Bessie's heart ached too for pity of the delicate, sensitive morsel of humanity.

They had soup for breakfast, greasy, flavorless stuff loaded with vegetables, and bread sour with long keeping. This was terrible to Bessie. She sipped and put down her spoon, then tried again. Miss Foster, at the same table, partook of a rough decoction of coffee with milk, and a little rancid butter on the sour bread toasted.

After breakfast the two girls were told that they were permitted to go into the garden. They spent the whole morning there, and there Mr. Carnegie and Harry Musgrave found Bessie when they came to take their final leave of her. It was good and brave of the little girl not to distress them with complaints, for she was awfully hungry, and likely to be so until her dainty appetite was broken in to French school-fare. Her few tears did not signify.

Harry Musgrave said the garden was not so pretty as it appeared from the street, and the doctor made rueful allusions to convents and prisons, and was not half satisfied to leave his dear little Bessie there. The morning sun had gone off the grass. The walls were immensely lofty—the tallest trees did not overtop them. There was a weedy, weak fountain, a damp grotto, and two shrines with white images of the Blessed Mary crowned with gilt stars.

Miss Foster came into the garden the moment the visitors appeared, holding one hand against the flannel that enveloped her face. She made the usual polite speeches of hope, expectation, and promise concerning the new-comer, and stayed about until the gentlemen went. Then an inexpressible flatness fell upon Bessie, and she would probably have wept in earnest, but for the sight of Janey Fricker standing aloof and gazing at her wistfully for an invitation to draw near. Somebody to succor was quite in Bessie's way; helpless, timid things felt safe under covert of her wing. It gave her a vocation at once to have this weak, ailing little girl seeking to her for protection, and she called her to come. How gladly Janey came!

"What were you thinking of just now when I lost my friends?" Bessie asked her.

"Oh, of lots of things: I can't tell you of what. Is that your brother?"

"No, he is a cousin."

"Are you very fond of him? I wonder what it feels like to have many people to love? I have no one but father."

"Harry Musgrave and I have known each other all our lives. And now you and I are going to be friends."

"If you don't find somebody you like better, as Elise Finckel did. There is the bell; it means dinner in ten minutes." Bessie was looking sorry at her new comrade's suspicion. Janey was quick to see it. "Oh, I have vexed you about Elise?" cried she in a voice of pleading distress. "When shall I learn to trust anybody again?"

Bessie smiled superior. "Very soon, I hope," said she. "You must not afflict yourself with fancies. I am not vexed; I am only sorry if you won't trust me. Let us wait and see. I feel a kindness for most people, and don't need to love one less because I love another more. I promise to keep a warm place in my heart for you always, you little mite! I have even taken to Miss Foster because I pity her. She looks so overworked, and jaded, and poor."

"It is easy to like Miss Foster when you know her. She keeps her mamma, and her salary is only twenty-five pounds a year."

The dinner, to which the girls adjourned at a second summons of the bell, was as little appetizing as the breakfast had been. There was the nauseous soup, a morsel of veal, a salad dressed with rank oil, a mess of sweet curd, and a dish of stewed prunes. After the fiction of dining, Miss Foster took the two pupils for a walk by the river, where groups of soldiers under shade of the trees were practising the fife and the drum. Caen seemed to be full of soldiers, marching and drilling for ever. Louise, the handsome portress at the school, frankly avowed that she did not know what the young women of her generation would do for husbands; the conscription carried away all the finest young men. Janey loved to watch the soldiers; she loved all manner of shows, and also to tell of them. She asked Bessie if she would like to hear about the emperor's *fête* last month; and when Bessie acquiesced, she began in a discursive narrative style by which a story can be stretched to almost any length:

"There was a military mass at St. Etienne's in the morning. I had only just left father, but Mademoiselle Adelaide took me with her, and a priest sent us up into the triforium—you understand what the triforium is? a gallery in the apse looking down on the choir. The triforium at St. Etienne's is wide enough to drive a coach and four round; at the Augustines, where we went once to see three sisters take the white veil, it is quite narrow, and without anything to prevent you falling over—a dizzy place. But I am forgetting the *fête*.... It was *so* beautiful when the doors were thrown open, and the soldiers and flags came tramping in with the sunshine, and filled the nave! The generals sat with the mayor and the *préfet* in the chancel, ever so grand in their ribbons and robes and orders. The service was all music and not long: soldiers don't like long prayers. You will see them go to mass on Sunday at St. Jean's, opposite the school.... Then at night there was a procession—such a pandemonium! such a rabble-rout, with music and

shouting, soldiers marching at the double, carrying blazing torches, and a cloud of paper lanterns that caught fire and flared out. We could hear the discordant riot ever so far off, and when the mob came up our street again, almost in the dark, I covered my ears. Of all horrible sounds, a mob of excited Frenchmen can make the worst. The wind in a storm at sea is nothing to it."

There was a man gathering peaches from the sunny wall of a garden-house by the river. Janey finished her tale, and remarked that here fruit could be bought. Bessie, rich in the possession of a pocketful of money, was most truly glad to hear it, and a great feast of fruit ensued, with accompaniments of *galette* and new milk. Then the walk was continued in a circuit which brought them back to the school through the town. The return was followed by a collation of thick bread and butter and thin tea; then by a little reading aloud in Miss Foster's holiday apartment, and then by the *dortoir*, and another good talk in the moonlight until sleep overwhelmed the talkers. Bessie dropt off with the thought in her mind that her father and dear Harry Musgrave must be just about going on board the vessel at Havre that was to carry them to Hampton, and that when she woke up in the morning they would be on English soil once more, and riding home to Beechhurst through the dewy glades of the Forest....

This account of twenty-four hours will stand for the whole of that first week of Bessie's exile. Only the walks of an afternoon were varied. In company with dull, neuralgic Miss Foster the two pupils visited the famous stone-quarries above the town, out of which so many grand churches have been built; they compassed the shaded Cours; they investigated the museum, and Bessie was introduced to the pretty portrait of Charlotte Corday, in a simple cross-over white gown, a blue sash and mob-cap. Afterward she was made acquainted with a lady of royalist partialities, whose mother had actually known the heroine, and had lived through the terrible days of the Terror. Her tradition was that the portrait of Charlotte was imaginary, and, as to her beauty, delusive, and that the tragical young lady's moving passion was a passion for notoriety. Bessie wondered and doubted, and began to think history a most interesting study.

For another "treat," as Janey Fricker called it, they went on the Sunday to drink tea with Miss Foster at her mother's. Mrs. Foster was a widow with ideas of gentility in poverty. She was a chirping, bird-like little woman, and lived in a room as trellised as a bird-cage. The house was on the site of the old ramparts, and the garden sloped to the *fosse*. A magnolia blossomed in it, and delicious pears, of the sort called "Bon chrêtiens," ripened on gnarled trees. This week was, in fact, a beautiful little prelude to school life, if Bessie had but known it. But her appreciation of its simple pleasures came later, when they were for ever past. She remembered then, with a sort of remorse, laughing at Janey's notion of a "treat." Everything goes by comparison. At this time Bessie had no experience of what it is to live by inelastic rule and rote, to be ailing and unhappy, alone in a crowd and neglected. Janey believed in Mrs. Foster's sun-baked little garden as a veritable pattern of Eden, but Bessie knew the Forest, she knew Fairfield, and almost despised that mingled patch of beauty and usefulness, of sweet odors and onions, for Mrs. Foster grew potherbs and vegetables amongst her flowers.

Thus Bessie's first week of exile got over, and except for a sense of being hungry now and then, she did not find herself so very miserable after all.

CHAPTER XI.

SCHOOL-DAYS AT CAEN.

One morning Bessie Fairfax rose to a new sensation. "To-day the classes open, and there is an end of treats," cried Janey Fricker with a despairing resignation. "You will soon see the day-scholars, and by degrees the boarders will arrive. Madame was to come late last night, and the next news will be of Miss Hiloe. Perhaps they will appear to-morrow. Heigh-ho!"

"You are not to care for Miss Hiloe; I shall stand up for you. I have no notion of tyrants," said Bessie in a spirited way. But her feelings were very mixed, very far from comfortable. This morning it seemed more than ever cruel to have sent her to school at her age, ignorant as she was of school ways. She shuddered in anticipation of the dreadful moment when it would be publicly revealed that she could neither play on the piano nor speak a word of French. Her deficiencies had been confided to Janey in a shy, shamefaced way, and Janey, who could chatter fluently in French and play ten tunes at least, had betrayed amazement. Afterward she had given consolation. There was one boarder who made no pretence of learning music, and several day-scholars; of course, being French, they spoke French, but not a girl of them all, not madame herself, could frame three consecutive sentences in English to be understood.

In the novelty of the situation Janey was patroness for the day. Madame Fournier had to be encountered after breakfast, and proved to be a perfectly small lady, of most intelligent countenance and kind conciliatory speech. She kissed Janey on both cheeks, and bent a penetrating pair of brown eyes on Bessie's face, which looked intensely proud in her blushing shyness. Madame had received from Mrs. Wiley (a former pupil and temporary teacher) instructions that Bessie's education and training had been of the most desultory kind, and that it was imperatively necessary to remedy her deficiencies, and give her a veneering of cultivation and a polish to fit her for the station of life to which she was called. Madame was able to judge for herself in such matters. Bessie impressed her favorably, and no humiliation was inflicted on

her even as touching her ignorance of French and the piano. It was decreed that as Bessie professed no enthusiasm for music, it would be wasting time that might be more profitably employed to teach her; and a recommendation to the considerate indulgence of Mademoiselle Adelaide, who was in charge of the junior class, saved her from huffs and ridicule while going through the preliminary paces of French.

At recreation-time in the garden Janey ran up to ask how she had got on. "*J'ai, tu as, il a*," said Bessie, and laughed with radiant audacity. Her phantoms were already vanishing into thin air.

Not many French girls were yet present. The next noon-day they were doubled. By Saturday all were come, and answered to their names when the roll was called, the great and dreadful Miss Hiloe amongst them. They were two, Mademoiselle Ada and Mademoiselle Ellen. The younger sister was a cipher—an echo of the elder, and an example of how she ought to be worshipped. Mademoiselle Ada would be a personage wherever she was. Already her *rôle* in the world was adopted. She had a pale Greek face, a lofty look, and a proud spirit. She was not rude to those who paid her the homage that was her due—she was, indeed, helpful and patronizing to the humble—but for a small Mordecai like Janey Fricker she had nothing but insolence and rough words. Janey would not bow down to her; in her own way Janey was as stubborn and proud as her tyrant, but she was not as strong. She was a waif by herself, and Mademoiselle Ada was obeyed, served, and honored by a large following of admirers. Bessie Fairfax did not feel drawn to enroll herself amongst them, and before the classes had been a month assembled she had rejoiced the heart of the master-mariner's little daughter with many warm, affectionate assurances that there was no one else in all the school that she loved so well as herself.

By degrees, and very quick degrees, Bessie's tremors for how she should succeed at school wore off. What fantastic distresses she would have been saved if she had known beforehand that she possessed a gift of beauty, more precious in the sight of girls than the first place in the first class, than the utmost eloquence of tongues, and the most brilliant execution on the piano! It came early to be disputed whether Mademoiselle Ada or Mademoiselle Bessie was the *belle des belles*; and Bessie, too, soon had her court of devoted partisans, who extolled her fair roseate complexion, blue eyes, and golden hair as lovelier far than Mademoiselle Ada's cold, severe perfection of feature. Bessie took their praises very coolly, and learnt her verbs, wrote her *dictées*, and labored at her *thêmes* with the solid perseverance of a girl who has her charms to acquire. The Miss Hiloes were not unwilling to be on good terms with her, but that, she told them, was impossible while they were so ostentatiously discourteous to her friend, Janey Fricker. When to her armor of beauty Bessie added the weapon of fearless, incisive speech, the risk of affronts was much abated. Mr. Carnegie had prophesied wisely when he said for his wife's consolation that character tells more in the long-run than talking French or playing on the piano. Her companions might like Bessie Fairfax, or they might let liking alone, but very few would venture a second time on ill-natured demonstrations either towards herself or towards any one she protected.

Bessie's position in the community was established when the tug of work began. Her health and complexion triumphed over the coarse, hard fare; her habits of industry made application easy; but the dulness and monotony were sickening to her, the routine and confinement were hateful yoke and bondage. Saving one march on Sunday to the Temple under Miss Foster's escort, she went nowhere beyond the garden for weeks together. Both French and English girls were in the same case, unless some friend residing in the town or visiting it obtained leave to take them out. And nobody came for Bessie. That she should go home to Beechhurst for a Christmas holiday she had taken for granted; and while abiding the narrow discipline, and toiling at her unaccustomed tasks with conscientious diligence, that flattering anticipation made sunshine in the distance. Every falling leaf, every chill breath of advancing winter, brought it nearer. Janey and she used to talk of it half their recreation-time—by the stagnant, weedy fountain in the garden at noon, and in the twilight windows of the *classe*, when thoughts of the absent are sweetest. For the Petrel had not come into port at Caen since the autumn, and Janey was still left at school in daily expectation and uncertainty.

"I am only sorry, Janey, that you are not sure of going home too," said Bessie, one day, commiserating her.

"If I am not sailing with father I would rather be here. *I* am not so lonely since you came," responded Janey.

Then Bessie dilated on the pleasantness of the doctor's house, the excellent kindness of her father and mother, the goodness of the boys, the rejoicing there would be at her return, both amongst friends at Beechhurst and friends at Brook. Each day, after she had indulged her memory and imagination in this strain, her heart swelled with loving expectancy, and when the recess was spoken of as beginning "next week," she could hardly contain herself for joy.

What a cruel pity that such natural delightsome hopes must all collapse, all fall to the ground! It was ruled by Mr. Fairfax that his granddaughter had been absent so short a time that she need not go to England this winter season. Came a letter from Mrs. Carnegie to express the infinite disappointment at home. And there an end.

"I cried for three days," Bessie afterward confessed. "It seemed that there never could befall me such another misery."

It was indeed terrible. In a day the big house was empty of scholars. Madame Fournier adjourned

to Bayeux. Miss Foster went to her mother. The masters, the other teachers disappeared, all except Mademoiselle Adelaide, who was to stay in charge of the two girls for a fortnight, and then to resign her office for the same period to Miss Foster. There was a month of this heartless solitude before Bessie and Janey. Mademoiselle Adelaide bemoaned herself as their jailer, as much in prison as they. They had good grounds of complaint. A deserted school at Christmas-time is not a cheerful place.

But there was compensation preparing for Bessie.

"And when does Bessie Fairfax come?" was almost the first question of Harry Musgrave when he arrived from Oxford.

"Bessie is not to come at all," was the answer.

What was that for? He proceeded to an investigation. There was a streak of lively, strong perversity in Harry Musgrave. Remarks had been passed on his accompanying Mr. Carnegie when he conveyed Bessie to school—quite uncalled-for remarks, which had originated at Fairfield and the rectory. The impertinence of them roused Harry's temper, and, boy-like, he instantly resolved that if his dear little Bessie was kept away from home and punished on his account, he would give her meddlesome friends something to talk about by going to Caen again and seeing her in spite of them. He made out with clearness enough to satisfy his conscience that Lady Latimer and Mrs. Wiley gave themselves unnecessary anxiety about Mr. Fairfax's granddaughter, and that he was perfectly justified in circumventing their cautious tactics. He did not speak of his intention to the Carnegies, lest he should meet with a remonstrance that he would be forced to yield to; but he told his sympathizing mother that he was going to spend five pounds of his pocket-money in a run across to Normandy to see Bessie Fairfax. Mrs. Musgrave asked if it was quite wise, quite kind, for Bessie's sake. He was sure that Bessie would be glad, and he did not care who was vexed.

Harry Musgrave gave himself no leisure to reconsider the matter, but went off to Hampton, to Havre, to Caen, with the lightest heart and most buoyant spirit in the world. He put up at Thunby's, and in the frosty sunshine of the next morning marched with the airs and sensations of a lover in mischief to the Rue St. Jean. Louise, that sage portress, recognized the bold young cousin of the English *belle des belles*, and announced him to Mademoiselle Adelaide. After a parley Bessie was permitted to receive him, to go out with him, to be as happy as three days were long. Harry told her how and why he had come, and Bessie was furiously indignant at the Wileys pretending to any concern in her affairs. Towards Lady Latimer she was more indulgent. They spent many hours in company, and told all their experiences. Harry talked of dons and proctors, of work and play, of hopes and projects, of rivals and friends. Bessie had not so much to tell: she showed him the *classe* and her place there, and introduced him to Janey. They visited all the public gardens and river-side walks. They were beautiful young people, and were the observed of many observers. The sagacious *curé* of St. Jean's, the confessor and director at the school, saw them by chance on the morning of a day when he had a mission to Bayeux. What more natural than that he should call upon Madame Fournier at her uncle the canon's house? and what more simple than that he should mention having met the English *belle* and her cousin of the dangerous sex?

Bessie Fairfax and Janey Fricker attended vespers regularly on Sunday afternoons at the church of St. Jean; but they were not amongst the fair penitents who whispered their peccadilloes once a fortnight in the *curé's* ear—he secluded in an edifice of chintz like a shower-bath, they kneeling outside the curtain with the blank eyes of the Holy Mother upon them, and the remote presence of a guardian-teacher out of hearing. But he took an interest in them. No overt act of proselytism was permitted in the school, but if an English girl liked vespers instead of the second service at the Temple, her preference was not discouraged. Bessie attended the Protestant ordinances at stated seasons, and went to vespers and benediction besides. The *curé* approved of her ingenuous devotion. Once upon a time there had been Fairfaxes faithful children of the Church: this young lady was an off-set of that house, its heiress and hope in this generation; it would be a holy deed to bring her, the mother perhaps of a new line, within its sacred pale.

Madame Fournier heard his communication with alarm. Already, by her ex-teacher Mrs. Wiley, this young Musgrave had been spoken against with voice of warning. Madame returned to Caen with her worthy pastor. The enterprising lover was just flown. Bessie had a sunshine face. Mademoiselle Adelaide wept that night because of the reproaches madame made her, and the following morning Bessie was invited to resume her lessons, and was mulcted of every holiday indulgence. Janey Fricker suffered with her, and for nearly a week they were all *en penitence*. Then Miss Foster came; madame vanished without leave-taking, as if liable to reappear at any instant, and lessons lapsed back into leisure. Bessie felt that she had been an innocent scapegrace, and Harry very venturesome; but she had so much enjoyed her "treat," and felt so much the happier for it, that, all madame's grave displeasure notwithstanding, she never was properly sorry.

Harry Musgrave returned to England as jubilant as he left Bessie. The trip, winter though it was, exhilarated him. But it behooved him to be serious when Mr. Carnegie was angry, and Mrs. Carnegie declared that she did not know how to forgive him. If his escapade were made known to Mr. Fairfax, the upshot might be a refusal to let Bessie revisit them at Beechhurst throughout the whole continuance of her school-days. And that was what came of it. Of course his escapade was

communicated to Mr. Fairfax, and Madame Fournier received a letter from Abbotsmead with the intimation that the youth who had presented himself in the Rue St. Jean as a cousin of Miss Fairfax was nothing akin to her, and that if she could not be secured from his presumptuous intrusions there, she must be removed from madame's custody. They had associated together as children, but it was desirable to stay the progress of their unequal friendship as they grew up; for the youth, though well conducted and clever, was of mean origin and poor condition; so Mr. Fairfax was credibly informed. And he trusted that Madame Fournier would see the necessity of a decisive separation between them.

Madame did see the necessity. With Mr. Fairfax's letter came to her hand another, a letter from the "youth" himself, but addressed to his dear Bessie. That it should ever reach her was improbable. There was the strictest quarantine for letters in the Rue St. Jean. Even letters to and from parents passed through madame's private office. She opened and read Harry Musgrave's as an obvious necessity, smiled over its boyish exaggeration, and relished its fun at her own expense, for madame was a woman of wisdom and humor. Little by little she had learnt the whole of Bessie's life and conversation from her own lips; and she felt that there was nothing to be feared from a lover of young Musgrave's type, unless he was set on mischief by the premature interposition of obstacles, of which this denial to Bessie of her Christmas holiday was an example.

However, madame had not to judge, but to act. She returned Harry Musgrave his letter, with a polite warning that such a correspondence with a girl at school was silly and not to be thought of. Harry blushed a little, felt foolish, and put the document into the fire. Madame made him confess to himself that he had gone to Caen as much for bravado as for love of Bessie. Bessie never knew of the letter, but she cherished her pretty romance in her heart, and when she was melancholy she thought of the garden at Brook, and of the beeches by the stream where they had sat and told their secrets on their farewell afternoon; and in her imagination her dear Harry was a perfect friend and lover.

That episode passed out of date. Bessie gave her mind to improvement. Discovery was made that she had a sweet singing voice, and, late in the day as it seemed to begin, she undertook to learn the piano, on the plea that it would be useful if she could only play enough to accompany herself in a song. She had her dancing-lessons, her drawing-lessons, and as much study of grammars, dictionaries, histories, geographies, and sciences-made-easy as was good for her, and every day showed her more and more what a dunce she was. Madame, however, treated her as a girl who had *des moyens*, and she was encouraged to believe that when she had done with school she would make as creditable a figure in the world as most of her contemporaries.

How far off her *début* might be no one had yet inquired. Since her late experiences there was little certainty in Bessie's expectations of going to Beechhurst for the long vacation which began in July. And it was salutary that she entertained a doubt, for it mitigated disappointment when it came. About a fortnight before the breaking up madame sent for her one evening in to the *salon*, and with much consideration informed her that it was arranged she should go with her to Bayeux and to the sea, instead of going to England. Bessie had acquired the art of controlling her feelings, and she accepted the fiat in silence. But she felt a throb of vindictive rage against her grandfather, and said in her heart that to live in a world where such men were masters, women ought to be made of machinery. She refused to write to him, but she wrote home to Beechhurst, and asked if any of them were coming to see her. But the loving joint reply of her father and mother was that they thought it better not.

Madame Fournier was indulgent in holiday-time, and Bessie was better pleased at Bayeux than she had thought it possible to be. The canon proved to be the most genial of old clergymen. He knew all the romance of French history, and gave Bessie more instruction in their peripatetic lectures about that drowsy, ancient city than she could have learnt in a year of dull books. Then there was Queen Matilda's famous tapestry to study in the museum, a very retired, rustic nook, all embowered in vines. Bessie also practised sketching, for Bayeux is rich in bits of street scenery—gables, queer windows, gateways, flowery balconies. And she was asked into society with madame, and met the gentlefolks who kept their simple, retired state about the magnificent cathedral. Before Bayeux palled she was carried off to Luc-sur-Mer, the canon going too, also in the care of madame his niece.

Bessie's regret next to that for home was for the loneliness of Janey Fricker, left with Miss Foster in the Rue St. Jean. She wished for Janey to walk with her in the rough sea-wind, to bathe with her, and talk with her. One morning when the sun was glorious on the dancing waves, she cried out her longing for her little friend. The next day Janey arrived by the diligence. Mr. Fairfax had given madame *carte blanche* for the holiday entertainment of his granddaughter, and madame was glad to be able to content her so easily. Luc-sur-Mer is not a place to be enthusiastic about. Its beauty is moderate—a shelving beach, a background of sand-hills, and the rocky reef of Calvados. The canon took his gentle paces with a broad-brimmed abbé from Avranches, and madame was happy in the society of a married sister from Paris. The two girls did as they pleased. They were very fond of one another, and this sentiment is enough for perfect bliss at their age. Bessie had never wavered in her protecting kindness to Janey, and Janey served her now with devotion, and promised eternal remembrance and gratitude.

When a fortnight came to an end at Luc-sur-Mer, Bessie returned to Bayeux, and Janey went back to the Rue St. Jean. Before the school reopened came into port at Caen the Petrel, and John

Fricker, the master-mariner, carried away his daughter. Janey left six lines of hasty, tender adieu with Miss Foster for her friend, but no address. She only said that she was "Going to sail with father."

CHAPTER XII.

IN COURSE OF TIME.

For days, weeks, months the memory of lost Janey Fricker haunted Bessie Fairfax with a sweet melancholy. She missed her little friend exceedingly. She did not doubt that Janey would write, would return, and even a year of silence and absence did not cure her of regret and expectation. She was of a constant as well as a faithful nature, and had a thousand kind pleas and excuses for those she loved. It was impossible to believe that Janey had forgotten her, but Janey made no sign of remembrance.

Time and change! Time and change! How fast they get over the ground! how light the traces they leave behind them! At the next Christmas recess there was a great exodus of English girls. The Miss Hiloes went, and they had no successors. When Bessie wanted to talk of Janey and old days, she had to betake herself to Miss Foster. There was nobody else left who remembered Janey or her own coming to school.

As the time went on letters from Beechhurst were fewer and farther between; letters from Brook she had none, nor any mention of Harry Musgrave in her mother's. Her grandfather desired to wean her from early associations, and a mixture of pride and right feeling kept the Carnegies from whatever could be misconstrued into a wish to thwart him. No one came to see her from the Forest after that rash escapade of Harry Musgrave's. Her eighteenth birthday passed, and she was still kept at school both in school-time and holidays.

Madame Fournier, the genial canon, the kind *curé*, a few English acquaintances at Caen, a few French acquaintances at Bayeux, were very good to her. Especially she liked her visits to the canon's house in summer. Often, as the long vacation of her third year at Caen approached, she caught herself musing on the probability of her recall to England with a reluctancy full of doubts and fears. She had been so long away that she felt half forgotten, and when madame announced that once more she was to spend the autumn under her protection, she heard it without remonstrance, and, for the moment, with something like relief. But afterward, when the house was silent and the girls were all gone, the unbidden tears rose often to her eyes, and the yearning of home-sickness came upon her as strongly as in the early days of her exile.

Bayeux is a *triste* little city, and in hot weather a perfect sun-trap between its two hills. The river runs softly hidden amongst willows, and the dust rises in light clouds with scarce a breath of air. Yet glimpses of cool beautiful green within gates and over stone walls refresh the eyes; vines drape the placid rustic nook that calls itself the library; every other window in the streets is a garland or a posy, and through the doors ajar show vistas of oleanders, magnolias, pomegranates flowering in olive-wood tubs, and making sweet lanes and hedges across tiled courts to the pleasant gloom of the old houses.

Canon Fournier's house was in the neighborhood of the cathedral, and as secluded, green, and garlanded as any. Oftentimes in the day his man Launcelot watered the court-yard in agreeable zigzags. Bessie Fairfax, when she heard the cool tinkle of the shower upon the stones, always looked out to share the refreshment. The canon's *salon* was a double room with a *portière* between. Two windows *gave* upon the court and two upon a shaded, paved terrace, from which a broad flight of steps descended to the garden. The domain of the canon's housekeeper was at one end of this terrace, and there old Babette sat in the cool shelling peas, shredding beans, and issuing orders to Margot in the sultry atmosphere of the kitchen stove. Bessie, alone in the *salon* one August morning, heard the shrill monotone of her voice in the pauses of a day-dream. She had dropped her book because, try as she would to hold her attention to the story, her thoughts lost themselves continually, and were found again at every turning of the page astray somewhere about the Forest—about home.

"It is very strange! I cannot help thinking of them. I wonder whether anything is happening?" she said, and yielded to the subtle influence. She began to walk to and fro the *salon*. She went over in her mind many scenes; she recollected incidents so trivial that they had been long ago forgotten —how Willie had broken the wooden leg of little Polly's new Dutch doll (for surgical practice), and how Polly had raised the whole house with her lamentations. And then she fell to reckoning how old the boys would be now and how big, until suddenly she caught herself laughing through tears at that cruel pang of her own when, after submitting to be the victim of Harry Musgrave's electrical experiments, he had neglected to reward her with the anticipated kiss. "I wonder whether he remembers?—girls remember such silly things." In this fancy she stood still, her bright face addressed towards the court. Through the trees over the wall appeared the gray dome of the cathedral. Launcelot came sauntering and waving his watering-can. The stout figure of the canon issued from the doorway of a small pavilion which he called his *omnibus*, passed along under the shadow of the wall, and out into the glowing sun. Madame entered the *salon*, her light quick steps ringing on the *parquet*, her holiday voice clear as a carol, her holiday figure gay as a showy-plumaged bird.

"Ma chérie, tu n'es pas sortie? tu ne fais rien?"

Bessie awoke from her reverie, and confessed that she was idle this morning, very idle and uncomfortably restless: it was the heat, she thought, and she breathed a vast sigh. Madame invited her to *do* something by way of relief to her *ennui*, and after a brief considering fit she said she would go into the cathedral, where it was the coolest, and take her sketching-block.

Oh, for the moist glades of the Forest, for the soft turf under foot and the thick verdure overhead! Bessie longed for them with all her heart as she passed upon the sun-baked stones to the great door of the cathedral. The dusk of its vaulted roof was not cool and sweet like the arching of green branches, but chill with damp odors of antiquity. She sat down in one of the arcades near the portal above the steps that descend into the nave. The immense edifice seemed quite empty. The perpetual lamp burned before the altar, and wandering echoes thrilled in the upper galleries. Through a low-browed open door streamed across the aisle a flood of sunshine, and there was the sound of chisel and mallet from the same quarter, the stone-yard of the cathedral; but there was no visible worshipper—nothing to interrupt her mood of reverie.

For a long while, that is. Presently chimed in with the music of chisel and mallet the ring of eager young footsteps outside, young men's footsteps, voices and dear English speech. One was freely translating from his guide-book: "The cathedral, many times destroyed, was rebuilt after the fire of 1106, and not completed until the eighteenth century. It is therefore of several styles. The length is one hundred and two mètres and the height twenty-three mètres from floor to vault."

Bessie's breath came and went very fast; so did the blood in her cheeks. Surely that voice she knew. It was Harry Musgrave's voice, and this was why thoughts of the Forest had haunted her all the morning.

The owner of the voice entered, and it was Harry Musgrave—he and two others, all with the fresh air of British tourists not long started on their tour, knapsack on back and walking-stick in hand. They pulled off their gray wideawakes and stared about, lowering their manly tones as they talked; stood a few minutes considering the length, breadth, height, and beauty of general effect in the nave and the choir, and then descended the steps, and in the true national spirit of inquiry walked straight to the stream of sunshine that revealed a door opening into some place unseen. Bessie, sitting in retired shade, escaped their observation. She laughed to herself with an inexpressible gladness. It was certainly not by accident that Harry was here. She would have liked to slip along the aisle in his shadow, to have called him by his name, but the presence of his two unknown companions, and some diffidence in herself, restrained her until the opportunity was gone, and he disappeared, inveigled by the sacristan into making the regular tour of the building. She knew every word he would hear, every antiquity he would admire. She saw him in the choir turning over the splendid manuscript books of Holy Writ and of the Mass which were in use in the church when the kings of England were still dukes of Normandy; saw him carried off into the crypt where is shown the pyx of those long-ago times, a curious specimen of mediæval work in brass; and after that she lost him.

Would they climb the dome, those enterprising young men? Bessie took it for granted that they would. But she must see dear Harry again; and oh for a word with him! Perhaps he would seek her out—he might have learnt from her mother where she was at Bayeux—or perhaps he would not *dare*? Not that Harry's character had ever lacked daring where his wishes were concerned; still, recollecting the trouble that had come of his former unauthorized visit, he might deny himself for her sake. It was not probable, and Bessie would not have bidden him deny himself; she would willingly go through the same trouble again for the same treat. Why had she not taken courage to arrest his progress? How foolish, how heartless it would appear to-morrow if the chance were not renewed to her to-day! She would not have done so silly a thing three years ago—her impulse to follow him, to call out his name, would have been irresistible—but now she felt shy of him. A plague on her shyness!

Bessie's little temper had the better of her for a minute or two. She was very angry with herself, would never forgive herself, she said, if by her own trivial fault she had thrown away this favor of kind Fortune. What must she do, what could she do, to retrieve her blunder? Where seek for him? How find him? She quivered, grew hot and cold again with excitement. Should she go to the Green Square?—he was sure to visit that quarter. Then she remembered a high window in the canon's house that commanded the open spaces round the cathedral; she would go and watch from that high window. It was a long while before she arrived at this determination; she waited to see if the strangers would return to the beautiful chapter-house, to admire its fine tesselated floor and carved stalls, and its chief treasure in the exquisite ivory crucifix of the unfortunately famous princess De Lamballe; but they did not return, and then she hastened home, lest she should be too late. Launcelot was plying his water-can for the sixth time that morning when she entered the court, and she stood in an angle of shadow to feel the air of the light shower.

"Here she is, and just the same as ever!" exclaimed somebody at the *salon* window.

Bessie was startled into a cry of joy. It was Harry Musgrave himself. Madame Fournier had been honored with his society for quite half an hour while his little friend was loitering and longing pensively in the cathedral. All that lost, precious time! Bessie never recollected how they met, or what they said to each other in the first moments, but Babette, who witnessed the meeting through the glass door at the end of the hall which opened on the terrace, had a firm belief ever afterward that the English ladies and gentlemen embrace with a kiss after absence—a sign whether of simplicity or freedom of manners, she could not decide; so she wisely kept her witness

to herself, being a sage person and of discreet experiences.

They returned into the *salon* together. It was full of the perfume of roses, of the wavering shadow of leaves on the floor and walls and ceiling. It looked bright and pretty, and madame, with suave benignity, explained: "I told Mr. Musgrave that it was better to wait here, and not play hide-and-seek; Bessie was sure to come soon."

"I saw you in the cathedral, Harry; you passed close by me. It was so difficult not to cry out!"

"You saw me in the cathedral, and did not run up to me? Oh, Bessie!"

"There were two other gentlemen with you." Bessie, though conscious of her wickedness, saw no harm in extenuating it.

"If there had been twenty, what matter? Would I have let you pass me? If I had not found courage to seek you here—and it required some courage, and some perseverance, too—why, I should have missed you altogether."

Bessie laughed: here were they sparring as if they had parted no longer ago than yesterday! Then she blushed, and all at once they came to themselves, and began to be graver and more restrained.

"My friends are Fordyce and Craik; they have gone to study the Tapestry. I said I would look in at it later with you, Bessie: I counted on you for my guide," announced Harry with native assurance.

Bessie launched a supplicatory glance at madame, then hazarded a doubtful consent, which did not provoke a denial. After that they moved to the garden-end of the *salon*, and seated themselves in friendly proximity. Then Bessie asked to be told all about them at home. All about them was not a long story. The doctor's family had not arrived at the era of dispersion and changes; the three years that had been so long, full, and important to Bessie had passed in his house like three monotonous days. The same at Brook.

"The fathers and mothers, yours and mine, are not an hour altered," Harry Musgrave said. "The boys are grown. Jack is a sturdy little ruffian, as you might expect; no boy in the Forest runs through so many clothes as Jack—that's the complaint. There is a talk of sending him to sea, and he is deep in Marryat's novels for preparation."

"Poor Jack, he was a sad Pickle, but *so* affectionate! And Willie and the others?" queried Bessie rather mournfully.

Concerning Willie and the others there was a favorable account. Of all Bessie's old friends and acquaintances not one was lost, not one had gone away. But talk of them was only preliminary to more interesting talk of themselves, modestly deferred, but well lingered over once it was begun. Harry Musgrave could not tell Bessie too much—he could not explain with too exact a precision the system of college-life, its delights and drawbacks. He had been very successful; he had won many prizes, and anticipated the distinction of a high degree—all at the cost of work. One term he had not gone up to Oxford. The doctor had ordered him to rest.

"Still, you are not quite killed with study," said Bessie gayly, rallying him. She thought the school-life of girls was as laborious as the college-life of young men, with much fewer alleviations.

"That was never my way. I can make a spurt if need be. But it is safer to keep a steady, even pace."

"And what are you going to do for a profession, Harry? Have you made up your mind yet?"

Harry had made up his mind to win a fellowship at Oxford, and then to enter himself at one of the Inns of Court and read for the bar. For physic and divinity he had no taste, but the law would suit him. Bessie was ineffably depressed by this information: what romance is there in the law for the imagination of eighteen? If Harry had said he was going to throw himself on the world as a poor author, she would have bestowed upon him a fund of interest and sympathy. To win a little of such encouragement Harry added that while waiting for briefs he might be forced to betake himself to the cultivation of light literature, of journalism, or even of parliamentary reporting: many men, now of mark, had done so. Then Bessie was better satisfied. "But oh what a prodigious wig you will want!" was her rueful conclusion.

"Have I such a Goliath head?" Harry inquired, rubbing his large hands through his crisp, abundant locks. They were as much all in a fuzz as ever, but his skin was not so gloriously tanned, and his hands were white instead of umber. Bessie noticed them: they were whiter and more delicate than her own.

Harry Musgrave had no conceit, but plenty of confidence, and he knew that his head was a very good head. It had room for plenty of brains, and Harry was of opinion that it is far more desirable to be born with a fortune in brains than with the proverbial silver spoon in one's mouth. He would have laughed to scorn the vulgar notion that to be born in the purple or in a wilderness of money-bags is more than an equivalent, and would have bid you see the little value God sets on riches by observing the people to whom He gives them. Birth, he would have granted, ensures a man a long step at starting, but unless he have brains his rival without ancestors will pass him in the race for distinction. This was young Musgrave's creed at three-and-twenty. He expounded it to Bessie, who heard him with a puzzled perception of something left out. Harry, like many another man at the beginning of life, reckoned without the unforeseen.

The sum of Bessie's experiences, adventures, opinions was not long. Her mind had not matured at school as it would have done in the practical education of home. She had acquired a graceful carriage and propriety of behavior, and she had learned a little more history, with a few dates and other things that are written in books; but of current literature and current events, great or small, she had learned nothing. For seclusion a French school is like a convent. She had a sense of humor and a sense of justice—qualities not too common in the sex; and she had a few liberal notions, the seed of which had been sown during her rides with the doctor. They would probably outlive her memory for the shadowy regions of chronology. Then she had a clear and strong sentiment with regard to the oppressive manner in which her grandfather had exercised his right and power over her, which gave a tincture to her social views not the most amiable. She was confessedly happier with Madame Fournier at Bayeux than she had any anticipation of being at Abbotsmead, but she had nevertheless a feeling of injury in being kept in a state of pupilage. She had wrought up her mind to expect a recall to England when she was eighteen, and no recall had come. Harry Musgrave's inquiry when she was to leave school brought a blush to her face. She was ashamed to answer that she did not know.

"Lady Latimer should interfere for you," suggested Harry, who had not received a lively impression of her lot.

Bessie's countenance cleared with a flash, and her thoughts were instantly diverted to Fairfield and its gracious mistress—that bright particular star of her childish imagination: "Oh, Harry, have you made friends with Lady Latimer?" asked she.

"I have not been to her house, because she has never asked me since that time I despised her commands, but we have a talk when we meet on the road. Her ladyship loves all manner of information, and is good enough to take an interest in my progress. I know she takes an interest in it, because she recollects what I tell her—not like our ascetic parson, who forgets whether I am at Balliol or Oriel, and whether I came out first class or fourth in moderations."

"I wish I could meet Lady Latimer on the road or anywhere! Seeing you makes me long to go home, Harry," said Bessie with a sigh. Harry protested that she ought to go home, and promised that he would speak about it—he would go to Fairfield immediately on his return to the Forest, and beg Lady Latimer to intercede in her behalf. Bessie had a doubt whether this was a judicious plan, but she did not say so. The hope of deliverance, once admitted into her mind, overcame all perplexities.

A little while and the canon came in glowing hot. "*Pouf!*" and he wiped his rubicund, round visage with a handkerchief as brilliant. Coming straight from the glare out of doors, he was not aware of the stranger in the *salon* till his eyes were used to the gloom. Then madame and Bessie effected Harry's introduction, and as Harry, with a rare wisdom, had practised colloquial French, he and the canon were soon acquainted. Once only had the old man visited England, a visit for ever memorable on account of the guinea he had paid for his first dinner in London.

"Certainly, they took you for an archbishop or for a monsigneur," said Harry, when the old story of this cruel extortion was recited to him. The canon was pleased. This explanation gave a color of flattery to his infamous wrong. And madame thought her brother had quite *l'air noble*.

Babette summoned them to *dejeuner*. Harry stayed gladly at a hint of invitation. Across the table the two young people had a full view of each other, and satisfied their eyes with gazing. Bessie looked lovely in her innocent delight, and Harry had now a maturer appreciation of her loveliness. He himself had more of the student aspect, and an air of lassitude, which he ascribed, as he had been instructed, to overstrain in reading for the recent examinations. This was why he had come abroad—the surest way of taking mental rest and refreshment. Incidentally he mentioned that he had given up boating and athletic exercises, under Mr. Carnegie's direction. Bessie only smiled, and reflected that it was odd to hear of Harry Musgrave taking care of himself. One visitor from England on a day would have been enough, but by a curious coincidence, as they sat all at ease, through the open window from the court there sounded another English voice, demanding Madame Fournier and Miss Fairfax.

"Who can it be?" said Bessie, and she craned her fair neck to look, while a rosy red suffused her face from chin to brow.

The canon and madame laid down their knives and forks to listen, and involuntarily everybody's eyes turned upon Harry. He could not forbear a smile and a glance of intelligence at Bessie; for he had an instant suspicion that this new-comer was an emissary from Mr. Fairfax, and from her agitation so had she. Launcelot held a short, prompt parley at the gate, then Babette intervened, and next was audible the advance of a firm, even step into the hall, and the closing of the *salon* door. "Encore un beau monsieur pour mademoiselle," announced the housekeeper, and handed in a card inscribed with the name of "Mr. Cecil Burleigh," and a letter of introduction from Mr. Fairfax.

Bessie's heart went pit-a-pat while madame read the letter, and Harry feared that he would probably have to find his way to the Tapestry without a guide. Madame's countenance was inscrutable, but she said to Bessie, "Calme-toi, mon enfant," and finished her meal with extreme deliberation. Then with a perfect politeness, and an utter oblivion of the little arrangement for a walk to the library that Harry and Bessie had made, she gave him his *congé* in the form of a hope that he would never fail to visit her when he found himself at Caen or Bayeux. Harry accepted it with a ready apprehension of the necessity for his dismissal, and without alluding to the Tapestry

made his respectful acknowledgments to madame and the canon preparatory to bidding Bessie farewell.

Under the awning over the *perron* they said their good-byes. Bessie, frank-hearted girl, was disappointed even to the glittering of tears. "It has been very pleasant. I am so happy you came!" whispered she with a tremor.

"God bless you, dear little Bessie! Give me this for a keepsake," said Harry, and took a white, half-blown rose which she wore in the bosom of her pretty dress of lilac *percale*. She let him have it. Then they stood for a minute face to face and hand in hand, but the delicate perplexities of Babette, spying through her glass door, were not increased by a kiss at parting. And the young man seemed to rush away at last in sudden haste.

"Montes dans ta chambre quelques instants, Bessie," said the voice of madame. And then with a gentle, decorous dignity she entered the *salon*.

When madame entered the *salon*, Mr. Cecil Burleigh was standing at one of the windows that *gave* upon the court. He witnessed the departure of Harry Musgrave, and did not fail to recognize an Englishman in the best made of English clothes. The reader will probably recognize *him* as one of the guests at the Fairfield wedding, who had shown some attention to Bessie Fairfax on her grandfather's introduction of him as a neighbor of his in Woldshire. He was now at Bayeux by leave of Mr. Fairfax, to see the young lady and take the sense of her opinions as to whether she would prefer to remain another year at school, or to go back to England in ten days under his escort. The interval he was on his way to spend in Paris—on a private errand for the government, to a highly honorable member of which he was private secretary.

Mr. Fairfax's letter to madame announced in simple terms the object of Mr. Cecil Burleigh's mission to Bayeux, and as the gentleman recited it by word of mouth she grew freezingly formal. To lose Bessie would be a loss that she had been treating as deferred. Certainly, also, the ways of the English are odd! To send the young lady on a two days' journey with this strange gentleman, who was no relative, was impossible. So well brought up as Bessie had been since she came to Caen, she would surely refuse the alternative, and decide to remain at school. Madame replied to the announcement that Miss Fairfax would appear in a few minutes, and would of course speak for herself. But Bessie was in no haste to meet the envoy from Kirkham after parting with her beloved Harry, and when a quarter of an hour had elapsed, and there was still no sign of her coming, Babette was despatched to the top of the house to bring her down to the interview.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh had taken a chair opposite the door, and he watched for its reopening with a visible and vivid interest. It opened, and Bessie walked in with that stately erectness of gait which was characteristic of the women of her race. "As upright as a Fairfax," was said of them in more senses than one. She was blushing, and her large dark blue eyes had the softness of recent tears. She curtseyed, school-girl fashion, to her grandfather's envoy, and her graceful proud humility set him instantly at a distance. His programme was to be lordly, affable, tenderly patronizing, but his dark cheek flushed, and self-possessed as he was, both by nature and habit, he was suddenly at a loss how to address this stiff princess about whom he had expected to find some rags of Cophetua still hanging. But the rags were all gone, and the little gypsy of the Forest was become a lady.

Madame intervened with needful explanations. Bessie comprehended the gist of the embassage very readily. She must take heart for an immediate encounter with her grandfather and all her other difficulties, or she must resign herself to a fourth year of exile and of school. Her mind was at once made up. Since the morning—how long ago it seemed!—an ardent wish to return to England had begun to glow in her imagination. She wanted her real life to begin. These dull, monotonous school-days were only a prelude which had gone on long enough. Therefore she said, with brief consideration, that her choice would be to return home.

"To Kirkham understand, *ma chérie*, not to Beechhurst," said madame softly, warningly.

"To Kirkham, so be it! Sooner or later I must go there," answered Bessie with brave resignation.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh was apparently gratified by the young lady's consent, abrupt though it was. But madame's countenance fell. She was deeply disappointed at this issue. Apart from her pecuniary interest in Bessie, which was not inconsiderable, Bessie had become a source of religious concern to influential persons. And there was a favorite nephew of madame's, domiciled in Paris, about whom visionary schemes had been indulged, which now all in a moment vanished. This young nephew was to have come with his mother to Étretât only a week hence, and there the canon and Madame Fournier were to have joined them, with the beautiful English girl committed to their charge. It was now good-bye to all such plots and plans.

Bessie perceived from her face that madame was distressed, but she did not know all the reasons why. Madame had been very good to her, and Bessie felt sorry; but to leave school for home was such a natural, inevitable episode in the course of life in the Rue St. Jean that, beyond a momentary regret, she had no compunction. Mr. Cecil Burleigh proceeded to lay open his arrangements. He was on his road to Paris, where he might be detained from ten to fifteen days, but madame should receive a letter from him when the precise time of his return was fixed. After he had spoken to this effect he rose to take leave, and Bessie, blushing as she heard her own voice, originated her first remark, her first question:

"My grandfather hardly knows me. Does he expect my arrival at Kirkham with pleasure, or would he rather put it off for another year?" Madame thought she was already wavering in her determination.

"I am sure that when I have written to him he will expect your arrival with the *greatest* pleasure," replied Mr. Cecil Burleigh with kind emphasis, retaining Bessie's hand for a moment longer than was necessary, and relinquishing it with a cordial shake.

Bessie's blushes did not abate at the compliment implied in his answer and in his manner: he had been favorably impressed, and would send to Abbotsmead a favorable report of her. When he was gone she all in a moment recollected when and where she had seen him before, and wondered that he had not reminded her of it; but perhaps he had forgotten too? She soon let go that reminiscence, and with a light heart, in anticipation of the future which had appeared in the distance so unpropitious, she talked of it to madame with a thousand random speculations, until madame was tired of the subject. And then she talked of it to Babette, who having no private disappointments in connection therewith, proved patiently and sympathetically responsive.

"Of course," said Bessie, "we shall go down the river to Havre, and then we shall cross to Hampton. I shall send them word at home, and some of them are sure to come and meet me there."

The letter was written and despatched, and in due course of post arrived an answer from Mr. Carnegie. He would come to Hampton certainly, and his wife would come with him, and perhaps one of the boys: they would come or go anywhere for a sight of their dear Bessie. But, fond, affectionate souls! they were all doomed to disappointment. Mr. Cecil Burleigh wrote earlier than was expected that he had intelligence from Kirkham to the effect that Mr. Frederick Fairfax would be at Havre with his yacht on or about a certain day, that he would come to Caen and himself take charge of his niece, and carry her home by sea—to Scarcliffe understood, for Kirkham was full twenty miles from the coast.

"Oh, how sorry I am! how sorry they will be in the Forest!" cried Bessie. "Is there no help for it?"

Madame was afraid there was no help for it—nothing for it but submission and obedience. And Bessie wrote to revoke all the cheerful promises and prospects that she had held out to her friends at Beechhurst.

CHAPTER XIII.

BESSIE LEARNS A FAMILY SECRET.

Canon Fournier went to Étretât by himself, for madame was bound to escort her pupil to Caen, to prepare her for her departure to England, and with her own hands to remit her into those of her friends. Caen is suffocatingly hot in August—dusty, empty, dull. Mr. Frederick Fairfax's beautiful yacht, the Foam, was in port at Havre, but it was understood that a week would elapse before it could be ready to go to sea again. It had met with some misadventure and wanted repairs. Mr. Frederick Fairfax came on to Caen, and presented himself in the Rue St. Jean, where he saw Bessie in the garden. Two chairs were brought out for them, and they sat and talked to the tinkle of the old fountain. It was not much either had to say to the other. The gentleman was absent and preoccupied, like a person accustomed to solitude and long silence; even while he talked he gave Bessie the impression of being half lost in reverie. He bore some slight resemblance to his father, and his fair hair and beard were whitening already, though he appeared otherwise in the prime of life.

The day after her uncle's visit there came to Bessie a sage, matronly woman to offer her any help or information she might need in prospect of sea-adventures. Mrs. Betts was to attend upon her on board the yacht; she had decisive ways and spoke like a woman in authority. When Bessie hesitated she told her what to do. She had been in charge of Mr. Frederick Fairfax's unfortunate wife during a few weeks' cruise along the coast. The poor lady was an inmate of the asylum of the Bon Sauveur at Caen. The Foam had been many times into the port on her account during Bessie's residence in the Rue St. Jean, but, naturally enough, Mr. Frederick Fairfax had kept his visits from the knowledge of his school-girl niece. Now, however, concealment might be abandoned, for if the facts were not communicated to her here, she would be sure to hear them at Kirkham. And Mrs. Betts told her the pitiful story. Bessie was inexpressibly awed and shocked at the revelation. She had not heard a whisper of the tragedy before.

One evening in the cool Bessie walked with Miss Foster up the wide thoroughfare, at the country end of which are the old convent walls and gardens which enclose the modern buildings of the Bon Sauveur. They were not a dozen paces from the gates when the wicket was opened by a sister, and Mr. Frederick Fairfax came out. Bessie's face flushed and her eyes filled with tears of compassion.

"You know where I have been, then, Elizabeth?" said he—"to visit my poor wife. She seems happier in her little room full of birds and flowers than on the yacht with me, yet the good nuns assure me she is the better for her sea-trip. The nuns are most kind."

Bessie acquiesced, and Miss Foster remarked that it was at the Bon Sauveur gentle usage of the insane had first superseded the cruel old system of restraints and terror. Mr. Frederick Fairfax shivered, stood a minute gazing dejectedly into space, and then walked on.

"He loves her," said Bessie, deeply touched. "I suppose death is a light affliction in comparison with such a separation."

The wicket was still open, the sister was still looking out. There was a glimpse of lofty houses, open windows, grapevines rich in purple clusters on the walls, and boxes of mignonette and gayer flowers upon the window-sills. Miss Foster asked Bessie if she would like to see what of the asylum was shown; and though Bessie's taste did not incline to painful studies, before she had the decision to refuse she found herself inside the gates and the sister was reciting her monotonous formula.

These tall houses in a crescent on the court were occupied by lady-boarders not suffering from mental alienation or any loss of faculty, but from decayed fortunes. The deaf and dumb, the blind, the crippled, epileptic, and insane had separate dwellings built apart in the formal luxuriant gardens. "We have patients of all nations," said the sister. "Strangers see none of these; there have been distressing recognitions." Bessie was not desirous of seeing any. She breathed more freely when she was outside the gates. It was a nightmare to imagine the agonies massed within those walls, though all is done that skill and charity can do for their alleviation.

"You will not forget us: if ever you come back to Caen, you will not forget us?" The speaker was little Mrs. Foster.

Bessie had learned to love Mrs. Foster's crowded, minute *salon*, her mixed garden of flowers and herbs; and she had learned to love the old lady too, by reason of the kindnesses she had done her and her over-worked daughter. Mr. Fairfax had made his granddaughter an allowance of pocket-money so liberal that she was never at a loss for a substantial testimony of her gratitude to any one who earned it. And now her farewell visits to all who had been kind to her were paid, and she was surprised how much she was leaving that she regretted. The word had come for her to be ready at a moment's call. The yacht was in the river, her luggage was gone on board, and Mrs. Betts had completed her final arrangements for the comfort of the young lady. Only Mr. Cecil Burleigh was to wait for—that was the last news for Bessie: Mr. Cecil Burleigh was to join the yacht, and to be carried to England with her.

There were three days to wait. The time seemed long in that large vacant house, that sunburnt secluded garden, that glaring silent court. Bessie spent hours in the church. It was cool there, and close by if her summons came. The good *curé* saw her often, and took no notice. She was not devout. She was too facile, too philosophical of temper to have violent preferences or aversions in religion. A less sober mind than hers would have yielded to the gentle pressure of universal example, but Bessie was not of those who are given to change. She would have made an excellent Roman Catholic if she had been born and bred in that communion, but she had disappointed everybody's pious hopes and efforts for her conversion to it. She once said to the *curé* that holiness of life was the chief thing, and she could not make out that it was the monopoly of any creed or any sect, or any age of the world. He gave her his blessing, and, not to acknowledge a complete defeat, he told Madame Fournier that if the dear young lady met with poignant griefs and mortifications, for which there were abundant opportunities in her circumstances, he had expectations that she might then seek refuge and consolation in the tender arms of the Church. Madame did not agree with him. She had studied Bessie's character more closely, and believed that whatever her trials, her strength would always suffice for her day, and that whatever she changed she would not change her profession of faith or deny her liberal and practical Protestant principles.

There was hurry at the end, as in most departures, but it was soon over, and then followed a delicious calm. The yacht was towed down the river in the beautiful cool of the evening. A pretty awning shaded the deck, and there Bessie dined daintily with her uncle and Mr. Cecil Burleigh, and for the first time in her life was served with polite assiduity. She looked very handsome and more coquettish than she had any idea of in her white dress and red *capuchon*, but she felt shy at being made so much of. She did not readily adapt herself to worship. Mr. Cecil Burleigh had arrived from Paris only that afternoon, and had many amusing things to tell of his pleasures and adventures there. He spoke of Paris as one who loved the gay city, and seemed in excellent spirits. If his mission had a political object, he must certainly have carried it through with triumphant success; but his talk was of balls, *fêtes*, plays and shows.

After they had dined Bessie was left to her memories and musings, while the gentlemen went pacing up and down the deck in earnest conversation. It was a perfect evening. The sky was full of color, scarlet, rosy, violet, primrose—changing, fading, flushing, perpetually. And before all was gray the moon had risen and was shining in silver floods upon the sea. In the mystery of moonshine Bessie lost sight of the phantom poplars that fringe the Orne. The excitement of novelty and uncertainty routed dull thoughts, and her fancy pruned its wings for a flight into the future. In the twilight came Mrs. Betts, and cut short the flight of fancy with prosy suggestions of early retirement to rest. It was easy to retire, but not so easy to sleep. Bessie's mind was astir. It became retrospective. She went over the terrors of her first coming to Caen, the dinner at Thunby's, and the weird talk of Janey Fricker in the *dortoir*, till melancholy overwhelmed her.

Where was Janey? Was she still sailing with her father? No news of her had ever come to the Rue St. Jean since the day she left it. It sometimes crossed Bessie's mind that Janey was no longer in the land of the living. At last, with the lulling, soft motion of a breezeless night on the water, came oblivion and sleep too sound for dreams.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON BOARD THE FOAM.

Life is continuous, so we say, but here and there events happen that mark off its parts so sharply as almost to sever them. Awaking the next morning in the tiny gilded cabin of the Foam was the signal of such an event to Bessie Fairfax. She had put away childish things, and left them behind her at Caen yesterday. To-day before her, across the Channel, was a new world to be proved, and a cloudy revelation of the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears that nourish the imagination of blooming adolescence. For a minute she did not realize where she was, and lay still, with wide-open eyes and ears perplexed, listening to the wash of the sea. There was a splendid sunshine, a sky blue as sapphire, and a lovely green ripple of waves against the glass.

The voice of Mrs. Betts brought her to herself: "I thought it best to let you sleep your sleep out, miss. The sea-air does it. The gentlemen have breakfasted two hours ago."

Bessie was sorry and ashamed. It was with a penitent face she appeared on deck. But she immediately discovered that this was not school: she had entire liberty to please and amuse herself. Perhaps if her imagination had been less engaged she might have found the voyage tedious. Mrs. Betts told her there was no knowing when they should see Scarcliffe—it depended on wind and weather and whims. The yacht was to put in at Ryde to land Mr. Cecil Burleigh; and as the regattas were going on, they might cruise off the Isle of Wight for a week, maybe, for the master was never in a hurry. In Bessie's bower there was an agreeable selection of novels, but she had many successive hours of silence to dream in when she was tired of heroes and heroines. Mr. Frederick Fairfax was the most taciturn of men, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh was constantly busy with pens, ink, and paper. In the long course of the day he did take shreds of leisure, but they were mostly devoted to cigars and meditation. Bessie observed that he was older and graver since that gay wedding at Fairfield—which of course he had a right to be, for it was three years ago—but he was still and always a very handsome and distinguished personage.

In the *salon* of Canon Fournier at Bayeux, Bessie Fairfax had disconcerted this fine gentleman, but now the tables were turned, and on board the yacht he often disconcerted her—not of *malice prepense*, but for want of due consideration. No doubt she was a little unformed, ignorant girl, but her intuitive perceptions were quick, and she knew when she was depreciated and misunderstood. On a certain afternoon he read her some beautiful poetry under the awning, and was interested to know whether she had any taste for poetry. Bessie confessed that at school she had read only Racine, and felt shy of saying what she used to read at home, and he dropped the conversation. He drew the conclusion that she did not care for literature. At their first meeting it had seemed as if they might become cordial friends, but she soon grew diffident of this much-employed stranger, who always had the ill-luck to discover to her some deficiency in her education. The effect was that by the time the yacht anchored off Ryde, she had lost her ease in his society, and had become as shy as he was capricious, for she thought him a most capricious and uncertain person in temper and demeanor.

Yet it was not caprice that influenced his behavior. He was quite unconscious of the variableness that taxed her how to meet it. He approved of Bessie: he admired her—face, figure, air, voice, manner. He judged that she would probably mature into a quiet and loving woman of no very pronounced character, and there was a direct purpose in his mind to cultivate her affection and to make her his wife. He thought her a nice girl, sweet and sensible, but she did not enchant him. Perhaps he was under other magic—under other magic, but not spell-bound beyond his strength to break the charm.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh was a man of genius and of soaring ambition—well-born, well-nurtured, but as the younger son of a younger son absolutely without patrimony. At his school and his university he had won his way through a course of honors, and he would disappoint all who knew him if he did not revive the traditions of his name and go onto achieve place, power, and fame. To enter Parliament was necessary for success in the career he desired to run, and the first step towards Parliament for a poor young man was a prudent marriage into a family of long standing, wide connection, and large influence in their county—so competent authorities assured him—and all these qualifications had the Fairfaxes of Kirkham, with a young heiress sufficiently eligible, besides, to dispose of. The heads on each side had spoken again, and in almost royal fashion had laid the lines for an alliance between their houses. When Mr. Cecil Burleigh took Caen in his road to Paris, it was with the distinct understanding that if Elizabeth Fairfax pleased him and he succeeded in pleasing her, a marriage between them would crown the hopes of both their families.

The gentleman had not taken long to decide that the lady would do. And now they were on the Foam together he had opportunities enough of wooing. He availed himself of a courtly grace of manner, with sometimes an air of worship, which would have been tenderness had he felt like a

lover. Bessie was puzzled, and grew more and more ill at ease with him. Absorbed in work, in thought, or in idle reverie and smoke, he appeared natural and happy; he turned his attention to her, and was gay, gracious, flattering, but all with an effort. She wished he would not give himself the trouble. She hated to be made to blush and stammer in her talk; it confused her to have him look superbly in her eyes; it made her angry to have him press her hand as if he would reassure her against a doubt.

Fortunately, the time was not long, for they began to bore one another immensely. It was an exquisite morning when they anchored opposite Ryde, and the first day of the annual regatta. At breakfast Mr. Cecil Burleigh quietly announced that he would now leave the yacht, and make his way home in a few days by the ordinary conveyances. Mr. Frederick Fairfax, who was a consenting party to the family arrangement, suggested that Bessie might like to go on shore to see the town and the charming prospect from the pier and the strand. Mr. Cecil Burleigh did not second the suggestion promptly enough to avoid the suspicion that he would prefer to go alone; and Bessie, who had a most sensitive reluctance to be where she was not wanted, made haste to say that she did not care to land—she was quite satisfied to see the town from the water. Thereupon the gentleman pressed the matter with so much insistance that, though she would much rather have foregone the pleasure than enjoy it under his escort, she found no polite words decisive enough for a refusal.

A white sateen dress embroidered in black and red, and a flapping leghorn hat tied down gypsy style with a crimson ribbon, was a picturesque costume, but not orthodox as a yachting costume at Ryde. Bessie had a provincial French air in spite of her English face, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh perhaps regretted that she was not more suitably equipped for making her *début* in his company. He had a prejudice against peculiarity in dress, and knew that it was a terrible thing to be out of the fashion and to run the gauntlet of bold eyes on Ryde pier. At the seaside the world is idle, and has nothing to do but stare and speculate. Bessie had beauty enough to be stared at for that alone, but it was not her beauty that attracted most remark; it was her cavalier and the singularity of her attire. Poor child! with her own industrious fingers had she lavishly embroidered that heathen embroidery. The gentlemen were not critically severe; the ladies looked at her, and looked again for her escort's sake, and wondered how this prodigiously fine gentleman came to have foregathered with so outlandish a blushing girl; for Bessie, when she perceived herself an object of curious observation, blushed furiously under the unmitigated fire of their gaze. And most heartily did she wish herself back again on board the Foam.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh had friends and acquaintances everywhere, and some very dear friends at this moment at Ryde. That was why he ended his yachting there. As he advanced with Bessie up the pier every minute there was an arrest, a brisk inquiry, and a reply. At last a halt that might have been a *rendezvous* occurred, finding of seats ensued, with general introductions, and then a settling down on pretence of watching the yachts through a glass. It was a very pretty spectacle, and Bessie was left at liberty to enjoy it, and also to take note of the many gay and fashionable folk who enrich and embellish Ryde in the season; for Mr. Cecil Burleigh was entirely engrossed with another person. The party they had joined consisted of a very thin old gentleman, spruce, well brushed, and well cared for; of a languid, pale lady, some thirty years younger, who was his wife; and of two girls, their daughters. It was one of these daughters who absorbed all Mr. Cecil Burleigh's attention, and Bessie recognized her at once as that most beautiful young lady to whom he had been devoted at the Fairfield wedding. His meeting with her had quite transfigured him. He looked infinitely glad, an expression that was reflected on her countenance in a lovely light of joy. It was not necessary to be a witch to discern that there was an understanding between these two—that they loved one another. Bessie saw it and felt sympathetic, and was provoked at the recollection of her foolish conceit in being perplexed by the gentleman's elaborate courtesies to herself.

The other sister talked to her. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner sat in silent pensiveness, according to their wont, contemplating the boats on the water. Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Julia (he called her Julia) conversed together in low but earnest tones. It seemed that they had much to communicate. Presently they crossed the pier, and stood for ever so long leaning over the railing. Bessie was not inquisitive, but she could take a lively, unselfish interest in many matters that did not concern her. When they turned round again she was somehow not surprised to see that Mr. Cecil Burleigh had a constrained air, and that the shell-pink face of the young lady was pale and distorted with emotion. Their joy and gladness had been but evanescent. She came hastily to her mother and said they would now go home to luncheon. On the way she and Mr. Cecil Burleigh followed behind the rest, but they did not speak much, or spoke only of common things.

The Gardiners had a small house in a street turning up from the Strand, a confined little house of the ordinary lodging-house sort, with a handsbreadth of gravel and shrubs in front, and from the sitting-room window up stairs a side-glance at the sea. From a few words that Mr. Gardiner dropped, Bessie learned that it was theirs for twelve months, until the following June; that it was very dear, but the cheapest place they could get in Ryde fit to put their heads into; also that Ryde was chosen as their home for a year because it was cheerful for "poor papa."

Here was a family of indigent gentility, servile waiters upon the accidents of Fortune, unable to work, but not ashamed to beg, as their friends and kindred to the fourth degree could have plaintively testified. It was a mystery to common folks how they lived and got along. They were most agreeable and accomplished people, who knew everybody and went everywhere. The daughters had taste and beauty. They visited by turns at great houses, never both leaving their parents at the same time; they wore pretty, even elegant clothing, and were always ready to

assist at amateur concerts, private theatricals, church festivals, and other cheerful celebrations. Miss Julia Gardiner's voice was an acquisition at an evening party; her elder sister's brilliant touch on the piano was worth an invitation to the most select entertainment. And besides this, there are rich, kind people about in the world who are always glad to give poor girls, who are also nice, a little amusement. And the Miss Gardiners were popular; they were very sweet-tempered, lady-like, useful, and charming.

Bessie Fairfax was an admirer of beauty in her own sex, and she could scarcely take her eyes from the winsome fair face of Julia. It was a very fair face, very lovely. After luncheon, at Mr. Cecil Burleigh's request, she sang a new song that was lying on the piano; and they talked of old songs which he professed to like better, which she said she had forgotten. Mr. Gardiner had not come up stairs, and Mrs. Gardiner, who had, soon disappeared. It was a narrow little room made graceful with a few plants and ornaments and the working tools of ladies; novels from the library were on the table and on the couch. A word spoken there could not be spoken in secret. By and by, Helen, the elder sister, proposed to take Bessie to the arcade. Mr. Cecil Burleigh demurred, but acceded when it was added that "mamma" would go with them. Mamma went, a weary, willing sacrifice; and in the arcade and in somebody's pretty verandah they spent the hot afternoon until six o'clock. When they returned to the house, Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Julia were still together, and the new song on the desk of the piano had not been moved to make room for any other. The gentleman appeared annoyed, the lady weary and dejected. Bessie had no doubt that they were lovers who had roughnesses in the course of their true love, and she sentimentally wished them good-speed over all obstacles.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh rose as they entered, and said he would walk down the pier with Miss Fairfax to restore her to the yacht, and Mr. Gardiner bade Julia put on her hat and walk with them—it would refresh her after staying all the hot afternoon in-doors.

The pier was deserted now. The gay crowd had disappeared, the regatta was over for the day, and the band silent. The glare of sunshine had softened to a delicate amber glow, and the water was smooth, translucent as a lake. The three walked at a pace, but were overtaken and passed by two ladies in dark blue-braided serge dresses that cleared the ground as they walked and fitted close to very well made figures. Their hats were black-glazed and low-crowned, with a narrow blue ribbon lettered "Ariel" in white and gold.

"Look at those ladies," said Mr. Cecil Burleigh, suddenly breaking off his talk with Julia to speak to Bessie; "that is the proper yachting costume. You must have one before you come to Ryde in the Foam again."

Bessie blushed; perhaps he had been ashamed of her. This was a most afflicting, humiliating notion. She was delighted to see the boat from the yacht waiting to take her off. She had imagined her own dress both pretty and becoming—she knew that it had cost her months of patient embroidering. Poor Bessie! she had much to learn yet of the fitness of things, and of things in their right places. Miss Gardiner treated her as very young, and only spoke to her of her school, from which she was newly but fully and for ever emancipated. Incidentally, Bessie learned a bit of news concerning one of her early comrades there. "Ada Hiloe was at Madame Fournier's at Caen. Was it in your time? Did you know her?" she was asked, and when she said that she did, Mr. Cecil Burleigh added for information that the young lady was going to be married; so he had heard in Paris from Mr. Chiverton. Julia instantly cried out, "Indeed! to whom?"

"To Mr. Chiverton himself."

"That horrid old man! Oh, can it be true?"

"He is very rich," was the quiet rejoinder, and both lapsed into silence, until they had parted with their young companion.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh carefully enveloped Bessie in a cloak, Miss Gardiner watching them. Then he bade her good-bye, with a reference to the probability of his seeing her again soon at Abbotsmead. It was a gracious good-bye, and effaced her slight discomfiture about her dress. It even left her under the agreeable impression that he liked her in a friendly way, his abrupt dicta on costume notwithstanding. A certain amount of approbation from without was essential to Bessie's inner peace. As the boat rowed off she waved her hand with rosy benignity to the two looking after her departure. Mr. Cecil Burleigh raised his hat, and they moved away.

CHAPTER XV.

A LITTLE CHAPTER BY THE WAY.

It must not be dissimulated what very dear friends Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Miss Julia Gardiner were. They had known and loved one another for six years as neither was ever likely to love again. They had been long of convincing that a marriage was impossible between two such poor young people—the one ambitious, the other fond of pleasure. They suited to a nicety in character, in tastes, but they were agreed, at last, that there must be an end to their philandering. No engagement had ever been acknowledged. The young lady's parents had been indulgent to their constant affection so long as there was hope, and it was a fact generally recognized by Miss Julia

Gardiner's friends that she cared very much for Mr. Cecil Burleigh, because she had refused two eligible offers—splendid offers for a girl in her position. A third was now open to her, and without being urgent or unkind her mother sincerely wished that she would accept it. Since the morning she had made up her mind to do so.

If the circumstances of these two had been what Elizabeth Fairfax supposed, they would have spent some blessed hours together before dusk. They stayed on the pier, and they talked, not of their love—they had said all their say of love—but of Mr. Cecil Burleigh's flattering prospects. When he stated that his expectations of getting a seat in the House of Commons were based on the good-will of the Fairfax family and connections, Julia was silent for several minutes. Then she remarked in a gentle voice that Miss Fairfax was a handsome girl. Mr. Cecil Burleigh acquiesced, and added that she was also amiable and intelligent.

After that they walked home—to the dull little house in the by street, that is. Mr. Cecil Burleigh refused to go in; and when the door closed on Julia's "Good-bye, Cecil, goodbye, dear," he walked swiftly away to his hotel, with the sensations of a man who is honestly miserable, and also who has not dined.

Julia sat by the open window until very late in the hot night, and Helen with her, comforting her.

"No, the years have not been thrown away! If I live to grow old I shall still count them the best years of my life," said she with a pathetic resignation. "I may have been sometimes out of spirits, but much oftener I have been happy; what other joy have I ever had than Cecil's love? I was eighteen when we met at that ball—you remember, Nell! Dear Cecil! I adored him from the first kind word he gave me, and what a thrill I felt to-day when I saw him coming!"

"And he is to come no more?" inquired Helen softly.

"No more as of old. Of course we shall see one another as people do who live in the same world: I am not going into a nunnery. Cecil will be a great man some day, and I shall recollect with pride that for six years he loved only *me*. He did not mention Mr. Brotherton: I think he has heard, but if not, he will hear soon enough from other people. If we were not so awfully poor, Nell, or if poverty were not so dreadful to mamma, I *never* would marry—*never* while Cecil is a bachelor."

This was how Julia Gardiner announced that she meant to succumb to the pressure of circumstances. Helen kissed her thankfully. She had been very anxious for this consummation. It would be a substantial, permanent benefit to them all if Julia married Mr. Brotherton. He had said that it should be so, and he was a gentleman of good estate, and as generous as he was wealthy, though very middle-aged, a widower with six children, and as a lover not interesting perhaps.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh also sat at an open window, but he was not provided with a confessor, only with a cigar. He had dined, and did not feel so intensely miserable as he felt an hour ago. "Dear little Julia!" He thought of her with caressing tenderness, her pretty looks, her graceful ways, her sweet affection. "There were tears in her dove's eyes when she said 'Good-bye, Cecil, good-bye, dear!'" No other woman would ever have his heart.

They had both good sense, and did not rail at evil fortune. It had done neither any mischief to be absorbed in love of the other through the most passionate years of their lives. Mrs. Gardiner had remonstrated often and kindly against their folly, but had put no decisive *veto* on it, in the hope that they would grow out it. And, in a manner, they had grown out of it. Six years ago, if they had been allowed, they would have married without counting the cost; but those six years had brought them experience of the world, of themselves, and of each other, and they feared the venture. If Mr. Cecil Burleigh had been without ambition, his secretaryship would have maintained them a modest home; but neither had he a mind for the exclusive retired pleasures of the domestic hearth, nor she the wish to forego the delights of society. There was no romance in poverty for Julia Gardiner. It was too familiar; it signified to her shifts, privations, expediencies, rude humiliations, and rebuffs. And that was not the life for Mr. Cecil Burleigh. Their best friends said so, and they acquiesced. From this it followed that the time was come for them to part. Julia was twenty-four. The present opportunity of settling herself by a desirable marriage lost, she might never have another—might wear away youth, beauty, expectation, until no residuum were left her but bitterness and regret. She would have risked it at a word from Cecil, but that word was not spoken. He reasoned with himself that he had no right to speak it. He was not prepared to give all for love, though he keenly regretted what he resigned. He realized frankly that he lost in losing Julia a true, warm sympathizer in his aspirations, and a loving peace in his heart that had been a God's blessing to him. Oh, if there had been only a little more money between them!

He reflected on many things, but on this most, and as he reflected there came a doubt upon him whether it was well done to sever himself from the dear repose he had enjoyed in loving her—whether there might not be a more far-sighted prudence in marrying her than in letting her go. Men have to ask their wives whether life shall be a success with them or not. And Julia had been so much to him, so encouraging, such a treasure of kindness! Whatever else he might win, without her he would always miss something. His letters to her of six years were a complete history of their course. Was it probable that he would ever be able to write so to the rosy-cheeked little girl on board the Foam? Julia was equal with him, a cultivated woman and a perfect companion.

But what profit was there in going back upon it? They had determined that it must not be. In a few days he was expected at Abbotsmead: Norminster wanted to hear from him. A general

election impended, and he had been requested to offer himself as a candidate in the Conservative interest for that ancient city. Mr. Fairfax was already busy in his behalf, and Mr. John Short, the Conservative lawyer, was extremely impatient for his appearance upon the stage of action.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LOST OPPORTUNITY.

Ryde looked beautiful the next morning from the deck of the Foam. The mainland looked beautiful too, and Bessie, gazing that way, thought how near she was to the Forest, until an irresistible longing to be there overcame her reserve. She asked her uncle if the Foam was going to lie long off Ryde. Why did she inquire? Because she should like to go to Hampton by the boat, and to Beechhurst to see her friends, if only for one single night. Before her humble petition was well past her lips the tears were in her eyes, for she saw that it was not going to be granted. Mr. Frederick Fairfax never risked being put out of his way, or made to wait the convenience of others on his yachting cruises. He simply told Bessie that she could not go, and added no reason why. But almost immediately after he sent her on shore with Mrs. Betts to Morgan's to buy a proper glazed hat and to be measured for a serge dress: that was his way of diverting and consoling her.

Bessie was glad enough to be diverted from the contemplation of her disappointment. It was a very great pain indeed to be so near, and yet so cut off from all she loved. The morning was fresh on the pier, and many people were out inhaling the delicious salt breezes. A clergyman, wielding a slim umbrella and carrying a black bag and an overcoat, came lurching along. Bessie recognized Mr. Askew Wiley, and was so overjoyed to see anybody who came from home that she rushed up to him: "Oh, Mr. Wiley! how do you do? Are you going back to Beechhurst?" she cried breathless.

"Bessie Fairfax, surely? How you are grown!" said he, and shook hands. "Yes, Bessie, I am on my way now to catch the boat. If you want to hear about your people, you must turn back with me, for I have not a minute to spare."

Bessie turned back: "Will you please tell them I am on board the Foam, my uncle Frederick's yacht? I cannot get away to see them, and I don't know how long we shall stay here, but if they could come over to see me!" she urged wistfully.

"It sounds like tempting them to a wild-goose chase, Bessie. Yachts that are here to-day are gone to-morrow. By the time they arrive you may have sailed off to Cowes or to Yarmouth. But I will give your message. How came you on board a yacht?"

Bessie got no more information from the rector; he had the same catechising habit as his good wife, and wanted to know her news. She gave it freely, and then they were at the end of the pier, and there was the Hampton boat ringing its bell to start. "Are you going straight home? Will you tell them at once?" Bessie ventured to say again as Mr. Wiley went down the gangway.

"Yes. I expect to find the carriage waiting for me at Hampton," was the response.

"They might even come by the afternoon boat," cried Bessie as a last word, and the rector said, "Yes."

It was with a lightened heart and spirits exhilarated that Bessie retraced her steps up the pier. "It was such a good opportunity!" said she, congratulating herself.

"Yes, if the gentleman don't forget," rejoined Mrs. Betts.

But, alas! that was just what the gentleman did. He forgot until his remembering was too late to be of any purpose. He forgot until the next Sunday when he was in the reading-desk, and saw Mrs. Carnegie sitting in front of him with a restless boy on either hand. He felt a momentary compunction, but that also, as well as the cause of it, went out of his head with the end of his sermon, and the conclusion of the matter was that he never delivered the message Bessie had given him on Ryde pier at all.

Bessie, however, having a little confidence in him, unwittingly enjoyed the pleasures of hope all that day and the next. On the second evening she was a trifle downhearted. The morning after she awoke with another prospect before her eyes—a beautiful bay, with houses fringing its shores and standing out on its cliffs, and verdure to the water's edge. Mrs. Betts told her these villages were Sandown and Shanklyn. The yacht was scudding along at a famous rate. They passed Luccombe with its few cottages nestling at the foot of the chine, then Bonchurch and Ventnor. "It would be very pleasant living at sea in fine weather, if only one had what one wants," Bessie said.

The following day the yacht was off Ryde again, and Bessie went to walk on the pier in her close-fitting serge costume and glazed hat, feeling very barefaced and evident, she assured Mrs. Betts, who tried to convince her that the style of dress was exceedingly becoming to her, and made her appear taller. Bessie was, indeed, a very pretty middle height now, and her shining hair, clear-cut features, and complexion of brilliant health constituted her a very handsome girl.

Almost the first people she met were the Gardiners. "Mr. Cecil Burleigh went to London this morning," Miss Julia told her. The elder sister asked if she was coming to the flower-show in Appley Gardens in the afternoon or the regatta ball that night.

Bessie said, "No, oh, no! she had never been to a ball in her life."

"But you might go with us to the flower-show," said Julia. She thought it would please Mr. Cecil Burleigh if a little attention were shown to Miss Fairfax.

Bessie did not know what to answer: she looked at her strange clothing, and said suddenly, No, she thanked them, but she could not go. They quite understood.

Just at that moment came bearing down upon them Miss Buff, fat, loud, jolly as ever. "It *is* Bessie Fairfax! I was sure it was," cried she; and Bessie rushed straight into her open arms with responsive joy.

When she came to herself the Gardiners were gone. "Never mind, you are sure to meet them again; they are always about Ryde somewhere," Miss Buff said. "How delightful it is to see you, Bessie! And quite yourself! Not a bit altered—only taller!" And then they found a sheltered seat, and Bessie, still quivering with her happy surprise, began to ask questions.

"We have come from Beechhurst this morning, my niece Louy and myself," was Miss Buff's answer to the first. "We started at six, to be in time for the eight o'clock boat: the flower-show and the regatta ball have brought us. I hope you are going to both? No? What a pity! I never miss a ball for Louy if I can help it."

Bessie briefly explained herself and her circumstances, and asked when her friend had last seen any of Mr. Carnegie's family.

"I saw Mrs. Carnegie yesterday to inquire if I could do anything for her at Hampton. She looked very well."

"And did she say nothing of me?" cried Bessie in consternation.

"Not a word. She mentioned some time ago how sorry they all were not to have you at home for a little while before you are carried away to Woldshire."

"Then Mr. Wiley has never given them my message! Oh, how unkind!" Bessie was fit to cry for vexation and self-reproach, for why had she not written? Why had she trusted anybody when there was a post?

"You might as well pour water into a sieve, and expect it to stay there, as expect Mr. Wiley to remember anything that does not concern himself," said Miss Buff. "But it is not too late yet, perhaps? When do you leave Ryde?"

"It is all uncertain: it is just as the wind blows and as my uncle fancies," replied Bessie despondently.

"Then write—write at once, and telegraph. Do both. There is Smith's bookstall. They will let you have a sheet of paper, and I always carry stamps." Miss Buff was prompt in action. Six lines were written for the post and one line for the telegraph, and both were despatched in ten minutes or less. "Now all is done that can be done to remedy yesterday and ensure to-morrow: some of them are certain to appear in the morning. Make your mind easy. Come back to our seat and tell me all about yourself."

Bessie's cheerfulness revived under the brisk influence of her friend, and she was ready to give an epitome of her annals, or a forecast of her hopes, or (which she much preferred) to hear the chronicles of Beechhurst. Miss Buff was the best authority for the village politics that she could have fallen in with. She knew everything that went on in the parish—not quite accurately perhaps, but accurately enough for purposes of popular information and gossip.

"Well, my dear, Miss Thusy O'Flynn is gone, for one good thing," she began with a *verve* that promised thoroughness. "And we are to have a new organ in the church, for another: it has been long enough talked about. Old Phipps set his face dead against it until we got the money in hand; we have got it, but not until we are all at daggers drawn. He told Lady Latimer that we ought to keep our liberal imaginations in check by a system of cash payments."

"Our friend has a disagreeable trick of being right," said Bessie laughing.

"He has his uses, but I cannot bear him. I don't know who is to blame—whether it is Miss Wort or Lady Latimer—but there is no peace at Beechhurst now for begging. They have plenty of money, and little enough to do with it. I call *giving* the greatest of luxuries, but, bless you! giving is not all charity. Miss Wort spends a fortune in eleemosynary physic to half poison poor folks; Lady Latimer indulges herself in a variety of freaks: her last was a mechanical leg for old Bumpus, who had been happy on a wooden peg for forty years; we were all asked to subscribe, and he doesn't thank us for it. As soon as one thing is done with, up starts another that we are entreated to be interested in—things we don't care about one bit. Old Phipps protests that it is vanity and busy-bodyism. I hope I shall never grow so hard-hearted as to see a poor soul want and not help her, but I hate to be canvassed for alms on behalf of other people's benevolent objects—don't you?"

"It has never happened to me. I remember that my father used to appeal to Lady Latimer and Miss Wort when his poor patients had not fit diet. Lady Latimer was his chief Lady Bountiful."

"That may be true, but it is possible to have too much of a good thing. I love fair play. The schools, now—they were very good schools before ever she came into the Forest; yes, as far back as your father's time, Bessie Fairfax—and yet, to hear the way in which she is belauded by a certain set, one might suppose that she had been the making of them. But it is the same all the world over—a hundred hands do the work, and one name gets all the praise!" Miss Buff was growing warm over her reminiscences, but catching the spark of mischief in Bessie's eyes, she laughed, and added with great candor: "Yes, I confess there is a spice of rivalry between us, but I am very fond of her all the same."

"Oh yes. She loves to rule, but then she has the talent," pleaded Bessie.

"No, my dear, there you are mistaken. She is too fussy; she irritates people. But for the old admiral she would often get into difficulties. Beechhurst has taken to ladies' meetings and committees, and all sorts of fudge that she is the moving spirit of. I often wish we were back in the quiet, times when dear old Hutton was rector, and would not let her be always interfering. I suppose it comes of this new doctrine of the equality of the sexes; but I say they never will be equal till women consent to be frights. It gives a man an immense pull over us to clap on his hat without mounting up stairs to the looking-glass: while we are getting ready to go and do a thing, he has gone and done it. You hear Lady Latimer's name at every turn, but the old admiral is the backbone of Beechhurst, as he always was, and old Phipps is his right hand."

"And Mr. Musgrave and my father?" queried Bessie.

"They do their part, but it is so unobtrusively that one forgets them; but they would be missed if they were not there. Mr. Musgrave has a great deal of influence amongst his own class—the farmers and those people. Of course, you have heard how wonderfully his son is getting on at college? Oh, my dear, what a stir there was about his running over to Normandy after you!"

"Dear Harry! I saw him again quite lately. He came to see me at Bayeux," said Bessie with a happy sigh.

"Did he? we never heard of that. He is at home now: perhaps he will come over with them to-morrow, eh?"

"I wish he would," was Bessie's frank rejoinder.

"And who else is there that you used to like? Fanny Mitten has married a clerk in the Hampton Bank, and Miss Ely is married; but she was married in London. I was in great hopes once that old Phipps would take Miss Thusy O'Flynn, and a sweet pair they would have been; but he thought better of it, and she went away as she came. Her aunt was a good old soul, and what did it matter if she was vulgar? We were very sorry to lose her contralto in the choir." Miss Buff's gossip was almost run out. Bessie remembered little Christie to inquire for him. "Little Christie—who is he? I never heard of him. Oh, the wheelwright's son who went away to be an artist! I don't know. The old man made me a garden-barrow once, and charged me enormously; and when I told him it was too dear, he said it would last me my life. Such impertinence! The common people grow very independent."

Bessie had heard the anecdote of the garden-barrow before. It spoke volumes for the peace and simplicity of Miss Buff's life that she still recollected and cited this ancient grievance. A few more words of the doctor and his household, a few doubts and fears on Bessie's part that her telegram might be delayed, and a few cheery predictions on Miss Buff's, and they said good-bye, with the expression of a cordial hope that they might meet soon again, and meet in the Forest. Bessie Fairfax was amused and exhilarated by this familiar tattle about her beloved Beechhurst. It had dissipated the shadows of her three years' absence, and made home present to her once more. Nothing seems trivial that concerns places and people dear to young affections, and all the keener became her desire to be amongst them. She consulted Smith's boy as to the probable time of the arrival of her telegram at the doctor's house; she studied the table of the steamboats. She regretted bitterly that she had not written the first day at Ryde; then pleaded her own excuse because letters were a rarity for her to write, and had hitherto required a formal permission.

Mrs. Betts lingered with her long and patiently upon the pier, but the Gardiners did not come down again, and by and by Mrs. Betts, feeling the approach of dinner-time, began to look out towards the yacht. After a minute's steady observation she said, half to herself, but seriously, "I do believe they are making ready to sail. There is a boat alongside with bread and things."

"To sail! To leave Ryde! Oh, don't you think my uncle would wait a day if I begged him?" cried Bessie in acute dismay.

"No, miss—not if he has given orders and the wind keeps fair. If I was in your place, miss, I should not ask him. And as for the telegram, I should not name it. It would put Mr. Frederick out, and do no good."

Bessie did not name it. Mrs. Betts's speculation proved correct. The yacht sailed away in the afternoon. About the time when Mrs. Carnegie was hurriedly dressing to drive with her husband to Hampton over-night, to ensure not missing the mail-boat to Ryde in the morning, that gay and pleasant town was fast receding from Bessie's view. At dawn the island was out of sight, and when Mr. Carnegie, landing on the pier, sought a boat to carry him and his wife to the Foam, a boatman looked up at him and said, "The Foam, sir? You'll have much ado to overtake her. She's halfway to Hastings by this time. She sailed yesterday soon after five o'clock."

Mr. and Mrs. Carnegie turned away in silence. They had nothing to do but sorrowfully to repair home again. They were more grieved at heart by this disappointment than by any that had preceded it; and all the more did they try to cheer one another.

"Don't fret, Jane: it hurts me to see you fret," said the doctor. "It was a nice thought in Bessie, but the chance was a poor one."

"We have lost her, Thomas; I fear we have lost her," said his wife. "It is unnatural to pass by our very door, so to speak, and not let us see her. But I don't blame her."

"No, no, Bessie is not to blame: Harry Musgrave can tell us better than that. It is Mr. Fairfax—his orders. He forbade her coming, or it might have been managed easily. It is a mistake. He will never win her heart so; and as for ruling her except through her affections, he will have a task. I'm sorry, for the child will not be happy."

When Mr. and Mrs. Carnegie arrived at home they found Bessie's letter that had come by post—an abrupt, warm little letter that comforted them for themselves, but troubled them for her exceedingly. "God bless her, dear child!" said her mother. "I am afraid she will cry sadly, Thomas, and nobody to say a loving word to her or give her a kiss."

"It is a pity; she will have her share of vexations. But she is young and can bear them, with all her life before her. We will answer that pretty letter, that she may have something to encourage her when she gets amongst her grand relations. I suppose it may be a week or ten days first. We have done what we could, Jane, so cheer up, and let it rest."

CHAPTER XVII.

BESSIE'S BRINGING HOME.

When Bessie Fairfax realized that the yacht was sailing away from Ryde not to return, and carrying her quite out of reach of pursuit, her spirits sank to zero. It was a perfect evening, and the light on the water was lovely, but to her it was a most melancholy view—when she could see it for the mist that obscured her vision. All her heart desired was being left farther and farther behind, and attraction there was none in Woldshire to which she was going. She looked at her uncle Frederick, silent, absent, sad; she remembered her grandfather, cold, sarcastic, severe; and every ensuing day she experienced fits of dejection or fits of terror and repulsion, to which even the most healthy young creatures are liable when they find themselves cut adrift from what is dear and familiar. Happily, these fits were intermittent, and at their worst easily diverted by what interested her on the voyage; and she did not encourage the murky humor: she always tried to shake it off and feel brave, and especially she made the effort as the yacht drew towards its haven. It was her nature to struggle against gloom and pain for a clear outlook at her horizon, and Madame Fournier had not failed to supply her with moral precepts for sustenance when cast on the shore of a strange and indifferent society.

The Foam touched at Hastings, at Dover, at semi-Dutch Harwich, and then no more until it put into Scarcliffe Bay. Here Bessie's sea-adventures ended. She went ashore and walked with her uncle on the bridge, gazing about with frank, unsophisticated eyes. The scenery and the weather were beautiful. Mr. Frederick Fairfax had many friends now at Scarcliffe, the favorite sea-resort of the county people. Greetings met him on every hand, and Bessie was taken note of. "My niece Elizabeth." Her history was known, kindness had been bespoken for her, her prospects were anticipated by a prescient few.

At length one acquaintance gave her uncle news: "The squire and your brother are both in the town. I fell in with them at the bank less than an hour ago."

"That is good luck: then we will go into the town and find them." And he moved off with alacrity, as if in sight of the end of an irksome duty. Bessie inquired if her uncle was going forward to Abbotsmead, to which he replied that he was not; he was going across to Norway to make the most of the fine weather while it lasted. He might be at horns in the winter, but his movements were always uncertain.

Mr. Fairfax came upon them suddenly out of the library. "Eh! here you are! We heard that the Foam was in," said he, and shook hands with his eldest son as if he had been parted with only yesterday. Then he spoke a few words to Bessie, rather abruptly, but with a critical observance of her: she had outgrown his recollection, and was more of a woman than he had anticipated. He walked on without any attempt at conversation until they met a third, a tall man with a fair beard, whom her grandfather named as "Your uncle Laurence, Elizabeth." And she had seen all her Woldshire kinsmen. For a miracle, she was able to put as cool a face upon her reception as the others did. A warm welcome would have brought her to tears and smiles, but its quiet formality subdued emotion and set her features like a handsome mask. She was too composed. Pride tinged with resentment simulates dignified composure very well for a little while, but only for a little while when there is a heart behind.

They went walking hither and thither about the steep, windy streets. Bessie fell behind. Now and then there was an encounter with other gentlemen, brief, energetic speech, inquiry and answer,

sally and rejoinder, all with one common subject of interest—the Norminster election. Scarcliffe is a fine town, and there was much gay company abroad that afternoon, but Bessie was too miserable to be amused. Her uncle Laurence was the one of the party who was so fortunate as to discover this. He turned round on a sudden recollection of his stranger niece, and surprised a most desolate look on her rosy face. Bessie confessed her feelings by the grateful humility of her reply to his considerate proposal that they should turn in at a confectioner's they were passing and have a cup of tea.

"My father is as full of this election as if he were going to contest the city of Norminster himself," said he. "I hope you have a blue bonnet? You will have to play your part. Beautiful ladies are of great service in these affairs."

Bessie had not a blue bonnet; her bonnet was white chip and pink may—the enemy's colors. She must put it by till the end of the war. Tea and thick bread and butter were supplied to the hungry couple, and about four o'clock Mr. Fairfax called for them and hurried them off to the train. Mr. Laurence went on to Norminster, dropping the squire and Elizabeth at Mitford Junction. Thence they had a drive of four miles through a country of long-backed, rounded hills, ripening cornfields, and meadows green with the rich aftermath, and full of cattle. The sky above was high and clear, the air had a crispness that was exhilarating. The sun set in scarlet splendor, and the reflection of its glory was shed over the low levels of lawn, garden, and copse, which, lying on either side of a shallow, devious river, kept still the name of Abbotsmead that had belonged to them before the great monastery at Kirkham was dissolved.

Mr. Fairfax was in good-humor now, and recovered from his momentary loss of self-possession at the sight of his granddaughter so thoroughly grown up. Also, election business at Norminster was going as he would have it, and bowling smoothly along in the quiet, early evening he had time to think of Elizabeth, sitting bolt upright in the carriage beside him. She had a pretty, pensive air, for which he saw no cause—only the excitement of novelty staved off depression—and in his sarcastic vein, with doubtful compliment, he said, "I did not expect to see you grown so tall, Elizabeth. You look as healthy as a milkmaid."

She was very quick and sensitive of feeling. She understood him perfectly, and replied that she *was* as healthy as a milkmaid. Then she reverted to her wistful contemplation of the landscape, and tried to think of that and not of herself, which was too pathetic.

This country was not so lovely as the Forest. It had only the beauty of high culture. Human habitations were too wide-scattered, and the trees—there were no very great trees, nor any blue glimpses of the sea. Nevertheless, when the carriage turned into the domain at a pretty rustic lodge, the overarching gloom of an avenue of limes won Bessie's admiration, and a few fir trees standing in single grace near the ruins of the abbey, which they had to pass on their way to the house, she found almost worthy to be compared with the centenarians of the Forest. The western sun was still upon the house itself. The dusk-tiled mansard roof, pierced by two rows of twinkling dormers, and crowned by solid chimney-stacks, bulked vast and shapely against the primrose sky, and the stone-shafted lower windows caught many a fiery reflection in their blackness. Through a porch broad and deep, and furnished with oaken seats, Bessie preceded her grandfather into a lofty and spacious hall, where the foot rang on the bare, polished boards, and ten generations of Fairfaxes, successive dwellers in the grand old house, looked down from the walls. It was not lighted except by the sunset, which filled it with a warm and solemn glow.

Numerous servants appeared, amongst them a plump functionary in blue satinette and a towering cap, who curtseyed to Elizabeth and spoke some words of real welcome: "I'm right glad to see you back, Miss Fairfax; these arms were the first that held you." Bessie's impulse was to fall on the neck of this kindly personage with kisses and tears, but her grandfather's cool tone intervening maintained her reserve:

"Your young mistress will be pleased to go to her room, Macky. Your reminiscences will keep till to-morrow."

Macky, instantly obedient, begged Miss Fairfax to "come this way," and conducted her through a double-leaved door that stood open to the inner hall, carpeted with crimson pile, like the wide shallow stairs that went up to the gallery surrounding the greater hall. On this gallery opened many doors of chambers long silent and deserted.

"The master ordered you the white suite," announced Macky, ushering Elizabeth into the room so called. "It has pretty prospects, and the rooms are not such wildernesses as the other state-apartments. The eldest unmarried lady of the family always occupied the white suite."

A narrow ante-room, a sitting-room, a bed-room, and off it a sleeping-closet for her maid,—this was the private lodging accorded to the new daughter of the house. Bessie gazed about, taking in a general impression of faded, delicate richness, of white and gold and sparse color, in elegant, antiquated taste, like a boudoir in an old Norman château that she had visited.

"Mrs. Betts was so thoughtful as to come on by an earlier train to get unpacked and warn us to be prepared," Macky observed in a respectful explanatory tone; and then she went on to offer her good wishes to the young lady she had nursed, in the manner of an old and trusted dependant of the family. "It is fine weather and a fine time of year, and we hope and pray all of us, Miss Fairfax, as this will be a blessed bringing-home for you and our dear master. Most of us was here servants when Mr. Geoffry, your father, went south. A cheerful, pleasant gentleman he was, and your mamma as pleasant a lady. And here is Mrs. Betts to wait on you."

Bessie thanked the old woman, and would have bidden her remain and talk on about her forgotten parents, but Macky with another curtsey retired, and Mrs. Betts, calm and peremptory, proceeded to array her young lady in her prize-day muslin dress, and sent her hastily down stairs under the guidance of a little page who loitered in the gallery. At the foot of the stairs a lean, gray-headed man in black received her, and ushered her into a beautiful octagon-shaped room, all garnished with books and brilliant with light, where her grandfather was waiting to conduct her to dinner. So much ceremony made Bessie feel as if she was acting a part in a play. Since Macky's kind greeting her spirits had risen, and her countenance had cleared marvellously.

Mr. Fairfax was standing opposite the door when she appeared. "Good God! it is Dolly!" he exclaimed, visibly startled. Dolly was his sister Dorothy, long since dead. Not only in face and figure, but in a certain lightness of movement and a buoyant swift way of stepping towards him, Elizabeth recalled her. Perhaps there was something in the simplicity of her dress too: there on the wall was a pretty miniature of her great-aunt in blue and white and golden flowing hair to witness the resemblance. Mr. Fairfax pointed it out to his granddaughter, and then they went to dinner.

It was a very formal ceremonial, and rather tedious to the newly-emancipated school-girl. Jonquil served his master when he was alone, but this evening he was reinforced by a footman in blue and silver, by way of honor to the young lady. Elizabeth faced her grandfather across a round table. A bowl-shaped chandelier holding twelve wax-lights hung from the groined ceiling above the rose-decked *épergne*, making a bright oasis in the centre of a room gloomy rather from the darkness of its fittings than from the insufficiency of illumination. Under the soft lustre the plate, precious for its antique beauty, the quaint cut glass, and old blue china enriched with gold were displayed to perfection. Bessie had a taste, her eye was gratified, there was repose in all this splendor. But still she felt that odd sensation of acting in a comedy which would be over as soon as the lights were out. Suddenly she recollected the bare board in the Rue St. Jean, the coarse white platters, the hunches of sour bread, the lenten soup, the flavorless *bouilli*, and sighed—sighed audibly, and when her grandfather asked her why that mournful sound, she told him. Her courage never forsook her long.

"It has done you no harm to sup your share of Spartan broth; hard living is good for us young," was the squire's comment. "You never complained—your dry little letters always confessed to excellent health. When I was at school we fed roughly. The joints were cut into lumps which had all their names, and we were in honor bound not to pick and choose, but to strike with the fork and take what came up."

"Of course," said Bessie, pricked in her pride and conscience lest she should seem to be weakly complaining now—"of course we had treats sometimes. On madame's birthday we had a glass of white wine at dinner, which was roast veal and pancakes. And on our own birthdays we might have *galette* with sugar, if we liked to give Margotin the money."

"I trust the whole school had *galette* with sugar on your birthday, Elizabeth?" said her grandfather, quietly amused. He was relieved to find her younger, more child-like in her ideas, than her first appearance gave him hopes of. His manner relaxed, his tone became indulgent. When she smiled with a blush, she was his sweet sister Dolly; when her countenance fell grave again, she was the shy, touchy, uncertain little girl who had gone to Fairfield on their first acquaintance so sorely against her inclination. After Jonquil and his assistant retired, Elizabeth was invited to tell how the time had passed on board the Foam.

"Pleasantly, on the whole," she said. "The weather was so fine that we were on deck from morning till night, and often far on into the night when the moon shone. It was delightful cruising off the Isle of Wight; only I had an immense disappointment there."

"What was that?" Mr. Fairfax asked, though he had a shrewd guess.

"I did not remember how easy it is to send a letter—not being used to write without leave—and I trusted Mr. Wiley, whom I met on Ryde pier going straight back to Beechhurst, with a message to them at home, which he forgot to deliver. And though I did write after, it was too late, for we left Ryde the same day. So I lost the opportunity of seeing my father and mother. It was a pity, because we were so near; and I was all the more sorry because it was my own fault."

Mr. Fairfax was silent for a few minutes after this bold confession. He had interdicted any communication with the Forest, as Mr. Carnegie prevised. He did not, however, consider it necessary to provoke Bessie's ire by telling her that he was responsible for her immense disappointment. He let that pass, and when he spoke again it was to draw her out on the more important subject of what progress Mr. Cecil Burleigh had made in her interest. It was truly vexatious, but as Bessie told her simple tale she was conscious that her color rose and deepened slowly to a burning blush. Why? She vehemently assured herself that she did not care a straw for Mr. Cecil Burleigh, that she disliked him rather than otherwise, yet at the mere sound of his name she blushed. Perhaps it was because she dreaded lest anybody should suspect the mistake her vanity had made before. Her grandfather gave her one acute glance, and was satisfied that this business also went well.

"Mr. Cecil Burleigh left the yacht at Ryde. It was the first day of the regatta when we anchored there, and we landed and saw the town," was all Bessie said in words, but her self-betrayal was eloquent.

"We—what do you mean by *we*? Did your uncle Frederick land?" asked the squire, not caring in

the least to know.

"No—only Mr. Cecil Burleigh and myself. We went to the house of some friends of his where we had lunch; and afterward Mrs. Gardiner and one of the young ladies took me to the Arcade. My uncle never landed at all from the day we left Caen till we arrived at Scarcliffe. Mrs. Betts went into Harwich with me. That is a very quaint old town, but nothing in England looks so battered and decayed as the French cities do."

Mr. Fairfax knew all about Miss Julia Gardiner, and Elizabeth's information that Mr. Cecil Burleigh had called on the family in Ryde caused him to reflect. It was very imprudent to take Elizabeth with him—very imprudent indeed; of course, the squire could not know how little he was to blame. To take her mind off the incident that seriously annoyed himself, he asked what troubles Caen had seen, and Bessie, thankful to discourse of something not confusing, answered him like a book:

"Oh, many. It is very impoverished and dilapidated. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes ruined its trade. Its principal merchants were Huguenots: there are still amongst the best families some of the Reformed religion. Then in the great Revolution it suffered again; the churches were desecrated, and turned to all manner of common uses; some are being restored, but I myself have seen straw hoisted in at a church window, beautiful with flamboyant tracery in the arch, the shafts below being partly broken away."

Mr. Fairfax remarked that France was too prone to violent remedies; then reverting to the subjects uppermost in his thoughts, he said, "Elections and politics cannot have much interest for you yet, Elizabeth, but probably you have heard that Mr. Cecil Burleigh is going to stand for Norminster?"

"Yes; he spoke of it to my uncle Frederick. He is a very liberal Conservative, from what I heard him say. There was a famous contest for Hampton when I was not more than twelve years old: we went to see the members chaired. My father was orange—the Carnegies are almost radicals; they supported Mr. Hiloe—and we wore orange rosettes."

"A most unbecoming color! You must take up with blue now; blue is the only wear for a Fairfax. Most men might wear motley for a sign of their convictions. Let us return to the octagon parlor; it is cheerful with a fire after dinner. At Abbotsmead there are not many evenings when a fire is not acceptable at dusk."

The fire was very acceptable; it was very composing and pleasant. Bright flashes of flame kindled and reddened the fragrant dry pine chips and played about the lightly-piled logs. Mr. Fairfax took his own commodious chair on one side of the hearth, facing the uncurtained windows; a low seat confronted him for Bessie. Both were inclined to be silent, for both were full of thought. The rich color and gilding of the volumes that filled the dwarf bookcases caught the glow, as did innumerable pretty objects besides—water-color drawings on the walls, mirrors that reflected the landscape outside, statuettes in shrines of crimson fluted silk—but the prettiest object by far in this dainty lady's chamber was still Bessie Fairfax, in her white raiment and rippled, shining hair.

This was her grandfather's reflection, and again that impulse to love her that he had felt at Beechhurst long ago began to sway his feelings. It was on the cards that he might become to her a most indulgent, fond old man; but then Elizabeth must be submissive, and do his will in great things if he allowed her to rule in small. Bessie had dropt her mask and showed her bright face, at peace for the moment; but it was shadowed again by the resurrection of all her wrongs when her grandfather said on bidding her good-night, "Perhaps, Elizabeth, the assurance that will tend most to promote your comfort at Abbotsmead, to begin with, is that you have a perfect right to be here."

Her astonishment was too genuine to be hidden. Did her grandfather imagine that she was flattered by her domicile in his grand house? It was exile to her quite as much as the old school at Caen. Nothing had ever occurred to shake her original conviction that she was cruelly used in being separated from her friends in the Forest. *They* were her family—not these strangers. Bessie dropped him her embarrassed school-girl's curtsey, and said, "Good-night, sir"—not even a Thank you! Mr. Fairfax thought her manner abrupt, but he did not know the depth and tenacity of her resentment, or he would have recognized the blunder he had committed in bringing her into Woldshire with unsatisfied longings after old, familiar scenes.

Bessie was of a thoroughly healthy nature and warmly affectionate. She felt very lonely and unfriended; she wished that her grandfather had said he was glad to have her at Abbotsmead, instead of telling her that she had a *right* to be there; but she was also very tired, and sleep soon prevailed over both sweet and bitter fancies. Premature resolutions she made none; she had been warned against them by Madame Fournier as mischievous impediments to making the best of life, which is so much less often "what we could wish than what we must even put up with."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEXT MORNING.

Perplexities and distressed feelings notwithstanding, Bessie Fairfax awoke at an early hour perfectly rested and refreshed. In the east the sun was rising in glory. A soft, bluish haze hung about the woods, a thick dew whitened the grass. She rose to look out of the window.

"It is going to be a lovely day," she said, and coiled herself in a cushioned chair to watch the dawn advancing.

All the world was hushed and silent yet. Slowly the light spread over the gardens, over the meadows and cornfields, chasing away the shadows and revealing the hues of shrub and flower. A reach of the river stole into view, and the red roof of an old mill on its banks. Then there was a musical, monotonous, reiterated call not far off which roused the cattle, and brought them wending leisurely towards the milking-shed. The crowing of cocks near and more remote, the chirping of little birds under the eaves, began and increased. A laborer, then another, on their way to work, passed within sight along a field-path leading to the mill; a troop of reapers came by the same road. Then there was the pleasant sound of sharpening a scythe, and Bessie saw a gardener on the lawn stoop to his task.

She returned to her pillow, and slept again until she was awakened by somebody coming to her bedside. It was Mrs. Betts, bearing in her hands one of those elegant china services for a solitary cup of tea which have popularized that indulgence amongst ladies.

"What is it?" Bessie asked, gazing with a puzzled air at the tiny turquoise-blue vessels. "Tea? I am going to get up to breakfast."

"Certainly, miss, I hope so. But it is a custom with many young ladies to have a cup of tea before dressing."

"I will touch my bell if I want anything. No—no tea, thank you," responded Bessie; and the waiting-woman felt herself dismissed. Bessie chose to make and unmake her toilette alone. It was easy to see that her education had not been that of a young lady of quality, for she was quite independent of her maid; but Mrs. Betts was a woman of experience and made allowance for her, convinced that, give her time, she would be helpless and exacting enough.

Mr. Fairfax and his granddaughter met in the inner hall with a polite "Good-morning." Elizabeth looked shyly proud, but sweet as a dewy rose. The door of communication with the great hall was thrown wide open. It was all in cool shade, redolent of fresh air and the perfume of flowers. Jonquil waited to usher them to breakfast, which was laid in the room where they had dined last night.

Mr. Fairfax was never a talker, but he made an effort on behalf of Bessie, with whom it was apparently good manners not to speak until she was spoken to. "What will you do, Elizabeth, by way of making acquaintance with your home? Will you have Macky with her legends of family history and go over the house, or will you take a turn outside with me and visit the stables?"

Bessie knew which it was her duty to prefer, and fortunately her duty tallied with her inclination; her countenance beamed, and she said, "I will go out with you, if you please."

"You ride, I know. There is a nice little filly breaking in for you: you must name her, as she is to be yours."

"May I call her Janey?"

"Janey! Was that the name of Mr. Carnegie's little mare?"

"No; she was Miss Hoyden. Janey was the name of my first friend at school. She went away soon, and I have never heard of her since. But I shall: I often think of her."

"You have a constant memory, Elizabeth—not the best memory for your happiness. What are you eating? Only bread and butter. Will you have no sardines, bacon, eggs, honey? Nothing! A very abstemious young lady! You have done with school, and may wean yourself from school-fare."

Breakfast over, Mrs. Betts brought her young lady's leghorn hat and a pair of new Limerick gauntlet-gloves—nice enough for Sunday in Bessie's modest opinion, but as they were presented for common wear she put them on and said nothing. Mr. Fairfax conducted his granddaughter to his private room, which had a lobby and porch into the garden, and twenty paces along the wall a door into the stable-yard. The groom who had the nice little filly in charge to train was just bringing her out of her stable.

"There is your Janey, Elizabeth," said her grandfather.

"Oh, what a darling!" cried Bessie in a voice that pleased him, as the pretty creature began to dance and prance and sidle and show off her restive caprices, making the groom's mounting her for some minutes impracticable.

"It is only her play, miss—she ain't no vice at all," the man said, pleading her excuses. "She'll be as dossil as dossil can be when I've give her a gallop. But this is her of a morning—so fresh there's no holding her."

Another groom had come to aid, and at length the first was seated firm in the saddle, with a flowing skirt to mimic the lady that Janey was to carry. And with a good deal of manœuvring they got safe out of the yard.

"You would like to follow and see? Come, then," said the squire, and led Bessie by a short cut across the gardens to the park. Janey was flying like the wind over the level turf, but she was well under guidance, and when her rider brought her round to the spot where Mr. Fairfax and the young lady stood to watch, she quite bore out his encomium on her docility. She allowed Bessie to stroke her neck, and even took from her hand an apple which the groom produced from a private store of encouragement and reward in his pocket.

"It will be well to give her a good breathing before Miss Fairfax mounts her, Ranby," said his master, walking round her approvingly. Then to Bessie he said, "Do you know enough of horses not to count rashness courage, Elizabeth?"

"I am ready to take your word or Ranby's for what is venturesome," was Bessie's moderate reply. "My father taught me to ride as soon as I could sit, so that I have no fear. But I am out of practice, for I have never ridden since I went to Caen."

"You must have a new habit: you shall have a heavy one for the winter, and ride to the meet with me occasionally. I suppose you have never done that?"

"Mr. Musgrave once took me to see the hounds throw off. I rode Harry's pony that day. I was staying at Brook for a week."

Mr. Fairfax knew who "Mr. Musgrave" was and who "Harry" was, but Bessie did not recollect that he knew. However, as he asked no explanation of them, she volunteered none, and they returned to the gardens.

The cultivated grounds of Abbotsmead extended round three sides of the house. On the west, where the principal entrance was, an outer semicircle of lime trees, formed by the extension of the avenue, enclosed a belt of evergreens, and in the middle of the drive rose a mound over which spread a magnificent cedar. The great hall was the central portion of the building, lighted by two lofty, square-headed windows on either side of the door; the advanced wings that flanked it had corresponding bays of exquisite proportions, which were the end-windows of the great drawing-room and the old banqueting-room. The former was continued along the south, with one bay very wide and deep, and on either side of it a smaller bay, all preserving their dim glazing after the old Venetian pattern. Beyond the drawing-room was the modern adaptation of the wing which contained the octagon parlor and dining-room: from the outside the harmony of construction was not disturbed. The library adjoined the banqueting-room on the north, and overlooked a fine expanse where the naturalization of American trees and shrubs had been the hobby of the Fairfaxes for more than one generation. The flower-garden was formed in terraces on the south, and was a mixture of Italian and old English taste. The walls were a mingled tapestry of roses, jessamine, sweet clematis, and all climbing plants hardy enough to bear the rigors of the northern winter. Trimmed in though ever so closely in the fall of the year, in the summer it bushed and blossomed out into a wantonly luxuriant, delicious variety of color and fragrance. If here and there a bit of gray stone showed through the mass, it seemed only to enhance the loveliness of the leaf and flower-work.

Bessie Fairfax stood to admire its glowing intricacy, and with a remarkable effort of candor exclaimed, "I think this is as pretty as anything in the Forest—as pretty as Fairfield or the manor-house at Brook;" which amused her grandfather, for the south front of the old mansion-house of Abbotsmead was one of the most grandly picturesque specimens of domestic architecture to be found in the kingdom.

In such perambulations time slips away fast. The squire looked at his watch. It was eleven o'clock; at half-past he was due at a magistrate's meeting two miles off; he must leave Bessie to amuse herself until luncheon at two. Bessie was contented to be left. She replied that she would now go indoors and write to her mother. Her grandfather paused an instant on her answer, then nodded acquiescence and went away in haste. Was he disappointed that she said nothing spontaneous? Bessie did not give that a thought, but she said in her letter, "I do believe that my grandfather wishes me to be happy here"—a possibility which had not struck her until she took a pen in her hand, and set about reflecting what news she had to communicate to her dear friends at Beechhurst. This brilliant era of her vicissitudes was undoubtedly begun with a little aversion.

In the absence of her young lady, Mrs. Betts had unpacked and carefully disposed of Bessie's limited possessions.

"Your wardrobe will not give me much trouble, miss," said the waiting-woman, with sly, good-humored allusion to the extent of it.

"No," answered Bessie, misunderstanding her in perfect simplicity. "You will find all in order. At school we mended our clothes and darned our stockings punctually every week."

"Did you really do this beautiful darning, miss? It is the finest darning I ever met with—not to say it was lace." Mrs. Betts spoke more seriously, as she held up to view a pair of filmy Lille thread stockings which had sustained considerable dilapidation and repair.

"Yes. They were not worth the trouble. Mademoiselle Adelaide made us wear Lille thread on dancing-days that we might never want stockings to mend. She had a passion for darning. She taught us to graft also: you will find one pair of black silk grafted toe and heel. I have thought them much too precious ever to wear since. I keep them for a curiosity."

On the tables in Bessie's sitting-room were set out her humble appliances for work, for writing—

an enamelled white box with cut-steel ornaments, much scratched; a capacious oval basket with a quilted red silk cover, much faded; a limp Russia-leather blotting-book wrapped in silver paper (Harry Musgrave had presented it to Bessie on her going into exile, and she had cherished it too dearly to expose it to the risk of blots at school). "I think," said she, "I shall begin to use it now."

She released it from its envelope, smelt it, and laid it down comfortably in front of the Sevres china inkstand. All the permanent furniture of the writing-table was of Sevres china. Bessie thought it grotesque, and had no notion of the value of it.

"The big basket may be put aside?" suggested Mrs. Betts, and her young lady did not gainsay her. But when the shabby little white enamelled box was threatened, she commanded that that should be left—she had had it so long she could not bear to part with it. It had been the joint-gift of Mr. and Mrs. Carnegie on her twelfth birthday.

Released, at length, from Mrs. Betts's respectful, observant presence, Bessie began to look about her and consider her new habitation. A sense of exaltation and a sense of bondage possessed her. These pretty, quaint rooms were hers, then? It was not a day-dream—it was real. She was at Abbotsmead—at Kirkham. Her true home-nest under the eaves at Beechhurst was hundreds of miles away: farther still was the melancholy garden in the Rue St. Jean.

Opposite the parlor window was the fireplace, the lofty mantelshelf being surmounted by a circular mirror, so inclined as to reflect the landscape outside. Upon the panelled walls hung numerous specimens of the elegant industry of Bessie's predecessors—groups of flowers embroidered on tarnished white satin; shepherds and shepherdesses with shell-pink painted faces and raiment of needlework in many colors; pallid sketches of scenery; crayon portraits of youths and maidens of past generations, none younger than fifty years ago. There was a bookcase of white wood ruled with gold lines, like the spindly chairs and tables, and here Bessie could study, if she pleased, the literary tastes of ancient ladies, matrons and virgins, long since departed this life in the odor of gentility and sanctity. The volumes were in bindings rich and solid, and the purchase or presentation of each had probably been an event. Bessie took down here and there one. Those ladies who spent their graceful leisure at embroidery-frames were students of rather stiff books. Locke *On the Conduct of the Human Understanding* and Paley's *Evidences of the Christian Religion* Bessie took down and promptly restored; also the *Sermons* of Dr. Barrow and the *Essays* of Dr. Goldsmith. The *Letters* of Mrs. Katherine Talbot and Mrs. Elizabeth Carter engaged her only a few minutes, and the novels of Miss Edgeworth not much longer. The most modern volumes in the collection were inscribed with the name of "Dorothy Fairfax," who reigned in the days of Byron and Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley, and had through them (from the contents of three white vellum-covered volumes of extracts in her autograph) learnt to love the elder poets whose works in quarto populated the library. To Bessie these volumes became a treasure out of which she filled her mind with songs and ballads, lays and lyrics. The third volume had a few blank pages at the end, and these were the last lines in it:

"Absence, hear thou my protestation
Against thy strength,
Distance and length;
Do what thou canst for alteration:
For hearts of truest mettle
Absence doth join, and Time doth settle."

Twice over Bessie read this, then to herself repeated it aloud—all with thoughts of her friends in the Forest.

The next minute her fortitude gave way, tears rushed to her eyes, Madame Fournier's precepts vanished out of remembrance, and she cried like a child wanting its mother. In which unhappy condition Mrs. Betts discovered her, sitting upon the floor, when the little page came flying to announce luncheon and visitors. It was two o'clock already.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEIGHBORS TO ABBOTSMEAD.

Some recent duties of Mrs. Betts's service had given her, on occasion, an authoritative manner, and she was impelled to use it when she witnessed the forlornness of her young lady. "I am surprised that you should give way, miss," said she. "In the middle of the day, too, when callers are always liable, and your dear, good grandpapa expects a smiling face! To make your eyes as red as a ferret—"

"Indeed, they are not!" cried Bessie, and rose and ran to the looking-glass.

Mrs. Betts smiled at the effect of her tactics, and persevered: "Let me see, miss: because if it is plain you have been fretting, you had better make an excuse and stop up stairs. But the master will be vexed." Bessie turned and submitted her countenance to inspection. "There was never a complexion yet that was improved by fretting," was the waiting-woman's severe insinuation. "You must wait five minutes, and let the air from the window blow on you. Really, miss, you are too old to cry."

Bessie offered no rejoinder; she was ashamed. The imperative necessity of controlling the tender emotions had been sternly inculcated by Madame Fournier. "Now shall I do?" she humbly asked, feeling the temperature of her cheeks with her cool hands.

Mrs. Betts judiciously hesitated, then, speaking in a milder voice, said, "Yes—perhaps it would not be noticed. But tears was the very mischief for eyes—*that* Miss Fairfax might take her word for. And it was old Lady Angleby and her niece, one of the Miss Burleighs, who were down stairs."

Bessie blushed consciously, appealed to the looking-glass again, adjusted her mind to her duty, and descended to the octagon parlor. The rose was no worse for the shower. Mr. Fairfax was there, standing with his back to the fireplace, and lending his ears to an argument that was being slowly enunciated by the noble matron who filled his chair. A younger lady, yet not very young, who was seated languidly with her back to the light, acknowledged Bessie's entrance with a smile that invited her approach. "I think," she said, "you know my brother Cecil?" and so they were introduced.

For several minutes yet Lady Angleby's eloquence oozed on (her theme was female emancipation), the squire listening with an inscrutable countenance. "Now, I hope you feel convinced," was her triumphant conclusion. Mr. Fairfax did not say whether he was convinced or not. He seemed to observe that Elizabeth had come in, and begged to present his granddaughter to her ladyship. Elizabeth made her pretty curtsey, and was received with condescension, and felt, on a sudden, a most unmannerly inclination to laugh, which she dissembled under a girlish animation and alacrity in talk. The squire was pleased that she manifested none of the stupid shyness of new young-ladyhood, though in the presence of one of the most formidable of county magnates. Elizabeth did not know that Lady Angleby was formidable, but she saw that she was immense, and her sense of humor was stirred by the instant perception that her self-consequence was as enormous as her bulk. But Miss Burleigh experienced a thrill of alarm. The possibility of being made fun of by a little simple girl had never suggested itself to the mind of her august relative, but there was always the risk that her native shrewdness might wake up some day from the long torpor induced by the homage paid to her rank, and discover the humiliating fact that she was not always imposing. By good luck for Miss Fairfax's favor with her, Pascal's maxim recurred to her memory—that though it is not necessary to respect grand people it is necessary to bow to them—and her temptation to be merry at Lady Angleby's expense was instantly controlled. Miss Burleigh could not but make a note of her sarcastic humor as a decidedly objectionable, and even dangerous, trait in the young lady's character. That she dissembled it so admirably was, however, to her credit. After his first movement of satisfaction the squire was himself perplexed. Elizabeth's spirits were lively and capricious, she was joyous-tempered, but she would not dare to quiz; he must be mistaken. In fact, she had not yet acquired the suppressed manner and deferential tone to her betters which are the perpetuation of that ancient rule of etiquette by which inferiors are guarded against affecting to be equal in talk with the mighty. Mr. Fairfax proposed rather abruptly to go in to luncheon. Jonquil had announced it five minutes ago.

"She is beautiful! *beautiful*! I am charmed. We shall have her with us—a beautiful young woman would popularize our cause beyond anything. But how would Cecil approve of that?" whispered Lady Angleby as she toiled into the adjoining room with the help of her host's arm.

"Mr. Cecil Burleigh is wise and prudent. He will know how to temporize with the vagaries of his womankind," said the squire. But he was highly gratified by the complimentary appreciation of his granddaughter.

"Vagaries, indeed! The surest signs of sound and healthy progress that have shown themselves in this generation."

Lady Angleby mounted her hobby. She was that queer modern development, a democrat skin-deep, born and bred in feudal state, clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, and devoted colloquially to the regeneration of the middle classes. The lower classes might now be trusted to take care of themselves (with the help of the government and the philanthropists), but such large discovery was being made of frivolity, ignorance, and helplessness amongst the young women of the great intermediate body of the people that Lady Angleby and a few select friends had determined, looking for the blessing of Providence on their endeavors, to take them under their patronage.

"It is," she said, "a most hopeful thing to see the discontent that is stirring amongst young women in this age, because an essential preliminary to their improvement is the conviction that they have the capacity for a freer, nobler life than that to which they are bound by obsolete domestic traditions. Let us put within the reach of every young girl an education that shall really develop her character and her faculties. Why should the education of girls be arrested at eighteen, and the apprenticeship of their brothers be continued to one-and-twenty?" This query was launched into the air, but Lady Angleby's prominent blue eyes seemed to appeal to Bessie, who was visibly dismayed at the personal nature of the suggestion.

Mr. Fairfax smiled and bade her speak, and then laughing, she said, "Because at eighteen girls tire of grammar and dictionaries and precepts for the conduct of life. We are women, and want to try life itself."

"And what do you know to fit you for life?" said Lady Angleby firmly.

"Nothing, except by instinct and precept."

"Exactly so. And where is your experience? You have none. Girls plunge into life at eighteen destitute of experience—weak, foolish, ignorant of men and themselves. No wonder the world is encumbered with so many helpless poor creatures as it is."

"I should not like to live with only girls till one-and-twenty. What experience could we teach each other?" said Bessie, rather at sea. A notion flashed across her that Lady Angleby might be talking nonsense, but as her grandfather seemed to listen with deference, she could not be sure.

"Girls ought to be trained in logic, geometry, and physical science to harden their mental fibre; and how can they be so trained if their education is to cease at eighteen?" Then with a modest tribute to her own undeveloped capacities, the great lady cried, "Oh, what I might have done if I had enjoyed the advantages I claim for others!"

"You don't know. You have never yet been thrown on your own resources," said Bessie with an air of infinite suggestion.

Lady Angleby stared in cold astonishment, but Bessie preserved her gay self-possession. Lady Angleby's cold stare was to most persons utterly confusing. Miss Burleigh, an inattentive listener (perhaps because her state of being was always that of a passive listener), gently observed that she had no idea what any of them would do if they were thrown on their own resources.

"No idea is ever expected from you, Mary," said her aunt, and turned her stony regard upon the poor lady, causing her to collapse with a silent shiver. Bessie felt indignant. What was this towering old woman, with her theory of feminine freedom and practice of feminine tyranny? There was a momentary hush, and then Lady Angleby with pompous complacency resumed, addressing the squire:

"Our large scheme cannot be carried into effect without the general concurrence of the classes we propose to benefit, but our pet plan for proving to what women may be raised demands the concurrence of only a few influential persons. I am sanguine that the government will yield to our representations, and make us a grant for the foundation of a college to be devoted to their higher education. We ask for twenty thousand pounds."

"I hope the government will have more wit," Mr. Fairfax exclaimed, his rallying tone taking the sting out of his words. "The private hobbies of you noble ladies must be supported out of your private purses, at the expense of more selfish whims."

"There is nothing so unjust as prejudice, unless it be jealousy," exclaimed Lady Angleby with delicious unreason. "You would keep women in subjection."

Mr. Fairfax laughed, and assented to the proposition. "You clamor for the high education of a few at the cost of the many; is that fair?" he continued. "High education is a luxury for those who can afford it—a rich endowment for the small minority who have the power of mind to acquire it; and no more to be provided for that small minority out of the national exchequer than silk attire for our conspicuous beauties."

"I shall never convert you into an advocate for the elevation of the sex. You sustain the old cry—the inferiority of woman's intellect."

"'The earth giveth much mould whereof earthen vessels are made, but little dust that gold cometh of.' High education exists already for the wealthy, and commercial enterprise will increase the means of it as the demand increases. If you see a grain of gold in the dust of common life, and likely to be lost there, rescue it for the crucible, but most such grains of gold find out the way to refine themselves. As for gilding the earthen pots, I take leave to think that it would be labor wasted—that they are, in fact, more serviceable without ornament, plain, well-baked clay. Help those who are helpless and protect those who are weak as much as you please, but don't vex the strong and capable with idle interference. Leave the middle classes to supply their wants in their own way—they know them best, and have gumption enough—and stick we to the ancient custom of providing for the sick and needy."

"The ancient custom is good, and is not neglected, but the modern fashion is better."

"That I contest. There is more alloy of vanity and busy-bodyism in modern philanthropy than savor of charity."

"We shall never agree," cried Lady Angleby with mock despair. "Miss Fairfax, this is the way with us—your grandfather and I never meet but we fall out."

"You are not much in earnest," said Bessie. Terrible child! she had set down this great lady as a great sham.

"To live in the world and to be absolutely truthful is very difficult, is all but impossible," remarked Miss Burleigh with a mild sententiousness that sounded irrelevant, but came probably in the natural sequence of her unspoken thoughts.

"When you utter maxims like your famous progenitor you should give us his nod too, Mary," said her aunt. Then she suddenly inquired of Mr. Fairfax, "When do you expect Cecil?"

"Next week. He must address the electors at Norminster on Thursday. I hope he will arrive here on Tuesday."

Lady Angleby looked full in Bessie's face, which was instantly overspread by a haughty blush.

Miss Burleigh looked anywhere else. And both drew the same conclusion—that the young lady's imagination was all on fire, and that her heart would not be slow to yield and melt in the combustion. The next move was back to the octagon parlor. The young people walked to the open window; the elders had communications to exchange that might or might not concern them, but which they were not invited to hear. They leant on the sill and talked low. Miss Burleigh began the conversation by remarking that Miss Fairfax must find Abbotsmead very strange, being but just escaped from school.

"It is strange, but one grows used to any place very soon," Bessie answered.

"You have no companion, and Mr. Fairfax sets his face against duennas. What shall you do next week?"

"What I am bid," said Bessie laconically. "My grandfather has bespoken for me the good offices of Mrs. Stokes as guide to the choice of a blue bonnet; the paramount duty of my life at present seems to be to conform myself to the political views of Mr. Cecil Burleigh in the color of my ribbons. I have great pleasure in doing so, for blue is my color, and suits me."

Miss Burleigh had a good heart, and let Bessie's little bravado pass. "Are you interested in the coming election? I cannot think of anything else. My brother's career may almost be said to depend on his success."

"Then I hope he will win."

"Your kind good wishes should help him. You will come and stay at Brentwood?"

"Brentwood? what is Brentwood?"

"My aunt's house. It is only two miles out of Norminster. My aunt was so impatient to see you that she refused to wait one day. Cecil will often be with us, for my father's house is at Carisfort—too far off."

"I am at my grandfather's commands. I have not a friend here. I know no one, and have even to find out the ways and manners of my new world. Do you live at Brentwood?"

"Yes. My home is with my aunt. I shall be glad, very glad, to give you any help or direction that you like to ask for. Mrs. Stokes has a charming taste in dress, and is a dear little woman. You could not have a nicer friend; and she is well married, which is always an advantage in a girl's friend. You will like Colonel Stokes too."

In the course of the afternoon Bessie had the opportunity of judging for herself. Colonel Stokes brought his wife to call upon her. Their residence was close by Abbotsmead, at the Abbey Lodge, restored by Mr. Fairfax for their occupation. Colonel Stokes was old enough to be his wife's father, and young enough to be her hero and companion. She was a plump little lady, full of spirits and loving-kindness. Bessie considered her, and decided that she was of her own age, but Mrs. Stokes had two boys at home to contradict that. She looked so girlish still in her sage matronhood because she was happy, gay, contented with her life, because her eyes were blue and limpid as deep lake water, and her cheeks round and fresh as half-blown roses ungathered. Her dress was as dainty as herself, and merited the eulogium that Miss Burleigh had passed upon it.

"You are going to be so kind as to introduce me to a good milliner at Norminster?" Bessie said after a few polite preliminaries.

"Yes—to Miss Jocund, who will be delighted to make your acquaintance. I shall tell her to take pains with you, but there will be no need to tell her that; she always does take pains with girls who promise to do her credit. I am afraid there is not time to send to Paris for the blue bonnet you must wear next Thursday, but she will make you something nice; you may trust her. This wonderful election is the event of the day. We have resolved that Mr. Cecil Burleigh shall head the poll."

"How shall you ensure his triumph? Are you going to canvass for him?"

"No, no, that is out of date. But Lady Angleby threatens that she will leave Brentwood, and never employ a Norminster tradesman again if they are so ungrateful as to refuse their support to her nephew. They are radicals every one."

"And is not she also a radical? She talks of the emancipation of women by keeping them at school till one-and-twenty, of the elevation of the masses, and the mutual improvement of everybody not in the peerage."

"You are making game of her, like my Arthur. No, she is not a radical; that is all her *hum*. I believe Lord Angleby was something of the sort, but I don't understand much about politics."

"Only for the present occasion we are blue?" said Bessie airily.

"Yes—all blue," echoed Mrs. Stokes. "Sky-blue," and they both laughed.

"You must agree at what hour you will go into Norminster on Monday—the half-past-eleven train is the best," Colonel Stokes said.

"Cannot we go to-morrow?" his wife asked.

"No, it is Saturday, market-day;" and his suggestion was adopted.

When the visit was over, in the pleasantness of the late afternoon, Bessie walked through the gardens and across the park with these neighbors to Abbotsmead. A belt of shrubbery and a sunk fence divided the grounds of the lodge from the park, and there was easy communication by a rustic bridge and a wicket left on the latch. "I hope you will come often to and fro, and that you will seek me whenever you want me. This is the shortest way," Mrs. Stokes said to her. Bessie thanked her, and then walked back to the house, taking her time, and thinking what a long while ago it was since yesterday.

Yesterday! Only yesterday she was on board the Foam that had brought her from France, that had passed by the Forest—no longer ago than yesterday, yet as far off already as a year ago.

Thinking of it, she fell into a melancholy that belonged to her character. She was tired with the incidents of the day. At dinner Mr. Fairfax seemed to miss something that had charmed him the night before. She answered when he spoke, but her gayety was under eclipse. They were both relieved when the evening came to an end. Bessie was glad to escape to solitude, and her grandfather experienced a sense of vague disappointment, but he supposed he must have patience. Even Jonquil observed the difference, and was sorry that this bright young lady who had come into the house should enter so soon into its clouds; he was grieved too that his dear old master, who betrayed an unwonted humility in his desire to please her, should not at once find his reward in her affection. Bessie was not conscious that it would have been any boon to him. She had no rule yet to measure the present by except the past, and her experience of his usage in the past did not invite her tenderness. A reasonable and mild behavior was all she supposed to be required of her. Anything else—whether for better or worse—would be spontaneous. She could not affect either love or dislike, and how far she could dissemble either she had yet to learn.

CHAPTER XX.

PAST AND PRESENT.

The next morning Bessie was left entirely at liberty to amuse herself. Mr. Fairfax had breakfasted alone, and was gone to Norminster before she came down stairs. Jonquil made the communication. Bessie wondered whether it was often so, and whether she would have to make out the greater part of the days for herself. But she said nothing; some feeling that she did not reason about told her that there must be no complaining here, let the days be what they might. She wrote a long letter to Madame Fournier, and then went out of doors, having declined Mrs. Betts's proposed attendance.

"Where is the village?" she asked a boy who was sweeping up fallen leaves from the still dewy lawn. He pointed her the way to go. "And the church and parsonage?" she added.

"They be all together, miss, a piece beyond the lodge."

With an object in view Bessie could feel interested. She was going to see her mother's home, the house where she was herself born; and on the road she began to question whether she had any kinsfolk on her mother's side. Mrs. Carnegie had once told her that she believed not—unless there were descendants of her grandfather Bulmer's only brother in America, whither he had emigrated as a young man; but she had never heard of any. A cousin of some sort would have been most acceptable to Bessie in her dignified isolation. She did not naturally love solitude.

The way across the park by which she had been directed brought her out upon the high-road—a very pleasant road at that spot, with a fir wood climbing a shallow hill opposite, bounded by a low stone fence, all crusted with moss and lichen, age and weather.

For nearly half a mile along the roadside lay an irregular open space of broken ground with fine scattered trees upon it, and close turf where primroses were profuse in spring. An old woman was sitting in the shade knitting and tending a little black cow that cropped the sweet moist grass. Only for the sake of speaking Bessie asked again her way to the village.

"Keep straight on, miss, you can't miss it," said the old woman, and gazed up at her inquisitively.

So Bessie kept straight on until she came to the ivy-covered walls of the lodge; the porch opened upon the road, and Colonel Stokes was standing outside in conversation with another gentleman, who was the vicar of Kirkham, Mr. Forbes. Bessie went on when she had passed them, shyly disconcerted, for Colonel Stokes had come forward with an air of surprise and had asked her if she was lost. Perhaps it was unusual for young ladies to walk alone here? She did not know.

The gentlemen watched her out of sight. "Miss Fairfax, of course," said the vicar. "She walks admirably—I like to see that."

"A handsome girl," said Colonel Stokes. And then they reverted to their interrupted discussion, the approaching election at Norminster. The clergyman was very keen about it, the old Indian officer was almost indifferent.

Meanwhile Bessie reached the church—a very ancient church, spacious and simple, with a square

tower and a porch that was called Norman. The graveyard surrounded it. A flagged pathway led from the gate between the grassy mounds to the door, which stood open that the Saturday sun might drive out the damp vapors of the week. She went in and saw whitewashed walls; thick round pillars between the nave and aisles; deep-sunken windows dim with fragmentary pieces of colored glass, and all more or less out of the perpendicular; a worm-eaten oak-screen separating the chancel and a solemn enclosure, erst a chapel, now the Fairfax pew; a loft where the choir sat in front for divine service, with fiddle and bassoon, and the school-children sat behind, all under the eye of the parson and his clerk, who was also the school-master.

In the chancel were several monuments to the memory of defunct pastors. The oldest was very old, and the inscription in Latin on brass; the newest was to Bessie's grandfather—the "Reverend Thomas Bulmer, for forty-six years vicar of this parish." From the dates he had married late, for he had died in a good old age in the same year as his daughter Elizabeth, and only two months before her. In smaller letters below the inscription-in-chief it was recorded that his wife Letitia was buried at Torquay in Cornwall, and that this monument was erected to their pious memory by their only child—"Elizabeth, the wife of the Reverend Geoffry Fairfax, rector of Beechhurst in the county of Hants."

All gone—not one left! Bessie pondered over this epitome of family history, and thought within herself that it was not without cause she felt alone here. With a shiver she returned into the sunshine and proceeded up the public road. The vicarage was a little low house, very humble in its externals, roofed with fluted tiles, and the walls covered to the height of the chamber windows with green latticework and creepers. It stood in a spacious garden and orchard, and had outbuildings at a little distance on the same homely plan. The living was in the gift of Abbotsmead, and the Fairfaxes had not been moved to house their pastor, with his three hundred a year, in a residence fit for a bishop. It was a simple, pleasant, rustic spot. The lower windows were open, so was the door under the porch. Bessie saw that it could not have undergone any material change since the summer days of twenty years ago, when her father, a bright young fellow fresh from college, went to read there of a morning with the learned vicar, and fell in love with his pretty Elizabeth, and wooed and won her.

Bessie, imperfectly informed, exaggerated the resentment with which Mr. Fairfax had visited his offending son. It was never an active resentment, but merely a contemptuous acceptance of his irrevocable act. He said, "Geoffry has married to his taste. His wife is used to a plain way of living; they will be more useful in a country parish living on so, free from the temptations of superfluous means." And he gave the young couple a bare pittance. Time might have brought him relenting, but time does not always reserve us opportunities. And here was Bessie Fairfax considering the sorrows and early deaths of her parents, charging them to her grandfather's account, and confirming herself in her original judgment that he was a hard and cruel man.

The village of Kirkham was a sinuous wide street of homesteads and cottages within gardens, and having a green open border to the road where geese and pigs, cows and children, pastured indiscriminately. It was the old order of things where one man was master. The gardens had, for the most part, a fine show of fragrant flowers, the hedges were neatly trimmed, the fruit trees were ripening abundantly. Of children, fat and ruddy, clean and well clothed, there were many playing about, for their mothers were gone to Norminster market, and there was no school on Saturday. Bessie spoke to nobody, and nobody spoke to her. Some of the children dropt her a curtsey, but the majority only stared at her as a stranger. She felt, somehow, as if she would never be anything else but a stranger here. When she had passed through the village to the end of it, where the "Chequers," the forge, and the wheelwright's shed stood, she came to a wide common. Looking across it, she saw the river, and found her way home by the mill and the harvest-fields.

It would have enhanced Bessie's pleasure, though not her happiness perhaps, if she could have betaken herself to building castles in the Woldshire air, but the moment she began to indulge in reverie her thoughts flew to the Forest. No glamour of pride, enthusiasm, or any sort of delightful hope mistified her imagination as to her real indifference towards Abbotsmead. When she reached the garden she sat down amongst the roses, and gazed at the beautiful old flower-woven walls that she had admired yesterday, and felt like a visitor growing weary of the place. Even while her bodily eyes were upon it, her mind's eye was filled with a vision of the green slopes of the wilderness garden at Brook, and the beeches laving their shadows in the sweet running water.

"I believe I am homesick," she said. "I cannot care for this place. I should have had a better chance of taking to it kindly if my grandfather had let me go home for a little while. Everything is an effort here." And it is to be feared that she gave way again, and fretted in a manner that Madame Fournier would have grieved to see. But there was no help for it; her heart was sore, and tears relieved it.

Mr. Fairfax was at home to dinner. He returned from Norminster jaded and out of spirits. Now, Bessie, though she did not love him (though she felt it a duty to assert and reassert that fact to herself, lest she should forget it), felt oddly pained when she looked into his face and saw that he was dull; to be dull signified to be unhappy in Bessie's vocabulary. But timidity tied her tongue. It was not until Jonquil had left them to themselves that they attempted any conversation. Then Mr. Fairfax remarked, "You have been making a tour of investigation, Elizabeth: you have been into

the village?"

Bessie said that she had, and that she had gone into the church. Then all at once an impulse came upon her to ask, "Why did you let my parents go so far away? was it so very wrong in them to marry?"

"No, not wrong at all. It is written, 'A man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife,'" was the baffling reply she got, and it silenced her. And not for that occasion only.

When Bessie retired into the octagon parlor her grandfather stayed behind. He had been to see Mr. John Short that day, and had heard that a new aspect had come over the electioneering sky. The Radicals had received an impetus from some quarter unknown, and were preparing to make such a hard fight for the representation of Norminster that the triumph of the Tory party was seriously threatened. This news had vexed him, but it was not of that he meditated chiefly when he was left alone. It was of Bessie. He had founded certain pleasurable expectations upon her, and he felt that these expectations were losing their bloom. He could not fail to recollect her quietness of last night, when he noticed the languor of her eyes, the dejection of her mouth, and the effort it was to her to speak. The question concerning her parents had aroused the slumbering ache of old remembrance, and had stung him anew with a sense of her condemnation. A feeling akin to remorse visited him as he sat considering, and by degrees realizing, what he had done to her, and was doing; but he had his motive, he had his object in it, and the motive had seemed to justify the means until he came to see her face to face. Contact with her warm, distinct humanity began immediately to work a change in his mind. Absent, he had decided that he could dispose of her as he would. Present, he recognized that she would have a voice, and probably a casting voice, in the disposal of herself. He might sever her from her friends in the Forest, but he would not thereby attach her to friends and kinsfolk in the north. His last wanton act of selfish unkindness, in refusing to let her see her old home in passing, was evidently producing its effect in silent grieving, in resentment and revolt.

All his life long Mr. Fairfax had coveted affection, and had missed the way to win it. No one had ever really loved him except his sister Dorothy—so he believed; and Elizabeth was so like Dorothy in the face, in her air, her voice, her gestures, that his heart went out to her with a yearning that was almost pain. But when he looked at her, she looked at him again like Dorothy alienated—like Dorothy grown strange. It was a very curious revival out of the far past. When he was a young man and Lady Latimer was a girl, there had been a prospect of a double marriage between their families, but the day that destroyed one hope destroyed both, and Dorothy Fairfax died of that grief. Elizabeth, with her tear-worn eyes, was Dorothy's sad self to-night, only the eyes did not seek his friendly. They were gazing at pictures in the fire when he rejoined her, and though Bessie moved and raised her head in courteous recognition of his coming, there was something of avoidance in her manner, as if she shrank from his inspection. Perhaps she did; she had no desire to parade her distresses or to reproach him with them. She meant to be good—only give her time. But she must have time.

There was a book of photographs on the table that Frederick Fairfax and his wife had collected during their wedding-tour on the Continent. It was during the early days of the art, and the pictures were as blurred and faded as their lives had since become. Bessie was turning them over with languid interest, when her grandfather, perceiving how she was employed, said he could show her some foreign views that would please her better than those dim photographs. He unlocked a drawer in the writing-table and produced half a dozen little sketch-books, his own and his sister Dorothy's during their frequent travels together. It seemed that their practice had been to make an annual tour.

While Bessie examined the contents of the sketch-books, her grandfather stood behind her looking over her shoulder, and now and then saying a few words in explanation, though most of the scenes were named and dated. They were water-color drawings—bits of landscape, picturesque buildings, grotesque and quaint figures, odd incidents of foreign life, all touched with tender humor, and evidently by a strong and skilful hand; and flowers, singly or in groups, full of a delicate fancy. In the last volume of the series there were no more flowers; the scenes were of snow-peaks and green hills, of wonderful lake-water, and boats with awnings like the hood of a tilted cart; and the sky was that of Italy.

"Oh, these are lovely, but why are there no more flowers?" said Bessie thoughtlessly.

"Dorothy had given up going out then," said her grandfather in a low, strained voice.

Bessie caught her breath as she turned the next page, and came on a roughly washed-in mound of earth under an old wall where a white cross was set. A sudden mist clouded her sight, and then a tear fell on the paper.

"That is where she was buried—at Bellagio on Lake Como," said Mr. Fairfax, and moved away.

Bessie continued to gaze at the closing page for several minutes without seeing it; then she turned back the leaves preceding, and read them again, as it were, in the sad light of the end. It was half a feint to hide or overcome her emotion, for her imagination had figured to her that last mournful journey. Her grandfather saw how she was affected—saw the trembling of her hand as she paused upon the sketches and the furtive winking away of her tears. Dear Bessie! smiles and tears were so easy to her yet. If she had dared to yield to a natural impulse, she would have shut the melancholy record and have run to comfort him—would have clasped her hands round his arm and laid her cheek against his shoulder, and have said, "Oh, poor grandpapa!" with most

genuine pity and sympathy. But he stood upon the hearth with his back to the fire, erect, stiff as a ramrod, with gloom in his eyes and lips compressed, and anything in the way of a caress would probably have amazed more than it would have flattered him. Bessie therefore refrained herself, and for ever so long there was silence in the room, except for the ticking of the clock on the chimney-piece and the occasional dropping of the ashes from the bars. At last she left looking at the sketches and mechanically reverted to the photographs upon which Mr. Fairfax came out of his reverie and spoke again. She was weary, but the evening was now almost over.

"I do not like those sun-pictures. They are not permanent, and a water-color drawing is more pleasing to begin with. You can draw a little, Elizabeth? Have you any sketches about Caen or Bayeux?"

Bessie modestly said that she had, and went to bring them; school-girl fashion, she wished to exhibit her work, and to hear that the money spent on her neglected education had not been all spent in vain. Her grandfather was graciously inclined to commend her productions. He told her that she had a nice touch, and that it was quite worth her while to cultivate her talent. "It will add a great interest to your travels when you have the chance of travelling," he said; "for, like life itself, travelling has many blank spaces that a taste for sketching agreeably fills up. Ten o'clock already? Yes—good-night."

The following morning Mr. Fairfax and Bessie walked to church together. Along the road everybody acknowledged the squire with bow or curtsey, and the little children stood respectfully at gaze as he passed. He returned the civility of all by lifting a forefinger to his hat, though he spoke to none, and Bessie was led to understand that he had the confidence of his people, and that he probably deserved it. For a sign that there was no bitterness in his own feelings, each token of regard was noted by her with satisfaction.

At the lodge Colonel and Mrs. Stokes joined them, and Mrs. Stokes's bright eyes frankly appreciated the elegant simplicity of Bessie's attire, her chip bonnet and daisies, her dress of French spun silk, white and violet striped, and perfectly fitting Paris gloves. She nodded meaningly to Bessie, and Bessie smiled back her full comprehension that the survey was satisfactory and pleasing.

Some old customs still prevailed at Kirkham. The humble congregation was settled in church before the squire entered his red-curtained pew, and sat quiet after sermon until the squire went out. Bessie's thoughts roved often during the service. Mr. Forbes read apace, and the clerk sang out the responses like an echo with no time to lose. There had been a death in the village during the past week, and the event was now commemorated by a dirge in which the children's shrill treble was supported by the majority of the congregation. The sermon also took up the moral of life and death. It was short and pithy; perhaps it was familiar, and none the less useful for that. Mr. Forbes was not concerned to lead his people into new ways; he believed the old were better. Work and pray, fear God and keep His commandments, love your neighbor, and meddle not with those who are given to change,—these were his cardinal points, from which he brought to bear on their consciences much powerful doctrine and purifying precept. He was a man of high courage and robust faith, who practised what he preached, and bore that cheerful countenance which is a sign of a heart in prosperity.

After service Colonel and Mrs. Stokes walked home with Mr. Fairfax and Bessie, lunched at Abbotsmead, and lounged about the garden afterward. This was an institution. Sunday is long in country houses, and good neighbors help one another to get rid of it. The Stokes's boys came in the afternoon, to Bessie's great joy; they made a noisy playground of the garden, and behaved just like Jack and Tom and Willie Carnegie, kicking up their heels and laughing at nothing.

"There are no more gooseberries," cried their mother, catching the younger of the two, a bluff copy of herself, and offering him to Bessie to kiss. Bessie kissed him heartily. "You are fond of children, I can see," said her new friend.

"I like a houseful! Oh, when have I had a nice kiss at a boy's hard, round cheeks? Not for years! years! I have five little brothers and two sisters at home."

Mrs. Stokes regarded Bessie with a touched surprise, but she asked no questions; she knew her story in a general inaccurate way. The boy gazed in her face with a pretty lovingness, rubbed his nose suddenly against hers, wrestled himself out of her embrace, and ran away. "When you feel as if you want a good kiss, come to my house," said his mother, her blue eyes shining tenderly. "It must be dreadful to miss little children when you have lived with them. I could not bear it. Abbotsmead always looks to me like a great dull splendid prison."

"My grandfather makes it as pleasant to me as he can; I don't repine," said Bessie quickly. "He has given me a beautiful little filly to ride, but she is not quite trained yet; and I shall beg him to let me have a companionable dog; I love a dog."

The church-bells began to ring for afternoon service. Mrs. Stokes shook her head at Bessie's query: nobody ever went, she said, but servants and poor people. Evening service there was none, and Mr. Forbes dined with the squire; that also was an institution. The gentlemen talked of parochial matters, and Bessie, wisely inferring that they could talk more freely in her absence, left them to themselves and retreated to her private parlor, to read a little and dream a great deal of her friends in the Forest.

At dusk there was a loud jangling indoors and out, and Mrs. Betts summoned her young lady down stairs. She met her grandfather and Mr. Forbes issuing from the dining-room, and they passed together into the hall, where the servants of the house stood on parade to receive their pastor and master. They were assembled for prayers. Once a week, after supper, this compliment was paid to the Almighty—a remnant of ancient custom which the squire refused to alter or amend. When Bessie had assisted at this ceremony she had gone through the whole duty of the day, and her reflection on her experience since she came to Abbotsmead was that life as a pageant must be dull—duller than life as a toil.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DISCOVERY.

While Bessie Fairfax was pronouncing the web of her fortunes dull, Fate was spinning some mingled threads to throw into the pattern and give it intricacy and liveliness. The next day Mrs. Stokes chaperoned her to Norminster in quest of that blue bonnet. Mrs. Betts went also, and had a world of shopping to help in on behalf of her young mistress. They drove from the station first to the chief tailor's in High street, the ladies' habitmaker, then to the fashionable hosier, the fashionable haberdasher. By three o'clock Bessie felt herself flagging. What did she want with so many fine clothes? she inquired of Mrs. Stokes with an air of appeal. She was learning that to get up only one character in life as a pageant involves weariness, labor, pains, and money.

"You are going to stay at Brentwood," rejoined her chaperone conclusively.

"And is it so dull at Brentwood that dressing is a resource?" Bessie demurred.

"Wait and see. You will have pleasant occupation enough, I should think. Most girls would call this an immense treat. But if you are really tired we will go to Miss Jocund now. Mrs. Betts can choose ribbons and gloves."

Miss Jocund was a large-featured woman of a grave and wise countenance. She read the newspaper in intervals of business, and was reading it now with her glasses on. Lowering the paper, she recognized a favorite customer in Mrs. Stokes, and laid the news by, but with reluctance. Duty forbade, however, that this lady should be remitted to an assistant.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Miss Jocund, but it is important—it is about a bonnet," cried Mrs. Stokes gayly. "I have brought you Miss Fairfax of Abbotsmead. I am sure you will make her something quite lovely."

Miss Jocund took off her glasses, and gave Bessie a deliberate, discerning look-over. "Very happy, ma'am, indeed. Blue, of course?" she said. Bessie acquiesced. "Any taste, any style?" the milliner further queried.

"Yes. Give me always simplicity and no imitations," was the unhesitating, concise reply.

"Miss Fairfax and I understand one another. Anything more to-day, ladies?" Bessie and Mrs. Stokes considered for a moment, and then said they would not detain Miss Jocund any longer from her newspaper. "Ah, ladies! who can exist altogether on *chiffons*?" rejoined the milliner, half apologetically. "I do love my *Times*—I call it my 'gentleman.' I cannot live without my gentleman. Yes, ladies, he does smell of tobacco. That is because he spends a day and night in the bar-parlor of the Shakespeare Tavern before he visits me. So do evil communications corrupt good manners. The door, Miss Lawson. Good-afternoon, ladies."

"You must not judge of Miss Jocund as a milliner and nothing more," her chaperone instructed Bessie when they had left the shop. "She is a lady herself. Her father was Dr. Jocund, the best physician in Norminster when you could find him sober. He died, and left his daughter with only debts for a fortune; she turned milliner, and has paid every sixpence of them."

Where were they to go next? Bessie recollected that her uncle Laurence lived in the vicinity of the minster, and that she had an errand to him from her grandfather. She had undertaken it cheerfully, feeling that it would be a pleasure to see her kind uncle Laurence again. There was a warmth of geniality about him that was absent from her uncle Frederick and her grandfather, and she had decided that if she was to have any friend amongst her kinsfolk, her uncle Laurence would be that friend. She was sure that her father, whom she barely knew, had been most like him.

It was not far to Minster Court, and they directed their steps that way. The streets of Norminster still preserve much of their picturesque antiquity, but they are dull, undeniably dull, except on the occasion of assizes, races, fairs, and the annual assembling of the yeomanry and militia. Elections are no more the saturnalia they used to be in the good old times. Bessie was reminded of Bayeux and its sultry drowsiness as they passed into the green purlieus of the minster and under a low-browed archway into a spacious paved court, where the sun slept on the red-brick backs of the old houses. Mr. Laurence Fairfax's door was in the most remote corner, up a semi-circular flight of steps, guarded on either side by an iron railing.

As the two ladies approached the steps a young countrywoman came down them, saying in a

mingled strain of persuasion and threat, "Come, Master Justus: if you don't come along this minute, I'll tell your granma." And a naughty invisible voice made an answer with lisping defiance, "Well, go, Sally, go. Be quick! go before your shoes wear out."

Mrs. Stokes, rounding her pretty eyes and pretty mouth, cried softly, "Oh, what a very rude little boy!" And the very rude little boy appeared in sight, hustled coaxingly behind by the stout respectable housekeeper of Mr. Laurence Fairfax. When he saw the strange ladies he stood stock-still and gazed at them as bold as Hector, and they gazed at him again in mute amazement —a cherub of four years old or thereabouts, with big blue eyes and yellow curls. When he had satisfied himself with gazing, he descended the steps and set off suddenly at a run for the archway. The housekeeper had a flushed, uneasy smile on her face as she recognized Mrs. Stokes —a smile of amused consternation, which the little lady's shocked grimace provoked. Bessie herself laughed in looking at her again, and the housekeeper rallied her composure enough to say, "Oh, the self-will and naughtiness there is in boys, ma'am! But you know it, having boys of your own!"

"Too well, Mrs. Burrage, too well! Is Mr. Laurence Fairfax at home?"

"I am sorry to say that he is not, ma'am. May I make bold to ask if the young lady is Miss Fairfax from Abbotsmead, that was expected?"

Bessie confessed to her identity, and while Mrs. Stokes wrote the name of Miss Fairfax on one of her own visiting-cards (for Bessie was still unprovided), Burrage begged, as an old servant of the house, to offer her best wishes and to inquire after the health of the squire. They were interrupted by that rude little boy, who came running back into the court with Sally in pursuit. He was shouting too at the top of his voice, and making its solemn echoes ring again. Burrage with sudden gravity watched what would ensue. Capture ensued, and a second evasion into the street. Burrage shook her head, as who would say that Sally's riotous charge was far beyond her control—which indubitably he was—and Bessie forgot her errand entirely. Whose was that little boy, the picture of herself? Mrs. Stokes recovered her countenance. They turned to go, and were halfway across the court when the housekeeper called after them in haste: "Ladies, ladies! my master has come in by the garden way, if you will be pleased to return?" and they returned, neither of them by word or look affording to the other any intimation of her profound reflections.

Mr. Laurence Fairfax received his visitors with a frank welcome, and bade Burrage bring them a cup of tea. Mrs. Stokes soon engaged him in easy chat, but Bessie sat by in perplexed rumination, trying to reconcile the existence of that little flaxen-haired boy with her preconceived notions of her bachelor uncle. The view of him had let in a light upon her future that pleased while it confused her. The reason it pleased her she would discern as her thoughts cleared. At this moment she was dazzled by a series of surprises. First, by the sight of that cherub, and then by the order that reigned through this quaint and narrow house where her learned kinsman lived. They had come up a winding stair into a large, light hall, lined with books and peopled by marble sages on pedestals, from which opened two doors—the one into a small red parlor where the philosopher ate, the other into a long room looking to the garden and the minster, furnished with the choicest collections of his travelled youth. The "omnibus" of Canon Fournier used to be all dusty disorder. Bessie's silence and her vagrant eyes misled her uncle into the supposition that his old stones, old canvases, and ponderous quartoes interested her curiosity, and noticing that they settled at length, with an intelligent scrutiny, on some object beyond him, he asked what it was, and moved to see.

Nothing rich, nothing rare or ancient—only the tail and woolly hind-quarters of a toy lamb extruded from the imperfectly closed door of a cupboard below a bookcase. Instantly he jumped up and went to shut the cupboard; but first he must open it to thrust in the lamb, and out it tumbled bodily, and after it a wagon with red wheels and black-spotted horses harnessed thereto. As he awkwardly restored them, Mrs. Stokes never moved a muscle, but Bessie smiled irrepressibly and in her uncle's face as he returned to his seat with a fine confusion blushing thereon. At that moment Burrage came in with the tea. No doubt Mrs. Stokes was equally astonished to see a nursery-cupboard in a philosopher's study, but she could turn her discourse to circumstances with more skill than her unworldly companion, and she resumed the thread of their interrupted chat with perfect composure. Mr. Laurence Fairfax could not, however, take her cue, and he rose with readiness at the first movement of the ladies to go. He began to say to Bessie that she must make his house her home when she wanted to come to Norminster, and that he should always be glad of her company. Bessie thanked him, and as she looked up in his benevolent face there was a pure friendliness in her eyes that he responded to by a warm pressure of her hand. And as he closed the door upon them he dismissed his sympathetic niece with a most kind and kinsman-like nod.

Mrs. Stokes began to laugh when they were clear of the house: "A pretty discovery! Mr. Laurence Fairfax has a little playfellow: suppose he should turn out to be a married man?" cried she under her breath. "So that is the depth of his philosophy! My Arthur will be mightily amused."

"What a darling little naughty boy that was!" whispered Bessie, also laughing. "How I should like to have him at Abbotsmead! What fun it would be!"

"Mind, you don't mention him at Abbotsmead. Mr. Fairfax will be the last to hear of him; the mother must be some unpresentable person. If Mr. Laurence Fairfax is married, it will be so much the worse for you."

"Nothing in the way of little Fairfax boys can be the worse for me," was Bessie's airy, pleasant rejoinder. And she felt exhilarated as by a sudden, sunshiny break in the cloudy monotony of her horizon.

Mr. Laurence Fairfax returned to his study when he had parted with his visitors, and there he found Burrage awaiting him. "Sir," she said with a gravity befitting the occasion, "I must tell you that Master Justus has been seen by those two ladies."

"And Master Justus's pet lamb and cart and horses," quoth her master as seriously. "You had thrown the toys into the cupboard too hastily, or you had not fastened the door, and the lamb's legs stuck out. Miss Fairfax made a note of them."

"Ah, sir, if you would but let Mr. John Short speak before the story gets round to your respected father the wrong way!" pleaded Burrage. Mr. Laurence Fairfax did not answer her. She said no more, but shook her head and went away, leaving him to his reflections, which were more mischievous than the reflections of philosophers are commonly supposed to be.

Bessie returned to Kirkham a changed creature. Her hopefulness had rallied to the front. Her mind was filled with blithe anticipations founded on that dear little naughty boy and his incongruous cupboard of playthings in her uncle's study.

If there was a boy for heir to Abbotsmead, nobody would want her; she might go back to the Forest. Secrets and mysteries always come out in the end. She had sagacity enough to know that she must not speak of what she had seen; if the little boy was openly to be spoken of, he would have been named to her. But she might speculate about him as much as she pleased in the recesses of her fancy. And oh what a comfort was that!

Mr. Fairfax at dinner observed her revived animation, and asked for an account of her doings in Norminster. Then, and not till then, did Bessie recollect his message to her uncle Laurence, and penitently confessed her forgetfulness, unable to confess the occasion of it. "It is of no importance; I took the precaution of writing to him this afternoon," said her grandfather dryly, and Bessie's confusion was doubled. She thought he would never have any confidence in her again. Presently he said, "This is the last evening we shall be alone for some time, Elizabeth. Mr. Cecil Burleigh and his sister Mary, whom you have seen, will arrive to-morrow, and on Thursday you will go with me to Lady Angleby's for a few nights. I trust you will be able to make a friend of Miss Burleigh."

To this long speech Bessie gave her attention and a submissive assent, followed by a rather silly wish: "I wish it was to Lady Latimer's we were going instead of to Lady Angleby's; I don't like Lady Angleby."

"That does not much matter if you preserve the same measure of courtesy toward her as if you did," rejoined her grandfather. "It is unnecessary to announce your preferences and prejudices by word of mouth, and it would be unpardonable to obtrude them by your behavior. It is not of obligation that because she is a grand lady you should esteem her, but it is of obligation that you should curtsey to her; you understand me? Do not let your ironical humor mislead you into forgetting the first principle of good manners—to render to all their due." Mr. Fairfax also had read Pascal.

Bessie's cheeks burned under this severe admonition, but she did not attempt to extenuate her fault, and after a brief silence her grandfather said, to make peace, "It is not impossible that your longing to see Lady Latimer may be gratified. She still comes into Woldshire at intervals, and she will take an interest in Mr. Cecil Burleigh's election." But Bessie felt too much put down to trust herself to speak again, and the rest of the meal passed in a constrained quiet.

This was not the way towards a friendly and affectionate understanding. Nevertheless, Bessie was not so crushed as she would have been but for the vision of that unexplained cherub who had usurped the regions of her imagination. If the time present wearied her, she had gained a wide outlook to a *beyond* that was bright enough to dream of, to inspire her with hope, and sustain her against oppression. Mr. Fairfax discerned that she felt her bonds more easy—perhaps expecting the time when they would be loosed. His conjectures for a reason why were grounded on the confidential propensities of women, and the probability that Mrs. Stokes, during their long *tête-à-tête* that day, had divulged the plots for her wooing and wedding. How far wide of the mark these conjectures were he would learn by and by. Meanwhile, as the effect of the unknown magic was to make her gayer, more confident, and more interested in passing events, he was well pleased. His preference was for sweet acquiescence in women, but, for an exception, he liked his granddaughter best when she was least afraid of him.

CHAPTER XXII.

PRELIMINARIES.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh met Bessie Fairfax again with a courteous vivacity and an air of intimate acquaintance. If he was not very glad to see her he affected gladness well, and Bessie's vivid blushes were all the welcome that was necessary to delude the witnesses into a belief that they

already understood one another. He was perfectly satisfied himself, and his sister Mary, who worshipped him, thought Bessie sweetly modest and pretty. And her mind was at peace for the results.

There was a dinner-party at Abbotsmead that evening. Colonel and Mrs. Stokes came, and Mr. Forbes and his mother, who lived with him (for he was unmarried), a most agreeable old lady. It was much like other dinner-parties in the country. The guests were all of one mind on politics and the paramount importance of the landed interest, which gave a delightful unanimity to the conversation. The table was round, so that Miss Fairfax did not appear conspicuous as the lady of the house, but she was not for that the less critically observed. Happily, she was unconscious of the ordeal she underwent. She looked lovely in the face, but her dress was not the elaborate dress of the other ladies; it was still her prize-day white muslin, high to the throat and long to the wrists, with a red rose in her belt, and an antique Normandy gold cross for her sole ornament. The cross was a gift from Madame Fournier. Mr. Cecil Burleigh, being seated next to her, was most condescending in his efforts to be entertaining, and Bessie was not quite so uneasy under his affability as she had been on board the yacht. Mrs. Stokes, who had heard much of the Tory candidate, but now met him for the first time, regarded him with awe, impressed by his distinguished air and fine manners. But Bessie was more diffident than impressed. She did not talk much; everybody else was so willing to talk that it was enough for her to look charming. Once or twice her grandfather glanced towards her, wishing to hear her voice—which was a most tunable voice—in reply to her magnificent neighbor, but Bessie sat in beaming, beautiful silence, lending him her ears, and at intervals giving him a monosyllabic reply. She might certainly have done worse. She might have spoken foolishly, or she might have said what she occasionally thought in contradiction of his solemn opinions. And surely this would have been unwise? Her silence was pleasing, and he wished for nothing in her different from what she seemed. He liked her youthfulness, and approved her simplicity as an eminently teachable characteristic; and if she was not able greatly to interest or amuse him, perhaps that was not from any fault or deficiency in herself, but from circumstances over which she had no control. An old love, a true love, unwillingly relinquished, is a powerful rival.

The whole of the following day was at his service to walk and talk with Bessie if he and she pleased, but Bessie invited Miss Burleigh into her private parlor and went into seclusion. That was after breakfast, and Mr. Cecil made a tour of the stables with the squire, and saw Janey take her morning gallop. Then he spoke in praise of Janey's mistress while on board the Foam, and with all the enthusiasm at his command of his own hopes. They had not become expectations yet.

"It is uphill work with Elizabeth," said her grandfather. "She cares for none of us here."

"The harder to win the more constant to keep," replied the aspirant suitor cheerfully.

"I shall put no pressure on her. Here is your opportunity, and you must rely on yourself. She has a heart for those who can reach it, but my efforts have fallen short thus far." This was not what the squire had once thought to say.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh did not admire gushing, demonstrative women, and a gushing wife would have wearied him inexpressibly. He felt an attraction in Bessie's aloofness, and said again, "She is worth the pains she will cost to win: a few years will mature her fine intelligence and make of her a perfect companion. I admire her courageous simplicity; there is a great deal in her character to work upon."

"She is no cipher, certainly; if you are satisfied, I am," said Mr. Fairfax resignedly. "Yet it is not flattering to think that she would toss up her cap to go back to the Forest to-morrow."

"Then she is loyal in affection to very worthy people. I have heard of her Forest friends from Lady Latimer."

"Lady Latimer has a great hold on Elizabeth's imagination. It would be a good thing if she were to pay a visit to Hartwell; she might give her young devotee some valuable instructions. Elizabeth is prejudiced against me, and does not fall into her new condition so happily as I was led to anticipate that she might."

"She will wear to it. My sister Mary has an art of taming, and will help her. I prefer her indifference to an undue elation: that would argue a commonness of mind from which I imagine her to be quite free."

"She has her own way of estimating us, and treats the state and luxury of Abbotsmead as quite external to her. In her private thoughts, I fear, she treats them as cumbrous lendings that she will throw off after a season, and be gladly quit of their burden."

"Better so than in the other extreme. A girl of heart and mind cannot be expected to identify herself suddenly with the customs of a strange rank. She was early trained in the habits of a simple household, but from what I see there can have been nothing wanting of essential refinement in Mrs. Carnegie. There is a crudeness in Miss Fairfax yet—she is very young—but she will ripen sound and sweet to the core, or I am much mistaken in the quality of the green fruit."

The squire replied that he had no reason to believe his granddaughter was otherwise than a good girl. And with that they left discussing her and fell upon the election. Mr. Cecil Burleigh had a good courage for the encounter, but he also had received intimations not to make too sure of his

success. The Fairfax influence had been so long in abeyance, so long only a name in Norminster, that Mr. John Short began to quake the moment he began to test it. Once upon a time Norminster had returned a Fairfax as a matter of course, but for a generation its tendencies had been more and more towards Liberalism, and at the last election it had returned its old Whig member at the head of the poll, and in lieu of its old Tory member a native lawyer, one Bradley, who professed Radicalism on the hustings, but pruned his opinions in the House to the useful working pattern of a supporter of the ministry. This prudent gentleman was considered by a majority of his constituents not to have played fair, and it was as against him, traitor and turncoat, that the old Tories and moderate Conservatives were going to try to bring in Mr. Cecil Burleigh. Both sides were prepared to spend money, and Norminster was enjoying lively anticipations of a good time coming.

While the gentlemen were thus discoursing to and fro the terrace under the library window, Miss Burleigh in Bessie's parlor was instructing her of her brother's political views. It is to be feared that Bessie was less interested than the subject deserved, and also less interested in the proprietor of the said views than his sister supposed her to be. She listened respectfully, however, and did not answer very much at random, considering that she was totally ignorant beforehand of all that was being explained to her. At length she said, "I must begin to read the newspapers. I know much better what happened in the days of Queen Elizabeth than what has happened in my own lifetime;" and then Miss Burleigh left politics, and began to speak of her brother's personal ambition and personal qualities; to relate anecdotes of his signal success at Eton and at Oxford; to expatiate on her own devotion to him, and the great expectations founded by all his family upon his high character and splendid abilities. She added that he had the finest temper in the world, and that he was ardently affectionate.

Bessie smiled at this. She believed that she knew where his ardent affections were centred; and then she blushed at the tormenting recollection of how she had interpreted his assiduities to herself before making that discovery. Miss Burleigh saw the blush, seeming to see nothing, and said softly, "I envy the woman who has to pass her life with Cecil. I can imagine nothing more contenting than his society to one he loves."

Bessie's blush was perpetuated. She would have liked to mention Miss Julia Gardiner, but she felt a restraining delicacy in speaking of what had come to her knowledge in such a casual way, and more than ever ashamed of her own ridiculous mistake. Suddenly she broke out with an odd query, at the same moment clapping her hands to her traitorous cheeks: "Do you ever blush at your own foolish fancies? Oh, how tiresome it is to have a trick of blushing! I wish I could get over it."

"It is a trick we get over quite early enough. The fancies girls blush at are so innocent. I have had none of that pretty sort for a long while."

Miss Burleigh looked sympathetic and amused. Bessie was silent for a few minutes and full of thought. Presently, in a musing, meditative voice, she said, "Ambition! I suppose all men who have force enough to do great things long for an opportunity to do them; and that we call ambition. Harry Musgrave is ambitious. He is going to be a lawyer. What can a famous lawyer become?"

"Lord chancellor, the highest civil dignity under the Crown."

"Then I shall set my mind on seeing Harry lord chancellor," cried Bessie with bold conclusion.

"And when he retires from office, though he may have held it for ever so short a time, he will have a pension of five thousand a year."

"How pleasant! What a grateful country! Then he will be able to buy Brook and spend his holidays there. Dear old Harry! We were like brother and sister once, and I feel as if I had a right to be proud of him, as you are of your brother Cecil. Women have no chance of being ambitious on their own account, have they?"

"Oh yes. Women are as ambitious of rank, riches, and power as men are; and some are ambitious of doing what they imagine to be great deeds. You will probably meet one at Brentwood, a most beautiful lady she is—a Mrs. Chiverton."

Bessie's countenance flashed: "She was a Miss Hiloe, was she not—Ada Hiloe? I knew her. She was at Madame Fournier's—she and a younger sister—during my first year there."

"Then you will be glad to meet again. She was married in Paris only the other day, and has come into Woldshire a bride. They say she is showing herself a prodigy of benevolence round her husband's magnificent seat already: she married him that she might have the power to do good with his immense wealth. There must always be some self-sacrifice in a lofty ambition, but hers is a sacrifice that few women could endure to pay."

Bessie held her peace. She had been instructed how all but impossible it is to live in the world and be absolutely truthful; and what perplexed her in this new character of her old school-fellow she therefore supposed to be the veil of glamour which the world requires to have thrown over an ugly, naked truth.

About eleven o'clock the two young ladies walked out across the park towards the lodge, to pay a visit to Mrs. Stokes. Then they walked on to the village, and home again by the mill. The morning seemed long drawn out. Then followed luncheon, and after it Mr. Cecil Burleigh drove in an open

carriage with Bessie and his sister to Hartwell. The afternoon was very clear and pleasant, and the scenery sufficiently varied. On the road Bessie learnt that Hartwell was the early home of Lady Latimer, and still the residence of her bachelor brother and two maiden sisters.

The very name of Lady Latimer acted like a spell on Bessie. She had been rather silent and reserved until she heard it, and then all at once she roused up into a vivid interest. Mr. Cecil Burleigh studied her more attentively than he had done hitherto. Miss Burleigh said, "Lady Latimer is another of our ambitious women. Miss Fairfax fancies women can have no ambition on their own account, Cecil. I have been telling her of Mrs. Chiverton."

"And what does Miss Fairfax say of Mrs. Chiverton's ambition?" asked Mr. Cecil Burleigh.

"Nothing," rejoined Bessie. But her delicate lip and nostril expressed a great deal.

The man of the world preferred her reticence to the wisest speech. He mused for several minutes before he spoke again himself. Then he gave air to some of his reflections: "Lady Latimer has great qualities. Her marriage was the blunder of her youth. Her girlish imagination was dazzled by the name of a lord and the splendor of Umpleby. It remains to be considered that she was not one of the melting sort, and that she made her life noble."

Here Miss Burleigh took up the story: "That is true. But she would have made it more noble if she had been faithful to her first love—to your grandfather, Miss Fairfax."

Bessie colored. "Oh, were they fond of each other when they were young?" she asked wondering.

"Your grandfather was devoted to her. He had just succeeded to Abbotsmead. All the world thought it would be a match, and great promotion for her too, when she met Lord Latimer. He was sixty and she was nineteen, and they lived together thirty-seven years, for he survived into quite extreme old age."

"And she had no children, and my grandfather married somebody else?" said Bessie with a plaintive fall in her voice.

"She had no children, and your grandfather married somebody else. Lady Latimer was a most excellent wife to her old tyrant."

Bessie looked sorrowful: "Was he a tyrant? I wonder whether she ever pities herself for the love she threw away? She is quite alone—she would give anything that people should love her now, I have heard them say in the Forest."

"That is the revenge that slighted love so often takes. But she must have satisfaction in her life too. She was always more proud than tender, except perhaps to her friend, Dorothy Fairfax. You have heard of your great-aunt Dorothy?"

"Yes. I have succeeded to her rooms, to her books. My grandfather says I remind him of her."

"Dorothy Fairfax never forgave Lady Latimer. They had been familiar friends, and there was a double separation. Oh, it is quite a romance! My aunt, Lady Angleby, could tell you all about it, for she was quite one with them at Abbotsmead and Hartwell in those days; indeed, the intimacy has never been interrupted. And you know Lady Latimer—you admire her?"

"I used to admire her enthusiastically. I should like to see her again."

After this there was silence until the drive ended at Hartwell. Bessie was meditating on the glimpse she had got into the pathetic past of her grandfather's life, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh and his sister were meditating upon her.

Hartwell was a modest brick house within a garden skirting the road. It had a retired air, as of a poor gentleman's house whose slender fortunes limit his tastes: Mr. Oliver Smith's fortunes were very slender, and he shared them with two maiden sisters. The shrubs were well grown and the grass was well kept, but there was no show of the gorgeous scentless flowers which make the gardens of the wealthy so gay and splendid in summer. Ivy clothed the walls, and old-fashioned flowers bloomed all the year round in the borders, but it was not a very cheerful garden in the afternoon.

Two elderly ladies were pacing the lawn arm-in-arm, with straw hats tilted over their noses, when the Abbotsmead carriage stopped at the gate. They stood an instant to see whose it was, and then hurried forward to welcome their visitors.

"This is very kind, Mr. Cecil, very kind, Miss Mary; but you always are kind in remembering old friends," said the elder, Miss Juliana, and then was silent, gazing at Bessie.

"This is Miss Fairfax," said Mr. Cecil Burleigh. "Lady Latimer has no doubt named her in her letters."

"Ah! yes, yes—what am I dreaming about? Charlotte," turning to her sister, "who is she like?"

"She is like poor Dorothy," was the answer in a tremulous, solemn voice. "What will Oliver say?"

"How long is it since Lady Latimer saw you, my dear?" asked Miss Juliana.

"Three years. I have not been home to the Forest since I left it to go to school in France."

"Ah! Then that accounts for our sister not having mentioned to us your wonderful resemblance to your great-aunt, Dorothy Fairfax. Three years alter and refine a child's chubby face into a young woman's face."

Miss Juliana seemed to be thrown into irretrievable confusion by Bessie's apparition and her own memory. She was quite silent as she led the way to the house, walking between Mr. Cecil Burleigh and his sister. Miss Charlotte walked behind with Bessie, and remarked that she was pleased to have a link of acquaintance with her already by means of Lady Latimer. Bessie asked whether Lady Latimer was likely soon to come into Woldshire.

"We have not heard that she has any present intention of visiting us. Her visits are few and far between," was the formal reply.

"I wish she would. When I was a little girl she was my ideal of all that is grand, gracious, and lovely," said Bessie.

Bessie's little outbreak had done her good, had set her tongue at liberty. Her self-consciousness was growing less obtrusive. Mr. Cecil Burleigh explained to her the legal process of an election for a member of Parliament, and Miss Burleigh sat by in satisfied silence, observing the quick intelligence of her face and the flattered interest in her brother's. At the park gates, Mr. Fairfax, returning from a visit to one of his farmsteads where building was in progress, met the carriage and got in. His first question was what Mr. Oliver Smith had said about the coming election, and whether he would be in Norminster the following day.

The news about Buller troubled him no little, to judge by his countenance, but he did not say much beyond an exclamation that they would carry the contest through, let it cost what it might. "We have been looking forward to this contest ever since Bradley was returned five years ago; we will not be so faint-hearted as to yield without a battle. If we are defeated again, we may count Norminster lost to the Conservative interest."

"Oh, don't talk of defeat! We shall be far more likely to win if we refuse to contemplate the possibility of defeat," cried Bessie with girlish vivacity.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh laughed and said, "Miss Fairfax is right. She will wear my colors and I will adopt her logic, and, ostrich-like, refuse to see the perils that threaten me."

"No, no," remonstrated Bessie casting off her shy reserve under encouragement. "So far from hiding your face, you must make it familiar in every street in Norminster. You must seek if you would find, and ask if you would have. I would. I should hate to be beaten by my own neglect, worse than by my rival."

Mr. Fairfax was electrified at this brusque assertion of her sentiments by his granddaughter. Her audacity seemed at least equal to her shyness. "Very good advice, Elizabeth; make him follow it," said he dryly.

"We will give him no rest when we have him at Brentwood," added Miss Burleigh. "But though he is so cool about it, I believe he is dreadfully in earnest. Are you not, Cecil?"

"I will not be beaten by my own neglect," was his rejoinder, with a glance at Bessie, blushing beautifully.

They did not relapse into constraint any more that day. There was no addition to the company at dinner, and the evening being genially warm, they enjoyed it in the garden. Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Miss Fairfax even strolled as far as the ruins in the park, and on the way he enlightened her respecting some of his opinions, tastes, and prejudices. She heard him attentively, and found him very instructive. His clever conversation was a compliment to which, as a bright girl, she was not insensible. His sister had detailed to him her behavior on her introduction to Lady Angleby, and had deplored her lively sense of the ridiculous. Miss Burleigh had the art of taming that her brother credited her with, and Elizabeth was already at ease and happy with her—free to be herself, as she felt, and not always on guard and measuring her words; and the more of her character that she revealed, the better Miss Burleigh liked her. Her gayety of temper was very attractive when it was kept within due bounds, and she had a most sweet docility of tractableness when approached with caution. At the close of the evening she retired to her white parlor with a rather exalted feeling of responsibility, having promised, at Mr. Cecil Burleigh's instigation, to study certain essays of Lord Bacon on government and seditions in states for the informing of her mind. She took the volume down from Dorothy Fairfax's bookshelf, and laid it on her table for a reminder. Miss Burleigh saw it there in the morning.

"Ah, dear Cecil! He will try to make you very wise and learned," said she, nodding her head and smiling significantly. "But never mind: he waltzes to perfection, and delights in a ball, no man more."

"Does he?" cried Bessie, amused and laughing. "That potent, grave, and reverend signor can condescend, then, to frivolities! Oh, when shall we have a ball that I may waltz with him?"

"Soon, if all go successfully at the election. Lady Angleby will give a ball if Cecil win and you ask her."

"*I* ask her! But I should never dare."

"She will be only too glad of the opportunity, and you may dare anything with her when she is

pleased. She has always been dear Cecil's fast friend, and his triumph will be hers. She will want to celebrate it joyously, and nothing is really so joyous as a good dance. We will have a good dance."

CHAPTER XXIII.

BESSIE SHOWS CHARACTER.

At breakfast, Mr. Fairfax handed a letter to Bessie. "From home, from my mother," said she in a glad undertone, and instantly, without apology, opened and read it. Mr. Cecil Burleigh took a furtive observation of her while she was thus occupied. What a good countenance she had! how the slight emotion of her lips and the lustrous shining under her dark eyelashes enhanced her beauty! It was a letter to make her happy, to give her a light heart to go to Brentwood with. Mrs. Carnegie was always sympathetic, cheerful, and loving in her letters. She encouraged her dear Bessie to reconcile herself to absence, and attach herself to her new home by cultivating all its sources of interest, and especially the affection of her grandfather. She gave her much tender, reasonable advice for her guidance, and she gave her good news: they were all well at home and at Brook, and Harry Musgrave had come out in honors at Oxford. The sunshine of pure content irradiated Bessie's face. She looked up; she wanted to communicate her joy. Her grandfather looked up at the same moment, and their eyes met.

"Would you like to read it? It is from my mother," she said, holding out the letter with an impulse to be good to him.

"I can trust you with your correspondence, Elizabeth," was his reply.

She drew back her hand quickly, and laid down the letter by her plate. She sipped her tea, her throat aching, her eyes swimming. The squire began to talk rather fast and loud, and in a few minutes, the meal being over, he pushed away his chair and left the room.

"The train we go into Norminster by reaches Mitford Junction at ten thirty-five," observed Mr. Cecil Burleigh.

Bessie rose and vanished with a mutinous air, which made him laugh and whisper to his sister, as she disappeared, that the young lady had a rare spirit. Mr. Fairfax was in the hall. She went swiftly up to him, and laying a hand on his arm, said, in a quivering, resolute voice, "Read my letter, grandpapa. If you will not recognize those I have the best right to love, we shall be strangers always, you and I."

"Come up stairs: I will read your letter," said the old man shortly, and he mounted to her parlor, she still keeping her hold on his arm. He stood at her table and read it, and laid it down without a word, but, glancing aside at her pleasing face, he was moved to kiss her, and then promptly effected his escape from her tyranny. He was not displeased, and Bessie was triumphant.

"Now we can begin to be friends," she cried softly, clapping her hands. "I refuse to be frightened. I shall always tell him my news, and make him listen. If he is sarcastic, I won't care. He will respect me if I assert my right to be respected, and maintain that my father and mother at Beechhurst have the first and best claim on my love. He shall not recognize them as belonging only to my past life; he shall acknowledge them as belonging to me always. And Harry too!"

These strong resolutions arising out of that letter from the Forest exhilarated Bessie exceedingly. There was perhaps more guile in her than was manifest on slight acquaintance, but it was the guile of a wise, warm heart. All trace of emotion had passed away when she came down stairs, and when her grandfather, assisting her into the carriage, squeezed her fingers confidentially, her new, all-pervading sense of happiness was confirmed and established. And the courage that happiness inspires was hers too.

At Mitford Junction, Colonel and Mrs. Stokes and Mr. Oliver Smith joined their party, and they travelled to Norminster together. The old city was going quietly about its business much as usual when they drove through the streets to the "George," where Mr. Cecil Burleigh was to meet his committee and address the electors out of the big middle bow-window. Miss Jocund's shop was nearly opposite to the inn, and thither the ladies at once adjourned, that Bessie might assume her blue bonnet. The others were already handsomely provided. Miss Jocund was quite at liberty to attend to them at this early hour of the day—her "gentleman" had not come in yet—and she conducted them to her show-room over the shop with the complacent alacrity of a milliner confident that she is about to give supreme satisfaction. And indeed Mrs. Stokes cried out with rapture, the instant the bonnet filled her eye, that it was "A sweet little bonnet—blue crape and white marabouts!"

Bessie smiled most becomingly as it was tried on, and blushed at herself in the glass. "But a shower of rain will spoil it," she objected, nodding the downy white feathers that topped the brim. She was proceeding philosophically to tie the glossy broad strings in a bow under her round chin when Miss Jocund stepped hastily to the rescue, and Mrs. Betts entered with a curtsey, and a blue silk slip on her arm. "What next?" Bessie demanded of the waiting-woman in rosy consternation.

"I am afraid we must trouble you, Miss Fairfax, but not much, I hope," insinuated Miss Jocund with a queer, deprecating humility. "There is a good half hour to spare. Since Eve put on a little cool foliage, female dress has developed so extensively that it is necessary to try some ladies on six times to avoid a misfit. But your figure is perfectly proportioned, and I resolved, for once, to chance it on my knowledge of anatomy, supplemented by an embroidered dress from your wardrobe. If you *will* be *so* kind: a stitch here and a stitch there, and my delightful duty is accomplished."

Miss Jocund's speeches had always a touch of mockery, and Bessie, being in excellent spirits, laughed good-humoredly, but denied her request. "No, no," said she, "I will not be so kind. Your lovely blue bonnet would be thrown away if I did not look pleasant under it, and how could I look pleasant after the painful ordeal of trying on?"

Mrs. Stokes, with raised eyebrows, was about to remonstrate, Mrs. Betts, with flushed dismay, was about to argue, when Miss Jocund interposed; she entered into the young lady's sentiments: "Miss Fairfax has spoken, and Miss Fairfax is right. A pleasant look is the glory of a woman's face, and without a pleasant look, if I were a single gentleman a woman might wear a coal-scuttle for me."

At this crisis there occurred a scuffle and commotion on the stairs, and Bessie recognized a voice she had heard elsewhere—a loud, ineffectual voice—pleading, "Master Justus, Master Justus, you are not to go to your granny in the show-room;" and in Master Justus bounced—lovely, delicious, in the whitest of frilly pinafores and most boisterous of naughty humors.

Bessie Fairfax stooped down and opened her arms with rapturous invitation. "Come, oh, you bonnie boy!" and she caught him up, shook him, kissed him, tickled him, with an exuberant fun that he evidently shared, and frantically retaliated by pulling down her hair.

This was very agreeable to Bessie, but Miss Jocund looked like an angry sphinx, and as the defeated nurse appeared she said with suppressed excitement, "Sally, how often must I warn you to keep the boy out of the show-room? Carry him away." The flaxen cherub was born off kicking and howling; Bessie looked as if she were being punished herself, Mrs. Stokes stood confounded, Mrs. Betts turned red. Only Miss Burleigh seemed unaffected, and inquired simply whose that little boy was. "*Mine*, ma'am," replied the milliner with an emphasis that forbade further question. But Miss Burleigh's reflective powers were awakened.

Mrs. Betts, that woman of resources and experience, standing with the blue silk slip half dropt on the Scotch carpet at her feet, reverted to the interrupted business of the hour as if there had been no break. "And if, when it comes to dressing this evening at Lady Angleby's, there's not a thing that fits?" she bitterly suggested.

"I will answer for it that everything fits," said Miss Jocund, recovering herself with more effort. "I have worked on true principles. But"—with a persuasive inclination towards Bessie—"if Miss Fairfax will condescend to inspect my productions, she will gratify me and herself also."

As she spoke Miss Jocund threw open the door of an adjoining room, where the said productions were elaborately laid out, and Mrs. Stokes ran in to have the first view. Miss Burleigh followed. Bessie, with a rather unworthy distrust, refused to advance beyond the doorway; but, looking in, she beheld clouds upon clouds of blue and white puffery, tulle and tarletan, and shining breadths of silk of the same delicate hues, with fans, gloves, bows, wreaths, shoes, ribbons, sashes, laces—a portentous confusion. After a few seconds of disturbed contemplation, during which she was lending an ear to the remote shrieks of that darling boy, she said—and surely it was provoking!—"The half would be better than the whole. I am sorry for you, Mrs. Betts, if you are to have all those works of art on your mind till they are worn out."

"Indeed, miss, if you don't show more feeling, my mind will give way," retorted Mrs. Betts. "It is the first time in my long experience that ever a young lady so set me at defiance as to refuse to try on new dresses. And all one's credit at stake upon her appearance! In a great house like Brentwood, too!"

Those piercing cries continued to rise higher and higher. Miss Jocund, with a vexed exclamation, dropped some piece of finery on which she was beginning to dilate, and vanished by another door. In a minute the noise was redoubled with a passionate intensity. Bessie's eyes filled; she knew that old-fashioned discipline was being administered, and her heart ached dreadfully. She even offered to rush to the rescue, but Mrs. Betts intercepted her with a stern "Better let me do up your hair, miss," while Mrs. Stokes, moved by sympathetic tenderness, whispered, "Stop your ears; it is necessary, *quite* necessary, now and then, I assure you." Oh, did not Bessie know? had she not little brothers? When there was silence, Miss Jocund returned, and without allusion to the nursery tragedy resumed her task of displaying the fruits of her toils.

Bessie, with a yearning sigh, composed herself, laid hands on her blue bonnet while nobody was observing, and moved away to an open window in the show-room that commanded the street. Deliberately she tied the strings in the fashion that pleased her, and seated herself to look out where a few men and boys were collecting on the edge of the pavement to await the appearance of the Conservative candidate at the bow-window over the portico of the "George." Presently, Mrs. Stokes joined her, shaking her head, and saying with demure rebuke, "You naughty girl! And this is all you care for pretty things?" Miss Burleigh, with more real seriousness, hoped that the pretty things would be right. Miss Jocund came forward with a natural professional anxiety to hear their opinions, and when she saw the bonnet-strings tied clasped her hands in acute regret,

but said nothing. Mrs. Betts, a picture of injured virtue, held herself aloof beyond the sea of finery, gazing across it at her insensible young mistress with eyes of mournful indignation. Bessie felt herself the object of general misunderstanding and reproach, and was stirred up to extenuate her untoward behavior in a strain of mischievous sarcasm.

"Don't look so distressed, all of you," she pleaded. "How can I interest myself to-day in anything but Mr. Cecil Burleigh's address to the electors of Norminster and my own new bonnet?"

"*That* is very becoming, for a consolation," said the milliner with an affronted air.

"I think it is," rejoined Bessie coolly. "And if you will not bedizen me with artificial flowers, and will exonerate me from wearing dresses that crackle, I shall be happy. Did you not promise to give me simplicity and no imitations, Miss Jocund?"

"I cannot deny it, Miss Fairfax. Natural leaves and flowers are my taste, and graceful soft outlines of drapery; but when it is the mode to wear tall wreaths of painted calico, and to be bustled off in twenty yards of stiff, cheap tarletan, most ladies conform to the mode, on the axiom that they might as well be out of the world as out of the fashion. And nothing comes up so ugly and outrageous but there are some who will have it in the very extreme."

"I am quite aware of the pains many women take to be displeasing, but I thought you understood that was not 'my style, my taste,'" said Bessie, quoting the milliner's curt query at their first interview.

"I understand now, Miss Fairfax, that there are things here you would rather be without. I will not pack up the tarletan skirts and artificial flowers. With the two morning silks and two dinner silks, and the tulle over the blue slip for a possible dance, perhaps you will be able to go through your visit to Brentwood?"

"I trust so," said Bessie. "But if I need anything more I will write to you."

There was an odd pause of silence, in which Bessie looked out of the window, and the rest looked at one another with a furtive, defeated, amused acknowledgment that this young lady, so ignorant of the world, knew how to take her own part, and would not be controlled in the exercise of her senses by any irregular, usurped authority. Mrs. Betts saw her day-dream of perquisites vanish. Both she and Miss Jocund had got their lesson, and they remembered it.

A welcome interruption came with the sound of swift wheels and high-stepping horses in the street, and the ladies pressed forward to see. "Lady Angleby's carriage," said Miss Burleigh as it whirled past and drew up at the "George." She was now in haste to be gone and join her aunt, but Bessie lingered at the window to witness the great lady's reception by the gentlemen who came out of the inn to meet her. Mr. Cecil Burleigh was foremost, and Mr. Fairfax, Mr. Oliver Smith, Mr. Forbes, and several more, yet strangers to Bessie, supported him. One who bowed with extreme deference she recognized, at a second glance, as Mr. John Short, her grandfather's companion on his memorable visit to Beechhurst, which resulted in her severance from that dear home of her childhood. The sight of him brought back some vexed recollections, but she sighed and shook them off, and on Miss Burleigh's again inviting her to come away to the "George" to Lady Angleby, she rose and followed her.

"Look pleasant," said Miss Jocund, standing by the door as Bessie went out, and Bessie laughed and was obedient.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A QUIET POLICY.

Lady Angleby received Bessie Fairfax with a gracious affability, and if Bessie had desired to avail herself of the privilege there was a cheek offered her to kiss, but she did not appear to see it. Her mind was running on that boy, and her countenance was blithe as sunshine. Mr. Laurence Fairfax came forward to shake hands, and Mr. John Short respectfully claimed her acquaintance. They were in a smaller room, adjoining the committee-room, where the majority of the gentlemen had assembled, and Bessie said to Miss Burleigh, "We should see and hear better in Miss Jocund's window;" but Miss Burleigh showed her that Miss Jocund's window was already filled, and that the gathering on the pavement was increasing. Soon after twelve it increased fast, with the workmen halting during a few minutes of their hour's release for dinner, but it never became a crowd, and the affair was much flatter than Bessie had expected. The new candidate was introduced by Mr. Oliver Smith, who spoke very briefly, and then made way for the candidate himself. Bessie could not see Mr. Cecil Burleigh, nor hear his words, but she observed that he was listened to, and jeeringly questioned only twice, and on both occasions his answer was received with cheers.

"You will read his speech in the *Norminster Gazette* on Saturday, or he will tell you the substance of it," Miss Burleigh said. "Extremes meet in politics as in other things, and much of Cecil's creed will suit the root-and-branch men as well as the fanatics of his own party." Bessie wondered a little, but said nothing; she had thought moderation Mr. Cecil Burleigh's characteristic.

A school of young ladies passed without difficulty behind the scanty throng, and five minutes after the speaking was over the street was empty.

"Buller was not there," said Mr. John Short to Mr. Oliver Smith, and from the absence of mirth amongst the gentlemen, Bessie conjectured that there was a general sense of failure and disappointment.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh preserved his dignified composure, and came up to Bessie, who said, "This is only the beginning?"

"Only the beginning—the real work is all to do," said he, and entered into a low-toned exposition thereof quite calmly.

It was at this moment that Mr. John Short, happening to cast an eye upon the two, received one of those happy inspirations that visit in emergency men of superior resources and varied experience. At Lady Angleby's behest the pretty ladies in blue bonnets set out to shop, pay calls in the town, and show their colors, and the agent attached himself to the party. They all left the "George" together, but it was not long before they divided, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Bessie, having nowhere particular where they wished to go, wandered towards the minster. Mr. John Short, without considering whether his company might be acceptable, adhered to them, and at length boldly suggested that they were not far from the thoroughfare in which the "Red Lion" was situated, and that a word from the aspirant candidate to Buller might not be thrown away.

It was the hour of the afternoon when the host of the "Red Lion" sat at the receipt of news and custom, smoking his pipe after dinner in the shade of an old elm tree by his own door. He was a burly man, with a becoming sense of his importance and weight in the world, and as honest a desire to do his share in mending it as his betters. He was not to be bought by any of the usual methods of electioneering sale and barter, but he had a soft place in his heart that Mr. John Short knew of, and was not therefore to be relinquished as altogether invulnerable.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh could not affect the jocose and familiar, but perhaps his plain way of address was a higher compliment to the publican's understanding. "Is it true, Buller, that you balance about voting again for Bradley? Think of it, and see if you cannot return to the old flag," was all he said.

"Sir, I mean to think of it," replied Buller with equal directness. "I'm pleased with what I hear of you, and I like a gentleman, but Bradley explains his puzzling conduct very plausibly: it is no use being factious and hindering business in the House, as he says. And it can't be denied that there's Tory members in the House as factious as any of them pestilent Radical chaps that get up strikes out of doors. I'm not saying that you would be one of them, sir."

"I hope not. For no party considerations would I hinder any advance or reform that I believe to be for the good of the country."

"I am glad to hear it, sir; you would be what we call an independent member. My opinion is, sir, that sound progress feels its way and takes one step at a time, and if it tries to go too fast it overleaps itself."

Mr. Cecil Burleigh was not prepared for political disquisition on the pavement in front of the "Red Lion," but he pondered an instant on Mr. Buller's platitude as if it were a new revelation, and then said with quiet cordiality, "Well, think of it, and if you decide to give me your support, it will be the more valuable as being given on conviction. Good-day to you, Buller."

The publican had risen, and laid aside his pipe. "Good-day to you, sir," said he, and as Bessie inclined her fair head to him also, he bowed with more confusion and pleasure than could have been expected from the host of a popular tavern.

Mr. John Short lingered behind, and as the beautiful young people retired out of hearing, admiringly watched by the publican, the lawyer plied his insinuating craft and whispered, "You are always a good-natured man, Buller. Look at those two—*No election, no wedding*."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Buller with kindly sympathy in his voice. "A pretty pair, indeed, to run in a curricle! I should think now his word's as good as his bond—eh? Egad, then, I'll give 'em a plumper!"

The agent shook hands with him on it delighted. "You are a man of your word too, Buller. I thank you," he said with fervor, and felt that this form of bribery and corruption had many excuses besides its success. He did not intend to divulge by what means the innkeeper's pledge had been obtained, lest his chief might not quite like it, and with a few nods, becks, and half-words he ensured Buller's silence on the delicate family arrangement that he had so prematurely confided to his ear. And then he went back to the "George" with the approving conscience of an agent who has done his master good secret service without risking any impeachment of his honor. He fully expected that time would make his words true. Unless in that confidence, Mr. Short was not the man to have spoken them, even to win an election.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Miss Fairfax strolled a little farther, and then retraced their steps to the minster, and went in to hear the anthem. Presently appeared in the distance Mr. Fairfax and Miss Burleigh, and when the music was over signed to them to come away. Lady Angleby was waiting in the carriage at the great south door to take them home, and in the beautiful light of the declining afternoon they drove out of the town to Brentwood—a big, square, convenient old

house, surrounded by a pleasant garden divided from the high-road by a belt of trees.

Mrs. Betts was already installed in the chamber allotted to her young lady, and had spread out the pretty new clothes she was to wear. She was deeply serious, and not disposed to say much after her morning's lesson. Bessie had apparently dismissed the recollection of it. She came in all good-humor and cheerfulness. She hummed a soft little tune, and for the first time submitted patiently to the assiduities of the experienced waiting-woman. Mrs. Betts did not fail to make her own reflections thereupon, and to interpret favorably Miss Fairfax's evidently happy preoccupation.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DINNER AT BRENTWOOD.

There was rejoicing at Brentwood that evening. All the guests staying in the house were assembled in the drawing-room before dinner, when Mr. Oliver Smith, who had retained quarters at the "George," walked in with an appearance of high satisfaction, and immediately began to say, "I bring you good news. Buller has made up his mind to do the right thing, Burleigh, and give you a plumper. He hailed my cab as I was passing the 'Red Lion' on my road here, and told me his decision. Do you carry witchcraft about with you?"

"Buller could not resist the old name and the old colors. Miss Fairfax is my witchcraft," said Mr. Cecil Burleigh with a profound bow to Bessie, in gay acknowledgment of her unconscious services.

Bessie blushed with pleasure, and said, "Indeed, I never opened my mouth."

"Oh, charms work in silence," said Mr. Oliver Smith.

Lady Angleby was delighted; Mr. Fairfax looked gratified, and gave his granddaughter an approving nod.

The next and last arrivals were Mr. and Mrs. Chiverton. Mr. Chiverton was known to all present, but the bride was a stranger except to one or two. She was attired in rich white silk—in full dress—so terribly trying to the majority of women, and Bessie Fairfax's first thought on seeing her again was how much less beautiful she was than in her simple *percale* dresses at school. She did not notice Bessie at once, but when their eyes met and Bessie smiled, she ran to embrace her with expansive cordiality. Bessie, her beaming comeliness notwithstanding, could assume in an instant a touch-me-not air, and gave her hand only, though that with a kind frankness; and then they sat down and talked of Caen.

Mrs. Chiverton's report as a woman of extraordinary beauty and virtue had preceded her into her husband's country, but to the general observer Miss Fairfax was much more pleasing. She also wore full dress—white relieved with blue—but she was also able to wear it with a grace; for her arms were lovely, and all her contours fair, rounded, and dimpled, while Mrs. Chiverton's tall frame, though very stately, was very bony, and her little head and pale, classical face, her brown hair not abundant, and eyes too cold and close together, with that expression of intense pride which is a character in itself, required a taste cultivated amidst statuary to appreciate. This taste Mr. Chiverton possessed, and his wife satisfied it perfectly.

Bessie looked at Mr. Chiverton with curiosity, and looked quickly away again, retaining an impression of a cur-like face with a fixed sneer upon it. He was not engaged in conversation at the time; he was contemplating his handsome wife with critical admiration, as he might have contemplated a new acquisition in his gallery of antique marbles. In his eyes the little girl beside her was a mere golden-haired, rosy, plump rustic, who served as a foil to his wife's Minerva-like beauty.

Lady Angleby was great lady enough to have her own by-laws of etiquette in her own house, and her nephew was assigned to take Miss Fairfax to dinner. They sat side by side, and were wonderfully sociable at one end of the table, with the hostess and Mr. Fairfax facing them at the other. Besides the guests already introduced, there was one other gentleman, very young—Sir Edward Lucas—whose privilege it was to escort Mrs. Chiverton. Mr. Forbes gave his arm to Miss Burleigh. Mr. Chiverton and Mr. Oliver Smith had no ladies: Lady Angleby liked a preponderance of gentlemen at her entertainments. Everybody talked and was pleasant, and Bessie Fairfax felt almost at ease, so fast does confidence grow in the warm atmosphere of courtesy and kindness. When the ladies retired to the drawing-room she was bidden to approach Lady Angleby's footstool, and treated caressingly; while Mrs. Chiverton was allowed to converse on philanthropic missions with Miss Burleigh, who yawned behind her fan and marvelled at the splendor of the bride's jewels.

In the dining-room conversation became more animated when the gentlemen were left to themselves. Mr. Chiverton loved to take the lead. He had said little during dinner, but now he began to talk with vivacity, and was heard with the attention that must be paid to an old man possessed of enormous wealth and the centre of great connexions. He was accustomed to this deference, and cared perhaps for none other. He had a vast contempt for his fellow-creatures,

and was himself almost universally detested. But he could bear it, sustained by the bitter tonic of his own numerous aversions. One chief aversion was present at this moment in the elegant person of Mr. Oliver Smith. Mr. Oliver Smith was called not too strong in the head, but he was good, and possessed the irresistible influence of goodness. Mr. Chiverton hated his mild tenacity. His own temper was purely despotic. He had represented a division of the county for several years, and had finally retired from Parliament in dudgeon at the success of the Liberal party and policy. After some general remarks on the approaching election, came up the problem of reconciling the quarrel between labor and capital, then already growing to such proportions that the whole community, alarmed, foresaw that it might have ere long to suffer with the disputants. The immediate cause of the reference was the fact of a great landowner named Gifford having asked for soldiers from Norminster to aid his farmers in gathering in the harvest, which was both early and abundant. The request had been granted. The dearth of labor on his estates arose from various causes, but primarily from there not being cottages enough to house the laborers, his father and he having both pursued the policy of driving them to a distance to keep down the rates.

"The penuriousness of rich men is a constant surprise to me," said Mr. Forbes. "Dunghill cottages are not so frequent as they were, but there are still a vast number too many. When old Gifford made a solitude round him, Blagg built those reed-thatched hovels at Morte which contribute more poor rogues to the quarter sessions than all the surrounding parishes. That strip of debatable land is the seedbed of crime and misery: the laborers take refuge in the hamlet, and herd together as animals left to their own choice never do herd; but their walk to and from their work is shortened by one half, and they have their excuse. We should probably do the same ourselves."

"The cottages of the small proprietors are always the worst," remarked Mr. Chiverton.

"If you and Gifford would combine to rebuild the houses you have allowed to decay or have pulled down, Morte would soon be left to the owls and the bats," said the clergyman. "By far the larger majority of the men are employed on your farms, and it is no longer for your advantage that their strength should be spent in walking miles to work—if ever it was. You will have to do it. While Jack was left in brute ignorance, it was possible to satisfy him with brute comforts and control him with brute discipline; but teach Jack the alphabet, and he becomes as shrewd as his master. He begins to consider what he is worth, and to readjust the proportion between his work and his wages—to reflect that the larger share of the profit is, perhaps, due to himself, seeing that he reaps by his own toil and sweat, and his master reaps by the toil and sweat of a score."

Mr. Chiverton had manifested signs of impatience and irritability during Mr. Forbes's address, and he now said, with his peculiar snarl for which he was famous, "Once upon a time there was a great redistribution of land in Egypt, and the fifth part of the increase was given to Pharaoh, and the other four parts were left to be food to the sowers. If Providence would graciously send us a universal famine, we might all begin again on a new foundation."

"Oh, we cannot wait for that—we must do something meanwhile," said Sir Edward Lucas, understanding him literally. "I expect we shall have to manage our land less exclusively with an eye to our own revenue from it."

Mr. Chiverton testily interrupted the young man's words of wisdom: "The fact is, Jack wants to be master himself. Strikes in the manufacturing towns are not unnatural—we know how those mercantile people grind their hands—but since it has come to strikes amongst colliers and miners, I tremble at the prospect for the country. The spirit of insubordination will spread and spread until the very plough-boys in the field are infected."

"A good thing, too, and the sooner the better," said Mr. Oliver Smith.

"No, no!" cried Mr. Fairfax, but Mr. Forbes said that was what they were coming to. Sir Edward Lucas listened hard. He was fresh from Oxford, where boating and athletic exercises had been his chief study. His father was lately dead, and the administration of a great estate had devolved upon him. His desire was to do his duty by it, and he had to learn how, that prospect not having been prepared for in his education, further than by initiation in the field-sports followed by gentlemen.

Mr. Chiverton turned on Mr. Oliver Smith with his snarl: "Your conduct as a landowner being above reproach, you can afford to look on with complacency while the rest of the world are being set by the ears."

Mr. Oliver Smith had very little land, but as all there knew what he had as well as he knew himself, he did not wince. He rejoined: "As a class, we have had a long opportunity for winning the confidence of the peasants; some of us have used it—others of us have neglected it and abused it. If the people these last have held lordship over revolt and transfer their allegiance to other masters, to demagogues hired in the streets, who shall blame them?"

"Suppose we all rise above reproach: I mean to try," said Sir Edward Lucas with an eagerness of interest that showed his good-will. "Then if my people can find a better master, let them go."

Mr. Cecil Burleigh turned to the young man: "It depends upon yourself whether they shall find a better master or not. Resolve that they shall not. Consider your duty to the land and those upon it as the vocation of your life, and you will run a worthy career."

Sir Edward was at once gratified and silenced. Mr. Cecil Burleigh's reputation was greater yet than his achievement, but a man's possibilities impress the young and enthusiastic even more than his successes accomplished.

"You hold subversive views, Burleigh—views to which the public mind is not educated up, nor will be in this generation," said Mr. Chiverton. "The old order of things will last my time."

"Changes move fast now-a-days," said Mr. Fairfax. "I should like to see a constitutional remedy provided for the Giffords of the gentry before I depart. We are too near neighbors to be friends, and Morte adjoins my property."

"Gifford was brought up in a bad school—a vaporing fellow, not true to any of his obligations," said Mr. Oliver Smith.

"It is Blagg, his agent, who is responsible," began Mr. Chiverton.

Mr. Oliver Smith interrupted contemptuously: "When a landlord permits an agent to represent him without supervision, and refuses to look into the reiterated complaints of his tenants, he gives us leave to suppose that his agent does him acceptable service."

"I have remonstrated with him myself, but he is cynically indifferent to public opinion," said Mr. Forbes.

"The public opinion that condemns a man and dines with him is not of much account," said Mr. Oliver Smith, with a glance at Mr. Chiverton, the obnoxious Gifford's very good friend.

"Would you have him cut?" demanded Mr. Chiverton. "I grant you that it is a necessary precaution to have his words in black and white if he is to be bound by them—"

"You could not well say worse of a gentleman than that, Chiverton—eh?" suggested Mr. Fairfax.

There was a minute's silence, and then Mr. Forbes spoke: "I should like our legal appointments to include advocates of the poor, men of integrity whose business it would be to watch over the rights and listen to the grievances of those classes who live by laborious work and are helpless to resist powerful wrong. Old truth bears repeating: these are the classes who maintain the state of the world—the laborer that holds the plough and whose talk is of bullocks, the carpenter, the smith, and the potter. All these trust to their hands, and are wise in their work, and when oppression comes they must seek to some one of leisure for justice. It is a pitiful thing to hear a poor man plead, 'Sir, what can I do?' when his heart burns with a sense of intolerable wrong, and to feel that the best advice you can give him is that he should bear it patiently."

"I call that too sentimental on your part, Forbes," remonstrated Mr. Chiverton. "The laborers are quiet yet, and guidable as their own oxen, but look at the trades—striking everywhere. Surely your smiths and carpenters are proving themselves strong enough to protect their own interests."

"Yes, by the combination that we should all deprecate amongst our laborers—only by that. Therefore the wise will be warned in time, for such example is contagious. Many of our people have lain so long in discontent that bitter distrust has come of it, and they are ready to abandon their natural leaders for any leader who promises them more wages and less toil. If the laborers strike, Smith's and Fairfax's will probably stick to their furrows, and Gifford's will turn upon him—yours too, Chiverton, perhaps." Mr. Forbes was very bold.

"God forbid that we should come to that!" exclaimed Mr. Fairfax devoutly. "We have all something to mend in our ways. Our view of the responsibility that goes with the possession of land has been too narrow. If we could put ourselves in the laborer's place!"

"I shall mend nothing: no John Hodge shall dictate to me," cried Mr. Chiverton in a sneering fury. "A man has a right to do what he likes with his own, I presume?"

"No, he has not; and especially not when he calls a great territory in land his own," said Mr. Forbes. "That is the false principle out of which the bad practice of some of you arises. A few have never been guided by it—they have acted on the ancient law that the land is the Lord's, and the profit of the land for all—and many more begin to acknowledge that it is a false principle by which it is not safe to be guided any longer. Pushed as far as it will go, the result is Gifford."

"And myself," added Mr. Chiverton in a quieter voice as he rose from his chair. Mr. Forbes looked at him. The old man made no sign of being affronted, and they went together into the drawing-room, where he introduced the clergyman to his wife, saying, "Here, Ada, is a gentleman who will back you in teaching me my duty to my neighbor;" and then he went over to Lady Angleby.

"You are on the side of the poor man, then, Mrs. Chiverton?" said Mr. Forbes pleasantly. "It is certainly a legitimate sphere of female influence in country neighborhoods."

The stately bride drew her splendid dress aside to make room for him on the ottoman, and replied in a measured voice, "I am. I tell Mr. Chiverton that he does not satisfy the reasonable expectations of his people. I hope to persuade him to a more liberal policy of management on his immense estates; his revenue from them is very large. It distresses me to be surrounded by a discontented tenantry, as it would do to be waited on by discontented servants. A bad cottage is an eyesore on a rich man's land, and I shall not rest until I get all Chiver-Chase cleared of bad cottages and picturesquely inconvenient old farmsteads. The people appeal to me already."

Bessie Fairfax had come up while her old school-fellow was gratifying Mr. Forbes's ears with her

admirable sentiments. She could not forbear a smile at the candid assertion of power they implied, and as Mr. Forbes smiled too with a twinkle of amused surprise, Bessie said sportively, "And if Mr. Chiverton is rebellious and won't take them away, then what shall you do?"

Mrs. Chiverton was dumb; perhaps this probability had not occurred to her ruling mind. Mr. Forbes begged to know what Miss Fairfax herself would do under such circumstances. Bessie considered a minute with her pretty chin in the air, and then said, "I would not wear my diamonds. Oh, I would find out a way to bring him to reason!"

A delicate color suffused Mrs. Chiverton's face, and she looked proudly at Bessie, standing in her bright freedom before her. Bessie caught her breath; she saw that she had given pain, and was sorry: "You don't care for my nonsense—you remember me at school," she whispered, and laid her hand impulsively on the slim folded hands of the young married lady.

"I remember that you found something to laugh at in almost everything—it is your way," said Mrs. Chiverton coldly, and as her flush subsided she appeared paler than before. She was so evidently hurt by something understood or imagined in Bessie's innocent raillery that Bessie, abashed herself, drew back her hand, and as Mr. Forbes began to speak with becoming seriousness she took the opportunity of gliding away to join Miss Burleigh in the glazed verandah.

It was a dark, warm night, but the moon that was rising above the trees gradually illumined it, and made the garden mysterious with masses of shadow, black against the silver light. In the distance rose the ghostly towers of the cathedral. Miss Burleigh feared that the grass was too wet for them to walk upon it, but they paced the verandah until Mr. Cecil Burleigh found them and the rising hum of conversation in the drawing-room announced the appearance of the other gentlemen. Miss Burleigh then went back to the company, and there was an opportunity for kind words and soft whisperings between the two who were left, if either had been thereto inclined; but Bessie's frank, girlish good-humor made lovers' pretences impossible, and while Mr. Cecil Burleigh felt every hour that he liked her better, he felt it more difficult to imply it in his behavior. Bessie, on her side, fully possessed with the idea that she knew the lady of his love, was fast throwing off all sense of embarrassment in his kindness to herself; while onlookers, predisposed to believe what they wished, interpreted her growing ease as an infallible sign that his progress with her was both swift and sure.

They were still at the glass door of the verandah when Mrs. Chiverton sought Bessie to bid her good-night. She seemed to have forgotten her recent offence, and said, "You will come and see me, Miss Fairfax, will you not? We ought to be friends here."

"Oh yes," cried Bessie, who, when compunction touched her, was ready to make liberal amends, "I shall be very glad."

Mrs. Chiverton went away satisfied. The other guests not staying in the house soon followed, and when all were gone there was some discussion of the bride amongst those who were left. They were of one consent that she was very handsome and that her jewels were most magnificent.

"But no one envies her, I hope?" said Lady Angleby.

"You do not admire her motive for the marriage? Perhaps you do not believe in it?" said Mr. Cecil Burleigh.

"I quite believe that she does, but I do not commend her example for imitation."

Miss Burleigh, lingering a few minutes in Miss Fairfax's room when they went up stairs, delivered her mind on the matter. "My poor ambition flies low," she said. "I could be content to give love for love, and do my duty in the humblest station God might call me to, but not for any sake could I go into the house of bondage where no love is. Poor Mrs. Chiverton!"

Bessie made a very unsentimental reply: "Poor Mrs. Chiverton, indeed! Oh, but she does not want our pity! That old man is a slave to her, just as the girls were at school. She adores power, and if she is allowed to help and patronize people, she will be perfectly happy in her way. Everybody does not care, first and last, to love and be loved. I have been so long away from everybody who loves me that I am learning to do without it."

"Oh, my dear, don't fancy that," said Miss Burleigh, and she stroked Bessie's face and kissed her. "Some of us here are longing to love you quite as tenderly as any friends you have in the Forest." And then she bade her good-night and left her to her ruminations.

Miss Burleigh's kiss brought a blush to Bessie's face that was slow to fade even though she was alone. She sat thinking, her hands clasped, her eyes dreamily fixed on the flame of the candle. Some incidents on board the Foam recurred to her mind, and the blush burnt more hotly. Then, with a sigh, she said to herself, "It is pleasant here, everybody is good to me, but I wish I could wake up at Beechhurst to-morrow morning, and have a ride with my father, and mend socks with my mother in the afternoon. There one felt *safe*."

There was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Betts entered, complacent with the flattering things that had been said of her young lady in the steward's room, and willing to repeat them on the smallest encouragement: "Miss Jocund is really cleverer than could have been supposed, miss. Your white silk fits most beautiful," she began.

"I was not conscious of being newly dressed to-night, so her work must be successful," replied Bessie, untying the black velvet round her fair throat. Mrs. Betts took occasion to suggest that a few more ornaments would not be amiss. "I don't care for ornaments—I am fond of my old cross," Bessie said, laying it in the rosy palm of her hand. Then looking up with a melancholy, reflective smile, she said, "All the shining stones in the world would not tempt me to sacrifice my liberty." Mrs. Chiverton was in her thoughts, and Lady Latimer.

Mrs. Betts had a shrewd discernment, and she was beginning to understand her young lady's character, and to respect it. She had herself a vein of feeling deeper than the surface; she had seen those she loved suffer, and she spoke in reply to Miss Fairfax with heartfelt solemnity: "It is a true thing, miss, and nobody has better cause than me to know it, that happiness does not belong to rank and riches. It belongs nowhere for certain, but them that are good have most of it. For let the course of their lives run ever so contrary, they have a peace within, given by One above, that the proud and craving never have. Mr. Frederick's wife—she bears the curse that has been in her family for generations, but she had a pious bringing-up, and, poor lady! though her wits forsook her, her best comfort never did."

"Some day, Mrs. Betts, I shall ask you to tell me her story," Bessie said.

"There is not much to tell, miss. She was the second Miss Lovel (her sister and she were co-heiresses)—not to say a beauty, but a sweet young lady, and there was a true attachment between her and Mr. Frederick. It was in this very house they met—in this very house he slept after that ball where he asked her to marry him. It is not telling secrets to tell how happy she was. Your grandfather, the old squire, would have been better pleased had it been some other lady, because of what was in the blood, but he did not offer to stop it, and they lived at Abbotsmead after they were married. The house was all new done-up to welcome her; that octagon parlor was her design. She brought Mr. Frederick a great fortune, and they loved one another dearly, but it did not last long. She had a baby, and lost it, and was never quite herself after. Poor thing! poor thing!"

"And my uncle Laurence's wife," said Bessie, not to dwell on that tragedy of which she knew the issue.

"Oh! Mr. Laurence's wife!" said Mrs. Betts in a quite changed tone. "I never pitied a gentleman more. Folks who don't know ladies fancy they speak and behave pretty always, but that lady would grind her teeth in her rages, and make us fly before her—him too. She would throw whatever was in her reach. She was a deal madder and more dangerous in her fits of passion than poor Mrs. Frederick: she, poor dear! had a delusion that she was quite destitute and dependent on charity, and when she could get out she would go to the cottages and beg a bit of bread. A curious delusion, miss, but it did not distress her, for she called herself one of God's poor, and was persuaded He would take care of her. But it was very distressing to those she belonged to. Twice she was lost. She wandered away so far once that it was a month and over before we got her back. She was found in Edinburgh. After that Mr. Frederick consented to her being taken care of: he never would before."

"Oh, Mrs. Betts, don't tell me any more, or it will haunt me."

"Life's a sorrowful tale, miss, at best, unless we have love here and a hope beyond."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MORNING AT BRENTWOOD.

Brentwood was a comfortable house to stay in for visitors who never wanted a moment's repose. Lady Angleby lived in the midst of her guests—must have their interest, their sympathy in all her occupations, and she was never without a press of work and correspondence. Bessie Fairfax by noon next day felt herself weary without having done anything but listen with folded hands to tedious dissertations on matters political and social that had no interest for her. Since ten o'clock Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Mr. Fairfax had withdrawn themselves, and were gone into Norminster, and Miss Burleigh sat, a patient victim, with two dark hollows under her eyes—bearing up with a smile while ready to sink with fatigue. The gentlemen did not return to luncheon, but a caller dropped in—a clergyman, Mr. Jones; and Miss Burleigh took the opportunity of his entrance to vanish, making a sign to Miss Fairfax to come too. They went into the garden, where they were met by a vivacious, pretty old lady, Miss Hague, a former governess of Miss Burleigh, who now acted as assistant secretary to Lady Angleby.

"Your enemy, Mr. Jones, is in the drawing-room with my aunt," Miss Burleigh told her. "Quite by chance—he was not asked."

"Oh, let him stay. It is a study to see him amble about her ladyship with the airs and graces of a favorite, and then to witness his condescension to inferior persons like me," said Miss Hague. "I'll go to your room, Mary, and take off my bonnet."

"Do, dear. We have only just escaped into the fresh air, and are making the most of our liberty."

Miss Hague lodged within a stone's throw of Brentwood, and Lady Angleby was good in bidding

her go to luncheon whenever she felt disposed. She was disposed as seldom as courtesy allowed, for, though very poor, she was a gentlewoman of independent spirit, and her ladyship sometimes forgot it. She was engaged seeking some report amongst her papers when Miss Hague entered, but she gave her a nod of welcome. Mr. Jones said, "Ah, Miss Hague," with superior affability, and luncheon was announced.

Lady Angleby had to give and hear opinions on a variety of subjects while they were at table. Middle-class female education Mr. Jones had not gone into. He listened and was instructed, and supposed that it might easily be made better; nevertheless, he had observed that the best taught amongst his candidates for confirmation came from the shopkeeping class, where the parents still gave their children religious lessons at home. Then ladies of refined habits and delicate feelings as mistresses of elementary schools—that was a new idea to him. A certain robustness seemed, perhaps, more desirable; teaching a crowd of imperfectly washed little boys and girls was not fancy-work; also he believed that essential propriety existed to the full as much amongst the young women now engaged as amongst young ladies. If the object was to create a class of rural school-mistresses who would take social rank with the curate, he thought it a mistake; a school-mistress ought not to be above drinking her cup of tea in a tidy cottage with the parents of her pupils: he should prefer a capable young woman in a clean holland apron with pockets, and no gloves, to any poor young lady of genteel tastes who would expect to associate on equal terms with his wife and daughters. Then, cookery for the poor. Here Mr. Jones fell inadvertently into a trap. He said that the chief want amongst the poor was something to cook: there was very little spending in twelve shillings a week, or even in fifteen and eighteen, with a family to house, clothe, and feed. Lady Angleby held a quite opposite view. She said that a helpless thriftlessness was at the root of the matter. She had printed and largely distributed a little book of receipts, for which many people had thanked her. Mr. Jones knew the little book, and had heard his wife say that Lady Angleby's receipt for stewed rabbits was well enough, but that her receipt for hares stewed with onions was hares spoilt; and where were poor people to get hares unless they went out poaching?

"I assure your ladyship that agrimony tea is still drunk amongst our widows, and an ounce of shop-tea is kept for home-coming sons and daughters grown proud in service. They gather the herb in the autumn, and dry it in bunches for the winter's use. And many is the laborer who lets his children swallow the lion's share of his Sunday bit of meat because the wife says it makes them strong, and children have not the sense not to want all they see. Any economical reform amongst the extravagant classes that would leave more and better food within reach of the hard-working classes would be highly beneficial to both. Sometimes I wish we could return to that sumptuary law of Queen Elizabeth which commanded the rich to eat fish and fast from flesh-meat certain days of the week." Here Mr. Jones too abruptly paused. Lady Angleby had grown exceedingly red in the face; Bessie Fairfax had grown rosy too, with suppressed reflections on the prize-stature to which her hostess had attained in sixty years of high feeding. Queen Elizabeth's pious fast might have been kept by her with much advantage to her figure.

Poor Mr. Jones had confused himself as well as Lady Angleby, but the return to the drawing-room created an opportune diversion. He took up an illustrated paper with a scene from a new play, and after studying it for a few minutes began to denounce the amusements of the gay world in the tone of a man who has known nothing of them, but has let his imagination run into very queer illusions. This passed harmless. Nobody was concerned to defend the actor's vocation where nobody followed it; but Mr. Jones was next so ill-advised as to turn to Miss Hague, and say with a supercilious air that since they last met he had been trying to read a novel, which he mentioned by name—a masterpiece of modern fiction—and really he could not see the good of such works. Miss Hague and he had disagreed on this subject before. She was an inveterate novel-reader, and claimed kindred with a star of chief magnitude in the profession, and to speak lightly of light literature in her presence always brought her out warmly and vigorously in defence and praise of it.

"No good in such works, Mr. Jones!" cried she. "My hair is gray, and this is a solemn fact: for the conduct of life I have found far more counsel and comfort in novels than in sermons, in week-day books than in Sunday preachers!"

There was a startled silence. Miss Burleigh extended a gentle hand to stop the impetuous old lady, but the words were spoken, and she could only intervene as moderator: "Novels show us ourselves at a distance, as it were. I think they are good both for instruction and reproof. The best of them are but the Scripture parables in modern masquerade. Here is one—the Prodigal Son of the nineteenth century, going out into the world, wasting his substance with riotous living, suffering, repenting, returning, and rejoiced over."

"Our Lord made people think: I am not aware that novels make people think," said Mr. Jones with cool contempt.

"Apply your mind to the study of either of these books—Mr. Thackeray's or George Eliot's—and you will not find all its powers too much for their appreciation," said Miss Hague.

Mr. Jones made a slight grimace: "Pray excuse the comparison, Miss Hague, but you remind me of a groom of mine whom I sent up to the Great Exhibition. When he came home again all he had to say was, 'Oh, sir, the saddlery was beautiful!'"

"Nothing like leather!" laughed Lady Angleby.

"He showed his wit—he spoke of what he understood," said Miss Hague. "You undertake to despise light literature, of which avowedly you know nothing. Tell me: of the little books and tracts that you circulate, which are the most popular?"

"The tales and stories; they are thumbed and blackened when the serious pages are left unread," Mr. Jones admitted.

"It is the same with the higher-class periodicals that come to us from D'Oyley's library," said Lady Angleby, pointing to the brown, buff, orange, green, and purple magazines that furnished her round-table. "The novels are well read, so are the social essays and the bits of gossiping biography; but dry chapters of exploration, science, discovery, and politics are tasted, and no more: the first page or two may be opened, and the rest as often as not are uncut. And as they come to Brentwood, so, but for myself, they would go away. The young people prefer the stories, and with rare exceptions it is the same with their elders. The fact is worth considering. A puff of secular air, to blow away the vapor of sanctity in which the clergy envelop themselves, might be salutary at intervals. All fresh air is a tonic."

Mr. Jones repeated his slight grimace, and said, "Will Miss Hague be so kind as to tell me what a sermon ought to be? I will sit at her feet with all humility."

"With arrogant humility!—with the pride that apes humility," cried Miss Hague with cheerful irreverence. "I don't pretend to teach you sermon-making: I only tell you that, such as sermons mostly are, precious little help or comfort can be derived from them."

Mr. Jones again made his characteristic grimace, expressive of the contempt for secular opinion with which he was morally so well cushioned, but he had a kind heart and refrained from crushing his poor old opponent with too severe a rejoinder. He granted that some novels might be harmless, and such as he would not object to see in the hands of his daughters; but as a general rule he had a prejudice against fiction; and as for theatres, he would have them all shut up, for he was convinced that thousands of young men and women might date their ruin from their first visit to a theatre: he could tell them many anecdotes in support of his assertions. Fortunately, it was three o'clock. The butler brought in letters by the afternoon post, and the anecdotes had to be deferred to a more convenient season. The clergyman took his leave.

Lady Angleby glanced through her sheaf of correspondence, and singled out one letter. "From dear Lady Latimer," she said, and tore it open. But as she read her countenance became exceedingly irate, and at the end she tossed it over to Miss Hague: "There is the answer to your application." The old lady did not raise her eyes immediately after its perusal, and Miss Burleigh took it kindly out of her hand, saying, "Let me see." Then Lady Angleby broke out: "I do not want anybody to teach me what is my duty, I hope."

Miss Hague now looked up, and Bessie Fairfax's kind heart ached to see her bright eyes glittering as she faltered, "I think it is a very kind letter. I wish more people were of Lady Latimer's opinion. I do not wish to enter the Governesses' Asylum: it would take me quite away from all the places and people I am fond of. I might never see any of you again."

"How often must I tell you that it is not necessary you should go into the asylum? You may be elected to one of the out-pensions if we can collect votes enough. As for Lady Latimer reserving her vote for really friendless persons, it is like her affectation of superior virtue." Lady Angleby spoke and looked as if she were highly incensed.

Miss Hague was trembling all over, and begging that nothing more might be said on the subject.

"But there is no time to lose," said her patroness, still more angrily. "If you do not press on with your applications, you will be too late: everybody will be engaged for the election in November. The voting-list is on my writing-table—the names I know are marked. Go on with the letters in order, and I will sign them when I return from my drive."

Miss Fairfax's face was so pitiful and inquisitive that the substance of Lady Latimer's letter was repeated to her. It was to the effect that Miss Hague's former pupils were of great and wealthy condition for the most part, and that they ought not to let her appeal to public charity, but to subscribe a sufficient pension for her amongst themselves; and out of the respect in which she herself held her, Lady Latimer offered five pounds annually towards it. "And I think that is right," said Bessie warmly. "If you were my old governess, Miss Hague, I should be only too glad to subscribe."

"Well, my dear young lady, I was your father's governess and your uncles' until they went to a preparatory school for Eton: from Frederick's being four years old to Geoffry's being ten, I lived at Abbotsmead," said Miss Hague. "And here is another of my boys," she added as the door opened and Sir Edward Lucas was announced.

"Then I will do what my father would have done had he been alive," said Bessie. "Perhaps my uncle Laurence will too."

"What were you saying of me, dear Hoddydoddy?" asked Sir Edward, turning to the old lady when he had paid his devoirs to the rest.

The matter being explained to him, he was eager to contribute his fraction. "Then leave the final arrangement to me," said Lady Angleby. "I will settle what is to be done. You need not write any more of those letters, Miss Hague, and I trust these enthusiastic young people will not tire of

what they have undertaken. It is right, but if everybody did what is right on such occasions there would be little use for benevolent institutions. Sir Edward, we were going to drive into Norminster: will you take a seat in my carriage?"

Sir Edward would be delighted; and Miss Hague, released from her ladyship's desk, went home happy, and in the midst of doubts and fears lest she had hurt the feelings of Mr. Jones wept the soft tears of grateful old age that meets with unexpected kindness. The resolute expression of her sentiments by Miss Fairfax had inspired her with confidence, and she longed to see that young lady again. In the letter of thanks she wrote to Lady Latimer she did not fail to mention how her judgment and example had been supported by that young disciple; and Lady Latimer, revolving the news with pleasure, began to think of paying a visit to Woldshire.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOME DOUBTS AND FEARS.

Sir Edward Lucas was a gentleman for whom Lady Angleby had a considerable degree of favor: it was a pity he was so young, otherwise he might have done for Mary. Poor Mary! Mr. Forbes and she had a long, obstinate kindness for each other, but Lady Angleby stood in the way: Mr. Forbes did not satisfy any of her requirements. Besides, if she gave Mary up, who was to live with her at Brentwood? Therefore Mr. Forbes and Miss Burleigh, after a six years' engagement, still played at patience. She did not drive into Norminster that afternoon. "Mr. Fairfax and Cecil will be glad of a seat back," said she, and stood excused.

Sir Edward Lucas had more pleasure in facing his contemporary: Miss Fairfax he regarded as his contemporary. He was smitten with a lively admiration for her, and in course of the drive he sought her advice on important matters. Lady Angleby began to instruct him on what he ought to do for the improvement of his fine house at Longdown, but he wanted to talk rather of a new interest—the mineral wealth still waiting development on his property at Hippesley Moor.

"Now, what should you do, Miss Fairfax, supposing you had to earn your bread by a labor always horribly disagreeable and never unattended by danger?" he asked with great eagerness.

Bessie had not a doubt of what she should do: "I should work as hard as ever I could for the shortest possible time that would keep me in bread."

"Just so," said Sir Edward rubbing his hands. "So would I. Now, will that principle work amongst colliers? I am going to open a pit at Hippesley Moor, where the coal is of excellent quality. It is a fresh start, and I shall try to carry out your principle, Miss Fairfax; I am convinced that it is excellent and Christian."

Christian! Bessie's blue eyes widened with laughing alarm. "Oh, had you not better consult somebody of greater experience?" cried she.

Lady Angleby approved her modesty, and with smiling indulgence remarked, "I should think so, indeed!"

"No, no: experience is always for sticking to grooves," said Sir Edward. "I like Miss Fairfax's idea. It is shrewd—it goes to the root of the difficulty. We must get it out in detail. Now, if in three days' hard work the collier can earn the week's wages of an agricultural laborer and more—and he can—we have touched the reason why he takes so many play-days. It would be a very sharp spur of necessity indeed that would drive me into a coal-pit at all; and nothing would keep me there one hour after necessity was satisfied. I shall take into consideration the instinct of our common humanity that craves for some sweetness in life, and as far as I am able it shall be gratified. Now, the other three days: what shall be their occupation? Idleness will not do."

"No, I should choose to have a garden and work in the sun," said Bessie, catching some of his spirit.

"And I should choose to tend some sort of live-stock. In the way of minor industries I am convinced that a great deal may be put in their way only by taking thought. I shall lay parcels of land together for spade cultivation—the men will have a market at their own doors; then poultry farms—"

"Not forgetting the cock-pit for Sunday amusement," interrupted Lady Angleby sarcastically. "You are too Utopian, Sir Edward. Your colony will be a dismal failure and disappointment if you conduct it on such a sentimental plan."

Sir Edward colored. He had a love of approbation, and her ladyship was an authority. He sought to propitiate her better opinion, and resumed: "There shall be no inexorable rule. A man may work his six days in the pit if it be his good-will, but he shall have the chance of a decent existence above ground if he refuse to live in darkness and peril more than three or four. Schools and institutes are very good things in their place, and I shall not neglect to provide them, but I do not expect that more than a slender minority of my colliers will ever trouble the reading-room much. Let them feed pigs and grow roses."

"They will soon not know what they want. The common people grow more exacting every day—even our servants. You will have some fine stories of trouble and vexation to tell us before long."

Sir Edward looked discouraged, and Bessie Fairfax, with her impulsive kind heart, exclaimed, "No, no! In all labor there is profit, and if you work at doing your best for those who depend on your land, you will not be disappointed. Men are not all ungrateful."

Sir Edward certainly was not. He thanked Miss Fairfax energetically, and just then the carriage stopped at the "George." Mr. Fairfax and Mr. Cecil Burleigh came out in the most cheerful good-humor, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh began to tell Bessie that she did not know how much she had done for him by securing Buller's vote; it had drawn others after it. Bessie was delighted, and was not withheld by any foolish shyness from proclaiming that her mind was set on his winning his election.

"You ought to take these two young people into your counsels, Cecil; they have some wonderful devices for the promotion of contentment amongst coal-miners," said Lady Angleby. Mr. Fairfax glanced in his granddaughter's innocent, rosy face, and shook hands with Sir Edward as he got out of the carriage. Mr. Cecil Burleigh said that wisdom was not the monopoly of age, and then he inquired where they were going.

They were going to call at the manor on Lady Eden, and to wind up with a visit to Mr. Laurence Fairfax in the Minster Court. Mr. Fairfax said he would meet them there, and the same said Mr. Cecil Burleigh. Sir Edward Lucas stood halting on the inn-steps, wistfully hoping for a bidding to come too. Lady Angleby was even kinder than his hopes; she asked if he had any engagement for the evening, and when he answered in the negative she invited him to come and dine at Brentwood again. He accepted with joy unfeigned.

When the ladies reached Minster Court only Mr. Cecil Burleigh had arrived there. Lady Angleby was impatient to hear some private details of the canvass, and took her nephew aside to talk of it. Mr. Laurence Fairfax began to ask Bessie how long she was to stay at Brentwood. "Until Monday," Bessie said; and her eyes roved unconsciously to the cupboard under the bookcase where the toys lived, but it was fast shut and locked, and gave no sign of its hid treasures. Her uncle's eyes followed hers, and with a significant smile he said, if she pleased, he would request her grandfather to leave her with him for a few days, adding that he would find her some young companions. Bessie professed that she would like it very much, and when Mr. Fairfax came in the request was preferred and cordially granted. The squire was in high good-humor with his granddaughter and all the world just now.

Bessie went away from Minster Court with jubilant anticipations of what might happen during the proposed visit to her uncle's house. One thing she felt sure of: she would become better acquainted with that darling cherub of a boy, and the vision she made of it shed quite a glow on the prospect. She told Miss Burleigh when she returned to Brentwood that she was not going out of reach on Monday; she was going to stay a few days with her uncle Laurence in Minster Court.

"Cecil will be so glad!" said his devoted sister.

"There are no more Bullers to conquer, are there?" Bessie asked, turning her face aside.

"I hope not. Oh no! Cecil begins to be tolerably sure of his election, and he will have you to thank for it. Mr. John Short blesses you every hour of the day."

Bessie laughed lightly. "I did good unconsciously, and blush to find it fame," said she.

A fear that her brother's success with Miss Fairfax might be doubtful, though his election was sure, flashed at that instant into Miss Burleigh's mind. Bessie's manner was not less charming, but it was much more intrepid, and at intervals there was a strain of fun in it—of mischief and mockery. Was it the subacid flavor of girlish caprice, which might very well subsist in combination with her sweetness, or was it sheer insensibility? Time would show, but Miss Burleigh retained a lurking sense of uneasiness akin to that she had experienced when she detected in Miss Fairfax, at their first meeting, an inclination to laugh at her aunt—an uneasiness difficult to conceal and dangerous to confess. Not for the world would she, at this stage of the affair, have revealed her anxiety to her brother, who held the even tenor of his way, whatever he felt—never obtrusive and never negligent. He treated Bessie like the girl of sense she was, with courtesy, but without compliments or any idle banter; and Bessie certainly began to enjoy his society. He improved on acquaintance, and made the hours pass much more pleasantly at Brentwood when he was there than they passed in his absence. This was promising. The evening's dinner-party would have been undeniably heavy without the leaven of his wit, for Mr. Logger, that well-known political writer, had arrived from London in the course of the afternoon, and Lady Angleby and he discoursed with so much solemn allusion and innuendo on the affairs of the nation that it was like listening surreptitiously at a cabinet council. Sir Edward Lucas was quite silent and oppressed.

Coming into the morning-room after breakfast on the following day armed with a roll of papers, Mr. Logger announced, "I met our excellent friend Lady Latimer at Summerhay last week; she is immensely interested in the education movement."

Mr. Fairfax and Mr. Cecil Burleigh instantly discovered that it was time they were gone into the town, and with one compunctious glance at Bessie, of which she did not yet know the meaning, they vanished. The roll in Mr. Logger's hand was an article in manuscript on that education

movement in which he had stated that his friend Lady Latimer was so immensely interested; and he had the cruelty to propose to read it to the ladies here. He did read it, his hostess listening with gratified approval and keeping a controlling eye on Miss Fairfax, who, when she saw what impended, would have escaped had she been able. Miss Burleigh bore it as she bore everything—with smiling resignation—but she enjoyed the vivacity of Bessie's declaration afterward that the lecture was unpardonable.

"What a shockingly vain old gentleman! Could we not have waited to read his article in print?" said she.

"Probably it will never be in print. He toadies my aunt, who likes to be credited with a literary taste, but Cecil says people laugh at him; he is not of any weight, either literary or political, though he has great pretensions. We shall have him for a week at least, and I have no doubt he has brought manuscript to last the whole time."

Bessie was so uncomfortably candid as to cry out that she was glad, then, her visit would soon be over; and then she tried to extenuate her plain-speaking, not very skilfully.

Miss Burleigh accepted her plea with a gentleness that reproached her: "We hoped that you would be happy at Brentwood with Cecil here; his company is generally supposed to make any place delightful. He is exceedingly dear to us all; no one knows how good he is until they have lived with him a long while."

"Oh, I am sure he is good; I like him much better now than I did at first; but if he runs away to Norminster and leaves us a helpless prey to Mr. Logger, that is not delightful," rejoined Bessie winsomely.

Miss Burleigh kissed and forgave her, acknowledged that it was the reverse of delightful, and conveyed an intimation to her brother by which he profited. Mr. Logger favored the ladies with another reading on Sunday afternoon—an essay on sermons, and twice as long as one. Mr. Jones should have been there: this essay was much heavier artillery than Miss Hague's little paper-winged arrows. In the middle of it, just at the moment when endurance became agony and release bliss, Mr. Cecil Burleigh entered and invited Miss Fairfax to walk into the town to minster prayers, and Bessie went so gladly that his sister was quite consoled in being left to hear Mr. Logger to an end.

The two were about to ascend the minster steps when they espied Mr. Fairfax in the distance, and turned to meet him. He had been lunching with his son. At the first glance Bessie knew that her grandfather had suffered an overwhelming surprise since he went out in the morning. Mr. Cecil Burleigh also perceived that something was amiss, and not to distress his friend by inopportune remark, he said where he and Miss Fairfax were going.

"Go—go, by all means," said the squire. "Perhaps you may overtake me as you return: I shall walk slowly, and I want a word with Short as I pass his house." With this he went on, and the young people entered the minster, thinking but not speaking of what they could not but observe—his manifest bewilderment and pre-occupation.

On the road home they did not, however, overtake Mr. Fairfax. He reached Brentwood before them, and was closeted with Lady Angleby for some considerable time previous to dinner. Her ladyship was not agreeable without effort that evening, and there was indeed a perceptible cloud over everybody but Mr. Logger. Whatever the secret, it had been communicated to Mr. Cecil Burleigh and his sister, and it affected them all more or less uncomfortably. Bessie guessed what had happened—that her grandfather had seen his son Laurence's little playfellow, and that there had been an important revelation.

Bessie was right. Mr. Laurence Fairfax had Master Justus on his lap when his father unexpectedly walked into his garden. There was a lady in blue amongst the flowers who vanished; and the incompetent Sally, with something in her arms, who also hastily retired, but not unseen, either her or her burden. Master Justus held his ground with baby audacity, and the old squire recognized a strong young shoot of the Fairfax stock. One or two sharp exclamations and astounded queries elicited from Mr. Laurence Fairfax that he had been five years married to the lady in blue—a niece of Dr. Jocund—and that the bold little boy was his own, and another in the nurse's arms. Mr. Fairfax did not refuse to sit at meat with his son, though the chubby boy sat opposite, but he declined all conversation on the subject beyond the bald fact, and expressed no desire to be made acquainted with his newly-discovered daughter-in-law. Indeed, at a hint of it he jerked out a peremptory negative, and left the house without any more reference to the matter. Mr. Laurence Fairfax feared that it would be long before his father would darken his doors again, but it was a sensible relief to have got his secret told, and not to have had any angry, unpardonable words about it. The squire said little, but those who knew him knew perfectly that he might be silent and all the more indignant. And undoubtedly he was indignant. Of his three sons, Laurence had been always the one preferred; and this was his usage of him, his confidence in him!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN MINSTER COURT.

Mr. Fairfax did not withdraw his consent to Elizabeth's staying in Norminster with her uncle Laurence, and on Monday afternoon she and Mrs. Betts were transferred from Brentwood to Minster Court. On the first evening Mr. John Short dined there, but no one else. He made Miss Fairfax happy by talking of the Forest, which he had revisited more than once since the famous first occasion. After dinner the two gentlemen remained together a long while, and Bessie amused herself alone in the study. She cast many a look towards the toy-cupboard, and was strongly tempted to peep, but did not; and in the morning her virtue had its reward. It was a little after eleven o'clock when Burrage threw open the door of the study where she was sitting with her uncle and announced "The dear children, sir," in a matter-of-fact tone, as if they were daily visitors.

Bessie's back was to the door. She blushed and turned round with brightened eyes, and there, behold! was that sweet little boy in a blue poplin tunic, and a second little boy, a year smaller, in a white embroidered frock and scarlet sash! The voice of the incompetent Sally was heard in final exhortation, "Now, mind you be good, Master Justus!" and Master Justus ran straight to the philosopher and saluted him imperatively as "Dada!" which honorable title the other little boy echoed in an imperfect lisp, with an eager desire to be taken up and kissed. The desire was abundantly gratified, and then Mr. Laurence Fairfax said, "This is Laury," and offered him to Bessie for a repetition of the ceremonial.

Bessie could not have told why, but her eyes filled as she took him into her lap and took off his pretty hat to see his shining curly locks. Master Justus was already at the cupboard dragging out the toys, and her uncle stood and looked down at her with a pleased, benevolent face. "Of course they are my cousins?" said Bessie simply, and quite as simply he said "Yes."

This was all the interrogatory. But games ensued in which Bessie was brought to her knees and a seat on the carpet, and had the beautiful propriety of her hair as sadly disarranged as in her gypsy childhood amongst the rough Carnegie boys. Mrs. Betts put it tidy again before luncheon, after the children were gone. Mrs. Betts had fathomed the whole mystery, and would have been sympathetic about it had not her young lady manifested an invincible gayety. Bessie hardly knew herself for joy. She wanted very much to hear the romantic story that must belong to those bonny children, but she felt that she must wait her uncle's time to tell it. Happily for her peace, the story was not long delayed: she learnt it that evening.

This was the scene in Mr. Laurence Fairfax's study. He was seated at ease in his great leathern chair, and perched on his knee, with one arm round his neck and a ripe pomegranate cheek pressed against his ear, was that winsome little lady in blue who was to be known henceforward as the philosopher's wife: if she had not been so exquisitely pretty it would have seemed a liberty to take with so much learning. Opposite to them, and grim as a monumental effigy, sat Miss Jocund, and Bessie Fairfax, with an amazed and amused countenance, listened and looked on. The philosopher and his wife were laughing: they loved one another, they had two dear little boys; what could the world give them or take away in comparison with such joys? Their secret, long suspected in various quarters, had transpired publicly since yesterday, and Lady Angleby had that morning appealed haughtily to Miss Jocund in her own shop to know how it had all happened.

Miss Jocund now reported what she had answered: "I reckon, your ladyship, that Dan Cupid is no more open in his tactics than ever he was. All I have to tell is, that one evening, some six years ago, my niece Rosy, who was a timid little thing, went for a walk by the river with a school-fellow, and a hulking, rude boy gave them a fright. Mr. Laurence Fairfax, by good luck, was in the way and brought them home, and said to me that Rosy was much too pretty to be allowed to wander out unprotected. When they met after he had a kind nod and a word for her, and I've no doubt she had a shy blush for him. A philosopher is but a man, and liable to fall in love, and that is what he did: he fell in love with Rosy and married her. It suited all parties to keep it a secret at first; but a secret is like a birth—when its time is full forth it must come. Two little boys with Fairfax writ large on their faces are bad to hide. Therefore it suits all parties now to declare the marriage. And that is the whole story, an' it please your ladyship."

"I warrant it did not please her ladyship at all," said Mr. Laurence Fairfax, laughing at the recital.

"No. She turned and went away in a rage; then came back to expound her views with respect to Rosy's origin. I begged to inform her that from time immemorial king's jesters had been of the Jocund family—an office to the full as dignified as the office of public barber. And a barber her ladyship's great-grandfather was, and shaved His Majesty's lieges for a penny. Mr. Cecil Burleigh waited for her outside, and to him immediately she of course repeated the tale. How does it come to be a concern of his, I should be glad to know?" Nobody volunteered to gratify her curiosity, but Mr. Laurence Fairfax could have done so, no doubt.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh had not visited Minster Court that day: was this the reason? Bessie was not absolutely indifferent to the omission, but she had other diversions. That night she went up stairs with the young mother (so young that Elizabeth could not fashion to call her by her title of kindred) to view the boys in their cots, and saw her so loving and tender over them that she could not but reflect how dear a companion she must be to her philosopher after his lost Xantippe. She was such a sweet and gentle lady that, though he had chosen to marry her privately, he could have no reluctance in producing her as his wife. He had kept her to himself unspoilt, had much

improved her in their retired life, and as he had no intention of bringing her into rivalry with finer ladies, the charm of her adoring simplicity was not likely to be impaired. He had set his mind on his niece Elizabeth for her friend from the first moment of their meeting, and except Elizabeth he did not desire that she should find, at present, any intimate friend of her own sex. And Elizabeth was perfectly ready to be her friend, and to care nothing for the change in her own prospects.

"You know that my boys will make all the difference to you?" her uncle said to her the next day, being a few minutes alone with her.

"Oh yes, I understand, and I shall be the happier in the end. Abbotsmead will be quite another place when they come over," was her reply.

"There is my father to conciliate before they can come to Abbotsmead. He is deeply aggrieved, and not without cause. You may help to smooth the way to comfortable relations again, or at least to prevent a widening breach. I count on that, because he has permitted you to come here, though he knows that Rosy and the boys are with me. I should not have had any right to complain had he denied us your visit."

"But I should have had a right to complain, and I should have complained," said Bessie. "My grandfather and I are friends now, because I have plucked up courage to assert my right to respect myself and my friends who brought me up; otherwise we must have quarrelled soon."

Mr. Laurence Fairfax smiled: "My father can be obstinately unforgiving. So he was to my brother Geoffry and his wife; so he may be to me, though we have never had a disagreement."

"I could fancy that he was sometimes sorry for his unkindness to my father. I shall not submit if he attempt to forbid me your house or the joy of seeing my little cousins. Oh, his heart must soften to them soon. I am glad he saw Justus, the darling!"

Bessie Fairfax had evidently no worldly ambition. All her desire was still only to be loved. Her uncle Laurence admired her unselfishness, and before she left his house at the week's end he had her confidence entirely. He did not place too much reliance on her recollections of Beechhurst as the place where she had centred her affections, for young affections are prone to weave a fine gossamer glamour about early days that will not bear the touch of later experience; but he was sure there had been a blunder in bringing her into Woldshire without giving her a pause amongst those scenes where her fond imagination dwelt, if only to sweep it clear of illusions and make room for new actors on the stage of her life. He said to Mr. Cecil Burleigh, with whom he had an important conversation during her visit to Minster Court, that he did not believe she would ever give her mind to settling amongst her north-country kindred until she had seen again her friends in the Forest, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh began to agree with him. Miss Burleigh did the same.

It was settled already that the recent disclosure must make no alteration in the family compact. Mr. Cecil Burleigh interposed a firm veto when its repeal was hinted at. Every afternoon, one excepted, he called on Miss Fairfax to report the progress of his canvass, accompanied by his sister, and Bessie always expressed herself glad in his promising success. But it was with a cool cheek and candor shining clear in her blue eyes that she saw them come and saw them go; and both brother and sister felt this discouraging. The one fault they found in Miss Fairfax was an absence of enthusiasm for themselves; and Bessie was so thankful that she had overcome her perverse trick of blushing at nothing. When she took her final leave of them before quitting Minster Court, Mr. Cecil Burleigh said that he should probably be over at Abbotsmead in the course of the ensuing week, and Bessie was glad as usual, and smiled cordially, and hoped that blue would win—as if he were thinking only of the election!

He was thinking of it, and perhaps primarily, but his interest in herself was becoming so much warmer and more personal than it had promised to be that it would have given him distinct pleasure to perceive that she was conscious of it.

The report of Mr. Laurence Fairfax's private marriage had spread through city and country, but Bessie went back to Kirkham without having heard it discussed except by Mrs. Betts, who was already so deeply initiated in the family secrets. That sage and experienced woman owned frankly to her young mistress that in her judgment it was a very good thing, looked at in the right way.

"A young lady that is a great heiress is more to be pitied than envied: that is my opinion," said she. "If she is not made a sacrifice of in marriage, it is a miracle. Men run after her for her money, or she fancies they do, which comes to the same thing; and perhaps she doesn't marry at all for suspecting nobody loves her; which is downright foolish. Jonquil and Macky are in great spirits over what has come out, and I don't suppose there is one neighbor to Kirkham that won't be pleased to hear that there's grandsons, even under the rose, to carry on the old line. Mrs. Laurence is a dear sweet lady, and the children are handsome little fellows as ever stepped; their father may well be proud of 'em. He has done a deal better for himself the second time than he did the first. I dare say it was what he suffered the first time made him choose so different the second. It is not to be wondered at that the squire is vext, but he ought to have learnt wisdom now, and it is to be hoped he will come round by and by. But whether or not, the deed's done, and he cannot undo it."

Mrs. Betts's summary embodied all the common sense of the case, and left nothing more to be said.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LADY LATIMER IN WOLDSHIRE.

Mr. Fairfax welcomed Elizabeth on her arrival with an air of reserve, as if he did not wish to receive any intelligence from Minster Court. Bessie took the hint. The only news he had for her was that she might mount Janey now as soon as she pleased. Bessie was pleased to mount her the next morning, and to enjoy a delightful ride in her grandfather's company. Janey went admirably, and promised to be an immense addition to the cheerfulness of her mistress's life. Mr. Fairfax was gratified to see her happy, and they chatted cordially enough, but Bessie did not find it possible to speak of the one thing that lay uppermost in her mind.

In the afternoon Mrs. Stokes called, and having had a glimpse of Mr. Laurence Fairfax's secret, and heard various reports since, she was curious for a full revelation. Bessie gave her the narrative complete, interspersed with much happy prediction; and Mrs. Stokes declared herself infinitely relieved to hear that, in spite of probabilities, the mysterious wife was a quite presentable person.

"You remember that I told you Miss Jocund was a lady herself," she said. "The Jocunds are an old Norminster family, and we knew a Dr. Jocund in India. It was an odd thing for Miss Jocund to turn milliner; still, it must be much more comfortable than dependence upon friends. There is nothing so unsatisfactory as helpless poor relations. Colonel Stokes has no end of them. I wish they would turn milliners, or go into Lady Angleby's scheme of genteel mistresses for national schools, or do anything but hang upon us. And the worst is, they are never grateful and never done with."

"Are they ashamed to work?"

"No, I don't think shame is in their way, or pride, but sheer incompetence. One is blind, another is a confirmed invalid."

"Then perhaps Providence puts them in your lot for the correction of selfishness," said Bessie laughing. "I believe if we all helped the need that belongs to us by kindred or service, there would be little misery of indigence in the world, and little superfluity of riches even amongst the richest. That must have been the original reading of the old saw that sayeth, 'Charity should begin at home.'".

"Oh, political economy is not in my line," cried Mrs. Stokes, also laughing. "You have caught a world of wisdom from Mr. Cecil Burleigh, no doubt, but please don't shower it on me."

Bessie did not own the impeachment by a blush, as she would have done a week ago. She could hear that name with composure now, and was proving an apt pupil in the manners of society. Mrs. Stokes scanned her in some perplexity, and would have had her discourse of the occupations and diversions of Brentwood, but all Bessie's inclination was to discourse of those precious boys in Minster Court.

"They are just of an age to be play-fellows with your boys," she said to the blooming little matron. "How I should rejoice to see them racing about the garden together!"

Bessie was to wish this often and long before her loving desire was gratified. If she had not been preassured that her grandfather did, in fact, know all that was to be known about the children, nothing in his conduct would have betrayed it to her. She told the story in writing to her mother, and received advice of prudence and patience. The days and weeks at Abbotsmead flowed evenly on, and brought no opportunity of asking the favor of a visit from them. Mr. and Mrs. Chiverton drove over to luncheon, and Bessie and her grandfather returned the civility. Sir Edward Lucas came to call and stayed a long time, planning his new town for colliers: Miss Fairfax said a word in praise of steep tiled roofs as more airy than low roofs of slate, and Sir Edward was an easy convert to her opinion. Mr. Cecil Burleigh came twice to spend a few days, and brought a favorable report of his canvass; the second time his sister accompanied him, and they brought the good news that Lady Latimer was at Brentwood, and was coming to Hartwell the following week.

Bessie Fairfax was certainly happier when there was company at Abbotsmead, and she had a preference for Miss Burleigh's company; which might be variously interpreted. Miss Burleigh herself considered Miss Fairfax rather cold, but then Bessie was not expansive unless she loved very fondly and familiarly. One day they fell a-talking of Mr. Laurence Fairfax's wife, and Miss Burleigh suggested a cautious inquiry with a view to obtaining Bessie's real sentiments respecting her. She received the frankest exposition of them, with a bit of information to boot that gave her a theme for reflection.

"I think her a perfect jewel of a wife," said Bessie with genuine kindness. "My uncle Laurence and she are quite devoted to one another. She sings like a little bird, and it is beautiful to see her with those boys. I wish we had them all at Abbotsmead. And she is *so* pretty—the prettiest lady I ever saw, except, perhaps, one."

"And who was that one?" Miss Burleigh begged to know.

"It was a Miss Julia Gardiner. I saw her first at Fairfield at the wedding of Lady Latimer's niece, and again at Ryde the other day."

"Oh yes! dear Julia was very lovely once, but she has gone off. The Gardiners are very old friends of ours." Miss Burleigh turned aside her face as she spoke. She had not heard before that Miss Fairfax had met her rival and predecessor in Mr. Cecil Burleigh's affections: why had her dear Cecil been so rash as to bring them in contact and give her the opportunity of drawing inferences? That Bessie had drawn her inferences truly was plain, from a soft blush and glance and a certain tone in her voice as she mentioned the name of Miss Julia Gardiner, as if she would deprecate any possible idea that she was taking a liberty. The subject was not pursued. Miss Burleigh wished only to forget it; perhaps Bessie had expected a confidential word, and was abashed at hearing none, for she began to talk with eagerness, rather strained, of Lady Latimer's promised visit to Hartwell.

Lady Latimer's arrival was signalized by an immediate invitation to Mr. Fairfax and his granddaughter to go over and lunch on a fixed day. Bessie was never so impatient as till the day came, and when she mounted Janey to ride to Hartwell she palpitated more joyously than ever she had done yet since her coming into Woldshire. Her grandfather asked her why she was so glad, but she found it difficult to tell him: because my lady had come from the Forest seemed the root of the matter, as far as it could be expressed. The squire looked rather glum, Macky remarked to Mrs. Betts; and if she had been in his shoes wild horses should not have drawn her into company with that proud Lady Latimer. The golden harvest was all gone from the fields, and there was a change of hue upon the woods—yellow and red and russet mingled with their deep green. The signs of decay in the vivid life of Nature could not touch Bessie with melancholy yet—the spring-tides of youth were too strong in her—but Mr. Fairfax, glancing hither and thither over the bare, sunless landscape, said, "The winter will soon be upon us, Elizabeth. You must make the best of the few bright days that are remaining: very few and very swift they seem when they are gone."

Hartwell was as secluded amongst its evergreens and fir trees now as at midsummer, but in the overcast day the house had a dull and unattractive aspect. The maiden sisters sat in the gloomy drawing-room alone to receive their guests, but after the lapse of a few minutes Lady Latimer entered. She was dressed in rich black silk and lace—carefully dressed, but the three years that had passed since Bessie Fairfax last saw her had left their mark. Bessie, her heart swelling, her eyes shining with emotion, moved to meet her, but Lady Latimer only shook hands with sweet ceremoniousness, and she was instantly herself again. The likeness that had struck the maiden sisters did not strike my lady, or, being warned of it, she was on her guard. There was a momentary silence, and then with cold pale face she turned to Mr. Fairfax, congratulated him on having his granddaughter at home, and asked how long she had been at Abbotsmead. Soon appeared Mr. Oliver Smith, anxious to talk election gossip with his neighbor; and for a few minutes Bessie had Lady Latimer to herself, to gaze at and admire, and confusedly to listen to, telling Beechhurst news.

"Mr. and Mrs. Carnegie charged me with innumerable kind words for you—Jack wants you to go home before he goes to sea—Willie and Tom want you to make tails for their kites—Miss Buff will send you a letter soon—Mr. Wiley trusts you have forgiven him his forgetfulness of your message."

"Oh no, I have not. He lost me an opportunity that may come again I know not when," said Bessie impetuously.

"I must persuade your grandfather to lend you to me for a month next spring, when the leaves are coming out and the orchards are in blossom; or, if he cannot spare you then, when the autumn tints begin."

"Oh, thank you! But I think the Forest lovely at all seasons—when the boughs are bare or when they are covered with snow."

Bessie would have been glad that the invitation should come now, without waiting for next year, but that was not even thought of. Lady Latimer was looking towards the gentlemen, more interested in their interests than in the small Beechhurst chat that Bessie would never have tired of. After a few minutes of divided attention my lady rose, and *a propos* of the Norminster election expressed her satisfaction in the career that seemed to be opening for Mr. Cecil Burleigh:

"Lord Latimer thought highly of him from a boy. He was often at Umpleby in the holidays. He is like a son to my old friend at Brentwood; Lady Angleby is happy in having a nephew who bids fair to attain distinction, since her own sons prefer obscurity. She deplores their want of ambition: it must be indeed a trial to a mother of her aspiring temper." So my lady talked on, heard and not often interrupted; it was the old voice and grand manner that Bessie Fairfax remembered so well, and once so vastly reverenced. She did not take much more notice of Bessie. After luncheon she chose to pace the lawn with her brother and Mr. Fairfax, debating and predicting the course of public affairs, which shared her thoughts with the government of Beechhurst. Bessie remained indoors with the two quiet sisters, who were not disposed to forsake the fireside for the garden: the wood-fire was really comfortable that clouded afternoon, though September was not yet far advanced. Miss Charlotte sat by one of the windows, holding back the curtain to watch the trio on the lawn, and Bessie sat near, able to observe them too.

"Dear Olympia is as energetic as ever, but, Juliana, don't you think she is contracting a slight

stoop to one side?" said Miss Charlotte. Miss Juliana approached to look out.

"She always did hang that arm. Dear Olympia! Still, she is a majestic figure. She was one of the handsomest women in Europe, Miss Fairfax, when Lord Latimer married her."

"I can well imagine that: she is beautiful now when she smiles and colors a little," said Bessie.

"Ah, that smile of Olympia's! We do not often see it in these days, but it had a magic. All the men were in love with her—she made a great marriage. Lord Latimer was not one of our oldest nobility, but he was very rich and his mansion at Umpleby was splendid, quite a palace, and our Olympia was queen there."

"We never married," said Miss Charlotte meekly. "It would not have done for us to marry men who could not have been received at court, so to speak—at Umpleby, I mean. Olympia said so at the time, and we agreed with her. Dear Olympia was the only one of us who married, except Maggie, our half-sister, the eldest of our father's children—Mrs. Bernard's mother—and that was long before the great event in our family."

Bessie fancied there was a flavor of regret in these statements.

Miss Juliana took up the thread where her sister had dropped it: "There is our dear Oliver—what a perfect gentleman he was! How accomplished, how elegant! If your sweet aunt Dorothy had not died when she did, he might have been your near connection, Miss Fairfax. We have often urged him to marry, if only for the sake of the property, but he has steadfastly refused to give that good and lovely young creature a successor. Our elder brother also died unmarried."

Miss Charlotte chimed in again: "Lady Latimer moved for so many years in a distinguished circle that she can throw her mind into public business. We range with humble livers in content, and are limited to the politics of a very small school and hamlet. You will be a near neighbor, Miss Fairfax, and we hope you will come often to Hartwell: we cannot be Lady Latimer to you, but we will do our best. Abbotsmead was once a familiar haunt; of late years it has been almost a house shut up."

Bessie liked the kindly, garrulous old ladies, and promised to be neighborly. "I have been told," she said after a short silence, "that my grandfather was devoted to Lady Latimer when they were young."

"Your grandfather, my dear, was one amongst many who were devoted to her," said Miss Juliana hastily.

"No more than that? Oh, I hoped he was preferred above others," said Bessie, without much reflecting.

"Why hope it?" said Miss Charlotte in a saddened tone. "Dorothy thought that he was, and resented Olympia's marriage with Lord Latimer as a treachery to her brother that was past pardon. Oliver shared Dorothy's sentiments; but we are all friends again now, thank God! Juliana's opinion is, that dear Olympia cared no more for Richard Fairfax than she cared for any of her other suitors, or why should she have married Lord Latimer? Olympia was her own mistress, and pleased herself—no one else, for we should have preferred Richard Fairfax, all of us. But she had her way, and there was a breach between Hartwell and Abbotsmead for many years in consequence. Why do we talk of it? it is past and gone. And there they go, walking up and down the lawn together, as I have seen them walk a hundred times, and a hundred to that. How strangely the old things seem to come round again!"

At that moment the three turned towards the house. Lady Latimer was talking with great earnestness; Mr. Fairfax sauntered with his hands clasped behind him and his eyes on the ground; Mr. Oliver Smith was not listening. When they entered the room her grandfather said to Bessie, "Come, Elizabeth, it is time we were riding home;" and when he saw her wistful eyes turn to the visitor from the Forest, he added, "You have not lost Lady Latimer yet. She will come over to Abbotsmead the day after to-morrow."

Bessie could not help being reminded by her grandfather's face and voice of another old Beechhurst friend—Mr. Phipps. Perhaps this luncheon at Hartwell had been pleasanter to her than to him, though even she had an aftertaste of disappointment in it, because Lady Latimer no longer dazzled her judgment. To the end my lady preserved her animation, and when the visitors had mounted and were ready to ride away she still engaged Mr. Fairfax's ear while she expounded her views of the mischief that would accrue if ever election by ballot became the law of the land.

"You must talk to Chiverton about that," said the squire, lifting his hat and moving off.

"I shall drive over to Castlemount to-morrow," said my lady; and she accompanied her visitors to the gate with more last words on a variety of themes that had been previously discussed and dismissed.

All the way home the squire never once opened his mouth to speak; he appeared thoroughly jaded and depressed and in his most sarcastic humor. At dinner Bessie heard more bitter sentiments against her sex than she had ever heard in her life before, and wondered whether they were the residuum of his disappointed passion.

CHAPTER XXX.

MY LADY REVISITS OLD SCENES.

To meet Lady Latimer and Mr. Oliver Smith at Abbotsmead, Lady Angleby and Mr. Cecil Burleigh came over from Brentwood. Bessie Fairfax was sorry. She longed to have my lady to herself. She thought that she might then ask questions about other friends in the Forest—about friends at Brook—which she felt it impossible to ask in the presence of uninterested or adverse witnesses. But Lady Latimer wished for no confidential communications. She had received at Brentwood full particulars of the alliance that was projected between the families of Fairfax and Burleigh, and considered it highly desirable. My lady's principle was entirely against any wilfulness of affection in young girls. In this she was always consistent, and Bessie's sentimental constancy to the idea of Harry Musgrave would have provoked her utter disapproval. It was therefore for Bessie's comfort that no opportunity was given her of betraying it.

At luncheon the grand ladies introduced their philanthropic hobbies, and were tedious to everybody but each other. They supposed the two young people would be grateful to be left to entertain themselves; but Bessie was not grateful at all, and her grandfather sat through the meal looking terribly like Mr. Phipps—meditating, perhaps, on the poor results in the way of happiness that had attended the private lives of his guests, who were yet so eager to meddle with their neighbors' lives. When luncheon was over, Lady Latimer, quitting the dining-room first, walked through the hall to the door of the great drawing-room. The little page ran quickly and opened to her, then ran in and drew back the silken curtains to admit the light. The immense room was close yet chill, as rooms are that have been long disused for daily purposes.

"Ah, you do not live here as you used to do formerly?" she said to Mr. Fairfax, who followed her.

"No, we are a diminished family. The octagon parlor is our common sitting-room."

Bessie had promised Macky that some rainy day she would make a tour of the house and view the pictures, but she had not done it yet, and this room was strange to her. The elder visitors had been once quite familiar with it. Lady Latimer pointed to a fine painting of the Virgin and Child, and remarked, "There is the Sasso-Ferrato," then sat down with her back to it and began to talk of political difficulties in Italy. Mr. Cecil Burleigh was interested in Italy, so was Mr. Oliver Smith, and they had a very animated conversation in which the others joined—all but Bessie. Bessie listened and looked on, and felt not quite happy—rather disenchanted, in fact. Lady Latimer was the same as ever—she overflowed with practical goodness—but Bessie did not regard her with the same simple, adoring confidence. Was it the influence of the old love-story that she had heard? My lady seemed entirely free from pathetic or tender memories, and domineered in the conversation here as she did everywhere. Even Lady Angleby was half effaced, and the squire had nothing to say.

"I like her best at Fairfield," Bessie thought, but Bessie liked everything best in the Forest.

Just before taking her leave my lady said abruptly to the young lady of the house, "An important sphere is open to you: I hope you will be able to fill it with honor to yourself and benefit to others. You have an admirable example of self-devotion, if you can imitate it, in Mrs. Chiverton of Castlemount. She told me that you were school-fellows and friends already. I was glad to hear it."

These remarks were so distinctly enunciated that every eye was at once attracted to Bessie's face. She colored, and with an odd, fastidious twist of her mouth—the feminine rendering of the squire's cynical smile—she answered, "Mrs. Chiverton has what she married for: God grant her satisfaction in it, and save me from her temptation!" In nothing did Bessie Fairfax's early breeding more show itself than in her audacious simplicity of speech when she was strongly moved. Lady Latimer did not condescend to make any rejoinder, but she remarked to Mr. Fairfax afterward that habits of mind were as permanent as other habits, and she hoped that Elizabeth would not give him trouble by her stiff self-opinion. Mr. Fairfax hoped not also, but in the present instance he had silently applauded it. And Mr. Burleigh was charmed that she had the wit to answer so skilfully.

When my lady was gone, Bessie grieved and vexed herself with compunctious thoughts. But that was not my lady's last visit; she came over with Miss Charlotte another afternoon when Mr. Fairfax was gone to Norminster, and on this occasion she behaved with the gracious sweetness that had fascinated her young admirer in former days. Bessie said she was like herself again. At my lady's request Bessie took her up to the white parlor. On the threshold she stopped a full minute, gazing in: nothing of its general aspect was changed since she saw it last—how long ago! She went straight to the old bookcase, and took down one of Dorothy Fairfax's manuscript volumes and furled over the leaves. Miss Charlotte drew Bessie to the window and engaged her in admiration of the prospect, to leave her sister undisturbed.

Presently my lady said, "Charlotte, do you remember these old books of Dorothy's?" and Miss Charlotte went and looked over the page.

"Oh yes. Dear Dorothy had such a pretty taste—she always knew when a sentiment was nicely put. She was a great lover of the old writers."

After a few minutes of silent reading my lady spoke again: "She once recited to me some verses of George Herbert's—of when God at first made man, how He gave him strength, beauty, wisdom,

honor, pleasure, all to keep, but with repining restlessness. They were a prophecy. I cannot find them." She restored the volume to its shelf, quoting the last lines—all she remembered distinctly:

"Let him be rich and weary, that at last,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast."

"I know; they are in the last volume, toward the end," said Bessie Fairfax, and quickly found them. "They do not say that God gave man love; and that is a craving too. Don't you think so?"

Lady Latimer looked straight before her out of the window with lips compressed.

"What do you mean by love, my dear?—so many foolish feelings go by that name," said Miss Charlotte, filling the pause.

"Oh, I mean just love—the warm, happy feeling in my heart toward everybody who belongs to me or is good to me—to my father and mother and all of them at home, and to my grandfather now and my uncle Laurence, and more besides."

"You are an affectionate soul!" said my lady, contemplating her quietly. "You were born loving and tender—"

"Like dear Dorothy," added Miss Charlotte with a sigh. "It is a great treasure, a warm heart."

"Some of us have hearts of stone given us—more our misfortune than our fault," said Lady Latimer with a sudden air of offence, and turned and left the room, preceding the others down stairs. Bessie was startled; Miss Charlotte made no sign, but when they were in the hall she asked her sister if she would not like to see the gardens once more. Indeed she would, she said; and, addressing Bessie with equanimity restored, she reminded her how she had once told her that Abbotsmead was very beautiful and its gardens always sunny, and she hoped that Bessie was not disappointed, but found them answer to her description. Bessie said "Yes," of course; and my lady led the way again—led the way everywhere, and to and fro so long that Miss Charlotte was fain to rest at intervals, and even Bessie's young feet began to ache with following her. My lady recollected every turn in the old walks and noted every alteration that had been made—noted the growth of certain trees, and here and there where one had disappeared. "The gum-cistus is gone—that lovely gum-cistus! In the hot summer evenings how sweet it was!—like Indian spices. And my cedar—the cedar I planted—is gone. It might have been a great tree now; it must have been cut down."

"No, Olympia, it never grew up—it withered away; Richard Fairfax told Oliver that it died," said Miss Charlotte.

The ladies from Hartwell were still in the gardens when the squire came home from Norminster, and on Jonquil's information he joined them there. "Ah, Olympia! are you here?" he said.

My lady colored, and looked as shy as a girl: "Yes; we were just going. I am glad to have seen you to say good-bye."

They did not, however, say good-bye yet; they took a turn together amongst the old familiar places, Miss Charlotte and Bessie resting meanwhile in the great porch, and philosophizing on what they saw.

"Did you know grandpapa's wife—my grandmamma?" Bessie began by asking.

"Oh yes, my dear. She was a sprightly girl before she married, but all her life after she went softly. Mr. Fairfax was not an unkind or negligent husband, but there was something wanting. She was as unlike Olympia as possible—very plain and simple in her tastes and appearance. She kept much at home, and never sought to shine in society—for which, indeed, she was not fitted—but she was a good woman and fond of her children."

"And grandpapa was perfectly indifferent to her: it must have been dreary work. Oh, what a pity that Lady Latimer did not care for him!"

"She did care for him very much."

"But if she cared for Umpleby more?"

Miss Charlotte sighed retrospectively and said, "Olympia was ambitious: she is the same still—I see no change. She longed to live in the world's eye and to have her fill of homage—for Nature had gifted her with the graces and talents that adorn high station—but she was never a happy woman, never satisfied or at peace with herself. She ardently desired children, and none were given her. I have often thought that she threw away substance for shadow—the true and lasting joys of life for its vain glories. But she had what she chose, and if it disappointed her she never confessed to her mistake or avowed a single regret. Her pride was enough to sustain her through all."

"It is of no use regretting mistakes that must last a lifetime. But one is sorry."

The squire and Lady Latimer were drawing slowly towards the porch, talking calmly as they walked.

"Yes, one is sorry. Those two were well suited to each other once," said Miss Charlotte.

The Hartwell carriage came round the sweep, the Hartwell coachman—who was groom and gardener too—not in the best of humors at having been kept so long waiting. Lady Latimer, with a sweet countenance, kissed Bessie at her leave-taking, and told her that permission was obtained for her to visit Fairfield next spring. Then she got into the carriage, and bowing and smiling in her exquisite way, and Miss Charlotte a little impatient and tired, they drove off. Bessie, exhilarated with her rather remote prospect of the Forest, turned to speak to her grandfather. But, lo! his brief amenity had vanished, and he was Mr. Phipps again.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SUCCESS AND A REPULSE.

The weather at the beginning of October was not favorable. There were gloomy days of wind and rain that Bessie Fairfax had to fill as she could, and in her own company, of which she found it possible to have more than enough. Mr. Fairfax had acquired solitary tastes and habits, and though to see Elizabeth's face at meal-times and to ride with her was a pleasure, he was seldom at her command at other hours. Mrs. Stokes was sociable and Mrs. Forbes was kind, but friends out of doors do not compensate altogether for the want of company within. Sir Edward Lucas rode or drove over rather frequently seeking advice, but he had to take it from the squire after the first or second occasion, though his contemporary would have given it with pleasure. Bessie resigned herself to circumstances, and, like a well-brought-up young lady, improved her leisure—practised her songs, sketched the ruins and the mill, and learnt by heart some of the best pieces in her aunt Dorothy's collection of poetry.

Towards the middle of the month Mr. Cecil Burleigh came again, bringing his sister with him to stay to the end of it. Bessie was very glad of her society, and when her feminine acumen had discerned Miss Burleigh's relations with the vicar she did not grudge the large share of it that was given to his mother: she reflected that it was a pity these elderly lovers should lose time. What did they wait for, Mr. Forbes and his gentle Mary, Mr. Cecil Burleigh and his sweet Julia? She would have liked to arrange their affairs speedily.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh went to and fro between Norminster and Abbotsmead as his business required, and if opportunity and propinquity could have advanced his suit, he had certainly no lack of either. But he felt that he was not prospering with Miss Fairfax: she was most animated, amiable and friendly, but she was not in a propitious mood to be courted. Bessie was to go to Brentwood for the nomination-day, and to remain until the election was over. By this date it had begun to dawn on other perceptions besides Mr. Cecil Burleigh's that she was not a young lady in love. His sister struggled against this conviction as long as she was able, and when it prevailed over her hopefulness she ventured to speak of it to him. He was not unprepared.

"I am, after all, afraid, Cecil, that Miss Fairfax may turn out an uninteresting person," she began diffidently.

"Because I fail to interest her, Mary—is that it?" said her brother.

"She perplexes me by her cool, capricious behavior. *Now* I think her very dear and sweet, and that she appreciates you; then she looks or says something mocking, and I don't know what to think. Does she care for any one else, I should like to know?"

"Perhaps she made some such discovery at Ryde for me."

"She told me of your meeting with the Gardiners there. Poor Julia! I wish it could be Julia, Cecil."

"I doubt whether it will ever be Miss Fairfax, Mary. She is the oddest mixture of wit and simplicity."

"Perhaps she has some old prepossession? She would not be persuaded against her will."

"All her prepossessions are in favor of her friends in the Forest. There was a young fellow for whom she had a childish fondness—he was at Bayeux when I called upon her there."

"Harry Musgrave? Oh, they are like brother and sister; she told me so."

"She is a good girl, and believes it, perhaps; but it is a brother-and-sisterhood likely to lapse into warmer relations, given the opportunity. That is what Mr. Fairfax is intent on hindering. My hope was in her youth, but she is not to be won by the semblance of wooing. She is either calmly unconscious or consciously discouraging."

"How will Mr. Fairfax bear his disappointment?"

"The recent disclosure of his son Laurence's marriage will lessen that. It is no longer of the same importance who Miss Fairfax marries. She has a great deal of character, and may take her own way. She is all anxiety now to heal the division between the father and son, that she may have the little boys over at Abbotsmead; and she will succeed before long. The disclosure was made just in time, supposing it likely to affect my intentions; but Miss Fairfax is still an excellent match for me—for me or any gentleman of my standing."

"I fancy Sir Edward Lucas is of that opinion."

"Yes, Sir Edward is quite captivated, but he will easily console himself. The squire has intimated to him that he has other views for her; the young man is cool to me in consequence."

Miss Burleigh became reflective: "Miss Fairfax's position is changed, Cecil. A good connexion and a good dower are one thing, and an heiress presumptive to Kirkham is another. Perhaps you would as lief remain a bachelor?"

"If Miss Fairfax prove impregnable—yes."

"You will test her, then?"

"Surely. It is in the bond. I have had her help, and will pay her the compliment."

Miss Burleigh regarded her brother with almost as much perplexity as she regarded Miss Fairfax. The thought passed through her mind that he did not wish even her to suspect how much his feelings were engaged in the pursuit of that uncertain young lady because he anticipated a refusal; but what she thought she kept to herself, and less interested persons did not observe that there was any relaxation in the aspirant member's assiduities to Miss Fairfax. Bessie accepted them with quiet simplicity. She knew that her grandfather was bearing the main cost of Mr. Cecil Burleigh's canvass, and she might interpret his kindnesses as gratitude: it cannot be averred that she did so interpret them, for she gave nobody her confidence, but the plea was open to her.

Lady Angleby welcomed Miss Fairfax on her second visit to Brentwood as if she were already a daughter of the house. It had not entered into her mind to imagine that her magnificent nephew could experience the slight of a rejection by this unsophisticated, lively little girl. She had quite reconciled herself to the change in Bessie's prospects, and looked forward to the marriage with satisfaction undiminished: Mr. Fairfax had much in his power with reference to settlements, and the conduct of his son Laurence would be an excitement to use it to the utmost extent. His granddaughter in any circumstances would be splendidly dowered. Nothing could be prettier than Bessie's behavior during this critical short interval before the election, and strangers were enchanted with her. A few more persons who knew her better were falling into a state of doubt—her grandfather amongst them—but nothing was said to her, for it was best the state of doubt should continue, and not be converted into a state of certainty until the crisis was over.

It was soon over now, and resulted in the return of Mr. Cecil Burleigh as the representative of Norminster in the Conservative interest, and the ignominious defeat of Mr. Bradley. Once more the blue party held up its head in the ancient city, and Mr. Fairfax, Mr. Chiverton, and others, their Tory contemporaries, were at ease again for the safety of the country. Mr. Burleigh the elder had come from Carisfort for the election, and he now for the first time saw the young lady of whom he had heard so much. He was a very handsome but very rustic poor squire, who troubled the society of cities little. Bessie's beauty was perfect to his taste, especially when her blushes were revived by a certain tender paternal significance and familiarity in his address to her. But when the blushes cooled her spirit of mischief grew vivacious to repel their false confession, and even Lady Angleby felt for a moment disturbed. Only for a moment, however. She wished that Mr. Burleigh would leave his country manners at home, and ascribing Bessie's shy irritation to alarmed modesty, introduced a pleasant subject to divert her thoughts.

"Is there to be a ball at Brentwood or no ball, Miss Fairfax?" said she with amiable suggestion. "I think there was something mooted about a ball if my nephew won his election, was there not?"

What could Bessie do but feel appeased, and brighten charmingly?—"Oh, we shall dance for joy if you give us one; but if you don't think we deserve it—" said she.

"Oh, as for your deserts—Well, Mary, we must have the dance for joy. Cecil wishes it, and so, I suppose, do you all," said her ladyship with comprehensive affability. Mr. Burleigh nodded at Bessie, as much as to say that nothing could be refused her.

Bessie blushed again. She loved a little pleasure, and a ball, a real ball—Oh, paradise! And Mr. Cecil Burleigh coming in at the moment she forgot her proper reticent demeanor, and made haste to announce to him the delight that was in prospect. He quite entered into her humor, and availed himself of the moment to bespeak her as his partner to open the ball.

It was settled that she should stay at Brentwood to help in the preparations for it, and her grandfather left her there extremely contented. Cards of invitation were sent out indiscriminately to blue and orange people of quality; carpenters and decorators came on the scene, and were busy for a week in a large empty room, converting it and making it beautiful. The officers of the cavalry regiment stationed at Norminster were asked, and offered the services of their band. Miss Jocund and her rivals were busy morning, noon, and night in the construction of aërial dresses, and all the young ladies who were bidden to the dance fell into great enthusiasm when it was currently reported that the new member, who was so handsome and so wonderfully clever, was almost, if not quite, engaged to be married to that pretty, nice Miss Fairfax, with whom they were all beginning to be more or less acquainted.

Mr. Fairfax did not return to Brentwood until the day of the dance. Lady Angleby was anxious that it should be the occasion of bringing her nephew's courtship to a climax, and she gave reasons for the expediency of having the whole affair carried through to a conclusion without unnecessary delays. Sir Edward Lucas had been intrusive this last week, and Miss Fairfax too

good-natured in listening to his tedious talk of colliers, cottagers, and spade husbandry. Her ladyship scented a danger. There was an evident suitability of age and temper between these two young persons, and she had fancied that Bessie looked pleased when Sir Edward's honest brown face appeared in her drawing-room. She had been obliged to ask him to her ball, but she would have been thankful to leave him out.

Mr. Fairfax heard all his old friend had to urge, and, though he made light of Sir Edward, it was with a startling candor that he added, "But woman's a riddle indeed if Elizabeth would give her shoe-tie for Cecil." Lady Angleby was so amazed and shocked that she made no answer whatever. The squire went on: "The farce had better pause—or end. Elizabeth is sensitive and shrewd enough. Cecil has no heart to give her, and she will never give hers unless in fair exchange. I have observed her all along, and that is the conclusion I have come to. She saw Miss Julia Gardiner at Ryde, and fathomed that old story: she supposes them to be engaged, and is of much too loyal a disposition to dream of love for another woman's lover. That is the explanation of her friendliness towards Cecil."

"But Julia Gardiner is as good as married," cried Lady Angleby. "Cecil will be cruelly disappointed if you forbid him to speak to Miss Fairfax. Pray, say nothing, at least until to-night is over."

"I shall not interfere at the present point. Let him use his own discretion, and incur a rebuff if he please. But his visits to Abbotsmead are pleasant, and I would prefer not to have either Elizabeth annoyed or his visits given up."

"You have used him so generously that whatever you wish must have his first consideration," said Lady Angleby. She was extremely surprised by the indulgent tone Mr. Fairfax assumed towards his granddaughter: she would rather have seen him apply a stern authority to the management of that self-willed young lady, for there was no denial that he, quite as sincerely as herself, desired the alliance between their families.

Mr. Fairfax had not chosen a very opportune moment to trouble her ladyship's mind with his own doubts. She was always nervous on the eve of an entertainment at Brentwood, and this fresh anxiety agitated her to such a degree that Miss Burleigh suffered a martyrdom before her duty of superintendence over the preparations in ball-room and supper-room was accomplished. Her aunt found time to tell her Mr. Fairfax's opinions respecting his granddaughter, and she again found time to communicate them to her brother. To her prodigious relief, he was not moved thereby. He had a letter from Ryde in his pocket, apprising him on what day his dear Julia was to become Mrs. Brotherton; and he was in an elastic humor because of his late success—just in the humor when a man of mature age and sense puts his trust in Fortune and expects to go on succeeding. Perhaps he had not consciously endeavored to detach his thoughts from Julia, but a shade of retrospective reverie had fallen upon her image, and if she was lost to him, Elizabeth Fairfax was, of all other women he had known, the one he would prefer to take her place. He was quite sure of this, though he was not in love. The passive resistance that he had encountered from Miss Fairfax had not whetted his ardor much, but there was the natural spirit of man in him that hates defeat in any shape; and from his air and manner his sister deduced that in the midst of uncertainties shared by his best friends he still kept hold of hope. Whether he might put his fate to the touch that night would, he said, depend on opportunity—and impulse.

Such was the attitude of parties on the famous occasion of Lady Angleby's ball to celebrate her nephew's successful election. Miss Fairfax had been a great help to Miss Burleigh in arranging the fruit and the flowers, and if Mrs. Betts had not been peremptory in making her rest a while before dinner, she would have been as tired to begin with as a light heart of eighteen can be. The waiting-woman had received a commission of importance from Lady Angleby (nothing less than to find out how much or how little Miss Fairfax knew of Miss Julia Gardiner's past and present circumstances), and accident favored her execution of it. A cheerful fire blazed on the hearth in Bessie's room; by the hearth was drawn up the couch, and a newspaper lay on the couch. Naturally, Bessie's first act was to take it up, and when she saw that it was a *Hampton Chronicle* she exclaimed with pleasure, and asked did Mrs. Betts receive it regularly from her friends?—if so, she should like to read it, for the sake of knowing what went on in the Forest.

"No, miss, it only comes a time by chance: that came by this afternoon's post. I have barely glanced through it. I expect it was sent by my cousin to let me know the fine wedding that is on the *tapis* at Ryde—Mr. Brotherton, her master, and Miss Julia Gardiner."

"Miss Julia Gardiner!" exclaimed Bessie in a low, astonished voice.

Mrs. Betts, with an indifference that a more cunning young lady than hers would have felt to be carefully prepared, proceeded with her information: "Yes, miss; you met the lady, I think? The gentleman is many years older, but a worthy gentleman. And she is a most sweet lady, which, where there is children to begin with, is much to be considered. She has no fortune, but there is oceans of money on his side—oceans."

Bessie did not jump to the conclusion that it was therefore a mercenary marriage, as she had done in another case. She forgot, for the moment, her interest in the Forest news, and though she seemed to be contemplating her beautiful dress for the evening laid out upon the bed, the pensive abstraction of her gaze implied profounder thoughts. Mrs. Betts busied herself with various little matters—sewed on faster the rosette of a white shoe, and the buttons on the gloves that were to be worn with that foam of silvery tulle. What Bessie was musing of she could not herself have told; a confused sensation of pain and pity was uppermost at first. Mrs. Betts stood

at a distance and with her back to her young mistress, but she commanded her face in the glass, and saw it overspread slowly by a warm soft blush, and the next moment she was asked, "Do you think she will be happy, Mrs. Betts?"

"We may trust so, miss," said the waiting-woman, still feigning to be fully occupied with her duties to her young lady's pretty things. "Why should she not? She is old enough to know her mind, and will have everything that heart can desire—won't she?"

Bessie did not attempt any answer to this suggestive query. She put the newspaper aside, and stretched herself with a sigh along the couch, folding her hands under her cheek on the pillow. Her eyes grew full of tears, and so she lay, meditating on this new lesson in life, until Mrs. Betts warned her that it was time to dress for dinner. Miss Fairfax had by this date so far accustomed herself to the usages of young ladies of rank that Mrs. Betts was permitted to assist at her toilette. It was a silent process this evening, and the penetration of the waiting-woman was at fault when she took furtive glances in the mirror at the subdued face that never smiled once, not even at its own beauty. She gave Lady Angleby an exact account of what had passed, and added for interpretation, "Miss Fairfax was surprised and sorry, I'm sure. I should say she believed Miss Julia Gardiner to be attached to somebody else. The only question she asked was, Did I think she would be happy?" Lady Angleby could extract nothing out of this.

Every one was aware of a change in Bessie when she went into the drawing-room; she felt as one feels who has heard bad news, and must conceal the impression of it. But the visible effect was that her original shyness seemed to have returned with more than her original pride, and she blushed vividly when Mr. Cecil Burleigh made her a low bow of compliment on her beautiful appearance. Mr. Fairfax had enriched his granddaughter that day with a suite of fine pearls, once his sister Dorothy's, and Bessie had not been able to deny herself the ornament of them, shining on her neck and arms. Her dress was white and bright as sea-foam in sunshine, but her own inimitable blooming freshness made her dress to be scarcely at all regarded. Every day at this period added something to her loveliness—the loveliness of youth, health, grace, and a good nature.

When dinner was over the three young people adjourned to the ball-room, leaving Lady Angleby and Mr. Fairfax together. Miss Burleigh and Bessie began by walking up and down arm-in-arm, then they took a few turns in a waltz, and after that Miss Burleigh said, "Cecil, Miss Fairfax and you are a perfect height to waltz together; try the floor, and I will go and play with the music-room door open. You will hear very well." She went off quickly the moment she had spoken, and Bessie could not refuse to try the floor, but she had a downcast, conscious air under her impromptu partner's observation. Mr. Cecil Burleigh was in a gay, light mood, as became him on this public occasion of his election triumph, and he was further elated by Miss Fairfax's amiable condescension in waltzing with him at his sister's behest; and as it was certainly a pleasure to any girl who loved waltzing to waltz with him, they went on until the music stopped at the sound of carriage-wheels.

"You are fond of dancing, Miss Fairfax?" said her cavalier.

"Oh yes," said Bessie with a pretty upward glance. She had enjoyed that waltz extremely; her natural animation was reviving, too buoyant to lie long under the depression of melancholy, philosophic reverie.

The guests were received in the drawing-room, and began to arrive in uninterrupted succession. Mr. and Mrs. Tindal, Lord and Lady Eden, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Raymond, Mr. Maurice and Miss Lois Wynyard, Mrs. Lefevre and Miss Jean Lefevre, Mr. and Mrs. Chiverton, Colonel Stokes and his wife, and Sir Edward Lucas with an architectural scheme in his pocket; however, he danced none the worse for it, as Miss Fairfax testified by dancing with him three times. She had a charming audacity in evading awkward partners, and it was observed that she waltzed only with the new member. She looked in joyous spirits, and acknowledged no reason why she should deny herself a pleasure. More than once in the course of the evening she flattered Lady Angleby's hopes by telling her it was a most delicious ball.

Mr. Fairfax contemplated his granddaughter with serene speculation. Lady Angleby had communicated to him the results of Mrs. Betts's inquisition. At a disengaged moment he noticed a wondering pathos in Bessie's eyes, which were following Mr. Cecil Burleigh's agile movements through the intricate mazes of the Lancers' Quadrilles. His prolonged gaze ended by attracting hers; she blushed and drew a long breath, and seemed to shake off some persistent thought. Then she came and asked, like a light-footed, mocking, merry girl, if he was not longing to dance too, and would he not dance with her? He dismissed her to pay a little attention to Mrs. Chiverton, who sat like a fine statue against the wall, unsought of partners, and Bessie went with cheerful submission. Her former school-rival was kind to her now with a patronizing, married superiority that she did not dislike. Mrs. Chiverton knew from her husband of the family project for Miss Fairfax's settlement in life, and as she approved of Mr. Cecil Burleigh as highly as her allegiance to Mr. Chiverton permitted her to approve of anybody but himself, she spoke at some length in his praise, desiring to be agreeable. Bessie suffered her to go on without check or discouragement; she must have understood the drift of many things this evening which had puzzled her hitherto, but she made no sign. Miss Burleigh said to her brother when they parted for the night that she really did not know what to think or what to advise, further than that Sir Edward Lucas ought to be "set down," or there was no guessing how far he might be tempted to encroach. Miss Fairfax, she considered, was too universally inclined to please.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh had no clear resolve of what he would do when he went to walk in the garden the next morning. He knew what he wanted. A sort of paradoxical exhilaration possessed him. He remembered his dear Julia with tender, weary regret, and gave his fancy license to dwell on the winsomeness of Bessie. And while it was so dwelling he heard her tuneful tongue as she came with Miss Burleigh over the grass, still white with hoar-frost where the sun had not fallen. He advanced to meet them.

"Oh, Cecil, here you are! Mr. Fairfax has been inquiring for you, but there is no hurry," said his sister, and she was gone.

Bessie wore a broad shady hat, yet not shady enough to conceal the impetuous blushes that mantled her cheeks on her companion's evasion. She felt what it was the prelude to. Mr. Cecil Burleigh, inspired with the needful courage by these fallacious signs, broke into a stammering eloquence of passion that was yet too plain to be misunderstood—not reflecting, he, that maiden blushes may have more sources than one. The hot torrent of Bessie's rose from the fountain of indignation in her heart—indignation at his inconstancy to the sweet lady who she knew loved him, and his impertinence in daring to address herself when she knew he loved that lady. She silently confessed that to this upshot his poor pretences of wooing had tended from the first, and that she had been wilfully half blind and wholly unbelieving—so unwilling are proud young creatures to imagine that their best feelings can be traded on—but she was none the less wrathful and scornful as she lifted her eyes, dilated with tears, to his, and sweeping him a curtsey turned away without a single word—without a single word, yet never was wooer more emphatically answered.

They parted and went different ways. Bessie, thinking she would give all she was worth that he had held his peace and let her keep her dream of pity and sympathy, took the shrubbery path to the village and Miss Hague's cottage-lodgings; and Mr. Cecil Burleigh, repenting too late the vain presumption that had reckoned on her youth and ignorance, apart from the divining power of an honest soul, walked off to Norminster to rid himself of his heavy sense of mortification and discomfiture.

Miss Burleigh saw her brother go down the road, and knew what had happened, and such a pang came with the certainty that only then did she realize how great had been her former confidence. She stood a long while at her window, listening and watching for Miss Fairfax's return to the house, but Bessie was resting in Miss Hague's parlor, hearing anecdotes of her father and uncles when they were little boys, and growing by degrees composed after her disturbing emotion. She wished to keep the morning's adventure to herself, or, if the story must be told, to leave the telling of it to Mr. Cecil Burleigh; and when she went back to the house, the old governess accompanying her, she betrayed no counsel by her face: that was rosy with the winter cold, and hardly waxed rosier when Lady Angleby expressed a wish to know what she had done with her nephew, missing since breakfast. Bessie very simply said that she had only seen him for a minute, and she believed that he had gone into the town; she had been paying a long-promised visit to Miss Hague.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh, reappearing midway the afternoon, was summoned to his aunt's closet and bidden to explain himself. The explanation was far from easy. Lady Angleby was profoundly irritated, and reproached her nephew with his blundering folly in visiting Miss Julia Gardiner in Miss Fairfax's company. She refused to believe but that his fascination must have proved irresistible if Miss Fairfax had not been led to the discovery of that faded romance. Was he quite sure that the young lady's answer was conclusive? Perfectly conclusive—so conclusive that he should not venture to address her again. "Not after Julia's marriage?" his sister whispered. Lady Angleby urged a temporary retreat and then a new approach: it was impossible but that a fine, spirited girl like Miss Fairfax must have ambition and some appreciation of a distinguished mind; and how was her dear Cecil to support his position without the fortune she was to bring him? At this point Mr. Cecil Burleigh manifested a contemptuous and angry impatience against himself, and rose and left the discussion to his grieved and disappointed female relatives. Mr. Fairfax, on being informed of the repulse he had provoked, received the news calmly, and observed that it was no more than he had anticipated.

Towards evening Bessie felt her fortitude failing her, and did not appear at dinner nor in the drawing-room. Her excuses were understood and accepted, and in the morning early Mr. Cecil Burleigh conveyed himself away by train to London, that his absence might release her from seclusion. Before he went, in a consultation with his aunt and Mr. Fairfax, it was agreed that the late episode in his courtship should be kept quiet and not treated as final. Later in the day Mr. Fairfax carried his granddaughter home to Abbotsmead, not unconsoled by the reflection that he was not to be called upon to resign her to make bright somebody else's hearth. Bessie was much subdued. She had passed a bad night, she had shed many tears, and though she had not encountered one reproach, she was under the distressing consciousness that she had vexed several people who had been good to her. At the same time there could not be two opinions of the wicked duplicity of a gentleman who could profess to love and wish to marry her when his heart was devoted to another lady: she believed that she never could forgive him that insult.

Yet she was sorry even to tears again when she remembered him in the dull little drawing-room at Ryde, and Miss Julia Gardiner telling him that she had forgotten her old songs which he liked better than her new ones; for it had dawned upon her that this scene—it had struck her then as sad—must have been their farewell, the *finis* to the love-chapter of their youth. Bessie averted her mind from the idea that Miss Julia Gardiner had consented to marry a rich, middle-aged

gentleman who was a widower: she did not like it, it was utterly repugnant, she hated to think of it. Oh, that people would marry the right people, and not care so much for rank and money! Lady Angleby's loveliest sister had forty years ago aggrieved her whole family by marrying the poor squire of Carisfort; and Lady Angleby had said in Bessie's hearing that her sister was the most enviable woman she knew, happy as the day was long, though so positively indigent as to be thankful for her eldest daughter's half-worn Brentwood finery to smarten up her younger girls. It must indeed be a cruel mistake to marry the wrong person. So far the wisdom and sentiment of Bessie Fairfax—all derived from observation or most trustworthy report—and therefore not to be laughed at, although she was so young.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A HARD STRUGGLE.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh's departure to town so immediately after Lady Angleby's ball might have given rise to remark had he not returned to Brentwood before the month's end, and in excellent spirits. During his brief absence he had, however, found time to run down to the Isle of Wight and see Miss Julia Gardiner. In all trouble and vexation his thoughts still turned to her for rest.

Twice already a day had been named for the marriage, and twice it had been deferred to please her. It now stood fixed for February—"A good time to start for Rome and the Easter festivals," she had pleaded. Mr. Brotherton was kindness itself in consideration for her wishes, but her own family felt that poor Julia was making a long agony of what, if it were to be done at all, were best done quickly. When Mr. Cecil Burleigh went to Ryde, he expected to find the preparations for the wedding very forward, but nothing seemed to have been begun. The young ladies were out walking, but Mrs. Gardiner, who had written him word that the 10th of December was the day, now told him almost in the first breath that it was put off again until the New Year.

"We shall all be thankful to have it over. I never knew dear Julia so capricious or so little thoughtful for others," said the poor languid, weary lady.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh heard the complaint with a miserable compassion, and when Julia came in, and her beautiful countenance broke into sunshine at the sight of him, he knew what a cruel anticipation for her this marriage really was. He could have wished for her sake—and a little for his own too—that the last three months were blotted from their history; but when they came to talk together, Julia, with the quick discernment of a loving woman, felt that the youthful charms of Miss Fairfax had warmly engaged his imagination, though he had so much tenderness of heart still left for herself.

He did not stay long, and when he was going he said that it would have been wiser never to have come: it was a selfish impulse brought him—he wanted to see her. Julia laughed at his simple confession; her sister Helen was rather angry.

"Now, I suppose you will be all unsettled again, Julia," said she, though Julia had just then a most peaceful face. Helen was observant of her: "I know what you are dreaming—while there is the shadow of a chance that Cecil will return to you, Mr. Brotherton will be left hanging between earth and heaven."

"Oh, Nellie, I wish you would marry Mr. Brotherton yourself. Your appreciation of his merits is far higher than mine."

"If I were in your place I would not use him as you do: it *is* a shame, Julia."

"It is not you who are sentenced to be buried alive, Nellie. I dare not look forward: I dread it more and more—"

"Of course. That is the effect of Cecil's ill-judged visit and Mary Burleigh's foolish letter. Pray, don't say so to mamma; it would be enough to lay her up for a week."

Julia shut her eyes and sighed greatly. "Fashionable marriages are advertised with the tag of 'no cards;' you will have to announce mine as 'under chloroform.' Nellie, I never can go through with it," was her cry.

"Oh, Julia," remonstrated her sister, "don't say that. If you throw over Mr. Brotherton, half our friends will turn their backs upon us. We have been wretchedly poor, but we have always been well thought of."

Miss Julia Gardiner's brief joy passed in a thunder-shower of passionate tears.

It was not intended that the rebuff Mr. Cecil Burleigh had received from Miss Fairfax should be generally known even by his friends, but it transpired nevertheless, and was whispered as a secret in various Norminster circles. Buller heard it, but was incredulous when he saw the new member in his visual spirits; Mrs. Stokes guessed it, and was astonished; Lady Angleby wrote about it to Lady Latimer with a petition for advice, though why Lady Latimer should be regarded as specially qualified to advise in affairs of the heart was a mystery. She was not backward, however, in responding to the request: Let Mr. Cecil Burleigh hold himself in reserve until Miss

Julia Gardiner's marriage was an accomplished fact, and then let him come forward again. Miss Fairfax had behaved naturally under the circumstances, and Lady Latimer could not blame her. When the young lady came to Fairfield in the spring, according to her grandfather's pledge, Mr. Cecil Burleigh should have the opportunity of meeting her there, but meanwhile he ought not entirely to give up calling at Abbotsmead. This Mr. Cecil Burleigh could not do without affronting his generous old friend—to whom Bessie gave no confidence, none being sought—but he timed his first visit during her temporary absence, and she heard of it as ordinary news on her return.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A VISIT TO CASTLEMOUNT.

Bessie Fairfax had been but a few days at home after the Brentwood rejoicings when there came for her an invitation from Mrs. Chiverton to spend a week at Castlemount. She was perfectly ready to go—more ready to go than her grandfather was to part with her. She read him the letter at breakfast; he said he would think about it, and at luncheon he had not yet made up his mind. Before post-time, however, he supposed he must let her choose her own associates, and if she chose Mrs. Chiverton for old acquaintance' sake, he would not refuse his consent, but Mr. Chiverton and he were not on intimate terms.

Bessie went to Castlemount under escort of Mrs. Betts. Mrs. Chiverton was rejoiced to welcome her. "I like Miss Fairfax, because she is honest. Her manner is a little brusque, but she has a good heart, and we knew each other at school," was her reason given to Mr. Chiverton for desiring Bessie's company. They got on together capitally. Mrs. Chiverton had found her course and object in life already, and was as deeply committed to philanthropic labors and letters as either Lady Latimer or Lady Angleby. They were both numbered amongst her correspondents, and she promised to outvie them in originality and fertility of resource. What she chiefly wanted at Castlemount was a good listener, and Bessie Fairfax, as yet unprovided with a vocation, showed a fine turn that way. She reposed lazily at the end of Mrs. Chiverton's encumbered writing-table, between the fire and the window, and heard her discourse with infinite patience. Bessie was too moderate ever to join the sisterhood of active reformers, but she had no objection to their activity while herself safe from assaults. But when she was invited to sign papers pledging herself to divers serious convictions she demurred. Mrs. Chiverton said she would not urge her. Bessie gracefully acquiesced, and Mrs. Chiverton put in a more enticing plea: "I can scarcely expect to interest you in my occupations all at once, but they bring to me often the most gratifying returns. Read that letter."

Bessie read that letter. "Very honeyed phrases," said she with her odd twist of the mouth, so like her grandfather. It was from a more practised philanthropist than the young lady to whom it was addressed, and was in a strain of fulsome adulation, redolent of gratitude for favors to come. Religious and benevolent egotism is impervious to the tiny sting of sarcasm. Mrs. Chiverton looked complacently lofty, and Bessie had not now to learn how necessary to her was the incense of praise. Once this had provoked her contempt, but now she discerned a certain pathos in it; she had learnt what large opportunity the craving for homage gives to disappointment. "You cannot fail to do some good because you mean well," she said after the perusal of more letters, more papers and reports. "But don't call me heartless and unfeeling because I think that distance lends enchantment to the view of some of your pious and charitable objects."

"Oh no; I see you do not understand their necessity. I am busy at home too. I am waging a crusade against a dreadful place called Morte, and a cottage warfare with our own steward. These things do not interest Mr. Chiverton, but he gives me his support. I tell him Morte must disappear from the face of the earth, but there is a greedy old agent of Mr. Gifford's, one Blagg, who is terribly in the way. Then I have established a nursery in connection with the school, where the mothers can leave their little children when they go to work in the fields."

"Do they work in the fields hereabouts?"

"Oh yes—at hoeing, weeding and stone-picking, in hay-time and harvest. Some of them walk from Morte—four miles here and four back. There is a widow whose husband died on the home-farm—it was thought not to answer to let widows remain in the cottages—this woman had five young children, and when she moved to Morte, Mr. Chiverton kindly kept her on. I want her to live at our gates."

"And what does she earn a day?"

"Ninepence. Of course, she has help from the parish as well—two shillings a week, I think, and a loaf for each child besides."

A queer expression flitted over Bessie's face; she drew a long breath and stretched her arms above her head.

"Yes, I feel it is wrong: the widow of a laborer who died in Mr. Chiverton's service, who spends all her available strength in his service herself, ought not to be dependent on parish relief. I put it to him one day with the query, Why God had given him such great wealth? A little house, a garden, the keep of a cow, a pig, would have made all the difference in the world to her, and none to him,

except that her children might have grown up stout and healthy, instead of ill-nurtured and weakly. But you are tired. Let us go and take a few turns in the winter-garden. It is the perfection of comfort on a windy, cold day like this."

Bessie acceded with alacrity. Castlemount was not the building of one generation, but it owed its chief glories to its present master. Mr. Chiverton had found it a spacious country mansion, and had converted it into a palace of luxury and a museum of art—one reason why Morte had thriven and Chiver-Chase become almost without inhabitant. Bessie Fairfax was half bewildered amongst its magnificences, but its winter-garden was to her the greatest wonder of all. She was not, however, sufficiently acclimatized to an artificial temperature to enjoy it long. "It is delicious, but as we are not hot-house ferns, a good stretch over that upland would be, perhaps, more delicious still: it is cold, but the sun shines," she said after two turns under the moist glass.

"We must not change the air too suddenly," Mrs. Chiverton objected. "The wind is very boisterous."

"There is a woman at work in it; is it your widow?" Bessie asked, pointing down a mimic orange-grove.

"Yes—poor thing! how miserably she is clothed! I must send her out one of my knitted kerchiefs."

"Oh yes, do," said Bessie; and the woollen garment being brought, she was deputed to carry it to the weeding woman.

On closer view she proved to be a lean, laborious figure, with an anxious, weather-beaten face, which cleared a little as she received the mistress's gift. It was a kerchief of thick gray wool, to cross over in front and tie behind.

"It will be a protection against the cold for my chest; I suffered with the inflammation badly last spring," she said, approving it.

"Put it on at once; it is not to be only looked at," said Bessie.

The woman proceeded to obey, but when she wanted to tie it behind she found a difficulty from a stiffness of one shoulder, and said, "It is the rheumatics, miss; one catches it being out in the wet."

"Let me tie it for you," said Bessie.

"Thank you, miss, and thank the mistress for her goodness," said the woman when it was done, gazing curiously at the young lady. And she stooped again to her task, the wind making sport with her thin and scanty skirts.

Bessie walked farther down the grove, green in the teeth of winter. She was thinking that this poor widow, work and pain included, was not less contented with her lot than herself or than the beautiful young lady who reigned at Castlemount. Yet it was a cruelly hard lot, and might be ameliorated with very little thought. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor," says the old-fashioned text, and Bessie reflected that her proud school-fellow was in the way of earning this blessing.

She was confirmed in that opinion on the following day, when the weather was more genial, and they took a drive together in the afternoon and passed through the hamlet of Morte. It had formed itself round a dilapidated farm-house, now occupied as three tenements, in one of which lived the widow. The carriage stopped in the road, and Mrs. Chiverton got out with her companion and knocked at the door. It was opened by a shrewd-visaged, respectable old woman, and revealed a clean interior, but very indigent, with the tea-table set, and on a wooden stool by the hearth a tall, fair young woman sitting, who rose and dropt a smiling curtsey to Miss Fairfax: she was Alice, the second housemaid at Abbotsmead, and waited on the white suite. She explained that Mrs. Macky had given her leave to walk over and see her mother, but she was out at work; and this was her aunt Jane, retired from service and come to live at home with her widowed sister.

An old range well polished, an oven that would not bake, and a boiler that would not hold water, —this was the fireplace. The floor was of bricks, sunken in waves and broken; through a breach in the roof of the chamber over the "house" blew the wind and leaked the rain, in spite of a sack stuffed with straw thrust between the rafters and the tiles.

"Yes, ma'am, my poor sister has lived in this place for sixteen years, and paid the rent regularly, three pounds a year: I've sent her the money since she lost her husband," said the retired servant, in reply to some question of Mrs. Chiverton's. "Blagg is such a miser that he won't spend a penny on his places; it is promise, promise for ever. And what can my poor sister do? She dar'n't affront him, for where could she go if she was turned out of this? There's a dozen would jump at it, houses is so scarce and not to be had."

"There ought to be a swift remedy for wretches like Blagg," Mrs. Chiverton indignantly exclaimed when they were clear of the foul-smelling hamlet. "Why cannot it be an item of duty for the rural police to give information of his extortion and neglect? Those poor women are robbed, and they are utterly helpless to resist it. It is a greater crime than stealing on the highway."

"Do any of grandpapa's people live at Morte?" Bessie asked.

"No, I think not; they are ours and Mr. Gifford's, and a colony of miserable gentry who exist nobody can tell how, but half their time in jail. It was a man from Morte who shot our head-keeper last September. Poor wretch! he is waiting his trial now. When I have paid a visit to Morte I always feel indifferent to my beautiful home."

Bessie Fairfax felt a sharp pang of compunction for her former hard judgment of Mrs. Chiverton. If it was ever just, time and circumstances were already reversing it. The early twilight overtook them some miles from Castlemount, but it was still clear enough to see a picturesque ivied tower not far removed from the roadside when they passed Carisfort.

Bessie looked at it with interest. "That is not the dwelling-house—that is the keep," Mrs. Chiverton said. "The house faces the other way, and has the finest view in the country. It is an antiquated place, but people can be very good and happy there."

The coachman had slackened speed, and now stopped. A gentleman was hastening down the drive—Mr. Forbes, as it turned out on his nearer approach. The very person she was anxious to see! Mrs. Chiverton exclaimed; and they entered on a discussion of some plan proposed between them for the abolition of Morte.

"I can answer for Mr. Chiverton's consent. Mr. Gifford is the impracticable person. And of course it is Blagg's interest to oppose us. Can we buy Blagg out?" said the lady.

"No, no; that would be the triumph of iniquity. We must starve him out," said the clergyman.

More slowly there had followed a lady—Miss Burleigh, as Bessie now perceived. She came through the gate, and shook hands with Mrs. Chiverton before she saw who her companion in the carriage was, but when she recognized Bessie she came round and spoke to her very pleasantly: "Lady Augleby has gone to Scarcliffe to meet one of her daughters, and I have a fortnight's holiday, which I am spending at home. You have not been to Carisfort: it is such a pretty, dear old place! I hope you will come some day. I am never so happy anywhere as at Carisfort;" and she allowed Bessie to see that she included Mr. Forbes in the elements of her happiness there. Bessie was quite glad to be greeted in this friendly tone by Mr. Cecil Burleigh's sister; it was ever a distress to her to feel that she had hurt or vexed anybody. She returned to Castlemount in charming spirits.

On entering the drawing-room before dinner there was a new arrival—a slender little gentleman who knelt with one knee on the centre ottoman and turned over a volume of choice etchings. He moved his head, and Bessie saw a visage familiar in its strangeness. He laid the book down, advanced a step or two with a look of pleased intelligence, bowed and said, "Miss Fairfax!" Bessie had already recognized him. "Mr. Christie!" said she, and they shook hands with the utmost cordiality. The world is small and full of such surprises.

"Then you two are old acquaintances? Mr. Christie is here to paint my portrait," said Mrs. Chiverton.

The meeting was an agreeable episode in their visit. At dinner the young artist talked with his host of art, and Bessie learnt that he had seen Italy, Spain, Greece, that he had friends and patrons of distinction, and that he had earned success enough to set him above daily cares. Mr. Chiverton had a great opinion of his future, and there was no better judge in the circle of art-connoisseurs.

"Mr. Christie has an exquisite taste and refinement—feelings that are born in a man, and that no labor or pains can enable him to acquire," her host informed Bessie. It was these gifts that won him a commission for a portrait of the beautiful Mrs. Chiverton, though he was not professedly a painter of portraits.

After dinner, Miss Fairfax and he had a good talk of Beechhurst, of Harry Musgrave, and other places and persons interesting to both. Bessie asked after that drop-scene, at the Hampton theatre, and Mr. Christie, in nowise shy of early reminiscences, gave her an amusing account of how he worked at it. Then he spoke of Lady Latimer as a generous soul who had first given him a lift, and of Mr. Carnegie as another effectual helper. "He lent me a little money—I have long since paid it back," he whispered to Bessie. He was still plain, but his countenance was full of intelligence, and his air and manner were those of a perfectly simple, cultivated, travelled gentleman. He did salaam to nobody now, for in his brief commerce with the world he had learnt that genius has a rank of its own to which the noblest bow, and ambition he had none beyond excelling in his beloved art. Harry Musgrave was again, after long separation, his comrade in London. He said that he was very fond of Harry.

"He is my constant Sunday afternoon visitor," he told Bessie. "My painting-room looks to the river, and he enjoys the sunshine and the boats on the water. His own chambers are one degree less dismal than looking down a well."

"He works very hard, does he not?—Harry used to be a prodigious worker," said Bessie.

"Yes, he throws himself heart and soul into whatever he undertakes, whether it be work or pleasure. If he had won that fellowship the other day I should have been glad. It would have made him easier."

"I did not know he was trying for one. How sorry I am! It must be very dull studying law."

"He lightens that by writing articles for some paper—reviews of books chiefly. There are five years to be got through before he can be called to the bar—a long probation for a young fellow in his circumstances."

"Oh, Harry Musgrave was never impatient: he could always wait. I am pleased that he has taken to his pen. And what a resource you must be to each other in London, if only to tell your difficulties and disappointments!"

"Oh yes, I am in all Musgrave's secrets, and he in mine," said Christie. "A bachelor in chambers has not a superfluity of wants; he is short of money now and then, but that is very much the case with all of us."

Bessie laughed carelessly. "Poor Harry!" said she, and recollected the tragical and pathetic stories of the poets that they used to discuss, and of which they used to think so differently. She did not reflect how much temptation was implied in the words that told her Harry was short of money now and then. A degree of hardship to begin with was nothing more than all her heroes had encountered, and their biography had commonly succeeded in showing that they were the better for it—unless, indeed, they were so unlucky as to die of it—but Harry had far too much force of character ever to suffer himself to be beaten; in all her visions he was brave, steadfast, persistent, and triumphant. She said so to Mr. Christie, adding that they had been like brother and sister when they were children, and she felt as if she had a right to be interested in whatever concerned him. Mr. Christie looked on the carpet and said, "Yes, yes," he remembered what friends and comrades they were—almost inseparable; and he had heard Harry say, not so very long ago, that he wished Miss Fairfax was still at hand when his spirits flagged, for she used to hearten him more than anybody else ever did. Bessie was too much gratified by this reminiscence to think of asking what the discouragements were that caused Harry to wish for her.

The next day Mrs. Chiverton's portrait was begun, and the artist was as happy as the day was long. His temper was excellent unless he were interrupted at his work, and this Mr. Chiverton took care should not happen when he was at home. But one morning in his absence Mr. Gifford called on business, and was so obstinate to take no denial that Mrs. Chiverton permitted him to come and speak with her in the picture-gallery, where she was giving the artist a sitting. Bessie Fairfax, who had the tact never to be in the way, was there also, turning over his portfolio of sketches (some sketches on the beach at Yarmouth greatly interested her), but she looked up with curiosity when the visitor entered, for she knew his reputation.

He was a fat man of middle age, with a thin voice and jerky manner. "I had Forbes yesterday, Mrs. Chiverton, to speak to me in your name," he announced. "Do you know him for the officious fellow he is, for ever meddling in other people's matters? For ten years he has pestered me about Morte, which is no concern of mine."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Gifford, it is very much your concern," Mrs. Chiverton said with calm deliberation. "Eleven laborers, employed by farmers on your estate, representing with their families over thirty souls, live in hovels at Morte owned by you or your agent Blagg. They are unfit for human habitation. Mr. Chiverton has given orders for the erection of groups of cottages sufficient to house the men employed on our farms, and they will be removed to them in the spring. But Mr. Fairfax and other gentlemen who also own land in the bad neighborhood of Morte object to the hovels our men vacate being left as a harbor for the ragamuffinery of the district. They require to have them cleared away; most of these, again, are in Blagg's hands."

"The remedy is obvious: those gentlemen do not desire to be munificent at Blagg's expense—let them purchase his property. No doubt he has his price."

"Yes, Mr. Gifford, but a most extortionate price. And it is said he cannot sell without your consent."

Mr. Gifford grew very red, and with stammering elocution repelled the implication: "Blagg wants nobody's consent but his own. The fact is, the tenements pay better to keep than they would pay to sell; naturally, he prefers to keep them."

"But if you would follow Mr. Chiverton's example, and let the whole place be cleared of its more respectable inhabitants at one blow, he would lose that inducement."

Mr. Gifford laughed, amazed at this suggestion—so like a woman, as he afterwards said. "Blagg has served me many years—I have the highest respect for him. I cannot see that I am called on to conspire against his interests."

Mrs. Chiverton's countenance had lost its serenity, and would not soon recover it, but Bessie Fairfax could hardly believe her ears when the artist muttered, "Somebody take that chattering fool away;" and up he jumped, cast down his palette, and rushed out of the gallery. Mrs. Chiverton looked after him and whispered to Bessie, "What is it?" "Work over for the day," whispered Bessie again, controlling an inclination to laugh. "The temperament of genius disturbed by the intrusion of unpleasant circumstances." Mrs. Chiverton was sorry; perhaps a walk in the park would recompose the little man. There he was, tearing over the grass towards the lake. Then she turned to Mr. Gifford and resumed the discussion of Morte, with a warning of the terrible responsibility he incurred by maintaining that nest of vice and fever; but as it was barren of results it need not be continued.

The next day the painter worked without interruption.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BESSIE'S PEACEMAKING.

When Bessie Fairfax returned from Castlemount she learnt for a first piece of news that Mr. Cecil Burleigh had spent two days of her absence at Abbotsmead, and that he had only left in the morning. To this information her grandfather added that he had seen in his time unsuccessful lovers, more dejected. Bessie laughed and blushed, and said she was glad to hear he was in good spirits; and this was their first and last allusion to the crowning episode of her visit to Brentwood. The squire gave her one searching look, and thought it wisdom to be silent.

The green rides of the woods and glades of the park were all encumbered with fallen leaves. The last days of autumn were flown, and winter was come. The sound of the huntsman's horn was heard in the fields, and the squire came out in his weather-stained scarlet coat to enjoy the sport which was the greatest pleasure life had left for him. One fine soft morning at the end of November the meet was at Kirkham turnpike, and Abbotsmead entertained the gentlemen of the hunt at breakfast.

Bessie rode a little way with her grandfather, and would have ridden farther, but he sent her back with Ranby. Mr. Cecil Burleigh had once expressed a prejudice against foxhunting ladies, and when Mr. Fairfax saw his granddaughter the admiration of the miscellaneous gathering, and her acquaintance claimed by even Mr. Gifford, he adopted it. Bessie was disappointed. She liked the exercise, the vivacity of the sport, and Janey went so beautifully; but when her grandfather spoke she quietly submitted. Sir Edward Lucas, though he was charmed with her figure on horseback, was still more charmed by her obedience.

The burden of Bessie's present life threatened to be the tedium of nothing to do. She could not read, practise her songs, and learn poetry by heart all the hours of the day: less than three sufficed her often. If she had been bred in a country-house, she would have possessed numerous interests that she inevitably lacked. She was a stranger amongst the villagers—neither old nor young knew her. There was little suffering to engage her sympathy or poverty to invite her help. At Kirkham there were no long-accumulated neglects to reform as there was at Morte, and to Morte Mr. Fairfax forbade her to go. She had a liberal allowance, and not half ways enough to spend it, so she doubled her allowance to Miss Hague on behalf of her former pupils, Geoffry and Frederick; Laurence paid his own.

She was not a girl of many wants, and her taste did not incline to idle expenditure. She had seen thrift and the need of thrift in her early home, and thought money much too valuable to be wasted in buying things she did not require. Where she saw a necessity she was the freest of givers, but she had experience, gained in her rides with Mr. Carnegie, against manufacturing objects of sentimental charity.

Her resource for a little while was the study of the house and neighborhood she lived in. There was a good deal of history connected with Kirkham. But it was all contained in the county gazetteer; and when Macky had instructed her in the romance of the family, and the legends attached to the ruins by the river and the older portions of the mansion, all was learnt that there was to know, and the sum of her reflections announced aloud was, that Abbotsmead was a very big house for a small family. Macky shook her head in melancholy acquiescence.

The December days were very long, and the weather wild and stormy both by land and sea. Bessie conjectured sometimes when her uncle Frederick would come home, but it appeared presently that he was not coming. He wrote that he had laid up the Foam in one of the Danish ports to be ready for the breaking up of the winter and a further exploration of the Baltic coasts, and that he was just starting on a journey into Russia—judging that the beauty of the North is in perfection during the season of ice and snow.

"Just like one of Fred's whims!" said his father discontentedly. "As if he could not have come into Woldshire and have enjoyed the hunting! Nobody enjoyed it more than he did formerly."

He did not come, however, and Bessie was not astonished. Under other circumstances Abbotsmead might have been a cheerful house, but it seemed as if no one cared to make it cheerful now: if the days got over tranquilly, that was enough. The squire and his granddaughter dined alone day after day, Mr. Forbes relieved their monotony on Sundays, and occasionally Mr. Oliver Smith came for a night. Society was a toil to Mr. Fairfax. He did not find his house dull, and would have been surprised to know that Elizabeth did. What could she want that she had not? She had Janey to ride, and Joss, a companionable dog, to walk with; she had her carriage, and could drive to Hartwell as often as she pleased; and at her gates she had bright little Mrs. Stokes for company and excellent Mrs. Forbes for counsel. Still, Bessie felt life stagnant around her. She could not be interested in anything here without an effort. The secret of it was her hankering after the Forest, and partly also her longing for those children. To have those dear little boys over from Norminster would cheer her for the whole winter; but how to compass it? Once she thought she would bring them over without leave asked, but when she consulted Mrs. Stokes, she was assured that it would be a liberty the squire would never forgive.

"I am not afraid of being never forgiven," rejoined Bessie. "I shall do some desperate act one of these days if I am kept idle. Think of the echoes in this vast house answering only the slamming

of a door! and think of what they would have to answer if dear little unruly Justus were in the old nursery!"

Mrs. Stokes laughed: "I am only half in sympathy with you. Why did you discourage that fascinating Mr. Cecil Burleigh? A young lady is never really occupied until she is in love."

Bessie colored slightly. "Well," she said, "I am in love—I am in love with my two little boy-cousins. What do you advise? My grandfather has never mentioned them. It seems as if it would be easier to set them before him than to speak of them."

"I should not dare to do that. What does Mr. Laurence Fairfax say? What does his wife say?"

"Not much. My grandfather is treating them precisely as he treated my father and my mother—just letting them alone. And it would be so much pleasanter if we were all friends! I call it happiness thrown away. I have everything at Abbotsmead but that. It is not like a home, and the only motive there was for me to try and root there is taken away since those boys came to light."

"Your future prospects are completely changed. You bear it very well."

"It is easy to bear what I am truly thankful for. Abbotsmead is nothing to me, but those boys ought to be brought up in familiarity with the place and the people. I am a stranger, and I don't think I am very apt at making humble friends. To enjoy the life one ought to begin one's apprenticeship early. I wonder why anybody strains after rank and riches? I find them no gain at all. I still think Mr. Carnegie the best gentleman I know, and his wife as true a gentlewoman as any. You are smiling at my partiality. Shall you be shocked if I add that I have met in Woldshire grand people who, if they were not known by their titles, would be reckoned amongst the very vulgar, and gentry of old extraction who bear no brand of it but that disagreeable manner which is qualified as high-bred insolence?"

Mrs. Stokes held all the conventionalities in sincere respect. She did not understand Miss Fairfax, and asked who, then, of their acquaintance was her pattern of a perfect lady. Bessie instanced Miss Burleigh. "Her sweet graciousness is never at fault, because it is the flower of her beautiful disposition," said she.

"I should never have thought of her," said Mrs. Stokes reflectively. "She is very good. But to go back to those boys: do nothing without first speaking to Mr. Fairfax."

Bessie demurred, and still believed her own bolder device the best, but she allowed herself to be overruled, and watched for an opportunity of speaking. Undoubtedly, Mr. Fairfax loved his granddaughter with more respect for her independent will than he might have done had they been together always. He had denied her no reasonable request yet, and he granted her present prayer so readily that she was only sorry she had not preferred it earlier.

"Grandpapa, you will give me a Christmas gift, will you not?" she said one evening after dinner about a week before that festive season.

"Yes, Elizabeth. What would you like?" was his easy reply. It was a satisfaction to hear that she had a wish.

"I should like to have my two little cousins from Norminster—Justus and Laury. They would quite enliven us."

Mr. Fairfax was evidently taken by surprise. Still, he did not rebuke her audacity. He was silent for a minute or two, as if reflecting, and when he answered her it was with all the courtesy that he could have shown towards a guest for whose desires he was bound to feel the utmost deference. "Certainly, Elizabeth," said he. "You have a right to be here, as I told you at your first coming, and it would be hard that I should forbid you any visitor that would enliven you. Have the little boys, by all means, if you wish it, and make yourself as happy as you can."

Elizabeth thanked him warmly. "I will write to-morrow. Oh, I know they may come—my uncle Laurence promised me," said she. "And the day before Christmas Eve, Mrs. Betts and I will go for them. I am so glad!"

Mr. Fairfax did not check her gay exuberance, and all the house heard what was to be with unfeigned joy. Mrs. Stokes rejoiced too, and pledged her own sons as playfellows for the little visitors. And when the appointed time came, Bessie did as she had said, and made a journey to Norminster, taking Mrs. Betts with her to bring the children over. Their father and pretty young mother consented to their going with the less reluctance because it seemed the first step towards the re-establishment of kindly relations with the offended squire; and Sally was sent with them.

"Next Christmas you will come too," said Bessie, happier than any queen in the exercise of her office as peacemaker, and important also as being put in charge of those incomparable boys, for Sally was, of course, under superior orders.

The first drawback to her intense delight was a whimper from Laury as he lost sight of his mamma, and the next drawback was that Justus asked to be taken home again the moment the train reached Mitford Junction. These little troubles were quickly composed, however, though liable, of course, to break out again; and Bessie felt flushed and uneasy lest the darling boys should fail of making a pleasant first impression on grandpapa. Alas for her disquiets! She need have felt none. Jonquil received her at the door with a sad countenance; and Macky, as she came forward to welcome the little gentlemen, betrayed that her temper had been tried even to tears

not very long before. Jonquil did not wait to be inquired of respecting his master, but immediately began to say, in reply to his young lady's look of troubled amazement, "The squire, miss, has gone on a journey. I was to tell you that he had left you the house to yourself."

"Gone on a journey? But he will return before night?" said Bessie.

"No, miss. We are to expect him this day week, when Mr. Laurence's children have gone back to Norminster," explained the old servant in a lower voice.

Bessie comprehended the whole case instantly. Macky was relieving her pent feelings by making a fuss with the little boys, and giving Mrs. Betts her mind on the matter. The group stood disconcerted in the hall for several minutes, the door open and the low winter sun shining upon them. Bessie did not speak—she could not. She gazed at the children, pale herself and trembling all over. Justus began to ask where was grandpapa, and Laury repeated his question like a lisping echo. There was no answer to give them, but they were soon pacified in the old nursery where their father had played, and were made quite happy with a grand parade of new toys on the floor, expressly provided for the occasion. Bed-time came early, and Bessie was relieved when it did come. Never in the whole course of her life had she felt so hurt, so insulted, so injured; and yet she was pained, intensely pained, for the old man too. Perhaps he had meant her to be so, and that was her punishment. Jonquil could give her no information as to whither his master had gone, but he offered a conjecture that he had most probably gone up to London.

If it was any comfort to know that the old servants of the house sympathized with her, Bessie had that. They threw themselves heart and soul into the work of promoting the pleasure of the little visitors. Jonquil proved an excellent substitute for grandpapa, and Macky turned out an inexhaustible treasury of nice harmless things to eat, of funny rhymes to sing, and funny stories to tell in a dramatic manner. Still, it was a holiday spoilt. It was not enjoyed in the servants' hall nor in the housekeeper's room. No amount of Yule logs or Yule cakes could make a merry Christmas of it that year. All the neighbors had heard with satisfaction that Mr. Fairfax's little grandsons were to be brought to Abbotsmead, and such as had children made a point of coming over with them, so that the way in which Miss Fairfax's effort at peacemaking had failed was soon generally known, and as generally disapproved. Mrs. Stokes, that indignant young matron, qualified the squire's behavior as "Quite abominable!" but she declared that she would not vex herself if she were Miss Fairfax—"No, indeed!" Bessie tried hard not. She tried to be dignified, but her disappointment was too acute, and her grandfather's usage of her too humiliating, to be borne with her ordinary philosophy.

She let her uncle Laurence know what had happened by letter, and on the day fixed for the children to go home again she went with them, attended by Mrs. Betts as before. Mr. Laurence Fairfax was half amused at the method by which his father had evaded Bessie's bold attempt to rule him, and his blossom of a wife was much too happy to care for the old squire's perversity unless he cared; but they were both sorry for Bessie.

"My grandfather lets me have everything but what I want," she said with a tinge of rueful humor. "He surrounds me with every luxury, and denies me the drink of cold water that I thirst for. I wish I could escape from his tyranny. We were beginning to be friends, and this has undone it all. A refusal would not have been half so unkind."

"There is nothing but time to trust to," said her uncle Laurence. "My father's resentment is not active, but it lasts."

Bessie was quite alone that long evening, the last of the old year: at Beechhurst or at Brook there was certainly a party. Nor had she any intimation of the time of her grandfather's return beyond what Jonquil had been able to give her a week ago. He had not written since he left, and an accumulation of letters awaited him in his private room, Jonquil having been unable to forward any for want of an address. The dull routine of the house proceeded for three days more, and then the master reappeared at luncheon without notice to anybody.

Mr. Fairfax took his seat at the table, ate hungrily, and looked so exactly like himself, and so unconscious of having done anything to provoke anger, to give pain or cause anxiety, that Bessie's imaginary difficulties in anticipation of his return were instantly removed. He made polite inquiries after Janey and Joss, and even hoped that Bessie had been enlivened by her little cousins' visit. She would certainly not have mentioned them if he had not, but, as he asked the question, she was not afraid to answer him.

"Yes," said she, "children are always good company to me, especially boys; and they behaved so nicely, though they are very high-spirited, that I don't think they would have been inconvenient if you had stayed at home."

"Indeed? I am glad to hear they are being well brought up," said the squire; and then he turned to Jonquil and asked for his letters.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ABBOTSMEAD IN SHADOW.

Mr. Fairfax's letters were brought to him, and after glancing cursorily through the batch, he gathered them all up and went off to his private room. Bessie conjectured that he would be busy for the rest of the afternoon, and she took a walk in the park until dusk, when she returned to the house and retired to her own parlor. The dressing-bell rang at a quarter to seven, as usual, and Mrs. Betts came to assist at her young lady's toilet. Being dressed, Bessie descended to the octagon room, which she found empty.

It was a fine, frosty night, and the sky was full of stars. She put aside a curtain and looked out into the wintry garden, feeling more than ever alone and desolate amidst the grandeur of her home. It seemed as if the last unkindness she had suffered was the worst of all, and her heart yearned painfully towards her friends in the Forest. Oh, for their simple, warm affection! She would have liked to be sitting with her mother in the old-fashioned dining-room at Beechhurst, listening for the doctor's return and the clink of Miss Hoyden's hoofs on the hard frozen road, as they had listened often in the winters long ago. She forgot herself in that reverie, and scarcely noticed that the door had been opened and shut again until her grandfather spoke from the hearth, saying that Jonquil had announced dinner.

The amiable disposition in which the squire had come home appeared to have passed off completely. Bessie had seen him often crabbed and sarcastic, but never so irritable as he was that evening. Nothing went right, from the soup to the dessert, and Jonquil even stirred the fire amiss. Some matter in his correspondence had put him out. But as he made no allusion to his grievance, Bessie was of course blind and deaf to his untoward symptoms. The next day he went to Norminster to see Mr. John Short, and came back in no better humor—in a worse humor if possible—and Mrs. Stokes whispered to Bessie the explanation of it.

Mr. Fairfax had inherited a lawsuit with a small estate in Durham, bequeathed to him by a distant connexion, and this suit, after being for years a blister on his peace, had been finally decided against him. The estate was lost, and the plague of the suit with it, but there were large costs to pay and the time was inconvenient.

"Your grandfather contributed heavily to the election of Mr. Cecil Burleigh in the prospect of an event which it seems is not to be," concluded the little lady with reproachful significance. "My Arthur told me all about it (Mr. Fairfax consults him on everything); and now there are I don't know how many thousands to pay in the shape of back rents, interest, and costs, but it is an immense sum."

Bessie was sorry, very sorry, and showed it with so much sense and sympathy that her grandfather presently revealed his vexations to her himself, and having once mentioned them, he found her a resource to complain to again. She hoped that he would get over his defeat the sooner for talking of it, but he did not. He was utterly convinced that he had right on his side, and he wanted a new trial, from which Mr. John Short could hardly dissuade him. The root of his profound annoyance was that Abbotsmead must be encumbered to pay for the lost suit, unless his son Frederick, who had ready money accumulated from the unspent fortune of his wife, would come to the rescue. In answer to his father's appeal Frederick wrote back that a certain considerable sum which he mentioned was at his service, but as for the bulk of his wife's fortune, he intended it to revert to her family. Mr. Laurence Fairfax made, through the lawyer, an offer of further help to keep Abbotsmead clear of mortgages, and with the bitter remark that it was Laurence's interest to do so, the squire accepted his offer.

So much at this crisis did Bessie hear of money and the burden and anxiety of great estates that she thought poverty must be far preferable. The squire developed a positively bad temper under his worries. And he was not irritable only: by degrees he became ill, and yet would have no advice. Jonquil was greatly troubled about him, and when he refused to mount his horse one splendid hunting morning in February, though he was all equipped and ready, Bessie also began to wonder what ailed him besides crossness, for he was a man of strong constitution and not subject to fanciful infirmities.

Early in March, Mr. Frederick Fairfax wrote home that his Russian tour was accomplished, and that he was impatient to be on board his yacht again. The weather was exceedingly rough and tempestuous later in the month, and the squire, watching the wrack of the storm on the wolds, often expressed anxiety lest his son should be rash and venturesome enough to trust himself out of port in such weather. Everybody was relieved when April opened with sunny showers and the long and severe winter seemed to be at an end. It had not made Bessie more in love with her life at Abbotsmead: there had, indeed, been times of inexpressible dreariness in it very trying to her fortitude. With the dawning of brighter days in spring she could not but think of the Forest with fresh longing, and she watched each morning's post for the arrival of that invitation to Fairfield which Lady Latimer had promised to send. At length it came, and after brief demur received a favorable answer. The squire had a mortified consciousness that his granddaughter's life was not very cheerful, and, though he did not refuse her wish, he was unable to grant it heartily. However, the fact of his consent overcame the manner of it, and Bessie was enjoying the pleasures of anticipation, and writing ecstatically to her mother, when an event happened that threw Abbotsmead into mourning and changed the bent even of her desires.

One chilly evening after dinner, when she had retreated to the octagon parlor, and was dreaming by the fireside in the dusk alone, Jonquil, with visage white as a ghost, ushered in Mr. John Short. He had walked over from Mitford Junction, in the absence of any vehicle to bring him on, and was jaded and depressed, though with an air of forced composure. As Jonquil withdrew to seek his master the lawyer advanced into the firelight, and Bessie saw at once that he came on some sad

errand. Her grandfather had gone, she believed, to look after his favorite hunter, which had met with a severe sprain a week ago; but she was not sure, for he had been more and more restless for some time past, had taken to walking at unaccustomed hours, to neglecting his correspondence, leaving letters for days unopened, and betraying various other signs of a mind unsettled and disturbed. It had appeared to Bessie that he was always in a state of distressed expectancy, but what for she had no idea. The appearance of Mr. John Short without previous notice suggested new vexation connected with the lawsuit, but when she asked if he were again the messenger of bad news, he startled her with a much more tragical announcement.

"I am sorry to say that I am, Miss Fairfax. Mr. Frederick has not lived much at home of late years, but I fear that it will be a terrible shock to his father to hear that he is lost," said Mr. John Short.

"Lost!" echoed Bessie. "Lost! Oh where? Poor grandpapa!"

"On the Danish coast. His yacht was wrecked in one of the gales of last month, and all on board perished. The washing ashore of portions of the wreck leaves no doubt of the disaster. The consul at the nearest port communicated with the authorities in London, and the intelligence reached me some days ago in a form that left little to hope. This morning the worst was confirmed."

Bessie sat down feeling inexpressibly sorrowful. "Grandpapa is out somewhere—Jonquil is seeking him. Oh, how I wish I could be more of a help and comfort to him!" she said, raising her eyes to the lawyer's face.

"It is a singular thing, Miss Fairfax, but your grandfather never seems to want help or comfort like other men. He shuts himself up and broods—just broods—when he is grieved or angry. He was very genial and pleasant as a young man, but he had a disappointment of the affections that quite soured him. I do not know that he ever made a friend of any one but his sister Dorothy. They were on the Continent for a year after that affair, and she died in Italy. He was a changed man when he came home, and he married a woman of good family, but nobody was, perhaps, more of a stranger to him than his own wife. It was generally remarked. And he seemed to care as little for her children as he did for her. I have often been surprised to see that he was indifferent whether they came to Abbotsmead or not; yet the death of Mr. Geoffry, your father, hurt him severely, and Mr. Frederick's will be no less a pain."

"I wish I had not vexed him about my uncle Laurence's boys. We were becoming good friends before," said Bessie.

"Oh, the squire will not bear malice for that. He discriminates between the generosity of your intention towards the children, and what he probably mistook for a will to rule himself. He acted very perversely in going out of the way."

"Does my uncle Laurence know the news you bring?"

"Yes, but he desired me to be the first medium of it. Jonquil is a long while seeking his master."

A very long while. So long that Bessie rang the bell to inquire, and the little page answered it. The master was not come in, he said; they had sent every way to find him. Bessie rose in haste, and followed by Mr. John Short went along the passage to her grandfather's private room. That was dark and empty, and so was the lobby by which it communicated with the garden and the way to the stables. She was just turning back when she bethought her to open the outer door, and there, at the foot of the steps on the gravel-walk, lay the squire. She did not scream nor cry, but ran down and helped to carry him in, holding his white head tenderly. For a minute they laid him on the couch in the justice-room, and servants came running with lights.

"It is not death," said Mrs. Betts, peering close in the unconscious face. "The fire is out here: we will move him to his chamber at once."

As they raised him again one stiffened hand that clutched a letter relaxed and dropped it. The lawyer picked it up and gave it to Miss Fairfax. It was a week old—a sort of official letter recording the wreck of the Foam and the loss of her crew. The suddenness and tragical character of the news had been too much for the poor father. In the shock of it he had apparently staggered into the air and had fallen unconscious, smitten with paralysis. Such was the verdict of Mr. Wilson, the general practitioner at Mitford, who arrived first upon the scene, and Dr. Marks, the experienced physician from Norminster, who came in the early morning, supported his opinion. The latter was a stranger to the house, and before he left it he asked to see Miss Fairfax.

The night had got over between waiting and watching, and Bessie had not slept—had not even lain down to rest. She begged that Dr. Marks might be shown to her parlor, and Mr. John Short appeared with him. Mrs. Betts had put over her shoulders a white cachemire wrapper, and with her fair hair loosened and flowing she sat by the window over-looking the fields and the river where the misty morning was breaking slowly into sunshine. Both the gentlemen were impressed by a certain power in her, a fortitude and gentleness combined that are a woman's best strength in times of trouble and difficulty. They could speak to her without fear of creating fresh embarrassment as plainly as it was desirable that they should speak, for she was manifestly aware of a responsibility devolving upon her.

"Though I apprehend no immediate danger, Miss Fairfax, it is to be regretted that this sad moment finds Mr. Fairfax at variance with his only surviving son," said Dr. Marks. "Mr. Laurence Fairfax ought to be here. It is probable that his father has not made a final disposition of his affairs; indeed, I understand from Mr. John Short that he has not done so."

"Oh, does that matter now?" said Bessie.

"Mr. Fairfax's recovery might be promoted if his mind were quite at ease. If he should wish to transact any business with his lawyer, you may be required to speak of your own wishes. Do not waste the favorable moment. The stroke has not been severe, and I have good hopes of restoration, but when the patient is verging on seventy we can never be sure."

Dr. Marks went away, leaving Mr. Wilson to watch the case. Mr. John Short then explained to Bessie the need there was that she should be prepared for any event: a rally of consciousness was what he hoped for, perfect, whether tending to recovery or the precursor of dissolution. For he knew of no will that Mr. Frederick had made, and he knew that since the discovery of Mr. Laurence's marriage the squire had destroyed the last will of his own making, and that he had not even drawn out a rough scheme of his further intentions. The entailed estates were of course inalienable—those must pass to his son and his son's son—but there were houses and lands besides over which he had the power of settlement. Bessie listened, but found it very hard to give her mind to these considerations, and said so.

"My uncle Laurence is the person to talk to," she suggested.

"Probably he will arrive before the day is over, but you are to be thought of, you are to be provided for, Miss Fairfax."

"Oh, I don't care for myself at all," said Bessie.

"The more need, then, that some one else should care for you," replied Mr. John Short.

Inquirers daily besieged Abbotsmead for news of the squire. Mr. Laurence Fairfax came over, and Mr. John Short stayed on, expecting his opportunity, while slowly the old man recovered up to a certain point. But his constitution was permanently weakened and his speech indistinct. Jonquil, Macky, and Mrs. Betts were his nurses, and the first person that he was understood to ask for was Elizabeth. Bessie was so glad of his recollection that she went to him with a bright face—the first bright face that had come about his bed yet—and he was evidently pleased. She took up one of his hands and stroked and kissed it, and knelt down to bring herself nearer to him, all with that affectionate kindness that his life had missed ever since his sister Dorothy died.

"You are better, grandpapa; you will soon be up and out of doors again," said she cheerfully.

He gave her no answer, but lay composed with his eyes resting upon her. It was doubtful whether the cause of his illness had recurred to his weakened memory, for he had not attempted to speak of it. She went on to tell him what friends and neighbors had been to ask after his health—Mr. Chiverton, Sir Edward Lucas, Mr. Oliver Smith—and what letters to the same purport she had received from Lady Latimer, Lady Angleby, Mr. Cecil Burleigh, and others, to which she had replied. He acknowledged each item of her information with a glance, but he made no return inquiries.

Mr. Chiverton had called that day, and the form in which he carried intelligence home to his wife was, "Poor Fairfax will not die of this bout, but he has got his first warning."

Mrs. Chiverton was sorry, but she did not refrain from speculating on how Miss Fairfax would be influenced in her fortunes by the triple catastrophe of her uncle Laurence's marriage, her uncle Frederick's death, and her grandfather's impending demise. "I suppose if Mr. Laurence were unmarried, as all the world believed him to be, she would stand now as the greatest prospective heiress in this part of the county. If it was her fortune Mr. Cecil Burleigh wanted, he has had a deliverance."

"I am far from sure that Burleigh thinks so," returned Mr. Chiverton significantly.

"Oh, I imagined that projected marriage was one of convenience, a family compact."

"In the first instance so it was. But the young lady's rosy simplicity caught Burleigh's fancy, and it is still in the power of Mr. Fairfax to make his granddaughter rich."

Whether Mr. Fairfax would make his granddaughter rich was debated in circles where it was not a personal interest, but of course it was discussed with much livelier vivacity where it was. Lady Angleby expressed a confident expectation that as Miss Fairfax had been latterly brought up in anticipation of heiress-ship, her grandfather would endow her with a noble fortune, and Miss Burleigh, with ulterior views for her brother, ventured to hope the same. But Mr. Fairfax was in no haste to set his house in order. He saw his son Laurence for a few minutes twice, but gave him no encouragement to linger at Abbotsmead, and his reply to Mr. John Short on the only occasion when he openly approached the subject of will-making was, "There is time enough yet."

The household was put into mourning, but as there was no bringing home of the dead and no funeral, the event of the eldest son's death passed with little outward mark. Elizabeth was her grandfather's chief companion in-doors, and she was cheerful for his sake under circumstances that were tryingly oppressive. To keep up to her duty she rode daily, rain or fair, and towards the month's end there were many soft, wet days when all the wolds were wrapt in mist. People watched her go by often, with Joss at Janey's heels, and Ranby following behind, and said they were sorry for Miss Fairfax; it was very sad for so young a girl to have to bear, unsupported, the burden of her grandfather's declining old age. For the squire was still consistent in his obstinacy in refusing to be gracious to his son and his son's wife and children, and Bessie, on her uncle

Laurence's advice, refrained from mentioning them any more. Old Jonquil alone had greater courage.

One evening the squire, after lying long silent, broke out with, "Poor Fred is gone!" the first spontaneous allusion to his loss that he had made.

Jonquil hastened to him. "My dear master, my dear master!" he lamented. "Oh, sir, you have but one son now! forgive him, and let the little boys come home—for your own sake, dear master."

"They will come home, as you call it, when I follow poor Fred. My son Laurence stands in no need of forgiveness—he has done me no wrong. Strange women and children would be in my way; they are better where they are." Thus had the squire once answered every plea on behalf of his son Geoffry. Jonquil remembered very well, and held his peace, sighing as one without hope.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DIPLOMATIC.

Bessie Fairfax gave up her visit to the Forest of her own accord in her pitying reluctance to leave her grandfather. She wrote to Lady Latimer, and to her mother more at length. They were disappointed, but not surprised.

"Now they will prove what she is—a downright good girl, not an atom of selfishness about her," said Mr. Carnegie to his wife with tender triumph.

"Yes, God bless her! Bessie will wear well in trouble, but I am very wishful to see her, and hear her own voice about that gentleman Lady Latimer talked of." Lady Latimer had made a communication to the doctor's wife respecting Mr. Cecil Burleigh.

Mr. Carnegie had nothing to advise. He felt tolerably sure that Bessie would tell her mother every serious matter that befell her, and as she had not mentioned this he drew the inference that it was not serious.

The first warm days of summer saw Mr. Fairfax out again, walking in the garden with a stick and the support of his granddaughter's shoulder. She was an excellent and patient companion, he said. Indeed, Bessie could forget herself entirely in another's want, and since this claim for care and helpfulness had been made upon her the tedium of life oppressed her no more. It was thus that Mr. Cecil Burleigh next saw her again. He had taken his seat in the House, and had come down to Brentwood for a few days; and when he called to visit his old friend, Jonquil sent him round to the south terrace, where Mr. Fairfax was walking with Bessie in the sun.

In her black dress Bessie looked taller, more womanly, and there was a sweet peace and kindness in her countenance, which, combined with a sudden blush at the sight of him, caused him to discover in her new graces and a more touching beauty than he had been able to discern before. Mr. Fairfax was very glad to see him, and interested to hear all he had to tell. Since he had learnt to appreciate at their real worth his granddaughter's homely virtues, his desire for her union with this gentleman had revived. He had the highest opinion of Mr. Cecil Burleigh's disposition, and he would be thankful to put her in his keeping—a jewel worth having.

Presently Bessie was released from her attendance, and the visitor took her place: her grandfather wished to speak to Mr. Cecil Burleigh alone. He began by reverting to the old project of their marriage, and was easily satisfied with an assurance that the gentleman desired it with all his heart. Miss Julia Gardiner's wedding had not yet taken place. She had been delicate through the winter, and Mr. Brotherton had succumbed to a sharp attack of gout in the early spring. So there had been delay after delay, but the engagement continued in force, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh had not repeated his indecorous visit. He believed that he was quite weaned from that temptation.

Mr. Fairfax gave him every encouragement to renew his siege to Elizabeth, and promised him a dower with her if he succeeded that should compensate for her loss of position as heiress of Abbotsmead. It was an understood thing that Mr. Cecil Burleigh could not afford to marry a scantily-portioned wife, and a whisper got abroad that Miss Fairfax was to prosper in her fortunes as she behaved, and to be rich or poor according as she married to please her grandfather or persevered in refusing his choice. If Bessie heard it, she behaved as though she heard it not. She went on being good to the old man with a most complete and unconscious self-denial—read to him, wrote for him, walked and drove with him at his will and pleasure, which began to be marked with all the exacting caprice of senility. And the days, weeks, months slipped round again to golden September. Monotony abridges time, and, looking behind her, Bessie could hardly believe that it was over a year ago since she came home from France.

One day her grandfather observed or imagined that she looked paler than her wont. He had a letter in his hand, which he gave to her, saying, "You were disappointed of your visit to Fairfield in the spring, Elizabeth: would you like to go now? Lady Latimer renews her invitation, and I will spare you for a week or two."

Oh, the surprise and delight of this unexpected bounty! Bessie blushed with gratitude. She was

the most grateful soul alive, and for the smallest mercies. Lady Latimer wrote that she should not find Fairfield dull, for Dora Meadows was on a long stay there, and she expected her friend Mr. Logger, and probably other visitors. Mr. Fairfax watched his granddaughter narrowly through the perusal of the document. There could be no denial that she was eagerness itself to go, but whether she had any motive deeper than the renewal of love with the family amidst which she had been brought up, he could not ascertain. There was a great jealousy in his mind concerning that young Musgrave of whose visit to Bayeux Mr. Cecil Burleigh had told him, and a settled purpose to hinder Elizabeth from what he would have called an unequal match. At the same time that he would not force her will, he would have felt fully justified in thwarting it; but he had a hope that the romance of her childish memories would fade at contact with present realities. Lady Latimer had suggested this possible solution of a difficulty, and Lady Angleby had supported her, and had agreed that it was time now to give Mr. Cecil Burleigh a new opportunity of urging his suit, and the coy young lady a chance of comparing him with those whom her affection and imagination had invested with greater attractions. There was feminine diplomacy in this, and the joyful accident that appeared to Bessie a piece of spontaneous kindness and good-fortune was the result of a well-laid and well-matured plan. However, as she remained in blissful ignorance of the design, there was no shadow forecast upon her pleasure, and she prepared for a fortnight's absence with satisfaction unalloyed.

"You are quite sure you will not miss me, grandpapa—quite sure you can do without me?" she affectionately pleaded.

"Yes, yes, I can do without you. I shall miss you, and shall be glad to see you home again, but you have deserved your holiday, and Lady Latimer might feel hurt if I refused to let you go."

Before leaving Woldshire, Bessie went to Norminster. The old house in Minster Court was more delightful to her than ever. There was another little boy in the nursery now, called Richard, after his grandfather. Bessie had to seek Mrs. Laurence Fairfax at the Manor House, where Lady Eden was celebrating the birthday of her eldest son. She was seated in the garden conversing with a young Mrs. Tindal, amidst a group of mothers besides, whose children were at play on the grass. Mr. Laurence Fairfax was a man of philosophic benevolence, and when advances were made to his wife (who had a sense and cleverness beyond anything that could have been expected in anything so bewilderingly pretty) by ladies of the rank to which he had raised her, he met them with courtesy, and she had now two friends in Lady Eden and Mrs. Tindal, whose society she especially enjoyed, because they all had babies and nearly of an age. Bessie told her grandfather where and in what company she had found her little cousins and their mother. The squire was silent, but he was not affronted. No results, however, came of her information, and she left Abbotsmead the next morning without any further reference to the family in Minster Court.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SUNDAY MORNING AT BEECHHURST.

Bessie Fairfax arrived at Fairfield late on Saturday night, and had the warmest welcome from Lady Latimer. They were only four at dinner. Mr. Logger and Dora Meadows made up the quartette, and as she was tired with her journey, and the conversation both at table and in the drawing-room was literary and political, she was thankful to be dismissed to her room at an early hour. It was difficult to believe that she was actually within two miles of home. She could see nothing from her window for the night-dews, and she woke on Sunday morning to a thick Forest mist; but by nine o'clock it had cleared, and it was a sumptuous day. She was full of happy excitement, and proposed to set off betimes and walk to church. Lady Latimer, in her most complacent humor, bade her do exactly what she liked: there was Dora to accompany her if she walked, or there was room in the carriage that would convey herself and Mr. Logger.

The young ladies preferred to walk. Bessie had ridden that road with Mr. Carnegie many and many a time, but had walked it seldom, for there were short cuts through the brushwood and heather that she was wont to pursue in her gypsy excursions with the doctor's boys. But these were not paths for Sunday. She recollected going along that road with Lady Latimer and her grandfather sorely against her inclination, and returning by the same way with her grandfather and Mr. Wiley, when the rector, admonishing her on the virtue of humility, roused her pride and ire by his reminder of the lowly occupations to which her early patronesses had destined her. She laughed to herself, but she blushed too, for the recollection was not altogether agreeable.

As they drew near to Beechhurst one familiar spot after another called her attention. Then the church-bells began to ring for morning service, and they were at the entrance of the town-street, with its little bow-windowed shops shut up, and its pretty thatched cottages half buried in flowery gardens that made sweet the air. Bessie's heart beat fast and faster as she recognized one old acquaintance after another. Some looked at her and looked again, and did not know her, but most of those she remembered had a nod, a smile, or a kind word for her, and she smiled on all. They all seemed like friends. Now Miss Wort rushed out of her gate and rushed back, something necessary forgotten—gloves or prayer-book probably. Then the school-children swarmed forth like bees from a hive, loudly exhorted to peaceable behavior by jolly Miss Buff, who was too much absorbed in her duty of marshalling them in order to walk the twenty yards to church to see her young friend at first, but cried out in a gust of enthusiasm when she did see her, "Oh, you dear

little Bessie! who would have thought it? I never heard you were coming. What a surprise for them all! They will be delighted."

"I am staying at Fairfield," said Bessie. "There had been so many disappointments before that I would not promise again. But here I am, and it seems almost too good to be true."

"Here you are, and a picture of health and beauty; you don't mind my telling you that? Nobody can say Woldshire disagrees with you."

They walked on. They came in sight of the "King's Arms"—of the doctor's house. "There is dear old Jack in the porch," said Bessie; and Miss Buff, with a kind, sympathetic nod, turned off to the church gate and left her. Jack marched down the path and Willie followed. Then Mrs. Carnegie appeared, hustling dilatory Tom before her, and leading by the hand Polly, a little white-frocked girl of nine. As they issued into the road Bessie stepped more quickly forward. The boys stared at the elegant young lady in mourning, and even her mother gazed for one moment with grave, unrecognizing scrutiny. It was but for one moment, and then the flooded blue eyes and tremulous lips revealed who it was.

"Why, it is our Bessie!" cried Jack, and sprang at her with a shout, quite forgetful of Sunday sobriety.

"Oh, Jack! But you are taller than I am now," said she, arresting his rough embrace and giving her hand to her mother. They kissed each other, and, deferring all explanations, Bessie whispered, "May I come home with you after service and spend the day?"

"Yes, yes—father will be in then. He has had to go to Mrs. Christie: Mr. Robb has been attending her lately, but the moment she is worse nothing will pacify her but seeing her old doctor."

They crossed the road to the church in a group. Mr. Phipps came up at the moment, grotesque and sharp as ever. "Cinderella!" exclaimed he, lifting his hat with ceremonious politeness. "But where is the prince?" looking round and feigning surprise.

"Oh, the prince has not come yet," said Bessie with her beautiful blush.

Mrs. Carnegie emitted a gentle sound, calling everybody to order, and they entered the church. Bessie halted at the Carnegie pew, but the children filled it, and as she knew those boys were only kept quiet during service by maternal control, she passed on to the Fairfield pew in the chancel, where Dora Meadows was already ensconced. Lady Latimer presently arrived alone: Mr. Logger had committed himself to an opinion that it was a shame to waste such a glorious morning in church, and had declined, at the last moment, to come. He preferred to criticise preachers without hearing them.

The congregation was much fuller than Bessie remembered it formerly. Beechhurst had reconciled itself to its pastor, and had found him not so very bad after all. There was no other church within easy reach, divine worship could not, with safety, be neglected altogether, and the aversion with which he was regarded did not prove invincible. It was the interest of the respectable church-people to get over it, and they had got over it, pleading in extenuation of their indulgence that, in the first place, the rector was a fixture, and in the second that his want of social tact was his misfortune rather than his fault, and a clergyman might have even worse defects than that. Lady Latimer, Admiral Parkins, Mr. Musgrave, and Miss Wort had supported him in his office from the first, and now Mr. Phipps and Mr. Carnegie did not systematically absent themselves from his religious ministrations.

The programme of the service, so to speak, was also considerably enlarged since Bessie Fairfax went away. There was a nice-looking curate whom she recollected as one of the rector's private pupils—Mr. Duffer. There were twelve men and boys in white raiment, and Miss Buff, presiding at the new organ with more than her ancient courage, executed ambitious music that caused strangers and visitors to look up at the loft and inquire who the organist was. Players and singers were not always agreed, but no one could say otherwise than that, for a country church, the performance was truly remarkable; and in the *Hampton Chronicle*, when an account was given of special services, gratifying mention was invariably made of Miss Buff as having presided at the organ with her usual ability. Bessie hardly knew whether to laugh or cry as she listened. Lady Latimer wore a countenance of ineffable patience. She had fought the ground inch by inch with the choral party in the congregation, and inch by inch had lost it. The responses went first, then the psalms, and this prolonged the service so seriously that twice she walked out of the church during the pause before sermon; but being pastorally condoled with on the infirmities inseparable from years which prevented her sitting through the discourse, she warmly denied the existence of any such infirmities, and the following Sunday she stayed to the end. For the latest innovation Beechhurst was indebted to the young curate, who had a round full voice. He would intone the prayers. By this time my lady was tired of clerical vanities, and only remarked, with a little disdain in her voice, that Mr. Duffer's proper place was Whitchester Cathedral.

When service was over Bessie whispered to her hostess the engagement she had made for herself during the rest of the day. My lady gloomed for an instant, and then assented, but Bessie ought to have asked her leave. The two elder boys were waiting at the church-door as Bessie came out, and snatched each a daintily gloved hand to conduct her home.

"Mother has gone on first to warn father," Jack announced; and missing other friends—the Musgraves, Mittens, and Semples, to wit—she allowed herself to be led in triumph across the

road and up the garden-walk, the garden gay as ever with late-blooming roses and as fragrant of mignonette.

When she reached the porch she was all trembling. There was her mother, rather flushed, with her bonnet-strings untied, and her father appearing from the dining-parlor, where the table was spread for the family dinner, just as of old.

"This is as it should be; and how are you, my dear?" said Mr. Carnegie, drawing her affectionately to him.

"Is there any need to ask, Thomas? Could she have looked bonnier if she had never left us?" said his wife fondly.

Blushing, beaming, laughing, Bessie came in. How small the house seemed, and how full! There was young Christie's picture of her smiling above the mantelpiece, there was the doctor's old bureau and the old leathern chair. Bridget and the younger branches appeared, some of them shy of Bessie, and Totty particularly, who was the baby when she went away. They crowded the stairs, the narrow hall. "Make room there!" cried Jack, imperative amidst the fuss; and her mother conveyed the trembling girl up to her own dear old triangular nest under the thatch. The books, the watery miniatures, the Oriental bowl and dishes were all in their places. "Oh, mother, how happy I am to see it again!" cried she. And they had a few tears to wink away, and with them the fancied forgetfulnesses of the absent years.

It was a noisy dinner in comparison with the serene dulness Bessie was used to, but not noisier than it was entitled to be with seven children at table, ranging from four to fourteen, for Sunday was the one day of the week when Mr. Carnegie dined with his children, and it was his good pleasure to dine with them all. So many bright faces and white pinafores were a sweet spectacle to Bessie, who was so merry that Totty was quite tamed by the time the dessert of ripe fruit came; and would sit on "Sissy's" lap, and apply juicy grapes to "Sissy's" lips—then as "Sissy" opened them, suddenly popped the purple globes into her own little mouth, which made everybody laugh, and was evidently a good old family joke.

Dinner over, Mr. Carnegie adjourned to his study, where his practice was to make up for short and often disturbed nights by an innocent nap on Sunday afternoon. "We will go into the drawing-room, Bessie, as we always do. Totty says a hymn with the others now, and will soon begin to say her catechism, God bless her!" Thus Mrs. Carnegie.

Bessie had now a boy clinging to either arm. They put her down in a corner of the sofa, their mother occupying the other, and Totty throned between them. There was a little desultory talk and seeking of places, and then the four elder children, standing round the table, read a chapter, verse for verse. Then followed the recitation of the catechism in that queer, mechanical gabble that Bessie recollected so well. "If you stop to think you are sure to break down," was still the warning. After that Jack said the collect and epistle for the day, and Willie and Tom said the gospel, and the lesser ones said psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and by the time this duty was accomplished Bridget had done dinner, and arrived in holiday gown and ribbons to resume her charge. In a few minutes Bessie was left alone with her mother. The boys went to consult a favorite pear-tree in the orchard, and as Jack was seen an hour or two later perched aloft amongst its gnarled branches with a book, it is probable that he chose that retreat to pursue undisturbed his seafaring studies by means of Marryat's novels.

"I like to keep up old-fashioned customs, Bessie," said her mother. "I know the dear children have been taught their duty, and if they forget it sometimes there is always a hope they may return. Mrs. Wiley and Lady Latimer have asked for them to attend the Bible classes, but their father was strongly against it; and I think, with him, that if they are not quite so cleverly taught at home, there is a feeling in having learnt at their mother's knees which will stay by them longer. It is growing quite common for young ladies in Beechhurst to have classes in the evening for servant-girls and others, but I cannot say I favor them: the girls get together gossipping and stopping out late, and the teachers are so set up with notions of superior piety that they are quite spoilt. And they do break out in the ugliest hats and clothes—faster than the gayest of the young ladies who don't pretend to be so over-righteous. You have not fallen into that way, dear Bessie?"

"Oh no. I do not even teach in the Sunday-school at Kirkham. It is very small. Mr. Forbes does not encourage the attendance of children whose parents are able to instruct them themselves."

"I am glad to hear it. I do not approve of this system of relieving parents of their private duties. Mr. Wiley carries it to excess, and will not permit any poor woman to become a member of the coal-and-clothing club who does not send her children to Sunday-school: the doctor has refused his subscription in consequence, and divides it amongst the recusants. For a specimen of Miss Myra Robb's evening-class teaching we have a girl who provokes Bridget almost past her patience: she cannot say her duty to her neighbor in the catechism, and her practice of it is so imperfect that your father begs me, the next time I engage a scullery-wench, to ascertain that she is not infected with the offensive pious conceit that distinguishes poor Eliza. Our own dear children are affectionate and good, on the whole. Jack has made up his mind to the sea, and Willie professes that he will be a doctor, like his father; he could not be better. They are both at Hampton School yet, but we have them over for Sunday while the summer weather continues."

When Bessie had heard the family news and all about the children, she had to tell her own, and very interesting her mother found it. She had to answer numerous questions concerning Mr. Laurence Fairfax, his wife and boys, and then Mrs. Carnegie inquired about that fine gentleman

of whose pretensions to Miss Fairfax Lady Latimer had warned her. Bessie blushed rather warmly, and told what facts there were to tell, and she now learnt for the first time that her wooing was a matter of arrangement and policy. The information was not gratifying, to judge from the hot fire of her face and the tone of her rejoinder. "Mr. Cecil Burleigh is a fascinating person—so I am assured—but I don't think I was the least bit in love," she averred with energetic scorn. Her mother smiled, and did not say so much in reply as Bessie thought she might.

Presently they went into the orchard, and insensibly the subject was renewed. Bessie remembered afterward saying many things that she never meant to say. She mentioned how she had first seen Mr. Cecil Burleigh at the Fairfield wedding devoted to a most lovely young lady whom she had seen again at Ryde, and had known as Miss Julia Gardiner. "I thought they were engaged," she said. "I am sure they were lovers for a long while."

"You were under that impression throughout?" Mrs. Carnegie suggested interrogatively.

"Yes. From the day I saw them together at Ryde I had no other thought. He was grandpapa's friend, grandpapa forwarded his election for Norminster, and as I was the young lady of the house at Abbotsmead, it was not singular that he should be kind and attentive to me, was it? I am quite certain that he was as little in love with me as I was with him, though he did invite me to be his wife. I felt very much insulted that he should suppose me such a child as not to know that he did not care for me; it was not in that way he had courted Miss Julia Gardiner."

"It is a much commoner thing than you imagine for a man to be unable to marry as his heart would dictate. But he is not for that to remain single all his life, is he?" said Mrs. Carnegie.

"Perhaps not; I should respect him more if he did. I will remain single all my life unless I find somebody to love me first and best," said Bessie with the airy assurance of the romantic age.

"Well, dear, and I trust you may, for affection is the great sweetener of life, and it must be hard getting along without it. But here is father."

Mr. Carnegie, his nap over, had seen his wife and Bessie from the study-window. He drew Bessie's hand through his arm and asked what they were so earnest in debate upon. Not receiving an immediate answer, he went on to remark to his wife that their little Bessie was not spoilt by her life among her high-born friends. "For anything I can see, she is our dear Bessie still."

"So she is, Thomas—self-will and her own opinion and all," replied her mother, looking fondly in her face.

Bessie laughed and blushed. "You never expected perfection in me, nor too much docility," she said.

The doctor patted her hand, and told her she was good enough for human nature's daily companionship. Then he began to give her news of their neighbors. "It falls out fortunately that it is holiday-time. Young Christie is here: you know him? He told us how he had met you at some grand house in the winter, where he went to paint a picture: the lady had too little expression to please him, and he was not satisfied with his work. She was, fortunately, and her husband too, for he had a hundred pounds for the picture—like coining money his father says. He is very good to the old people, and makes them share his prosperity—a most excellent son." Bessie listened for another name of an excellent son. It came. "And Harry Musgrave is at Brook for a whiff of country air. That young man works and plays very hard: he must take heed not to overdo it."

"Then I shall see all my friends while I am in the Forest," said Bessie, very glad.

"Yes, and as pleased they will be to see you. Mother, Bessie might walk to Brook with me before tea. They will be uncommonly gratified, and she will get over to us many another day," Mr. Carnegie proposed.

"Yes, Thomas, if it will not overtire her."

"Oh, nothing overtires me," said Bessie. "Let us go by Great-Ash Ford."

Before they started the doctor had a word or two with his wife alone. He wanted to hear what she had made out from dear Bessie herself respecting that grand gentleman, the member of Parliament, who by Lady Latimer's account was her suitor some time ago and still.

"I am puzzled, Thomas, and that is the truth—girls are so deep," Mrs. Carnegie said.

"Too deep sometimes for their own comprehension—eh? At any rate, she is not moping and pining. She is as fresh as a rose, and her health and spirits are all right. I don't remember when I have felt so thankful as at the sight of her bonny face to-day."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SUNDAY EVENING AT BROOK.

That still Sunday afternoon across the glowing heath to Great-Ash Ford was most enchanting.

Every step of the way was a pleasure to Bessie. And when they came to the ford, whom should they see resting under the shade of the trees but Harry Musgrave and young Christie? Harry's attitude was somewhat weary. He leant on one elbow, recumbent upon the turf, and with flat pebbles dexterously thrown made ducks and drakes upon the surface of the shallow pool where the cattle drank. Young Christie was talking with much earnestness—propounding some argument apparently—and neither observed the approach of Mr. Carnegie and his companion until they were within twenty paces. Then a sudden flush overspread Harry's face. "It *is* Bessie Fairfax!" said he, and sprang to his feet and advanced to meet her. Bessie was rosy too, and her eyes dewy bright. Young Christie, viewing her as an artist, called her to himself the sweetest and most womanly of women, and admired her the more for her kind looks at his friend. Harry's *ennui* was quite routed.

"We were walking to Brook—your mother will give us a cup of tea, Harry?" said Mr. Carnegie.

Harry was walking home to Brook too, with Christie for company; his mother would be only too proud to entertain so many good friends. They went along by the rippling water together, and entered the familiar garden by the wicket into the wood. Mr. and Mrs. Musgrave were out there on the green slope under the beeches, awaiting their son and his friend, and lively were their exclamations of joy when they saw who their other visitors were.

"Did I not tell you little Bessie was at church, Harry?" cried his father, turning to him with an air of triumph.

"And he would not believe it. I thought myself it must be a mistake," said Mrs. Musgrave.

Bessie was touched to the heart by their cordial welcome. She made a most favorable impression. Mr. Musgrave thought her as handsome a young lady as a man could wish to look at, and his wife said her good heart could be seen in her face.

Bessie felt, nevertheless, rather more formally at home than in her childhood, except with her old comrade Harry. Between them there was not a moment's shyness. They were as friendly, as intimate as formerly, though with a perceptible difference of manner. Bessie had the simple graces of happy maidenhood, and Harry had the courteous reserve of good society to which his university honors and pleasant humor had introduced him. He was a very acceptable companion wherever he went, because his enjoyment of life was so thorough as to be almost infectious. He must be a dull dog, indeed, who did not cheer up in the sunshine of Musgrave's presence: that was his popular character, and it agreed with Bessie's reminiscences of him; but Harry, like other young men of great hopes and small fortunes, had his hours of shadow that Christie knew of and others guessed at. At tea the talk fell on London amusements and bachelor-life in chambers.

"As for Christie, prudent old fogy that he is, what can he know of our miseries?" said Harry with assumed ruefulness "He has a mansion in Cheyne Walk and a balcony looking over the river, and a vigilant housekeeper who allows no latch-key and turns off the gas at eleven. She gives him perfect little dinners, and makes him too comfortable by half: we poor apprentices to law lodge and fare very rudely."

"He has the air of being well done to, which is more than could be said for you when first you arrived at home, Harry," remarked his mother with what struck Bessie as a long and wistful gaze.

"Too much smell of the midnight oil is poison to country lungs—mind what I tell you," said the doctor, emphasizing his words with a grave nod at the young man.

"He ought to be content with less of his theatres and his operas and supper-parties if he will read and write so furiously. A young fellow can't combine the lives of a man of study and a man of leisure without stealing too many hours from his natural rest. But I talk in vain—talk you, Mr. Carnegie," said Christie with earnestness.

"A man must work, and work hard, now-a-days, if he means to do or be anything," said Harry defiantly.

"It is the pace that kills," said the doctor. "The mischief is, that you ardent young fellows never know when to stop. And in public life, my lad, there is many a one comes to acknowledge that he has made more haste than good speed."

Harry sank back in his chair with laughing resignation; it was too bad, he said, to talk of him to his face so dismally. Bessie Fairfax was looking at him, her eyebrows raised, and fancying she saw a change; he was certainly not so brown as he used to be, nor so buoyant, nor so animated. But it would have perplexed her to define what the change she fancied was. Conscious of her observation, Harry dissembled a minute, then pushed back his chair, and invited her to come away to the old sitting-room, where the evening sun shone. No one offered to follow them; they were permitted to go alone.

The sitting-room looked a trifle more dilapidated, but was otherwise unaltered, and was Harry's own room still, by the books, pens, ink, and paper on the table. Being by themselves, silence ensued. Bessie sadly wondered whether anything was really going wrong with her beloved Harry, and he knew that she was wondering. Then she remembered what young Christie had said at Castlemount of his being occasionally short of money, and would have liked to ask. But when she had reflected a moment she did not dare. Their boy-and-girl days, their days of plain, outspoken confidence, were for ever past. That one year of absence spent by him in London, by her at Abbotsmead, had insensibly matured the worldly knowledge of both, and without a word spoken

each recognized the other's position, but without diminution of their ancient kindness.

This recognition, and certain possible, even probable, results had been anticipated before Bessie was suffered to come into the Forest. Lady Angleby had said to Mr. Fairfax: "Entrust her to Lady Latimer for a short while. Granting her humble friends all the virtues that humanity adorns itself with, they must want some of the social graces. Those people always dispense more or less with politeness in their familiar intercourse. Now, Cecil is exquisitely polite, and Miss Fairfax has a fine, delicate feeling. She cannot but make comparisons and draw conclusions. Solid worth apart, the charm of manner is with us. I shall expect decisive consequences from this visit."

What Bessie actually discerned was that all the old tenderness that had blessed her childhood, and that gives the true sensitive touch, was still abiding: father, mother, Harry—dearest of all who were most dear to her—had not lost one whit of it. And judged by the eye, where love looked out, Harry's great frame, well knit and suppled by athletic sports, had a dignity, and his irregular features a beauty, that pleased her better than dainty, high-bred elegance. He had to push his way over the obstacles of poverty and obscure birth, and she was a young lady of family and fortune, but she looked up to him with as meek a humility as ever she had done when they were friends and comrades together, before her vicissitudes began and her exalted kinsfolk reclaimed her. Woldshire had not acquainted her with his equal. All the world never would.

Their conversation was opened at last with a surprised smile at finding themselves where they were—in the bare sitting-room at Brook, with the western light shining on them through the vine-trellised lattices after four years of growth and experience. How often had Bessie made a picture in her day-dreams of their next meeting here since she went away! In this hour, in this instant, love was new-born in both their hearts. They saw it, each in the other's eyes—heard it, each in the other's voice. Tears came with Bessie's sudden smile. She trembled and sighed and laughed, and said she did not know why she was so foolish. Harry was foolish too as he made her some indistinct plea about being so glad. And a red spot burned on his own cheek as he dwelt on her loveliness. Once more they were silent, then both at once began to talk of people and things indifferent, coming gradually round to what concerned themselves.

Harry Musgrave spoke of his friend Christie and his profession relatively to his own: "Christie has distinguished himself already. There are houses in London where the hostess has a pride in bringing forward young talent. Christie got the *entrée* of one of the best at the beginning of his career, and is quite a favorite. His gentleness is better than conventional polish, but he has taken that well too. He is a generous little fellow, and deserves the good luck that has befallen him. His honors are budding betimes. That is the joy of an artistic life—you work, but it is amongst flowers. Christie will be famous before he is thirty, and he is easy in his circumstances now: he will never be more, never rich; he is too open-handed for that. But I shall have years and years to toil and wait," Harry concluded with a melancholy, humorous fall in his voice, half mocking at himself and half pathetic, and the same was his countenance.

All the more earnestly did Bessie brighten: "You knew that, Harry, when you chose the law. But if you work amongst bookworms and cobwebs, don't you play in the sunshine?"

"Now and then, Bessie, but there will be less and less of that if I maintain my high endeavors."

"You will, Harry, you must! You will never be satisfied else. But there is no sentiment in the law—it is dreary, dreary."

"No sentiment in the law? It is a laborious calling, but many honorable men follow it; and are not the lawyers continually helping those to right who suffer wrong?"

"That is not the vulgar idea of them, is it? But I believe it is what you will always strive to do, Harry." Bessie spoke with pretty eagerness. She feared that she might have seemed to contemn Harry's vocation, and she hastened to make amends. Harry understood her perfectly, and had the impudence to laugh at her quite in his old boyish way. A little confused—also in the old way—she ran on: "I have seen the judges in their scarlet robes and huge white wigs on a hot July Sunday attending service in Norminster Cathedral. I tried to attire you so, but my imagination failed. I don't believe you will ever be a judge, Harry."

"That is a discouraging prediction, Bessie, if I am to be a lawyer. I do a little in this way," he said, handling a famous review that lay on the table. "May I send it to you when there is a paper of mine in it?"

"Oh yes; I should like it so much! I should be so interested!" said Bessie fervently. "We take the *Times* at Abbotsmead, and *Blackwood* and the old *Quarterly*, but not that. I have seen it at my uncle Laurence's house, and Lady Latimer has it. I saw it in the Fairfield drawing-room last night: is there anything of yours here, Harry?"

"Yes, this is mine—a rather dry nut for you. But occasionally I contribute a light-literature article."

"Oh, I must tell my lady. She and Mr. Logger were differing over that very paper, and ascribing it to half a dozen great, wise people in turn."

Harry laughed: "Pray, then, don't confess for me. The arguments will lose half their force if she learn what a tyro wrote it."

"No, no, she will be delighted to know—she adores talent. Besides, Mr. Logger told her that the

cleverest articles were written by sprightly young men fresh from college. Have you paid your respects to her yet? She told me with a significant little *moue* that you had condescended to call upon her at Easter."

"I propose to pay my respects in company with Christie to-morrow. She is a grand old lady; and what cubs we were, Bessie, to throw her kindness in her face before! How angry you were!"

"You were afraid that her patronage might be a trespass on your independence. It was a mistake in the right direction, if it was a mistake at all. Poor Mr. Logger is called a toady because he loves to visit at the comfortable houses of rich great widow ladies, but I am sure they love to have him. Lady Latimer does not approve you any the less for not being eager to accept her invitations. You know I was fond of her—I looked up to her more than anybody. I believe I do still."

There was a brief pause, and then Harry said, "I have heard nothing of Abbotsmead yet, Bessie?"

"There is not much to hear. I live there, but no longer in the character of heiress; that prospect is changed by the opportune discovery that my uncle Laurence had the wisdom, some five years ago, to take a wife to please himself, instead of a second fine lady to please my grandfather. He made a secret of it, for which there was no necessity and not much excuse, but he did it for their happiness. They have three capital little boys, who, of course, have taken my shoes. I am not sorry. I don't care for Woldshire or Abbotsmead. The Forest has my heart."

"And mine. A man may set his hopes high, so I go on aspiring to the possession of this earthly paradise of Brook."

Bessie was smitten with a sudden recollection of what more Harry had aspired to that time she was admitted into his confidence respecting the old manor-house. She colored consciously, for she knew that he also recollected, then said with a smile, "Ah, Harry, but between such aspirations and their achievement there stretches so often a weary long day. You will tire with looking forward if you look so far. Are you not tiring now?"

"No, no. You must not take any notice of my mother's solemn prognostics. She does not admire what she calls the smoky color I bring home from London. Some remote ancestor of my father died there of decline, and she has taken up a notion that I ought to throw the study of the law to the winds, come home, and turn farmer. Of what avail, I ask her, would my scholarship be then?"

"You would enjoy it, Harry. In combination with a country life it would make you the pleasantest life a man can live."

Harry shook his head: "What do you know about it, Bessie? It is dreadfully hard on an ambitious fellow to be forced to turn his back on all his fine visions of usefulness and distinction for the paltry fear that death may cut him short."

"Oh, if you regard it in that light! I should not call it a paltry fear. There are more ways than one to distinction—this, for instance," dropping her hand on Harry's paper in the review. "Winged words fly far, and influence you never know what minds. I should be proud of the distinction of a public writer."

"Literature by itself is not enough to depend on unless one draws a great prize of popularity. I have not imagination enough to write a novel. Have you forgotten the disasters of your heroes the poets, Bessie? No—I cannot give up after a year of difficulty. I would rather rub out than rust out, if that be all."

"Oh, Harry, don't be provoking! Why rub out or rust out either?" remonstrated Bessie. "Your mother would rather keep her living son, though ever so unlucky, than bury the most promising that ever killed himself with misdirected labor. Two young men came to Abbotsmead once to bid grandpapa good-bye; they were only nineteen and sixteen, and were the last survivors of a family of seven sons. They were going to New Zealand to save their lives, and are thriving there in a patriarchal fashion with large families and flocks and herds. You are not asked to go to New Zealand, but you had better do that than die untimely in foggy England, dear as it is. Is not life sweet to you?—it is very sweet to me."

Harry got up, and walked to an open lattice that commanded the purple splendor of the western sky. He stood there two or three minutes quite silent, then by a glance invited Bessie to come. "Life is so sweet," he said, "that I dare not risk marring it by what seems like cowardice; but I will be prudent, if only for the sake of the women who love me." There was the old mirthful light in Harry's eyes as he said the last words very softly.

"Don't make fun of us," said Bessie, looking up with a faint blush. "You know we love you; mind you keep your word. It is time I was going back to Fairfield, the evening is closing in."

The door opened and Mrs. Musgrave entered. "Well, children, are you ready?" she inquired cheerfully. "We are all thinking you have had quite time enough to tell your secrets, and the doctor has been wanting to leave for ever so long."

"Bessie has been administering a lecture, mother, and giving me some serious advice; she would send me to the antipodes," said her son. Bessie made a gentle show of denial, and they came forward from the window.

"Never mind him, dear, that is his teasing way: I know how much to believe of his nonsense," said Mrs. Musgrave. "But," she added more gravely, turning to Harry, "if Bessie agrees with your

mother that there is no sense in destroying your health by poring over dusty law in London when there are wholesome light ways of living to be turned to in sweet country air, Bessie is wise. I wish anybody could persuade him to tell what is his objection to the Church. Or he might go and be a tutor in some high family, as Lady Latimer suggested. He is well fitted for it."

"Did Lady Latimer suggest that, mother?" Harry asked with sharp annoyance in his voice and look.

"She did, Harry; and don't let that vex you as if it was a coming-down. For she said that many such tutors, when they took orders, got good promotion, and more than one had been made a bishop."

This was too much for the gravity of the young people. "A bishop, Bessie! Can you array me in lawn sleeves and satin gown?" cried Harry with a peal of laughter. Then, with a sudden recovery and a sigh, he said, "Nay, mother, if I must play a part, it shall not be on that stage. I'll keep my self-respect, whatever else I forfeit."

"You will have your own way, Harry, lead where it will; your father and me have not that to learn at this time of day. But, Bessie joy, Mr. Carnegie's in a hurry, and it is a good step to Fairfield. We shall see you often while you are in the Forest, I hope?"

"Staying with Lady Latimer is not quite the same as being at home, but I shall try to come again."

"Do, dear—we shall be more than pleased; you were ever a favorite at Brook," said Mrs. Musgrave tenderly. Bessie kissed Harry's mother, shook hands with himself and his father, who also patted her on the back as a reminder of old familiarity, and then went off with Mr. Carnegie, light-hearted and light-footed, a picture of young content. The doctor, after one glance at her blithe face, thought that he could tell his wife when he got home who it was their little Bessie really loved.

Harry Musgrave took his hat to set Christie part of the way back to Beechhurst in the opposite direction. The young men talked as they walked, Christie resuming the argument that the apparition of Bessie Fairfax had interrupted in the afternoon. The argument was that which Mrs. Musgrave had enunciated against the study of the law. Harry was not much moved by it. If he had a new motive for prudence, he had also a new and very strong motive for persistence. Christie suspected as much, but the name of Miss Fairfax was not mentioned.

"You have made your mark in that review, and literature is as fair a profession as art if a man will only be industrious," he said.

"I hate the notion of task-work and drudgery in literature; and what sort of a living is to be got out of our inspirations?" objected Harry.

"It is good to bear the yoke in our youth: I find it discipline to paint pot-boilers," rejoined little Christie mildly. "You must write pot-boilers for the magazines. The best authors do it."

"It is not easy to get a footing in a magazine where one would care to appear. There are not many authors whose sole dependence is a goose-quill. Call over the well-known men; they are all something else before they are authors. Your pot-boilers are sure of a market; pictures have become articles of furniture, indispensable to people of taste, and everybody has a taste now-a-days. But rejected papers are good for nothing but to light one's fire, if one can keep a fire. Look at Stamford! Stamford has done excellent work for thirty years; he has been neither idle nor thriftless, and he lives from hand to mouth still. He is one of the writers for bread, who must take the price he can get, and not refuse it, lest he get nothing. And that would be my case—is my case—for, as you know, my pen provides two-thirds of my maintenance. I cannot tax my father further. If I had not missed that fellowship! The love of money may be a root of evil, but the want of it is an evil grown up and bearing fruit that sets the teeth on edge."

"My dear Musgrave, that is the voice of despair, and for such a universal *crux*!"

"I don't despair, but I am tried, partly by my hard lines and partly by the anxieties at home that infect me. To think that with this frame," striking out his muscular right arm, "even Carnegie warns me as if I were a sick girl! The sins of the fathers are the modern Nessus' shirt to their children. I shall do my utmost to hold on until I get my call to the bar and a platform to start from. If I cannot hold on so long, I'll call it, as my mother does, defeat by visitation of God, and step down to be a poor fellow amongst other poor fellows. But that is not the life I planned for."

"We all know that, Musgrave, and there is no quarter where you won't meet the truest sympathy. Many a man has to come down from the tall pedestal where his hopes have set him, and, unless it be by his own grievous fault, he is tolerably sure to find his level of content on the common ground. That's where I mean to walk with my Janey; and some day you'll hold up a finger, and just as sweet a companion will come and walk hand in hand with you."

Harry smiled despite his trouble; he knew what Christie meant, and he believed him. He parted with his friend there, and turned back in the soft gloom towards home, thinking of her all the way—dear little Bessie, so frank and warm-hearted. He remembered how, when he was a boy and lost a certain prize at school that he had reckoned on too confidently, she had whispered away his shame-faced disappointment with a rosy cheek against his jacket, and "Never mind, Harry, I love you." And she would do it again, he knew she would. The feeling was in her—she could not hide it.

But at this point of his meditations his worldly wisdom came in to dash their beauty. Unless he could bridge with bow of highest promise the gulf that vicissitude had opened between them since those days of primitive affection, he need not set his mind upon her. He ought not, so he told himself, though his mind was set upon her already beyond the chance of turning. He did not know yet that he had a rival; when that knowledge came all other obstacles, sentimental, chivalrous, would be swallowed up in its portentous shadow. For to-night he held his reverie in peace.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AT FAIRFIELD.

"We thought you were lost," was Lady Latimer's greeting to Bessie Fairfax when she entered the Fairfield drawing-room, tired with her long walk, but still in buoyant spirits.

"Oh no!" said Bessie. "I have come from Brook. When I had seen them all at home my father carried me off there to tea."

"I observed that you were not at the evening service. The Musgraves and those people drink tea at five o'clock: you must be ready for your supper now. Mr. Logger, will you be so good as to ring the bell?"

Bessie was profoundly absorbed in her own happiness, but Lady Latimer's manner, and still more the tone of her voice, struck her with an uncomfortable chill. "Thank you, but I do not wish for anything to eat," she said, a little surprised.

The bell had rung, however, and the footman appeared. "Miss Fairfax will take supper—she dined in the middle of the day," said Lady Latimer, but nothing could be less hospitable than the inflection of her speech as she gave the order.

"Indeed, indeed, I am not hungry; we had chicken and tongue to tea," cried Bessie, rather shamefaced now.

"And matrimony-cake and hot buttered toast—"

"No, we had no matrimony-cake," said Bessie, who understood now that my lady was cross; and no one could be more taunting and unpleasant than my lady when she was cross.

The footman had taken Miss Fairfax's remonstrative statement for a negative, and had returned to his own supper when the drawing-room bell rang again: "Why do you not announce Miss Fairfax's supper? Is it not ready yet?"

"In a minute, my lady," said the man, and vanished. In due time he reappeared to say that supper was served, and Lady Latimer looked at her young guest and repeated the notice. Bessie laughed, and, rising with a fine color and rather proud air, left the room and went straight to bed. When neither she nor Mrs. Betts came in to prayers half an hour later, my lady became silent and reflective: she was not accustomed to revolt amongst her young ladies, and Miss Fairfax's quiet defiance took her at a disadvantage. She had anticipated a much more timid habit in this young lady, whom she had undertaken to manage and mould to the will of her grandfather. In the morning her humor was gracious again, and Bessie, who had received counsel from Dora Meadows, deeply experienced in Aunt Olympia's peculiarities, made no sign of remembering that there had been any fray. But she was warned of the imperious temper of her hostess, who would have no independence of action amongst her youthful charges, but expected them to consult her and defer to her at every step. "Why, then," thought Bessie, "did she bid me, in the first instance, do exactly what I liked?" To this there was no answer: is there ever an answer to the *why* of an exacting woman's caprice?

After breakfast the young ladies took Mr. Logger out for a salubrious airing across the heath. In their absence Harry Musgrave and young Christie called at Fairfield, and, no longer in terror of Lady Latimer's patronage, talked to her of themselves, which she liked. She was exceedingly kind, and asked them both to dine the next day. "You will meet Mr. Cecil Burleigh: you may have heard his name, Mr. Musgrave? The Conservative member for Norminster," she said rather imposingly.

"Oh yes, he is one of the coming men," said Harry, much interested, and he accepted the invitation. Mr. Christie declined it. His mother was very ill, he said, but he would send his portfolio for her ladyship to look over, if she would allow him. Her ladyship would be delighted.

When the young ladies brought Mr. Logger back to luncheon the visitors were gone, but Lady Latimer mentioned that they had been there, and she gave Mr. Logger a short account of them: "Mr. Harry Musgrave is reading for the bar. He took honors at Oxford, and if his constitution will stand the wear and tear of a laborious, intellectual life, great things may be expected from him. But unhappily he is not very strong." Mr. Logger shook his head, and said it was the London gas. "Mr. Christie is a son of our village wheelwright, himself a most ingenious person. Mr. Danberry found him out, and spoke those few words of judicious praise that revealed the young man to himself as an artist. Mr. Danberry was staying with me at the time, and we had him here with his

sketches, which were so promising that we encouraged him to make art his study. And he has done so with much credit."

"Christie? a landscape-painter? does a portrait now and then? I have met him at Danberry's," said Mr. Logger, whose vocation it was to have met everybody who was likely to be mentioned in society. "Curious now: Archdeacon Topham was the son of a country carpenter: headstrong fellow—took a mountain-walk without a guide, and fell down a *crevasse*, or something."

Mr. Cecil Burleigh arrived the next day to luncheon. In the afternoon the whole party walked in the Forest. Lady Latimer kept Dora at her elbow, and required Mr. Logger's opinion and advice on a new emigration scheme that she was endeavoring to develop. Bessie Fairfax was thus left to Mr. Cecil Burleigh, and they were not at a loss for conversation. Bessie was feeling quite gay and happy, and talked and listened as cheerfully as possible. The gentleman was rather jaded with the work of the session, and showed it in his handsome visage. He assumed that Miss Fairfax was so far in his confidence as to be interested in the high themes that interested himself, and of these he discoursed until his companion inadvertently betrayed that she was capable of abstracting her mind and thinking of something else while seeming to give him all her polite attention. He was then silent—not unthankfully.

Their walk took them first round by the wheelwright's and afterward by the village. Lady Latimer loved to entertain and occupy her guests, even those who would have preferred wider margins of leisure. On the green in front of the wheelwright's they found little Christie seated under a white umbrella, making a sketch of his father's house and the shed. A group of sturdy children had put themselves just in the way by a disabled wagon to give it life.

"I am doing it to please my mother," said the artist in reply to Lady Latimer's inquiry if he was going to make a finished picture of it. He went on with his dainty touches without moving. "I must not lose the five-o'clock effect of the sun through that tall fir," he explained apologetically.

"No; continue, pray, continue," said my lady, and summoned her party to proceed.

At the entrance of the village, to Bessie's great joy, they fell in with Mr. Carnegie returning from a long round on horseback.

"Would Bessie like a ride with the old doctor to-morrow?" he asked her as the others strolled on.

"Oh yes—I have brought my habit," she said enthusiastically.

"Then Miss Hoyden shall trot along with me, and we'll call for you—not later than ten, Bessie, and you'll not keep me waiting."

"Oh no; I will be ready. Lady Latimer has not planned anything for the morning, so I may be excused."

Whether Lady Latimer had planned anything for the morning or not, she manifested a lofty displeasure that Miss Fairfax had planned this ride for herself. Dora whispered to her not to mind, it would soon blow over. So Bessie went up stairs to dress somewhat relieved, but still with a doubtful mind and a sense of indignant astonishment at my lady's behavior to her. She thought it very odd, and speculated whether there might be any reason for it beyond the failure in deference to herself.

An idea struck her when she saw Mrs. Betts unfolding her most sumptuous dress—a rich white silk embroidered in black and silver for mourning—evidently in the intention of adorning her to the highest. "Oh, not that dress," she said. "I will wear my India muslin with black ribbons."

"It is quite a set party, miss," remonstrated Mrs. Betts.

"No matter," said Bessie decisively. No, she would not triumph over dear Harry with grand clothes.

When her young lady had spoken, Mrs. Betts knew that it was spending her breath in vain to contradict; and Bessie went down to the drawing-room with an air of inexpensive simplicity very becoming to her beauty, and that need not alarm a poor gentleman who might have visions of her as a wife. Lady Latimer instantly accused and convicted her of that intention in it—in her private thoughts, that is. My lady herself was magnificent in purple satin, and little Dora Meadows had put on her finest raiment; but Bessie, with her wealth of fair hair and incomparable beauty of coloring, still glowed the most; and she glowed with more than her natural rose when Lady Latimer, after looking her up and down from head to foot with extreme deliberation, turned away with a scorny face. Bessie's eyes sparkled, and Mr. Logger, who saw all and saw nothing, perceived that she could look scorny too.

Mr. Cecil Burleigh was pacing to and fro the conservatory into which a glass door opened from the drawing-room. His hands were clasped behind him, and his head was bent down as if he were in a profoundly cogitative mood. "I am afraid Burleigh is rather out of sorts—the effect of overstrain, the curse of our time," said Mr. Logger sententiously. Mr. Logger himself was admirably preserved.

"He is looking remarkably well, on the contrary," said Lady Latimer. My lady was certainly not in her most beneficent humor. Dora darted an alarmed glance at Bessie, and at that moment Mr. Musgrave was announced.

Bessie blushed him a sweet welcome, and said, perhaps unnecessarily, "I am so glad you have come!" and Harry expressed his thanks with kind eyes and a very cordial shake of the hand: they appeared quite confidentially intimate, those young people. Lady Latimer stood looking on like a picture of dignity, and when Mr. Cecil Burleigh entered from the conservatory she introduced the two young men in her stateliest manner. Bessie was beginning now to understand what all this meant. Throughout the dinner my lady never relaxed. She was formally courteous, elaborately gracious, but *grande dame* from her shoe-tie to the top-knot of her cap.

Those who knew her well were ill at ease, but Harry Musgrave dined in undisturbed, complacent comfort. He had known dons at Oxford, and placed Lady Latimer in the donnish caste: that was all. He thought she had been a more charming woman. The conversation was interrogatory, and chiefly addressed to himself, and he had plenty to say and a pleasant way of saying it, but except for Bessie's dear bright face opposite the atmosphere would have been quite freezing. When the ladies withdrew, Mr. Logger almost immediately followed, and then Mr. Cecil Burleigh was himself again. He unbent to this athletic young man, whose Oxford double-first was the hall-mark of his quality, and whom Miss Fairfax was so frankly glad to see. Harry Musgrave had heard the reputation of the other, and met his condescension with the easy deference of a young man who knows the world. They were mutually interesting, and stayed in the dining-room until Lady Latimer sent to say that tea was in.

When they entered the drawing-room my lady and Mr. Logger were deep in a report of the emigration commission. Bessie and Dora were sitting on the steps into the rose-garden watching the moon rise over the distant sea. Dora was bidden to come in out of the dew and give the gentlemen a cup of tea; Bessie was not bidden to do anything: she was apparently in disgrace. Dora obeyed like a little scared rabbit. Harry Musgrave stood a minute pensive, then took possession of a fine, quilted red silk *duvet* from the couch, and folded it round Bessie's shoulders with the remark that her dress was but thin. Mr. Cecil Burleigh witnessed with secret trepidation the simple, affectionate thoughtfulness with which the act was done and the beautiful look of kindness with which it was acknowledged. Bessie's innocent face was a mirror for her heart. If this fine gentleman was any longer deceived on his own account, he was one of the blind who are blind because they will not see.

Lady Latimer was observant too, and she now left her blue-book, and said, "Mr. Musgrave, will you not have tea?"

Harry came forward and accepted a cup, and was kept standing in the middle of the room for the next half hour, extemporizing views and opinions upon subjects on which he had none, until a glance of my lady's eye towards the clock on the chimney-piece gave him notice of the hours observed in great society. A few minutes after he took his leave, without having found the opportunity of speaking to Bessie again, except to say "Good-night."

As Harry Musgrave left the room my lady rang the bell, and when the servant answered it she turned to Bessie and said in her iced voice, "Perhaps you would like to send for a shawl?"

"Thank you, but I will not go out again," said Bessie mildly, and the servant vanished.

Mr. Logger, who had really much amiability, here offered a remark: "A very fine young man, that Mr. Musgrave—great power of countenance. Wherever I meet with it now I say, Let us cherish talent, for it will soon be the only real distinction where everybody is rich."

Mr. Cecil Burleigh made an inarticulate murmur, which might signify acquiescence or the reverse.

Lady Latimer said, "Young ladies, I think it is time you were going up stairs." And with dutiful alacrity the young ladies went.

"Never mind," whispered Dora to Bessie with a kiss as they separated. "If you take any notice of Aunt Olympia's tempers, you will not have a moment's peace: I never do. All will be right again in the morning." Bessie had her doubts of that, but she tried to feel hopeful; and she was not without her consolation, whether or no.

CHAPTER XL.

ANOTHER RIDE WITH THE DOCTOR.

Half-past nine was the breakfast-hour at Fairfield, and Bessie Fairfax said she would prepare for her ride before going down.

"Will you breakfast in your riding-habit, miss?—her ladyship is very particular," said Mrs. Betts in a tone implying that her ladyship might consider it a liberty. Bessie said Yes, she must not keep Mr. Carnegie waiting when he came.

So she went down stairs in her habit and a crimson neck-tie, with her hair compactly rolled up, and looking exceedingly well. Lady Latimer justified Dora's predictions: she kissed Bessie as if she had never been affronted. Bessie accepted the caress, and was thankful. It was no part of her pleasure to vex my lady.

They had not left the breakfast-table when the servant announced that Mr. Carnegie had arrived. "We will go out and see you mount," said Lady Latimer, and left her unfinished meal, Mr. Cecil Burleigh attending her. Dora would have gone too, but as Mr. Logger made no sign of moving, my lady intimated that she must remain. Lady Latimer had inquiries to make of the doctor respecting several sick poor persons, her pensioners, and while they are talking Mr. Cecil Burleigh gave Bessie a hand up into her saddle, and remarked that Miss Hoyden was in high condition and very fresh.

"Oh, I can hold her. She has a good mouth and perfect temper; she never ran away from me but once," said Bessie, caressing her old favorite with voice and hand.

"And what happened on that occasion?" said Mr. Cecil Burleigh.

"She had her fling, and nothing happened. It was along the road that skirts the Brook pastures, and at the sharp turn Mr. Harry Musgrave saw her coming—head down, the bit in her teeth—and threw open the gate, and we dashed into the clover. As I did not lose my nerve or tumble off, I am never afraid now. I love a good gallop."

Mr. Cecil Burleigh asked no more questions. If it be true that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, Brook and Mr. Harry Musgrave must have been much in Miss Fairfax's thoughts; this was now the third time that she had found occasion to mention them since coming to breakfast.

Lady Latimer turned in-doors again with a preoccupied air. Bessie had looked behind her as she rode down the avenue, as if she were bidding them good-bye. Mr. Cecil Burleigh was silent too. He had come to Fairfield with certain lively hopes and expectations, for which my lady was mainly responsible, and already he was experiencing sensations of blankness worse to bear than disappointment. Others might be perplexed as to Miss Fairfax's sentiments, but to him they were clear as the day—friendly, but nothing more. She was now where she would be, was exuberantly contented, and could not hide how slight a tie upon her had been established by a year amongst her kindred in Woldshire.

"This is like old times, Bessie," said the doctor as the Fairfield gate closed behind them.

Bessie laughed and tossed her head like a creature escaped. "Yes, I am so happy!" she answered.

The ride was just one of the doctor's regular rounds. He had to call at Brook, where a servant was ill, and they went by the high-road to the manor. Harry Musgrave was not at home. He had gone out for a day's ranging, and was pensively pondering his way through the bosky recesses of the Forest, under the unbroken silence of the tall pines, to the seashore and the old haunts of the almost extinct race of smugglers. The first person they met after leaving the manor was little Christie with a pale radiant face, having just come on a perfect theme for a picture—a still woodland pool reflecting high broken banks and flags and rushes, with slender birchen trees hanging over, and a cluster of low reed-thatched huts, very uncomfortable to live in, but gloriously mossed and weather-stained to paint.

"Don't linger here too late—it is an unwholesome spot," said Mr. Carnegie, warning him as he rode on. Little Christie set up his white umbrella in the sun, and kings might have envied him.

"My mother is better, but call and see her," he cried after the doctor; this amendment was one cause of the artist's blitheness.

"Of course, she is better—she has had nothing for a week to make her bad," said Mr. Carnegie; but when he reached the wheelwright's and saw Mrs. Christie, with a handkerchief tied over her cap, gently pacing the narrow garden-walks, he assumed an air of excessive astonishment.

"Yes, Mr. Carnegie, sir, I'm up and out," she announced in a tone of no thanks to anybody. "I felt a sing'lar wish to taste the air, and my boy says, 'Go out, mother; it will do you more good than anything.' I could enjoy a ride in a chaise, but folks that make debts can afford to behave very handsome to themselves in a many things that them that pays ready money has to be mean enough to do without. Jones's wife has her rides, but if her husband would pay for the repair of the spring-cart that was mended fourteen months ago come Martinmas, there'd be more sense in that."

"Don't matter, my good soul! Walking is better than riding any fine day, if you have got the strength," said the doctor briskly.

"Yes, sir; there's that consolation for them that is not rich and loves to pay their way. I hope to walk to church next Sunday, please the Lord. And if a word could be given to Mr. Wiley not to play so on the feelings, it would be a mercy. He do make such awful faces, and allude to sudden death and accidents and the like, as is enough to give an ailing person a turn. I said to Mrs. Bunny, 'Mary,' I said, 'don't you go to hear him; leastways, sit by the door if you must, and don't stop for the sermon: it might make that impression it would do the babe a mischief.'"

"Go to chapel; it is nearer. And take Mrs. Bunny with you," said Mr. Carnegie.

"No, sir. Mrs. Wiley has been very kind in calling and taking notice since I have been laid up, and one good turn deserves another. I shall attend church in future, though the doctrine's so shocking that if folks pondered it the lunatic asylums wouldn't hold 'em all. I'll never believe as the Lord meant us to be threatened with judgment to come, and hell, and all that, till one's afraid

to lie down in one's bed. He'd not have let there be an end of us if we didn't get so mortal tired o' living."

"Living is a weariness that men and women bear with unanimous patience, Mrs. Christie—aches and pains included."

"So it may be, sir. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. A week ago I could not have thought the pleasure it would be to-day to see the sun, and the pretty things in flower, and my boy going out with his color-box. And not as much physic have you given me, Mr. Carnegie, as would lie on a penny-piece."

Bessie Fairfax laughed as they rode on, and said, "Nobody changes. I should be tempted to give Mrs. Christie something horribly nasty for her ingratitude."

"Nobody changes," echoed the doctor. "She will be at her drugs again before the month is out."

A little beyond the wheelwright's, Mr. Carnegie pulled up at a spot by the wayside where an itinerant tinker sat in the shade with his brazier hot, doing a good stroke of work on the village kettles and pots: "Eh, Gampling, here you are again! They bade me at home look out for you and tell you to call. There is a whole regiment of cripples to mend."

"Then let 'em march to Hampton, sir—they'll get back some time this side o' Christmas," said the tinker, with a surly cunning glance out of the corner of his eye. "Your women's so mighty hard to please that I'm not meaning to call again; I prefers to work where I gives satisfaction."

"I did hear something of a pan new bottomed to mend a hole in its side; but what is that amongst friends? Mistakes will occur in the best-regulated businesses."

"You're likely to know, sir—there's a sight o' folks dropping off quite unaccountable else. I'm not dependent on one nor another, and what I says I stands to: I'll never call at Dr. Carnegie's back door again while that Irish lass is about his kitchen; she's give me the rough side of her tongue once, but she won't do it no more."

"Then good-day to you, Gampling; I can't part with the Irish lass at your price."

A sturdy laborer came along the road eating a hunch of bread and cheese. Mr. Carnegie asked him how his wife did. The answer was crabbed: "She's never naught to boast on, and she's allus worse after a spiritchus visit: parson's paying her one now. Can you tell me, Mr. Carnegie, sir, why parson chooses folk's dinner-time to drop in an' badger 'em about church? Old parson never did." He did not stay to have his puzzle elucidated, but trudged heavily on.

"Mr. Wiley does not seem very popular yet," observed Bessie.

"He is more so than he was. But his wife, who helps the poor liberally in the winter, is of twice the use in the parish that he is, with his inopportune 'spiritchus visits.' I have remonstrated with him about going to the cottages between twelve and one, when dinner is being eaten and the men want a bit of rest, but he professes that it is the only time to catch them in-doors. I suppose Molton won't bear it, and takes up his food and walks out. Yet Beechhurst might have a worse pastor than poor Wiley. He is a man I pity—a martyr to dyspepsia and a gloomy imagination. But I will not deny that he often raises my choler still." The doctor was on the verge of having it raised now.

At the last bend of the road to the village, and nearly opposite the forge, was a small cabin of one room, the abode of the respectable Mrs. Wallop, the mainstay of Beechhurst as a nurse in last illnesses and dangerous cases—a woman of heart and courage, though perhaps of too imaginative a style of conversation. Although it was but a work-day, she was sitting at her own door in her Sunday black gown and bonnet, and, like Niobe, all tears. Mr. Carnegie pulled up in sheer amazement at the deplorable spectacle his valued right hand was making of herself in public, and, as if she had been on the watch for him, up she rose from her stool and came forward to answer his unspoken questions.

"Ay, Mr. Carnegie, sir, you may well ask what I am doing at home all day idle," said she. "It is a Judas I feel, and if I don't get it off my mind it will be too much for me: I can't bear it, sir."

"Then out with it, Mrs. Wallop," said the imperative doctor. "It is nothing very private, or you would not advertise it by crying at the corner of the street."

"No, sir, but it shames me to tell it, that it do, though you're one o' them that well knows what flesh and blood comes to when the temptation's strong. I've took money, Mr. Carnegie, wage for a month, to go nowheres else but to the rectory; and nobody ill there, only a' might happen. It never occurred to me the cruel sin I'd done till Robb came along, begging and praying of me to go to them forlorn poor creturs at Marsh-End. For it is the fever, sir. Mr. Wiley got wind of it, and sent Robb over to make sure."

"Lost in misery they are. Fling away your dirty hire, and be off to Marsh-End, Mrs. Wallop. Crying and denying your conscience will disagree very badly with your inside," said Mr. Carnegie, angry contempt in his voice.

"I will sir, and be glad to. It ain't Christian—no, nor human natur—to sit with hands folded when there is sick folk wanting help. Poor Judas!" she went on in soliloquy as the doctor trotted off. "I reckon his feelings changed above a bit between looking at the thirty pieces of silver and wishing

he had 'un, and finding how heavy they was on his soul afore he was drove to get rid of 'em, and went out and hanged himself. I won't do that, anyhow, while I've a good charicter to fall back on, but I'll return Mrs. Wiley her money, and take the consequences if she sets it about as I'm not a woman of my word."

A few minutes more brought Mr. Carnegie home with Bessie Fairfax to his own door. Hovering about on the watch for the doctor's return was Mr. Wiley. Though there was no great love lost between them, the rector was imbued with the local faith in the doctor's skill, and wanted to consult him.

"You have heard that the fever has broken out again?" he said with visible trepidation.

"I have no case of fever myself. I hear that Robb has."

"Yes—two in one house. Now, what precautions do you recommend against infection?"

"For nervous persons the best precaution is to keep out of the way of infection."

"You would recommend me to keep away from Marsh-End, then? Moxon is nearer, though it is in my parish."

"I never recommend a man to dodge his duty. Mrs. Wallop will be of most use at present; she is just starting."

"Mrs. Wallop? My wife has engaged her and paid her for a month in the event of any trouble coming amongst ourselves. You must surely be mistaken, Mr. Carnegie?"

"Mrs. Wiley was mistaken. She did not know her woman. Good-morning to you, sir."

CHAPTER XLI.

FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES.

Mrs. Carnegie from the dining-room window witnessed the colloquy between the rector and her husband, and came out into the porch to receive her dear Bessie. "They will not expect you at Fairfield until they see you; so come in, love," said she, and Bessie gladly obeyed.

The doctor's house was all the quieter for the absence of the elder boys at Hampton. The other children were playing in the orchard after school. "It is a great convenience to have a school opened here where boys and girls are both taught from four up to ten, and very nicely taught," said the mother. "It gives me a little leisure. Even Totty goes, and likes it, bless her!"

Mr. Carnegie was not many minutes in-doors. He ate a crust standing, and then went away again to answer a summons that had come since he went out in the morning.

"It will be a good opportunity, Bessie, to call on Miss Buff and Miss Wort, and to say a word in passing to the Semples and Mittens; they are always polite in asking after you," Mrs. Carnegie mentioned at the children's dinner. But Miss Buff, having heard that Miss Fairfax was at the doctor's house, forestalled these good intentions by arriving there herself. She was ushered into the drawing-room, and Bessie joined her, and was embraced and rejoiced over exuberantly.

"You dear little thing! I do like you in your habit," cried she. "Turn round—it fits beautifully. So you have been having a ride with the doctor, and seeing everybody, I suppose? Mrs. Wiley wonders when you will call."

"Oh yes, Bessie dear, you must not neglect Mrs. Wiley," said Mrs. Carnegie.

"It will do some day with Lady Latimer—she has constant business at the rectory," Bessie said. She did not wish to waste this precious afternoon in duty-visits to people she did not care for.

"Well, I was to have written to you, and I never did," recommenced Miss Buff.

"Out of sight, out of mind: don't apologize!"

But Miss Buff would explain and extenuate her broken promise: "The fact is, my hands are almost too full: what with the school and the committee, the organ and church, the missionary club and my district, I am a regular lay-curate. Then there is Mr. Duffer's early service, eight o'clock; and Fridays and Wednesdays and all the saints' days, and decorating for the great festivals—perhaps a little too much of that, but on Whitsunday the chancel was lovely, was it not, Mrs. Carnegie?" Mrs. Carnegie nodded her acquiescence. "Then I have a green-house at last, and that gives me something to do. I should like to show you my green-house, Bessie. But you must be used to such magnificent things now that perhaps you will not care for my small place."

"I shall care as much as ever. I prefer small things to great yet."

"And my fowl-house—you shall see that—and my pigeons. You used to be so fond of live creatures, Bessie."

"By the by, Miss Buff, have you discovered yet the depredator of your poultry-yard?" Mrs.

Carnegie asked.

"No, but I have put a stop to his depredations. I strongly suspect that pet subject of Miss Wort's—that hulking, idle son of Widow Burt. I am sorry for *her*, but *he* is no good. You know I wrote to the inspector of police at Hampton. Did I not tell you? No! Well, but I did, and said if he would send an extra man over to stay the night in the house and watch who stole my pigeons, he should have coffee and hot buttered toast; and I dare say Eppie would not have objected to sit up with him till twelve. However, the inspector didn't—he did not consider it necessary—but the ordinary police probably watched, for I have not been robbed since. And that is a comfort; I hate to sleep with one eye open. You are laughing, Bessie; you would not laugh if you had lost seven pigeons ready to go into a pie, and all in the space of ten days. I am sure that horrid Burt stole 'em."

Bessie still laughed: "Is your affection so material? Do you love your pigeons so dearly that you eat them up?" said she.

"What else should I keep them for? I should be overrun with pigeons but for putting them in pies; they make the garden very untidy as it is. I have given up keeping ducks, but I have a tame gull for the slugs. Who is this at the gate? Oh! Miss Wort with her inexhaustible physic-bottle. Everybody seems to have heard that you are here, Bessie."

Miss Wort came in breathless, and paused, and greeted Bessie in a way that showed her wits were otherwise engaged. "It is the income-tax," she explained parenthetically, with an appealing look round at the company. "I have been so put out this morning; I never had my word doubted before. Jimpson is the collector this year—"

"Jimpson!" broke out Miss Buff impetuously. "I should like to know who they will appoint next to pry into our private affairs? As long as old Dobbs collected all the rates and taxes they were just tolerable, but since they have begun to appoint new men every year my patience is exhausted. Talk of giving us votes at elections: I would rather vote at twenty elections than have Tom, Dick, and Harry licensed to inquire into my money-matters. Since Dobbs was removed we have had for assessors of income-tax both the butchers, the baker, the brewer, the miller, the little tailor, the milk-man; and now Jimpson at the toy-shop, of all good people! There will soon be nobody left but the sweep."

"The sweep is a very civil man, but Jimpson is impertinent. I told him the sum was not correct, and he answered me: 'The government of the country must have money to carry on; I have nothing to do with the sum except to collect it. If you don't like it, ma'am, you've got to appeal and go before the commissioners.' He may puzzle me with his figures, but he will never convince me I have the income, for I have not. And he said if I supposed he was fond of the job I was mistaken."

"Can Mr. Carnegie help you, Miss Wort? Men manage these things so much more easily than we do," said Mrs. Carnegie kindly.

"Thank you, but I paid the demand as the least trouble and to have done with it."

"Of course; I would pay half I am possessed of rather rather than go before the commissioners," said Miss Buff. "Old Phipps is one of them; and here he is. Come to see you, Bessie; you are having quite a levee. I shall be off now." Miss Buff rose, and Miss Wort with her, but before they went there were some rallying speeches to be exchanged between Miss Buff and the quaint old bachelor. They were the most friendly of antagonists, and their animosity was not skin-deep. "Have you seen Lady Latimer since the last school committee, Mr. Phipps?" asked Miss Buff, in mischievous allusion to their latest difference of opinion.

"No. I always keep as far as possible out of her ladyship's way."

"If you had her spirit of charity you would not avow it."

"You take the name of charity in vain. 'It is the beginning, the excuse, and the pretext for a thousand usurpations.' Poverty has a new terror now-a-days in the officiousness of women with nothing to do but play at charity."

Miss Wort shook her head and shut her eyes, as if to stave off the shock of this profanity. Miss Buff only laughed the more merrily, and declared that Mr. Phipps himself had as much to answer for as anybody in Beechhurst, if charity was a sin.

"I can charge myself with very few acts of charity," said he grimly. "I am not out of bonds to bare justice."

Mr. Phipps was in his sarcastic vein, and shot many a look askance at Cinderella in the sofa corner, with her plumed velvet hat lying on a chair beside her. She had been transformed into a most beautiful princess, there was no denying that. He had heard a confidential whisper respecting Mr. Cecil Burleigh, and had seen that gentleman—a very handsome personage to play the part of prince in the story. Mr. Phipps had curiosity, discernment, and a great shrewdness. Bessie had a happy face, and was enjoying her day in her old home; but she would never be Cinderella in the nursery any more—never the little sunburnt gypsy who delighted to wander in the Forest with the boys, and was nowhere so well pleased as when she might run wild. He told her so; he wanted to prove her temper since her exaltation.

"I shall never be only twelve years old again, and that's true," said Bessie, with a sportive

defiance exceedingly like her former self. "But I may travel—who knows how far and wide?—and come home browner than any berry. Grandpapa was a traveller once; so was my uncle Laurence in pursuit of antiquities; and my poor uncle Frederick—you know he was lost in the Baltic? The gypsy wildness is in the blood, but I shall always come back to the Forest to rest."

"She will keep up that delusion in her own mind to the last," said Mr. Phipps. Then after an instant's pause, as if purposely to mark the sequence of his thoughts, he asked, "Is that gentleman who is staying at Fairfield with you now, Mr. Cecil Burleigh, a Woldshire man or South country?"

"Woldshire," said Bessie curtly; and the color mounted to her face at the boldness of her old friend's insinuation.

Mr. Phipps admired her anger, and went on with great coolness: "He has some reputation—member for Norminster, I think you said? The Fairfaxes used to be great in that part of the county fifty years ago. And I suppose, Miss Fairfax, you can talk French now and play on the piano?"

Bessie felt that he was very impertinent, but she preserved her good-humor, and replied laughing, "Yes, Mr. Phipps, I can do a little of both, like other young ladies." Mr. Carnegie had now come in.

"The old piano is sadly out of tune, but perhaps, Bessie dear, you would give us a song before you go," suggested her mother.

Bessie gracefully complied, but nobody thought much of her little French canzonette. "It is but a tiny chirp, Bessie; we have better songs than that at home—eh, mother?" said the doctor, and that was all the compliment she got on her performance. Mr. Phipps was amused by her disconcerted air; already she was beyond the circle where plain speaking is the rule and false politeness the exception. She knew that her father must be right, and registered a silent vow to sing no more unless in private.

Just at this crisis a carriage drove up and stopped at the gate. "It is the Fairfield carriage come to carry you off, Bessie," said her mother. Lady Latimer looked out and spoke to the footman, who touched his hat and ran to the porch with his message, "Would Miss Fairfax make haste?—her ladyship was in a hurry."

"I must go," said Bessie, and took her hat. Mr. Phipps sighed like an echo, and everybody laughed. "Good-bye, but you will see me very soon again," she cried from the gate, and then she got into the carriage.

"To Admiral Parking's," said Lady Latimer, and they drove off on a round of visits, returning to Fairfield only in time to dress for dinner.

Just at that hour Harry Musgrave was coming back from his ramble in the red light of a gorgeous sunset, to be met by his mother with the news that Bessie Fairfax had called at the manor in the course of a ride with the doctor in the morning, and what a pity it was that he was out of the way! for he might have had a ride with them if he had not set off quite so early on his walk. Harry regretted too much what he had missed to have much to say about it; it was very unlucky. Bessie at Fairfield, he clearly discerned, was not at home for him, and Lady Latimer was not his friend. He had not heard any secrets respecting Mr. Cecil Burleigh, but a suspicion obscured his fancy since last night, and his mother's tidings threw him into a mood of dejection that made him as pale as a fond lover whom his lady has rebuffed.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW FRIENDS MAY FALL OUT..

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard and Mr. Wiley were added to the dinner-party at Fairfield that evening, and Lady Latimer gave Miss Fairfax a quiet reminder that she might have to be on her guard, for the rector was as deficient in tact as ever. And so he proved. He first announced that the fever had broken out again at Littlemire and Marsh-End, after the shortest lull he recollected, thus taking away Mr. Logger's present appetite, and causing him to flee from the Forest the first thing in the morning. Then he condoled with Mrs. Bernard on a mishap to her child that other people avoided speaking of, for the consequences were likely to be very serious, and she had not yet been made fully aware of them. There was a peculiar, low, lugubrious note in his voice which caused it to be audible through the room, and Bessie, who sat opposite to him, between Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Mr. Logger, devoted all her conversation to them to avoid that of the rector. But he had taken note of her at the moment of his entrance, and though the opportunity of remark had not been afforded him, he soon made it, beginning with inquiries after her grandfather. Then he reverted to Mr. Fairfax's visit to Beechhurst four years ago, and spoke in a congratulatory, patronizing manner that was peculiarly annoying to Bessie: "There is a difference between now and then—eh, Bessie? Mrs. Wiley and I have often smiled at one naïve little speech of yours—about a nest-egg that was saving up for a certain event that young ladies look forward to. It must be considerably grown by now, that nest-egg. You remember, I see."

Anybody might see that Bessie remembered; not her face only, but her neck, her very arms, burned.

"Secrets are not to be told out of the confessional," said Mr. Bernard. "Miss Fairfax, you blush unseen by me."

There was a general low ripple of laughter, and everybody began to talk at once, to cover the young lady's palpable confusion. Afterward, Lady Latimer, who had been amused, begged to know what that mysterious nest-egg might be. Bessie hesitated. "Tell us, *do* tell us," urged Dora and Mrs. Bernard; so Bessie told them. She had to mention the schemes for sending her to the Hampton Training School and Madame Michaud's millinery shop by way of making her story clear, and then Lady Latimer rather regretted that curiosity had prevailed, and manifested her regret by saying that Mr. Wiley was one of the most awkward and unsafe guests she ever invited to her table. "I should have asked him to meet Mr. Harry Musgrave last night, but he would have been certain to make some remark or inquiry that would have hurt the young man's feelings or put him out of countenance."

"Oh no," said Bessie with a beautiful blushing light in her face, "Harry is above that. He has made his own place, and holds it with perfect ease and simplicity. I see no gentleman who is his better."

"You were always his advocate," Lady Latimer said with a sudden accession of coldness. "Oxford has done everything for him. Dora, close that window; Margaret, don't stand in a draught. Mr. Harry Musgrave is a very plain young man."

"Aunt Olympia, no," remonstrated Mrs. Bernard, who had a suspicion of Miss Fairfax's tenderness in that quarter, and for kind sympathy would not have her ruffled.

But Bessie was quite equal to the occasion. "His plainness is lost in what Mr. Logger calls his power of countenance," said she. "And I'm sure he has a fine eye, and the sweetest smile I know."

Lady Latimer's visage was a study of lofty disapproval: "Has he but one eye?—I thought he had two. When young ladies begin to talk of young gentlemen's fine eyes and sweet smiles, we begin to reflect. But they commonly keep such sentiments to themselves."

Dora and Bessie glanced at one another, and had the audacity to laugh. Then Mrs. Bernard laughed and shook her head. My lady colored; she felt herself in a minority, and, though she did not positively laugh, her lips parted and her air of severity melted away. Bessie had cast off all fear of her with her old belief in her perfection. She loved her, but she knew now that she would never submit to her guidance. Lady Latimer glanced in the girl's brave, bright face, and said meaningly, "The nest-egg will not have been saving up unnecessarily if you condescend to such a folly as *that*." And Bessie felt that my lady had got the last word for the present.

She looked guilty yet indignant at this open reference to what was no more than an unspoken vision. She had a thousand shy silent thoughts in her heart, but it was not for any one to drag them into the light. Lady Latimer understood that she had said too much, but she would not retract, and in this way their contention began. They were henceforward visibly in opposition. Mr. Harry Musgrave called the next morning at Fairfield and asked for Miss Fairfax. He was not admitted; he was told that she was not at home.

"But I was at home. Perhaps he is going back to London. I should have liked to see him," said Bessie when she heard.

"He came at eleven o'clock: who comes at eleven o'clock? Of course Roberts said 'Not at home,'" replied my lady.

Bessie knew that Roberts would not have said "Not at home" unless he had received orders to that effect. And, in fact, his orders were to say "Not at home" to Mr. Harry Musgrave at any and every hour. Lady Latimer had pledged herself to secure the success of Mr. Cecil Burleigh. She felt that Bessie was strong in her frank defiance, but if my lady could do no more for the discouraged suitor, she could at least keep his favored rival at a distance. And this she did without a twinge of remorse. Bessie had a beautiful temper when she was pleased, but her whole soul rebelled against persecution, and she considered it acute persecution to be taken out for formal drives and calls in custody of my lady and Mr. Cecil Burleigh, when her mother was probably mending the boys' socks, and longing for an hour or two of her company at Beechhurst, and Harry Musgrave was looking in every afternoon at the doctor's to see if, by good luck, she had gone over. Bessie was made aware of this last circumstance, and she reckoned it up with a daily accumulating sense of injury against my lady and her client. Mr. Cecil Burleigh found out before long that he was losing rather than gaining in her esteem. Miss Fairfax became not only stiff and cold, but perverse, and Lady Latimer began to feel that it was foolishly done to bring her to Fairfield. She had been put in the way of the very danger that was to be averted. Mr. Harry Musgrave showed to no disadvantage in any company; Miss Fairfax had not the classic taste; Lady Angleby's tactics were a signal failure; her nephew it was who suffered diminution in the ordeal she had prescribed for his rival; and the sooner, therefore, that Miss Fairfax, "a most determined young lady," was sent back to Woldshire, the better for the family plans.

"I shall not invite Elizabeth Fairfax to prolong her visit," Lady Latimer said to Mr. Cecil Burleigh, who in his own mind was sorry she had made it. "I am afraid that her temper is masterful." My lady was resolved to think that Bessie was behaving very ill, not reflecting that a young lady

pursued by a lover whom she does not love is allowed to behave worse than under ordinary circumstances.

Bessie would have liked to be asked to stay at Fairfield longer (which was rather poor-spirited of her), for, though she did not go so much to her old home or to Brook as she desired and had expected, it was something to know that they were within reach. Her sense of happiness was not very far from perfect—the slight bitterness infused into her joy gave it a piquancy—and Lady Latimer presently had brought to her notice symptoms so ominous that she began to wish for the day that would relieve her from her charge.

One morning Mr. Cecil Burleigh was pacing the garden without his hat, his head bent down, and his arms clasped behind him as his custom was, when Bessie, after regarding him with pensive abstraction for several minutes, remarked to Dora in a quaint, melancholy voice: "Mr. Cecil Burleigh's hyacinthine locks grow thin—he is almost bald." My lady jumped up hastily to look, and declared it nonsense—it was only the sun shining on his head. Dora added that he was growing round-shouldered too.

"Why not say humpbacked at once?" exclaimed Lady Latimer angrily. Both the girls laughed: it was very naughty.

"But he is not humpbacked, Aunt Olympia," said the literal Dora.

My lady walked about in a fume, moved and removed books and papers, and tried to restrain a violent impulse of displeasure. She took up the review that contained Harry Musgrave's paper, and said with impatience, "Dora, how often must I beg of you to put away the books that are done with? Surely this is done with."

"I have not finished reading Harry's article yet: please let me take it," said Bessie, coming forward.

"'Harry's article'? What do you mean?" demanded Lady Latimer with austerity: "'Mr. Harry Musgrave' would sound more becoming."

"I forgot to tell you: the paper you and Mr. Logger were discussing the first evening I was here was written by Mr. Harry Musgrave," said Bessie demurely, but not without pride.

"Oh, indeed! The crudeness Mr. Logger remarked in it is accounted for, then," said my lady, and Bessie's triumph was abated. Also my lady carried off the review, and she saw it no more.

"It is only Aunt Olympia's way," whispered Dora to comfort her. "It will go off. She is very fond of you, but you must know you are dreadfully provoking. I wonder how you dare?"

"And is not *she* dreadfully provoking?" rejoined Bessie, and began to laugh. "But I am too happy to be intimidated. She will forgive me—if not to-day, then to-morrow, or if not to-morrow, then the day after; or I can have patience longer. But I will *not* be ruled by her—*never*!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

BETWEEN THEMSELVES.

It was on this day, when Bessie Fairfax's happiness primed her with courage to resist my lady's imperious will, that Harry Musgrave learnt for a certainty he had a rival. The rector was his informant. Mr. Wiley overtook Harry sauntering in the Forest, and asked him how he did, adding that he regretted to hear from his mother that there was a doubt of his being able to continue his law-studies in London, and reminding him of his own unheeded warnings against his ambition to rise in the world.

"Oh, I shall pull through, I trust," replied the young man, betraying no disquiet. "My mother is a little fanciful, as mothers often are. You must not encourage her anxieties."

"You look strong enough, but appearances are sometimes deceptive. Take care of yourself—health is before everything. It was a pity you did not win that fellowship: I don't know how you mean to live after you have got your call to the bar. You clever young fellows who rise from the ranks expect to carry the world before you, but it is a much harder matter than you think. Your father cannot make you much of an allowance?"

Harry knew the rector's tactless way too well to be affronted now by any remark he might make or any question he might ask. "My father has a liberal mind," he said good-humoredly. "And a man hopes for briefs sooner or later."

"It is mostly later, unless he have singular ability or good connexions. You must marry a solicitor's daughter," said the rector, flourishing his stick. Harry said he would try to dispense with violent expedients. They walked on a minute or two in silence, and then Mr. Wiley said: "You have seen Miss Fairfax, of course?—she is on a visit at Fairfield."

"Yes. She has been at Brook," replied Harry with reticent coolness. "We all thought her looking remarkably well."

"Yes, beautiful—very much improved indeed. My wife was quite astonished, but she has been living in the very best society. And have you seen Mr. Cecil Burleigh?"

Harry made answer that he had dined at Fairfield one evening, and had met Mr. Cecil Burleigh there.

"Miss Fairfax's friends must be glad she is going to marry so well—so suitably in every point of view. It is an excellent match, and, I understand from Lady Latimer, all but settled. She is delighted, for they are both immense favorites with her."

Harry Musgrave was dumb. Yet he did not believe what he heard—he could not believe it, remembering Bessie's kind, pretty looks. Why, her very voice had another, softer tone when she spoke to him; his name was music from her lips. The rector went on, explaining the fame and anticipated future of Mr. Cecil Burleigh in a vaguely confidential manner, until they came to a spot where two ways met, and Harry abruptly said, "I was going to Littlemire to call on Mr. Moxon, and this is my road." He held out his hand, and was moving off when Mr. Wiley's visage put on a solemn shade of warning:

"It will carry you through Marsh-End. I would avoid Marsh-End just now if I were you—a nasty, dangerous place. The fever is never long absent. I don't go there myself at present."

But Harry said there was a chance, then, that he might meet with his old tutor in the hamlet, and he started away, eager to be alone and to escape from the rector's observation, for he knew that he was betraying himself. He went swiftly along under the sultry shade in a confused whirl of sensations. His confidence had suddenly failed him. He had counted on Bessie Fairfax for his comrade since he was a boy; the idea of her was woven into all his pleasant recollections of the past and all his expectations in the future. Since that Sunday evening in the old sitting-room at Brook her sweet, womanly figure had been the centre of his thoughts, his reveries. He had imagined difficulties, obstacles, but none with her. This real difficulty, this tangible obstacle, in the shape of Mr. Cecil Burleigh, a suitor chosen by her family and supported by Lady Latimer, gave him pause. He could not affect to despise Mr. Cecil Burleigh, but he vowed a vow that he would not be cheated of his dear little Bessie unless by her own consent. Was it possible that he was deceived in her—that he and she mistook her old childish affection for the passion that is strong as death? No—no, it could not be. If there was truth in her eyes, in her voice, she loved him as dearly as he loved her, though never a word of love had been spoken between them. The young man wrought himself up into such a state of agitation and excitement that he never reached Marsh-End nor saw Mr. Moxon at all that day. He turned, and bent his steps by a circuitous path to a woodland nook where he had left his friend Christie at work a couple of hours ago.

"Back again so soon? Then you did not find Moxon at home," said the artist, scarcely lifting an eye from the canvas.

Harry flung himself on the ground beside his friend and delivered his mind of its new burden. Christie now condescended to look at him and to say calmly, "It is always well to know what threatens us, but there is no need to exaggerate facts. Mr. Cecil Burleigh is a rival you may be proud to defeat; Miss Fairfax will please herself, and I think you are a match for him. You have the start."

"I know Bessie is fond of me, but she is a simple, warm-hearted girl, and is fond of all of us," said Harry with a reflective air.

"I had no idea you were so modest. Probably she has a slight preference for *you*." Christie went on painting, and now and then a telling touch accentuated his sentiments.

Harry hearkened, and grew more composed. "I wish I had her own assurance of it," said he.

"You had better ask her," said Christie.

After this they were silent for a considerable space, and the picture made progress. Then Harry began again, summing up his disadvantages: "Is it fair to ask her? Here am I, of no account as to family or fortune, and under a cloud as to the future, if my mother and Carnegie are justified in their warnings—and sometimes it comes over me that they are—why, Christie, what have I to offer her? Nothing, nothing but my presumptuous self."

"Let her be judge: women have to put up with a little presumption in a lover."

"Would it not be great presumption? Consider her relations and friends, her rank and its concomitants. I cannot tell how much she has learnt to value them, how necessary they have become to her. Lady Latimer, who was good to me until the other day, is shutting her doors against me now as too contemptible."

"Not at all. The despotic old lady shuts her doors against you because she is afraid of you."

"What have I to urge except that I love her?"

"The best of pleas. Don't fear too much. Give her leave to love you by avowing your love—that is what a girl waits for: if you let her go back to Woldshire without an understanding between yourselves, she will think you care for your own pride more than for her."

"I wish she were little Bessie at Beechhurst again, and all her finery blown to the winds. I have

not seen her for five days."

"That must be your own fault. You don't want an ambassador? If you do, there's the post."

Harry was silent again. He was chiefly raising objections for the pleasure of hearing them contradicted; of course he was not aware of half the objections that might have been cited against him as an aspirant to the hand of Miss Fairfax. In the depth of his heart there was a tenacious conviction that Bessie Fairfax loved him best in the world—with a love that had grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength, and would maintain itself independent of his failure or success in life. But oh, that word *failure*! It touched him with a dreadful chill. He turned pale at it, and resolutely averted his mind from the idea.

He left young Christie with as little ceremony as he had rejoined him, and walked home to Brook, entering the garden from the wood. The first sight that met him was Bessie Fairfax standing alone under the beeches. At the moment he thought it was an illusion, for she was all in bluish-gray amongst the shadows; but at the sound of the gate she turned quickly and came forward to meet him.

"I was just beginning to feel disappointed," said she impulsively. "Lady Latimer brought me over to say good-bye, and we were told you had gone to Littlemire. She is in the sitting-room with your mother. I came out here."

Harry's face flushed so warmly that he had no need to express his joy in words. What a lucky event it was that he had met Mr. Wiley, and had been turned back from his visit to his old tutor! He was fatigued with excitement and his hurried walk, and he invited Bessie to sit with him under the beeches where they used to sit watching the little stream as it ran by at their feet. Bessie was nothing loath—she was thinking that this was the last time they should meet for who could tell how long—and she complied with all her old child-like submission to him, and a certain sweet appealing womanly dignity, which, without daunting Harry at all, compelled him to remember that she was not any longer a child.

The young people were not visible from the sitting-room. Lady Latimer's head was turned another way when Harry and Bessie met, but the instant she missed her young charge she got up and looked out of the lattice. The boles and sweeping branches of the great beeches hid the figures at their feet, and Mrs. Musgrave, observing that dear Bessie was very fond of the manor-garden, and had probably strolled into the wilderness, my lady accepted the explanation and resumed her seat and her patience.

Meanwhile, Harry did not waste his precious opportunity. He had this advantage, that when he saw Bessie he saw only the fair face that he worshipped, and thought nothing of her adventitious belongings, while in her absence he saw her surrounded by them, and himself set at a vast conventional distance. He said that the four years since she left Beechhurst seemed but as one day, now they were together again in the old familiar places, and she replied that she was glad he thought so, for she thought so too. "I still call the Forest home, though I do not pine in exile. I return to it the day after to-morrow," she told him.

"Good little philosophical Bessie!" cried Harry, and relapsed into his normal state of masculine superiority.

Then they talked of themselves, past, present, and future—now with animation, now again with dropped and saddened voices. The afternoon sun twinkled in the many-paned lattices of the old house in the background, and the brook sang on as it had sung from immemorial days before a stone of the house was built. Harry gazed rather mournfully at the ivied walls during one of their sudden silences, and then he told Bessie that the proprietor was ill, and the manor would have a new owner by and by.

"I trust he will not want to turn out my father and mother and pull it down, but he is an improving landlord, and has built some excellent ugly farmsteads on his other property. I have a clinging to it, and the doctor says it would be well for me had I been born and bred in almost any other place."

Bessie sighed, and said deprecatingly, "Harry, you look as strong as a castle. If it was Mr. Christie they were always warning, I should not wonder, but *you*!"

"But *me*! Little Christie looks as though a good puff of wind might blow him away, and he is as tough as a pin-wire. I stand like a tower, and they tell me the foundations are sinking. It sounds like a fable to frighten me."

"Harry dear, it is not serious; don't believe it. Everybody has to take a little care. You must give up London and hard study if they try you. We will all help you to bear the disappointment: I know it would be cruel, but if you must, you must! Leaning towers, I've heard, stand hundreds of years, and serve their purpose as well as towers that stand erect."

"Ah, Bessie, cunning little comforter! Tell me which is the worse—a life that is a failure or death?" said Harry, watching the gyrations of a straw that the eddies of the rivulet were whirling by.

"Oh, death, death—there is no remedy for death." Bessie shuddered. There was repulsion in her face as well as awe.

Harry felt surprised: this was his own feeling, but women, he thought, had more natural resignation. Not so, however, his young comrade. She loved life, and hoped to see good days. He reminded her that she had lost both her parents early.

"Yes," she said, "but my other father and mother prevented me suffering from their loss. I scarcely recollect it, I was such a happy child. It would be different now if any of those, young like myself, that I have grown up with and love very much, were to pass out of sight, and I had to think that nowhere in the world could I find them any more."

"It would touch you more personally. There was a young fellow drowned at Oxford whom I knew: we were aghast for a day, but the next we were on the river again. I recollect how bitterly you cried the morning your father was buried; all the afternoon you refused to be comforted, even by a sweet black puppy that I had brought over for the purpose, but in the evening you took to it and carried it about in your pinafore. Oh, God and time are very good to us. We lose one love, another steps in to fill the void, and soon we do not remember that ever there was a void."

Bessie was gazing straight away into heaven, her eyes full of sunshiny tears, thoughts of the black puppy struggling with more pathetic thoughts. "We are very dismal, Harry," said she presently. "Is the moral of it how easily we should be consoled for each other's loss? Would you not pity me if I died? I should almost die of your death, I think."

"And if I am to live and never do any good, never to be famous, Bessie? If I come to you some day beaten and jaded—no honors and glories, as I used to promise—"

"Why, Harry, unless it were your mother no one would be kinder to you than I would," she said with exquisite tenderness, turning to look in his face, for he spoke in a strained, low voice as if it hurt him.

He took her hands, she not refusing to yield them, and said, "It is my belief that we are as fond of each other as ever we were, Bessie, and that neither of us will ever care half so much for anybody else?"

"It is my belief too, Harry." Bessie's eyes shone and her tongue trembled, but how happy she was! And he bowed his head for several minutes in silence.

There was a rustling in the bushes behind them, a bird perhaps, but the noise recalled them to the present world—that and a whisper from Bessie, smiling again for pure content: "Harry dear, we must not make fools of ourselves now; my lady might descend upon us at any moment."

Harry sighed, and looked up with great content. "It is a compact, Bessie," said he, holding out his right hand.

"Trust me, Harry," said she, and laid hers softly in his open palm.

Mrs. Musgrave's voice was heard from the sitting-room window: "Bessie! Bessie dear! where are you?—Lady Latimer wishes to go. Make haste—come in." A bit of Bessie's blue-gray dress had betrayed her whereabouts. And lo! the two young people emerged from the shelter of the trees, and quite at their leisure sauntered up the lawn, talking with a sweet gay confidence, just as they used to talk when they were boy and girl, and Bessie came to tea at Brook, and they were the best friends in the world. Harry's mother guessed in a moment what had happened. Lady Latimer caught one glance and loftily averted her observation.

They had to go round to the hall-door, and they did not hurry themselves. They took time to assure one another how deep was their happiness, their mutual confidence—to promise a frequent exchange of letters, and to fear that they would not meet again before Bessie left Fairfield. Lady Latimer was seated in the carriage when they appeared in sight. Bessie got in meekly, and was bidden to be quicker. She smiled at Harry, who looked divinely glad, and as they drove off rapidly recollected that she had not said good-bye to his mother.

"Never mind—Harry will explain," she said aloud: evidently her thoughts were astray.

"Explain what? I am afraid there are many things that need explanation," said my lady austerely, and not another word until they reached home. But Bessie's heart was in perfect peace, and her countenance reflected nothing but the sunshine.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A LONG, DULL DAY.

That evening Bessie Fairfax was charming, she was *so* happy. She was good and gracious again to Mr. Cecil Burleigh, and she was never prettier. He basked in her content, without trying to understand it—thought more than ever what a buoyant, sweet-tempered woman she would be, to give a man rest and refreshment at home, whose active life must be spent in the arid ways of the political world. Dora had her conjectures, and whispered them, but Bessie made no revelation, gave no confidences.

It must be *ages* before her league with Harry Musgrave could be concluded, and therefore let it

be still, as it had been always, suspected, but not confessed—unless she were over-urged by Harry's rival and her northern kinsfolk and friends. Then she would declare her mind, but not before. Lady Latimer asked no questions. Her woman's discernment was not at fault, but she had her own opinion of youthful constancy and early loves and early vows, and believed that when they were not to be approved they were to be most judiciously ignored.

The next day was so fully occupied with engagements made beforehand that Bessie had no chance of going again to Beechhurst, but she did not make a grief of it—she could not have made a grief of anything just then. On the last morning, however, to her dear surprise, the doctor stopped at the door for a parting word of her mother's love and his own, and their hopes that she would soon be coming amongst them again; and when she went away an hour later she went as joyous as she had come, though she knew that a report of her untoward behavior had gone before her, and that the probabilities were she would enter into an atmosphere of clouds the moment she reached Abbotsmead.

But it did not prove so. Lady Latimer had written cautiously and kindly—had not been able to give any assurance of Mr. Cecil Burleigh's success, but had a feeling that it must come to pass. Elizabeth was a sweet girl, though she had the self-will of a child; in many points she was more of a child than my lady had supposed—in her estimate of individuals, and of their weight and position in the world, for instance—but this was a fault that knowledge of the world would cure.

Mr. Fairfax was pleased to welcome his granddaughter home again, and especially pleased to see no sadness in her return. The Forest was ever so much nearer now—not out of her world at all. Bessie had travelled that road once, and would travel it again. Every experience shortens such roads, lessens such difficulties between true friends. Bessie's acquaintances came to call upon her, and she talked of the pleasure it had been to her to revisit the scenes of her childhood, of the few changes that had happened there since she came away, and of the hospitality of Lady Latimer.

The lime trees were turning yellow and thin of leaf; there was a fire all day in the octagon parlor. It was autumn in Woldshire, soon to be winter. It seemed to Bessie on her return like resuming the dull routine of a life that had gone on for a long while. Mrs. Stokes, as her nearest and most neighborly neighbor, often ran across the park of an afternoon, but Bessie's best delight was at post-time in the morning. Mr. Fairfax never came down stairs to breakfast, and she had Harry Musgrave's letters all to herself, undiscovered and undisturbed.

The squire never regained his strength or his perfect moral control, and the peculiar tempers of his previous life seemed to be exaggerated as his natural force decayed. Mr. Oliver Smith was his most frequent and welcome visitor. They talked together of events past and of friends long since dead. Perhaps this was a little wearisome and painful now and then to Mr. Oliver Smith, who retained his youthful sprightliness amidst more serious sentiments. He would have had his old friend contemplate the great future that was approaching, instead of the unalterable past.

One day he said to Bessie, "I think your grandfather wanders in his mind sometimes; I fear he is failing."

"I don't know," was her reflective answer. "His thoughts often run on his sister Dorothy and Lady Latimer: I hear him mutter to himself the same words often, 'It was a lifelong mistake, Olympia.' But that is true, is it not? He is as clear and collected as ever when he dictates to me a letter on business; he makes use of me as his secretary."

"Well, well! Let us hope, then, God may spare him to us for many years to come," said Mr. Oliver Smith, with that conventional propriety of speech which helps us through so many hard moments when feeling does not dictate anything real to say.

Bessie dwelt for some days after on that pious aspiration of her grandfather's old friend, but the ache and tedium of life did not return upon her. Her sense of duty and natural affection were very strong. She told herself that if it were her lot to watch for many years beside this dwindling flame, it was a lot of God's giving, not of her own seeking, and therefore good. The letters that came to her from Beechhurst and Caen breathed nothing but encouragement to love and patience, and Harry Musgrave's letters were a perpetual fount of refreshment. What delightful letters they were! He told, her whatever he thought would interest or amuse her or make his life palpable to her. He sent her books, he sent her proof-sheets to be read and returned: if Bessie had not loved him so devotedly and all that belonged to him, she might have thought his literature a tax on her leisure. It was a wonder to all who knew her (without knowing her secret fund of joy) what a cheerful countenance she wore through this dreary period of her youth. Within the house she had no support but the old servants, and little change or variety from without. Those kind old ladies, Miss Juliana and Miss Charlotte Smith, were very good in coming to see her, and always indulged her in a talk of Lady Latimer and Fairfield; Miss Burleigh visited her occasionally for a day, but Lady Angleby kept out of the shadow on principle—she could not bear to see it lengthening. She enjoyed life very much, and would not be reminded of death if she could help it. Her nephew spent Christmas at Norminster, and paid more than one visit to Abbotsmead. Miss Fairfax was as glad as ever to see him. He came like a breath of fresh air from the living outer world, and made no pretensions to what he knew she had not to give. The engagement between Miss Julia Gardiner and Mr. Brotherton had fallen through, for some reason that was never fully explained, and Miss Burleigh began to think her dear brother would marry poor Julia after all.

Another of Bessie's pleasures was a day in Minster Court. One evening she brought home a photograph of the three boys, and the old squire put on his spectacles to look at it. She had ceased to urge reconciliation, but she still hoped for it earnestly; and it came in time, but not at all as she expected. One day—it was in the early spring—she was called to her grandfather's room, and there she found Mr. John Short sitting in council and looking exceedingly discontented. The table was strewn with parchments and papers, and she was invited to take a seat in front of the confusion. Then an abrupt question was put to her: Would she prefer to have settled upon her the Abbey Lodge, which Colonel Stokes now occupied as a yearly tenant, or a certain house in the suburbs of Norminster going out towards Brentwood?

"In what event?" she asked, coloring confusedly.

"In the event of my death or your own establishment in life," said her grandfather. "Your uncle Laurence will bring his family here, and I do not imagine that you will choose to be one with them long; you will prefer a home of your own."

The wave of color passed from Bessie's face. "Dear grandpapa, don't talk of such remote events; it is time enough to think of changes and decide when the time comes," said she.

"That is no answer, Elizabeth. Prudent people make their arrangements in anticipation of changes, and their will in anticipation of death. Speak plainly: do you like the lodge as a residence, or the vicinity of Norminster?"

"Dear grandpapa, if you were no longer here I should go home to the Forest," Bessie said, and grew very pale.

The old squire neither moved nor spoke for several minutes. He stared out of the window, then he glanced at the lawyer and said, "You hear, Short? now you will be convinced. She has not taken root enough to care to live here any longer. She will go back to the Forest; all this time she has been in exile, and cut off from those whom alone she loves. Why should I keep her waiting at Abbotsmead for a release that may be slow to come? Go now, Elizabeth, go now, if to stay wearies you;" and he waved her to the door imperatively.

Bessie rose trembling and left the room, tears and indignation struggling for the mastery. "Oh, grandpapa! why will you say such things?" was all her remonstrance, but she felt that there are some wrongs in this life very hard to bear.

Mr. John Short sat mute for some time after the young lady's departure. The squire gloomed sorrowfully: "From first to last my course is nothing but disappointment."

"I wish, sir, that you could be prevailed on to see Mr. Laurence?" suggested the lawyer. "His wife is a very good little lady, and the boys you might be proud of. Pray, sir, give yourself that chance of happiness for your closing days."

"I had other plans. There will be no marriage, Short: I understand Elizabeth. In warning me that she will return to the Forest when I am gone, she just tells me that my hopes of her and Burleigh are all moonshine. Well, let Laurence come. Let him come and take possession with his children; they can leave me my corner of the house in peace. I shall not need it very long. And Elizabeth can go *home* when she pleases."

Mr. Fairfax's resentment was very bitter against Bessie, at first, for the frank exposition she had made of her future intentions. She had meant no unkindness, but simple honesty. He did not take it so, and when her customary duty and service brought her next into his presence he made her feel how deeply she had offended. He rejected her offer to read to him, put aside her helping hand, and said he would have Jonquil to assist him; she need not remain. He uttered no accusation against her and no reproach; he gave her no opportunity of softening her abrupt announcement; he just set her at a distance, as it were, and made himself unapproachable. Bessie betook herself in haste to her white parlor, to hide the blinding tears in her eyes and the mortification in her heart. "And he wonders that so few love him!" she said to herself, not without anger even in her pitiful yearning to be friends again.

A week of alienation followed this scene, and Bessie was never more miserable. Day by day she tried to resume her loving care of her grandfather, and day by day she was coldly repulsed. Jonquil, Macky, Mrs. Betts, all sympathized in silence; their young lady was less easy to condole with now than when she was fresh from school. The old squire was as wretched as he made his granddaughter. He had given permission for his son to come to Abbotsmead, and he seemed in no haste to embrace the permission. When he came at last, he brought little Justus with him, but he had to say that it was only for a few hours. In fact, his wife was extremely unwilling to abandon their happy, independent home in the Minster Court, and he was equally unwilling to force her inclination. Mr. Fairfax replied, "You know best," and gazed at his grandson, who, from between his father's knees, gazed at him again without any advance towards good-fellowship. A formal reconciliation ensued, but that was all. For the kindness that springs out of a warm, affectionate nature the old squire had to look to Elizabeth, and without any violent transition they glided back into their former habits and relations. Bessie was saddened a little by her late experiences, but she was not quite new to the lesson that the world is a place of unsatisfied hopes and defeated intentions.

Mr. John Short was often to and fro between Abbotsmead and Norminster during that summer, and an idea prevailed in the household that the squire was altering his will again. His son

Frederick had died intestate, and the squire had taken possession of what he left. The poor lady in seclusion at Caen died also about this time, and a large addition was made to Mr. Fairfax's income—so large that his loss by the Durham lawsuit was more than balanced. The lawyer looked far from pleasant while transacting his client's business. It was true that Mr. Frederick Fairfax had left no will, but he had expressed certain distinct intentions, and these intentions, to the indignant astonishment of many persons, his father would not carry out. Mr. Forbes talked to him of the sacredness of his son's wishes, but the squire had a purpose for the money, and was obstinate in his refusal to relinquish it. Some people decided that thus he meant to enrich his granddaughter without impoverishing Abbotsmead for his successor, but Mr. John Short's manner to the young lady was tinctured with a respectful compassion that did not augur well for her prospects.

Bessie paid very little heed to the speculations of which she could not fail to hear something. So long as her grandfather was tolerably kind to her she asked no more from the present, and she left the future to take care of itself. But it cannot be averred that he was invariably kind. There seemed to lurk in his mind a sense of injury, which he visited upon her in sarcastic gibes and allusions to the Forest, taunting her with impatience to have done with him and begone to her dearer friends. Bessie resented this for a little while, but by and by she ceased to be affected, and treated it as the pettishness of a sick old man, never used to be considerate for others. He kept her very much confined and gave her scant thanks for her care of him. If Mr. Cecil Burleigh admired patience and forbearance in a woman, he had the opportunity of studying a fair example of both in her. He pitied her secretly, but she put on no martyr-airs. "It is nothing. Oh no, grandpapa is not difficult—it is only his way. Most people are testy when they are ill," she would plead, and she believed what she said. The early sense of repulsion and disappointment once overcome, she was too sensible to bewail the want of unselfish affection where it had never existed before.

The squire had certain habits of long standing—habits of coldness, distance, reserve, and he never changed materially. He survived through the ensuing autumn and winter, and finally sank during the north-easterly weather of the following spring, just two years after the death of his son Frederick. Jonquil and Macky, who had been all his life about him, were his most acceptable attendants. He did not care to have his son Laurence with him, and when the children came over it was not by his invitation. Mr. Forbes visited him almost daily, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh came down from London twice at his request. Bessie remitted no act of tender thoughtfulness; and one day, shortly before the end, he said to her, "You are a good girl, Elizabeth." She smiled and said, "Am I, grandpapa?" but his persistent coldness had brought back her shy reticence, and neither said any more. Perhaps there was compunction in the old man's mind—the cast of his countenance was continually that of regret—but there was no drawing near in heart or confidence ever again, and the squire died in the isolation of feeling with which living he had chosen to surround himself. The world, his friends, neighbors, and servants said that he died in honor respected by all who knew him; but for long and long after Bessie could never think of his death without tears—not because he had died, but because so little sorrow followed him.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE SQUIRE'S WILL.

Throughout his life Mr. Fairfax had guided his actions by a certain rule of justice that satisfied himself. The same rule was evident in his last will. His granddaughter had given him to understand that she should return to the Forest and cast in her lot with the humble friends from amongst whom he had taken her, and the provision he made for her was consonant with that determination. He bequeathed to her a sum of five thousand pounds—a sufficient portion, as he considered, for that rank in life—and to Mr. Cecil Burleigh he bequeathed the handsome fortune that it was intended she should bring him in marriage. He had the dower without the bride, and though Lady Angleby and his sister quietly intimated to astonished friends that they had good reason to hope Miss Fairfax would ultimately be no loser by her grandfather's will, her uncle Laurence was not the only person by many who judged her unkindly and unfairly treated. But it was impossible to dispute the old squire's ability to dispose of his property, or his right to dispose of it as he pleased. He had been mainly instrumental in raising Mr. Cecil Burleigh to the position he occupied, and there was a certain obligation incurred to support him in it. If Mr. Fairfax had chosen to make a son of him, no one had a right to complain. No one did complain; the expression of opinion was extremely guarded.

Bessie was informed of the terms of her grandfather's will in the first shock of surprise; afterward her uncle Laurence reflected that it would have been wise to keep them from her, but the deed was done. She received the news without emotion: she blushed, put up her eyebrows, and smiled as she said, "Then I am a poor young woman again." She saw at once what was absurd, pathetic, vexatious in her descent from the dignity of riches, but she was not angry. She never uttered a word of blame or reproach against her grandfather, and when it was indignantly recalled to her that Mr. Cecil Burleigh was put into possession of what ought to have been hers, she answered, "There is no ought in the matter. Grandpapa had a lively interest in Mr. Cecil Burleigh's career, for the sake of the country as well as for his own sake, and if you ask me my sentiments I must confess that I feel the money grandpapa has left him is well bestowed. It would

be a shame that such a man should be hampered by mean cares and insufficient fortune."

"Oh, if you are satisfied that is enough," was the significant rejoinder, and Lady Angleby's hopes had a wider echo.

To Mr. Cecil Burleigh his old friend's bequest was a boon to be thankful for, and he was profoundly thankful. It set him above troublesome anxieties and lifted his private life into the sphere of comfort. But his first visit to Abbotsmead and first meeting with Miss Fairfax after it was communicated to him tried his courage not a little. The intimacy that had been kept up, and even improved during Mr. Fairfax's decline, had given him no grounds for hoping better success with Elizabeth as a lover than before, and yet he was convinced that in leaving him this fine fortune the squire had continued to indulge his expectations of their ultimate union. That Elizabeth would be inclined towards him in the slightest degree by the fact of his gaining the inheritance that she had forfeited, he never for one moment dreamed; the contrary might be possible, but not that. Amongst the many and important duties and interests that engaged him now he had neither leisure nor desire for sentimental philandering. He was a very busy man of the world, and wished for the rest of a home. Insensibly his best thoughts reverted to his dear Julia, never married, still his very good friend. He approved the sweet rosy face of Elizabeth Fairfax, her bright spirit and loving, unselfish disposition, but he found it impossible to flatter himself that she would ever willingly become his wife. Lady Angleby insisted that honor demanded a renewal of his offer, but Elizabeth never gave him an opportunity; and there was an end of his uncertainties when she said one day to his sister (after receiving an announcement of her own approaching marriage to Mr. Forbes), "And there is nothing now to stand between your brother and Miss Julia Gardiner. I am truly glad grandpapa left him an independence, they have been so faithful to each other."

Miss Burleigh looked up surprised, as if she thought Bessie must be laughing at them. And Bessie was laughing. "Not quite constant perhaps, but certainly faithful," she persisted. But Mr. Cecil Burleigh had probably appreciated her blossoming youth more kindly than his dear Julia had appreciated her autumnal widower. Bessie meant to convey that neither had any right to complain of the other, and that was true. Miss Burleigh carried Miss Fairfax's remarks to her brother, and after that they were privately agreed that it would be poor Julia after all.

Mr. Laurence Fairfax insisted that his niece should live at Abbotsmead, and continue in possession of the white suite until she was of age. He was her guardian, and would take no denial.

"It wants but three months to that date," she told him.

"Your home is here until you marry, Elizabeth," he rejoined in a tone that forbade contradiction. "You shall visit Lady Latimer, but subject to permission. Remember you are a Fairfax. Though you may go back to the Forest, it is a delusion to imagine that you can live comfortably in the crowded household where you were happy as a child. You have been six years absent; three of them you have spent in the luxurious ease of Abbotsmead. You have acquired the tastes and habits of your own class—a very different class. You must look to me now: your pittance is not enough for the common necessaries of life."

"Not so very different a class, Uncle Laurence, and fortunately I am not in bondage to luxurious ease," Bessie said. "But I will not be perverse. Changes come without seeking, and I am of an adaptable disposition. The other day I was supposed to be a great heiress—to-day I have no more than a bare competence."

"Not even that, but if you marry suitably you may be sure that I shall make you a suitable settlement," rejoined her kinsman. Bessie speculated in silence and many times again what her uncle Laurence might mean by "suitably," but they had no explanation, and the occasion passed.

Bessie's little fortune was vested in the hands of trustees, and settled absolutely to her own use. She could not anticipate her income nor make away with it, which Mr. Carnegie said was a very good thing. Beyond that remark, and a generous reminder that her old nest under the thatch was ready for her whenever she liked to return and take possession, nothing was said in the letters from Beechhurst about her grandfather's will or her new vicissitude. She had some difficulty in writing to announce her latest change to Harry Musgrave, but he wrote back promptly and decisively to set her heart at rest, telling her that to his notions her fortune was a very pretty fortune, and avowing a prejudice against being maintained by his wife: he would greatly prefer that she should be dependent upon him. Bessie, who was a loving woman far more than a proud or ambitious one, was pleased by his assurance, and in answering him again she confessed that would have been her choice too. Nevertheless, she became rather impatient to see him and talk the matter over—the more so because Harry manifested little curiosity to learn anything of her family affairs unless they immediately affected herself. He told her that he should be able to go down to Brook at the end of August, and he begged her to meet him there. This she promised, and it was understood between them that if she was not invited to Fairfield she would go to the doctor's house, even though the boys might be at home for their holidays.

Bessie was long enough at Abbotsmead after her grandfather's death to realize how that event affected her own position there. The old servants had been provided for by their old master, and they left—Jonquil, Macky, Mrs. Betts, and others their contemporaries. Bessie missed their friendly faces, and dispensed with the services of a maid. Then Mrs. Fairfax objected to Joss in the house, lest he should bite the children, and Janey and Ranby were not entirely at her beck

and call as formerly. The incompetent Sally, who sang a sweet cradle-song, became quite a personage and sovereign in the nursery, and was jealous of Miss Fairfax's intrusion into her domain. It was inevitable and natural, but Bessie appreciated better now the forethought of her grandfather in wishing to provide her with a roof of her own. Abbotsmead under its new squire, all his learning and philosophy notwithstanding, promised to become quite a house of the world again, for his beautiful young wife was proving of a most popular character, and attracted friends about her with no effort. Instead of old Lady Angleby, the Hartwell people and the Chivertons, came the Tindals, Edens, Raymonds, Lefevres, and Wynards; and Miss Fairfax felt herself an object of curiosity amongst them as the young lady who had been all but disinherited for her obstinate refusal to marry the man of her grandfather's choice. She was generally liked, but she was not just then in the humor to cultivate anybody's intimacy. Mrs. Stokes was still her chief resource when she was solitary.

She had a private grief and anxiety of her own, of which she could speak to none. One day her expected letter from Harry Musgrave did not come; it was the first time he had failed her since their compact was made. She wrote herself as usual, and asked why she was neglected. In reply she received a letter, not from Harry himself, but from his friend Christie, who was nursing him through an attack of inflammation occasioned by a chill from remaining in his wet clothes after an upset on the river. She gathered from it that Harry had been ill and suffering for nearly a fortnight, but that he was better, though very weak, and that if Christie had been permitted to do as he wished, Mrs. Musgrave would have been sent for, but her son was imperative against it. He did not think it was necessary to put her to that distress and inconvenience, and as he was now in a fair way of recovery it was his particular desire that she should not be alarmed and made nervous by any information of what he had passed through. But he would not keep it from his dear Bessie, who had greater firmness, and who might rest assured he was well cared for, as Christie had brought him to his own house, and his old woman was a capital cook—a very material comfort for a convalescent.

With a recollection of the warnings of a year and a half ago, Bessie could not but ponder this news of Harry's illness with grave distress. She wrote to Mr. Carnegie, and enclosed the letter for his opinion. Mr. Carnegie respected her confidence, and told her that from the name of the physician mentioned by Christie as in attendance on his patient he was in the best possible hands. She confessed to Harry what she had done, and he found no fault with her, but his next letter was in a vein of melancholy humor from beginning to end. He was going back, he said, to his dismal chambers, his law-books and his scribbling, and she was to send him a very bright letter indeed to cheer him in his solitude. How Bessie wished she could have flown herself to cheer him! And now, too, she half regretted her poverty under her grandfather's will, that deferred all hope of his rescue from London smoke and toil till he had made the means of rescue for himself. But she gave him the pleasure of knowing what she would do if she could.

Thus the summer months lapsed away. There was no hiatus in their correspondence again, but Harry told her that he had a constant fever on him and was longing for home and rest. Once he wrote from Richmond, whither he had gone with Christie, "The best fellow in the universe—love him, dear Bessie, for my sake"—and once he spoke of going to Italy for the winter, and of newspaper letters that were to pay the shot. He was sad, humorous, tender by turns, but Bessie missed something. There were allusions to the vanity of man's life and joy, now and then there was a word of philosophy for future consolation, but of present hope there was nothing. Her eyes used to grow dim over these letters: she understood that Harry was giving in, that he found his life too hard for him, and that he was trying to prepare her and himself for this great disappointment.

When Parliament rose Mr. Cecil Burleigh came down to Norminster and paid a visit to Abbotsmead. He was the bearer of an invitation to Brentwood and his sister's wedding, but Miss Fairfax was not able to accept it. She had just accepted an invitation to Fairfield.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TENDER AND TRUE.

Lady Latimer was in possession of all the facts and circumstances of her guest's position when she arrived at Fairfield. Her grandfather's will was notorious, and my lady did not entirely disapprove of it, as Bessie's humbler friends did, for she still cherished expectations in Mr. Cecil Burleigh's interest, and was not aware how far he was now from entertaining any on his own account. Though she had convinced herself that there was an unavowed engagement between Mr. Harry Musgrave and Miss Fairfax, she was resolved to treat it and speak of it as a very slight thing indeed, and one that must be set aside without weak tenderness. Having such clear and decided views on the affair, she was not afraid to state them even to Bessie herself.

Harry Musgrave had not yet arrived at Brook, but after a day devoted to her mother Bessie's next opportunity for a visit was devoted to Harry's mother. She mentioned to Lady Latimer where she was going, and though my lady looked stern she did not object. On Bessie's return, however, she found something to say, and cast off all reserves: "Mr. Harry Musgrave has not come, but he is coming. Had I known beforehand, I should have preferred to have you here in his absence. Elizabeth, I shall consider that young man very deficient in honorable feeling if he attempt to

interfere between you and your true interest."

"That I am sure he never will," said Bessie with animation.

"He is not over-modest. If you are advised by me you will be distant with him—you will give him no advantage by which he may imagine himself encouraged. Any foolish promise that you exchanged when you were last here must be forgotten."

Bessie replied with much quiet dignity: "You know, Lady Latimer, that I was not brought up to think rank and riches essential, and the experience I have had of them has not been so enticing that I should care to sacrifice for their sake a true and tried affection. Harry Musgrave and I are dear friends, and, since you speak to me so frankly, I will tell you that we propose to be friends for life."

Lady Latimer grew very red, very angry: "Do you tell me that you will marry that young man—without birth, without means, without a profession even? What has he, or is he, that should tempt you to throw away the fine position that awaits your acceptance?"

"He has a real kindness for me, a real unselfish love, and I would rather be enriched with that than be ever so exalted. It is an old promise. I always did love Harry Musgrave, and never anybody else."

Lady Latimer fumed, walked about and sat down again: "How are you to live?"

"I don't know," said Bessie cheerfully. "Like other young people—partly on our prospects. But we do not talk of marrying yet."

"It is a relief to hear that you do not talk of marrying yet, though how you can dream of marrying young Mr. Musgrave at all, when you have Mr. Cecil Burleigh at your feet, is to me a strange, incomprehensible infatuation."

"Mr. Cecil Burleigh is not at my feet any longer. He has got up and gone back to Miss Julia Gardiner's feet, which he ought never to have left. Grandpapa's will has the effect of making two charming people happy, and I am glad of it."

"Is it possible?" said Lady Latimer in a low, chagrined voice. "Then you have lost him. I presume that you felt the strain of such high companionship too severe for you? Early habits cling very close."

"He had no fascination for me; it was an effort sometimes."

"You must have been carrying on a correspondence with Mr. Harry Musgrave all this while."

"We have corresponded during the last year," said Bessie calmly.

"I blame myself that I ever gave the opportunity for a renewal of your old friendliness. That is the secret of your wilfulness."

"I loved Harry best—that is the secret of it," said Bessie; and she turned away to close the discussion.

It was a profound mortification to Lady Latimer to hear within the week from various quarters that Mr. Cecil Burleigh was at Ryde, and to all appearance on the happiest terms with Miss Julia Gardiner. And in fact they were quietly married one morning by special license, and the next news of them was that they were travelling in the Tyrol.

It was about a week after this, when Bessie was spending a few hours with her mother, that she heard of Harry Musgrave's arrival at Brook. It was the doctor who brought the intelligence. He came into the little drawing-room where his wife and Bessie were sitting, and said, "I called at Brook in passing and saw poor Harry."

"Well, Thomas, and how is he?" inquired Mrs. Carnegie in the anxious tone a kind voice takes when asking after the health of a friend who may be in a critical way. Bessie dropped her work and looked from one to the other.

The doctor did not answer directly, but, addressing Bessie, he said, "You must not be shocked, my dear, when you see Harry Musgrave."

"What is the matter? I have heard nothing: is he ill again?" cried Bessie.

"He must never go back to London," said Mr. Carnegie with a great sigh.

"Is it so bad as that? Poor Harry!" said his wife in a sad, suppressed tone. Bessie said nothing: her throat ached, her eyes burnt, but she was too stunned and bewildered to inquire further, and yet she thought she had been prepared for something like this.

"He asked after you, Bessie, and when you would go to see him," the doctor went on.

"I will go now. It is not too late? he is not too tired? will he be glad?" Bessie said, all in a breath.

"Yes, he wants to talk to you; but you will have to walk all the way, dear, and alone, for I have to go the other road."

"Oh, the walk will not hurt me. And when I have seen him I will go back to Fairfield. But tell me

what ails him: has he been over-working, or is it the results of his illness?" Bessie was very earnest to know all there was to be known.

"Work is not to blame: the lad was always more or less delicate, though his frame was so powerful," Mr. Carnegie said with gravity. "He is out of spirits, and he has had a warning to beware of the family complaint. That is not to say it has marked him yet—he may live for years, with care and prudence live to a good old age—but there is no public career before him; and it is a terrible prospect, this giving up and coming down, to a young fellow of his temper. His mother sits and looks at him, beats on her knee, deplores the money spent on his college education, and frets; you must try your hand at some other sort of consolation, Bessie, for that will never do. Now, if you are going, my dear, you had better start."

Mrs. Carnegie wished she could have offered herself as Bessie's companion, but she would have been an impediment rather than a help, and Bessie set out alone. She had gone that way to Brook many and many a time, but never quite alone before. It seemed, at first, strange to her to be walking across the open heath by herself, and yet she felt, somehow, as if it had all happened before—perhaps in a dream. It was a warm afternoon towards six o'clock, and the August glow of the heather in blossom spread everywhere like a purple sea. At the gate of the Forest Farm the cows were gathered, with meek patience expecting their call to the milking-shed; but after she passed under the shade of the trees beyond Great-Ash Ford she met not a creature until she came in sight of the wicket opening into the wood from the manor-garden. And there was Harry Musgrave himself.

Approaching over the turf with her light swift foot, Bessie drew quite near to him unheard, and saw him before he saw her. He had seated himself on a fallen tree, and leant his head on his hand in an easy attitude; his countenance was abstracted rather than sad, and his eyes, fixed on the violet and amber of the sky in the west, were full of tranquil watching. Bessie's voice as she cried out his name was tremulous with joy, and her face as he turned and saw her was beautiful with the flush of young love's delight.

"I was waiting for you. I knew you would come, my dear, my dear!" was his greeting. They went into the garden hand in hand, silent: they looked at each other with assured happiness. Harry said, "You are all in black, Bessie."

"Yes, for poor grandpapa: don't you remember? I will put it off to-morrow if you dislike it."

"Put it off; I *do* dislike it: you have worn it long enough." They directed their steps to their favorite seat under the beeches, but Mrs. Musgrave, restless since her son's arrival, and ever on the watch, came down to them with a plea that they would avoid the damp ground and falling dew. The ground was dry as dust, and the sun would not set yet for a good hour.

"There is the sitting-room if you want to be by yourselves," she said plaintively. "Perhaps you'll be able to persuade Harry to show some sense, Bessie Fairfax, and feeling for his health: he won't listen to his mother."

She followed them into the spacious old room, and would have shut the lattices because the curtains were gently flapping in the evening breeze, but Harry protested: "Mother dear, let us have air—it is life and pleasure to me. After the sultry languor of town this is delicious."

"There you go, Harry, perverse as ever! He never could be made to mind a draught, Bessie; and though he has just been told that consumption is in the family, and carried off his uncle Walter—every bit as fine a young man as himself—he pays no heed. He might as well have stopped on the farm from the beginning, if this was to be the end. I am more mortified than tongue can tell."

Harry stood gazing at her with a pitiful patience, and said kindly, "You fear too much, mother. I shall live to give you more trouble yet."

"Even trouble's precious if that's all my son is likely to give me. I would rather have trouble than nothing." She went out, closing the door softly as if she were leaving a sick room. Bessie felt very sorry for her, and when she looked at Harry again, and saw the expression of helpless, painful regret in his face, she could have wept for them both.

"Poor mother! she is bitterly disappointed in me, Bessie," he said, dropping into one of the huge old elbow-chairs.

"Oh, Harry, it is all her love! She will get over this, and you will repay her hurt pride another day," cried Bessie, eager to comfort him.

"Shall I, Bessie? But how? but when? We must take counsel together. They have been telling me it is selfish and a sacrifice and unmanly to bind Bessie to me now, but I see no sign that Bessie wants her freedom," he said, looking at her with laughing, wistful eyes—always with that sense of masculine triumph which Bessie's humility had encouraged.

"Oh, Harry, I want no freedom but the freedom to love and serve you!" cried she with a rush of tears and a hand held out to him. And then with an irresistible, passionate sorrow she fell on her knees beside him and hid her face on his shoulder. He put his arm round her and held her fast for several minutes, himself too moved to speak. He guessed what this sudden outburst of feeling meant: it meant that Bessie saw him so altered, saw through his quiet humor into the deep anxiety of his heart.

"I'll conceal nothing from you, Bessie: I don't think I have felt the worst of my defeat yet," were his words when he spoke at last. She listened, still on her knees: "It is a common thing to say that suspense is worse to bear than certainty, but the certainty that destroys hope and makes the future a blank is very like a millstone hanged round a man's neck to sink him in a slough of despondency. I never really believed it until Dr. Courteney told me that if I wish to save my life it must be at the cost of my ambition; that I can never be an advocate, a teacher, a preacher; that I shall have to go softly all my days, and take care that the winds don't blow on me too roughly; that I must be an exile from English fogs and cold, let me prefer home ever so dearly; that I must read only a little, and write only a little, and avoid all violent emotions, and be in fact the creature I have most despised—a poor valetudinarian, always feeling my own pulse and considering my own feelings."

"You will have to change much more before you will come to that; and I never knew you despise anybody, Harry," Bessie said with gentle deprecation. "You had a tender heart from a boy, and others feel kindly towards you."

"And come what may, my dear little Bessie will keep her faith to me?" said Harry looking down into her sweet eyes.

"Yes, Harry."

After a pause he spoke again: "You have done me good, dear; I shall rest better for having talked to you to-night. It is in the night-time that thought is terrible. For months past, ever since I was ill in the spring, the foreshadow of failure has loomed dark and close upon me like a suffocating weight—what I must do; how I must live without being a tax on my father, if I am to live; what he and my mother would feel; what old friends would say; who could or would help me to some harmless occupation; and whether I should not, for everybody's sake, be better out of the world."

"Oh, Harry, but that was faint-hearted!" said Bessie with a touch of reproach. "You forgot me, then?"

"I have had several strokes of bad luck lately, or perhaps I ought to suspect that not being in good case my work was weak. Manuscript after manuscript has been returned on my hands. Surely this was discouraging. There on the table is a roll of which I had better hopes, and I found it awaiting me here."

"May I take it to Fairfield and read it?" Bessie asked. "It is as big as a book."

"Yes; if it were printed and bound it would be a book. Read it, and let me know how it impresses you."

Bessie looked mightily glad. "If you will let me help you, Harry, you will make me happy," said she. "What is it about?"

"It is a story, for your comfort—a true story. I could not devise a plot, so I fell back on a series of pathetic facts. Life is very sad, Bessie. Why are we so fond of it?"

"We take it in detail, as we take the hours of the day and the days of the year, and it is very endurable. It has seemed to me sometimes that those whom we call fortunate are the least happy, and that the hard lot is often lifted into the sphere of blessedness. Consider Mr. and Mrs. Moxon; they appear to have nothing to be thankful for, and yet in their devotion to one another what perfect peace and consolation!"

"Oh, Bessie, but it is a dreadful fate!" said Harry. "Poor Moxon! who began life with as fine hopes and as solid grounds for them as any man,—there he is vegetating at Littlemire still, his mind chiefly taken up with thinking whether his sick wife will be a little more or a little less suffering to-day than she was yesterday."

"I saw them last week, and could have envied them. She is as near an angel as a woman can be; and he was very contented in the garden, giving lessons to a village boy in whom he has discovered a genius for mathematics. He talked of nothing else."

"Poor boy! poor genius! And are we to grow after the Moxons' pattern, Bessie—meek, patient, heavenly?" said Harry.

"By the time our hair is white, Harry, I have no objection, but there is a long meanwhile," replied Bessie with brave uplooking face. "We have love between us and about us, and that is the first thing. The best pleasures are the cheapest—we burden life with too many needless cares. You may do as much good in an obscure groove of the world as you might do if your name was in all men's mouths. I don't believe that I admire very successful people."

"That is lucky for us both, since I am a poor fellow whose health has given way—who is never likely to have any success at all."

"You don't know, Harry; but this is not the time to remember pride and ambition—it is the time to recover all the health and strength you can; and with them hope and power will return. What do you most enjoy in the absence of work?"

"Fresh air, fine scenery, and the converse of men. To live plainly is no hardship to me; it would be a great hardship to fall on lower associations, which is the common destiny of the poor and decayed scholar. You will save me, Bessie?"

"Indeed I will!" And on this they clasped hands fervently.

"Bessie, can we go to Italy together this winter? I dare not go alone: I must have you to take care of me," pleaded Harry.

"I will take care of you, Harry." Bessie was smiling, tearful, blushing, and Harry said she was a dear, good girl, and he thanked her.

After that there was some exposition of ways and means, and Bessie, growing rosier and rosier, told Harry the story of that famous nest-egg, concerning which she had been put to the blush before. He was very glad to hear of it—very glad indeed, and much relieved, for it would make that easy which he had been dwelling on as most of all desirable, but hampered with difficulties that he could not himself remove. To see him cheer up at this practical point was delightful to Bessie; it was like his generous warm heart, equally open to give and to receive. She felt almost too happy, and blessed the simple forethought of the doctor which would justify them in remitting all care and anxiety to a future at least two years off, and afford Harry leisure and opportunity to regain his health and courage, and look about him for another vocation than that he had chosen originally.

"And you will find it, Harry, and perhaps you will love it better than London and dusty law. I am sure I shall," prophesied Bessie gayly.

Harry laughed at her obstinate prejudice; she pointed out that the result had proved it a shrewd prejudice; and then they fell upon Italy and talked travel-talk with the sanguine anticipations of young people endowed with limitless curiosity and a genuine taste for simple pleasures and each other's society. Harry's classical learning would be everywhere available for the enhancement of these pleasures.

At this stage of their previsions Mrs. Musgrave intervened, and Bessie became conscious that the shades of evening were stealing over the landscape. Mrs. Musgrave had on her bonnet, and was prepared to walk with Bessie on the road to Fairfield until they should meet Mr. Musgrave returning from Hampton, who would accompany her the rest of the way. Harry wished to go in his mother's stead, but she was peremptory in bidding him stay where he was, and Bessie supported her. "No, Harry, not to-night—another time," she said, and he yielded at once.

"I'm sure his mother thanks you," said Mrs. Musgrave as they went out. "He was so jaded this morning when he arrived that the tears came into his eyes at a word, and Mr. Carnegie said that showed how thoroughly done he is."

Tears in Harry's eyes! Bessie thought of him with a most pitiful tenderness. "Oh," she said, "we must all be good to him: he does not look so ill to me as he looks tired. We must keep up his spirits and his hope for himself. I see no cause for despair."

"You are young, Bessie Fairfax, and it is easy for you to hope that everything will turn out for the best, but it is a sore trial for his father and me to have our expectation taken away. If Harry would have been advised when he left college, he would never have gone to London. But it is no use talking of that now. I wish we could see what he is to do for a living; he will fret his heart out doing nothing at Brook."

"Oh, Mrs. Musgrave, with a quire of paper and one of your gray goosequills Harry will be preserved from the mischief of doing nothing. You must let me come over and cheer him sometimes."

"If things had turned out different with my poor son, all might have been different. You have a good, affectionate disposition, Bessie, and there is nobody Harry prizes as he prizes you; but a young man whose health is indifferent and who has no prospects—what is that for a young lady?" Mrs. Musgrave began to cry.

"Don't cry, dear Mrs. Musgrave; if you cry, that will hurt Harry worse than anything," said Bessie energetically. "He feels his disappointment more for his father and you than for himself. His health is not so bad but that it will mend; and as for his prospects, it is not wise to impress upon him that the cloud he is under now may never disperse. 'A cheerful heart doeth good like a medicine.' Have a cheerful heart again. It will come with trying."

They had not yet met Mr. Musgrave, though they were nearly a mile on the road, but Bessie would not permit the poor mother to walk any farther with her. They parted with a kiss. "And God for ever bless you, Bessie Fairfax, if you have it in your heart to be to Harry what nobody else can be," said his mother, laying her tremulous hands on the girl's shoulders. Bessie kissed her again and went on her way rejoicing. This was one of the happiest hours her life had ever known. She was not tempted to dwell wantonly on the dark side of events present, and there were so many brighter possibilities in the future that she could entirely act out the divine precept to let the morrow take thought for the things of itself.

When Bessie Fairfax reached Fairfield, Roberts informed her in a depressed manner that her ladyship was waiting dinner. Bessie started at this view of her impolite absence, and hastened to the drawing-room to apologize. But Lady Latimer coldly waived her explanations, and Bessie felt very self-reproachful until an idea occurred to her what she would do. After a brief retreat and rapid toilet she reappeared with Harry's manuscript in her hand, and with simple craft displaying the roll, she said, "This is for us to read—a true story. It is not in print yet, but Mr. Harry Musgrave writes a plain hand. We are to give him our opinion of it. I believe that, after all, he will

be a poor author—one of my heroes, Lady Latimer."

"One of your heroes, Elizabeth? There is nothing very heroic in Mr. Logger," rejoined my lady softening, and holding out her hand for the manuscript. "Is the young man very ill?"

"No, no—not so ill that we need fear his dying inglorious without giving the world something to remember him by, but discouraged by the dicta of friends and physicians, who consign him to idleness and obscurity for a year or two."

"Which idleness and obscurity I presume it is your wish to alleviate?" said Lady Latimer with half-contemptuous resignation. "Come to dinner now: we will read your hero's story afterward."

Lady Latimer's personal interests were so few that it was a necessity for her generous soul to adopt the interests of other people. She kept Bessie reading until eleven o'clock, when she was dismissed to bed and ordered to leave the manuscript below, lest she should sit up and read it when she ought to be asleep. But what Bessie might not do my lady was quite at liberty to do herself, and she made an end of the tale before she retired. And not only that. She wrote to Mr. Logger to recommend a publisher, and to ask how proper payment could be assured to a young and unknown author. She described the story to the veteran critic as a sad, pretty story of true love (which people go on believing in), sensibly written, without serious flaws of taste or grammar, and really worth reading if one had nothing else to do. In the morning she informed Bessie of what she had done. Bessie was not quite sure that Harry would feel gratified at being placed under the protection of her ladyship and Mr. Logger; but as she could not well revoke the letter that was written, she said nothing against it, and Lady Latimer was busy and happy for a week in the expectation that she was doing something for "the unfortunate young man." But at the week's end Mr. Logger dashed her confidence with the answer that he had not been able to meet with any publisher willing to pay money down for a sad, pretty story of true love by an unknown author: sad, pretty stories of true love were a drug in the literary market. She was grievously disappointed. Bessie was the same, and as she had confessed a hope to Harry, she had to carry to him the tidings of failure. If he was sorry, it was for her regret, but they soon began to talk of other things. They had agreed that if good luck came they would be glad, and if bad luck they would pass it lightly over.

CHAPTER XLVII.

GOODNESS PREVAILS.

Desirous as Lady Latimer was to do Mr. Harry Musgrave a service, her good-will towards him ended there. She perversely affected to believe that Miss Fairfax's avowed promise to him constituted no engagement, and on this plea put impediments in the way of her visits to Brook, lest a handle should be given to gossip. Bessie herself was not concerned to hinder gossip. With the exception of Lady Latimer, all her old friends in the Forest were ready to give her their blessing. The Wileys were more and more astonished that she should be so short-sighted, but Mr. Phipps shook her by both hands and expressed his cordial approbation, and Miss Buff advised her to have her own way, and let those who were vexed please themselves again.

Bessie suffered hours of argument from my lady, who, when she found she could prevail nothing, took refuge in a sort of scornful, compassionate silence. These silences were, however, of brief duration. She appealed to Mr. Carnegie, who gave her for answer that Bessie was old enough to know her own mind, and if that leant towards Mr. Harry Musgrave, so much the better for him; if she were a weak, impulsive girl, he would advise delay and probation, but she was of full age and had a good sensible head of her own; she knew Mr. Harry Musgrave's circumstances, tastes, prejudices, and habits—what she would gain in marrying him, and what she would resign. What more was there to say? Mr. Laurence Fairfax had neither the power nor the will to interpose authoritatively; he made inquiries into Mr. Harry Musgrave's university career, and talked of him to Mr. Cecil Burleigh, who replied with magnanimity that but for the break-down of his health he was undoubtedly one of those young men from whose early achievement and mental force the highest successes might have been expected in after-life. Thereupon Mr. Laurence Fairfax and his gentle wife pitied him, and could not condemn Elizabeth.

Mrs. Carnegie considered that Bessie manifested signal prudence, forethought, and trust in God when she proposed that her nest-egg, which was now near a thousand pounds, should supply the means of living in Italy for a couple of years, without reference to what might come after. But when Elizabeth wrote to her uncle Laurence to announce what manner of life she was preparing to enter upon, and what provision was made for it, though he admired her courage he wrote back that it should not be so severely tested. It was his intention to give her the portion that would have been her father's—not so much as the old squire had destined for her had she married as he wished (that, she knew, had gone another way), but a competence sufficient to live on, whether at home or abroad. He told her that one-half of her fortune ought to be settled on Mr. Harry Musgrave, to revert to her if he died first, and he concluded by offering himself as one of her trustees.

This generous letter made Bessie very glad, and having shown it to Lady Latimer at breakfast, she went off with it to Brook directly after. She found Harry in the sitting-room, turning out the

contents of his old desk. In his hand at the moment of her entrance was the white rose that he had taken from her at Bayeux; it kept its fragrance still. She gave him her uncle's letter to read, and when he had read it he said, "If I did not love you so much, Bessie, this would be a burden painful to bear."

"Then don't let us speak of it—let me bear it. I am pleased that my uncle Laurence should be so good to us. When you meet I know you will be friends. He is in elysium when he can get a good scholar to talk to, and he will want you to send him all sorts of archæological intelligence from Rome."

"I have a piece of news too—hopeful news from Christie," said Harry, producing one of the artist's rapid scratches. "It is to tell me that he is on the committee of a new illustrated magazine of art which is to start at Christmas, and that he is sure I can help them with the letter-press department while we are in Italy."

"Of course you can. And they will require a story: that sweet story of yours has some picture bits that would be exquisite if they fell into the hands of a sympathetic artist. Let us send it to Christie, Harry dear."

"Very well: nothing venture, nothing have. The manuscript is with you. Take Christie's letter for his address; you will see that he wants an answer without loss of time. He is going to be married very shortly, and will be out of town till November."

"I will despatch the story by to-day's post, and a few lines of what I think of it: independent criticism is useful sometimes."

Harry looked at her, laughing and saying with a humorous deprecation, "Bessie's independent criticism!"

Bessie blushed and laughed too, but steadfastly affirmed, "Indeed, Harry, if I did not think it the prettiest story I ever read I would not tell you so. Lady Latimer said it was pretty, and you cannot accuse her of loving you too much."

"No. And that brings me to another matter. I wish you would come away from Fairfield: come here, Bessie. In this rambling old house there is room enough and to spare, and you shall have all the liberty you please. I don't see you as often or for as long as I want, and the order of things is quite reversed: I would much rather set out to walk to you than wait and watch for your appearance."

"Had I not better go home? My little old nest under the thatch is empty, and the boys are away."

"Come here first for a week; we have never stayed in one house together since we were children. I want to see my dear little Bessie every hour of the day. At Fairfield you are caged. When her ladyship puts on her grand manner and towers she is very daunting to a poor lover."

"She has not seen you since you left London, Harry. I should like you to meet; then I think she might forgive us," said Bessie, with a wistful regret. Sometimes she was highly indignant with my lady, but in the depths of her heart there was always a fund of affection, admiration, and respect for the idol of her childish days.

The morning but one after this Bessie's anxious desire that my lady and her dear Harry should meet was unexpectedly gratified. It was about halfway towards noon when she was considering whether or no she could with peace and propriety bring forward her wish to go again to Brook, when Lady Latimer hurried down from her sanctum, which overlooked the drive, saying, "Elizabeth, here is young Mr. Musgrave on horseback; run and bid him come in and rest. He is giving some message to Roberts and going away."

"Oh, please ask him yourself," said Bessie, but at the same moment she hastened out to the door.

It was a sultry, oppressive morning, and Harry looked languid and ill—more ill than Bessie had ever seen him look. She felt inexpressibly shocked and pained, and he smiled as if to relieve her, while he held out a letter that he had been on the point of entrusting to Roberts: "From that excellent fellow, Christie. Your independent criticism has opened his eyes to the beauties of my story, and he declares that he shall claim the landscape bits himself."

Lady Latimer advanced with a pale, grave face, and invited the young man to dismount. There was something of entreaty in her voice: "The morning-room is the coolest, Elizabeth—take Mr. Musgrave there. I shall be occupied until luncheon, but I hope you will be able to persuade him to stay."

Bessie's lips repeated, "Stay," and Harry not unthankfully entered the house. He dropt into a great easy-chair and put up one hand to cover his eyes, and so continued for several minutes. Lady Latimer stood an instant looking at him with a pitiful, scared gaze, and then, avoiding Bessie's face, she turned and left the lovers together. Bessie laid her hand on Harry's shoulder and spoke kindly to him: he was tired, the atmosphere was very close and took away his strength. After a while he recovered himself and said something about Christie's friendliness, and perhaps if *he* illustrated the story they should see reminiscences of the manor-garden and of Great-Ash Ford, and other favorite spots in the Forest. They did not talk much or eagerly at all, but Christie's commendation of the sad pretty story of true love was a distinct pleasure to them both, and especially to Harry. His mother had begged him to stop at home and let the letter be sent

over to Fairfield, but he wanted the gratification of telling Bessie his news himself; and the ride in the hot, airless weather had been too fatiguing. Bessie took up a piece of work and sat by the window, silent, soothing. He turned his chair to face her, and from his position he had a distant view of the sea—a dark blue line on the horizon. He had been fond of the sea and of boats from his first school-days at Hampton, and as he contemplated its great remote calm a longing to be out upon it took possession of him, which he immediately confessed to Bessie. Bessie did not think he need long in vain for that—it was easy of accomplishment. He said yes—Ryde was not far, and a Ryde wherry was a capital craft for sailing.

Just as he was speaking Lady Latimer came back bringing some delicious fruit for Harry's refreshment. "What is that you are saying about Ryde?" she inquired quickly. "I am going to Ryde for a week or two, and as I shall take Elizabeth with me, you can come to us there, Mr. Musgrave, and enjoy the salt breezes. It is very relaxing in the Forest at this season."

Bessie by a glance supplicated Harry to be gracious, and in obedience to her mute entreaty he thanked her ladyship and said it would give him the truest pleasure. My lady had never thought of going to Ryde until that moment, but since she had seen Harry Musgrave and had been struck by the tragedy of his countenance, and all that was meant by his having to fall out of the race of life so early, she was impelled by an irresistible goodness of nature to be kind and generous to him. Robust people, healthy, wealthy, and wise, she could let alone, but poverty, sickness, or any manner of trouble appealed straight to her noble heart, and brought out all her spirit of Christian fellowship. She was prompt and thorough in doing a good action, and when she met the young people at luncheon her arrangements for going to the island were all made, and she announced that the next day, in the cool of the evening, they would drive to Hampton and cross by the last boat to Ryde. This sudden and complete revolution in her behavior was not owing to any change in principle, but to sheer pitifulness of temper. She had not realized before what an immense disaster and overthrow young Musgrave was suffering, but at the sight of his pathetic visage and weakened frame, and of Elizabeth's exquisite tenderness, she knew that such great love must be given to him for consolation and a shield against despair. It was quite within the scope of her imagination to depict the temptations of a powerful and aspiring mind reduced to bondage and inaction by the development of inherited disease: to herself it would have been of all fates the most terrible, and thus she fancied it for him. But in Harry Musgrave's nature there was no bitterness or fierce revolt, no angry sarcasm against an unjust world or stinging remorse for fault of his own. Defeat was his destiny, and he bowed to it as the old Greek heroes bowed to the decree of the gods, and laughed sometimes at the impotence of misfortune to fetter the free flight of his thoughts. And Elizabeth was his angel of peace.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CERTAIN OPINIONS.

The house that Lady Latimer always occupied on her visits to Ryde was away from the town and the pier, amongst the green fields going out towards Binstead. It had a shaded garden down to the sea, and a landing-place of its own when the tide was in. A balcony, looking north, made the narrow drawing-room spacious, and my lady and her despatch-box were established in a cool room below, adjoining the dining-parlor. She did not like the pier or the strand, with their shoals of company in the season, and took her drives out on the white roads to Wootton and Newport, Osborne and Cowes, commonly accompanied by some poor friend to whom a drive was an unfrequent pleasure. She never trusted herself to a small boat, and as for the wherry that bore Harry Musgrave and Elizabeth every morning flying before the wind for three delicious hours, she appreciated its boasted safety so slightly that she was always relieved to see them safe back again, whether they landed at the foot of the garden or came through the town. It was beautiful weather, with fine fresh breezes all the week, and Harry looked and felt so much like a new man at the end of it that my lady insisted on his remaining a second week, when they would all return to the Forest together. He had given her the highest satisfaction by so visibly taking the benefit of her hospitality, and had made great way in her private esteem besides. Amongst her many friends and acquaintances then at Ryde, for every day's dinner she chose one gentleman for the sake of good talk that Mr. Harry Musgrave might not tire, and the breadth and diversity of the young man's knowledge and interests surprised her.

One evening after some especially amusing conversation with a travelled doctor, who was great in the scientific study of botany and beetles, she said to Elizabeth when they were alone, "What a pity! what a grievous pity! There is no position brains and energy can win that Mr. Harry Musgrave might not raise himself to if his health were equal to his mental capacity. And with what dignity and fortitude he bears his condemnation to a desultory, obscure existence! I had no idea there could be so much sweet patience in a man. Do you anticipate that it will be always so?"

"Harry is very happy now, and I do not look forward much or far," Elizabeth said quietly. "People say men are so different from women, but after all they must be more like women than like anything else. So I try sometimes to put myself in Harry's place, and I know there will be fluctuations—perhaps, even a sense of waste and blankness now and then, and a waking up of regret. But he has no envious littleness of mind and no irritability of temper: when he is feeling ill he will feel low. But our life need not be dull or restricted, and he has naturally a most enjoying

humor."

"And he will have you—I think, after all, Elizabeth, you have found your vocation—to love and to serve; a blessed vocation for those called to it, but full of sorrows to those who take it up when the world and pride have disappointed them."

Elizabeth knew that my lady was reflecting on herself. They were both silent for a few minutes, and then Elizabeth went on: "Harry and I have been thinking that a yacht would be an excellent establishment for us to begin with—a yacht that would be fit to coast along France, and could be laid up at Bordeaux while we rest for the winter at Arcachon—or, if we are of a mind to go farther, that would carry us to the Mediterranean. Harry loves a city, and Bologna attracts his present curiosity: I tell him because it was once a famous school of law."

"Bologna is a most interesting city. He would be well amused there," said my lady. "It has a learned society, and is full of antiquities and pictures. It is in the midst of a magnificent country too. I spent a month there once with Lord Latimer, and we found the drives in the vicinity unparalleled. You cannot do better than go to Bologna. Take your yacht round to one of the Adriatic ports—to Venice. I can supply you with guide-books. I perceive that Mr. Harry Musgrave must be well entertained. A Ryde wherry with you in the morning is the perfection of entertainment, but he has an evident relish for sound masculine discourse in the evening: we must not be too exacting."

Bessie colored slightly and laughed. "I don't think that I am very exacting," she said. "I am sure whatever Harry likes he shall do, for me. I know he wants the converse of men; he classes it with fine scenery and fresh air as one of the three delights that he most inclines to, since hard work is forbidden him. Bologna will be better than Arcachon for the winter."

"Yes, if the climate be suitable. We must find out what the climate is, or you may alter your plans again. I have not heard yet when the great event is to take place—when you are to be married."

"My father thinks that Harry should avoid the late autumn in the Forest—the fall of the leaf," Bessie began with rosy diffidence.

"But you have made no preparations? And there are the settlements!" exclaimed Lady Latimer, anxiously.

"Our preparations are going on. My uncle Laurence and Mr. Carnegie will be our trustees; they have consulted Harry, I know, and the settlements are in progress. Oh, there will be no difficulty."

"But the wedding will be at Abbotsmead, since Mr. Laurence Fairfax gives his countenance?" Lady Latimer suggested interrogatively.

Bessie's blush deepened: "No. I have promised Harry that it shall be at Beechhurst, and very quiet. Therefore when we return to the Forest I shall have to ask you to leave me at the doctor's house."

Lady Latimer was silent and astonished. Then she said with emphasis: "Elizabeth, I cannot approve of that plan. If you will not go to Abbotsmead, why not be married from Fairfield? I shall be glad to render you every assistance."

"You are very, very kind, but Harry would not like it," pleaded Bessie.

"You are too indulgent, Elizabeth. Harry would not like it, indeed! Why should he have everything his own way?"

"Oh, Lady Latimer, I am sure you would not have the heart to cross him yourself!" cried Bessie.

My lady looked up at her sharply, but Elizabeth's face was quite serious: "He has rallied wonderfully during the week—rallied both his strength and his spirits. It is fortunate he has that buoyancy. Every girl loves a gay wedding."

"It would be peculiarly distasteful to Harry under the circumstances, and I would not give him pain for the world," Bessie said warmly.

"He is as well able to bear a little contradiction as the rest of us," said Lady Latimer, looking lofty. "In my day the lady was consulted. Now everything must be arranged to accommodate the gentleman. I'm sure we are grown very humble!"

Bessie looked meekly on the carpet and did not belie my lady's words. Something in her air was provoking—perhaps that very meekness, in certain lights so foreign to her character—for Lady Latimer colored, and continued in her frostiest tone: "If you are ashamed of the connection you are forming, that justifies your not inviting the world to look on at your wedding, which ought to be an hour of pride and triumph to a girl."

Bessie's meekness vanished in a blush: "And it will be an hour of triumph to me. Ashamed! Harry Musgrave is to me the best and dearest heart that breathes," she exclaimed; and my lady was too well advised to prolong the argument, especially as she felt that it would be useless.

Harry Musgrave was not grudging of his gratitude for real kindness, and though, when he was in his stronger mood, Lady Latimer was perhaps still disposed to huff him, the next hour she was as good as she knew how to be. The visit to the island was productive of excellent results in the way

of a better understanding, and my lady made no more opposition to Elizabeth's leaving her and taking up her abode in Mr. Carnegie's house until her marriage.

For a day or two the triangular nest under the thatch felt small and confined to Bessie, but one morning the rustic sweetness of honeysuckle blowing in at the open lattice awoke in her memory a thousand happy childish recollections and brought back all the dear home-feelings. Then Harry Musgrave was more like his original self here than elsewhere. Insensibly he fell into his easy boyish pleasantry of manner, and announced himself as more secure of his fate when he found Bessie sitting in company with a work-basket in the pretty, low, old-fashioned drawing-room, perfumed with roses overflowing the china bowl. Bessie had a perfect notion of the fitness of things, and as simplicity of dress seemed best suited to her beauty in that place, she attired herself in her plainest and most becoming gown, and Harry looked her over approvingly and called her his dear little Bessie again. The doctor, her mother, the children, every early friend out of the house, was glad, and congratulated her upon her return to the Forest and to them. And now and then, in the dreamy length of the days when she sat thinking, all the interval of time and all the change of scene, circumstance, and faces since she first went away appeared to her like a dream of the night when it is gone.

Of course she had to listen to the moralities of this last vicissitude from her various friends.

Said Miss Buff confidentially, "There is a vast deal more in surroundings, Bessie, than people like to admit. We are all under their influence. If we had seen you at Abbotsmead, we might have pitied your sacrifice, but when we see you at the doctor's in your sprigged cambric dresses, and your beautiful wavy hair in the style we remember, it seems the most right and natural thing in the world that you should marry Mr. Harry Musgrave—no condescension in it. But I did not *quite* feel that while you were at Fairfield, though I commended your resolution to have your own way. Now that you are here you are just Bessie Fairfax—only the doctor's little daughter. And that goes in proof of what I always maintain—that grand people, where they are not known, ought never to divest themselves of the outward and visible signs of their grandness; for Nature has not been bountiful to them all with either wit or sense, manners or beauty, though there are toadies everywhere able to discern in them the virtues and graces suitable to their rank."

"Lady Latimer looks her part upon the stage," said Bessie.

"But how many don't! The countess of Harbro', for instance; who that did not know her would take her for anything but a common person? Insolent woman she is! She found fault with the choir to me last Sunday, as if I were a singing-mistress and she paid my salary. Has old Phipps confessed how you have astonished him and falsified his predictions?"

"I am not aware that I have done anything to astonish anybody. I fancied that I had pleased Mr. Phipps rather than otherwise," said Bessie with a quiet smile.

"And so you have. He is gratified that a young lady of quality should have the pluck to make a marriage of affection in a rank so far below her own, considering nothing but the personal worth of the man she marries."

"I have never been able to discover the hard and fast conventional lines that are supposed to separate ranks. There is an affectation in these matters which practically deludes nobody. A liberal education and the refinements of wealth are too extensively diffused for those whose pride it is that they have done nothing but vegetate on one spot of land for generations to hold themselves aloof as a superior caste. The pretensions of some of them are evident, but only evident to be ridiculous—like the pretensions of those who, newly enriched by trade, decline all but what they describe as carriage-company."

"The poor gentry are eager enough to marry money, but that does not prevent them sneering at the way the money is made," Miss Buff said. "Even Lady Latimer herself, speaking of the family who have taken Admiral Parkins's house for three months, said it was a pity they should come to a place like Beechhurst, for the gentlefolk would not call upon them, and they would feel themselves above associating with the tradespeople. They are the great tea-dealers in Cheapside."

"Oh, if they are not vulgar and ostentatious, Lady Latimer will soon forget her prejudice against the tea."

"And invite them to her garden-parties like the rest of us? No doubt she will; she likes to know everybody. Then some connection with other people of her acquaintance will come out, or she will learn that they are influential with the charitable institutions by reason of their handsome donations, or that they have an uncle high in the Church, or a daughter married into the brewing interest. Oh, the ramifications of society are infinite, and it is safest not to lay too much stress on the tea to begin with."

"Much the safest," Mr. Phipps, who had just come in, agreed. "The tea-dealer is very rich, and money (we have Solomon's word for it) is a defence. He is not aware of needing her ladyship's patronage. I expect, Miss Fairfax, that, drifting up and down and to and fro in your vicissitudes, you have found all classes much more alike than different?"

"Yes. The refinements and vulgarities are the monopoly of no degree; only I think the conceit of moral superiority is common to us all," said Bessie, and she laughed.

"And well it may be, since the axiom that *noblesse oblige* has fallen into desuetude, and the word

of a gentleman is no more to swear by than a huckster's. Tom and Jerry's wives go to court, and the arbitrary edict of fashion constitutes the latest barbaric importation *bon ton* for a season. I have been giving Harry Musgrave the benefit of my wanderings in Italy thirty years ago, and he is so enchanted that you will have to turn gypsy again next spring, Miss Fairfax."

"It will suit me exactly—a mule or an ox-cart instead of the train, byways for highways, and sauntering for speed. Did I not tell you long ago, Mr. Phipps, that the gypsy wildness was in the Fairfax blood, and that some day it would be my fate to travel ever so far and wide, and to come home again browner than any berry?"

"Why, you see, Miss Fairfax, the wisest seer is occasionally blind, and you are that rare bird, a consistent woman. Knowing the great lady you most admired, I feared for you some fatal act of imitation. But, thank God! you have had grace given you to appreciate a simple-minded, lovable fellow, who will take you out of conventional bonds, and help you to bend your life round in a perfect circle. You are the happiest woman it has been my lot to meet with."

Bessie did not speak, but she looked up gratefully in the face of her old friend.

CHAPTER XLIX.

BESSIE'S LAST RIDE WITH THE DOCTOR.

Mr. Carnegie complained that he had less of his dear Bessie's company than anybody else by reason of his own busy occupation, and one clear September morning, when the air was wonderfully fresh and sweet after a thunderstorm during the night, he asked her to come out for a last ride with him before Harry Musgrave carried her away. Bessie donned her habit and hat, and went gladly: the ride would serve as a leavetaking of some of her friends in the cottages whom otherwise she might miss.

In the village they met Miss Buff, going off to the school to hear the Bible read and teach the Catechism—works of supererogation under the new system, which Mr. Wiley had thankfully remitted to her on account of her popularity with parents and children.

"Your duty to your neighbor and your duty to God and the ten commandments—nothing else, because of the Dissenters," she explained in a bustle. "Imagine the vulgarity of an education for the poor from which the Bible may be omitted! Dreadful! I persuade the children to get certain of the psalms, proverbs, and parables by heart out of school. Bless you! they like that; but as for teaching them such abstract knowledge as what an adverb or an isthmus is, or the height of Mont Blanc, I defy you! And it is all fudge. Will they sweep a room or make an apple-dumpling the better for it? Not they. But fix it in their minds that whatever their hands find to do they must do it with their might, and there is a chance that they will sweep into the corners and pare the apples thin. But I have no time to spare, so good-bye, good-bye!"

The general opinion of Beechhurst was with Miss Buff, who was making a stand upon the ancient ways in opposition to the superior master of Lady Latimer's selection, whose chief tendency was towards grammar, physical geography, and advanced arithmetic, which told well in the inspector's report. Miss Buff was strong also in the matter of needle, work and knitting—she would even have had the boys knit—but here she had sustained defeat.

Mr. Carnegie's first visit was to Mrs. Christie, who, since she had recovered her normal state of health, had resumed her habit of drugging and complaining. Her son was now at home, and when the doctor and Bessie rode across the green to the wheelwright's house there was the artist at work, with a companion under his white umbrella. His companion wore a maize piqué dress and a crimson sash; a large leghorn hat, garnished with poppies and wheat-ears, hid her face.

"There is Miss Fairfax herself, Janey," whispered young Christie in an encouraging tone. "Don't be afraid."

Janey half raised her head and gazed at Bessie with shy, distrustful eyes. Bessie, quite unconscious, reined in Miss Hoyden under the shadow of a spreading tree to wait while the doctor paid his visit in-doors. She perceived that there was a whispering between the two under the white umbrella, and with a pleasant recognition of the young man she looked another way. After the lapse of a few minutes he approached her, an unusual modest suffusion overspreading his pale face, and said, "Miss Fairfax, there is somebody here you once knew. She is very timid, and says she dares not claim your remembrance, because you must have thought she had forgotten you."

Bessie turned her head towards the diffident small personage who was regarding her from the distance. "Is it Janey Fricker?" she asked with a pleased, amused light in her face.

"It is Janey Christie." In fact, the artist was now making his wedding-tour, and Janey was his wife.

"Oh," said Bessie, "then this was why your portfolio was so full of sketches at Yarmouth. I wish I had known before."

Janey's face was one universal blush as she came forward and looked up in Miss Fairfax's

handsome, beneficent face. There had always been an indulgent protectiveness in Bessie's manner to the master-mariner's little daughter, and it came back quite naturally. Janey expected hasty questions, perhaps reproaches, perhaps coldness, but none of these were in Bessie's way. She had never felt herself ill used by Janey, and in the joy of the sudden rencounter did not recollect that she had anything to forgive. She said how she had lived in the hope of a meeting again with Janey some day, and what a delightful thing it was to meet thus—to find that her dear little comrade at school was married to Harry Musgrave's best friend! Janey had heard from her husband all the story of Bessie's faithful love, but she was too timid and self-doubting to be very cordial or responsive. Bessie therefore talked for both—promised herself a renewal of their early friendship, and expressed an hospitable wish that Mr. Christie would bring his wife to visit them in Italy next year when he took his holiday. Christie promised that he would, and thought Miss Fairfax more than ever good and charming; but Janey was almost happier when Bessie rode away with Mr. Carnegie and she was permitted to retire into seclusion again under the white umbrella. The artist had chosen him a helpmeet who could be very devoted in private life, but who would never care for his professional honors or public reputation. Bessie heard afterward that the master-mariner was dead, and the place in her heart that he had held was now her husband's. With her own more expansive and affectionate nature she felt a genial warmth of satisfaction in the meeting, and as she trotted along with the doctor she told him about Janey at school, and thought herself most fortunate to have been riding with him that morning.

"For I really fear the little shy creature would never have come near me had I not fallen in with her where she could not escape," said she.

"Christie has been even less ambitious in his marriage than yourself, Bessie," was the doctor's reply. "That one-idead little woman may worship him, but she will be no help. She will not attract friends to his house, even if she be not jealous of them; and he will have to go out and leave her at home; and that is a pity, for an artist ought to live in the world."

"She is docile, but not trustful. Oh, he will tame her, and she will try to please him," said Bessie cheerfully. "She fancied that I must have forgotten her, when there was rarely a day that she did not come into my mind. And she says the same of me, yet neither of us ever wrote or made any effort to find the other out."

"Let us hope that you have both contracted a more serviceable friendship in another direction," said the doctor, and Bessie laughed. She was aware that his estimate of feminine friendship was not exalted.

About half a mile farther, where a byroad turned off towards Fairfield, the riders came upon a remarkable group in high debate over a donkey—Lady Latimer, Gampling the tinker, and the rural policeman. My lady instantly summoned Mr. Carnegie to her succor in the fray, which, to judge from her countenance and the stolid visage of the emissary of the law, was obstinate. It appeared that the policeman claimed to arrest the donkey and convey him to the pound. The dry and hungry beast had been tethered by his master in the early morning where a hedge and margin of sward bordered the domain of Admiral Parkins. Uninstructed in modern law, he broke loose and strayed along the green, cropping here and there a succulent shoot of thorn or thistle, until, when approaching repletion, he was surprised by the policeman, reprimanded, captured, and led ignominiously towards the gaol for vagrant animals—a donkey that everybody knew.

"He's took the innicent ass into custody, and me he's going to summons and get fined," Gampling exclaimed, his indignation not abated by the appearance of another friend upon the scene, for a friend he still counted the doctor, though he persisted in his refusal to mend his kettles and pots and pans.

"Is not this an excess of zeal, Cobb?" remonstrated Mr. Carnegie. "Suppose you let the ass off this time, and consider him warned not to do it again?"

"Sir, my instructions is not to pass over any infringement of the new h'act. Straying is to be put down," said Cobb stiffly.

"This here ass have earned his living honest a matter of eight year, and naught ever laid agen his character afore by high nor low," pleaded Gampling, growing pathetic as authority grew more stern. "Her ladyship and the doctor will speak a good word for him, and there's others as will."

"Afore the bench it may be of vally and go to lowering the fine," said the invincible exponent of the law; "I ain't nothing to do with that."

"I'll tell you where it is, Cobb," urged Gampling, swelling into anger again. "This here ass knows more o' nat'ral justice than the whole boiling o' new h'acts. He'd never be the man to walk into her ladyship's garden an' eat up her flowerbeds: raason why, he'd get a jolly good hiding if he did. But he says to hisself, he says, when he sees a nice bite o' clover or a sow-thistle by the roadside: "This here's what's left for the poor, the fatherless, and the widder—it ain't much, but thank God for small mercies!'—an' he falls to. Who's he robbed, I should like to know?"

"You must ask the admiral that when you come up before the magistrates on Saturday," rejoined Cobb severely—his professional virtue sustained, perhaps, by the presence of witnesses.

Gampling besides being an itinerant tinker was also an itinerant political preacher, and seeing that he could prevail nothing by secular pleas, he betook himself to his spiritual armory, and in a voice of sour derision that made Bessie Fairfax cringe asked the doctor if he had yet received the

Devil's Decalogue according to h'act of Parliament and justices' notices that might be read on every wall?—and he proceeded to recite it: "Thou shalt remove the old landmarks, and enter into the fields of the poor. Thou shalt wholly reap the corners of thy fields and gather the gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave nothing for the poor and the stranger. If a wayfarer that is a-hungered pluck the ears of corn and eat, thou shalt hale him before the magistrates, and he shall be cast into prison. Thou shalt turn away thy face from every poor man, and if thy brother ask bread of thee, thou shalt give him neither money nor food."

Mr. Carnegie made a gesture to silence the tinker, for he had thrown himself into an oratorical attitude, and shouted out the new commandments at the top of his voice, emphasizing each clause with his right fist brought down each time more passionately on the palm of his left hand. But his humor had grown savage, and with his eyes glowing like hot coals in his blackened visage he went on, his tone rising to a hoarse, hysteric yell: "Thou shalt oppress the poor, and forbid to teach the gospel in the schools, lest they learn to cry unto their God, and He hear them, and they turn again and rend thee."

"What use is there in saying the thing that is not, Gampling?" demanded Lady Latimer impetuously. "The Bible *is* read in our schools. And if you workingmen take advantage of the privileges that you have won, you ought to be strong enough, both in and out of Parliament, to prevent any new act being made in violation of the spirit of either law or gospel."

"I can't argy with your ladyship—it would be uncivil to say you talk bosh," replied the tinker as suddenly despondent as he had been furious. "I know that every year makes this world worse for poor honest folk to live in, an' that there's more an' more h'acts to break one's shins over. Who would ha' thowt as ever my old ass could arn me a fine an' costs o' a summons by nibbling a mouthful o' green meat on the queen's highway, God bless her! I've done."

My lady endeavored to make Gampling hear that she would pay his fine (if fined he were), but he refused to listen, and went off, shaking his head and bemoaning the hard pass the world was come to.

"It is almost incredible the power of interference that is given to the police," said Lady Latimer. "That wretched young Burt and his mother were taken up by Cobb last week and made to walk to Hampton for lying on the heath asleep in the sun; nothing else—that was their crime. Fortunately, the magistrates had the humanity to discharge them."

"Poor souls! they are stamped for vagabonds. But young Burt will not trouble police or magistrates much longer now," said the doctor.

In fact, he had that very morning done with troubling anybody. When Mr. Carnegie pulled up ten minutes later at the door of a forlorn hovel which was the present shelter of the once decent widow, he had no need to dismount. "Ride on, Bessie," he said softly, and Bessie rode on. Widow Burt came out to speak to the doctor, her lean face scorched to the color of a brick, her clothing ragged, her hair unkempt, her eyes wild as the eyes of a hunted animal.

"He's gone, sir," she said, pointing in-doors to where a long, motionless figure seated in a chair was covered with a ragged patchwork quilt. The doctor nodded gravely, paused, asked if she were alone.

"Mrs. Wallop sat up with us last night—she's very good, is Mrs. Wallop—but first thing this morning Bunny came along to fetch her to his wife, and she'd hardly got out o' sight when poor Tom stretched hisself like a bairn that's waked up and is going to drop off to sleep again, an' with one great sigh was dead. Miss Wort comes most mornings: here she is."

Yes, there was Miss Wort, plunging head foremost through the heather by way of making a short cut. She saw at a glance what had happened, and taking both the poor mother's hands in her own, she addressed the doctor with tears in her eyes and tremulous anger in her voice: "I shall always say that it is a bad and cruel thing to send boys to prison, or anybody whose temptation is hunger. How can we tell what we should do ourselves? We are not wiser than the Bible, and we are taught to pray God lest we be poor and steal. Tom would never have come to be what he was but for that dreadful month at Whitchester. Instead of shutting up village-boys and hurting their health if they have done anything wrong, why can't they be ordered to wear a fool's cap for a week, going about their ordinary work? Our eyes would be on them, and they would not have a chance of picking and stealing again; it would give us a little more trouble at first, but not in the long run, and save taxes for prisons. People would say, 'There goes a poor thief,' and they would be sorry for him, and wonder why he did it; and we ought to look after our own things. And then, if they turned out incorrigible, they might be shut up or sent out of the way of temptation. Oh, if those who have the power were only a little more considerate, and would learn to put themselves in their place!"

Mr. Carnegie said that Miss Wort's queer suggestion was capable of development, and there was too much sending of poor and young people to prison for light offences—offences of ignorance often, for which a reprimand and compensation would be enough. Bessie had never seen him more saddened.

Their next and last visit was to Littlemire. Mr. Moxon was in his garden, working without his coat. He came forward, putting the threadbare garment on, and begged Miss Fairfax to go up stairs and see his wife. This was one of her good days, as she called the days when the aching weariness of her perpetual confinement was a degree abated, and she welcomed her visitor with

a cry of plaintive joy, kissed her, gazed at her fondly through glittering tears.

Bessie did not know that she had been loved so much. Girl-like, she had brought her tribute of flowers to the invalid's room, had wondered at this half-paralyzed life that was surrounded by such an atmosphere of peace; and when, during her last visit, she had realized what a compensation for all sorrow was this peace, she had not yet understood what an ardor of sympathy kept the poor sufferer's heart warm towards those whose brighter lot had nothing in common with her own.

"Oh, my love," she said in a sweet, thrilling voice, "dear Harry Musgrave has been to tell me of his happiness. I am so glad for you both—so very, very glad!" She did not pause to let Bessie respond, but ran on with her recollections of Harry since he was a boy and came first to read with her husband. "His thoughtfulness was really quite beautiful; he never forgot to be kind. Oh, my dear, you may thoroughly rely on his fine, affectionate temper. Rarely did he come to a lesson without bringing me some message from his mother and little present in his hand—a few flowers, a spring chicken, some nice fruit, a partridge. This queer rustic scaffold for my books and work, Harry constructed it himself, and I would not exchange it for the most elegant and ingenious of whatnots. I could do nothing for him but listen to his long thoughts and aspirations: that was when you were out of hearing, and he could neither talk nor write to his dear little Bessie."

"It was a great gap, but it did not make us strangers," said Bessie.

"When he went to Oxford he sent us word of his arrival, and how he liked his college and his tutor—matters that were as interesting to us as if he had been our own. And when he found how welcome his letters were, he wrote to Mr. Moxon often, and sent him any report or pamphlet that he thought might please him; and several times he gave himself the trouble both at the Bodleian and in London to search for and copy out extracts from works that Mr. Moxon wanted and had no means of procuring here. You can have no idea how helpful he has been to my husband in such things. Poor fellow! what a grief it was to us that term he had to stay away from Oxford on account of his health! Already we began to fear for the future, but his buoyant spirit would not anticipate any permanent hindrance to his progress; and that check did make him more prudent. But it is not to be; he sees himself cut short of the career where he planned to be famous; he gives way, however, to neither anger nor repining. Oh, my love! that I could win you to believe that if you clasp this cross to your heart, as the gift of Him who cannot err, you will never feel it a burden!"

Bessie smiled. She did not feel it a burden now, and Harry was not abandoned to carry its weight alone. She did not speak: she was not apt at the expression of her religious feelings, but they were sincere as far as life had taught her. She could have lent her ears for a long while to Harry Musgrave's praises without growing weary, but the vicar now appeared, followed by the doctor, talking in a high, cheerful voice of that discovery he had made of a remarkable mathematical genius in Littlemire: "A most practical fellow, a wonderful hard head—will turn out an enterprising engineer, an inventor, perhaps; has the patience of Job himself, and an infinite genius for taking pains."

Bessie recollected rather pathetically having once heard the sanguine, good vicar use very similar terms in speaking of her beloved Harry.

CHAPTER L.

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE.

Towards the end of September, Harry Musgrave and Bessie Fairfax were married. Lady Latimer protested against this conclusion by her absence, but she permitted Dora Meadows to go to the church to look on. The wedding differed but very little from other weddings. Harry Musgrave was attended by his friend Forsyth, and Polly and Totty Carnegie were the bridesmaids. Mr. Moxon married the young couple, and Mr. Carnegie gave the bride away. Mr. Laurence Fairfax was present, and the occasion was further embellished by little Christie and Janey in their recent wedding garments, and by Miss Buff and Mr. Phipps, whose cheerful appearance in company gave rise to some ingenious prophetic remarks. The village folks pronounced the newly-wedded pair to be the handsomest they had seen married at Beechhurst church for many a long year, and perhaps it was lucky that Lady Latimer stayed away, for there was nothing in Mr. Harry Musgrave's air or countenance to cheat her into commiseration.

"Elizabeth looked lovely—so beautifully happy," Dora Meadows reported. "And Mr. Harry Musgrave went through the ceremony with composure: Miss Buff said he was as cool as a cucumber. I should think he is a faithless, unsentimental sort of person, Aunt Olympia."

"Indeed! because he was composed?" inquired my lady coldly.

Dora found it easier to express an opinion than to give her reasons for it: all that Aunt Olympia could gather from her rather incoherent attempts at explanation was that Mr. Harry Musgrave had possibly feigned to be worse than he was until he had made sure of Elizabeth's tender heart, for he appeared to be in very good case, both as to health and spirits.

"He might have died for Elizabeth if she had not loved him; and whatever he is or is not, he most assuredly would never voluntarily have given up the chances of an honorable career for the sake of living in idleness even with Elizabeth. You talk nonsense, Dora. There may be persons as foolish and contemptible as you suppose, but Elizabeth has more wit than to have set her affections on such a one." Poor Dora was silenced. My lady was peremptory and decisive, as usual. When Dora had duly repented of her silly suggestion, Aunt Olympia's natural curiosity to hear everything prevailed over her momentary caprice of ill-humor, and she was permitted to recite the wedding in all its details—even to Mrs. Musgrave's silk gown and the pretty little bridesmaids' dresses. The bridegroom only she prudently omitted, and was sarcastically rebuked for the omission by and by with the query, "And the bridegroom was nowhere, then?"

The bells broke out several times in the course of the day, and the event served for a week's talk after it was over. The projected yacht-voyage had been given up, and the young people travelled in all simplicity, with very little baggage and no attendant except Mrs. Betts. They went through Normandy until they came to Bayeux, where Madame Fournier was spending the long vacation at the house of her brother the canon, as her custom was. In the twilight of a hot autumnal evening they went to call upon her. Lancelot's watering-can had diffused its final shower, and the oleanders and pomegranates, grateful for the refreshing coolness, were giving out their most delicious odors. The canon and madame were sipping their *café noir* after dinner, seated in the verandah towards the garden, and Madame Babette, the toil of the day over, was dozing and reposing under the bowery sweet clematis at the end by her own domain.

The elderly people welcomed their young visitors with hospitable warmth. Two more chairs were brought out and two cups of *café noir*, and the visit was prolonged into the warm harvest moonlight with news of friends and acquaintances. Bessie heard that the venerable *curé* of St. Jean's still presided over his flock at Caen, and occupied the chintz edifice like a shower-bath which was the school-confessional. Miss Foster was married to a *brave fermier*, and Bessie was assured that she would not recognize that depressed and neuralgic *demoiselle* in the stout and prosperous *fermière* she had developed into. Mdlle. Adelaide was also married; and Louise, that pretty portress, in spite of the raids of the conscription amongst the young men of her *pays*, had found a shrewd young innkeeper, the only son of a widow, who was so wishful to convert her into madame at the sign of the Croix Rouge that she had consented, and now another Louise, also very pretty, took cautious observation of visitors before admission through the little trap of the wicket in the Rue St. Jean.

Then Madame Fournier inquired with respectful interest concerning her distinguished pupil, Madame Chiverton, of whose splendid marriage in Paris a report had reached her through her nephew. Was Monsieur Chiverton so very rich? was he so very old and ugly? was he good to his beautiful wife? Monsieur Chiverton, Bessie believed, was perfectly devoted and submissive to his wife—he was not handsome nor youthful—he had great estates and held a conspicuous position. Madame replied with an air of satisfaction that proud Miss Ada would be in her element then, for she was born to be a grand lady, and her own family was so poor that she was utterly without *dot*—else, added madame with some mystery, she might have found a *parti* in the imperial court: there had been a brave marshal who was also duke. Here the amiable old lady checked herself, and said with kind reassurance to the unambitious Bessie, "But, *ma chèrie*, you have chosen well for your happiness. Your Harry is excellent; you have both such gayety of heart, like *us*—not like the English, who are *si maussade* often."

Bessie would not allow that the English are *maussade*, but madame refused to believe herself mistaken.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Musgrave still carry their gayety of heart wherever they go. They are not fashionable people, but people like to know them. They have adopted Italy for their country, and are most at home in Florence, but they do not find their other home in England too far off for frequent visits.

They are still only two, and move about often and easily, and see more than most travellers do, for they charter queer private conveyances for themselves, and leave the beaten ways for devious paths that look attractive and often turn out great successes. It was during one of these excursions—an excursion into the Brianza—that they not long ago fell in with a large party of old friends from England, come together fortuitously at Bellagio. Descending early in the evening from the luxuriant hills across which they had been driving through a long green June day, they halted at the hospitable open gate of the Villa Giulia. There was a pony-carriage at the door, and another carriage just moving off after the discharge of its freight.

"Oh, Aunt Olympia, look here! Mr. Harry Musgrave and Elizabeth!" cried a happy voice, and there, behold! were my Lady Latimer and Dora—Lady Lucas now—and Sir Edward; and turning back to see and asking, "Who? who?" came Mr. Oliver Smith and his sisters, and Mr. Cecil Burleigh and his dear Julia.

To Bessie it was a delightful encounter, and Harry Musgrave, if his enthusiasm was not quite so eager, certainly enjoyed it as much, for his disposition was always sociable. My lady, after a warm embrace and six words to Elizabeth, said, "You will dine with me—we are all dining together this evening;" and she communicated her commands to one of the attendants. It was exactly as at home: my lady took the lead, and everybody was under her orders. Bessie liked it for old custom's sake; Mrs. Cecil Burleigh stood a little at a loss, and asked, "What are we to do?"

The Cecil Burleighs were not staying at the Villa Giulia—they were at another hotel on the hill

above—and the Lucases, abroad on their wedding-tour, were at a villa on the edge of the lake. They had been making a picnic with Lady Latimer and her party that day, and were just returning when the young Musgraves appeared. The dinner was served in a room looking upon the garden, and afterward the company walked out upon the terraces, fell into groups and exchanged news. My lady had already enjoyed long conversations with Mr. Cecil Burleigh and Sir Edward Lucas, and she now took Mr. Harry Musgrave to talk to. Harry slipped his hand within his wife's arm to make her a third in the chat, but as it was information on Roman politics and social reforms my lady chiefly wanted, Bessie presently released herself and joined the wistful Dora, who was longing to give her a brief history of her own wooing and wedding. Before the tale was told Sir Edward joined them in the rose-bower whither they had retreated, and contributed some general news from Norminster and Abbotsmead and the neighborhood. Lady Angleby had adopted another niece for spaniel, *vice* Mrs Forbes promoted to Kirkham vicarage, and her favorite clergyman, Mr. Jones, had been made rural dean; Mrs Stokes had a little girl; Mrs. Chiverton was carrying on a hundred beneficent projects to the Woldshire world's wonder and admiration: she had even prevailed against Morte.

"And I believe she would have prevailed had poor Gifford lived; she is a most energetic woman," Sir Edward said. Bessie looked up inquiringly. "Mr. Gifford died of malignant fever last autumn," Sir Edward told her. "He went to Morte in pursuit of some incorrigible poacher when fever was raging there, and took it in its most virulent form; his death proved an irresistible argument against the place, and Blagg made a virtue of necessity and razed his hovels."

Bessie heard further that her uncle Laurence Fairfax had announced the principle that it is unwise for landowners to expect a direct profit from the cottages and gardens of their laboring tenants, and was putting it into practice on the Kirkham estates, to the great comfort and advantage of his dependants.

"My Edward began it," whispered Dora, not satisfied that her husband should lose the honor that to him belonged.

"Yes," said Bessie, "I remember what sensible, kind views he always took of his duties and responsibilities."

"And another thing he has done," continued the little lady. "While other men are enclosing every waste roadside scrap they dare, he has thrown open again a large meadow by the river which once upon a time was free to the villagers on the payment of a shilling a head for each cow turned out upon it. The gardens to the new cottages are planted with fruit trees, and you cannot think what interest is added to the people's lives when they have to attend to what is pleasant and profitable for themselves. It cannot be a happy feeling to be always toiling for a master and never for one's own. There! Edward has taken himself off, so I may tell you that there never was anybody so good as he is, so generous and considerate."

Dora evidently regarded her spouse with serious, old-fashioned devotion and honor. Bessie smiled. She could have borne an equal tribute to her dear Harry, and probably if Mrs. Cecil Burleigh had been as effusive as these young folks, she might have done the same; for while they talked in the rose-bower Mr. Cecil Burleigh and his wife came by, she leaning on his arm and looking up and listening as to the words of an oracle.

"Is she not sweet? What a pity it would have been had those two not married!" said Dora softly, and they passed out of sight.

"Come out and see the roses," Lady Latimer said to Elizabeth through the window early next morning. "They are beautiful with the dew upon them."

Harry Musgrave and his wife were at breakfast, with a good deal of litter about the room. Botanical and other specimens were on the window-sill, on the table was a sheaf of popular Italian street-songs collected in various cities, and numerous loose leaves of manuscript. Harry had decided that Bellagio was a pleasant spot to rest in for a week or so, and Bessie had produced their work in divers kinds. They were going to have a delightful quiet morning of it, when my lady tapped on the glass and invited Elizabeth out to admire the roses.

"Don't stay away long," whispered Harry to his wife, rising to pay his compliments.

He did not reseat himself to enjoy his tranquil labors for nearly an hour, and Bessie stood in her cool white dress like a statue of Patience, hearing Lady Latimer discourse until the sun had evaporated the dew from the roses. Then Miss Juliana and Miss Charlotte appeared, returning from a stroll beyond the bounds of the garden, and announced that the day was growing very hot. "Yes, it is almost too hot to walk now; but will you come to my room, Elizabeth? I have some photographs that I am sure would interest you," urged my lady. She seemed surprised and displeased when Harry entreated comically that his wife might not be taken away, waving his hand to the numerous tasks that awaited them.

"We also have photographs: let us compare them in the drowsy hours of afternoon," said he; and when Bessie offered to hush his odd speeches, he boldly averred that she was indispensable: "She has allowed me to get into the bad habit of not being able to work without her."

My lady could only take her leave with a hope that they would be at leisure later in the day, and was soon after seen to foregather with an American gentleman as ardent in the pursuit of knowledge as herself. Afterward she found her way to the village school, and had an instructive

interview with an old priest; and on the way back to the Villa Giulia, falling in with a very poor woman and two barefooted little boys, her children, she administered charitable relief and earned many heartfelt blessings. The review of photographs took place in the afternoon, as Harry suggested, and in the cool of the evening, after the *table d'hôte*, they had a boat on the lake and paid the Lucases a visit before their departure for Como. Then they sauntered home to their inn by narrow, circuitous lanes between walled gardens—steep, stony lanes where, by and by, they came upon an iron gate standing open for the convenience of a man who was busy within amongst the graves, for this was the little cemetery of Bellagio. It had its grand ponderosity in stone and marble sacred to the memory of noble dust, and a throng of poor iron crosses, leaning this way and that amidst the unkempt, tall grasses.

Lady Latimer walked in; Harry Musgrave and Bessie waited outside. My lady had many questions to ask of the gardener about the tenants of the vaults beneath the huge monuments, and many inscriptions upon the wall to read—pathetic, quaint, or fulsome. At length she turned to rejoin her companions. They were gazing through a locked grate into a tiny garden where were two graves only—a verdant little spot over which the roses hung in clouds of beauty and fragrance. An inscription on a slab sunk in the wall stated that this piece of ground was given for a burial-place to his country-people by an Englishman who had there buried his only son. The other denizen of the narrow plat was Dorothea Fairfax, at whose head and feet were white marble stones, the sculpture on them as distinct as yesterday. Bessie turned away with tears in her eyes.

"What is it?" said my lady sharply, and peered through the grate. Harry Musgrave had walked on. When Lady Latimer looked round her face was stern and cold, and the pleasant light had gone out of it. Without meeting Elizabeth's glance she spoke: "The dead are always in the right; the living always in the wrong. I had forgotten it was at Bellagio that Dorothy died. Has Oliver seen it, I wonder? I must tell him." Yes, Oliver had been there with his other sisters in the morning: they had not forgotten, but they hoped that dear Olympia's steps would not wander round by that way.

However, my lady made no further sign except by her unwonted silence. She left the Villa Giulia the following day with all her party, her last words to Elizabeth being, "You will let me know when you are coming to England, and I will be at Fairfield. I would not miss seeing you: it seems to me that we belong to one another in some fashion. Good-bye."

Bessie went back to Harry over his work rather saddened. "I do love Lady Latimer, Harry—her very faults and her foibles," she said. "I must have it by inheritance."

"If you had expressed a wish, perhaps she would not have gone so suddenly. She appears to have no object in life but to serve other people even while she rules them. Don't look so melancholy: she is not unhappy—she is not to be pitied."

"Oh, Harry! Not unhappy, and so lonely!"

"My dear child, all the world is lonely more or less—she more, we less. But doing all the good she can—and so much good—she must have many hours of pure and high satisfaction. I am glad we have met."

And Bessie was glad. These chance meetings so far away gave her sweet intervals of reverie about friends at home. She kept her tender heart for them, but had never a regret that she had left them all for Harry Musgrave's sake. She sat musing with lovely pensive face. Harry looked up from his work again. The sky was heavenly serene, there was a cool air stirring, and slow moving shadows of cloud were upon the lake.

"I am tired of these songs just now," said Harry, rising and stepping over to the window where his wife sat. "This is a day to find out something new: let us go down the garden to the landing and take a boat. We will ask for a roll or two of bread and some wine, and we can stay as late as we please."

Bessie came out of her dream and did his bidding with a grace. And that was the day's diversion.

THE END.

Black Dwarf; and Old Mortality.
The Heart of Mid-Lothian.
The Bride of Lammermoor; and A
Legend of Montrose.
*Ivanhoe.
The Monastery.
The Abbott.
Kenilworth.
The Pirate.
The Fortunes of Nigel.
Peveril of the Peak.
Quentin Durward.
St. Ronan's Well.
Redgauntlet.
The Betrothed; and The Talisman.
Woodstock.
The Fair Maid of Perth.
Anne of Geierstein.
Count Robert of Paris; and Castle
Dangerous.
Chronicles of the Canongate.

Household Edition. 23 vols. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per vol., $1.00; sheep, marbled edges, per vol., $1.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, per vol., $3.00. Sold separately in cloth binding only.

Universe Edition. 25 vols. Printed on thin paper, and containing one illustration to the volume. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per vol., 75 cts.

World Edition. 12 vols. Thick 12mo. (Sold in sets only.) Cloth, extra, black and gold, $18.00; half imt. Russia, marbled edges, $24.00.

This is the best edition for the library or for general use published. Its convenient size, the extreme legibility of the type, which is larger than is used in any other 12mo edition, either English or American.

TALES OF A GRANDFATHER. By Sir Walter Scott, Bart. 4 vols. Uniform with the Waverley Novels.

Household Edition. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per vol., $1.00; sheep, marbled edges, per vol., $1.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, per vol., $3.00.

This edition contains the Fourth Series—Tales from French history—and is the only complete edition published in this country.

CHARLES DICKENS' COMPLETE WORKS. Author's Edition. 14 vols., with a portrait of the author on steel, and eight illustrations by F.O.C. Darley, Cruikshank, Fildes, Eytinge, and others, in each volume. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per vol., $1.00; sheep, marbled edges, per vol., $1.50; half imt. Russia, marbled edges, per vol., $1.50: half calf, gilt, marbled edges, per vol., $2.75.

*Pickwick Papers.
*Oliver Twist, Pictures of Italy, and American Notes.
*Nicholas Nickleby.
Old Curiosity Shop, and Reprinted Pieces.
Barnaby Rudge, and Hard Times.
*Martin Chuzzlewit.
Dombey and Son.
*David Copperfield.
Christmas Books, Uncommercial Traveller, and Additional Christmas Stories.
Bleak House.
Little Dorrit.
Tale of Two Cities, and Great Expectations.
Our Mutual Friend.
Edwin Drood, Sketches, Master Humphrey's Clock, etc., etc.

Sold separately in cloth binding only.

*Also in Alta Edition, one illustration, 75 cents.

The same. Universe Edition. Printed on thin paper and containing one illustration to the volume. 14 vols., 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per vol., 75 cents.

The same. World Edition. 7 vols., thick 12mo., $12.25. (Sold in sets only.)

CHILD'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND. By Charles Dickens. Popular 12mo. edition; from new electrotype plates. Large clear type. Beautifully illustrated with 8 engravings on wood. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.00.

Alta Edition. One illustration, 75 cents.

> "Dickens as a novelist and prose poet is to be classed in the front rank of the noble company to which he belongs. He has revived the novel of genuine practical life, as it existed in the works of Fielding, Smollett, and Goldsmith; but at the same time has given to his material an individual coloring and expression peculiarly his own. His characters, like those of his great exemplars, constitute a world of their own, whose truth to nature every reader instinctively recognizes in connection with their truth to darkness."—*E.P. Whipple*.

MACAULAY'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND. From the accession of James II. By Thomas Babington Macaulay. With a steel portrait of the author. Printed from new electrotype plates from the last English Edition. Being by far the most correct edition in the American market. 5 volumes, 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per set, $5.00; sheep, marbled edges, per set, $7.50; half imitation Russia, $7.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, per set, $15.00.

Popular Edition. 5 vols., cloth, plain, $5.00.

8vo. Edition. 5 volumes in one, with portrait. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $3.00; sheep, marbled edges, $3.50.

MARTINEAU'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND. From the beginning of the 19th Century to the Crimean War. By Harriet Martineau. Complete in 4 vols., with full Index. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per set, $4.00; sheep, marbled edges, $6.00; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, $12.00.

HUME'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND. From the invasion of Julius Cæsar to the abdication of James II, 1688. By David Hume. Standard Edition. With the author's last corrections and improvements; to which is prefixed a short account of his life, written by himself. With a portrait on steel. A new edition from entirely new stereotype plates. 5 vols., 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per set, $5.00; sheep, marbled edges, per set, $7.50; half imitation Russia, $7.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, per set, $15.00.

Popular Edition. 5 vols. Cloth, plain, $5.00.

GIBBON'S DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE. By Edward Gibbon. With Notes, by Rev. H.H. Milman. Standard Edition. To which is added a complete Index of the work. A new edition from entirely new stereotype plates. With portrait on steel. 5 vols., 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per set, $5.00; sheep, marbled edges, per set, $7.50; half imitation Russia, $7.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, per set, $15.00.

Popular Edition. 5 vols. Cloth, plain, $5.00.

ENGLAND, PICTURESQUE AND DESCRIPTIVE. By Joel Cook, author of "A Holiday Tour in Europe," etc. With 487 finely engraved illustrations, descriptive of the most famous and attractive places, as well as of the historic scenes and rural life of England and Wales. With Mr. Cook's admirable descriptions of the places and the country, and the splendid illustrations, this is the most valuable and attractive book of the season, and the sale will doubtless be very large. 4to. Cloth, extra, gilt side and edges, $7.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, $10.00; half morocco, full gilt edges, $10.00; full Turkey morocco, gilt edges, $15.00; tree calf, gilt edges, $18.00.

> This work, which is prepared in elegant style, and profusely illustrated, is a comprehensive description of England and Wales, arranged in convenient form for the tourist, and at the same time providing an illustrated guide-book to a country which Americans always view with interest. There are few satisfactory works about this land which is so generously gifted by Nature and so full of memorials of the past. Such books as there are, either cover a few counties or are devoted to special localities, or are merely guide-books. The present work is believed to be the first attempt to give in attractive form a description of the stately homes, renowned castles, ivy-clad ruins of abbeys, churches, and ancient fortresses, delicious scenery, rock-bound coasts, and celebrated places of England and Wales. It is written by an author fully competent from travel and reading, and in position to properly describe his very interesting subject; and the artist's pencil has been called into requisition to graphically illustrate its well-written pages. There are 487 illustrations, prepared in the highest style of the engraver's art, while the book itself is one of the most attractive ever presented to the American public.
>
> Its method of construction is systematic, following the most convenient routes taken by

tourists, and the letter-press includes enough of the history and legend of each of the places described to make the story highly interesting. Its pages fairly overflow with picture and description, telling of everything attractive that is presented by England and Wales. Executed in the highest style of the printer's and engraver's art, "England, Picturesque and Descriptive," is one of the best American books of the year.

HISTORY OF THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA. By the Comte De Paris. With Maps faithfully Engraved from the Originals, and Printed in Three Colors. 8vo. Cloth, per volume, $3.50; red cloth, extra, Roxburgh style, uncut edges, $3.50; sheep, library style, $4.50; half Turkey morocco, $6.00. Vols. I, II, and III now ready.

The third volume embraces, without abridgment, the fifth and sixth volumes of the French edition, and covers one of the most interesting as well as the most anxious periods of the war, describing the operations of the Army of the Potomac in the East, and the Army of the Cumberland and Tennessee in the West.

It contains full accounts of the battle of Chancellorsville, the attack of the monitors on Fort Sumter, the sieges and fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson; the battles of Port Gibson and Champion's Hill, and the fullest and most authentic account of the battle of Gettysburg ever written.

"The head of the Orleans family has put pen to paper with excellent result.... Our present impression is that it will form by far the best history of the American war."—*Athenæum, London*.

"We advise all Americans to read it carefully, and judge for themselves if 'the future historian of our war,' of whom we have heard so much, be not already arrived in the Comte de Paris."—*Nation, New York*.

"This is incomparably the best account of our great second revolution that has yet been even attempted. It is so calm, so dispassionate, so accurate in detail, and at the same time so philosophical in general, that its reader counts confidently on finding the complete work thoroughly satisfactory."—*Evening Bulletin, Philadelphia*.

"The work expresses the calm, deliberate judgment of an experienced military observer and a highly intelligent man. Many of its statements will excite discussion, but we much mistake if it does not take high and permanent rank among the standard histories of the civil war. Indeed that place has been assigned it by the most competent critics both of this country and abroad."—*Times, Cincinnati*.

"Messrs. Porter & Coates, of Philadelphia, will publish in a few days the authorized translation of the new volume of the Comte de Paris' History of Our Civil War. The two volumes in French—the fifth and sixth—are bound together in the translation in one volume. Our readers already know, through a table of contents of these volumes, published in the cable columns of the *Herald*, the period covered by this new installment of a work remarkable in several ways. It includes the most important and decisive period of the war, and the two great campaigns of Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

"The great civil war has had no better, no abler historian than the French prince who, emulating the example of Lafayette, took part in this new struggle for freedom, and who now writes of events, in many of which he participated, as an accomplished officer, and one who, by his independent position, his high character and eminent talents, was placed in circumstances and relations which gave him almost unequalled opportunities to gain correct information and form impartial judgments.

"The new installment of a work which has already become a classic will be read with increased interest by Americans because of the importance of the period it covers and the stirring events it describes. In advance of a careful review we present to-day some extracts from the advance sheets sent us by Messrs. Porter & Coates, which will give our readers a foretaste of chapters which bring back to memory so many half-forgotten and not a few hitherto unvalued details of a time which Americans of this generation at least cannot read of without a fresh thrill of excitement."

HALF-HOURS WITH THE BEST AUTHORS. With short Biographical and Critical Notes. By Charles Knight.

New Household Edition. With six portraits on steel. 3 vols., thick 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, per set, $4.50; half imt. Russia, marbled edges, $6.00; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, $12.00.

Library Edition. Printed on fine laid and tinted paper. With twenty-four portraits on steel. 6 vols., 12mo. Cloth, extra, per set, $7.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, per set, $18.00; half Russia, gilt top, $21.00; full French morocco, limp, per set, $12.00; full smooth Russia, limp, round corners, in Russia case, per set, $25.00; full seal grained Russia, limp, round corners, in Russia case to match, $25.00.

The excellent idea of the editor of these choice volumes has been most admirably

carried out, as will be seen by the list of authors upon all subjects. Selecting some choice passages of the best standard authors, each of sufficient length to occupy half an hour in its perusal, there is here food for thought for every day in the year: so that if the purchaser will devote but one-half hour each day to its appropriate selection he will read through these six volumes in one year, and in such a leisurely manner that the noblest thoughts of many of the greatest minds will be firmly in his mind forever. For every Sunday there is a suitable selection from some of the most eminent writers in sacred literature. We venture to say if the editor's idea is carried out the reader will possess more and better knowledge of the English classics at the end of the year than he would by five years of desultory reading.

They can be commenced at any day in the year. The variety of reading is so great that no one will ever tire of these volumes. It is a library in itself.

THE POETRY OF OTHER LANDS. A Collection of Translations into English Verse of the Poetry of Other Languages, Ancient and Modern. Compiled by N. Clemmons Hunt. Containing translations from the Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabian, Japanese, Turkish, Servian, Russian, Bohemian, Polish, Dutch, German, Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese languages. 12mo. Cloth, extra, gilt edges, $2.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, $4.00; Turkey morocco, gilt edges, $6.00.

"Another of the publications of Porter & Coates, called 'The Poetry of Other Lands,' compiled by N. Clemmons Hunt, we most warmly commend. It is one of the best collections we have seen, containing many exquisite poems and fragments of verse which have not before been put into book form in English words. We find many of the old favorites, which appear in every well-selected collection of sonnets and songs, and we miss others, which seem a necessity to complete the bouquet of grasses and flowers, some of which, from time to time, we hope to republish in the 'Courier.'"—*Cincinnati Courier*.

"A book of rare excellence, because it gives a collection of choice gems in many languages not available to the general lover of poetry. It contains translations from the Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabian, Japanese, Turkish, Servian, Russian, Bohemian, Polish, Dutch, German, Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese languages. The book will be an admirable companion volume to any one of the collections of English poetry that are now published. With the full index of authors immediately preceding the collection, and the arrangement of the poems under headings, the reader will find it convenient for reference. It is a gift that will be more valued by very many than some of the transitory ones at these holiday times."—*Philadelphia Methodist*.

THE FIRESIDE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF POETRY. Edited by Henry T. Coates. This is the latest, and beyond doubt the best collection of poetry published. Printed on fine paper and illustrated with thirteen steel engravings and fifteen title pages, containing portraits of prominent American poets and fac-similes of their handwriting, made expressly for this book. 8vo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, gilt edges, $5.00; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, $7.50; half morocco, full gilt edges, $7.50; full Turkey morocco, gilt edges, $10.00; tree calf, gilt edges, $12.00; plush, padded side, nickel lettering, $14.00.

"The editor shows a wide acquaintance with the most precious treasures of English verse, and has gathered the most admirable specimens of their ample wealth. Many pieces which have been passed by in previous collections hold a place of honor in the present volume, and will be heartily welcomed by the lovers of poetry as a delightful addition to their sources of enjoyment. It is a volume rich in solace, in entertainment, in inspiration, of which the possession may well be coveted by every lover of poetry. The pictorial illustrations of the work are in keeping with its poetical contents, and the beauty of the typographical execution entitles it to a place among the choicest ornaments of the library."—*New York Tribune*.

"Lovers of good poetry will find this one of the richest collections ever made. All the best singers in our language are represented, and the selections are generally those which reveal their highest qualities.... The lights and shades, the finer play of thought and imagination belonging to individual authors, are brought out in this way (by the arrangement of poems under subject-headings) as they would not be under any other system.... We are deeply impressed with the keen appreciation of poetical worth, and also with the good taste manifested by the compiler."—*Churchman*.

"Cyclopædias of poetry are numerous, but for sterling value of its contents for the library, or as a book of reference, no work of the kind will compare with this admirable volume of Mr. Coates. It takes the gems from many volumes, culling with rare skill and judgment."—*Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF POETRY. Compiled by Henry T. Coates. Containing over 500 poems carefully selected from the works of the best and most popular writers for children; with nearly

200 illustrations. The most complete collection of poetry for children ever published. 4to. Cloth, extra, black and gold, gilt side and edges, $3.00; full Turkey morocco, gilt edges, $7.50.

> "This seems to us the best book of poetry for children in existence. We have examined many other collections, but we cannot name another that deserves to be compared with this admirable compilation."—*Worcester Spy*.
>
> "The special value of the book lies in the fact that it nearly or quite covers the entire field. There is not a great deal of good poetry which has been written for children that cannot be found in this book. The collection is particularly strong in ballads and tales, which are apt to interest children more than poems of other kinds; and Mr. Coates has shown good judgment in supplementing this department with some of the best poems of that class that have been written for grown people. A surer method of forming the taste of children for good and pure literature than by reading to them from any portion of this book can hardly be imagined. The volume is richly illustrated and beautifully bound."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.
>
> "A more excellent volume cannot be found. We have found within the covers of this handsome volume, and upon its fair pages, many of the most exquisite poems which our language contains. It must become a standard volume, and can never grow old or obsolete."—*Episcopal Recorder*.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF THOS. HOOD. With engravings on steel. 4 vols., 12mo., tinted paper. Poetical Works; Up the Rhine; Miscellanies and Hood's Own; Whimsicalities, Whims, and Oddities. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $6.00; red cloth, paper label, gilt top, uncut edges, $6.00; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, $14.00; half Russia, gilt top, $18.00.

> Hood's verse, whether serious or comic—whether serene like a cloudless autumn evening or sparkling with puns like a frosty January midnight with stars—was ever pregnant with materials for the thought. Like every author distinguished for true comic humor, there was a deep vein of melancholy pathos running through his mirth, and even when his sun shone brightly its light seemed often reflected as if only over the rim of a cloud.
>
> Well may we say, in the words of Tennyson, "Would he could have stayed with us," for never could it be more truly recorded of any one—in the words of Hamlet characterizing Yorick—that "he was a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy." D.M. Moir.

THE ILIAD OF HOMER RENDERED INTO ENGLISH BLANK VERSE. By Edward, Earl of Derby. From the latest London edition, with all the author's last revisions and corrections, and with a Biographical Sketch of Lord Derby, by R. Shelton Mackenzie, D.C.L. With twelve steel engravings from Flaxman's celebrated designs. 2 vols., 12mo. Cloth, extra, bev. boards, gilt top, $3.50; half calf, gilt, marbled edges, $7.00; half Turkey morocco, gilt top, $7.00.

The same. Popular edition. Two vols. in one. 12mo. Cloth, extra, $1.50.

> "It must equally be considered a splendid performance; and for the present we have no hesitation in saying that it is by far the best representation of Homer's Iliad in the English language."—*London Times*.
>
> "The merits of Lord Derby's translation may be summed up in one word, it is eminently attractive; it is instinct with life; it may be read with fervent interest; it is immeasurably nearer than Pope to the text of the original.... Lord Derby has given a version far more closely allied to the original, and superior to any that has yet been attempted in the blank verse of our language."—*Edinburg Review*.

THE WORKS OF FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS. Comprising the Antiquities of the Jews; a History of the Jewish Wars, and a Life of Flavius Josephus, written by himself. Translated from the original Greek, by William Whiston, A.M. Together with numerous explanatory Notes and seven Dissertations concerning Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, James the Just, God's command to Abraham, etc., with an Introductory Essay by Rev. H. Stebbing, D.D. 8vo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, plain edges, $3.00; cloth, red, black and gold, gilt edges, $4.50; sheep, marbled edges, $3.50; Turkey morocco, gilt edges, $8.00.

This is the largest type one volume edition published.

THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE EGYPTIANS, CARTHAGINIANS, ASSYRIANS, BABYLONIANS, MEDES AND PERSIANS, GRECIANS AND MACEDONIANS Including a History of the Arts and Sciences of the Ancients. By Charles Rollin. With a Life of the Author, by James Bell. 2 vols., royal 8vo. Sheep, marbled edges, per set, $6.00.

COOKERY FROM EXPERIENCE. A Practical Guide for Housekeepers in the Preparation of Every-day Meals, containing more than One Thousand Domestic Recipes, mostly tested by Personal Experience, with Suggestions for Meals, Lists of Meats and Vegetables in Season, etc. By Mrs. Sara T. Paul. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.50.

Interleaved Edition. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.75.

THE COMPARATIVE EDITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Both Versions in One Book.

The proof readings of our Comparative Edition have been gone over by so many competent proof readers, that we believe the text is absolutely correct.

Large 12mo., 700 pp. Cloth, extra, plain edges, $1.50; cloth, extra, bevelled boards and carmine edges, $1.75; imitation panelled calf, yellow edges, $2.00; arabesque, gilt edges, $2.50; French morocco, limp, gilt edges, $4.00; Turkey morocco, limp, gilt edges, $6.00.

> The Comparative New Testament has been published by Porter & Coates. In parallel columns on each page are given the old and new versions of the Testament, divided also as far us practicable into comparative verses, so that it is almost impossible for the slightest new word to escape the notice of either the ordinary reader or the analytical student. It is decidedly the best edition yet published of the most interest-exciting literary production of the day. No more convenient form for comparison could be devised either for economizing time or labor. Another feature is the foot-notes, and there is also given in an appendix the various words and expressions preferred by the American members of the Revising Commission. The work is handsomely printed on excellent paper with clear, legible type. It contains nearly 700 pages.

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO. By Alexandre Dumas. Complete in one volume, with two illustrations by George G. White. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.25.

THE THREE GUARDSMEN. By Alexandre Dumas. Complete in one volume, with two illustrations by George G. White. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.25.

> There is a magic influence in his pen, a magnetic attraction in his descriptions, a fertility in his literary resources which are characteristic of Dumas alone, and the seal of the master of light literature is set upon all his works. Even when not strictly historical, his romances give an insight into the habits and modes of thought and action of the people of the time described, which are not offered in any other author's productions.

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII. By Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Bart. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.00. Alta edition, one illustration, 75 cts.

JANE EYRE. By Charlotte Brontë (Currer Bell). New Library Edition. With five illustrations by E.M. Wimperis. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.00.

SHIRLEY. By Charlotte Brontë (Currer Bell). New Library Edition. With five illustrations by E.M. Wimperis. 12mo, Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.00.

VILLETTE. By Charlotte Brontë (Currer Bell). New Library Edition. With five illustrations by E.M. Wimperis. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.00.

THE PROFESSOR, EMMA and POEMS. By Charlotte Brontë (Currer Bell). New Library Edition. With five illustrations by E.M. Wimperis. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.00.

Cloth, extra, black and gold, per set, $4.00; red cloth, paper label, gilt top, uncut edges, per set, $5.00; half calf, gilt, per set, $12.00. The four volumes forming the complete works of Charlotte Brontë (Currer Bell).

> The wondrous power of Currer Bell's stories consists in their fiery insight into the human heart, their merciless dissection of passion, and their stern analysis of character and motive. The style of these productions possesses incredible force, sometimes almost grim in its bare severity, then relapsing into passages of melting pathos—always direct, natural, and effective in its unpretending strength. They exhibit the identity

which always belongs to works of genius by the same author, though without the slightest approach to monotony. The characters portrayed by Currer Bell all have a strongly marked individuality. Once brought before the imagination, they haunt the memory like a strange dream. The sinewy, muscular strength of her writings guarantees their permanent duration, and thus far they have lost nothing of their intensity of interest since the period of their composition.

CAPTAIN JACK THE SCOUT; or, The Indian Wars about Old Fort Duquesne. An Historical Novel, with copious notes. By CHARLES MCKNIGHT. Illustrated with eight engravings. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.50.

A work of such rare merit and thrilling interest as to have been republished both in England and Germany. This genuine American historical work has been received with extraordinary popular favor, and has "won golden opinions from all sorts of people" for its freshness, its forest life, and its fidelity to truth. In many instances it even corrects History and uses the drapery of fiction simply to enliven and illustrate the fact.

It is a universal favorite with both sexes, and with all ages and conditions, and is not only proving a marked and notable success in this country, but has been eagerly taken up abroad and republished in London, England, and issued in two volumes in the far-famed "Tauchnitz Edition" of Leipsic, Germany.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS, FRESH AND FADED. By T.S. ARTHUR. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.50.

"Orange Blossoms" contains a number of short stories of society. Like all of Mr. Arthur's works, it has a special moral purpose, and is especially addressed to the young who have just entered the marital experience, whom it pleasantly warns against those social and moral pitfalls into which they may almost innocently plunge.

THE BAR ROOMS AT BRANTLEY; or, The Great Hotel Speculation. By T.S. ARTHUR. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.50.

"One of the best temperance stories recently issued."—*N.Y. Commercial Advertiser*.

"Although it is in the form of a novel, its truthful delineation of characters is such that in every village in the land you meet the broken manhood it pictures upon the streets, and look upon sad, tear-dimmed eyes of women and children. The characters are not overdrawn, but are as truthful as an artist's pencil could make them."—*Inter-Ocean, Chicago*.

EMMA. By JANE AUSTEN. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth extra $1.25.

MANSFIELD PARK. By JANE AUSTEN. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, $1.25.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE; and Northanger Abbey. By JANE AUSTEN. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, $1.25.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY; and Persuasion. By JANE AUSTEN. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, $1.25.

The four volumes, forming the complete works of Jane Austen, in a neat box: Cloth, extra, per set, $5.00; red cloth, paper label gilt top, uncut edges, $5.00; half calf, gilt, per set, $12.00.

"Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. In her novels she has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain sense, common-place, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings.... And almost all this is done by touches so delicate that they elude analysis, that they defy the powers of description, and that we know them to exist only by the general effect to which they have contributed."—*Macaulay's Essays*.

ART AT HOME. Containing in one volume House Decoration, by RHODA and AGNES GARRETT; Plea for Art in the House, by W.J. LOFTIE; Music, by JOHN HULLAH; and Dress, by Mrs. OLIPHANT. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.50.

TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS AT RUGBY. By THOMAS HUGHES. New Edition, large clear type. With 30 illustrations after Caldecott and others. 12mo., 400 pp. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.25; half calf, gilt, $2.75.

Alta Edition. One illustration, 75 cents.

> "It is difficult to estimate the amount of good which may be done by 'Tom Brown's School Days.' It gives, in the main, a most faithful and interesting picture of our public schools, the most English institutions of England, and which educate the best and most powerful elements in our upper classes. But it is more than this; it is an attempt, a very noble and successful attempt, to Christianize the society of our youth, through the only practicable channel—hearty and brotherly sympathy with their feelings; a book, in short, which a father might well wish to see in the hands of his son."—*London Times*.

TOM BROWN AT OXFORD. By THOMAS HUGHES. Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, extra, black and gold, $1.50; half calf, gilt, $3.00.

> "Fairly entitled to the rank and dignity of an English classic. Plot, style and truthfulness are of the soundest British character. Racy, idiomatic, mirror-like, always interesting, suggesting thought on the knottiest social and religious questions, now deeply moving by its unconscious pathos, and anon inspiring uproarious laughter, it is a work the world will not willingly let die."—*N.Y. Christian Advocate*.

the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable

taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless

from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make

donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.