Title: Daisy Burns (Volume 2)

Author: Julia Kavanagh

Release date: May 18, 2011 [EBook #36158]

Language: English

Julia Kavanagh (1824-1877), Daisy Burns (1853), volume 2, Tauchnitz

edition

Produced by Daniel FROMONT

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DAISY BURNS;

A TALE

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF "NATHALIE."

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VOL. II.

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BERNHARDT TAUCHNITZ

1853.

JULIA KAVANAGH

DAISY BURNS.

CHAPTER I.

It has chanced that for a week or more this narrative has been laid aside. This evening I thought I would resume it, and, before doing so, I looked back on what I had written.

Alas, how long it takes us to forget the angry and evil feelings of our childhood! How I traced, in this record of the past, a lingering animosity against the enemy of my youth, which years, it seems, had failed to efface from my heart! How sad and humbling a lesson has this been to me, of passion warping judgment and holy charity forgotten!

I have represented Miriam without one redeeming trait, and conscience tells me that she was not thus. I now remember many touches of human feeling and human kindness, which, I feel it remorsefully, need not have been omitted, when all that was evil was so faithfully registered.

She had many high qualities. In worldly affairs she was generous and disinterested. Her word was inviolable; she gave it rarely, and never broke it. She was devoted to her blind old nurse, and patient with her infirm aunt. Her temper was calm and enduring; she had in her something of the spirit which makes martyrs, and could have borne persecution with unshaken fortitude. She never spoke of religion, and I doubt if she had any religious feeling; but she was charitable to the poor; she had sympathy for their misery and compassion too for bodily suffering: I remember that once, when I cut my hand rather severely, she showed a concern which even I felt to be sincere. Had I been wholly in her power, and provoked her to the utmost, I knew she would neither have ill-used me herself, nor allowed me to be neglected by others. Her hatred was pitiless; yet in one sense it was not mean, for it disdained to inflict useless pangs. She had an object in tormenting me, but to do so gave her no pleasure. I know that had I not been so tenacious of the affection of Cornelius, so obstinate and proud, she would never have sought my ruin; but she was not one to brook the rivalry or opposition even of a child; I chose to place myself in her path, and she treated me as an obstacle to be removed, or, if that failed, to be conquered, and, if needful, crushed.

She was one of those outwardly calm persons whose real nature can never be known, unless when drawn forth by something or some one. I do not think that one action to be concealed had marked her life until we met. We were antagonistic principles, and, from our conflict, the worst points of each were displayed. But for her Cornelius would never have suspected my jealous nature; but for that jealousy he would never have known the real character of his betrothed. Even Kate, though she had never liked her, was, as I afterwards learned, taken by surprise, and declared, "Cornelius had had a most fortunate escape from marrying such a cruel, treacherous woman." Was Miriam such? I do not think so. True, she had little principle, and was not stopped by falsehood when she held it necessary: but she was never cruel, never treacherous without a purpose. She might have been good but for one mistaken idea—that good and evil are indifferent in themselves; and great but for one sin—self-idolatry.

She lacked that centre of all hearts—God. He who made us, made us so that in Him alone we shall find peace. We may make idols of honour, duty, love, art; of human ideas and human beings; but even this is not to fall utterly. The sense of honour and duty are His gifts; He gave us hearts to love with, souls to know the beautiful, minds to conceive, feelings to spend and bestow. So long therefore as its action is outward, even our grossest idolatry will be pervaded with the sanctity of adoration and the majesty of God. But self-worship is the sin of Satan: we were never meant to be our own centre, our own hope, our own aim and divinity; there never has been a drearier prison than that which can be to itself a human heart; the other circles of hell are broad and free, compared to this narrowest of dungeons—self locked in self.

It was this that, whilst outwardly she seemed so calm and cool, made Miriam internally so restless and unquiet. There was a healthy serenity in the ardour of Cornelius; but hers was agitated like an ever-troubled sea. She sought not in love its divine oblivion of self, but, on the contrary, a consciousness of existence, rendered more intense by the very tumult of passion.

To love, for her, was not to be merged in some other being, but to absorb that other being in herself. All I know of her first lover was, that he was a captain in the navy, and that he perished with his ship four or five years before she met Cornelius. Her affection may have been outwardly devoted, but must have been selfish at heart. To have lovud again would have been no crime; but to wish to do so showed that the man had been nothing in comparison with the feeling.

Even thus with her sister. Whilst she existed, Miriam seemed wrapped in her; once the young girl was in her grave, her name was never mentioned; everything that could recall her was studiously set aside as too painful; a new object, a new passion were eagerly grasped at; she had been, and she was no more. To those who love truly, there may be separation, but there is no death: their heart, like a hospitable lord, keeps sacred for ever the place of the guests he has once received and cherished. With Miriam it was not thus. Once the being in whom she had delighted could no longer minister to her delight, it ceased to occupy her. I never saw her after her parting from Cornelius, yet I can scarcely think that he, to win whose exclusive affection she had done so much, gave her one sad thought; she had not loved, but he had, and to him she left all the sorrow.

How did he bear it? This was a question neither his sister nor I could have answered. He had gone out on the night of the discovery, sent forth by that impulse which in great grief urges us to seek spots no eye can haunt, and the calm silence, so soothing to the troubled senses and wounded heart, of our mother nature. He came in the next morning, looking worn and weary, like one who had wandered far, vainly seeking peace. His sister looked at him sadly, and said, in her gentlest tones—

"It is hard. Cornelius."

He looked up in her face and replied calmly, "It is, Kate; but there is no sorrow that cannot be crushed and conquered."

Pride, stung at having been so deceived, made him shun sympathy, and forbade him to complain. He struggled against his bitter grief in manful spirit. He quietly called me up one morning to the studio, there to resume the sittings for the Stolen Child; in the course of the same week he procured two Gipsy sitters, and gave to work his whole mind, heart, and energies. Yet there were moments when his hand flagged, when his look became drearily vacant, when it was plain that not even all the might of will could compel attention any longer. There were other signs too which I heeded.

A mile down the lane rose a homely little house of God, consecrated to the worship of that faith which, like their country, was only the more dear to Cornelius and Kate for the insults daily heaped upon it. There, Sunday after Sunday, with a brief interruption, I had for three years sat and knelt by the side of Cornelius, and taken a childish pleasure in reading from the same book. But now—and I was quick to notice it—though his hand still held the volume, his eyes no longer perused the page with mine; in his abstracted face I read a worship far more intense, inward, and sorrowful than the quiet attention of old times. Once, as we walked home together, he asked me what the sermon had been about.

But nothing endures in this world. The grief of Cornelius was not of a nature to be brooded over for ever: we never knew exactly when he recovered his inward serenity, but that he recovered it, an event which occurred in the course of the winter proved beyond doubt.

One afternoon, when both Kate and her brother were out, Mr. Smalley called. He had obtained a living somewhere in the North, and was come to bid us adieu. He expressed much regret that his friend and Miss O'Reilly should not be at home, and inquired after them with his usual benignant gentleness.

"They are both quite well; and are you too quite well, Mr. Smalley?" I asked, for as he sat before me, his slender frame slightly bent, I could not but be struck with the pallor and thinness of his face.

"I am very well indeed," he replied with a smile, "and in a very happy— though not, I hope, too elated —frame of mind, which is natural enough considering my recent good fortune. Rugby—have you ever heard of Rugby, my dear?"

"No, Sir, I don't think I have."

"Well, it is rather odd, but really nobody seems to hare heard of Rugby, and Trim will have it that it is an imaginary place altogether; but I tell him this is a point on which I must differ from him, as I have actually seen Rugby Well, Rugby, as I was saying, is an extremely picturesque village, almost too picturesque, rising on the brow of a steep hill, with an old church and very quaint parsonage; then there's a splendid torrent, that inundates the place twice a year, but the people are used to it and don't mind it, so it makes no difference, you know."

"But is it not rather unpleasant, Sir?"

"Well, perhaps it is," quietly replied Morton Smalley; then added with a sigh, "but life has greater trials; every one has his or her trial, my dear."

"Yes," I answered, "Miss O'Reilly can't let her house; it is such a pity, is it not?"

"Have her tenants left?" asked Mr. Smalley, a little troubled.

"Miss Russell has given notice; the bill is up, did you not see it?"

"I did not look," he replied in a low tone; then he again said—

"Has Miss Russell left?"

"Her furniture is still there; but she is always at Hastings."

There was a pause; but Mr. Smalley made an effort and asked—

"Is her niece with her?"

"I don't know, Sir."

"Don't you?"

"Oh no! we don't know anything more about Miss Miriam, since she is not to marry Cornelius."

Mr. Smalley turned pale and red, and pale again; but he never put a question to me. He constrained himself to talk of the weather, of what a fine day it was (the rain was drizzling), of how happy it made

him to hear Cornelius was so successful (we had never said a word about his success); then he left off at once, rose and bade me good-bye, to my infinite relief, for I was conscious of having committed an indiscretion, and not the first either.

Within the course of the same month, as we sat at breakfast, Kate, who was reading the newspaper, suddenly uttered an exclamation which she as hastily checked. Cornelius took the paper from her hand, glanced over it, and read aloud very calmly—

"On the twelfth instant, at St. George's, Hanover Square, the Rev. Morton Smalley, of Rugby, to Miriam Russell, eldest daughter of the late Thomas Russell, Esq., of Southwell, Norfolk."

"Smalley deserved a better wife," said Cornelius; and he handed back the paper to Kate, without betraying the least sign of emotion. It was thus we learned how utterly dead Miriam was in his heart.

What sort of a wife did she make to Morton Smalley, in his wild northern home? I know not, no more than I know what, unless the thirst of agitation and change, could induce a spirit so feverish and unquiet to unite itself to that pure and calm nature. Did she find peace in his devoted love, and in fulfilling the duties that fall to the lot of a clergyman's wife? Perhaps she did, and perhaps too he drew forth whatever her nature held of good and true. A year after her marriage she died in giving birth to a child, who still lives, and whom her father persists in calling the image of his dear departed saint, though his eyes alone can trace in her the faintest resemblance to her dead mother.

I was not with Cornelius when this event occurred, and how he felt on learning the death of the woman with whom he had thought to spend his life, is more than I have ever known.

Cornelius had, as I said, recovered his serenity, but he was not what he once had been. A boyish lightness of temper had deserted him—his early faith was shaken, and he looked on life a sadder and a wiser man. To his sister he was the same as before; to me far kinder. He loved me all the more for having been to him the cause of so much trouble: a less generous mind and heart could not have forgiven me the mistakes into which I had made him fall, and the disadvantageous position in which I had placed him; both rendered me more dear to Cornelius. The only allusion he made to the past, was to say to me one wintry evening, as, the lessons over, we sat together by the fire-side—

"I think you are happy now, Daisy."

"Yes, Cornelius," I replied, a little moved, "very happy."

"That's right," he said, and rose.

"You are going out," observed Kate, anxiously.

"Yes; shall be in at nine."

"Come back by the Grove."

"Why so?"

"The lanes are not safe."

He laughed, said there was no fear, and left us. I saw him go with a sinking heart. The road by which he meant to return was lonely and had witnessed several recent cases of highway robbery. The evening passed quietly; but nine struck and Cornelius came not back. I gave Kate a terrified look.

"Nonsense!" she said indignantly, "how dare you think of such a thing? Go to bed directly."

In vain I begged hard to be allowed to sit up until his return; she said she would have no more such looks, and again bade me go to bed. I felt too wretched to scruple at disobeying her. I left the parlour indeed, but instead of going up-stairs to my room, I softly stole out of the house, crossed the garden, and unlocking the back-door I left it ajar, and stepped out to look in the direction along which Cornelius was to come. The night was dark; a keen wind swept down the lonely lane; I drew the skirt of my frock over my head and crouched within the shelter of the neighbouring hedge. There, with my ear bent to catch every sound, I remained for what seemed an age. Once my heart leaped as I heard a distant tread, and fell again when it drew nearer, and I was conscious of a stranger, who, unaware of my presence, passed by me whistling carelessly.

Dismal visions of Cornelius lying bleeding and inanimate in some dreary spot, haunted me until I felt nearly wild with terror and grief; but at once a sudden joy pervaded my being; I heard his quick, light step coming up the lane—I was sure it was he; he was safe—the dark vision fled like an evil spirit put to

flight by a good angel. I could have laughed for gladness, I felt so happy. Joy however did not make me forget my disobedience and its probable consequences; I thought to slip in and go up to my room unperceived, but to my dismay I found that the door had closed on me—I was shut out. There was no remedy for it; so I waited until Cornelius came up and rang, then I made a slight noise in the hedge.

"What's that?" he asked sharply.

"Don't be afraid, Cornelius," I replied in a low voice, "it is only me."

"Daisy! What brings you here, child?"

"I felt so miserable at your not returning that I came out here to watch for you. The door shut, so I could not get in when I heard you—don't let Kate scold me, Cornelius."

Before he could reply, the door was opened by Kate herself, a proof that she was not without secret uneasiness. In her haste she had brought no light.

"Is that you?" she said quickly.

"Of course it is, Kate."

"Thank God! I was so uneasy; and there's that foolish Midge, whom I sent to bed an hour ago, and who, I am sure, is still lying awake, listening, poor child! I felt angry with her for being so nervous, and I am as bad myself."

She closed the door as she spoke. I had slipped in unperceived, and I might have escaped detection, for Cornelius did not seem inclined to betray me, when, as we were going up the steps leading to the porch, Deborah suddenly appeared bringing a light; she stared at me as I slunk behind Cornelius; Kate turned round, saw me, and uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"It is very wrong of her," hastily said Cornelius, "but you must forgive her, Kate. I found her outside the door waiting for me. I suppose she had worked herself into a terror of my being waylaid and assassinated, and scarcely knew what she was about."

"Ah!" replied Kate, and she said no more.

We entered the parlour. Cornelius sat down, made me sit down by him, and chafed my cold hands in his. He chid me rather severely, forbade me ever to do such a thing again, said he was very angry, and ended by taking me in his arms and kissing me. Kate had never uttered one word of reproof, but she looked unusually grave. As I sat by her brother, indulged and caressed, spite of my foolish disobedience, I had an unpleasant consciousness of her look being fastened on us both, and shunned it by keeping mine pertinaciously fixed on the kind face which, as if to efface all memory of the past, now seemed unable to look down at me with anger or displeasure.

"Cornelius!" at length said Kate.

"Well!" he replied, looking from me to her.

"Do you remember the story of Goethe's Mignon?"

Cornelius reddened, turned pale, reddened again, and looked both irritated and ashamed.

"What about it, Kate?" he asked at length.

"Nothing." she quietly replied, "only I think of it now and then."

Cornelius did not reply; but he slowly turned towards me, and as I sat by his side, my two hands clasped on his shoulder and my head resting on them, I saw him give me a look so troubled and so strange, that I could not help asking—

"What is it, Cornelius?"

"Nothing," he replied hastily, "but don't you think you had better go to bed?"

"Well then, good-night, Cornelius;" I attempted to bend his face to mine; he looked annoyed, and averted it impatiently.

"I knew you were vexed with me for having waited for you outside," I observed, feeling ready to cry; "I am sure of it now; that is why you won't kiss me."

Cornelius bit his lip, and, giving my forehead an impatient kiss, said, shortly—

"There, child, are you satisfied?"

"Well, but am I not to kiss you?" I asked in the same tearful tone.

"Please yourself," he replied, resignedly allowing me to embrace him.

"I am sure you are still vexed with me," I said, lingering over the caress as children will, "you speak so sharply, and look so cross." He smiled; his brow smoothed; he looked from me to his sister.

"Oh! Kate," he said, "she is such a mere child," and with a sudden return of kindness he again made me sit down by him.

"Indeed, I am not such a child!" I said, rather piqued, "and you need not make me out such a little girl either, Cornelius, for you are only ten years older than I am."

"Only ten years! Why, my dear, the Roman Lustrum consisted of five years, and the Greek Olympiad of four. So that, if I were a grave Roman, I should twice have offered solemn sacrifices to the Gods, or if I were a sprightly young Greek I should twice, and a little bit over, have distinguished myself in the Olympic Games by chariot-driving, racing, leaping, throwing, wrestling, boxing, and other gentlemanly pastimes,— and all this, Midge, whilst you were still in your cradle! Why, you are a mere baby to me."

"Papa was ten years older than Mamma," I persisted: "was she a mere baby to him?"

"My dear, she was grown up."

"Well then, when I am grown up I shall not be a mere baby to you!" I replied triumphantly.

"You obstinate little thing!" observed Kate, who had listened with evident impatience; "don't you see this is a very different matter? you are as good as the adopted child of Cornelius."

"Precisely," he hastened to observe, "and as I mean to be very paternal,
I expressly desire you to be very filial."

"You want to make quite a little girl of me!" I said ruefully.

"Did your father do so?"

"Well, but he was my real father, and you are not, and could not be."

Kate declared there never had been such an obstinate child in all Ireland. Cornelius looked very grave, and said, as I did not value the privilege of being his adopted daughter, he should not press the point. I protested so warmly against this reproach, that he at length looked convinced, said it was all right, and again bade me good-night. I demurred, he insisted.

"Ah!" I said reproachfully, "you are not as fond of me as Papa was?"

"Why so, child?"

"If I had asked him to stay up awhile, he would not have said 'No:' he would have said, 'Yes, Margaret, my dear, it is only ten; you may stay up another quarter of an hour.'"

"Well then, stay," replied Cornelius, unable to repress a smile, "but you will make a nice exacting daughter."

"A spoiled one," said Kate.

"Let her," he replied; then laying his hand on my head, he kindly added, "Kate, this child is the only boast and good deed of my life. She makes me feel venerable and paternal, and, like a good Papa, I'll work hard to give her a marriage portion some day."

"I don't want to marry," I observed pettishly; "I don't want to leave you, Cornelius."

"Nonsense!" drily said Kate, "you'd do like your Mamma, run away, if one attempted to keep you."

I denied it indignantly; she insisted. I was beginning to utter a most vehement protest against the mere idea of ever forsaking Cornelius, when he interfered, and informed me that his paternal pride and feelings would be wounded to the quick at the idea of my remaining an old maid. He appealed to my sense of filial duty; I generously sacrificed myself, but not without making some preliminary conditions.

"He must be an Irishman," I said.

"Ah!" observed Cornelius, stroking his chin, "he must be an Irishman!"

"Yes, and an artist."

Cornelius looked uncomfortable, but he merely echoed—

"An artist!"

"Yes, and his name must be Cornelius."

Cornelius looked disconcerted.

"Nonsense!" sharply said Kate, "what are you talking of? an Irishman—an artist—name Cornelius? nonsense!"

"Then I won't have him at all," I replied, rather provoked: "I did not want him, Kate, and you know it too. I want to stay with Cornelius."

"Mrs. O'Reilly may have a word or two to say to that," very quietly observed Kate.

I felt Cornelius start like one who receives the sting of a sudden pain, but he did not contradict his sister. Mrs. O'Reilly! the mere name was hateful to me. I did not reply; Kate continued—

"You look quite charmed at the idea of your Papa marrying."

"No girl ever liked a stepmother yet," I answered, reddening.

"Then you will be an exception, I am sure," very gravely said Cornelius.

I was not at all sure of that; but I did not dare to say so. He saw very well that I was anything but cured of my old jealousy; and though I believe nothing was then further from his thoughts than marriage, he insisted on this point, to warn me, I suppose, of the necessity of self- subjection.

"You must be the governess of the children," he said.

"Yes, of course she must," decisively said Kate.

I turned on her triumphantly:

"Then don't you see," I said, "that if I am the governess I shall always stay with him?"

Cornelius looked both annoyed and amused.

"There is a wonderful degree of obstinacy in that child," he observed; "she always comes back to her idea of staying with me."

"Because there is nothing she likes half so well," I said, looking up into his face.

"Ah! Mignon! Mignon!" sighed Kate.

"Who is Mignon?" I asked, struck with the name which I heard for the second time.

"It is more than a quarter past ten," was the reply Miss O'Reilly gave me.

I looked at Cornelius, but he showed no wish to detain me; so I submitted and left them.

From that day there was a very marked change in his manner towards me. He was as kind, but by no means so familiar, as he once had been. He was always calling me his little daughter, yet I no sooner availed myself of this imaginary relationship to claim more freedom and tenderness, than he seemed bent on repelling me by the most pertinacious coldness. He received my caresses with chilling indifference, often with an annoyance he could not conceal; he seldom returned them, and when he did so, it was not with the friendliness and warmth to which he had accustomed me for years. When I felt this, and became dispirited and unhappy, Cornelius looked distressed, and, in his anxiety to restore me to cheerfulness, returned to his free and kind manner, in which he persevered until some remark of his sister, or some action of mine too fond and endearing, again rendered him cool and guarded.

I could not imagine then the reason of all this. I could not imagine why, when I showed Cornelius how much I loved him, he looked so wretched; I could not understand why, when Kate once said to him, in her most ominous tones, "Cornelius, that child won't always be a child," he started up and began to walk up and down the room like one distracted. Still less could I make out how, when he seemed more attached to me than ever he had been, more anxious for my welfare, more bent on improving me by

every means in his power, he was so provokingly cool and reserved.

At length I could stand it no longer.

"You don't like me," I once said to him, a little angrily,—"you know you don't; you never kiss me now —you know you never do." And I began to cry.

Cornelius looked almost ludicrously perplexed. He hit his lip; his upraised eyes sought the ceiling; he tapped his foot; he sighed profoundly, then hung down his head, and looked melancholy.

"I wish you would always remain a little girl of thirteen or so," he said ruefully, "it would be a great deal more convenient and comfortable."

I was piqued with the wish, and checked my tears to inform Cornelius I hoped I should not remain a little girl; indeed I was sure of it, and that though he did not care about me at all, he should not prevent me from caring about him. He smiled, but not cheerfully; then he made an effort, and said,—

"Never mind, Daisy, you shall be happy, let it cost what it may; only don't tell Kate."

"What must I not tell her, Cornelius?"

"Never mind; but don't tell her."

"But, Cornelius, I must know in order not to tell."

"You are very inquisitive," was his short answer.

I did not know what to make of him. He looked as oddly as he spoke, and I had not the faintest idea of the generous sacrifice he resolutely contemplated, at an age when most men are dead to all, save the gratification of their own vehement passions.

Since then I have understood both what Cornelius feared and what he intended to do. I have admired his generosity and wondered at his rashness in forgetting what was not merely likely to happen, but what really did happen; namely, that he was to love again.

This imprudent resolve had however the result of giving him momentary peace, and, perhaps because its realization was still so distant, of banishing from his mind all thought of the future.

CHAPTER II.

Of course Cornelius had gone on painting all this time. He finished his Stolen Child, painted two other smaller and more simple pictures, and he sent in the three to the Academy.

"1 don't see why you should always send your pictures to the Academy," said Kate; "I don't think it is fair to the other Exhibitions."

Cornelius confessed that the argument had its weight.

"But then you see, Kitty," he added, "I cannot do less; they behaved so well to me last year about that trashy Happy Time: it really was a poor thing, and yet see how well they hung it—they did not think much of it, but they saw that it promised something for the future. Yes, they really behaved very well—so well that though I am certain they will reject the two minor pictures and only take in the Stolen Child, I feel I cannot do less than give them the chance of the three."

"You are too generous," sighed Kate; "you will never get on in the world with those disinterested notions, my poor brother—never; besides, I put it to your sense of justice, now, is it fair to the other Exhibitions?"

Cornelius said perhaps it was not, but added that he really could not do less, and persisted in his original intention. I remember, when the pictures were sent off, that he said to me,—

"My little girl, let this be a lesson to you! Always do that which you feel to be right, even though you should be a loser by it: depend upon it, it is much better to feel generous than mean."

But when was generosity appreciated in this world? The Hanging Committee accepted the two

inferior pictures and rejected the Stolen Child. Cornelius was stung to the quick.

"If they had rejected the three pictures," he said, "I really could have borne it; I should have attributed it to want of room, or found some excuse for them. But to go and take the two inferior paintings, and reject the good one; to let it be thought—as it will be thought—by public and critics, that this is all the progress I have made since last year, it really is not fair."

"Not fair!" sarcastically replied Miss O'Reilly; "not fair, Cornelius! It is all of a piece with their behaviour to you from the beginning. I always thought you had an enemy there, Cornelius."

"But the Happy Time was accepted, Kate."

"Of course it was, just as the two little things have been accepted, to delude you and the public also with a show of impartiality of which you at least, Cornelius, are not the dupe, I trust. It is all jealousy, mean jealousy."

"It at least looks like it," replied Cornelius, sighing profoundly.

"Hanging Committee, indeed!" pursued Kate, whom never before had I seen so bitter and so ironical, "they deserve their name! Oh yes, hanging! Are their own pictures well hung? Oh dear no!—not at all—so impartial— very! Suppose they were hung instead of their pictures—in a row—not to hurt them, they are not worth it—but just to let us have a look at them!"

In short, Miss O'Reilly was in a great rage; and if ever this unfortunate and much-abused body got it, it was on this day, for having rejected "The Stolen Child" of Cornelius O'Reilly, Esq.

The two accepted pictures fetched ten pounds a-piece; the Stolen Child was sold to a picture-dealer for forty pounds.

"Go," indignantly said Cornelius to his favourite picture as they parted,—"go, you are nothing now, but he who painted you will give you a name yet!"

Four years had now elapsed since Cornelius had set forth on the conquest of Art with all the ardent courage of youth; and Art, alas! was still unconquered, and the triumph of victory was still a thing to come. He had anticipated difficulties, sharp and brief contests, but not this disheartening slowness, this powerlessness to emerge from the long night of obscurity. It irritated his impatient temper even more than the rejection of his picture. He did not complain, for there was nothing resembling querulousness in his nature; but he brooded over his disappointment, and resentfully too, as appeared from what he once said to me—

"If they think they'll prevent me from painting pictures, they'll find themselves wonderfully deceived!"

I am not sure that "they" meant the Hanging Committee; I rather think it represented that vague enemy at whom disappointed ambition grasps so tenaciously. Whatever it signified, Cornelius kept his word: he painted, and harder than ever; but fortune was ungracious. Two charming cottage scenes which he sent in on the following year were accepted, it is true, but did little or nothing for his fame. One critic said "they were really very nicely painted;" another "advised Mr. O'Reilly not to be quite so slovenly;" a third found out that as in one of the cottages there was a fiddle, it was a gross plagiarism of Wilkie's "Blind Fiddler," artfully disguised indeed by the fiddle not being played upon, and of course none of the characters listening to its music, but not the less evident to lynx-eyed criticism; a fourth declared that Mr. O'Reilly was a promising young artist, who, in a dozen years or so, could not fail to hold a very respectable place in Art; and a fifth—one of those venal characters who disgrace every profession—sent in his card and terms. Kate wanted her brother to give him a cutting reply; he said there was nothing more cutting than silence, and lit his cigar with Mr. —'s edifying letter.* [* A fact.]

"He does not complain," said Kate to me, "but I can see in his face there's something brewing."

I thought so too, and resolved to find it out. It was some time before I succeeded; but I did succeed, and one day, when Kate said with a sigh—

"I wish I knew what's the matter with that boy!"

I composedly replied—

"Cornelius wants to go to Rome."

"Nonsense!" she said, jumping in her chair, "what has put that into your head? Did he tell you?"

"No; but I am sure of it."

I spoke confidently; she affected to doubt me; but the same evening proved the truth of my conjecture. It was not in Miss O'Reilly's nature to turn round a thing, so, as we were all throe walking in the garden, enjoying the cool [air], she suddenly confronted her brother, and said bluntly—

"Cornelius, is it true that you want to go to Rome?"

He reddened, looked astonished, and never answered.

"Then it is true," she exclaimed with a sigh.

"Yes, Kate, it is, but how do you know it?"

"Midge told me."

"Daisy!" he turned round and gave me a piercing look. "Why, I never hinted anything of the sort to her."

"No, but she found it out; and what do you want to go to Rome for,
Cornelius?"

"To study, Kate. I have been too homely, too simple, and that is why I am slighted; I should like to go, to study, to try the historic style: but where is the use to talk of all this?"

He sighed profoundly.

"The historic style," cried Miss O'Reilly, kindling; "Cornelius, you have hit the true thing at last: depend upon it you have. Of course you have been too humble! give them something bold and dashing, and let us see what they'll say to that! Go to Rome, Cornelius, go to Rome."

"The means, Kate, the means!"

"Bless the boy! As if I had not money."

"Oh! Kate! you have done more than enough for me as it is," he replied, crimsoning; "it makes my blood boil to think that I shall soon be twenty- five—"

"Nonsense!" she interrupted hastily, "will you go to Rome, study the great masters, see all that painting has achieved of most glorious, become a great painter yourself—or stay at home and plod on?"

His varying countenance told how strong was the temptation: his look lit, his colour came and went like that of a girl.

"Yes or no?" decisively said Kate.

"Well, then,—yes," he replied desperately; "I know it is mean, but I cannot help it, the thought of it has for weeks kept me awake at night, and haunted me day after day."

"And you never told me," reproachfully interrupted his sister, "and never would if Midge had not found it out!"

He eluded the reproach by asking me how I had found it out. I could not satisfy him; instinct had guided me more than knowledge; the word Rome, uttered with stifled sigh; an impatient declaration that there was nothing to be done here; a long lingering over old engravings of which the originals were in Italy, were the signs which, often repeated and united to my intimate acquaintance with every change of his face, had showed me the secret thought of his heart.

"You must go at once," resolutely said Kate; "can you be ready next week?"

"I could be ready to-morrow," replied Cornelius, with eyes that lit.

There was a pang which he saw not on his sister's face; my heart fell to see how eager he was to go from us. Unconscious of this he continued—

"The sooner I go the better, is it not, Kate? for then, you know, I shall return the sooner, too."

"Very true," she sighed; and his departure was fixed for the following week.

He was in a fever for the whole of that week. For the first time, he was going to taste liberty: he was young, ardent, restless by nature, quiet by force of circumstances; no wonder the prospect enchanted him. I was in one sense happy to see him happy, but I felt acutely that he was going away from us. He was gay and cheerful, I did not want to sadden him with the sight of a grief I could not help feeling, and

I shunned rather than sought his company. Thus, two days before the day fixed for his departure, instead of remaining with him and Kate in the back parlour where they sat talking by the open window, I went out into the garden to indulge in a good fit of crying. In the stillness of the evening I could hear every word of their discourse. Either they did not know this or they forgot it, for after dwelling enthusiastically on his prospects, Cornelius added suddenly—

"How unwell Daisy looks!"

"She is fretting about you. The poor child is fonder of you than ever, Cornelius."

"Do you think so?" he earnestly replied.

"Of course I do. She frets, tries to hide it, and cannot; and you know, Cornelius, it is only beauty looks lovely in tears."

"She is not a beauty, but she has fine eyes."

"Spite of which you cannot call her pretty, Cornelius."

He sighed and did not contradict it.

"I know you did not think so," continued Kate.

"Oh! Kate!" he interrupted with another sigh, "why, any one can see the poor child is only getting plainer as she grows up!"

"Never mind," cheerfully said Kate.

"But she may mind, and she will mind too. If the women slight and the men neglect her, how can she but mind it?"

"The plain have a happiness of their own," quietly replied Kate. "God looks kindly on them and they learn to despise the rude harshness of the world." With this she began talking to Cornelius of his journey.

I was then near fifteen. I remember myself well,—a thin, slim girl, awkward, miserably shy and nervous, with sunken eyes, a face more sallow than ever, and hair scarcely darker in hue than when Miriam Russell had aptly called it straw-coloured. I knew my own disadvantages quiet well, I was accustomed to them, and though I quailed a little when I heard Cornelius and Kate thus settle the delicate question of my looks, it was only for awhile. It is true that the taunts of Miriam had formerly exasperated me, because it was by her beauty that she had conquered and replaced me in the heart of Cornelius; but with her power vanished the sting of my plainness. The little emotion I felt was over when Cornelius stepped out into the garden to indulge in a cigar.

On seeing me, he looked much disconcerted. I daresay he thought I must be cut to the quick by what I had heard; for though he did not allude to it, he sat down on the wooden bench, made me sit by him, and was so unusually kind that I could not help being a little amused. I allowed myself to be petted for awhile, then I looked up at him and said, smiling—

"As if I minded it, Cornelius! As if I did not know that though I should grow ever so plain, you would still like me! As if I could think it would make any difference to you!"

He muttered, "Oh! of course not!" I continued—

"Kate says you are handsome, and I dare say you are; but if you had lost one eye, or had a great ugly scar across your face, or were disfigured in some dreadful way, it would make no difference to me, Cornelius."

He smiled, without replying: I resumed—

"Therefore, Cornelius, that does not trouble me much, but something else which Kate said does trouble me."

I paused, and looked at him; he seemed a little disturbed.

"What are you talking of, child?" he said; "what do you mean?"

"Kate said I was fonder of you than ever, Cornelius; it is true, very true, I love you more as I grow up, because I know your goodness better; but then something which you might conclude from that,

Cornelius, is not true."

I looked up at him very earnestly.

"Child!" he said, astonished; "what are you talking and thinking of?"

"I am thinking, Cornelius, of a thing I have thought of for a year and more. I often wanted to tell you, but I never dared; I should like to tell you now, Cornelius, only I don't know how."

Cornelius looked perplexed.

"I would gladly help you," he observed, "if I only knew what it was about."

I could not help reddening.

"Suppose," he said hastily, "you write it to me when I am in Italy—eh, Daisy?"

"I would rather say it than write it, Cornelius."

"Then say it, child."

"Well, then, Cornelius," I replied, a little desperately, "I will never be jealous of you again—there!"

"There!" he echoed, smiling, "is that the mighty secret?"

"Yes, Cornelius, that is it," I replied, with a beating heart.

"My good little girl," he said kindly, "I am glad you have such good resolves; but I must set you right. You talk of not being jealous any more, as you would talk of taking off a dress and never putting it on again."

"And should I, Cornelius, if it were old and worn out?"

"But is this one worn out?"

"I hope so. I think so."

"I hope so too."

But I could see he did not think it. I was anxious to convince him, and resumed—

"Cornelius, do you remember how insolent I was when papa lived?—how rude I showed myself to you when you came to see him?—how over-bearing to the servants?"

"You were a spoiled child, certainly; but you have got over that."

"I think I have, Cornelius. When I came here, I was rude to Deborah, who was good enough to bear with it for a long time; but one day Kate heard me, and she told me she thought it very mean and ungenerous to be rude to servants. She said she would not enjoin on me to apologize to Deborah; but she hoped that, for my own sake, I would do so. The next day I went down into the kitchen, and asked Deborah to forgive me."

"How did you like that?" asked Cornelius giving me a curious look.

"Not at all. It mortified me so much I could scarcely do it; but I was never rude to Deborah again."

"How is it I never heard of this story before?"

"I begged of Kate not to tell you. I could not bear that you should think me ungenerous and mean."

"And the moral of all that, Daisy?"

"That it is very mean to be jealous, Cornelius; very mean and ungenerous; and that I hope never to be so again. Do you still think I shall?" I added, glancing up at his face.

"I think," he replied, looking down into mine, "that there is a strange spark of austere ambition in you, strange in one so young: and that what it will lead to is more than I can tell."

"Cornelius, I don't feel ambitious; but I long to be good, and I hope God will help me."

"If that is not ambitious, I don't know anything about it," replied Cornelius; "but it is a very fine ambition, Daisy; and I am glad you have it; ay, and I respect you for it, too!"

I looked up at him, to make sure he did not speak in jest; but he seemed quite grave and in earnest. I felt much relieved; this matter had lain on my heart a year and more, yet I never could have spoken to him, had he not been going away. The passionate wish of making him give me a little more of his regard and esteem had, alone, loosened my tongue, that wish was now more than gratified by his words.

"Oh! Cornelius," I exclaimed, "how good of you not to laugh at me!"

"Poor child, did you expect I should?"

"I feared it."

He was gently reproving me for the fear, when Kate beckoned him in, and held a whispered conversation with him in the passage. Some mystery seemed afloat. I felt uneasy. When I bade Cornelius good-night that evening, he kissed me with a lingering tenderness that troubled me. Was not this, perhaps, a parting embrace? I fancied I detected unusual sadness in his gaze, and heard him suppress a sigh.

I said nothing; but I resolved not to sleep that night, sooner than run the risk of losing the adieu of Cornelius. Soon after I had retired to my room, I heard him and his sister come up too. It was scarcely ten; this unusually early hour confirmed me in my suspicion. I sat up in the dark. I heard twelve,—then one,—then two; and my power of keeping vigil failed me. Sleep is a pitiless tyrant in youth. I felt my eyes involuntarily closing. I took a resolve that was not without some meaning. I softly stole out of my room, sat down on the mat at the door of Cornelius, and, secure that he could not leave without my knowledge, I soon fell fast asleep. What might have been foreseen, happened: Cornelius, on leaving his room, stumbled over me. I woke; he stooped and picked me up, with a mingled exclamation of wonder and dismay.

"Daisy!" he cried, "are you hurt? What brought you here?"

"I wanted to bid you good-bye. I guessed you were going."

His room door stood half-open, and so did the window beyond it; the morning stirred the white muslin curtains, and early dawn was blushing in the grey sky. Cornelius drew me to that dim light, and gazed at me silently.

"How long have you been there?" he asked.

"Since two; I felt too sleepy to sit up in my own room, and I was so afraid you might go whilst I slept."

"Since two—and it is four! You foolish child! If I wanted to go quietly, it was only to spare your little heart some grief, and your poor eyes some tears."

"Cornelius, I shall not cry now. I shall wait until you are gone for that."

Attracted by the sound of our voices, Kate now opened her room door.

"Daisy?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," replied her brother, "Daisy, who has been sleeping at my door like a faithful watcher. Oh! Kate, you'll take care of her whilst I am away?"

"Yes, yes, of course; but don't stand losing your time there. Come down."

We went downstairs. Cornelius took a hasty meal; then a cab stopped at the door; his luggage was removed to it, and he stood ready to depart. His sister was to go with him to the station. They thought it better for me to stay behind, and I submitted. I kept my word—I did not cry—I went through the parting courageously. Cornelius seemed much moved. He took me in his arms, and repeatedly he embraced me, repeatedly he pressed me to his heart. He exhorted me to persevere in my studies, to be good and dutiful to Kate. Then he promised to write to me, called me his child, his dear adopted daughter, gave me another kiss, put me away, and departed. I saw him go, I heard the cab rolling down the street, not without sorrow, but without bitterness. To be separated from him was hard, no doubt, but to part with the consciousness of so much affection on his side, with the prospect of a happy re-union, with the conviction that his absence was to open to him a career of fortune and renown, was not a thing that could not be borne. I wept heartily, but I was not unhappy.

In two hours Kate returned; she entered the parlour, sat down, took off her bonnet, and began to cry.

"Well," she said, "he has his wish—he is gone—and how glad, how eager he was to go! Poor boy, he has had a dull, imprisoned life, and liberty is sweet. Besides, it is in their nature; they like to rove, every

one of them; they like to rove, and once they are off, mother, sister, or wife may wait."

She cried again, but there never was a more firm, more cheerful nature.
She soon checked her tears, to say, with a sigh,—

"Now Midge, you must help me, for there is a wonderful deal to do. Well, child, don't open your eyes. I forgot I had not told you—we are going to leave."

"To leave!"

"Yes, my child, we must. I had money by me, to be sure; but not enough, and I was not going to let Cornelius travel otherwise than as an Irish gentleman, so I borrowed at interest. He will want for nothing, that is one comfort; but we must pinch, Daisy, and to begin I have let the house furnished to a single gentleman, who comes in next Saturday. He has agreed to keep Deborah, who is now too expensive a servant for me. That is why we must leave."

"Very well," I said, resolutely; "we shall take a little room somewhere, and I'll be your housemaid, Kate."

She smiled, and kissed me.

"Nonsense, child, we are not driven to that yet. You know your father left some property,—very little, it is true, but you will find it safe when you grow up. The house in which he died was his, and is yours now; it has not proved a very valuable possession, for nobody will live in it on account of its being so lone and bleak. Leigh is a cheap place, and you and I, Daisy, are going to Rock Cottage after to-morrow."

"To live in it, Kate?"

"Yes, to live in it. There is nothing to keep me here, once he is gone. I did not tell him this, as you may imagine, so there is no time to lose in packing up. That was what I meant by saying you should help me."

With the courage of a true heart, she rose at once and set to work. I aided her willingly; we made such good despatch, that three days after the departure of Cornelius we had left the Grove and reached Leigh. Miss Murray, with whom Cornelius and Kate had always kept up an occasional correspondence, had, through the medium of Abby, kindly provided our future home with the first necessaries of beds, chairs, and tables; the rest, Kate said, would come in time.

The village through which we passed looked the same quiet place I had left it five years before. Few changes had occurred; the only strangeness was that men and women whose faces I had not forgotten, stared at us, and knew me not.

"How very odd!" I said to Kate, "I am sure that was Mr. Jenning, who keeps the dancing academy. He ought to know me, ought he not, Kate? I was one of his pupils. Papa said I should know how to dance, for that it gave a graceful carriage. I believe he used to dance himself when he was quite a young man, but I never saw him. Do you feel uuwell, Kate?"

She made a sign of denial. I continued—

"Do you see that path, Kate? Well, it leads to my grandfather's house. I wonder if he still lives in it with Mrs. Marks and my cousin Edith! I will show you to-morrow the place where I felt tired, and Cornelius carried me to Ryde. Why, Kate, we need not go on; this is Rock Cottage; I forgot you did not know it."

"Yes, there it stood, the same isolated white-washed, low-roofed dwelling in its lone garden. My tears rushed forth as I saw again the home where I had been reared, and where my father had died. Kate opened the door, but as she crossed the threshold she turned deadly pale, and sank rather than sat in the nearest chair.

"Kate!" I cried, quite alarmed, "what is the matter with you?"

I passed my arm around her neck; she gave me a most sorrowful look, then laid her head on my shoulder, and cried as if her heart would break.

"Oh, Kate!" I said, much distressed, "he has promised to be back in two years, and indeed he will keep his word."

She did not seem to heed me.

"It was here," she murmured, "yes, it was here he died."

This time I looked at her silent and astonished.

"Oh, Daisy!" she cried, clasping her hands and looking up too, "is it possible that you neither know nor guess that I was to have been your father's wife, and that you ought to have been my child?"

Her passionate tone went through my very heart.

"You, Kate!" I said; "you!"

"Yes," she replied, weeping more slowly; "it was to have been—it was not—he died here alone, I was far away."

Miss O'Reilly made me feel very strangely. I had never known my mother. I drew closer to her, and after a while I said—

"Why did you not marry him?"

"He was poor, and I had the child to rear; I could not bear to bring two burdens upon him; it was pride, he thought it was mistrust, and married another; I had no right to complain, nor did I; but it was then I took to being so fond of the boy, just I suppose because he had cost me so dear."

"But why did you not marry Papa after Mamma died?" I inquired.

"He never asked me, child," and she bowed her head with sad and humble resignation; "I thought he would, and I should have been glad to have had him, but perhaps he could not quite forgive my having once preferred my little brother to my grown-up lover; perhaps he thought me altered, and no longer the pretty girl he had courted: whatever it was, he did not ask me; and yet how good and friendly it was of him to help me as he did to rear the boy for whom I had given him up! I sometimes think he liked me in his heart, for Cornelius has often told me how my name was the last he uttered; and I cannot help fancying he meant I was to have the care of you. Oh! Midge, Midge," she added, looking me in the face very wistfully, "I have loved you very dearly, because you were his child, but I have often remembered that you ought also to have been mine."

"If you had been Papa's wife, I mean his first wife," I said very earnestly, "I should have been the niece of Cornelius, should I not, Kate?"

"You would have been my child."

"And his niece too, Kate."

"Do not be always thinking of Cornelius, Daisy."

"Oh! Kate, Uncle Cornelius has such a pleasant sound!"

She caressed me sadly; then we rose, went over the house together, and finally surveyed the garden. All trace of man's art had vanished from the spot, on which nature had bestowed a beauty and wild grace its culture had never known. The hedge of gorse now enclosed but a green wilderness of high waving grass, weeds, and wild flowers. Other flowers there were none, and the tender shrubs uncared for, had perished, blighted by the keen sea-breeze; the pine trees alone still stood and looked the same as I had left them, over their changed domain. For awhile we looked down from the stone steps where Cornelius had found me lying so desolate, then Kate descended, and said to me—

"Daisy, we will not change much. We will spoil as little as we can the freshness of the place. I like that green grass, those weeds that hide the brown earth so well, those long trailing creepers and wild flowers. We will just clear the path, add a few of the plants we like, give the whole a look of home, and leave what is beautiful as we found it."

"Kate," I exclaimed, hastening down to the pine-trees, "here is the sea. You have not yet had a good view of it, do come and look. Do you remember how I got up on the table in the studio to get a sight of it? Oh! is it not a grand thing?"

She smiled at my enthusiasm, and sat down on the wooden bench, which still stood in its old place. My heart swelled as I remembered that there I had received my father's embrace, but I would not sadden her by recalling it; I shaded my eyes with my hand to hide my tears, and whilst they flowed I looked long and silently on that eternal ocean on which, for nearly five years, I had not gazed.

It still rolled its heavy waters with majestic calmness; they now looked dark as molten lead, a white line of surf marking where they broke on the beach. The day had been grey and cloudy, and the sun

was setting veiled and without splendour. For awhile the heavy clouds resting on the low, sea-bound horizon, still wore a reddish tint, like the smouldering ashes of a spent fire. Like them too they suddenly grew pale. Light mists, advancing from the sea, shrouded the coast below, distinctness faded away from every object, and the penetrating chillness of evening began to spread upon the air. Kate rose; we went in; as we ascended the steps she turned hack, she looked on the wild garden, on the pine-trees whose dark and spreading branches now moved to the evening breeze with a low rustling sound, at that broad sky crossed by swift clouds and hanging over the sea, and with a sigh she said—

"It was just like him, to come and live here,—he always liked wild places."

We entered the house, there to spend a quiet subdued evening, talking of him who had scarcely left us, and to whose return I already looked forward.

In a week we were settled at Rock Cottage. A little black-eyed girl, answering to the name of Jane, was our only servant. We led a humble, yet happy, homely life, to which the thought of the absent one lent something of the charm we once had found in his presence.

Household matters occupied Kate, and the garden was her relaxation. It is a spot which, ever since the days of Eve, has, in one sense, been the paradise of woman. The curse of banishment that fell on both her and Adam touched her more nearly. After his fall Eden itself could no more have been the limit of his hopes and desires, but Eve, if allowed to do so, could have lingered in the happy place for ever. Her daughters still love what she loved, and wherever they dwell, in wild or in the city, there too are the flowers which Eve first tended in happy Eden.

I shared the tasks and the pleasures of Kate, but whereas the absence of Cornelius, though deeply felt, had changed little or nothing in her habits or external life, it opened to me a new existence. Hitherto my life and my feelings had slept in the shadow of the life and feelings of Cornelius. He influenced me completely, when least seeking to do so. I loved his sister, but she had not that power over me, and when I was parted from my friend, I seemed to have remained alone and to fall back perforce on myself.

But when one evil, one teaching fail, God sends the needful. He now gave me nature in those aspects, both sublime and beautiful, which she wore around the home of my childhood. From winds and waves, from aspects of sea and winning shore, from green solitudes and spots of wild beauty, 1 learned, though all unconsciously, pure and daily lessons.

CHAPTER III.

I know not whether my native air did me good, or whether, had I even remained in the Grove, a crisis in my health would have taken place, but I know that to Kate's great joy I grew so strong and well, that she declared the change all but miraculous. I felt an altered being. My love of silence and repose vanished; I now rejoiced in motion and out-door exercise with all the unquiet delight of youth, and thirsted, with ever new longing, for air and liberty.

Scarce passed a day but I went down the path that led from our garden to the sands, and I wandered away along the rock-bound coast. This part of the country was both safe and retired; few met or noticed me in my solitary haunts, and I feared harm from none. It was often dusk when I returned to the white cottage, whose light burned like a solitary star on the heights above. I loved these lonely wanderings. I loved that barrier of steep and fantastic rock which ran along the coast, and fenced it in from the outer world; that long line of winding shore, fading in faint mists, until it rested, like a low cloud, on the distant horizon; that sea, whose waves broke at my feet, and yet seemed to extend beyond the power of mortal ken to follow, whilst the hollow sky, bent down from above and enclosing all, gave a sense of limit in the very midst of infinite.

Leigh does not by any means belong to the most romantic and picturesque part of the western coast; but on whatever shore the sea-waves break, there always is a great and dreary beauty. To sit on a lonely rock, to watch the fishing boats as they slowly sailed along the coast, or the ships on their distant track, to feel the solemn vastness of all around me, to note the rapid and almost infinite changes of light ever passing over rock, sea, and sky, to listen to the sounds which varied from the loudest roar of the swelling tide breaking at my feet, down to its lowest receding murmur, but that never ceased to echo, rise, and die away amongst those lonely cliffs, was to me a delight beyond all else.

There were pleasant walks about Leigh, but I soon wearied of them, and ever returned to my barren and much-loved coast. There I learned to know the sea under all her aspects. I saw her in sunshine, spreading peacefully beneath cloudless heavens, like them, an image of serenity and repose, and idly speeding on the light crafts that pursued their way with indolent and careless grace. I saw her in storm, darkness brooding over her heaving waters, her vast, white-crested billows rearing like angry serpents against the lowering sky, her hovering flocks of pale sea-birds rising and sinking to every motion of the waves like evil spirits rejoicing in the tempest, whilst some bold ship, with mainmast broken, with torn sails fluttering like banners on a battle day, sped past amidst the turmoil of wind and wave, riding the waters with a triumphant power that banished fear, and made you feel she would yet reach the port, and weather many another storm. I also found in the ocean other aspects less definite, but to me not less impressive,—the desolate and the bleak, when the wide waters of a dull green hue rolled sluggishly along or heavily beat the sandy beach, whilst fleecy clouds slowly passed over a misty sky where grey melted into paler grey, giving that sense of vague and melancholy infinite which can only be felt on the wild northern shores.

I delighted in this wild and lonely life, and seldom felt the utter solitude of my daily haunts. Sometimes indeed, when I chanced to meet in the sand the mark of my own footprints, which no other steps had crossed since I had passed there, which the wind alone would efface or the tide wash away, a sense of sudden sadness came over me. It seemed as if a friend, whom I never could meet or overtake, had made and left that track for me to see. I felt vaguely that she who had passed there was not quite the same who passed now. Only a few days perhaps had gone by: but of those few days, unseen and unfelt as they speed on, is made up not only the sum, but also the ceaseless change of this our earthly life.

Dearly as I have loved solitude, I hold it no unmixed good. Woe to the communion with nature that is only a brooding over self, and not a mingling of the soul with the Almighty Creator of all we behold; that seeks in her loveliness none save the images of voluptuous indulgence, and leaves by unread her purer teaching! Rightly even in innocent things have we been warned to guard our senses and our hearts. For this I hold ye dangerous, ye sheltered valleys, with quiet rivers gliding through, with green woods and lovely paths leading we know not where, with peaceful dwellings embosomed in the shade, and looking like so many abodes of love and happiness. What though we know that the golden age was all a fable and pastoral bliss the dream of poets, that innocence and peace dwell not here, though here passion and satiety can penetrate as surely as in the crowded city? Yet who, on beholding you, has not for a moment wished to live and die on your quiet bosom? Who has not felt that the thoughts you waken melt and subdue the heart, and haunt it vaguely for many a day, and enervate it with longing dreams and desires that savour too much of earth.

Not these the feelings which thou awakenest, thou austere sea,—austere in thy very beauty, in thy calmest and most unruffled moods. More true and honest are thy promises, which thou at least keepest faithfully,—the long, arduous strife against wind and storm, the tardy return of weatherbeaten mariners,—ay, and often too the wreck,—the wreck which may appal the weak, but never yet dismayed a brave heart;—these are the hopes thou holdest forth—these the promises which life, whom thou imagest, will fulfil, until her waves, calm or troubled, rough or smooth, lead us into that mysterious sea which man has named Eternity.

Our home existence was as quiet and secluded as my outward life. On settling at Leigh, Miss O'Reilly had come to a resolve which she thus imparted to me one evening:—"Daisy, you were too young when you left Leigh to know that because it is a small place it must have the inconvenience of all small places, in which life is a round of back- biting, quarrelling, envying, scandal, and gossip. Now we can't help being backbitten or talked about, but we can help doing it to others: the way, child, is to keep to ourselves and to see no one. We shall be hated, as a matter of course; thought proud, or still worse in England, poor. Never mind, child, those are not the things one cannot endure."

"Papa was thought proud," I said.

"And so he was, child; he had a mind above the paltriness of such a place as this,—of course he had: he never would have been a popular man anywhere, never. Well, as I was saying, child, we must bear with being thought proud and poor, for we shall make no acquaintances. A decent, civil intercourse we must certainly keep up with Miss Murray—she won't trouble us much, poor thing!—but beyond this we do not go. Now, you must not misunderstand me. I do not mean to keep you locked up, and if you can get acquainted with pleasant young people, I do not object. There is a dancing academy, it seems, and since your father wished you to learn how to dance, you must learn it, of course. If you meet there sensible girls whom you would like to see, see them here in liberty; but as to visiting their mammas, or being visited by them, I decline the honour."

Thus it was settled. We lived in our retired way; we were thought proud and poor; we saw Miss

Murray every now and then in her own house, for to come near us was an exertion not to be thought of; I went to the academy, and learned how to dance, but I found all the young ladies so little to my taste, that with not one of them did I form an intimate acquaintance, and two years passed away in this quiet, monotonous life, varied by the letters of Cornelius.

Only a few were addressed to "his dear adopted child," but they were so kind, they breathed an affection so true, an interest so heartfelt, that to this day, and spite of all that has passed since then, I cannot look over them without emotion. In all his letters, Cornelius spoke of course of his art and his prospects. He was enchanted with Rome, and ardent with hope; but he did not think it worth while to send home anything before his return. He thought he might just as well wait until he was coming back, and take the public by storm. Miss O'Reilly thought so too, and we accordingly expected her brother in the spring of the second year following his departure. A somewhat enigmatic letter, in which he expressed his great wish of seeing us both again, confirmed this impression.

"Depend upon it, Daisy," said Miss O'Reilly to me, "he means to take us, like the public, by surprise."

The mere thought took away my breath.

"Oh, Kate!" I exclaimed, laying down my work, "if he were to enter the room now, what should I do?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied Kate, looking up from her letter, "you look wild enough for anything. Go and take a walk, child, and calm yourself down with the fresh seabreeze. We are in March, I don't expect him for a fortnight or three weeks yet. Go out, I say; he must find you fresh and healthy."

"You don't think he will come whilst I am out, Kate?"

"Bless the child! no; I tell you not to expect him for three weeks."

I sighed; three weeks seemed an age, and, spite of her assurances, I had a nervous apprehension that Cornelius would arrive precisely whilst I was away; yet I yielded to her behest of going out. I wanted to see William Murray, and tell him the happy tidings; so I just put on my bonnet and cloak, and hastened down to the sands. It was a mild afternoon; the sky was clear, earth was silent, the cliffs rose grey and lonely, the flat beach was yet wet with the retreating tide that had left many a wide shallow pool behind, the far sea lay calm and still, and over sky, earth, cliffs, beach and sea, the setting sun shed a pale, golden glow. I walked fast, looking out for William, whom I at length saw coming towards me. And this reminds me I have neglected to mention how my acquaintance with him was renewed, after so long an interruption.

We had not parted very good friends. He had called me "a sulky little monkey," and if I had not retaliated, I had nevertheless internally considered him a young bear then and ever since. When, shortly after our return to Leigh, I met him at his aunt's house, William, who was nearly two years my senior, was in all the charming roughness of his sex in the teens. He had not yet got over being left to petticoat government, as he termed the rule of his gentle aunt, and accordingly vented the indignation of his injured manliness on her female friends. On seeing us enter the room in which Miss Murray sat in her usual shady state, her amiable nephew thrust his hands into his pockets, and began whistling with all his might. Miss O'Reilly took no notice of this, but in the course of conversation she quietly observed to Miss Murray—

"What a fine boy your nephew is, Ma'am?"

"Ah! if he were only a good boy!" sighed Miss Murray.

William was then turned seventeen; but he looked about fourteen; the observation of Kate was therefore doubly insulting. I know not whether it was to show his resentment, that at tea he shuffled and kicked his feet under the table to such a degree, that his aunt, laying down her cup, solemnly inquired, "If he intended to break her heart, as he was ruining her furniture and endangering the shins of her guests?" To which delicate question, the only reply William deigned to give was a scowl over his tea-cup, and a sarcastic intimation at the close of the meal, that "tea was the greatest slop and most womanish stuff *he* had ever tasted."

"Milk and water is decidedly more wholesome for children," mischievously said Kate.

William turned scarlet, stabbed her with a look, rose and left the room, slamming the door after him. Miss Murray produced her handkerchief, and looked pitiful.

"I appeal to you, Ma'am, is not mine a dreadful, a lamentable case! That boy, Ma'am, is the misery of my life; twice he has run away, and has had to be pursued and caught; each time offering the most desperate resistance."

"He is but a boy," good-humouredly observed Kate, "he will grow out of all this."

Miss Murray however, for a reason very different from that of Rachel, would not be comforted, and lamented the length of the holidays. Kate herself changed her opinion when she discovered on the following morning the manner in which the shoes of William had used her light grey silk. She called him a little wretch; and, in her indignation, wondered what could tempt his aunt to have him pursued and brought back, when by absconding he had offered her so easy a method of getting rid of him altogether. I almost concurred in this opinion, and altogether looked upon William as a sort of young Christian savage.

So far as I could see, the gracious youth did not trouble his aunt much with his company. I seldom or ever went down to the sands without meeting him with his dog 'Dash,' a shaggy-coated creature, as rough-looking as his master, who went whistling past me with superb indifference. I had met them thus one day, the youth climbing the cliffs, and the dog bounding on before him, and now and then turning round to utter a short joyous bark at his master, when, on returning homewards, I saw them again under altered circumstances. William sat on a rock at the base of the cliff, his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands, and at his feet Dash lay dead. He had fallen from above, and been killed at once; his young master looked at him silently, and, as I approached, dashed away a furtive tear. I stood, unwilling to go on without having expressed sympathy or attempted consolation, and not knowing how to do either, I knelt on the sands and, caressing the poor dead dog, I hesitatingly observed—

"He was a very good dog, was he not?"

"There never was a better," replied William in a subdued voice.

"He seemed very clever."

"I could make him do anything. He'd dash in the roughest sea at a look, and if I only said 'Dash!' he'd look into my face, prick his ears, and be ready to fly off. Poor old Dash! he'll never do the bidding of his master again."

And he stooped over him to hide his tears.

"Was he old?" I asked.

"Just turned five; the prime age, you know; at four they are too young, and at six they are aging: five is the age for a dog. That was why he was such a beauty; see what a coat he had, what a deep broad chest, and such a back! I'll take a bet with any one, you can hear that dog's bark for miles along the coast; that is to say, one could have heard it, for Dash's barking is all ended and over now."

Thus poor William sat lamenting over his lost favourite, recording his virtues and some of his many exploits, when I said—

"I suppose you will bury him in Miss Murray's garden?"

"No, that I shan't," he replied indignantly, "he shall be buried where he fell, as they bury soldiers after battle."

So saying, he drew forth his knife, and began digging a deep and narrow grave at the base of the sea-washed cliff; he lined it softly with his handkerchief, saying as he did so—

"Won't Abby have a precious hunt for it?"

Then he took Dash, gave him a last caress, gently laid him in his grave, covered him over with sand and earth, and marked the spot with a fragment of rock, on which he carved the day of the month and year.

"Won't you put his name?" I asked.

"No. Dash answered and obeyed no one but me; his name is nothing to any one else, and I don't want to know it."

We walked on. As a projecting rock was going to hide the spot from our view, William turned round to give it one last glance, then he looked at me wishfully, and said, "I had him from a pup, and I taught him all his tricks."

From that day William and I were friends. We met to talk of Dash at first, and afterwards of other things, for even the best of dogs must expect to be forgotten. William generously forgave me my sex, and confided to me his troubles. His aunt, it seems, kindly intended him as a present to the Church, but William vowed no mortal power should induce him to turn a parson, and boldly declared for the sea, in

a midshipman's berth, against which his aunt, whose ideas of nautical life were summed up in grog and biscuit, entered a solemn protest.

As we very seldom visited Miss Murray, and as she never visited us, I only saw William when I met him out, and that was often, for we loved the same solitary haunts and wild scenes. In parting we told one another what places we were to visit on the morrow, and William no more knew he had asked me for a meeting, than I knew I had granted him one. We followed the retreating tide to gather shells and sea-weeds, or ran hand in hand along the sands, laughing, because the keen breeze took away our breath, and the waves came dashing to our feet, covering us with spray. We climbed together the steepest cliffs for the mere love of danger, and risked our necks, ten times for one, by running down the same perilous path. When we felt tired, we sat down on some rock to rest, and William, drawing forth from his pocket 'The Dangers of the Deep,' made me low- spirited with dismal stories of lost or shipwrecked mariners. Friendships grow rapidly in youth, and by the close of William's holidays we were as free and intimate as if we had been in familiar intercourse for years.

I had told Miss O'Reilly of Dash's death and burial, and was beginning to state that William Murray was not quite so bad as he had appeared on our first interview, when she interrupted me with—

"Nonsense, child, the boy may have liked his dog; but what about it?"

Later, when I imparted to her the grievances of my friend, she treated them in the same careless, slighting way.

"Pooh! pooh!" she said, "does the little fellow think he knows his own mind? A midshipman! why the first breeze would whip him off the deck. He'll do a great deal better in the pulpit, so far as physical strength goes, but what sort of a preacher he will make is more than I can tell."

I was too much mortified by her tone and manner to renew the subject; but at the same time, and with the spirit of opposition of my years, I liked William all the better for being rather persecuted. Indeed, the aversion Kate had taken to my friend proved somewhat unfortunate, for, without intending any mystery, I forbore to mention his name to her; consequently she knew little or nothing of an intimacy which I have reason to believe she would have opposed from many motives, and to which her opposition would in the beginning have been a sufficient bar.

In spite of the ridicule with which Miss O'Reilly treated his pretensions to the sea, William Murray conquered his aunt's opposition, and, in the course of the ensuing spring, went forth on his first voyage. He remained a year away, and came back about a week before we received the letter which led us to expect the return of Cornelius. Our joy on seeing one another again was great; absence had not cooled our friendship; not a day passed but we met on the sands, and took long walks down the coast. I thought nothing of this until Miss O'Reilly said to me—

"William Murray is come back."

"Yes, I know," I replied, feeling that I turned crimson.

"And how do you know?" she asked, giving me an attentive look.

"I met him on the sands."

She did not ask me why I had not mentioned it to her sooner, but said quietly—

"That boy has grown very much."

The word "boy" relieved me greatly. Since William was only a boy, there could be no sort of harm or indiscretion in being so much with him, nor was there either any absolute necessity to mention the matter to Miss O'Reilly. So when, to quiet my anticipations, she sent me out for a walk, I did not inform her that one of my motives for complying with her request was to impart the tidings to William Murray. As I saw him advancing towards me, I eagerly ran to meet him.

"Oh, William," I cried joyfully, "I am so glad, so happy."

"Then Mr. O'Reilly is come back?" he said, stopping short to look at me.

"No; but he is coming soon, quite soon. Is it not delightful?"

"Indeed it is," he replied cordially; "tell me all about it, Daisy."

We sat down on a ledge of rock facing the sea, and I told him all there was to tell. He heard me with a pleased smile on his kind, handsome face, which he kept turned towards mine, as he sat there in a listening attitude. William was then between eighteen and nineteen. He was slight in figure, but above

the middle height, and of a spirited bearing. His complexion, once too fair, had become embrowned by constant exposure, and spite of his light hair and blue eyes he looked sufficiently manly; his midshipman's attire became him well, and the consciousness of having entered active life had freed his manner from much of its ungracious roughness. Of these changes I was conscious, but other change I saw not: William was to me what he had been since we had become friends—frank, ingenuous, and boyish in his kindness. I had often spoken to him of Cornelius, and I now closed my brief recital with the remark—

"Oh, William! I am so happy that I scarcely know what to do with myself."

He looked at me silently, began tracing figures in the sand with a slender wand which he held, then suddenly looked up again, and said, very earnestly—

"He is quite like a father to you, Daisy."

"More than a father," I replied, ardently, "for a father is bound to do for his child what, of his own free-will, Cornelius did for me. And then so kind! always giving me new playthings, or books, or things I liked."

"And you were quite like a daughter to him."

"I was, and am. Look, here is his last letter, beginning with 'my dear child,' and signed, 'your old friend, Cornelius;' but I have another at home, in which he actually calls me 'his dear, adopted daughter.' I am quite proud of it, for he is to be very celebrated, you know, and it is a great honour."

William again traced figures in the sand, but he did not speak.

"Well," I said, bending down to look at him, "what are you thinking of?"

"That I should like you to be proud of being my friend," he replied, with an earnest look.

"I am proud of it, so you have your wish."

"Yes, but I should like you to have cause, and also, Daisy, I should like to do something to please you. I wish I could."

"And so do I," 1 answered, laughing, "for you would bring him back at once."

"Indeed I would: in the first place, because your heart is set upon it; in the second, because I very much wish to know Mr. O'Reilly. I like him for your sake, and all he has done for you; and then, from what you tell me, I am sure he is a thoroughly good man."

I could not help laying my hand on the arm of William, and replying earnestly—

"Indeed, William, he is a good man, and when you see and know him, you will find that you were not mistaken, though good is not, I dare say, the word most people would apply to Cornelius O'Reilly."

William took this as a compliment to his penetration, and was rather gratified. The sun had set, grey evening was closing in; we rose, and walking together along the silent beach, we talked of Cornelius, and laid down plans of pleasant excursions up the coast, and far down the inland valleys, to be undertaken after his return. But, to our mutual mortification, William's leave of absence expired, nay the Academy opened, and Cornelius came not back to take us and the public by surprise. In her indignation, Miss O'Reilly declared that there could be but one interpretation given to such extraordinary conduct—"Cornelius has got entangled."

"How so, Kate?" I asked.

"Why, he is either married or going to be married to some Italian lady; that is it."

"Do you think so?" I asked quietly.

"Bless the child, how coolly she takes it!" exclaimed Kate, half angrily.

"I have no right to take it otherwise, Kate; besides, provided Cornelius comes back to us, what matter?"

"What matter! suppose he has been married all this time, and has a family about him!"

"I don't think Cornelius would marry as if he were ashamed of himself," I replied, rather indignantly; "then how can he have a family in two years? and even if he had—"

"Nonsense, child!" interrupted Kate, impatiently, "I don't speak of it as a fact, and there you go, coolly dissecting every hasty word I utter, as if I were giving evidence before judge and jury!"

"Well, Kate, all I mean to say is this—if Cornelius has a wife and children, where is the harm, provided he does not settle in Italy?"

Miss O'Reilly was of a very different opinion, and, as she seemed inclined to be vexed with me for disagreeing with her, I dropped the subject and proposed a walk. She shortly replied that with an Italian sister-in-law in prospect she did not feel disposed for walking; but that, as the matter did not touch me, I was quite right in not taking it to heart. I did not answer; I did not wish to add to her annoyance by letting her see how bitter was my disappointment at the prolonged absence of Cornelius, and the voluntary obscurity under which he lingered.

The thought kept me awake in bed beyond my usual hour; but at length I slept. I awoke with a sudden start, I myself knew not why; I thought I had heard something in my sleep, what I could not tell. I sat up and listened; yes, there was a sound of voices below in the parlour. I rose and opened my door softly. One of the voices was that of Kate: the other—unheard for two years, but not forgotten?-was that so well known and so dear, of her brother. I did not give myself time for joy; I dressed hurriedly and slipped down. The parlour door stood ajar; I looked in; he sat by Kate, bending over her and embracing her with a fondness which, as I felt, a little jealously, she had not called me down to share. He sat with his back turned to me, and saw me not; the floor was carpeted, my step was always light; I stood by his side ere he was conscious of my presence. I wished to speak, but the words died unuttered on my lips; I remained standing there, mute, motionless, and trembling from head to foot.

"Daisy!" he exclaimed, starting up. His arms were around me—I was gathered to his heart.

"Well!" he said, "what is the matter with you? You do not even give me a kiss. Have I grown strange?"

I did not answer; a singular feeling was coming over me; a mist fell on my eyes; the room seemed, with all it contained, to swim before my sight, then suddenly vanished in utter darkness. I had fainted for the first time in my life.

When I recovered I was lying on the sofa. Cornelius was bending over me, and helping his sister, armed with a formidable bottle, to rub my face and hands with vinegar.

"I am so glad," I cried, starting up.

"Why, there, she is all alive again!" exclaimed Miss O'Reilly.

"I am so glad," I continued, joyfully, "I thought I had dreamt it."

I sat up, and twining my arms around the neck of Cornelius, I kissed him, whilst my tears flowed fast. He sat down by me, and anxiously asked how I felt.

"Why, very well," I replied, laughing, in the gladness of my heart.

"Ay, ay," said Kate, smiling, "we may cork up the bottle, and lock it up, may we not, Daisy?"

"Are you sure you are quite well?" urged Cornelius; "you fainted, you know."

"Did I?" I had scarcely heeded the remark. Seated by him, with my arm locked in his, his hand clasping mine, I looked at him eagerly, delighting every sense with the consciousness of his dear presence. He asked me if the room did not feel too close, if I did not want air, and I could give him no answer, so charmed was I to listen to his voice again.

"Let her alone," said Kate, gaily; "she is well enough now; she fainted because she was glad to see you, and she got well at once for the same reason precisely. All she wants is to look at your face."

He turned it towards me; it was as kind and handsome as ever, not in the least altered. I could not take my eyes from it, and in the overflowing joy of my heart I exclaimed—

"Oh, Kate! Kate! I shall be too happy now, shall I not?"

"You see the poor child is as mad as ever," said Kate.

"I hope she has been a good girl in my absence," he observed, rather gravely.

"Of course she has."

"Learnt her lessons well?"

"Bless the boy!" exclaimed Kate, "does he think she is still a little girl? Don't you find her altered?"

"Oh yes, she has grown."

"Grown! grown!" impatiently said his sister, "of course she has! do you not think she has improved?"

"She seems much stronger."

Miss O'Reilly looked disappointed. Cornelius questioned me concerning my studies; I answered to his satisfaction; he stroked my hair and called me a good child.

"It is very odd you will persist in calling Daisy a child," drily said
Miss O'Reilly.

"Well, am I not his child?" I asked.

"Nonsense!" she replied, looking provoked.

"Indeed, I am his adopted daughter," I said eagerly.

"I never yet heard that a man of twenty-six or so had a daughter near seventeen," was her ironical reply.

Cornelius smiled; but I warmly vindicated our relationship.

"I am very glad he is so young," I observed. "Most girls have old fathers; mine is not old; he will live the longer."

Cornelius laughed; his sister said "Pish!" and Jane, by bringing in the supper-tray, closed the conversation. Indeed our discourse was of the most desultory kind. Although Cornelius protested that he was not in the least fatigued, having rested in London before coming to us, Kate would not hear of our sitting up. She made me leave him just as I was beginning to talk to him of his painting. To comfort me she confidently informed me as we went upstairs, that a large wooden case in the back parlour contained his pictures; to this intelligence she added, with a significant look—

"He has not got entangled after all."

CHAPTER IV.

We were not prepared for the sudden return of Cornelius; his room was neither aired nor ready; Miss O'Reilly accordingly gave him up her own apartment, and slept with me. She complained of my restlessness; well she might! tossed on a sea of unquiet joy, I scarcely slept. I woke and rose early. The morning was bright and gay, and my little room overflowed with sunshine.

"Now, Daisy," said Kate, in a tone of remonstrance, "you need not be in such a hurry: he is not awake yet, child!"

I was opening the window as she spoke. I drew back quickly, for it looked on the garden; I was but half-dressed, and, though I saw no one, the fresh breeze brought me the scent of a cigar. My heart leaped with joy, and something seemed to say within me, "Yes, yes, he is come back."

"Not awake!" I exclaimed aloud, "why he is already in the garden! Oh!
Kate, do help me to fasten on my dress."

"Not that dingy, everyday grey thing!" decisively said Miss O'Reilly, "he hates dull colours."

She went to my drawers, and drew forth a light blue muslin.

"But it has short sleeves!" I observed, a little uneasily, "and it looks so dressy!"

"Never mind the short sleeves or the dressiness either—the chief thing is, not to annoy him with an ugly colour he cannot endure."

I yielded against my own wish and judgment; partly to gratify her, and still more to lose no time. I gained nothing by the ready compliance. Miss O'Reilly dressed me as she had never dressed me before;

she suggested or rejected improvements with unusual and irritating fastidiousness. Now a snow-white habit-shirt "would look so nice, or if my hair were braided, instead of being in plain bands, it would become me so much better."

I could not help crying.

"Oh, Kate, if you would only let me go! What will Cornelius care about all this?"

"But I care," replied Miss O'Reilly. "I thought Cornelius would find you so much improved; but all he noticed was that you had grown."

"Because that is all!" I said, laughing.

"It is not. But last night you were pale and wild-looking; besides, you had that ugly grey thing on; but now, Midge, let me tell you there is a difference."

She was holding me out at arm's length, with a satisfied look and smile.

"There!" she said, dropping my hand, and releasing me, "you may go now."

I waited for no second bidding. I ran down the stairs, then up the gravel path that led to the pine-trees. The scent of the cigar had not deceived me: he stood leaning against the trunk of the farthest pine, looking at the fresh sparkling sea that spread beneath, and went far away to meet a white line of horizon arched over by a sky of brightest blue. He turned round as I reached him all out of breath, and welcomed me with a smile. I stood by him, looking at him with the delighted eyes with which we gaze at those we love. He laid his hand on my shoulder, and looked at me too, silently at first, then all at once he said—

"God bless your pleasant face!" and stooping, kissed my brow.

My heart beat a little; I could not help being glad. There was nothing in me beyond what there is in every girl from fifteen to twenty; but then this is the golden age of woman, when the youthful grace of the outlines makes the gazer forget their irregularity, and seeing the cheek so fresh and clear, he asks not whether it be dark or fair—when he is charmed by the sense of a being who has not dwelt on earth too long, and gives pleasant welcome to this late arrived guest.

Our first greeting over, Cornelius and I sat down on the wooden bench. The wind came from the west. It blew fresh in our faces, and bowed over us the pine-trees and their rustling branches, through which the slanting rays of the sun behind came warm and pleasant. Our glance rested on a sweep of winding shore, half veiled in light sparkling mists; on that sea which looked so serene, and yet seemed so living and so free in its very repose. Our ear was greeted by the low dash of waves on the beach below, by the murmurs of a breeze that died away far inland amongst low hills and lonely places, and looking up at one another with a smile, we both said what a lovely morning it was. I passed my arm within that of Cornelius, and clasping both my hands over it, I looked up into his face and began a series of questions.

"Tell me all about your pictures and your painting."

A light cloud passed over his brow, as he replied—

"Never mind about the pictures just now, Daisy."

"Well, then," I said, though a little disappointed, "tell me all about Italy."

"All about it—there's a modest request!"

"Well, then, tell me something. Are the Italian women so handsome?"

"Some are, some are not."

His tone and manner were abstracted. I could not but notice that he was surveying me from head to foot.

"What else?" I asked, a little impatiently.

"What else?" he echoed, still looking at me.

"Yes, what else?"

"Nothing else; save that I am thinking of something else just now."

"I knew you would notice it," I exclaimed, feeling myself reddening; "I told Kate so."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; it was her doing, not mine. She said you hated grey, and made me put on this blue muslin, though it looks so gay for the morning."

"Well," replied Cornelius, with a smile, "blue is as charming a colour as grey is cold and dull to the eye. But to tell you the truth, I was not thinking about your dress."

"Ah!" I said, rather abashed.

"No,—I was thinking of the change two years have wrought, and wondering I never noticed it last night. The other one was a pale, sickly little thing, a poor wee Daisy, coming up weak and stunted on the outskirts of the town; this one is fresh and fair as any wild flower that grows. Why, where did she, once so wan and sallow, get that clear, rosy freshness? What kind fairy has changed the pale yellow hair I still remember, into those heavy tresses of rich brown, tinged with gold—a hue both exquisite and rare, which I shall assuredly transfer to my next picture. As for the eyes, she could not improve them,—so she left them what they still are— the finest I have ever seen."

I opened them a little on hearing him speak so. He quietly took out my comb; my hair rolled down in waves below my waist; he surveyed it admiringly, with a glance in which blended the fondness of a father for his pet child and the ever-observant eye of the artist.

"A pretty little effect, so," he added, "especially with your startled look, reminding one of Cervantes' Dorothea."

"So she does!" said Miss O'Reilly, coming up from behind.

She kissed her brother, and looking at me as I rose to do up my hair, "It is like her father's," she added with a subdued sigh, "but not quite so bright."

"Why did you never write to me that Daisy was so much improved?" asked Cornelius, perhaps to divert her thoughts.

"Because I knew you had eyes of your own to find it out," answered his sister smiling. "And now don't sit looking at the girl, as if she were a beauty; she has grown tall and has good health, that is all."

"All! is not that a great deal?"

"Of course it is; but I came to tell you breakfast is waiting, and not to talk about Daisy's looks."

We went in to breakfast; I sat opposite Cornelius and could scarcely take my eyes off his face; he could not help smiling now and then, but Miss O'Reilly chose to be in a pet about it.

"Don't be foolish, Midge! I wish, Cornelius, you would mind what I say, instead of paying so much attention to that silly girl. When do you mean to have that case opened?"

"In a day or two."

"Nonsense! you don't think I am going to wait a day or two to see your pictures? After breakfast you mean?"

She carried the point as usual, and after breakfast it accordingly was. As Cornelius drew back the last covering which stood between us and his picture, I felt my heart beat with expectation; as for Kate, from the moment it became visible, she was lost in wonder and admiration. The picture, though not very large, was an elaborate historical performance; it represented the death of Mary Stuart, with mourning ladies-in-waiting, knights, pages, executioner and all.

"How beautiful, how very beautiful!" exclaimed Kate with tears in her eyes; "what a subject, and how you treated it! But what a pity, what a mortal pity it was not finished in time for the academy, Cornelius!"

There was a pause, he stooped and brushed away some dust from Mary Stuart's face, but never answered. His sister resumed—

"Who is that dark-looking fellow in front?"

"The Earl of Salisbury."

"Ah! I remember, I knew he could not be good; it is in his face, I assure you. And who is that girl in

the corner?"

"A looker-on."

"I knew it!" triumphantly exclaimed Miss O'Reilly, "I knew it by her unconcerned air. Cornelius, there is wonderful character in it all."

He did not reply: he was untying the strings of a large portfolio, and looking over the sketches and drawings it contained. His sister called him to her side with an air of concern. "Was he sure Mary Stuart had a velvet robe on? She hoped it was not a mistake. Critics are such harpies, you know," she added with a sigh, "they would pounce on a mistake directly."

He laid his hand on her shoulder, and, with a kind smile, looked down at her upraised face.

"Make your mind easy, Kate; Mary Stuart died in a velvet robe, which, poor thing, she kept for solemn occasions."

Miss O'Reilly's face brightened.

"Indeed I am glad to hear it; the imitation is perfect; real velvet could not have more depth and softness. How much pains you must have taken with it!"

"Yes, it gave me some trouble."

"But how sorry I am, the other pictures are sold!"

"It could not be helped! I wanted the money."

"Yes, but it has kept you in the shade all this time. What a pity Mary Stuart was not finished for this year's Academy!"

She looked at him so earnestly that he reddened.

"Cornelius," she continued rather seriously, "why was it not finished for this year's Academy?"

Jane spared him the trouble of answering, by looking in, and conveying the intimation that more luggage had come, and that there was a bill of one pound ten and elevenpence halfpenny to pay.

"I wish they may get it!" hotly said Miss O'Reilly; "it is perfectly shameful; let me manage them, Cornelius, only just come to see whether they have not changed your luggage for that of some one else. My opinion is," she added, raising her voice, "that people who charge one pound ten shillings and elevenpence halfpenny for carriage are capable of anything."

He smiled; they went out together, closed the door, and left me alone with Mary Stuart and my bitter disappointment. I could not understand it; it was strange, incredible, and yet it was so, I looked and did not admire. I could have cried with vexation to feel that this stately Mary Stuart did not touch me; that her sorrowful beauty, the grief of her weeping women, the insolent scorn of the English nobles, the impassiveness of the headsman, the commonplace pity of the lookers-on, actually left me cold and unmoved. And yet thus it was, and the longer I looked, the worse it grew; so I gave it up in despair, and turned to the portfolio.

Sketch after sketch I turned over with a pleasure that gradually grew into delight. All Italy, in her sunshine and beauty, seemed to pass before me. Here a dark-eyed girl danced the Tarantella; there swarthy boys with eager faces played at the morra; beggars held out their hand for alms with the look and mien of princes; and village women, of a beauty as calm and pure as that of the image above them, knelt and prayed before the shrine of some lowly Madonna. Nor was I less charmed by the glimpses of landscape and out-door life. I felt the warmth of that blue sky which looked as if the very heavens were opening; the sunshine on the steps of the white church dazzled me with its brightness; there were depths of coolness in the dark shade of those old trees beneath which the women sat reposing; there was life and dewy freshness in the waters of the stone fountain by which the children played. Charmed and absorbed, I never heard Cornelius enter, and knew not he was by me until he said in a careless tone behind me—

"Oh! you are looking at these odds and ends."

"I like them so much," I replied, carefully abstaining from looking towards Mary Stuart.

"Do you?"

"Indeed I do; they are beautiful, and then they remind me of our

Gallery—you remember our Gallery, Cornelius?"

"Yes, I think I remember something of the kind,—you were an odd little girl, Daisy."

"I wish you would explain these sketches to me."

He sat down by me; leaned one arm on the back of my chair, and, with the hand that was free, turned over the sketches, giving a few words of brief but graphic explanation to each. He allowed me to admire them, but made no comment of his own. At length the pleasant task was ended; Cornelius rose and put away the portfolio; I was thinking with inward self- gratulation that he had forgotten all about the picture, when to my dismay he said very quietly—

"Daisy, you have not told me what you think of my Mary Stuart."

"Have I not?"

"No, indeed. Whilst Kate was here you looked at it, but never opened your lips; when I came back, I found you sitting with your back to it, intent over these sketches, mere foolish trifles, Daisy, with which I relaxed my mind from graver labours; so pray forget them, look at Mary Stuart, and give me, without flattery of course, your candid opinion."

Here was a predicament! I came out with—

"A picture of yours cannot but be good, Cornelius."

"Thank you, Daisy, but that is stating a fact, not giving me your opinion."

"I dare not give an opinion."

"Very modest; but you know whether you like a thing or not; *ergo*, do you or do you not like Mary Stuart?"

Oh for a good genius to suggest some reply that might please him and not violate truth! All I could find was a foolish "Of course not," which prolonged, but did not elude the difficulty.

"Do you like it or not?" he repeated.

I did not reply.

"A plain yes or no, Daisy."

"Well, then,—no," I exclaimed, desperately.

Cornelius whistled.

"She is grown up," he said; "not like my picture! decidedly she is grown up! Why, the other one would have admired any daub I painted!"

Tears of vexation rose to my eyes; he stooped, and smiled in my face.

"Why should you be annoyed when I am not?" he asked, very kindly.

"I am mortified at my bad taste, Cornelius."

"Then since you are conscious of bad taste, why don't you like Mary Stuart?"

"I can't help it; I am afraid I have no feeling, for when I look at Mary Stuart I feel as if I did not care whether they put her to death or not."

"How hard-hearted you must be! but go on; what else?"

"Nothing else, Cornelius, save that I fear I don't care about Mary Stuart at all."

I looked at him rather shyly; he was laughing.

"You are as odd a girl as you were an odd child," he said, with his look bent on my face; "why, Daisy, that is just my case; I did not care about Mary Stuart whilst I painted her, and, poor thing! I don't care much about her now."

"Don't you, Cornelius?" I asked, astonished.

"No, history may be a fine, grand thing, but give me lowly beings and quiet feelings. Oh! Daisy, I wonder now that disappointed ambition ever made me bend the knee to the false goddess, success, who moreover always leaves me in the lurch; but our life is made up of mistakes; we stumble at every step, and the last thing we learn is to be true to ourselves."

"Were your other pictures like this, Cornelius?"

"Oh, Daisy, they were such charming things." he replied, sighing; "but Count Morsikoff wanted them, I wanted his rubles; but, never mind, I shall repeat them, and show Kate that my journey to Italy has not been quite lost."

"Why did you let her admire Mary Stuart?"

"How could I undeceive her? I had brought the unfortunate thing as a proof of my industry, not to encumber the walls of the Academy, or for her to admire; but when she looked at it with tears of admiration, what was I to do?"

"To show her the sketches."

"She won't care about them, Daisy."

"Try her."

I opened the door, and called her in eagerly. But the event proved the correctness of her brother's conjecture. Miss O'Reilly thought the sketches very pretty things, but she hoped Cornelius had not lost too much time with them. It would be such a pity, considering how admirably fitted he was for historical compositions. He winced, but did not contradict. She proceeded—

"I have been thinking of such a series of subjects: what do you say to the battle of Clontarf, or to Bannockburn? something to make one feel as if that grand lyric of Burns were being sung in the distance."

Cornelius stroked his chin and looked puzzled.

She resumed: "Perhaps you would like a subject more pathetic,—The Children in the Tower, eh, Cornelius?"

"I have been thinking of something more domestic."

Kate's face expressed the deepest disappointment.

"History is a grand thing, Cornelius."

"And Home is lovely."

She said he knew best, but that he would never surpass Mary Stuart.

Cornelius did not reply, and put away the portfolio with a smile at me. Then we all three went out into the garden, where we lingered until the noon-day heat sent us in: that is to say, Kate and I, for Cornelius, accustomed to an Italian sun, remained out, walking up and down the gravel path, and every now and then making long pauses of rest by the back parlour window, near which we sat sewing. Once Kate, called away by some domestic concern, left us; he stood on the side facing me, his elbow resting on the low window; he looked long, then smiled.

"Well!" I said.

"Well," he replied, "it would make a pretty picture; you sitting there sewing by the window, with the cool shady back-ground of the room, a glimpse of the bright sunny garden beyond."

"And you standing there looking in, leaning on the window-sill, and the warm sunshine upon you, Cornelius."

"Yes," said the pleasant voice of Kate, now coming in, "that would complete the picture." Then she suddenly added, "Cornelius, are you not tired?"

"Not at all; I rested in London, you know."

"Go and take a walk then."

"What for, Kate?"

"Go out sketching."

"I feel very comfortable here."

"Go, I tell you; Daisy will show you the way; she knows Leigh by heart, and, for England, it is pretty enough."

Cornelius looked at me and I looked at Kate. She smoothed my hair and answered the look: "No, child, I can't go; bless you, my hands are full of domestic concerns, so make haste and get ready. Stay, I shall go with you."

She accompanied me to my room, opened my drawers and drew forth a white muslin frock.

"Put that on," she said; "do not open your eyes, but do as I bid you."

"If we walk in the grass—" I began.

"You will soil it,—what matter?"

"But why put it on? it is my best."

"Bless the child! don't you see that I tell you to put it on because it is your best, or rather because you look best in it? Don't be dull, Midge, I want Cornelius to like you and your looks too."

There was no resisting an argument so plainly stated. Still when Kate went down on some mysterious errand into the kitchen, and I hastened to the parlour with my scarf on my arm and my bonnet in my hand, in order not to keep Cornelius waiting, I was under a nervous apprehension that he would think me very vain and fond of dress. He did look at me, and very fixedly too. I exclaimed, deprecatingly—

"I knew you would think it odd to go and put on a white dress for a walk in the country, but Kate would have it so."

He laughed, and gave me an amused look.

"What a strange girl you are, Daisy! I never noticed your dress. I was studying the effect of that bright sunlight on your hair, and thinking how it made it look more rich and deep than the hues Titian loved to paint."

It was my turn to laugh.

"How like an artist, to be always thinking of effects!"

"Now don't stand giggling and chatting there," said Miss O'Reilly, appearing with an ample provision of sandwiches neatly packed up, "but go out whilst the day is still pleasant. Cornelius, take these; you are to stay out the whole day. Daisy, why don't you take his arm? you are tall enough for that now."

He held out his arm for me with a smile, and as I took it and looked up into his face, I felt a proud and happy girl. The time had been when the hand of Cornelius was as much as I could claim, and I longed in vain for the present privilege and honour.

We left Rock Cottage by the garden gate. As we walked arm in arm down the path that led to the beach, I saw Miss O'Reilly stand on the door-step, and, shading her eyes with her hand, look after us, until the winding of the path concealed us from her sight.

CHAPTER V.

We went down to the beach. A deep line of shade still extended at the foot of the cliffs; the sky had not a cloud; the sea lay calm beneath; it looked one of Nature's happy days. I said so to Cornelius, adding, in the fulness of my joy, "How kind of Kate to tell you to take me!"

"Yes," he replied, wilfully misunderstanding me, "she always was a good sister."

"Now, Cornelius, you know very well she did it to please me."

He smiled without looking at me.

"One to please you, Daisy, and a great deal more to please me. You will ascertain it thus: state that D is to C in K's estimation, what 1 is to *x* in figures: then multiply by C (that's me) and divide by D (that's you), and you will know all about it."

"I don't want to multiply by you and to divide by myself, to know why Kate told you to take me."

"She's as obstinate as the other one," said Cornelius, stopping short to look at me.

I replied, "Is she?" and we went on, until a promontory of steep rock barred our passage.

"We must cross that," I said.

"Humph! Can you manage it, Daisy?"

"Can you, Cornelius?"

He told me I was very saucy. I laughed and ran up the rocks so fast, he could scarcely overtake me. When we reached the highest peak, we stood still, and thence looked down on a wild narrow spot below, shut in between cliff and wave. Long ridges of sharp rocks, stretching out far into the sea, and impassable when the tide was full, enclosed it on either side. The cliffs at the back stood steep and perpendicular within a few yards of the breaking surf, but the strata of earth that ran through them in slant and undulating lines, gave them a distant and receding aspect, which, like the glamour of enchantment, vanished with a closer view; then they suddenly rose on the eye, near, stern, and threatening. Undermined by the high spring tides, rocks had fallen from above, and now lay thickly strewn about the beach, as if tossed there by the sea in angry or sportive mood. From the deep gap thus made in the cliff descended a narrow stream, which spread on a flat advancing ledge of rock, fell again a wide and clear stream of sparkling water, into a basin which itself had made, and thence glided away with a low splash and faint murmur, through worn-out old stones green with slime, until it lost itself for ever in the great rush of the wide waters.

We descended silently; when we stood within the enclosed space, Cornelius said—

"Of all wild and barren spots this is the gem."

"It is sterile, Cornelius, and that is its beauty."

It was indeed a desolate place. Shell-fish in serried ranks, and weeds in dark and slippery masses, clung to the sea-washed rocks. A few crabs and shrimps had remained captive in the shallow pools of water, where they waited the returning tide. Long algae, all wet and tangled, and light feathery sprigs, delicate enough to be wreathed in the green hair of pale mermaids, were strewn on the beach, but other tokens of life and vegetation there were none. The sea breeze, which moaned along that wall of rock and cliff, fanned and stirred not one blade of yellowish grass on its way. Here ceased the freshness and verdure of earth; here began a nature other than that of the poets, yet not without its own beauty, contrasts, and harmonies.

"It is grand, but wonderfully dreary," said Cornelius, "let us go back, Daisy."

"Not yet. Do you see that hollow nook perched up there between earth and sky, close by the fountain?"

"Well, what about it?"

"There is a very fine prospect from it."

"How do you know?"

"I often go there."

"You!" he exclaimed, with an astonished look that amused me, "and pray how do you get there?"

"Look!"

I sprang up a steep path in the rock; every step of it was familiar to me; I had reached the hollow, and was laughing down at Cornelius, before he recovered from his amazement. He followed me lightly, but chid me all the way.

"What could tempt you to do such a mad thing and to come to such an eyrie as this?" he asked as he stood by me in the wide hollow and under the broad shelter of an overhanging rock.

"Look at that glorious prospect, Cornelius," I replied, sitting down and making him sit down by me.

I remember well both the day and the spot. The blue sky, the sea of a blue still more deep, the yellow beach, the brown wall of rock, gave back the same ardent glow; the place seemed enchanted into the quietness of noon, save when some solitary raven suddenly left a cleft in the rock and, descending with a swoop, hovered a black speck over the beach in search of prey. We sat pleasantly within reach of the cool spray of the spring; a breeze from above brought us the sweet scent of unseen fields of gorse in bloom; below us the sea boiled in white and angry surf amongst the rocks, and thence spread away in seemingly unbroken smoothness, until it met and mingled with the distant horizon.

"What do you think of my eyrie, Cornelius?" I said, after a long pause.

"So you come here often?" was his reply.

"Yes, very often."

"What can attract you to such a wild spot?"

"Its wildness."

He looked me in the face and smiled. I resumed—

"I was born by the sea, Cornelius, and I love it, ay, very dearly; this barren spot seems pleasanter to me than any sunny landscape. I could listen for hours to the wind sweeping down the coast and the dash of the heaving waves. Could not you?"

"No," he answered, frankly, "sea-side is to me the grand historic style of nature. I like the calm, homely woodlands and quiet valleys."

"Yes, but you are going to sketch that little fall of water?"

"Am I?"

"For what else did I bring you to see it? Let me go down first, and take my hand."

I held it out to him; he tossed it back to me with a laugh.

"Do you imagine I want it?" he asked, looking piqued; "I have gone sketching in mountain-passes where there were paths more steep than in any English Leigh, let me tell you."

He insisted on preceding me. It amazed me to see how he kept looking back, looking to my steps. He reached the bottom first, and stood still to receive me. Spite of his remonstrative "Daisy!" I ran down the rest of the way. I paused on reaching the last ledge, and standing a little above him, I uttered a triumphant "There!" then lightly stepped down to where he stood.

"Yes," he replied admiringly, "I see: your head is steady, your foot as light and sure as that of any mountain maid. Ah! if I had but had you for a companion, when I was sketching alone in the Alps!"

"Will you have me now, and though these are not the Alps, sketch."

He sat down on one of the fallen rocks, opened his sketch-book, and began to draw the little fountain and the stern crags around. I sat by him to watch his progress; he made little; he was ever looking round at me, and breaking off into speech that had nothing to do with sketching.

"How old are you?" he once asked.

"Seventeen; ten years younger than you are."

He resumed his task, but his pencil was soon idle again; his eyes once more sought my face.

"Am I too near?" said I, "shall I sit behind?"

"No, indeed."

"What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking that it is getting very hot."

His look sought the downs above. I said, I knew green nooks such as he would like. So we wound our way up the heights, and were soon in the open country. The scenery around Leigh was soft, woodland, pastoral, and no more. Yet Cornelius seemed to like those green slopes, fertile fields, and wide

pastures; those shallow valleys, white homesteads, and fragrant orchards looking down from above, with now and then, in the open space between the dark outskirt of low woodland, and the golden green of sunlit scope opposite, a glimpse of azure hills melting soft and indistinct on the far horizon. But though he confessed it was very pretty, he found nothing to sketch.

"Let me take you to an old ruin further on," I said, zealously, "it is so picturesque!"

"How much further on, Daisy?"

"Only three or four miles."

"A mere trifle! but suppose we stay here?"

We stood in a hollow, sheltered by a few stunted trees.

"There is nothing to sketch here," I said.

"So much the better; I want rest."

"Then I know of a better resting-place close by."

He submitted to my guidance, and I led him into an open plain, exposed to all the heat of a burning sun.

"Why, Daisy," said Cornelius, looking round, "what made you come here? There is not a hedge: no, not so much as a poor little bush. Let us go back."

I pointed to a group of trees, partly hidden by a rising of the ground.

"It is there," I said.

He gave a look of regret to the shady hollow we were leaving behind us, and followed me over the scorching plain. At length the group of trees was reached. I entered it first; then, as he followed, I turned round and looked to enjoy his surprise, for we now stood on the grassy banks of the clear little stream which passed through Leigh; trees flung their shadow above; waters flowed beneath; silence and freshness filled the whole place.

"Well!" I said triumphantly.

"Well," he replied, "it is a pleasant place, that is true enough."

And he threw himself down on the grass with evident delight. It was a pleasant place. Many a day has passed since I beheld it; yet if I but close my eyes with my hand over them, I seem to see it again as I saw it then on that summer noon, when I went out walking with Cornelius.

It had the first charm which such a spot need have—perfect solitude. You might sit or linger for hours, unheeded and undisturbed in that green nook, shut in between the dark mass of trees which separated it from the open country, and the stream on which their heavy shadow ever fell. Beyond extended a wide and ancient park, a wild-looking desert of dark heath and high green fern, with sombre groups of trees that seemed the vanguards of aged forests, and paths deepening down like Alpine dells and ravines. I took off my bonnet and scarf, and fastening them to the bending branch of an old, hoary willow, I sat down by Cornelius. The sandwiches were produced, and done full justice to; but when the repast was over, Cornelius exclaimed—

"Kate might as well have given us a stone or osier bottle of some sort.
We have nothing to drink."

"Nothing! why there is a whole river."

"Water!" he replied with a slight grimace; "but how are we to get at even that?"

I did not answer, but clasping the trunk of the willow with one arm, I bent over the stream to dip my other hand into it. With a start of alarm Cornelius held me back.

"That river, as you call it, is deep and swift, Daisy. How can you be so imprudent?"

"There is no danger where there is no fear. Unless that willow-tree breaks I am safe."

He persisted however in holding me fast with his arm passed around me, as I stooped again, and brought forth my hand full of water, as clear and sparkling as crystal.

"Look!" I said, "and tell me if you ever saw such water, even in Italy?"

"The true test lies in the taste."

He raised my hand to his lips, drank the little it contained, then said with a smile—

"Rather a shallow cup, Daisy."

"Well, but did you ever taste such water?"

"Never—it is as exquisite—"

"I told you so."

"As exquisite as water can be, which is not saying much."

Necessity however compelled him to have more of it; he brought it up himself, for he positively refused to let me try again. Our meal being now fairly over, I wanted him to indulge in a siesta, a habit which he acknowledged having taken during the hot noons of Italy; but he would not.

"I do not feel in the least inclined for it, Daisy; pleasant though it may be to sleep away here an hour or two, I fancy it must be more pleasant still to lie awake and dream."

It was indeed the very place for day-dreams. It lay in a gentle curve of the stream, and far as the eye might look it could see above nothing but the overhanging branches of old and majestic trees, with sudden glimpses of bright blue sky, and below the same trees and sky ever imaged again in glassy depths. The reflection was so distinct and vivid that the water almost seemed to flow between two forest solitudes, one above the other beneath the wave, but both beautiful, wild, and lonely, and yielding the same delightful sense of coolness which shade and water always give.

In the park beyond the sun shone with burning heat, and even the blue sky had caught a golden glow; but here the breeze was pleasantly chill, the trees sheltered us from its strength, and left us all its vivifying freshness. It came every now and then, sending through my veins a thrill of vague delight, for earth has many sounds and murmuring voices which are to me a part of her beauty, and it woke them every one. The rustling of leaves in the trees above blended with the faint ripple of the flowing waters below; birds broke forth into snatches of song, or flew away with flapping of wings; then there were strange undefined sounds of short twittering, low monotonous hum, and sudden splash mingling into nothing continuous, ever interrupted and ever renewed, faint, indistinct, but soft and soothing as a dream.

And as I sat at the foot of the old willow, half bending forward and looking at the stream which flowed almost beneath me, so steep was the bank, and so near the edge did I sit, I felt as if its scarcely audible murmur, as if its scarcely visible flow, were slowly wrapping me in a dream of bliss. I was steeped in happiness; it was sweet, it was delightful to know that Cornelius was come back, that he was sitting there by me. I did not look at him; there was no need. Besides, strangely enough, it seemed more pleasant by far to feel his presence in my heart, than to gaze on him for hours with my eyes. He had been two long years away—severed by the sea, by Alps, by strange skies, strange lands, strange languages, and now, if I wished, I had but to put forth my hand to touch him as he sat by me beneath the same shade, gazing on the same clear brook. How he felt I know not; but I know that gradually my reverie deepened, until at length external objects seemed to fade away, and I remained sitting there gazing at the dark water, and fully conscious but of two things—the presence of Cornelius, and the low gliding of the stream. Happy day!—happy moments! I felt as if I could have sat there, even as the waters flowed—for ever.

The sound of a tramp, swift and light, on the heath of the park, made me look up; a herd of deer, with heads erect and startled looks, were floating past like a vision. They vanished down a beaten track leading to some favourite haunt. I looked at Cornelius, and smiled; but he had heard, he had seen nothing. He sat by me on the grassy bank, half-leaning on one elbow; his brow rested on the palm of his hand; his dark and heavy hair partly shaded his face. I followed the direction of his glance; it was fixed on the stream, not with abstracted or dreamy gaze, but as if beholding something there that charmed attention irresistibly. I looked down rather curiously, and saw nothing, save my own face reflected in the placid wave, and seeming, Oread-like to bend forth from a background of dark foliage. He detected my change of attitude, for he looked up immediately. I laughed, and said—

"I know what you were doing, Cornelius."

He did not answer.

"You were studying 'effects' again."

"Precisely," he replied, smiling; "effects of light and shadow."

"Are you always studying effects, Cornelius?"

"Whenever I can get them. To look is the delight, ay, the very life, of an artist."

The words awoke within me a train of thoughts that made my heart beat and my blood flow with a warmer glow. I could not keep silent. I looked up and said—

"Oh! Cornelius, what a great painter you will yet be! How much fame and honour await you! Well, why do you smile so?" I added, somewhat annoyed: "is it not true?"

"Because, as you speak, your cheeks flush, and your eyes kindle. You look like a young sybil just now, Daisy."

"A sybil in white muslin!" I replied, laughing in his face; but remembering how disrespectful this was, I became suddenly grave again. He seemed anything but offended, and listened like one whose ear has caught a pleasant sound.

"Do you know," he said, "I think this is the first time I ever heard you laugh outright. I remember your smile, but not your laugh. Oh, Daisy, are you sure you are the same? When I hear your voice, I think of my pale, sickly child. When I look, I am perplexed to see a tall, slender girl— fair as a lily, fresh as a rose, demure as a young Quakeress, yet who looks kindly at me, like an old acquaintance. Speak!—say something that will throw a sort of bridge from the past to the present."

"The only bridge I can give you is, that you have been two years away; that I am now always well, instead of being always ill; and that, as I began at the wrong end, by being dull as a child, I now mean to make up for the lost time by being as merry and as mad as I can."

"How old are you?"

"You have already asked me. Subtract ten years from your own age and you will know."

"What is ten years?"

"A mere trifle, like the walk awhile ago."

"Then in another year you will be eighteen."

"And you twenty-eight."

"You are very tenacious of that ten years' difference," he said a little impatiently. "What is age—any one's age? I don't care about yours; all I care about," he said smiling, "is to find you so changed from what you were."

"In one or two things I certainly am changed, as you will perceive, if you close your eyes and promise not to look."

"Why so?"

I would not tell him, so he complied, looking rather curious. I rose so softly that he could not hear me; the stream was neither wide nor deep; besides at this spot it suddenly grew narrower; I lightly sprang over; as I alighted safely I said—

"You may look now."

He turned pale on seeing me on the other bank.

"Daisy," he cried, "how could you do such a thing!"

"Could you not do it, Cornelius? it really is not so difficult. Try."

He refused, and said he was very angry. I laughed.

"No, Cornelius," I said, "I see in your face you are only surprised. I mean to astonish you still more; you said you had never heard me laugh, I am at least certain that you never heard me sing. Pray open your ears, for I mean to sing you a song."

I sat down in the high ferns, so high that they almost hid me, and I sang him the song of her who loved the lad at the sign of the Blue Bell. He heard me, his chin in his hand, his look on my face; seeing me so fearless, his own uneasiness had vanished.

"Well!" I said.

"Well," he replied, smiling, "it is as wild and sweet a ditty and as pleasant a voice as one need wish to hear on a summer noon. Sing me something else."

"No, it is your turn now."

He lay down at the foot of the willow, and in his clear rich voice, he sang me that pleasant song of Burns—it had always been a favourite of his—of which the burden is 'Bonnie lassie, will ye go to the birks of Aberfeldy?'

I listened, thinking how delightful it was to hear that voice again. When its last tones had died away, I thanked him, and said—

"This is not Aberfeldy, but we have the birks."

"And the bonnie lassie too."

"To be sure; but will you just move a bit?"

"Why so?"

"I want to get back again, and the spot where you are lying is the only convenient one."

"Thank you for the information. I was wondering what sort of punishment I could devise for you: it is now settled; you shall stay there."

"And be taken up for trespassing?"

"Why not?"

"Or for poaching?"

"Why not?"

At length he relented, but said I was to sing him another song; then another, and so on, until I had sung him every song and ballad I knew. The intervals of rest were filled up with talking, laughing, and jesting at one another across the stream. I had never felt so merry, seldom so happy; yet once I could not help observing remorsefully—

"And Kate, who is alone at home, and thinks you are so busy sketching!"

"Why did she make me take you with me?"

"Do I prevent you from sketching, Cornelius?"

"Of course you do; but for you I should have travelled for miles, and come home at night groaning beneath the load of crags, lonely fountains, cottages, farm-houses, snug little woods, ruins, etc. Instead of which, here I am lying on my back, looking up at trees and sky, and losing all my precious time in listening to 'Auld Robin Gray,' 'The Exile of Erin,' 'Charlie, you're my darling,' and I know not what else. Oh, Daisy, Daisy! are you not ashamed of yourself?—sing me another song."

"Indeed, Cornelius, I do not know another."

"Then I must have mercy on you."

He moved away, but kept a keen, watchful look fastened on me. There was however no need to fear. In a second I was by his side. He chid me for form's sake, then smiled, stroked my hair, and passing his arm around me, said—

"The other one could not have done as much, could she, Daisy?"

"What other one, Cornelius?"

"The one I carried in my arms from Leigh to Ryde."

"No, Cornelius, she could not, and that was why Providence sent her so kind a friend."

I forget his answer, but I remember that we sat again on the grassy banks and lingered there until the little brook shone red and burning in the light of the broad round sun that slowly sank down behind us, filling with fiery glow the space between earth and sky.

Oh! surely it was a lovely thought in the worshippers of southern lands, to link an act of prayer with the close of day and the setting of the sun. If ever there was an hour for thanksgiving, praise, and adoration, it was this. When should we, poor travellers towards the dark goal of time, find fitter moment to pause, take breath after the journeying of another day, and give a look back to the past, a hope to the future, an aspiration to heaven? At that moment meet, to part almost as soon as met, the splendour and beauty of the day and the soothing solemnity of eve. We can give thanks at once for the gladness that is going, and for the silent rest of coming night. It is the very time for intense and brief worship; for aspiration purer than prayer; for the *Sursum corda*. I did raise my heart in that hour. Was the word too earthly? I know not; God who gave us hearts that love so warmly alone can tell; but as I sat there by Cornelius, my head, in attitude familiar of old, resting on his shoulder, I thanked Him who had given him to me, for the gift, and blessed Him who had sent him back for the return.

At length we rose, and left the spot where half a day had passed in enjoyment so pure. We followed a green path where we met, and soon outstripped a friendly couple whom we left, slowly lingering in the cool shadow of the winding lane. They looked like lovers, or a newly married pair—young, happy, oblivious of time, and heeding not the passing of hours. Cornelius gave them a stealthy look, and repressed a half smile. I smiled without disguise, for in the gladness of my heart I thought—"the lady may be fair, and the lover may be devoted, but she cannot be more happy than I am now—to feel within mine the arm of Cornelius; and sure am I, that he whom she seems to like so well, is not half so good, ay, nor half so handsome, as he who reared me."

And thus, arm-in-arm, we walked on through landscape scenes that would have gladdened the genial heart of Rubens. The warmth of the setting sun, the rich verdure of the undulating plains, the herds of fair cattle grazing by the green banks and full waters of a calm river, made one feel as if gazing on a land of untroubled peace and untold abundance.

But, oh! how glorious o'er the sea, was the hour thus beautiful on land. We reached the extremity of the downs as the sun began to dip in the broad ocean. Blue, green, purple, and burning gold glanced through every wave; the receding coast slowly vanished through glittering mists; the masts of distant ships rose on the golden horizon like the turreted castle of some enchanted region. As we descended a winding path that gently led to the beach, the sun set and the glorious pageantry suddenly vanished. The first pale stars glittered from the depths of the grey sky; the sea looked of a darker and colder blue, and returned to her fathomless bed with a faint murmur; a chill breeze rose, swept along the coast, then died away again; on all things silence set, and the high arch of heaven rose deep and solemn over the plain of the receding sea. Oh! brief life of ours, how beautiful is thy dwelling-place! How deeply did I then feel in my heart, the presence of that Great Spirit which broods over and hallows all it has given to the eye of man to scan!

We silently walked homeward along the beach, now grey, quiet, and lonely. A low, large moon hung over the silent downs, from which even the melancholy cry of the plover had died away. Everything seemed subdued to repose, and even in the low rush of the breaking waves, as they rose and fell ever again on the shore, there was a murmur inexpressibly soft and soothing to the ear. We did not speak until we reached the foot of the cliff on which Rock Cottage rose. A light burned in one of the windows and spoke of pleasant welcome. Cornelius looked up and said—

"It is a wild-looking place, quite an eagle's nest, and yet there is a strange sense of home about it."

We went up the path, and found the little wooden gate unlocked as usual. Miss O'Reilly came out to meet us, with a shawl thrown over her head. She seized on her brother; I slipped away to my room. When I came down again, in the grey dress after all, I found Kate presiding over a tea-table covered with provisions sufficient for a whole legion of famished travellers, and Cornelius laughing at the extent of her preparations. When the meal was over she took up his sketch-book.

"Oh, Kate!" I cried, "don't look—it is such a shame—he would not sketch at all; he began the little fountain and did not even finish it. Is it not too bad?"

She sat with the open sketch-book on her lap, but looking at us with a pleased, happy smile.

"Yes," she said at length, "it is a shame—but he will do better to- morrow."

"Must we go out again to-morrow, Kate?" I asked, a little hesitatingly.

"To be sure you must—that is, if you both liked it to-day well enough to wish to begin again."

I sat by him—he looked down—I looked up, and we exchanged a conscious smile.

"Yes," he said, laying his hand on my head; "I think we both found it a pleasant day."

"Delightful, Cornelius, delightful!" I exclaimed, with a warmth that made Kate smile, brought a transient glow to his brow, and won me a tacit and quiet pressure of the hand that was free. I only spoke as I felt. Pleasant days I had known before and was to know again, but none in which, oblivious of the past and heedless of the future, I surrendered myself so freely to the charm of the present time. I laid it all to the return of Cornelius. I had yet to learn from experience that this singleness of enjoyment, this simplicity in receiving happiness, belong almost exclusively to the pleasant season of youth, and—pity that it should be so—only to its first fresh untroubled hours, before the coming of grief or the wakening of passion.

CHAPTER VI.

How pleasant is the privilege, so little valued, because it is so common, of living in one home with those we love. Life has few things more true or more deep, and holds forth no promises more delightful. To sleep beneath the shelter of the same roof, to meet morn, noon and evening at the same board, to converse familiarly by the same fireside, to share the same sorrows and pleasures, is the ideal of those who love, whatever name their affection may take. The imagination of lovers themselves—and yet what can they not imagine?—has never gone beyond this. After all the trials, temptations and griefs, which may have beset their path, the magic hope of their future is still: one home.

Of one part of this happiness, we may be fully conscious, but another we seldom feel, unless after long separation; even as we know that life is sweet, yet rarely pause and stand still to enjoy its sweetness, so though we are well aware of the happiness of union, we sometimes forget to be happy. Too often do we accept the presence of those we love best, as we receive sunshine and our daily bread; wants of our nature fulfilled.

I rejoiced in the return of Cornelius with an eager delight I never strove to hide, and which he seemed to share. To hear his step, his voice, his laughter about the house; to meet him daily, and out or within to be constantly near him, was now my happy fate. Twice Miss O'Reilly accompanied us in our long daily walks; but the rest of the time she found some excuse to stay within, and we went out alone. That we should do so, gave her a degree of satisfaction I could not quite make out; but which I could not help perceiving. As I sat alone sewing one morning in the back parlour, Cornelius came, and leaning on the back of my chair, said:

"Where shall we go to-day?"

"Indeed, Cornelius," I replied, gravely, "I cannot always be going out with you, and leaving Kate alone."

"Kate is very fond of solitude," was his calm answer.

"Yes, but she might think it selfish."

The entrance of Kate interrupted the remark.

"The morning is getting very hot," she said, looking at her brother.

"Yes," he carelessly answered, "therefore I shall go out before the heat of the day."

"Quite right."

"I shall even go now."

"Of course, but what else?"

"What else?"

"Yes; do you not take Daisy with you?"

"If you can spare her."

"Of course I can," replied Kate, whose clouded face immediately brightened, "child, why are you not ready?"

What could I do but comply, and again go out walking with Cornelius? I resolved, however, that it should not be so on the following day. I declined accompanying him, giving him my reason, to which he submitted with a silent smile. I even managed to send him off without the knowledge of his sister. He

had not long been gone when she came up from the kitchen where she had been engaged. She gave a rapid look round the room, and said hastily:

"Where is Cornelius?"

"He is gone out sketching, Kate," I replied without looking up from my work.

"Why did not you go with him?"

I did not answer.

"Did he not ask you?"

"I did not like to leave you."

"Did he ask you?"

"Yes, he did."

"Do you know where he is?"

"He said he would go down the beach."

"Well, then, put on your bonnet and be off."

I remonstrated, but she was peremptory. I felt the kindness hidden beneath her imperative ways, and, as I rose and passed by her, I could not help giving her a kiss, and saying:

"How good you are, Kate."

"And how foolish you and he are," she replied, smiling, "not to make the most of this good time."

"Why, Kate, we have a whole summer before us, and with it I trust, plenty of fine weather."

She told me not to stand dallying there; in a few minutes I was ready, and running down the path that led to the sands. To my surprise, I found Cornelius quietly sitting on a rock at the base of a cliff, and smoking a cigar. He rose on seeing me, came to meet me, and as he took my arm, said:

"How long you were."

"Did you expect me?"

"Of course I did."

"But you could not know Kate would send me?"

"But I could guess it."

"And if she had not sent me, Cornelius?"

"I should have gone to fetch you."

"Then it seems it is quite a settled matter that I must go out with you every day?"

Cornelius stopped short, and looking at me, said earnestly:

"Do you object, Daisy?"

"Ah," I replied, with a remorseful sigh, "you know very well I only like it too much."

He smiled, and we walked on. There were woods about Leigh, and I took him to one, where we lingered, until its glades and avenues, instead of a golden light pouring in from above through the green foliage, were lit up from beneath by the long, red streaks, of a low, setting sun. As I write, there rises before me a vision of a mossy dell, low sunk down and overshadowed by three wide-spreading oaks, beneath which Cornelius and I sat during the still and burning hours of noon. There was little sketching, yet what we said and of what we conversed I know not now. But memory will sometimes keep the aspects of outward nature, when that which impressed them on the mind has faded away and is lost for ever. I had often seen that wood before, but on no day do I seem to have felt so much the calm of its silence, the freshness of its deep shadow, the sweetness of its many murmurs, ever rising from unknown depths, and dying away again as mysteriously as they had awakened. Never do I seem to have breathed in with so much delight, that wild forest fragrance sweeter than the perfumes of any garden.

Thus passed not merely that day, but many other days, of which I remember still less. There is always something vague and dreamy in the memory of happiness. Seen from afar, that time is like a sunny landscape, beheld through light and warmth. Dazzled and enchanted, you scarcely know what the passing hour was like, and scarcely remember afterwards what it has been; all that remains is a warm, golden hue cast over all things, and such to me was then in the present, and is in memory, the presence of Cornelius.

At the end of a delightful fortnight, I wakened to the consciousness that, though Cornelius went out sketching daily, he sketched very little; and that the two rainy days we had been obliged to spend at home, had been devoted to the task of teaching me Italian, and to nothing else. The little back parlour had been destined, by Kate, to be her brother's studio; but though Mary Stuart stood there, with her face turned to the wall, there came no intimation of a successor to this hapless lady. "Decidedly," I thought, "things cannot go on so." Accordingly, the morning, when, after breakfast, Cornelius stepped up to me, and said:

"Where is it to be to-day?"

I put on a grave face, and replied:

"I must stay at home to-day, Cornelius. I cannot leave everything to Kate, you know."

"Very true," answered he, submissively.

"Therefore, whilst you are out sketching, I shall just sit here in the window, with work-box and work-basket, and make up for lost time."

Before I knew what be was about, the chair was in the window, and near it stood the work-box and work-basket. I felt a little confused at his civility, for which I was, however, going to thank him, when I saw him draw a chair near mine.

"Are you not going out?" I asked.

"No," he quietly replied, and sat down by me. I worked in perfect silence. He sat, with his elbow resting on the back of my chair, and his eyes following the motion of my darning-needle, handing me my scissors when I wanted them, and picking up my thimble, which fell once or twice. I thought he would get tired of this, but he did not. At length, unable to keep in, I looked up, and said:

"Do you not feel dull, Cornelius?"

"Not at all," he replied, smiling. "I had no idea that to watch the darning of stockings was so entertaining."

As to entertain Cornelius was, by no means, my object, I quietly put by my work, and went up to my room. I had not been there half an hour, when I heard a low tap at my door. I guessed from whom it came, and did not answer it any more than the cough, and the low "Daisy!" which followed. He waited a while, then went down. In a few minutes, Kate entered my room.

"Child," she said, "what keeps you here? Cornelius has just found his way to the kitchen, to inform me that you had vanished, and that he felt morally certain you were unwell."

"I am quite well," I replied, gravely; "but, as you see, particularly engaged in airing my things, for fear of the moths."

"Make haste, then, for he is fidgeting in the front parlour."

"Indeed," I thought, "he may fidget. I am not going to make him lose all his time."

Instead, therefore, of joining him, when my task was done, I quietly slipped down to the garden; but I had scarcely sat down on the bench beneath the pine trees, when Cornelius came, and settled himself by me. I seemed intent on my crochet; but, as this produced no effect, I rose, and composedly observed the sun was very hot.

"Burning!" replied Cornelius, rising too.

We went in. The front parlour faced the east, and was as warm as the garden; the back parlour, on the contrary, looked cool and shady. Cornelius quietly brought in my work-basket and work-box, placed a chair for me by the open window, another chair for himself, near mine, then closed the door, and smiled at me.

"Yes," I thought, as I sat down, "I am caught; but, since you have such a relish for my company, you shall even hear a bit of my mind."

I sat darning my stockings, and meditating how to bring this about, when Cornelius observed, with a touch of impatience:

"Am I to see only your side face to-day?"

"Do you object to my side face?" I gravely asked.

"Oh, no!" he hastily replied. "It is a very charming profile; and I was thinking, just now, how well it would look on a medal or ancient coin."

"And why not on a modern coin, as well as on an ancient one?"

"With the legend, Daisy Regina, &c," he answered, smiling.

"Do you mean to imply I could not grace a throne, and bear a sceptre?"

"Heaven forbid; but I wonder what History would say of Queen Daisy!"

I looked up to answer calmly:

"History would despatch her with a few more &cs., Cornelius; such as: 'The most obscure of our long line of sovereigns, &c. Instead of emulating the Elizabeths and the Catherines, &c. Although with the intellectual mediocrity of her sex, &c. Her reign was nevertheless illustrated by a certain Irish artist, &c, &c.'"

"The Irish artist respectfully kisses her Majesty's hand," said Cornelius, raising my hand to his lips with mock homage; "he ventures to hope that, spite of the distance of rank, something like friendship existed between him and Queen Daisy."

He still held my hand in his; encouraged by the friendly kindness of the clasp, I replied:

"So much friendship that, on one propitious occasion, Queen Daisy ventured to remind her friend that time was passing fast, and his fame yet to win."

Cornelius dropped my hand, and asked, gravely:

"Does History say how this advice was received?"

"History is silent," I replied, with a beating heart. "How do you think it ended, Cornelius?"

"I think," he replied, smiling as our looks met, "that most artists would have civilly requested her Majesty to mind the affairs of the State. Painters are a touchy race, better accustomed to royal favour than to royal advice. The brush of Titian was picked up by Charles V.; Holbein found the English Bluebeard gentle; Leonardo da Vinci died in the arms of Francis I.; and, I suppose the artist we now allude to must have been spoiled by favours still more high, for I have heard that on this occasion he had the presumption to request of her Majesty—"

"To mind the affairs of the State," I interrupted, again taking up my stocking.

"Nay," he replied, gently taking it from me, "to leave by those important cares, and idle away a day with him, was the request, says History."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, with a sigh of relief, "I am so glad you are not offended, Cornelius!"

"Then you thought I was; and that explains why you looked at me with a sorrowful audacity that seemed to say: 'Be angry if you like. I have said the truth, nothing but the truth, and by that I stand fast.'"

"Yes, Cornelius, that is just what I felt; but I am very glad that you are not offended for all that."

"Then if you are so glad," he answered smiling, "how did you come to risk it?"

"Because I am not quite a child now," I replied earnestly. "Oh! Cornelius, do you not understand that I can love you better than your good pleasure, and your honour better than you?"

"And do you not understand," he answered, bending over me a warm and animated face, "that I cannot be offended to see the child's blind affection make room for the heart, mind and feelings of the woman; and call that look in the eyes, and that flush on the cheek?"

"I meant to be very quiet," I replied, deprecatingly; "and if I reddened as I spoke, it was because my heart was in it, Cornelius, as it is in everything that concerns you; and I could not help it."

"Who wants you to help it?" he asked with mingled tenderness and impatience in his accent, "or to be quiet either. Quiet affection is nonsense: there is but one way of loving or of doing anything, and that is, as much as one can, Daisy."

He uttered not a word to which something within me did not echo and reply. To this day, I do not understand placid affection, even though it should take the calmest name. Like him I hold that there is but one true way of loving any one, or anything, with one's whole heart.

"As much as one can," I echoed, passing my arm within his; "that's how you are going to set at painting, is it not?"

My upraised face looked into his; he did not reply.

"You know," I continued, "you said you could paint over again Count Morsikoff's pictures."

"And so I will, but not just yet."

"Cornelius, do you no longer like painting?"

"No longer like it! I like it but too well; and as I know its power over me, I delay placing myself under a spell, even you, Daisy, might not be able to break."

"As if I should wish to break it! When do you begin, Cornelius?"

"What a hurry you are in!"

"I am in a hurry to see you famous."

He smoothed my hair with a flattered smile.

"Will you begin to-morrow?" I persisted.

"No."

"After to-morrow?"

"No."

"Next week?"

"No."

"But, Cornelius, when will you begin?" I inquired, rather disappointed.

"Now."

"Now!" I exclaimed, delighted.

"Why did you not tell me sooner that you wished for it?" he asked, reproachfully. "I thought you liked the walks, and put off talking of work from day to day."

I had a confused impression at the time, that there was something odd in this speech, but in my joy at having succeeded, I forgot it.

"It is quite early yet," I said, "you can begin at once. Which shall it be, Cornelius, the women praying, or the children by the fountain?"

"Neither one nor the other for the present," he replied, "that is to say I hope not. I have thought of another subject to begin with."

"What is it, Cornelius?" I asked, much interested.

"I saw a young girl once," he said in a thoughtful tone, like one who looks back into memory, "and she brought to my mind's eye a full and charming picture. She sat within the meditative shadow of an ill-lit room, reading by an open window—well, why do you look at me so?"

"I only think that I was sewing that day—you know, not reading; therefore you cannot mean me."

"Logically concluded. To resume: the room was gloomy, but the open window gave a sense of space, and admitted the light, high and serene, of a pale evening sky. The book lay open on the lap of her who read, one hand rested upon its pages; the other supported her cheek; the eyes were rapt and thoughtful; the silent lips met and closed with a charming and austere grace; the attitude was meditative, even down to the garment's quiet and gathered folds. The slender figure told of early youth, but there was the calmness of an immortal spirit on the brow, and something beyond time in the bearing and the mien. I remembered the Greek's meditating muse, and Corregio's divine Magdalen reading in the wilderness, and I thought though Pagan times be gone and art may have lost her early faith, she still can tell the story of earnest spirits that live and move within the shadow of our own homes, yet ever seem to dwell serene in their own heights. That is the subject, Daisy, and there is a speech for you."

"Is that all, Cornelius?"

"All. It will stand in the catalogue, as 'A Young Girl Reading,' and many, unable to see more in it, will give a brief look and pass on. If a few linger near, even though they scarcely know why; if to them it embodies thought, meditation, or some such thing, I am satisfied. Daisy. Well, what do you think of it?"

"Nothing for the present; I am thinking whether Jane will do."

"What for?" he asked promptly.

"To sit for you. She is very pretty, you know."

"And she looks very meditative, with her bright black eyes ever open, and her cherry lips ever parted."

"I wish you had seen Miss Lindley. She is tall, graceful, and dresses with so much taste. Then she has a pale olive face, and looks very lady- like."

"And a lady-like Meditation—who dresses well too—would be the very thing."

"But Cornelius," I said, rather perplexed, "how will you manage? I can do for the figure pretty well, I dare say, but the face?"

He gave me an odd look, and answered:

"Yes, there is a puzzle."

"How thoughtless of you."

"Very."

"Then how will you manage?"

"Really," he said, turning round to confront me, "is it possible you do not guess whose face I want, Daisy?"

"Mine!" I exclaimed, much astonished.

"Yes, yours," he replied, taking my hand in his. "I once saw you reading—"

"Sewing, Cornelius."

"No [!] reading—do you think I never looked at you but that one time?— and I liked it, for I saw it would make a very charming picture. The attitude is one in which you often fall unconsciously—simple, true, and graceful. I like it. I like, too, the exquisite colour of your hair, and the meditative light of your gray eyes. Dark eyes may be for passion; blue, for love and sweetness; gray, less beautiful, perhaps, but also less earthly, are for meditation and spiritual thought."

"And the meaning of hazel eyes?" I said, looking up at his.

"Sincerity," he replied, biting his nether lip to repress a smile. "If, for instance, a person with hazel eyes ever tells you 'you are truly pretty, Daisy, though you do not seem to know it,' believe that person, Daisy."

"I shall see about that when the time comes. In the meanwhile, I wish you would begin."

He called me a little tyrant, but it was a tyranny he liked, for he yielded to it with an ardour and alacrity that betrayed him. He placed me in the attitude he wanted—sitting by the window, with a book on my lap— and began at once. I saw he was quite in his element again; and when, after a long sitting,

we both rested, I said to him, a little reproachfully:

"You like it more than ever, Cornelius. I see it in your face."

"It does not annoy you?" he asked, giving me an uneasy look.

"Annoy me, Cornelius! Have you forgotten Daisy?"

"Ah! but she was a sickly child: and for the merry young girl to be shut up—"

"She does not mind being shut up the whole day long, provided it be with Cornelius."

"Who, when once he is at his easel, has scarcely a word or a look to give her."

"She does not want him to give her words or looks. She wants him to paint a fine picture, than which, she thinks, there is nothing finer; and to become a great painter, than which, she believes, there is nothing greater."

"Indeed, then, there is not," he replied, laughing and reddening, and his brown eyes kindling with sudden, though lingering light. "Oh, Daisy!" he added, after a pause, laying his two hands on my shoulders, and looking down at me intently, "what a fine, generous little creature you are!"

"Because I do not mind sitting," I replied, smiling. "You forget. Cornelius, I always liked it. Let us return to it, and surprise Kate."

Miss O'Reilly was certainly surprised when she came up—much more surprised than pleased—to see the historic style put aside; but when her brother gently informed her that Mary Stuart was not quite a masterpiece, she waxed wroth, indignantly said he would never do better, and only hoped he would do as well. Cornelius heard her quietly, and smiled at me with the security of conscious power.

As he went on with his "Young Girl Reading," I was struck with the wonderful progress he had made—it more than fulfilled the promise of the Italian sketches. I expressed my admiration without reserve, and I could not but see in his face, how much it gratified him. The time that followed was, indeed, a happy time, as happy as the past, with much that the past had never known. Cornelius looked engrossed and delighted. He worked either with the impassioned ardour of a lover, or with a lingering tenderness as significant. He dwelt *con amore*, over certain bits, or stood back and looked at the whole fondly, through half-shut eyes, drinking in, with evident delight, that sweet intoxication which lies in the contemplation of our own work, when we can behold in it the fulfilment of some cherished idea. But, at the end of a fortnight, there came a change. He looked gloomy, misanthropic, and painted with the air of an angry lover, who has fallen out with his mistress. Ardour had become scorn—tenderness was changed into sullen languor. I guessed that one of his old desponding fits was on him, and, at length, I spoke. It was on a day when, spite of all his efforts, I could see that he scarcely worked. I left my place, and went up to him. For a while, I looked at the picture; then said:

"How it progresses."

"Wonderfully."

"I wish you would not be ironical, Cornelius."

"I wish you would not, Daisy."

"I only say what I think: that it progresses."

Cornelius laughed, but by no means cheerfully.

"I know you long for me to praise it," I observed, quietly.

"Indeed, I do not," he interrupted.

"Yes, you do: it would give you so good an opportunity of abusing it."

"Do you kindly mean to spare me the trouble?"

"No; for then you would defend it against all my criticisms. I know very well how you rate your picture, Cornelius."

"Do you?"

"Yes; I do. You know it will make your reputation; that it will be praised and admired; but it fails in

something on which you have set your heart, and, though it may do for the world, it will not do for Cornelius O'Reilly, his own severest judge, public and critic."

"Oh, you witch!" he replied, unable to repress a smile.

"Do you not like it better now?" I asked, thinking the cloud was beginning to break.

"No, Daisy. It is the old story; something within me to which, do what I will, I cannot give birth; it is this torments me, Daisy, it is this."

"And let it be this," I replied gravely; "let it be this, Cornelius, you will be better than your pictures: if you were not, if you could give all to art, would art be any longer worth living for? Where would be the mystery, the desire, the hope, the charm, to lure you on for ever. I dare say painting resembles life; and that to feel I am better than my pictures, is like the pleasure of feeling 'I am better than my destiny.'"

"And what do you know about that pleasure?" asked Cornelius.

"I have felt it," was my involuntary reply. "Well, why not?" I added, reddening beneath his look, "do you think that because I am a girl, I have had no ambition, no dreams of my own, no longing for a little bit of the heroic? We all have, Cornelius, only we don't confess it, for fear of being laughed at."

He looked attentively at me and smiled.

"What were your dreams about, Daisy?"

"Not worth your losing time in listening to them, Cornelius—time, that leads to fame!"

The smile vanished from his face.

"Not for me," he replied, with a clouded brow.

"Why not?"

"Because I have no genius."

"No genius?"

"No," he said impatiently, "not a bit."

"Do you mean to say, Cornelius, that you will never be one of the celebrated artists of whom I have read so much?"

"Never!" he replied, with a dreary seriousness that proved him, for the moment at least, to be quite in earnest.

"Cornelius," I said, decisively, "I am not going to put up with that, you know; fame is not a thing to be laid aside in that fashion."

"Fame! what is fame?"

"A poor aim, but a glorious reward."

"Empty, Daisy, empty. I do not care one pin for fame."

"Sour grapes," was the prompt reply which escaped me.

"Thank you, Daisy," he answered, reddening.

I felt rather disturbed. He resumed:

"Sour grapes! The illustration is kind and civil. Sour grapes!"

"They must be very sour," I ventured to observe, in a low tone, "for you seem unable to digest them, Cornelius."

"I beg your pardon," he said, very gravely, "I do not care for celebrity, and do not want to be famous."

"But I do," I warmly answered, "you were asking a while ago about my day- dreams: I will tell you one, a favourite one, of which the fulfilment lies with you:—I am out somewhere; for of course we shall not always live in this quiet way, and I overhear Mrs. H— asking Mrs. G—, in an audible whisper: 'Who is that commonplace-looking girl in white?' 'Something or other to the celebrated artist, Cornelius O'Reilly.' Mrs. H— looks at me with sudden veneration, whilst I give her a compassionate glance,

implying 'Who ever heard of Mr. H—?'"

"You saucy girl," said Cornelius, passing his arm around me, but looking down at me, with anything but a displeased face.

"I am not saucy; I am very humble. I am proud by temper, and yet I cannot fancy that if I were to go and earn my bread, it would have a sweeter taste than that you have earned for me so long. I am ambitious, and instead of winning fame for myself, here am I suing you to do it for me!"

"And shall it not be won for you?" he asked, fondly smoothing my hair, "that and anything else you wish for, my darling."

"Then, don't you see," I replied, triumphantly, "that you have got genius?"

"Oh! Daisy," he said sorrowfully, "what brought up that unlucky word?
Look at that figure, cold, lifeless thing, it tells its own story."

I lost all patience. I felt my face flush, and turning round on
Cornelius, I put by at once all the filial reverence of years.

"Cornelius!" I exclaimed, indignantly, "you are as capricious as a spoiled child. How can a man of your age indulge in such whims?"

"I am not so old as to have my age thrown in my face!" he replied, looking piqued. "I am only a few years beyond legal infancy."

"You ought to be ages beyond thinking and speaking as you do. If you have no faith in yourself, why do you paint at all? If I were a man, I would rather be a shoemaker or a tailor, than an artist without faith."

"On my word," said Cornelius, looking very angry, "you do speak strongly."

"Because *I* have faith in you," I replied, passing my arm around his neck, and looking into his averted face. "Call the picture bad, but do not say you have no genius. It cuts me to the heart, indeed it does. Besides, I cannot believe it. I never look at your face, but I seem to see the word 'Genius' written there."

And, as I spoke, I laid my lips on a brow where eyes less prejudiced than mine might have read the same story. A sudden and burning glow overspread the features of Cornelius; he looked another way, and bit his lips, as if seeking for calmness, as striving to curb down that impatient fever of the blood which, in good or in evil, it is always a sort of pain to betray. I half drew back, thinking him vexed again, but he detained me; and turning towards me a flushed and troubled face, he said with a forced laugh:

"Your head has been turned by reading those Lives of the Painters, and you want to turn mine too. To satisfy you, I should be the first painter in England."

"In England!" I echoed; "in Christendom, Sir."

"Rather high-flown, Daisy. Besides that it sounds like a reminiscence of the seven champions."

"High-flown! Ambition is a bird of high feather, Cornelius. I would scorn to aim at the second place when there is the first to win."

"Oh! you witch!" he said again, "how well you know me!"

"What has become of the evil spirit that possessed you?" I asked, smiling.

"Gone to the winds for the present," he answered gaily.

"Well then work."

"Not yet. Let us rest awhile."

He sat down on a low couch by the open window, and made me sit down by him. Since his return, I had not seen his face wear so free and happy a look, as it then wore. His brilliant and deep-set hazel eyes shone beneath the dark arch of the brow, with unusual light, and rested on me with a triumphant tenderness that perplexed me; a warmer glow tinged his cheek, embrowned by a southern sun. There lurked both joy and exultation in the half smile that trembled on his lips: like his sister, he had a very beautiful and fascinating smile; and, as I now gazed at him. I could not help smiling, too, for I thought I

had never seen him look half so handsome. In the freak of the moment, I told him so.

"Do you know, Mr. O'Reilly?" I said, taking hold of his curved chin, and looking up at him laughing. "Do you know that you are very good-looking?"

He half threw back his head, as if in scorn of the compliment; but when I added, "I suppose all great artists are so!" he smiled down at me; and if his smile was somewhat conscious, it was still more fond and tender.

"You like me, Daisy; don't you?" he said, bending over me a flushed and happy face.

I laughed, and he laughed, too, with the security of the knowledge.

"Oh! you may laugh," he said with sparkling eyes; "I know you do. I know it, but I have not deserved it," he added, remorsefully. "Oh! when I think how cold, and how careless I have been; and how you might serve me out now!"

"How so, Cornelius?"

He smiled, and smoothed my hair without replying.

"Why it is you who might serve me out," I said.

"Is it?"

"Of course, for it is I who have all to gain or lose."

"Are you afraid?"

"No."

He repressed a smile, gave me a curious look, and said I was an odd girl.

"And won't the other girls be jealous of me, Cornelius?" I asked, proudly.

"Jealous! What for?"

"Because you are immortalizing me in a picture."

"What else?"

"Because you like me."

"What else?"

"Because I am to be always with you."

"And how do you know you are to be always with me?" he asked with a mischievous look; "answer me that."

I did not at first; he laughed.

"Well," I said, piqued, "am I not to be always with you? Was it not agreed before you went to Italy? Am I not to be the governess?"

"The governess!" he echoed, astonished.

It was some time before I could make him remember what had passed between us. If I had not been positive, he would have denied it altogether.

"How can you think of such nonsense?" he asked, impatiently; "the governess of what?"

"Of the children; and please not to call them *what*."

"*Them!* Will you be pleased to remember that I am a poor artist."

"Sceptic! Providence will send for every child a new picture to paint."

"Providence is very kind. I hope her liberality will know some limits."

"The first must be Cornelius or Kate, second ditto, third—"

"Daisy!"

"There must be a third to be called after the mother, and the fourth after one of her friends; the fifth —"

"Daisy!" indignantly asked Cornelius: "do you mean to make a patriarch of me?"

"Patriarch or not, there must be a fifth—mine, whom you will call Daisy, in memory of the other Daisy you brought home, wrapped in your cloak."

Cornelius turned round to look at me smiling:

"So you were piqued," he said, "and brought up the governess to punish me!"

"Piqued!" I echoed, laughing in his face, "what about?"

He looked a little disconcerted. I thought him vexed, and apologized at once for my want of respect.

"Respect!" he replied seeming half astonished, half displeased, "what do I want with respect—your respect?" And he gave me a glance of mingled incredulity and uneasiness.

"Cornelius, you said before you went to Italy—"

"What about the foolish things, I may have said years ago." he interrupted impatiently; "Surely," he added, looking down at me reproachfully, "surely, we have both outgrown that time."

"I hope I have not outgrown my respect for you, Cornelius," I replied rather gravely.

"Again!" he said with subdued irritation; "why don't, you ask to call me
'Papa?'"

"I would if I thought you would say yes, Cornelius."

"No, you would not," he answered reddening and looking vexed; "you know you would not. You know all this is mere childish talk."

"Put me to the test!" I said laughing.

"I dare you to do it." he replied hastily. "Take warning, and, if troubled with filial feelings, look out for some other paternal parent. C. O. R., Esq., is not the man."

"When Louisa Scheppler asked the good Pastor Oberlin—he consented."

Cornelius looked at me uneasily and tried to smile.

"I know you are only jesting," he observed; "I know it, of course. But yet, Daisy, I would rather you did not."

"Is the idea of a daughter so formidable?" I asked.

"A daughter! Oh, Daisy!" exclaimed Cornelius a little desperately, "this is too childish! The next thing will be, that you will get out of the teens altogether, and go back to the little girl of ten whom I found here seven years ago."

"And you don't want me to do that?" I said amused at the idea.

He looked at me expressively.

"Oh, no!" he murmured, "oh, no! Surely, you know yourself how charming you have grown."

I smiled incredulously. I knew I was improved, but thought it was his affection which transformed a little freshness and colour into so comprehensive a word as charming.

"I wonder you will never believe me," he said, looking half annoyed. "I wonder, what is your real opinion of yourself. I do not mean that conventional opinion of one's own inferiority, or at the best mediocrity which, under penalty of being hunted out from decent society, every civilized individual is bound to profess, but that honest opinion of our merits and defects, by which we judge ourselves in our own hearts. Do you mind answering that question?"

"No, it is not worth minding."

"Then answer it."

"You must question me categorically. I have not a ready-made certificate of my good or bad points, to

deliver on such short notice."

"What do you think of Daisy morally?"

"A good sort of girl; has received honest principles; devoutly believes she will never do anything very shocking."

"What of her intellectually?"

"Sensible, not brilliant."

"What of her person?"

"Like her mind—plain; but, thank Heaven, has the use of her limbs and senses."

"And this common-place character is your real opinion of yourself!" exclaimed Cornelius almost indignantly.

"My real opinion; but it is scarcely civil to tell me to my face that I am common-place."

"I never said so. That is not my opinion of you, Daisy."

"Ah!" I said a little embarrassed, for it was plain he meant to favour me with that opinion.

"No," he continued very earnestly, "I do not think you that pale, every- day girl you described. I think you more than good, for you are high- minded; I think you more than sensible, for you are original. You may as well laugh out at once," he added in a piqued tone, "for to crown all, Daisy, I think you pretty, ay, and very pretty."

"Oh, Cornelius!" I replied endeavouring to look melancholy; "if you had not made that unlucky addition, I could have believed in the rest—but now!"

"Daisy, beauty is manifold: the greatest fool can discover the beauty of a perfectly beautiful woman."

"Whereas it requires a peculiar talent to find out the invisible sort of beauty. Judicious remark!"

"Allow me to return to the point. My meaning is, that to be able to see and feel none save the self-demonstrative sort of beauty, is common- place."

"The other course is decidedly more original; is that the point,
Cornelius?"

"The point," he replied, fairly provoked, "is, that such as you are, pretty or plain, *I* find you charming."

"Well, then," I said, amused at his persistency, "glamour has fallen on your eyes, and you see me through it."

"What if I do?" he answered, in a tone that, like his look, suddenly softened; "will that sort of magic vex you? What is there so pleasant in this world as the face of one we love; and if your face has that pleasantness for me; if the glamour, as you call it, of affection has fallen on my eyes and heart, why should you mind?"

Oh! not indifferent, even in the purest affection, are these things. I glanced up into his face; and as it told me how thoroughly he meant all he said, I blushed; then ashamed of blushing, I hung down my head. He stooped to look at me.

"Perverse girl," he said, chidingly, "don't you see it was useless to try to frighten and torment me? But you have provoked me. Shall I tell you why I find you so very, very charming?"

I looked up at him, and, passing my arms around his neck, I smiled as I replied:

"Cornelius, it is because as a father you have reared me; because as a father you love me. What wonder, then, that a father should see some sort of beauty in his daughter's face?"

Cornelius looked thunder-struck; then recovering, he gave me an incredulous glance, and attempted a smile, which vanished as he met my astonished look. A burning glow overspread his features: it was not the light blush of boy or girl, called up by idle words, but the ardent fire of a manly heart's deep and passionate emotions. He untwined my arm from around his neck; he rose: his brown eyes lit—his lips trembled. At first he seemed unable to speak; at length he said:

"You cannot mean it, Daisy—you cannot mean it."

"Why not, Cornelius?" I asked, amazed at his manner.

"Do you mean to say that I love you as my daughter or child?"

"Yes, Cornelius."

"Do you mean to say that you love me as your father?"

"Yes, Cornelius."

His voice rose and rang with each question; mine sank with every reply.
He darted at me a look of the keenest reproach.

"Never," he exclaimed, with a fire and vehemence that startled me, "never have I loved you, or shall I love you so; never for a second in the past; never for a second in the future; never, Daisy, never!" And turning from me, he paced the room with hasty steps, a flushed brow, and angry look. At length he stopped before me; for, being somewhat calmer, the fire of his look seemed more earnest and concentrated, the accents of his voice more measured and deep. He said:

"Confess you have been jesting."

"No, Cornelius, I spoke as I thought."

"And you thought that I liked you, as a father likes his child; I defy you to prove it! Since I returned from Italy, have I not done all I could to show you that your esteem, approbation, praise, and love were dearer to me than language could express? Have I not, through all our old familiarity, say, have I not mingled reserve and respect with all my tenderness? Have I not acknowledged the woman in you, and that in a hundred ways? The love of a father? I defy you to prove it, Daisy!"

He again paced the room with angry steps. I followed him, and laying my hand on his arm, I said earnestly—

"Cornelius, you should not be angry with me. Have you forgotten that, before you went to Italy, you called me your adopted child? that in your letters you addressed me thus? That on the very evening of your return, when Kate seemed vexed about it, you were not displeased, though you are so angry now?"

Cornelius turned a little pale.

"I had forgotten it," he said bitterly, "but you forget nothing—nothing; years pass, and words spoken in the heedlessness of ignorance and the presumptuousness of youth, still live in your pitiless memory."

"Cornelius," I said, gently, "is it a sin to remember the truth?"

"The truth!" he echoed, indignantly, "do not call that the truth. I may have said it, been fool enough to have believed it, but true it has never been. Never, I tell you, never have I felt for you one spark of the affection a father feels for his child, never. Do not think, dream, or imagine such a thing. I deny it in every way in which man can deny. I would, were it in my power, efface from your mind every such remembrance of a past, beyond which we both should look."

I began to feel startled. What did Cornelius mean? Why did he object so pertinaciously to a matter like this? I looked up at him and said earnestly—

"Cornelius, I do not understand at all why you are so vexed. Pray tell me."

He looked down at me very fixedly. Every trace of ungentle passion had passed away from his features, and there was a strange, undefined tenderness in his gaze, as he said in a low tone—

"If I have been vexed. Daisy, it is to find out a mistake—a great mistake of mine."

"What mistake, Cornelius?"

"Do you really want to know, Daisy?"

"Yes," I said, almost desperately, "I want to know."

There was a pause. He still stood by me, looking down in my face.

"Do not look so pale, and above all so frightened," he said, gently; "there is no need. How you tremble!" he added, taking my hand in both his, and speaking very sadly, "Oh, Daisy! Daisy!" And he turned his look away with a strange expression of disappointment and pain, of shame and mortification.

I hung down my head; I did not dare to look at him, to withdraw my hand, to move. I stood mutely expecting—what I knew not exactly; but I seemed to feel that it must be some shock, dreadful, because violent, that would perforce turn the current of my destiny, and compel it to flow through regions, where of itself, my will would never have led we. Vain fear; unfounded alarm. Cornelius turned to me, and said very calmly—

"The mistake into which I fell, was to think that we understood one another tacitly, Daisy. I do not love you now because I have reared you, but on your own merits, for the sake of that which you have become. And thus I thought that you too liked me, with a higher feeling than gratitude. In short, as I like you myself—as a very dear friend."

He spoke simply and naturally. I breathed freely.

"Oh! how good, how generous you are!" I exclaimed, moved to the heart by so much delicacy of affection. "You want to raise me to an equality with you. God bless you, Cornelius."

I pressed his two hands in mine, with much emotion.

"Are you happy?" he asked, looking down at me.

"So very happy!" I replied, with a joyous smile.

"I am glad of it," he said, trying to smile too.

"Shall we resume the sitting?" I asked.

"Not to-day. 1 am in no mood to work; I think I shall go out for a walk."

I felt somewhat surprised that Cornelius did not ask me to join him; and so was Kate, when she learned from me—she had been in her room all this time—that he was gone out alone.

"Why did you not go with him?" she asked, frowning slightly.

"He did not ask me, Kate."

"You have not quarrelled?"

"Oh, no! we are very good friends."

The cloud passed away from her brow. She kissed me and said "Of course you are."

Cornelius did not come in until late in the evening; he had walked miles, and was so tired that he could scarcely speak.

CHAPTER VII.

I awoke the next morning with a severe headache; I rose and came down as usual, thinking to hide it; scarcely, however, had I entered the front parlour, when Cornelius asked what ailed me. "Only a headache," I replied, carelessly; but he seemed filled with concern. He made me return to my room where I slept for a few hours, but without feeling any better; I then again went down to the parlour and lay on the sofa. Cornelius, who according to his sister had gone up to listen at my door every ten minutes—sat by me holding my hand.

"How feverish she is!" he said to Kate.

"There is twice as much fever in your blood as in that of Daisy," decisively replied Miss O'Reilly.

"Don't be alarmed, Cornelius," I said quietly, "I do not feel as if I should realize the prediction of Dr. Mixton just yet."

"Don't talk of that madman," exclaimed Cornelius, with a troubled face, "he was mad; only fit for Bedlam."

"It came into my head by chance, and, as one thought leads to another, I thought, if I were going to die, I should ask two things of Cornelius. That if he married and had daughters, he should call one of them Daisy. Thus there would ever be something in his home to remind him of me; also to bury me here at Leigh—"

"Daisy, Daisy!" almost angrily interrupted Cornelius, "what do you mean? I am not going to marry and have daughters; and to think of you as pale and inanimate with the cold earth above you, is a sickening thought."

He looked quite pale. I saw there was a deep and secret fear at his heart, and indeed he showed it sufficiently; for as the day advanced and my headache still continued to trouble me, he insisted, spite of my entreaties and those of Kate, on going himself for a physician who resided several miles off. I was touched to the heart by this proof of a love so vigilant.

"How kind he is," I said to Kate.

"Kind! why surely child, you can see that he doats on you! Is he not making a fool of himself, just because your head aches? Would he not go distracted if anything were to happen to you? Oh, Midge! Midge!" she added, with a half-stifled sigh, "don't you see you are the apple of his eye?"

As the heat of the day subsided, I felt suddenly better. The fresh sea- breeze could only do me good, so I went and sat on the bench at the end of the garden, there to watch for the return of Cornelius whose road home lay along the wide sweep of beach beneath me. For a long time I watched in vain; at length I perceived a man's form slowly descending the cliffs; I hastened in for my bonnet and scarf, and merely saying to Kate:

"I see him coming," as I passed the parlour door, I was gone before she could open her lips to object. When I reached the sands, I looked in vain for Cornelius. I walked on, thinking he had seen me coming and stood concealed in a cleft of the rocks, but my look searched every one of their dark recesses, and nowhere could discover a token of his presence. It was late, though the singular clearness of the air which prevails by the sea-side, gave more light than belonged to the hour. I resolved to go no further, but to give one more look and return. I climbed up a heap of fallen rocks, and slowly began to scan the whole coast; it looked silent and lonely in the pale light of a rising moon. I was preparing to descend from my post of observation, when I started to perceive a shadow near mine. I looked up and saw William Murray.

"William!" I exclaimed, delighted, "William Murray! Oh, how glad I am to see you again."

He did not speak, but he took and held both my hands in his, and pressed them warmly, looking down at me with a happy, smiling face.

"God bless you!" he said, "God bless you, Daisy! I thought I should never see you again."

"Why so, William?" I asked, sitting down on a rock and making him sit down by me.

He hesitated as he replied:

"Don't you know?"

"O, William, what is it? You make my heart beat."

"Why we have been wrecked in the Mediterranean. I am sorry to tell you so abruptly; I thought you knew."

He was safe before me; but we feel even the past perils of those we love. I felt myself turning faint and pale. William seemed much moved; he assured me that the danger had not been so very great, though in the hour of peril he had indeed thought of me as of one he should see no more.

"Oh, William!" I said, looking up, and allowing him again to take my hands in his, "will you not leave that perilous life, and that dangerous sea?"

"I cannot, Daisy; why I am only here for two days; I shall not see much of you before I am off again."

"For long?"

"A year," he replied, sighing.

"How long have you been back?"

"Two hours."

"Why did you not come to me at once?"

"Why did I wander up and down here, but to get a sight of you?"

"Then it was you I took for Cornelius. You know he is come back. Oh,

William! you must call on us and see him. How much you will like him!"

"And how fond you are of him, Daisy, said William, in a low tone.

"Why, of course, I am; and he deserves it."

"Ay, that he does," he warmly replied. "You know, Daisy, I always said he was a good man."

"He is a good man, for he does good actions, and never seems to know it. He is a great man—for he has genius, which is a great gift; and," I added, with a smile, "he is a handsome man, too, William."

"There are some very fine men amongst those Irish," gravely replied William; "and they wear well too. There's our captain—Captain MacMahon— who is upwards of fifty, but the most splendid fellow I ever saw—six foot six: then such shoulders and such lungs. He does not roar like Johnstone, or scream like Philipps; but he just opens his mouth, and lets his voice out as it were. Then his fists—you should see his fists, Daisy!"

I was much amused, and replied:

"I fear Cornelius is not quite equal to Captain MacMahon, yet I think you will like him, William."

"This is the second time you say so."

"Because I know it—just as I know that he will be delighted with you."

William gave me a look, half shy, half pleased, and muttered something that sounded very like:

"Did *I* care for him?"

"No," I replied, amused at the question, "not at all. How can I care for a friend who leaves me to go and get wrecked?"

"Not at all, Daisy," he echoed; "not at all."

He stooped, and looked very eagerly into my face. I drew back with a laugh that was checked by a voice observing behind me:

"Daisy, what are you doing here at this hour?"

I turned round—it was Cornelius. The moonlight fell full on his pale and angry face. I rose, without answering; 1 felt—and, no doubt, I looked— like a culprit. He gave me a glance in which sadness and severity blended: then, as it taking pity on my confusion, he silently held out his arm to me. As I took it, I attempted a justification, and said:

"I took William for you, Cornelius, and came out to meet you. He is Miss Murray's nephew, you know, and I had not seen him for months. Did you come for me from home? I am sorry—very sorry, Cornelius."

I sought his look, but vainly; it was fastened on William, who had risen, and now stood before us. Cornelius eyed him from head to foot, with a keen and scrutinising gaze, which the young man returned. Neither spoke— there was an evident want of cordiality in the silent glances they exchanged. I began to feel uncomfortable; my sense of uneasiness increased when Cornelius turned towards me, and said coldly:

"I am sorry to hurry you away, Daisy, but Kate is very anxious."

And without taking the least notice of William, or seeming to think that I could have another word to say to him, he made me turn homewards. I felt so disconcerted at his displeasure, that I neither opened my lips, nor attempted to resist; but, when we had walked on together for a few minute, I gathered courage to say:

"I must go back to bid him good evening, Cornelius."

I disengaged my arm from his, and lightly ran back to the spot where we had left William, and where he still stood looking after us with folded arms.

"Good night, William," I said, holding out my hand.

He did not take it, but replied in a tone overflowing with reproach:

"Why did you deceive me, Daisy?"

"Deceive you, William!"

"Why did you pretend to care for me when you are so wrapped up in another, that, from the moment he comes up, you have neither speech nor look for me?"

"I have left him to come and bid you good night, and by way of thanks, you accuse me of deceiving you. How, and about what?"

"What do you call speaking of him as if he were your grandfather, when I don't believe he is a bit older than I am?"

"He is twenty-seven. But what about his age?"

"I don't care about his age, nor about his looks either," replied William, with a scornful laugh. "You may think him handsome if you like—I do not."

I felt offended, and replied, shortly:

"I never told you Cornelius was old. It was you chose to compare an elegant young man, of twenty-seven, to a coarse sea-captain of fifty, not I. I might add that your remarks are very childish, but I do not want to speak unkindly. Good night, William. I trust that when I come here to- morrow morning, I shall find you in a better temper."

I turned away; he followed me.

"Will you really come?" he asked, submissively.

I replied,

"Yes," and hastened away to join Cornelius, who was coming to meet me with a face so overcast, that I saw I was again at fault.

"I am so sorry to have brought you back!" I said, forestalling accusation. "I thought you would go on."

Cornelius stopped short—we were once more walking homewards—to give me an amazed look, and say in a half indignant tone:

"Go on, and leave you alone at this hour with a strange young man!"

"He is not strange," I replied, feeling the blush he could not see; "I have known him since we were both children; and Kate can tell you he is only a boy."

"A boy scarcely younger than I am," pointedly replied Cornelius.

I thought it odd that both he and William should come to conclusions so similar with regard to their respective ages, but I did not venture to reply. Not another word was spoken until we reached the foot of the cliff on which rose our home; then, from the garden above was heard the anxious voice of Kate, exclaiming:

"Have you found her, Cornelius?"

"Yes," he replied, "she is quite safe."

I was dismayed at this proof of the uneasiness I had made them feel. Kate received me very sharply. "I am astonished at you," she said, "to choose the very moment when you are troubled with a headache, and Cornelius is gone for the physician, to run down to the sands!"

"You know, Kate, I was better; besides I thought I saw him coming, and went to meet him; but it proved to be William Murray."

"The young bear—what brought him back?"

"He has been wrecked."

"Nonsense! wrecked! he has been spinning a yarn to you, Daisy."

"I never yet knew William to tell an untruth," I replied, a little indignantly.

"Truth or not, were you to make us anxious just to listen to the stories of that boy. Cornelius has come back from Italy with banditti notions; and he would have it that some ill-looking fellows, whom he

met as he was going, had lingered on the beach until dusk to waylay you. So off he ran like a madman. Look at him. See how pale he is still!"

Cornelius, who had lingered behind, entered the parlour as his sister spoke; my heart smote me to see that he was deadly pale. He sat down by the table, leaned his elbow upon it, and rested his brow on the palm of his hand, so that his face was shaded from the light.

"Cornelius, what ails you?" asked Kate.

"I am tired," he answered, without looking up.

"Dr. Reeves was out, so I went for Dr. Simpson."

"Why that is three miles further off."

"Just so, that is what tired me. He too was out."

Kate gave me a reproachful look; but indeed there was no need; my conscience troubled me sorely for the heedlessness which had added unnecessary fatigue and alarm to that his ardent affection had already caused him to undergo for my sake. I longed to make some atonement; to offer some explanation; but he gave me no opportunity; he left early, and it was only by his not coming down again, that we knew he had left us for the evening.

In appointing to meet William on the sands the following morning, I had not reflected how difficult it would be for me to do so. I turned the subject over and over, and at length resolved to speak to Cornelius. He behaved to me at breakfast as if nothing had occurred; and when we both entered the little studio as usual, his face, though more serious than in the presence of Kate, expressed nothing like displeasure. In whose kindness and indulgence could I confide, if not in his? I hoped he would open the conversation, but, as he did not, I resolved to speak. I went up to his chair, and leaning upon it, said in a low tone:

"Cornelius."

"Well, Daisy," he replied, looking round.

"May I say something to you? But pray," I quickly added, "pray, do not be vexed; promise that you will not."

"Daisy!" exclaimed Cornelius, giving me a troubled look.

"Well, then, promise nothing. I will trust to your indulgence. I can bear that you should reprove me, but I could not bear to deceive you."

He took my hand in his, and, bending on me a look so keen that I began to feel disconcerted, he said slowly:

"What do you mean?"

I did not answer.

"What do you mean?" he said, his voice rising.

"Well then!" I exclaimed a little desperately, "I mean that I have made an appointment with William, and that I want your permission to keep it."

Cornelius dropped my hand, and looked petrified.

"You have made an appointment with that young man!" he said at length.

"Yes, Cornelius."

"And you come and tell it to me."

"Oh, Cornelius, would you have me keep it a secret?"

"But to tell it to *me*."

"To whom else should I tell it?"

"But to ask *me* to let you keep it."

"Of whom else should I ask it?"

He seemed unable to reply. He looked at me; but no words passed his trembling lips. I began to feel hurt and dismayed at the manner in which he received my confidence. At length, he said, with forced calmness:—

"This is some mistake of mine; I have misunderstood you, Daisy. You cannot have meant to say that you had appointed a meeting with the young man I saw with you last night."

"That was my meaning, Cornelius," I replied, firmly.

"You confirm it," he replied, turning pale; "and I, who, after a night of tormenting thought, came down this morning, not knowing how to question you. Oh, Daisy!"

There was agitation in his look and in his voice.

"Cornelius," I said, with some emotion, "if I have made an appointment with William, where is the harm? It is not the first time I have done so."

"Not the first time!"

"No, nor the second, nor the third. We have been attached since Kate brought me to Leigh; and before William went to sea, there scarcely passed a day but we met somewhere."

"And I have been away two years!" said Cornelius, in a low tone. "Not a day but you met somewhere!"

"Yes, on the downs, or on the beach, where you found me last night, and where I had promised to meet him this morning."

Cornelius turned on me with flashing eyes.

"Unhappy child!" he exclaimed, "what do you mean by telling me all this? What have you been doing in my absence? What sort of a watch has Kate kept over the young girl I left to her care? What sense of honour has he who took so shameless an advantage of your ignorance, but who shall account to me for it yet?"

He rose; his brow was stern; his face was pale. Half wild with terror, I threw my arms around his neck, and detained him.

"It was my fault!" I exclaimed, eagerly; "all my fault—resent it upon me."

"And what can I do to you?" answered Cornelius, looking down at me with strange anger and tenderness in his gaze; "what can I do to you?"

"Hear me," I entreated, weeping.

He sat down again, subdued at once by the sight of my tears, and said he would listen patiently.

"William," I began.

"Why speak of him?" he interrupted, with a clouded brow.

"You have accused him; I must justify him, or bear my share of the blame."

"Blame!" sorrowfully echoed Cornelius; "why should I blame you? I was away, and Kate was negligent, and another was there; it was natural, very natural."

Encouraged by the gentleness of his tone, I stooped, and pressing my lips to his cheek, I said, in my most persuasive accents:—

"May I keep my appointment, Cornelius?"

He turned upon me a flushed and troubled face.

"I have heard of strange, tormenting things," he said, between his set teeth; "but I vow I never heard of anything to equal this. My God!" he added, pressing me to him with strange and sudden passion, "what can you want with that young man?"

His look felt like fire; I bowed my face before its wrath. When I spoke, it was to say, in a faltering tone:—

"Cornelius, you are angry again; yet all I want is not to make William wait."

"But what do you want with him?—What can you want with him?" desperately asked Cornelius.

"He was so unreasonable; he said I did not care for him; and indeed, Cornelius, that was a great mistake of his. All I want is to speak to him a few minutes, and make him hear sense."

"Oh, Daisy!" exclaimed Cornelius, with ill repressed anger, "is it possible you do not understand that it is not becoming for a young girl to go and meet a young man in a lonely place?"

"Then forbid me to go!" I exclaimed, eagerly; "forbid me, that I may assure William if I broke my word to him, it was to obey you."

Cornelius turned very pale; he rose, and said, in a moved and broken tone:—

"I am no tyrant. I do not forbid you to go. I claim no control over your feelings or actions. Go, and stay at your pleasure."

Without giving me another look, he turned to his easel. I sat down in the attitude of the young girl reading; but, though every now and then I stole up a look from the open book on mv lap, I never could catch his eye. I felt this keenly; for if there was a thing which Cornelius had of late done more than another, it was to look into my face; and, oh! how kindly he ever looked! At length, I could bear it no longer. I rose, and went up to where he stood painting. He never even glanced around. The calm expostulation with which I had thought to address him, faded from my memory. With involuntary emotion, I sank down at his feet, and, seizing his hand, I exclaimed, with something like passion:—

"Blame me! but look at me, Cornelius; say what you will, but look at me."

"Are you mad?" he cried reddening indignantly and forcibly raising me from the ground. "What do you, what can you mean by kneeling to me? Oh, Daisy!" he added with keen reproach, "I would rather you had struck me than you had done that."

I stood by him silent and ashamed.

"To kneel to me!" he resumed, as if he could not get over it. "For man to kneel to woman may be folly, but at least it is the voluntary submission of strength; but for woman to kneel to man—what is it—save the painful submission of weakness. If you have any regard for me, if you care for me, never do that again."

I promised I would not, then added:

"Have you forgiven me, Cornelius?"

"What have I to forgive?"

"You know—I do not."

He looked around as I still stood by him in the attitude of an unforgiven child, and he sighed.

"You wish for an explanation," he said in a troubled tone, "so do I, and yet I dread it."

"Cornelius, I will do all I can not to annoy you. Question me and I will answer you in all the sincerity of my heart. If I have done wrong, it is by mistake, and indeed William too. We are both very young and ignorant, Cornelius?"

"Both! What is that young man to you that his name cannot be severed from yours?"

"He is my friend, Cornelius."

"Why did you never mention his name since my return?"

"It must have been because I was so much more absorbed in thinking of what concerned you, than of what concerned myself. I could not otherwise have failed mentioning the name of William, the only companion and friend I have had during your absence."

"The only one, Daisy?"

"Yes, Cornelius."

"I suppose you were a good deal together?"

"Yes, a great deal."

"Here or at Miss Murray's?"

"Neither at one nor at the other," I answered smiling. "We seldom went to Miss Murray's, and as Kate did not like William, nor he her, he never came here. I met him on the sands."

"How did you spend your time?"

"We played together."

"Played!"

"Yes, you know we were both quite young then; but as we grew older we left off playing."

"And what did you do then?" he asked uneasily.

"We walked on the beach, climbed up the cliffs, ran down again, sat when we felt tired and talked."

"Of what?"

"Of the sea; of anything."

There was a pause, then Cornelius said:

"He is your friend, you say."

"Yes, Cornelius; and though often rude to others, he is ever kind and gentle to me; he likes me, you know."

"Do you like him?"

"Very much."

He laid his hand on my head, and bent down on me a glance that seemed as if it longed to read my very heart.

"You like him?" he said in a low tone.

"Yes, Cornelius, I like him."

More he did not ask; more I did not dare to say, much as I longed to tell; I only ventured to observe:

"Do you not want to ask me anything else, Cornelius?"

"Nothing else," he replied with a sharp glance that made mine sink down abashed; "but I have a piece of advice to give you: appoint no more meetings with your friend. I do not mean that there was harm in those accidental interviews, in which of course there never passed anything but what you have told."

"Oh no, never."

"But discretion is needed by a young girl."

"Have I been indiscreet?"

"A little; but do not think I make much of it. It is a mere childish matter."

"You do not think anything else?"

"Nothing else," he said, with a look that again disconcerted me, "I have indeed advised—"

"Oh! speak not of advice," I interrupted eagerly. "You know that my pleasure is to please you, that I do my own will when I do yours, Cornelius."

"You believe that," he replied, "but can I, Daisy?"

"Put me to the test then!"

We stood side by side. He passed his arm around me, and drew me towards him.

"You bid me put you to the test," he said.

"Yes," I replied, but my heart beat fast.

"There was a time," he resumed with a look of jealous reproach, "when I was, I will not say the only friend you had, but the only friend you thought of or cared for."

I felt a sharp and sudden pang of pain, but I said nothing.

"Well!" he impatiently exclaimed.

"May I not write to him?" I replied, feeling that my colour came and went beneath his gaze.

He did not reply. It was plain he would have an entire sacrifice or none. He clasped me so close, that I was obliged to rest my head on his shoulder. As he bent over me, my look met his, and from the gaze I seemed to drink in all the strange and dangerous sweetness of sacrifice.

"Well!" he said again.

"Yes," I answered, "all—anything you like, Cornelius."

I trembled—for my blood rushed to my heart with something like pain and gladness blending in its rapid flow; but he only saw the tears which covered my face, and he exclaimed, with reproachful tenderness:

"You weep because I ask you to give up a childish past, which, childish as it is, I would give anything to annihilate. Oh! Daisy, Daisy!"

At once I checked my tears. He saw the effort, and, stooping, he pressed a long and lingering kiss on my brow.

"Oh! my darling!" he said, ardently, "do not regret it so much. If I will share your friendship with none, is it not because I mean to take on myself the exclusive care of your happiness? Trust in me—in that feeling be a child again. Alas! I sometimes fear that the calmness and serenity of childhood are not merely in your years, but also in your nature. Oh! if, without adding one day to your existence—one dark page to your experience—I could change this!"

I tried to smile, but I could not—I felt languid and wretched. My heart ached at what I had done—at William, given up so utterly, with scarcely a cause assigned. I wondered if Cornelius, knowing all, would have exacted the same sacrifice. Once or twice I tried to bring the discourse round to the point I wished; but he shunned this so carefully, that at length my eyes opened: Cornelius wished to know nothing. From that moment I was silent and resigned.

If endearing language, and every proof of an ardent affection, could have consoled me, I need not have grieved: but even sitting by Cornelius—- even listening to him—I was haunted by the image of William vainly waiting for me at the old meeting-place. I heard his voice reproachfully exclaiming—now, alas! with how much truth—"You have deceived me!"

In the course of the day, we received an invitation to take tea with Miss Murray, in honour of her nephew's return. I said I could not go, and Kate, with a smile, replied she would sacrifice herself, and allow Cornelius to remain and keep me company. We spent a quiet evening together. My head again ached slightly; I was glad of the pretence to lie on the sofa with closed eyes. Cornelius sat by me, holding my hand in his, and thus his sister found us on her return. She looked at us with a pleased face, and said it was well to be a spoiled child like me.

"By the bye," she carelessly added, "William Murray is as great a bear as ever. He had been out all day, and looked, when he came in, as if he longed to knock me down."

I think I replied, "Indeed." I know that soon after this I went up to my room, there to learn what new pangs can give to grief, and what new bitterness to tears—the sense of an affection betrayed.

CHAPTER VIII.

I sat to Cornelius as usual on the following day, but not a word did we exchange concerning what had passed. In the course of the afternoon he said he no longer wanted me; I left him, glad of a little solitude and liberty. He joined me in the garden as dusk was falling. He found me sitting on the bench studying Tasso. He asked me if we should not read together. I assented, but twice my tears fell on the page: he closed the book, and said sadly:

"Daisy, you need not weep; I release you from your promise."

I started slightly: he continued:

"I did not think your feelings were so deeply engaged, or I should never have put you to such a test. Come, do not weep; your time for tears is past; see your friend as much as you like, and let your pale, unhappy face reproach me no more that, unable to render you happy myself, I would not let another do it."

I could bear no more; every word he uttered pierced mo with a sharper pang. I hid my face in my hand and exclaimed:

"Cornelius, you are too good; I do not deserve this; I have seen William; he has but just left me."

I looked up, he turned rather pale; but never spoke one word.

"You are angry with me," I said.

"Angry with you!" he repeated, smiling sadly, but so kindly, that, impelled by the same sense of refuge which I had so often felt in my childish troubles, I threw my arms around his neck, and exclaimed in a voice broken by tears:

"Oh, Cornelius, I am so wretched."

"I am not angry, indeed I am not," he replied, sighing deeply.

"Oh! it is not that, Cornelius; William is again gone away, and if you knew all—Oh, what shall I do!"

I cried bitterly on his shoulder. He half rose as if to put me away; but he sat down again with fixed brow and compressed lips.

"What shall you do?" he echoed, "what others have done—you shall bear it."

I looked up, amazed at the stern bitterness of his tone, at the cold and inexorable meaning of his face, which had turned of a sallow paleness.

"But Cornelius," I exclaimed, much hurt, "I like him—"

"I don't believe it," he interrupted, biting his lip. "It is a dream—a fancy—the dream of a girl, of a mere child; all girls think they are in love; you have done like the rest."

I felt a burning blush overspread my face; my look sank beneath his; the hand which he had taken and still held, trembled in his; he dropped it and said:

"And is this the end of it all, Daisy? and do you really like that rough sailor, a mere boy too? Oh, Daisy!"

I conquered my scruples and my shame.

"Cornelius." I said, looking up at him, "I must speak to you openly once for all. I wanted to do so yesterday; you would not hear me then; pray hear me now."

"Why so?" he replied, with evident pain, "I know enough, more than enough."

"You do not know all."

"Then I can guess."

"No, I do not think you can."

"Well then, speak, Daisy, and do not linger."

"William, as I told you, has not long left me; he came to bid me good- bye, and also—but I must begin from the beginning."

"What else was it that he came for?" asked Cornelius.

"Let me first tell you the rest."

"Never mind the rest. What else did he call for?"

"I must go on my own way. I want you to judge of my conduct, as well as to know the issue. Do you remember yesterday all I told you concerning my acquaintance with William?"

"Every word."

"You are sure you have forgotten nothing?"

"Daisy," he exclaimed vehemently, "will you never tell me what he came for?"

His look, his tone, commanded a reply.

"To ask me whether I would not promise to marry him some day," I replied in a low tone.

There was a pause, during which I could hear the beating of my own heart.

"Well," at length said Cornelius, "did you give him that promise?"

"Guess!" I answered, and that he might not read the truth in my face, I averted it from his gaze.

"Guess!" he echoed, with a groan, "imprudent girl, I guess but too easily. Oh, Daisy! how could you pledge yourself, how could you promise that which may be the misery of your whole life."

"Cornelius, I did not promise."

"But you love him!" he exclaimed with a sort of despair, "and love is surer than vows."

In the reply which I then should have made, there was no cause for shame, yet my eyes sought the ground, my face burned, and I hesitated and paused. When I at length looked up, dreading to meet the glance of Cornelius, I perceived that his eyes were riveted on William Murray, who had come up the steep path unheard, and now stood leaning on the low wooden gate, looking at us sadly and gravely. I was the first to break the awkward pause that followed.

"I thought you were gone. William," I said, rising, and taking a step towards him.

"I could not make up my mind to it," he replied, giving me a look of half reproach. "I could not go without bidding you once more good-bye."

He held out his hand to me; I gave him mine across the gate. He took it, and keeping it clasped in his, he turned to Cornelius, and said with repressed emotion:

"I don't know why I should be ashamed of it—I am not ashamed of it—Mr. O'Reilly, I love her with my whole heart. I don't think there is another girl like her; at least I am very sure there is not another one for me. I think she likes me; but, hard as I begged, she would promise me nothing— she could not she said without your knowledge or consent; I said I wanted nobody's knowledge or consent, to like her. We parted rather angrily; but I thought better of it, and came back to speak to you, since she wished it. And look! even here in your presence, she takes her hand from me, lest you should not like it."

I did, indeed, withdraw my hand from his, as he spoke, partly because from friendship William had gone to love, partly because I had met the look of Cornelius, which disturbed me.

"Mr. O'Reilly," said William, looking at him very fixedly, "do you object?"

"No," coldly answered Cornelius.

William opened the gate, and stepped in with a triumphant look.

"Do you hear that, Daisy?" he exclaimed.

"Do not misunderstand me," quietly said Cornelius. "I do not object; but if Daisy wishes for my advice, I certainly advise her not to enter at seventeen into an engagement destined to last her whole life. The human heart changes; it will often loathe the very object of its former wishes, and often, too, learn to long too late for that which it once dreaded as utter misery."

"*I* shall not change!" exclaimed William, giving him an impatient look: "but of course if you advise Daisy against promises, there will be none. I need none to bind me to her; and if she will only promise to try and like me—"

"And why should she?" sharply interrupted Cornelius; "what have you done for her to deserve such a promise? What proof has she that you will always deserve it, even as much as you do now?"

"I'll tell you what, Mr. O'Reilly," said William, with sparkling eyes, "my opinion is, that though you make a fair show, like most of your countrymen, it is all a humbug, and that you want to keep Daisy for yourself!"

Cornelius laughed scornfully, as if disdaining to resent the petulant jealousy of a boy; but I saw his colour rise, and his brow knit slightly. I hastened to interfere; I stepped up to William; I looked up in his

face; I took his hands in mine, and pressed them to my heart.

"William," I said sadly, "why did you come back? I wish I had spoken more plainly: I love you, but not, indeed, as you mean; I love you as my friend, as a brother, but not otherwise."

"Not otherwise!" he said, seeking aw look; "that is hard, Daisy, not otherwise."

I turned my head away.

"And yet we have been such good friends!"

"And are still, William."

"Then be my best friend."

"Gladly."

"Well! what is to marry but to be best friends? Do I not like you more than any other creature? Would I not know you among a thousand? Have I a thought I would not tell you? Not one. And, indeed, I think you, too, like me more than you think now."

"No, William, I do not."

"Do not be in such a hurry to reply," he answered, with a wishful look; "it may take you longer to find out, than it did me."

In his earnestness he had forgotten all about the presence of Cornelius.
His importunity wrung the truth from me.

"William," I said, "this cannot be; I might promise to try to like you as you wish; but I could not keep that promise. There is a power and a charm that binds me to home, a tie that links me to Cornelius and to Kate, and which I cannot break even for your sake. Believe me, whilst I remain with them, I can love you very dearly; but if I were with you I should be too home-sick and too heart-sick to think of you, William. If we went out together, I know that even with my arm within yours, or your hand in mine, my eyes would ever be seeking out for them, my feet leading me to their dwelling. I like you, William, I like you dearly, but I cannot give you my whole heart."

William gave me one look; the tears rushed in his eyes; he dropped my hands.

"God bless you, Daisy," he said, and turned away. The gate closed on him; he slowly descended the path. I did not call him back, but sitting down on the bench, I hid my face in my hands and wept bitterly. I felt and felt truly that we had parted to meet no more; that my faithful companion and friend was lost to me, and the pleasant tie of my childhood and youth broken for ever.

For awhile Cornelius let me weep; then he did his best to soothe and console me. The very sound of his voice brought comfort to my heart; my tears lost their bitterness, at length they ceased to flow, and I could hear and speak with calmness.

"And so," said Cornelius, bending over me, his right hand clasping mine, his left resting on the back of the bench behind me, "and so it was only friendship after all which you felt for William Murray."

"You seem surprised, Cornelius."

"There was every appearance and every chance against it."

"I don't grant the chance."

"Because you have lived an isolated life, and know not that the first thing a youth and maiden, situated as you and William were, think of, is to get engaged as fast as they can."

"Was that what you thought yesterday, Cornelius?"

"Why did you not undeceive me?"

"Why did you not ask?"

"I did not like to put the question."

"Nor I to speak unquestioned. I had never dreamed that William, with whom I was so free, so friendly, with whom I played, picked up shells, and ran about, could think of such a thing. How could you, Cornelius?"

"Why not? he was your friend, and a fine young man, too."

"Yes," I replied, "and as good-looking as a very fair man can be. But his looks have nothing to do with what I mean, Cornelius."

"What is it you mean?"

"That he is a mere boy; Kate always called him a boy, and I always thought him one. You do not think I could have been so free with a young man. Indeed, no, Cornelius. And then he is a sailor!"

"Do you object to that?"

"Most decidedly."

"Why, what would you like, Daisy?"

"I don't know; but I know what I do not like, and a Lord Admiral himself would not tempt me."

"I had no idea you had so many good reasons for rejecting him," said Cornelius, smiling; "he is fair, a boy, and a sailor—have you anything else?"

"Yes, Cornelius," I replied, looking up into his face, "I have known him too long—almost as long as you."

"Indeed!" he said, abstractedly, "is old acquaintance so great a sin in your opinion, Daisy?"

"Not a sin, Cornelius; but I have liked William like a brother, and I cannot like him otherwise."

"Daisy, it seems to me that an old and known friend is in general much preferable to the stranger."

"That is a good reason, Cornelius, and I am talking of a feeling. Mine is so strong that, much as I like William, I feel a sort of relief in thinking we shall not meet in haste."

"Oh! Daisy," sadly said Cornelius, "do you impute that poor boy's affection for you, as a crime to him."

"Heaven forbid; but can I help feeling that the charm of our friendship is gone? He liked me one way, I liked him another; after that, what can there be between us? Could I again be free with him? I could not; and to be cold and constrained when I was once so trusting and so frank, would be worse than utter separation. I would rather never see him more, than feel my friendship for him breaking miserably away, Cornelius."

I spoke as I felt, with a warmth and earnestness that again made my eyes overflow. Cornelius heard me with an attentive look, then placing his hand on my arm, said, quietly—

"Oh, Daisy, what a lesson!"

"A lesson, Cornelius?"

"Yes, a lesson, which I, for one, shall not forget. If ever I find myself circumstanced as was your friend, Daisy, I shall have the wisdom not to cast away friendship before I am sure of love."

"Cornelius," I said, earnestly, "do you blame me?"

"No, no," he quickly replied.

"Because if you thought I should—"

"No," he interrupted; "not at all. Oh, Daisy! do you not see I am too selfish to wish to make a present of you to the first boy or man who chooses to take a fancy to you?"

"And I hope I know better than to leave you and Kate," I replied, confidently. "Oh, Cornelius!" I added, with sudden emotion, "how can daughters leave their father's house for that of a stranger?"

He was bending over me with the look and attitude which, even more than act or speech, imply the fond and caressing mood; but, on hearing this, he reddened, drew back, and said, in a short, vexed tone:—

"Don't be filial, Daisy."

"Don't be alarmed," I replied, smiling, "I have not forgotten that you called me your friend the other day, and I am going to avail myself of the privilege."

"Are you?" he answered, pacified at once.

"Yes, I am going to be very bold."

He smiled.

"To ask a great favour."

He looked delighted and inquisitive.

"You know," I continued, in my most persuasive accents, and passing my arm within his, "you know it is settled that I am always to remain with you and Kate; but—"

"But," he echoed.

"But is it settled that you are to remain with us?"

"Why not?" he replied, looking astonished.

"You spoke of Spain the other evening. What should you want to go to Spain for? I think it would be a great loss of time; besides—"

"Besides, Daisy?" he repeated, smoothing my hair.

"Besides, I want you to remain with us."

"For how long, Daisy?"

"For ever."

I said it, smiling, for I dreamt not he would consent.

"For ever," he repeated, with quiet assent.

I looked at him with breathless joy. He smiled.

"Ask me for something else," he said.

"I dare not," I replied, drawing in a long breath, "lest you should take back the first gift to punish my presumption."

"Your presumption! Oh, Daisy!"

I gave him a quick look; as our eyes met, I read in his the dangerous and intoxicating knowledge, that he who for seven years had been my master, now voluntarily abdicated that throne of authority where two so seldom sit in peace, and was calling me to something more than equality. My heart beat, my face flushed; I looked at him proudly.

"And so," I said, a little agitatedly, "I am really to be your friend. How good!—how kind! But I am not to obey you now?" I asked, breaking off.

"Don't name the word," he replied, impatiently.

"How odd!" I observed, both startled and amused. "How odd that I, who used to feel so much afraid of you, when you used to chide, punish, turn out of the room—"

"I fear," interrupted Cornelius, looking uneasy, "I was rather rude then."

"You were not always civil. You once called me a little monkey. Another time—"

"Pray don't!" he hastily observed, looking annoyed and disconcerted. "Tell me rather what I am to give you. Are there not shops at Ryde?"

"As if I should fancy anything out of a shop."

"And what is there that does not come out of a shop?"

"What a question for an artist!"

"Have I anything you would really fancy?" eagerly inquired Cornelius.

"Would you give me your picture, if I were to ask you for it?"

"Would you ask me for it?"

"No, for I want you to sell it."

"And will you not always want me to sell my pictures?"

"And is there nothing you will not sell?"

I alluded to his Italian drawings, from which Cornelius had often declared nothing should induce him to part. He understood me, for he smiled; but eluded the subject by asking if we should not go in. I assented. We entered the house, and spent, as usual, a quiet evening.

When I woke the next morning, the first object that met my eyes was the portfolio of Italian drawings, lying on the table by me. Never had I been so quick in dressing as I was then. I hastened downstairs to the parlour. Cornelius sat reading the newspaper by the table. I went up to him, and standing behind him, gently took it from his hand.

"Why so?" he said, demurring.

"Oh! you know. But I cannot thank you. All I can say is. I shall never forget that what you would not have given for money, when you wanted money, you gave to me for pure love and friendship. I shall never forget, Cornelius, when you are a rich man and a great man, that when you were but a poor, obscure artist, you gave me all a poor, obscure artist has to give."

He did not reply. I stood behind him, with my two hands leaning on the back of his chair. He took them, and gently clasped them around his neck. I stooped, and touching with my lips his bold and handsome brow, I could not help saying:

"Oh, my friend! shall I ever have another friend like you?"

"Indeed, I hope not," he replied, laughing: and in the glass opposite us, I saw Kate smiling, as she stood looking on in the half gloom of the open door.

The heart of youth is light. I liked William. I was sorry for him, but I did not let my remembrance of him press on me too sadly. Had I wished it, it would scarcely have been in my power to be unhappy, when I saw and felt that he who was dearest to me of God's creatures, now loved me as blindly and as devotedly as ever I had loved him.

CHAPTER IX.

At the end of a fortnight, Kate spoke of returning to our old home in the Grove, which had been vacant for some time. She resolved to go first with Jane and set all to rights, and to leave Cornelius and me to the care of a deaf and half-blind old dame. It was no use, she said, to bring us in the mess. When all was ready, she would write to us; and, as the furniture was not particularly valuable, we could just lock up Rock Cottage, and thus the labours of Cornelius need not be interrupted. He was then working hard at his Young Girl Reading, and entered quite into the spirit of this arrangement.

When Kate had been gone above ten days, she wrote to say we might leave whenever we pleased. I felt delighted, but noticed, with concern, that the prospect of our return affected Cornelius very differently. For several days he looked pale and unwell, yet there appeared about him no sign of physical ailment. He seemed in a strange state of restlessness and fever, and wandered about the house like an uneasy spirit. Two or three times he took long lonely walks, from which he came in so worn and languid-looking, that I once asked uneasily:

"What ails you, Cornelius?"

"Nothing. How flushed you look. Is anything the matter with you?"

"I have been stooping packing up—that is all."

I returned to the task. He moved away, then came back several times, as if to address me, but never spoke. At tea time, I noticed, with concern, that he touched nothing. I said I was sure he was ill. He denied it; but when our aged servant bad removed the tray, he came and sat by me, made me put by my work, and, taking my two hands in his, began looking at my face with a strange troubled gaze—like one who beholds things in a dream—far and dim.

"What is it?" I asked, a little uneasily.

"How pale you look!" was his only reply.

"I feel tired. Sewing there after tea, my eyes seemed to close involuntarily."

"They are closing now. You need sleep, poor child. Go up to your room."

"Have you nothing to say to me?"

"It will do to-morrow. Go! a long night's rest will do you so much good.
Sleep well and long."

I said it was too early yet, but even as I spoke, a heaviness not to be conquered by will, pressed down my eyelids. He urged the point and I yielded. How soon I slept that night; how long, deep and peaceful were my slumbers! how light and happy I felt when the morning sun awoke me, and opening my window, I drank in with delight the air still cool with the dews of night. I came down in a happy mood, and ran out to join Cornelius in the garden. He stood by the pine tree, smoking and looking at the sea in a fit of abstraction so deep, that he never heard me, until I passed my arm within his, and said:

"How are you to-day?"

"Quite well, child."

"Then let us have a good, long walk," I said eagerly. "Let us visit once more our old haunts, and take a few green images to smoky London. Shall we?"

"As you please, Daisy."

"I do please. I have a pastoral longing for breezy freshness, lanes, dells, and streams flowing in the shade. So let as go in to breakfast."

He yielded, but with little sympathy for my impatience, he lingered at the meal for an hour and more. When I sought to hurry him, he invariably replied:

"There is time enough."

I went up to dress; when I came down again, I found him in the garden, walking up and down the path. I joined him, and said "I was quite ready."

"Are you?" he quietly answered and continued his walk.

I followed him, impatient at his dilatoriness; but he seemed in no haste, for as he might have spoken on any other morning, he said:

"I like this garden, Daisy. Spite of the sea air, flowers seem to thrive here. I never saw a finer rose than this. Take it."

He gathered it, and gave it to me as he spoke. I murmured a little. This rose was to have been the pride of the bouquet I meant to take to Kate.

"There are plenty left," he replied, gathering a few more; then, looking at his watch, carelessly said:

"It was time to go."

I asked if we should take the path that led to the beach.

"Why not go by Leigh, you were wishing for green fields!"

"True; besides we can come back by the sands."

He did not reply. I took his arm; we traversed the house, and went down the steep path, which had seen some of our first walks in the pleasant lanes and meadows of Leigh.

"Only think," I observed after a while, "I have brought the flowers you gave me. They will be quite withered by the time we are home again."

Cornelius stopped abruptly, and held me back.

"Mind that stone," he said, "you might have hurt yourself. Why did you not look before you?"

"Because I feel as if I trod on air," I replied gaily, "and when one feels so, it seems quite ridiculous to

trouble one's self with stones, &c. I don't know when I have been in a mood so light and happy. I feel as if this green lane need have no end or turning, and this pleasant day no sunset."

He did not answer. My flights of fancy won no response from his graver mood; the dazzling brightness of the deep blue sky, the green freshness of the fields, seemed lost upon him, lost the charm and sweetness of the day. But even his unusual seriousness could not subdue the buoyancy and life which I felt rising within me. My blood flowed, as it only flows in youth or in spring, light, warm and rapid, making of every sensation a brief delight, of every aspect and change of nature an exquisite enjoyment, tempered with that under-current of subtle pain which runs through over-wrought emotions, and subdues at their very highest pitch the sweetest and purest joys of mortal sense. I walked on, like one in a dream, scarcely heeding where we went. At length Cornelius stopped, and said:

"Shall we not rest here awhile?"

We stood in that green and lonely nook, by the banks of the quiet stream where we had once lingered through the hours of a summer noon. It so chanced that though we had since then often passed by the spot, we had never made it our resting-place. The thought of once more spending here an hour or two was pleasant. I took off my bonnet and suspended it from the branches of the willow; I sat again beneath it; Cornelius unconsciously took the very attitude in which I remembered him—half reclining on the bank, with his brow resting on the palm of his hand. The same bending trees above, with their glimpses of blue sky; the same clear stream flowing on, with its silent world below, and its green wilderness beyond; the same murmur of low and broken sounds around us; the same sweet sense of freshness and solitude made past weeks seem like one unbroken summer day. I felt that sitting there, I could forget how quickly pass on hours, how rapid is the course of time.

"Daisy!" suddenly said Cornelius, looking up, "how is it you do not ask me what I had to tell you last night?"

"I had forgotten all about it," I answered, smiling, "What is it,
Cornelius?"

He did not reply at once, but again taking my hands in his, he looked at me so sadly, that my heart sank within me.

"Cornelius," I exclaimed, "you have not news—of—Kate?"

"No," he quickly replied, "I have sad news for you, my poor child; but
Kate is well."

"What is it then? What is it, Cornelius? Has she lost her money? Is the house burned down? What is it?"

"Nothing like this, Daisy; you would never guess—1 must tell you. God alone knows how hard I find it. Daisy, we are going to part."

My arms fell down powerless; I did not speak; I did not weep; I was stunned with the blow. An expression full of trouble and remorse passed over his face.

"What have I done?" he exclaimed in an agitated tone, "I wished to spare you until the last moment. Oh! Daisy, for God's sake do not look so."

I felt, and I dare say I looked, almost inanimate. He took me in his arms and bending over me, eagerly begged me to forgive him.

"It was to spare you, my darling," he said, "I was going to tell you last night, but I thought I would let you sleep in peace, and I kept the weary secret to myself, as I have done these three days."

I heard him drearily. It was true then, an actual, dread reality. I summoned strength to ask—

"Why must we part, Cornelius?"

"Why?" he echoed sadly.

"You must not go, I will not let you," I exclaimed passionately, "or if you go, you must take me with you. I have money of my own; I will be no cost to you, but I will not leave you."

He wanted to speak; I laid my hand on his lips.

"I tell you that you must either stay at home or take me with you," I said wilfully, "I too want to see Spain."

"Daisy, I am not going to Spain."

"Where then? To Italy? What for? Who have you left there that is so very dear? Oh! I see! I see! Go, Cornelius, go." And I disengaged myself with wounded pride from the embrace he could find it in his heart to bestow, with that heart full—as I thought in the jealousy of the moment—of another.

"That's right, Daisy!" he replied bitterly, "that's right! Make me feel to the end the fever and torment of the last two months."

"Are you or are you not going away to marry?" I said, confronting him.

"Marry!" he echoed in an impatient and irritated tone, "Marry! I don't think of it."

A load was raised from my heart. I breathed. I again. His marriage was the only evil to which I could see no remedy.

By the fright it had given me, I perceived how much I had dreaded it; but a vague instinct forbade me to show him this. I quickly changed the subject.

"Take me with you," I said entreatingly, "I will give you no trouble."

"Trouble! Oh, that indeed I were going away and you with me," he half groaned. "Blessed would be that trouble; too sweet, too delightful the task of bearing you away, alone with me, to some far land."

"Cornelius," I said, "tell me all at once. Since you are not going away— what is it?"

"I suppose," he answered after a brief pause, "you know, though you have never alluded to it, that this park before us is your grandfather's; that the house of which we can discern the roof through this grove of elm and beech, is Thornton House. I am taking you there now."

"But I shall go back to Rock Cottage with you?" I exclaimed eagerly. "I shall go to London with you, and live there in the house of Kate. Shall I not?"

He did not answer; but he half averted his troubled face; his gaze shunned mine.

"Cornelius," I said, clinging to him, "I will not go and live with Mr. Thornton, I will not. I don't love him, and I love you and Kate as my life. He treated me unkindly, and you took me and reared me. Unless you turn me out of your home, I will not leave it for his."

I spoke with passion and vehemence; holding fast to him, as if to brave the power that would seek to divide us.

"Do not speak so wildly," he replied in a soothing tone; "God knows I wish not to compel you—you are free. Daisy."

"Then I stay with you and Kate," I cried throwing my arms around his neck.

"Will you?" he said with a wistful look, and pressing me to his heart for a moment; but the next he put me away with a deep sigh, and added:

"No, Daisy, you cannot, and would not if you could. Do not interrupt me: I have much to say, and I must go far back. You know how your parents married?"

"Secretly, I believe."

"Yes: one evening your mother, then a girl of your age, left her father's house; she never came back, and died, soon after your birth, a disobedient, unforgiven child."

I was sitting by Cornelius with my hand in his, and my head resting on his shoulder.

"He is not my father," I thought, "yet never could I forsake him thus."

He continued:

"This you know, but I scarcely think you know how bitterly your father repented this act of his youth. He often spoke of it to me. 'Cornelius, never rob a man of his child,' he said, 'it is a great sin.' He was right, Daisy; it is a great sin; I felt it then; I feel it far more now; for though you are not my child, I have reared you, and I know that affection is jealous; that to resign a daughter to a stranger, must always be bitter, but that to have her actually stolen from you; to be robbed of the pleasant thing which has for years been your delight and pride, to feel that it is gone beyond recall, the property of another, I know that this is too sharp a pang for speech, almost for thought. I have thought of such a thing; I have

thought that another man might step in between you and me, that he might rob me, whilst I looked on powerless and deserted. My God!" he suddenly added, pressing me closer to him, his eyes kindling, his lips trembling, "I have also thought that if it were not for your sake, there was nothing I would not have the heart to do to that man."

"You have thought that?" I said, reproachfully, "as if such a thing could ever happen, Cornelius."

"If I speak so," he replied, "it is to show you what may be the feelings of the wronged father, and when he is a high-minded man like your father, of him by whom he had been wronged. It was the knowledge of this that made me take you to Mr. Thornton. Oh, how could I be so blind as to call in a stranger to share with me the exclusive and precious privilege Heaven had bestowed, but which I knew not then how to prize! You know, Daisy, that when you were at Mrs. Gray's, I wrote to Mr. Thornton, to obtain back again the boon my folly had forfeited; he cared little for you; he knew you were fretting to return; he consented, but on a condition, to the fulfilment of which I pledged my word—that word, Daisy, which it is death to a man's honour to break—that, whenever he wished it, you were his to claim. He was abroad then, but he returned about a week ago, and his first act has been to write and remind me of my promise."

"You pledged yourself for me, Cornelius?" I said dismayed.

"Oh! Daisy, forgive me. I acted as I thought your father would have wished me to act; besides, I could not have had you otherwise."

"And Mr. Thornton actually wants me!" I exclaimed desperately.

"Yes," sadly replied Cornelius.

"But I do not want him; I will not have him, or his wealth, Cornelius."

"He offers you no wealth, my poor child. Every one knows that his extravagance has made him poor; the estate is mortgaged and entailed; his personal property is small; he has little to give, nothing to bequeath. He is still, as when you knew him, wrapped up in his books."

"Then what does he want me for, Cornelius?"

"To be the charm of his home, and the delight of his heart and eyes," replied Cornelius, in a voice full of love, fondness, and sorrow. "To be to him all that you have been, and never more can be to me. I knew not how to value you formerly; and now that you have become all I could imagine, I am not allowed to possess you in peace! Scarcely have I recovered from the dread of seeing you throw yourself away on a mere boy, scarcely do I deem myself secure, when peril comes from the quarter whence I least feared it, and I am despoiled of my heart's best treasure."

"If you liked me," I said, in a low tone, "you would not, because you could not give me up."

"If I liked you!" began Cornelius, but he said no more.

"Yes, if you liked me!" I exclaimed in all the passion of my woe; "if you liked me, Cornelius, you would feel what I feel—that such a separation is like death. Tell me that your art requires your absence, I can bear it; tell me that you are too poor to keep me, that I must go, and earn my bread amongst strangers, and I shall bear that, too; for I shall look to a happy future, and a blessed reunion. But this—this, Cornelius, my very heart shrinks from it. I feel that you are to follow one path; and that, though my very being clings to you and Kate, I must tread in another, and see you both for ever receding from before my aching eyes. I am not yet eighteen, Cornelius, and I am so happy! I cannot afford to waste my youth, and throw away my happiness; and if you cared for me, would you not feel so, too?"

I spoke with involuntary reproach.

"Oh, Daisy!" he exclaimed so scornfully that I immediately repented, "you think me indifferent, because, not to add to your grief, I am silent on mine. You speak of your sorrow; you do not ask yourself what will be to me the cost of this separation. How shall I return alone to the home we left together this morning? What shall I say to Kate—to Kate who reared you—when she asks me for her child'? Why here am I actually giving up to a total stranger, the very thing I most long to keep; here am I taking you from my home, and leading you to the home of another; here am I placing you in the very circumstances that are likely to make me lose you for ever. You are young, Daisy, very young. You will be flattered, caressed, seduced out of old affections, almost unconsciously; and I shall not be there to guard my rights. I know that absence, time, the world will conspire to efface me from your heart; I know it, and yet I accept this."

"But why so?" I asked; "why so?"

"Because," he replied, with a fixed look, and compressed lips, "because to keep even you, Daisy, with the sense of my own engrossing selfishness, violated honour and trust betrayed upon me, would be gall and wormwood to my soul."

"But it is not you who keep me, Cornelius, if it is I who insist on remaining; if I disobey you, brave your authority, say you had no right to pledge yourself for me, and that, whether you like it or not, I will stay with Kate, what can you do then?"

His colour came and went; he turned upon me a strange, troubled look; his lip quivered; he took my hand in his, and almost crushed it, then dropped it as if it were fire.

"Tempt me not," he said, in a low tone, turning away his look as he spoke. "Tempt me not, for God's sake. I am but flesh and blood—I cannot always answer for myself. There are bounds to self-denial, and limits to self-subjection."

I did not answer, but I passed my arm around his neck, and I laid my head on his shoulder.

"Daisy, Daisy, my child!" he exclaimed, "do you know what you are doing?
Do you know what it is you want to make me do?"

I did not reply; but I wept and sobbed freely. He looked at me one moment, turned away, looked again, and turned away no more. He pressed me to his heart—he bent over me—he hushed my grief—he kissed away my tears.

"Be it so," he said, desperately. "I have resisted your dangerous tenderness, I cannot resist your grief. Yes, I will break my word to the living, my duty to the dead. I will let it be said of Cornelius O'Reilly, to gratify his own desires he betrayed his trust—he meanly deceived the ignorant affection of the child he had reared. Let those alone dare judge me who, like me, have been tempted."

"Then you do keep me!" I exclaimed, laughing and crying for joy.

"Oh! yes, I do keep you," he replied, bending on me a look that seemed as if he would attract and gather my whole being into his—a look that, through all my blindness, startled me: but, as it lasted—for a moment only. "Yes, I keep you, Daisy Burns. You have asked to remain with me, and you shall. I will bind you to my home and to me by bonds neither you nor others shall dare to break. Again I say, let those alone who have passed through this fiery trial, and conquered, dare to judge me."

I wondered at the repressed vehemence of his tone—at the defiance of his look—at the mingled trouble and scorn which I read in his countenance, usually so pleasant and good-humoured. I wondered, for I felt not thus, as if striving against my own wishes, and arguing with some hidden enemy. With my head still reclining on his shoulder, my hand in his, my mind, heart, and whole being conscious that we were not to be severed—I felt steeped in peace and serene happiness. My eyelids, heavy with recent tears, could almost have closed in slumber, so deep were now the calm and repose that had followed this storm of grief.

Therefore I wondered—I could not but wonder—that if he, too, felt happy, there should be in his look and mien so few of the tokens of joy— for, surely, joy never wore that flushed aspect and troubled glance. It shocked me to see that the meaning of his face was both guilty and resolute—that he looked like one who does a wrong thing, who knows it, but who will do that thing, come what will. He detected my uneasy look, and said, quickly:

"Never mind, Daisy; I take on myself the deed and the sin. I care not for the world's opinion—I care not for its esteem."

"The world, Cornelius! Why what can it say?"

"Accuse me of selfishness. But I say it again: I care not."

I laughed. He gave me a look of pain.

"Do not laugh so," he said; "do not. I never yet heard that light, girlish laugh of yours, but it presaged some new irritating torment. What are you going to say now?"

I saw his temper was chafed. I answered, soothingly:

"What can I say, Cornelius, save that only your sensitive conscience could imagine the accusation of selfishness? Those who think you selfish must be crazed. Why here am I to keep, a girl of seventeen, with little or no money, and you not a rich man yet! Why any other man would think me a bore—a burden—and be glad enough to get rid of me. But you are so disinterested, so generous, that you

cannot see that."

I felt more than I saw the change which these words wrought on Cornelius. It was not that his look turned away; it was not that the arm which encircled me, released its hold; but it was as if a cold shadow suddenly stepped in between us: the life and warmth departed from his clasp; the light and meaning of his look retreated inwardly, to depths where mine could not follow.

"You think me disinterested and generous," he said at length. "Do you mean that I do not care about you?"

"No, Cornelius, I know better; but your affection is disinterested. Oh! my friend, my more than father, though you could not be my father, how often have I felt that other girls might well be jealous of me, if they but knew, as I know, what it is to have a friend, who is not bound to you by the ties of blood, yet in whom you can trust utterly; on whom you can rely without fear—as I do with you, Cornelius."

"Do not," he replied, half pushing me away, and averting his face, "do not, Daisy. I dare not trust myself more than I would trust any other man; and, if I were you, I would not trust the man who could break his word—even for my sake."

The words startled me; they woke a chord which, do what I would, I could not lull to sleep or silence. His look and tone as he said, "if I were you, I would not trust the man who could break his word—even for my sake," told me that the sting of his broken word and tarnished honour had already entered, and would never again leave his soul. Then I saw and felt my selfishness in not redeeming his pledge, in dragging him down from that just pride which he took in his unblemished life. I saw, I felt it all, and there rose within me one of those agonizing struggles without which we should not know the power of life; which are the new and bitter birth of our being.

Kate and Cornelius O'Reilly had the deep religious feeling of their race. They made not religion the subject of frequent speech, but they bore its love in their hearts; above all, dear and sacred in their home, was held the name of their Redeemer and their God. His spirit, the spirit of self- denial and sacrifice, appeared in their lives, obscured by human weakness no doubt, but a living spirit still. How much had Kate done for her brother! How much had that brother done for me! What had I ever done for either? Nothing, nothing. And now that the hour was come, the hour of self-renonciation, I refused to bear my burden: I cast it on Cornelius. I knew how sacred he held a promise; how galling it would be for him to feel within himself the consciousness of violated truth. I knew it, and with this knowledge came the dread conviction that I was not free; that duty, honour, love, all enjoined the same fatal sacrifice.

I said nothing; but Cornelius could feel me, for I felt myself, trembling from head to foot; there were dews on my brow, and a death-like chill had seized my heart; for a moment the inward struggle, "I cannot leave him,"—"thou must," seemed like what we imagine of the spirit torn from the flesh; as bitter and as brief. I submitted silently; but Cornelius required not speech to know it. For a moment he turned pale; for a moment his lips parted, as if to detain me; but he checked the impulse, and said not a word.

I could not weep now; my grief was too bitter. I knew I was turning away from the warmth of my life, to enter a barren, sunless region; and I already felt upon me its desolateness and its gloom. The sacrifice was made; but in no humble, no resigned spirit. My whole being revolted against it with mute and powerless resentment. A captive in the subtle net of fate, I felt as if I could have struggled, even unto death, against those slender bonds which I did not dare to break. Cornelius watched me silently, and read on my face what was passing within me.

"Daisy," he said, in a low, sad tone, "remember we are not men or women until our hearts are mastered, until our passions—ay, the best and purest—lie subdued."

The words subdued my resentful mood to a sorrow more tender and holy. My burden was heavy, but was it more than I could bear? Daughter of the cross, should I dare to repine? I yielded; I tasted the bitter joy which those who bravely drain the cup of sacrifice find in its dregs—a strange sort of sweetness, to be felt, not described, and, alas! not to be envied.

"Cornelius!" I replied, and my faltering voice grew more firm as I uttered his name—"Cornelius, I am willing. Your word shall be redeemed!"

I was going to rise, but lightly resting his hand on my shoulder, he detained me. He stooped, and laid his lips on my brow. He did not say so, but I knew that this was his farewell kiss—the seal set on the love, care, and tenderness of years. The embrace lasted a moment only; the next he had risen. I rose too; I tied my bonnet-strings; he helped me to wrap my scarf around me: mechanically I picked up the flowers he had given me; then silently took his arm, and left the spot where I had decided my destiny.

CHAPTER X.

To reach Thornton House, we had to follow the windings of the stream for some time; cross a one-arched bridge that spanned it, then enter the solitary path that led to the old lodge and iron gate. We had not far to go, but my heart seemed to sink with every step I took; as I perceived the dark trees of the park rising before us, a sudden faintness seized me. I stopped short, and laying my head on the shoulder of Cornelius, I said:

"Let me cry before you give me up, Cornelius; let me cry—or my heart will break."

"I give you up!" he echoed, his eyes kindling, "no mortal man shall make me do that, Daisy. I shall redeem my word by taking you to your grandfather; but from the moment I leave Thornton House, my mind shall have but one thought, my will but one aim: to get you back."

Struck with his defiant tone, I raised my head, and checking my tears, drew back to see him better. He met my look firmly.

"It is fair play," he said, "so long as you are mine, I will not break my pledge by breathing a word to keep or secure you—even with you for the stakes, I would scorn to cheat—but once he fancies you his, I say you are mine, to win if I can. He may guard you as jealously as ever a Turk his Sultana—I shall still outwit and defy him—cost me what it will— come what may—I will have you back again."

A slight frown knit his brow; his brown eyes were bent on me, with a look both ardent and resolute; there was will and confidence in the smile which curled his lip, and power and daring in his mien.

"Cornelius," I said a little startled, "how will you do it?"

"Leave that to me, Daisy."

"Then, if this is no parting after all," I observed rather perplexed, "why were you so grieved, and why have you let me grieve, Cornelius?"

His face fell. He sighed profoundly.

"Why?" he said, "why? because, alas! my own will cannot do all. Oh, Daisy! I dread you. I dread you deeply! What avails it to me that I may prevail against others, when with a word you can render me powerless?"

He gave me a look of mingled anxiety and doubt. I wanted him to explain himself; but he would not go beyond saying that on me it all depended; an assertion which he repeated with a sigh. I believed him, and passed from grief to sudden gladness.

"Then consider it settled," I said laughing joyously. "I am not leaving you, Cornelius. I am going on a week's visit or so to my good grandpapa. Tell Johnstone to send me only the little black trunk, but to put my work in it. I want to have it ready for Kate."

We were standing in the path. Cornelius looked down, with a fond yet troubled smile, into my upraised face.

"Go on!" he observed, "it sounds too delightful to be true. It is but a dream which the first rude touch of reality will dispel; and yet I like to delude myself and listen; go on!"

I did go on, laughing at his credulity.

"You must write to Kate," I observed, "and tell her that you are waiting for me. I shall not keep you long; just a week for form's sake."

"God grant it," he replied fervently; and we resumed our walk.

We found Thornton House as gloomy and neglected as ever. The court was overgrown with grass and weeds; the fountain was still a ruin; the ivy grew thick and dark on the walls, and the yews and cypresses behind only looked more sombre and melancholy for rising, as they did now, in the gay sunlight.

When Cornelius knocked at the door, I seemed to expect that the little servant would again open and attempt to oppose our entrance; but, in her stead, a tall, straight housemaid appeared in the gloomy aperture; and, on hearing the name of Cornelius, showed us at once into the same room where, seven years before, we had been ushered by her predecessor. And there, too, surrounded by his books, his

papers, maps, globes, stuffed animals, insects, geological specimens, shells, and scientific instruments, we found my grandfather, seated in his arm-chair and unchanged, save for a few more wrinkles.

Mr. Thornton received us with abrupt courtesy. When the preliminary greetings had been exchanged, he gave me a sharp look, and startled me with the remark addressed to Cornelius—

"They are not at all alike."

Implying, I supposed, that my former and my present self were two individuals.

"Not at all," replied Cornelius, who had the faculty of entering at once into the peculiarities of those with whom he conversed.

"Of course you are sure it is the right one," suggested Mr. Thornton.

"Quite sure."

"She has grown," was the next observation of my grandfather; as if the fact astonished him.

Cornelius did not answer. My heart sank to see him rise; he laid his hand on my arm, and said gravely —

"Sir, four years ago, I pledged my word that whenever you wished for this young girl, you should have her. Here she is. I have kept my word."

"And mean to keep it still?" hinted Mr. Thornton, darting a quick and piercing look from me to him.

Cornelius reddened, and replied shortly—

"It is kept, Sir."

"And the future may shift for itself. Humph! Well, I suppose you are glad enough to be rid of her! I remember you found her in the way four years ago. So, fancying she would still be more inconvenient as she grew up, I thought I would relieve you from her altogether."

He spoke with ironical politeness. Cornelius gave him a defiant look— which Mr. Thornton received with evident amusement—then he turned to me, glanced at me significantly, pressed my hand, bade me a quiet adieu, bowed haughtily to my grandfather, and was gone. I felt confident that this parting was but to lead to a pleasanter reunion, and yet life is so uncertain—its unhappy chances so often outweigh the more fortunate, that I grew sad, spite of all my confident hopes.

"Humph!" said Mr. Thornton, looking at me from under his shaggy eyebrows.
"Don't you want to go up to your room?" he added, abruptly.

"I should like it," I replied, not much pleased with his manner.

He rang. A tall, straight housemaid appeared.

"Marks!" said Mr. Thornton, briefly.

"Please, Sir!"

"Mrs. Marks, you fool! Well, why do you stare?"

"I want to know what about Mrs. Marks, Sir."

"Tell her to come, of course."

The girl never moved. He asked, impatiently:

"What are you waiting for, creature?"

"Please, Sir, Mrs. Marks will not come."

"She will not come!"

"No, Sir; she has just had her luncheon. Mrs. Marks never stirs after her luncheon."

She spoke confidently. Mr. Thornton reclined back in his chair, uttered an amazed "Ah!" but, recovering himself, he said, with great suavity:

"Charlotte, be so good as to give my compliments to Mrs. Marks, and say that I shall feel indebted to

her if she will favour me with her company for a few minutes, now," he added, with some stress.

Charlotte shook her head sceptically; but she obeyed, and proved more successful than she had anticipated, for, ere long, the door again opened, and admitted Mrs. Marks. In dress and appearance, she looked exactly the same as seven years before.

"Mrs. Marks," said Mr. Thornton, with great politeness, "will you have the kindness to show Miss Burns, my grand-daughter, to her room?"

Mrs. Marks gave me a look of her cold, fishy eye, and said, "Yes, Sir," in a tone of ice.

I saw she remembered me with no pleasant feelings. I followed her out of the study, determined that both she and my grandfather should learn I was no longer a child. She took me to a room on the first floor, large, but plainly furnished, and informed me "this was my apartment."

"Thank you," I replied, quietly; "but it is too gloomy. I prefer the room
I had formerly."

Mrs. Marks did not understand. Mrs. Marks was in a state of obliviousness concerning all that had passed before this day. Mrs. Marks knew Miss Burns, the grand-daughter of Mr. Thornton; of the obstinate little girl whom she had called Burns, Mrs. Marks had no recollection, nor of anything concerning her. Without heeding this, I described to her so minutely the locality of my old apartment, that she could not feign ignorance; but when, in answer to her objection that it was "quite empty," I civilly requested her to cause the furniture around me to be removed to it as soon as possible, Mrs. Marks looked figuratively knocked down. I left her in that prostrate condition, to go down and speak to my grandfather.

I could not understand why he had so suddenly claimed me, and what he wanted with me. He did not look as if he liked me a bit better than formerly; certainly not as if inclined to make me "the charm of his home, and the delight of his heart and eyes." "There is something in it," I thought. "Cornelius may fancy that every body is as fond of me as he is, and look for no other motive; but I am sure there is, and I must find it out, if it were only to help him in his mysterious design."

I knocked at the door of the study, and, receiving no answer, opened it and looked in. My grandfather never raised his eyes from his book. Unwilling to disturb him, I entered quietly, and, without speaking, sat down by the window. It was a broad, arched casement, partly veiled with ivy hanging down from above, and facing a magnificent avenue of beech trees that stretched far on into the park. They communicated some of their solemn gloom to the apartment; and the contrast of that green woodland aspect with the dusty tomes and air of venerable learning within; of that solitary look out, and of the quiet, white-headed figure bending so intently over its open volume, struck me. "There is a pretty picture for Cornelius," I thought. "I must bear every detail of it in my mind's eye to tell him when we meet." The contrast recalled me to the object of my presence in my grandfather's apartment. I coughed gently; Mr. Thornton started, looked up, and said, "Ah!" with evident astonishment. I looked at him quietly.

"Well!" he ejaculated.

"Yes," I replied.

"Yes what?" he asked, impatiently.

I thought I might have asked, "Well what?" with as much reason; but I merely said:

"Yes, Sir, I am here."

"What for?"

"To speak to you, if you please."

"What about?"

"Is there any lady in the house besides myself?"

"No."

"Is there to be?"

"No."

"Am I to keep house?"

"Mrs. Marks is my housekeeper."

"Then what am I to do?"

"Nothing."

This was not encouraging; but I persisted.

"Then there is nothing for me to do?"

"Nothing."

"Are you quite sure?" I asked, earnestly.

He gave me a surprised look. I continued:

"Are you quite sure I cannot be of any use to you, Sir?"

"Of none," was his somewhat contemptuous reply.

"Well then," I rejoined, with great alacrity, "as I am not to keep house, not to do anything, don't you think, Sir, you had better send me back to Mr. and Miss O'Reilly? You know," I added, impressively, "that I must be of some expense to you here, whereas with them, I should cost you nothing at all; and, though it was very kind of you to think of me, I assure you they did not find me in the way."

My grandfather drew in a long breath, and, folding his arms, looked at me from head to foot.

"So you are not an hour here, and you already want to be off," he said.

"But since you don't want me—" I remonstrated.

"I beg your pardon—I do want you," he replied, with ironical politeness; "and the proof I do want you, is, that I have taken the trouble of procuring you, and that I mean to keep you."

He spoke as if I were a piece of furniture. I felt very indignant, and reddening, asked:

"May I know, Sir, what you want me for?"

"No," was the laconic and decisive reply.

"Am I to stay here whether I like or not?"

"Precisely."

"I shall appeal to Mr. O'Reilly," I exclaimed indignantly.

"The law does not recognise Mr. O'Reilly," composedly answered Mr. Thornton; "he is nothing to you, not even your guardian. I am your grandfather; and the law," he added, giving me an emphatic look, "recognizes me and my power until you are of age."

He seemed to think this sufficient, and again bent over his book. His last words had sunk on my heart like lead. Was it true? could it be true? Did the law give so much power to Mr. Thornton? and, provided he did not ill-use me, would it make me for four years the captive of his pleasure? Could Cornelius really deliver me from this bondage, or, as I began to fear, had he deceived himself, and deceived me? I repented having spoken so openly to Mr. Thornton: and hoping to repair this error, and conciliate him by a more submissive behaviour, I lingered in the study, and took up one of the dusty old volumes scattered everywhere around me. It was a Latin work, but an English treatise on mineralogy had been bound up with it; and this I began reading, or rather I attempted to read. My eyes ever kept wandering from the page down the avenue before me. From its direction, I was sure it led to that quiet stream by which Cornelius and I had sat that same day. In thought I leave the room, hurry down the avenue; the stream is crossed. I follow silent lanes, and traverse lonely fields; a quiet path brings me to Rock Cottage; the garden gate is open; the door stands ajar; I look in; Cornelius is sitting with his back turned to me; I utter his name; he looks round.

The sound of the key turning in the lock, woke me from my happy dream. I looked up; Mr. Thornton's chair was vacant; I ran to the door; it resisted my efforts; my grandfather, forgetting, I suppose, my presence, had locked me in. I looked for means of egress, and saw none but the window. I remained patient for about a quarter of an hour; but perceiving that Mr. Thornton did not return, and, from the fact of being shut in, feeling of course the most eager desire to get out, I opened the window, and stepping on the sill, prepared to jump down; it was higher from the ground than I had expected; I looked and hesitated a little.

"Allow me to assist you," said a very pleasant voice.

I looked round, and saw standing by the window a handsome, gentlemanly man of thirty-five or thereabouts. He had light brown hair, a delicate moustache of the same hue, very fine blue eyes, and a classical profile. As he stood before me, politely offering me his hand to assist my descent, yet scarcely able to repress a smile at my predicament, I fancied I recognized in him the "young Mr. Thornton" I had formerly mistaken for Cornelius. I could not retreat; it would have looked foolish to refuse; so I accepted his assistance, and, as I alighted, said explanatorily:

"My grandfather, I mean Mr. Thornton, had forgotten I was there, and locked me in."

"Miss Burns!" he said smiling, "I guessed as much."

I gave him a look implying, "Who are you?"

"Your cousin Edward Thornton," he answered bowing.

"I thought so;" I replied gravely, "I remember letting you in by the side-door."

"And I have been so fortunate as to help to let you out through the window."

I laughed at the turn our discourse was taking. There was a well-bred ease in his manner, sufficient of itself to banish all shyness.

"My dilemma," he said quietly, "is very different from yours, Miss Burns; I am in the same unfortunate position, in which you found me seven years ago: I cannot get in. I have tried three doors—in vain."

"Here is a fourth," I replied pointing to a low side-door. He knocked against it with his cane, but received no reply.

"Decidedly," gravely observed Edward Thornton, "the place is enchanted.
As old Spenser would say:

'There reigns a solemn silence over all;
Nor voice is heard—'"

Here he broke down in the quotation; I ventured to suggest the rest:

"—nor wight is seen in bower or hall."

"Thank you," he said, with a gracious inclination of his handsome head. "You like Spenser?" he added, resuming the task of tapping against the door with the end of his elegant cane.

"Yes," I answered, "and you?"

He turned round to give me a surprised look of his fine blue eyes, but he quietly replied:

"Yes, I admire Spenser very much."

He was at the door again, and this time he condescended to apply to it the heel of a very handsome, aristocratic foot, when a thin, high voice behind us observed:

"This way, Edward; I have found means of entering, but I never saw a more barbarous place, never."

We both looked round; a lady of middle age, very slender, and attired in pale blue bar?ge, a white lace cloak and a tulle bonnet, over which she balanced a delicate white parasol, was advancing towards us with mincing steps. I fancied I recognised Mrs. Brand, and I was not mistaken.

"Have you found no one?" asked her brother.

"I have found an idiotic house-maid, and an old goblin housekeeper, from neither of whom could I extract anything, save that Mr. Thornton never so much as hinted we were coming; but that, as our carriage entered the avenue, he was seen to rush from the study, and vanish down the park. Gracious, very!"

"Characteristic," said Edward Thornton, smiling with languid grace.

"My dear Edward," solemnly observed his sister, "are you aware that there are no beds ready, or indeed, in existence, and that Marks—I believe that is her name—declares there is not a pound of meat

in the house."

Edward Thornton's handsome face lengthened visibly.

"Really," he said, "really!"

"I do not mind it," continued Mrs. Brand; "but I am ashamed at the slur cast on our national hospitality. It is one of those things which, if related to me, I should have dismissed with the reply: 'Absurd—not English—absurd!' I am now compelled to acknowledge it as a melancholy fact, from which I cannot help drawing certain conclusions."

"Perhaps Miss Burns can enlighten us concerning the domestic arrangements of our eccentric relative," observed Mr. Thornton, turning to me.

"I have not been two hours in the house," I replied, smiling.

"Miss Burns!" exclaimed Mrs. Brand, with a start. "Really, Edward, I am surprised you did not mention it sooner. You know how I have longed to see our dear young cousin."

She tripped up to me as she spoke, and gave my hand a fervent squeeze.
Then looking at me through a gold eye-glass:

"My dear child," she said, "how well you look—not at all altered. Were I not so short-sighted, I should have known you anywhere—would not you, Edward?"

"No," he replied, quietly; "I find Miss Burns much altered; and if I recognised her, it was in spite of the change seven years have worked."

"Ah! very true," sighed Mrs. Brand. "Years pass, and the world goes on with all its vanities. My dear girl, have you really no idea of what we are to do for beds and a dinner?"

The moral sentiment had been uttered with slow abstraction, but the question relating to the things of the flesh, came out quite briskly.

I regretted that I could give Mrs. Brand no information, but repeated my previous statement.

"It is a *guet-apens*," she feelingly observed; "a most un-English, uncivilised mode of proceeding—worse than primitive—quite savage. Edward, what do you advise?"

"Eggs."

"Eggs!"

"Yes, I have always laboured under the impression that eggs were the resource of travellers in distress."

"When they could get them, I suppose," rather sharply replied his sister.

"Yes," he observed, gently tapping his foot with the extremity of his cane. "I should say this was an indispensable condition."

"I have sent Brooks to a place called Leigh," resumed Mrs. Brand, "but I have no hopes; for Marks says that this not being market-day, there is no chance of our getting anything."

"Excepting visitors," said Mr. Thornton as a sound of carriage wheels was heard in the neighbouring avenue.

We stood near the wicket-door, which had so often been my post of observation. A travelling-carriage was coming up the broad avenue. It stopped before the house, and a lady alighted. Affection rendered Mrs. Brand sharp-sighted, for without even using her eye-glass, she exclaimed:

"Edith!" and biting her lip, looked uneasily at her brother.

"Mrs. Langton!" he said raising his eye-brow, and smoothing his delicate moustache, "why I think it is at least five years since I saw her climbing the Jung-Frau with her gouty old husband. Is he not dead, Bertha?"

Bertha did not answer; she had hastened away to her friend. They met most affectionately, and entered the house kissing.

"This is quite a gathering of cousins," observed Edward Thornton smiling with some irony, "I suppose

you know Mrs. Langton?"

"I remember her as Miss Grainger."

He silently offered me his arm, I accepted it, and we entered Thornton House. In an old wainscotted parlour, we found the two ladies in close proximity and conversation. The beautiful Edith seemed to me more beautiful than ever; her weeds became her charmingly, and when she rose, and greeted me with a pleasant smile, I still thought her the loveliest creature I had ever looked at. A faint blush mantled her cheek, as she saw Mr. Thornton; he was polite and unmoved.

The cloth was laid; Mrs. Brand mournfully observed that the dinner not being more remarkable for quantity than for quality—it was the servants' dinner, she said, but did not say how they were to manage—it would be as prudent not to delay the meal. It consisted of cold beef, hot potatoes, home-brewed ale and musty cheese. Mr. Edward Thornton had the good breeding to look as unconscious of the sorry fare before him, as if he had venison on his plate and claret in his glass. Mrs. Brand sighed and lamented the whole time. Mrs. Langton would have been a woman after Byron's own heart, for she scarcely touched a morsel, and indeed looked much too lovely to eat or do anything but be beautiful, which she certainly did to perfection. As soon as politeness permitted, she retired to a deep bow-window that looked forth into the park; Mr. Thornton soon made his way to her chair, and from where I sat by Mrs. Brand, I could hear fragments of their conversation. He believed he had had the pleasure of seeing her in Switzerland. Had he really seen her? she asked carelessly; she thought one could see nothing but the mountains and precipices in that picturesque country. Did she not like it? inquired Mr. Thornton. Oh, yes; that was to say no; and yet she thought she rather liked it, as much as one could like anything of course. Of course, assented Mr. Thornton with some emphasis. She reddened, rose and came and sat by Mrs. Brand, who immediately began kissing her; whilst her brother, addressing me in his easy polite way, alluded to the beauty of the evening, and proposed a walk over the grounds. My lips parted to decline, but on second thought I consented.

"As I was telling you, dear," said Mrs. Langton, but on seeing me take the arm of my cousin, she hesitated slightly.

"As you were telling me, dear," echoed Mrs. Brand, giving the hand of her friend a gentle squeeze, and watching her brother and me with the corner of her eye.

"Yes, I was telling you," resumed Mrs. Langton.

What she was telling her dear Bertha. I know not, for at that precise moment, Mr. Thornton and I left the room. He was my cousin and old enough to be my father; I did not think there could he any impropriety in walking out with him, and, secure on this head, I allowed myself to be entertained by his pleasant discourse, and watched for an opportunity of introducing the questions I wished him to answer. That opportunity not coming, I was obliged to enter on the subject somewhat abruptly.

"What a beautiful, rosy cloud," thoughtfully observed my companion.

"Mr. Thornton," I said very earnestly, "I am afraid you are going to think me very impertinent."

Mr. Thornton thus summoned from his cloud, looked as astonished as a man of the world can look, but he promptly recovered, and of course protested against anything of the sort.

"Oh! but I mean it," I resumed; "and yet I cannot help it, you know; that is what makes it so provoking."

Mr. Thornton smiled, and felt convinced that I alarmed myself unnecessarily.

"No, I assure you I do not; and, to prove it, here it is. What sort of a man is Mr. Thornton?"

"A very learned man."

"Ah! but I mean in temper."

"Eccentric."

"And wilful," I suggested.

"He is very firm."

"I remember hearing formerly that he was very litigious; is it true!"

"Why yes," carelessly replied my cousin; "he generally has one or two little law matters going on. He is tenacious of his rights, and never allows them to be infringed. He would spend hundreds sooner than

be wronged of a shilling. How do you like this place?"

I had not heeded where he was taking me; looking up I perceived that we had reached a wild-looking part of the grounds, and stood by a quiet and solitary well. Between the sombre and massive trees that shed their solemn gloom over it, I caught a distant glimpse of the narrow stream by which Cornelius and I had sat that same day, and of which the glancing waters were now reddened by the setting sun. The well was built against a rise of ground; it was rude, ancient, defaced by time, and partly veiled by moss, and dark creeping plants; the water came out clear and bright from beneath the gloom of its low arch, to fall into a stone basin, then flow away hidden among the high ferns that grew around, and betrayed in its course, only by its low murmur.

"It is a wishing-well; will you try its virtues?" said my cousin, pointing with a smile to the iron bowl, hanging from a rusty chain by the low arch.

"Did you ever put them to the test, Sir?" I asked, wishfully.

"As a boy I did; and found the legend—a legend."

"Then I fear it is useless for me to try," I replied, sighing.

We turned away from the spot, walked a little longer, then went in. What sort of an evening my three cousins spent together, I know not. I retired early, and went up, sad and disheartened, to that room whence I now feared it passed the power of Cornelius to deliver me. I sat down, and looked around me; vivid images of the past rose with every glance. I went to the window by which I had so often watched for his coming; and looking down on the dark park below, I thought, with an aching heart, of the lonely evening he was spending at Rock Cottage. My own heart was full. I could not bear not to be with him; but every time, even in thought, I imagined our reunion, the dread spectre of the law seemed to rise between us. Cornelius, exposed to trouble, persecution, and loss on my account— it was not to be thought of.

"I must try conciliation," I thought; "rough as he is, Mr. Thornton may be smoothed down. If that will not do, I shall make myself so disagreeable that he will be glad to get rid of me." And with a thought and prayer for the absent one, I fell asleep at a late hour.

Our breakfast was a great improvement on the dinner of the preceding day; but this fact failed to conciliate Mrs. Brand, whom I found alone in the parlour. Scarcely giving herself time to return my good-morning, she said, eagerly:

"My dear, would you believe it! They actually had ducks! yes, ducks!" she repeated with indignant emphasis; "whilst *we* dined on cold beef, *they* had ducks! Now, it is a mere trifle—a matter of no consequence; but it nevertheless happens that *I* am particularly fond of ducks."

"Ducks!" I echoed, not exactly understanding her meaning.

"Yes, my dear, *they*, Marks, the servants in short, had ducks for *their* dinner; I found it out this morning by the merest chance."

Mrs. Langton here entered the room, looking as fresh and lovely as the morning. She gave her dear Bertha a kiss, which the other returned, saying breathlessly:

"Edith, they had ducks, the cold beef was good enough for us; they had ducks."

Edith looked surprised, and, on hearing the story, smiled and said: "Ah!" with charming grace, "and that she fancied she rather liked ducks, but was not quite sure." She sat down in the deep embrasure of the window, and looked out at the park with an abstraction that was not disturbed by the sound of the opening door, and the appearance of Edward Thornton. He informed us that Mr. Thornton was laid up with a rheumatic attack.

"Distressing!" abstractedly said Mrs. Brand. "I suppose you know they had ducks?"

And as we sat down to breakfast, she recapitulated her wrongs. Mr. Thornton heard her with perfect unconcern, and said "really," then spoke to me of the beauty of the morning, and of Mr. Thornton's rheumatism.

"You will be sorry to learn," he said, gently breaking the shell of an egg, "that our excellent relative is completely laid up; I found him in his study lying on a couch, unable to stir, and in acute pain."

I was sorry in one sense, and glad in another; I had a vague hope that pain might subdue my obdurate grandpapa, and as soon as breakfast was over, I hastened to his study; wishing to take him by

surprise, I ventured to enter without knocking. The surprise was mine. Mr. Thornton, whom I had expected to find groaning on his couch, was standing on the top of a high flight of steps, reaching down heavy quartos. On hearing the door open, he turned round sharply, and looked at me scowling. I rather enjoyed his predicament and said quietly:

"I am glad you are better, Sir."

He growled an inaudible reply, and came down, hobbling and groaning with every step he took, and darting mistrustful looks at me. I offered him the aid of my shoulder, which he accepted, leaning on me as heavily as he could. I helped him to return to his couch, then quietly sat down facing him. He knew he was at my mercy, and did not tell me to go; but he surlily rejected my proffered services; but I persisted.

"I can look for any book for you, Sir," I said.

"Look, then," was his ungracious reply.

"What book is it, Sir?"

"Begin with the first volume on the second shelf."

I obeyed, and brought him a heavy tome, which he just looked at, then threw away, briefly saying:

"Another."

Another I brought him, with the same result; a third, a fourth, and so on throughout the whole shelf.

"Are you not tired?" he asked with smooth irony.

"Oh, no," I replied, smiling, "shall I begin another shelf?"

"No, you need not," he answered, giving it up, "it is an old treatise on mineralogy that has long been lost."

I turned to the window; the book I had been reading on the preceding day still lay there open; I silently handed it to my grandfather, who gave it and then me a look of profound surprise, followed by a remarkable smoothing down of mien and accent.

"How did you find it?" he asked, looking at it with evident satisfaction.

"By chance, Sir."

"By chance! Oh! I have another thing missing. Ray's 'Chaos and Creation,' perhaps you could find that too, eh?"

He looked at me thoughtfully. Anxious to conciliate him, I replied, eagerly:

"Perhaps I might, Sir."

"Humph! Can you write? I mean write a round hand, not the abominable slant of most school-girls?"

"Yes, Sir: my handwriting is remarkably round."

"Transcribe this."

He pushed towards me a sheet of hieroglyphics, which I turned over with a dismay that made him chuckle. Unwilling to give him an advantage over me, I sat down and at once entered on my task; the decyphering was the worst part of the business; but after working hard for several hours, I accomplished it to his satisfaction and to mine. 1 thought to rest; but Mr. Thornton was differently inclined.

"Can you read?" he asked, "I mean read as you talk, without drawl or singing?"

I replied I hoped I could. He said we should see, and handed me the mineralogical treatise. For two hours I read without stopping. At length he said that was enough. I felt quite faint and exhausted, and asked if I could leave him. He assented, adding—

"Mind you keep a look-out for 'Chaos and Creation!'"

I promised to do so, and left him much relieved. The day was hot; the air of the close, dusty, old study felt stifling. I went out into the garden at the back of the house, and sat down in the arbour. I had not

been there five minutes before I was joined by my cousin, Edward Thornton. He was beginning to make himself very pleasant and agreeable, when Mrs. Langton appeared stepping down daintily from beneath the porch, like a lady in a picture. She had discarded her widow's cap; the warm sunlight gave a brown tint to her jet black hair, and she looked fresh and fair as the rose which she held in one hand, whilst the other slightly raised her sweeping skirt. Mr. Thornton rose and resigned to her his place by me, which she accepted with a gracious smile. He stood before us, talking in his easy, agreeable way; I looked and listened, remembering that in this very spot, seven years before, they had met and parted. They, too, remembered it; for ere long I had the pleasure of finding that I was made the medium of their well-bred sneers.

Edward Thornton addressed the chief portion of his discourse to me, and put several unimportant questions, each, more or less, arrows that glanced at Mrs. Langton.

"Is it not about seven years ago, that I saw you here?" he observed carelessly.

"Yes, Sir, exactly seven years."

"It seems a long time, does it not?" he added, addressing Mrs. Langton, as if to remind her that seven years had passed over her beauty.

"Very!" she replied, smelling her rose, and looking like one for whom time does not exist.

"I remember you quite well," Edward continued, addressing me, "a small fair child, with bright golden hair, which has now deepened into brown."

"Do you?" I replied, amused by this little bit of fiction, to which Mrs. Langton listened, smiling at the slight put on her glossy tresses, dark as the raven's wing.

"Oh! yes," he continued, "Bertha and I used to call you the little white rose. Your name is Rose, is it not?"

"No, my name is Daisy; that is to say, Margaret, but at home I am always called Daisy."

"The name of the sweetest wild flower," he replied, smiling; "there may be less beauty about it," he continued, "than about the rose, but then it has a grace and a freshness quite its own."

The Rose looked scornful. Not relishing being thus made the instrument of Mr. Edward Thornton's pique, I rose, and spite of his entreaties, left the arbour. Common politeness would not allow him to desert Mrs. Langton; how they got on together is more than I know. They were studiously polite at dinner.

When I went up to my room that same evening, I perceived that the little black trunk had arrived. I opened it eagerly, but searched in vain for a letter. A fact, however, struck me. It contained the portfolio of Italian drawings placed there by another hand than mine. I turned them over with a vague hope. I found nothing but a stray scrap of paper, which I took to the light. It was one of those rude and hasty sketches with which artists write down passing ideas: yet, imperfect as it was, I recognised at a glance the well I had so recently seen and visited. A female figure, in which I knew myself, sat by it with her hand shading her eyes, as if watching for something or some one; the disk of the sun, half sunk behind the far horizon and sending forth low spreading rays, indicated the close of day. Evidently Cornelius knew this place and wished me to meet him there at sunset. When? Most probably on the following day. My heart leaped with joy at the thought of seeing him so soon, and with trust and hope on perceiving how faithfully he kept his promise.

CHAPTER XI.

My first act the next morning was to go and see my grandfather. He received me with a sufficiently cordial growl, and confident, I suppose, of the good understanding between us, no longer kept up the pretence of rheumatic pains in my presence. I again read and transcribed for several hours, at the end of which Mr. Thornton was pleased to say—"I might be off if I liked;" and reminded me not to forget "that Chaos and Creation—" Wishing to sound him still further, I replied—

"Oh! no. I hope to find it before I go."

"Eh?" he sharply said.

"Before I go with Mr. O'Reilly," I resumed, "he means to stay another week or ten days here."

"Who said you were to go with him?" asked Mr. Thornton.

"No one. But surely, Sir, you will not care to keep an insignificant girl like me?"

He did not answer; I continued.

"It would be a great deal better to go with him, than to make him come back and fetch me."

"I'll tell you what," interrupted Mr. Thornton, knitting his black brows and looking irate: "if that Irishman, who sent the little girl to school, and who gives the young girl such queer looks, attempts to carry you off, he'll rue it as long as he lives. I'll teach him," he added, impressively, "the meaning of the word 'abduction.' See 9th of George IV."

"Abduction. Sir," I said, reddening, "means carrying off by force."

"And the law construes fraud into force," coolly answered Mr. Thornton.
"See 9th of George IV."

I was much perturbed by this threat. Mr. Thornton did not appear to see or notice it, and dismissed me with another hint about "Chaos and Creation."

After dinner—our housekeeping was now much improved and, indeed, quite stylish—Mr. Edward Thornton and Mrs. Langton vanished, and I remained with Mrs. Brand, who entertained me, for some time, with the many virtues of her brother. "A most excellent brother he had ever been to her; and since he had come into the Wyndham property, she could say that Poplar Lodge had been as much her home as his—a fact which proved there was nothing like the ties of blood, for Mr. Brand, she was very sorry to say, had not behaved at all delicately; and, satisfied with leaving her a few paltry hundreds a-year, had actually bequeathed to his daughter that delightful Holywell Lodge—a most exquisite place—to which he well knew that she had a particular fancy, not because it was beautiful—she was essentially a person of simple, unsophisticated tastes—but her heart was bound to Holywell. She had spent her honeymoon there, and she was astonished that had not proved a consideration with Mr. Brand." We sat by the window. The trunks of the trees in the park shone warm and red with the light of the setting sun. I wanted to be off, and said carelessly:

"What a delightful walk Mrs. Langton and Mr. Thornton are now having!"

Mrs. Brand started.

"My dear," she said, quickly, "you do not mean—Edith is in her own room surely."

"I saw her and Mr. Thornton disappearing behind that clamp of trees."

"Imprudent!" exclaimed Mrs. Brand, looking fidgetty. "She takes cold so easy. I must really go after her."

She rose, left the room, and hurried off, at once, in the direction I had pointed out. I waited awhile, then slipped out. My way lay exactly opposite to hers. I kept within the shelter of the trees. In a few minutes, I had reached the well; but, to my dismay, I perceived standing by it, and talking quietly together, the objects of Mrs. Brand's search. They stood with their backs turned to me. I sank down, at once, in the high ferns, which closed over me. I knelt stooping, and every now and then cautiously raised my head to look. They lingered awhile longer, then left. When they were out of sight, I sat up, shaking from my loosened hair the dried fern and withered leaves with which it had got entangled.

Startled by a low sound near me, I looked round quickly. A few paces from me, the ferns began to move, then a man's arm divided them, and, in the opening appeared the handsome and laughing face of Cornelius. He half sat up, leaning on one elbow, and looked at me, smiling.

"Are they gone?" he whispered.

I gave a hasty glance around. The sun had nearly set. In its warm and mellow glow, the park looked silent and lonely. Over all things already brooded the stillness of evening.

"It's all right," I said, jumping up. "Cornelius, you are tall, and could be seen a good distance, so please to be quiet."

"You don't mean to say that I am to remain here on my back?" he asked, indignantly.

"I mean that, if you get up, I shall take flight."

He fumed and fretted, but I was obdurate. On his back I made him lie, and there I kept him. When he

became restless, I threatened to leave him. He submitted, muttering, "Absurd—ridiculous!" and, turning away his flushed and vexed face, he would not speak. I knelt down by him, and, smoothing his hair, asked if he did not feel comfortable, and what more he wanted. At first, I got no answer, but I stroked him into good humour, for, all at once, he snatched my hand, and pressing it tenderly to his lips, informed me he was a savage, and I an angel. I laughed, and said:

"That explains what Mr. Thornton meant by your queer looks. I have always heard that the eye of a savage has something quite peculiar."

"Queer looks!" echoed Cornelius, reddening; "the queerness is in his eyes, Daisy. But let him have his say. I have taken no vow; but I am determined—"

"Cornelius, if you will toss in that extraordinary fashion, I must go."

He groaned, but became once more quiet.

"Since you are so fidgetty," I said, "why did you not come to see me at Thornton House?"

"Why, Daisy," he replied, rolling a stray lock of my hair round his finger, "because I am a burglar, and not a swindler. I may rob a man of his jewel, but I will not cheat him out of it."

"Abduction and 9th George IV," rushed into my head; but I carelessly said:—

"So I am to be stolen property."

He laughed, and did not contradict it.

"But how will you manage?" I asked.

"It is not settled yet?" he replied evasively; "but you shall know all the next time we meet here."

"Then why this meeting of to-day, Cornelius?—why this useless danger?"

"Danger!—there is none for me; and if there were, I would meet and brave it willingly for this sight of your face. Now do not look so like a shy fawn, though it becomes you charmingly. It was quite pretty to watch you hidden in the ferns. Every now and then you raised your fair head like a young Nereid, then dipped it again into that green sea, where I now lie flat like a dead fish; and yet, Daisy, how pleasant it is to be here with you!"

"How do you know this place?"

"I sketched it years ago on one of my visits to your father; little thinking then that the sulky little girl, who would not kiss me, would one day break every tie for my sake."

All doubt that I might not enter into his plans, or that I could refuse to accompany him when the moment came, seemed as if by magic to have left Cornelius. No longer did he, or perhaps could he, anticipate the chance of a refusal. Yet, now, that I saw more clearly to what consequences his scheme might lead, I felt I loved him far too much to consent. But he spoke with so much confidence and hope, that I dreaded undeceiving him. I could rule him in little things; but when his passions were roused—I had tested it in the case of William Murray—he was my master. His vehement feelings swayed me, as a strong wind bows weak reeds before its breath. If, in the burst of anger and grief that would assuredly follow the announcement of my resolve not to agree to his plans, Cornelius insisted on making me accompany him at once, I knew my own weakness well enough to guess that I could not remain behind. So kneeling by him, and looking down somewhat sadly at his triumphant face, I said nothing, but indulged him in his flights of fancy.

The warm glow of day had not yet left earth; the moon had risen, but her light was pale and indistinct, as it is in the first hours of evening; it shone with a mild and grey radiance over that quiet spot, fell softly on the trees that sheltered it, and just touched the stone arch of the well, whose waters flowed with a low ripple, then spread away vaguely over the wide park, dotted with dark clumps of trees. The evening was unusually mild and balmy. I felt it both soothing and delightful to be alone with Cornelius at this lonely hour, and in this solitary spot; but most saddening to think we no longer owned the shelter of the same roof, and were no longer to live within the holy circle of the same home.

At length, I spoke of going. He detained me as long as he could, and released me with a promise of meeting him there again two days hence. If I could not come, a letter hidden under a stone that lay half buried in the grass, was to tell him so. As we parted, he said, fondly:—

"A few days more, Daisy, and there shall be no more meetings, nor partings either."

I did not dare to reply, but turning abruptly from him, I ran away through the high grass, without once looking behind.

I had not to read or transcribe on the following day, the best part of which I spent with Mrs. Brand. She spoke a good deal of Mr. Thornton, and dropped mysterious hints, wholly lost on my ignorance; but she assured me she was not at all offended with my reserve, which was quite *de bon go?t*, and decidedly English.

I was amused at the idea that I should be accused of reserve for not understanding her sphinx-like mode of speech; I also thought that, for a lady who seemed fond of everything English, a less frequent use of French words, to which her own language offered equivalents, would have been more consistent. But this was one of the little contradictions in which, as I afterwards found, Mrs. Brand indulged. She was very national, but an English dressmaker would have thrown her into fits; English manufactures were irritating to her nerves, and English cooking would have been the death of her. She also once informed me, that but for her dear Edward, her health would compel her to reside on the Continent, in which case, England would, I fear, have been deprived of Mrs. Brand altogether, and the intercourse between them would have been limited to the transmission and receipt of the English "paltry hundreds" which Mr. Brand had bequeathed to his affectionate spouse.

That Mrs. Brand was quite a martyr to sisterly affection, was indeed an indubitable fact, for in the course of the morning, she observed to me: "My dear, people may talk about plantations and negro slavery, and factory girls; but I assure you, that the fashionable world is a wide plantation, and that we, the slaves who work it, are worked to death. I came here for a little peace, and behold, I received I know not how many invitations yesterday, and I must pay I know not how many visits to-day. Oh! my dear; if it were not for Edward, I would break my chains and fly."

Borne up, however, by the thought of Edward, the slave of the world managed to drag her chain pretty well, and that same afternoon was even equal to the exertion of stepping into her carriage for the purpose of going to work her plantation. Mrs. Langton accompanied her; Edward Thornton remained at home. He had stretched his elegant person in an old- fashioned arm-chair, where he read the newspaper, and looked as politely *ennuy?* as possible. I sat by the window, looking at the Italian drawings of Cornelius. I had brought them down on the express wish of Mrs. Brand, who, giving them a careless look, had said "how pretty," and thought no more about them. When she left, however, she envied me with a sigh my privilege of being able to stay at home, and congratulated me on my indifference to worldly pleasures. As the door closed on her, Mr. Edward Thornton laid down his newspaper, to say negligently:

"And so, Miss Burns, you really don't care for the world! What a little hermitess!"

"Do you care about it, Sir?"

"I? no; but I'm tired of it."

I smiled and shook my head incredulously. I rather liked my cousin; but I could not help thinking that his character of an old man of the world was more put on than real.

"You don't believe it?" he said.

"No," was my frank reply.

"Now, Miss Burns, what should I care for?"

"Politics?"

"I am sick of them. Standing for a certain borough, and being pelted with eggs and apples, gave me a surfeit."

"Pleasure?"

"It is too hard work for me."

"Money?"

"I have got it, and therefore do not care for it."

"Horses?"

"Over years ago."

"Years ago!" I thought, "and you have not come into the Wyndham property more than a year, cousin. Travelling?" I suggested aloud.

"Over too. Do you confess yourself mistaken, and acknowledge that I am tired of the world?"

"No, Sir!"

"No!"

"No; you read the newspaper."

My cousin opened his fine blue eyes, and looked amused, and seemed to expect more; but I looked at my drawings, and remained mute; he raised his head from the back of the high arm-chair on which it was cushioned. I took no notice of this; he coughed; I never looked up. He took his paper, laid it down, took it up again, and at length feeling either piqued or inquisitive, rose and came round to the back of my chair. I allowed him to stand there, and look over my shoulder, as long as he pleased.

"I wonder where Bertha got these!" he said at length in a tone of surprise.

"They are mine," I replied quietly, "Mr. O'Reilly gave them to me."

"Are they by him?"

I assented with some pride. My cousin looked astonished, and pronounced the sketches masterly. He sat down by my side, and looked over the contents of the portfolio; his remarks showed me that he was an excellent judge. We looked slowly; and had not done, when Mrs. Brand and Mrs. Langton returned from their laborious duties.

"Have you seen these, Bertha?" said Edward Thornton to his sister.

"Yes, lovely things," she replied, carelessly.

"Have you?" he asked of Edith, who sat apart, gathered up in her own loveliness, like a self-admiring rose.

She answered in the negative, and taking up the portfolio, he seemed inclined to show them to her; but his sister playfully interfered, told him that as he had already seen them, it was not fair; that she was passionately fond of drawings, and would look over these with her dear Edith by whom she accordingly sat most pertinaciously until dinner-time. Her brother remained by me, and talked of Cornelius, whom he emphatically pronounced a man of genius. My ear opened to hear him speak so.

"He is more than a man of genius," I replied with some emotion; "he is so good. At least he has always been so to me; he adopted and reared me quite as if I had been his own child, and that was very kind."

Mr. Thornton smiled, and spoke of good deeds that brought their own reward. I hinted that if I was a reward, it seemed hard he should be deprived of me. He evidently thought this hard, too; and though he did not say so, I saw he intended influencing Mr. Thornton in my favour. A fact on which I did not place much hope, for I knew enough of my grandfather to guess he was not easily governed.

He kept me with him transcribing for several hours the next day; but he never spoke until I was leaving the room, then he said very coolly:

"You can do the rest after dinner, whilst I go on with that little business to the wishing-well."

My hand was on the door; I turned round to give him a terrified look. He laughed as if he enjoyed my fright. I dare say I looked dismayed enough, for as I left the study, I met my cousin entering, and he gave me an astonished glance. I passed by him swiftly, and ran up to my room, there to write a few words, with which I hastened down again. Not suspecting that my grandfather would see me, or seeing me guess my intention, I went down the beech-tree avenue; but I had not gone ten steps, when the arched casement was thrown open, and Mr. Thornton appeared in the aperture, grim and forbidding.

"Miss Burns," he said, sternly, "will you come back, if you please. I want you. Sir, I shall thank you not to interfere."

The latter remark was addressed to my cousin, who, standing by him, seemed to plead or urge something. He bowed stiffly and drew back, looking offended. I obeyed the summons I had received, and returned to the study, my eyes overflowing with indignant tears which pride could scarcely restrain. Edward Thornton gave me a look of sympathy, and left as I entered. Mr. Thornton eyed me severely.

"You may as well give it up," he said, "for I won't allow it."

I sank down on a chair without replying. He continued:

"If you ever saw a moth singe its wings at a candle, you know the fate of your friend. Every one knows that though I don't care a farthing for game, I allow no poaching. We were three of us at the wishing-well the other evening. Since he would brave me, why I shall just show him that I have him so," he added expressively uniting his forefinger and thumb, "and that no later than this evening."

I gave him a beseeching look; he laughed; I began a supplication; he interrupted with a stern: "I never retract."

I steeled my heart, and took a desperate resolve.

"Mr. Thornton," I said rising and going up to him, "I will submit to anything, if you will but let Mr. O'Reilly alone. It is because he knows I am so fond of him that he does all this."

"That's not true, and you know it," roundly interrupted Mr. Thornton. "It's because he is so fond of you that he can't take his eyes off of you."

"Well then, yes," I exclaimed, feeling that perfect sincerity was after all the best policy. "It is because ho likes me. Has he not a right to be fond of me, just as I of him and his sister? I love them both with my whole heart; I long to be with them back again, and I hate being here— and yet I yield—I submit to anything you may exact; but, to the grief of my loss, I entreat you do not add the torment of a persecution endured for my sake. If you will but disregard this and any other attempt he may make to see me, I will pass my word not to see him without your permission. He has taught me that one's word is a sacred thing; if I give mine I will keep it, though Grod alone knows how much it will cost me."

My voice faltered and sank, for, as I thought of the pledge I was offering, I felt scarcely able to speak, and yet I dreaded lest Mr. Thornton should say no, and persist in seeking out Cornelius. He cogitated for a while, then said abruptly:

"To spare the time I cannot afford to lose, and for no other reason—I consent; but mind: as you keep your word, I keep mine."

I made no answer to this remark, but asked if I might not write to Cornelius to tell him what had passed, and bid him the farewell I was not to utter. He said yes. I wrote at once, and gave him the letter which he promised to forward without delay.

Until then, I had not felt my parting from Cornelius. His promise, my own hopes, the light spirit of youth, had sustained me. But now that I was pledged beyond recall, hope forsook me like a faithless friend in the hour of need, and left me to taste in all its bitterness the misery of absence and separation.

CHAPTER XII.

Years give us strength to suffer. I was no longer a weak and sickly child. I grieved, but my sorrow was not more than I could bear. I was young, and hope soon returned to me, and whispered that, after all, this trial, though bitter, could not last for ever; that I might succeed in conciliating my grandfather; and, should I fail in the attempt, that a few more years would make me my own mistress.

My cousin Edward sympathised with me, wondered what could be Mr. Thornton's motives for such strange severity, and what sort of a heart he had thus rudely to break the tender and filial tie which bound me to my adopted father. I thought him very kind; and my only comfort was to look with him over the sketches of Cornelius.

Next to seeing him, it was pleasant to hear him spoken of. I seldom uttered his name myself, but I could sit for hours, listening patiently, just for the chance of its being mentioned now and then. This was the charm which lay for me, in the presence of Edward Thornton, which made me regret his absence and welcome his return. He seemed flattered by my evident preference, his sister looked on approvingly, and Mrs. Langton brushed past me haughty and disdainful.

At the end of a week, Mr. Edward Thornton announced to me, one evening that we chanced to be alone, his intention of leaving Thornton House early the next day. He was going to London; he promised to call on Cornelius and Kate, tell them he had seen me, and write to me how he had found them. Then

he rose, and bade me farewell.

"When do you come back?" I asked, with a sigh.

"I do not come back," he said, gently.

"Oh! but what shall I do?" I exclaimed, dismayed at the prospect of having no one to talk to me of Cornelius, and my eyes filled with involuntary tears.

Mr. Edward Thornton looked embarrassed and hinted that his sister remained behind. I did not answer—a pause followed. Then my cousin hoped that, if my grandfather permitted it, I would accompany Mrs. Brand when she left Thornton House for Poplar Lodge. I knew the place well: it stood within a comparatively short distance of the Grove. My heart beat, and my face flushed, at the thought of catching a stray glimpse of Cornelius and Kate.

"Oh, I shall be so glad—so happy!" I exclaimed, eagerly.

My cousin protested that the joy and happiness would be his; and, respectfully kissing my hand, he bade me a tender adieu. On the very day of his arrival in town, he called at the Grove, and, with a promptitude that touched me, wrote to me, by the same day's post, that he had seen Miss O'Reilly, who seemed quite well, and sent her love to me; but that he had missed her brother. More he did not say, and with this much, I had, perforce, to content myself.

His absence made me feel very lonely. We were a strange household, and led a strange life. My grandfather did not think it necessary to trouble himself about his uninvited guests. He never sought our society, or appeared at our table. Mrs. Marks tacitly resented our intrusion by retiring to the stronghold of her high room, whence she occasionally amused herself with ringing her alarum-bell, and now and then emerged to make a descent upon Charlotte below. She saw that Mr. Thornton wanted for nothing, and allowed us to shift as we liked. We went on very well. Mrs. Brand's servant daily foraged for our support, and Mrs. Langton's French maid, with Charlotte as a subordinate, condescended to cook us the exquisite soups and ragouts of her country. Thus we lived most luxuriously in that old wainscotted parlour, where there were scarcely three chairs fit to sit upon.

Mrs. Brand and Mrs. Langton did not feel the inconvenience; both before and after the departure of Edward Thornton, they lived in a round of visits and country gaieties. People, I believe, must not have known that I existed, for I was never included in the invitations they received; and the peculiar life my grandfather led, had so thoroughly estranged him from his neighbours, that not one of them ever crossed the threshold of his dwelling. What kept two such gay ladies in so gloomy an abode, was, for some time, more than I could tell, or find out, spite of the mysterious hints which Mrs. Brand dropped now and then.

My cousin had been gone a week, when Mr. Thornton was suddenly called away on business. He placed his study under my care, with the strict, but, as it seemed to me, unnecessary prohibition of allowing any one to enter this sacred place. He still employed me as reader and amanuensis, and had left me plenty of manuscripts to transcribe. I sat writing by the open window, when the sound of the opening door made me look up. I saw Mrs. Brand. She came in with a mysterious air, and locked the door after her. I rose, and with some embarrassment, informed her of my grandfather's orders.

"I am not at all astonished," she replied, calmly.

"I am sorry to be the bearer of such a message," I said, with some emphasis.

"True," she sighed, sitting down as she spoke, and her eye wandering keenly over the whole room. I reminded her that Mr. Thornton's orders admitted of no exception. She shook her head, raised her handkerchief to her eyes, withdrew it after a decent pause, and observed, mournfully:—

"Bound as I am to Mr. Thornton by the ties of blood—bound, I may say, by the ties of affection—it is melancholy—My dear, is he to be long out?"

"I don't know, ma'am; but he said—"

"Yes, dear, I know. Bound by the ties of affection, it is melancholy even to allude to the mysterious calamity which has befallen him. I have with pleasure noticed your reserve."

"Indeed, Ma'am, I am ignorant—"

"Quite right, dear, quite proper. Of course you have noticed peculiarities of thought, speech, and conduct. No one, indeed, has had so good an opportunity as you have possessed; but you have discreetly abstained from comment. You had heard of dungeons, chains, whips, strait- waistcoats, and

keepers; you did not know that there are places where the afflicted are happier far than when allowed the indulgence of their own wayward wills; indeed, where they are only restricted in one or two trifling matters, for their own good of course."

She sighed as she concluded.

"Excuse me, Ma'am," I said, much astonished, "you mistake; I never thought anything of the sort, and never for a moment connected the places you mention with Mr. Thornton."

"I see; you thought of keeping it quiet in the family; very amiable, but impracticable."

"No, Ma'am, I did not think of that either."

"But, my dear, you must have noticed so many things; indeed you have had rare opportunities, for instance, the change from amiability to moroseness."

"I don't think Mr. Thornton ever was amiable, Ma'am."

"My dear! the most amiable of men."

"Then not in my time, Ma'am."

Mrs. Brand gave me a perplexed look, then observed—

"Do you really think, my dear, Mr. Thornton is of sound mind?"

"I am sure of it."

"My dear, you take a weight from my mind. Edith would have it that he did such strange things when she was here—write such oddities. I wonder what there is in those papers."

She stretched forth her hand; I drew away the papers from her reach, and said, quietly—

"There is nothing odd in these papers, Ma'am. They are merely about mineralogy."

"Mineralogy!" she exclaimed, eagerly, "my dear, if a lawyer were to see them he might detect what you cannot of course perceive—the scientific madness."

"The what, Ma'am?"

"'The scientific madness,' you deaf little fool," said the sarcastic voice of my grandfather.

Mrs. Brand jumped and I started. We looked round, he was nowhere in the room. He laughed ironically; we turned round and saw his head rising above the window-sill, on which his chin just rested.

"So," he said, addressing his cousin, "you are kind enough to trouble yourself about me in my absence. Eh!"

Mrs. Brand, the first moment over, was too thorough a woman of the world to allow herself to be disconcerted.

"Yes, Mr. Thornton," she said, rising with sorrowful dignity, "your ill- used relatives think of schemes for your benefit; they know their duty to you, and though they should be misunderstood, they will persist in that duty. Good-bye, my dear child, I leave you with regret to the fatal consequences of your blindness."

She walked out of the room as she spoke. The head of my grandfather sank down and vanished, and in a few minutes his whole person appeared at the door of the study; he stood there eyeing me from head to foot.

"Why did you let her in?" he asked sternly.

"I could not help it, Sir."

"You should have turned her out."

"Sir."

"Turned her out. Are you getting deaf?"

He seemed in a very bad temper, sat down with his hat on, and hunted for something amongst the

books and papers on his table, grumbling all the time. A knock at the door disturbed him; he opened it himself.

"Miss Burns is engaged," he said sharply, in reply to something, then re- entered the room, slamming the door and muttering to himself.

In a few minutes, there was a sound of carriage wheels rolling down the avenue.

"A happy riddance!" grumbled Mr. Thornton. "Will you soon have done that transcribing?"

"By dinner-time, Sir."

He glanced over my shoulder at what I had done, signified his approbation, and told me, as the others had taken themselves off, I might stay and dine with him. Accordingly, in an hour's time, we had a frugal and silent meal on an end of the table cleared away for that purpose. When the repast was over, Mr. Thornton went to a cupboard, opened it, and brought forth a bottle of old-looking wine, then laid it down and glanced at me significantly. I shook my head, and said I never took wine.

"Then you are a little fool," he replied good-humouredly, "for there is nothing better; and this is glorious old port, too."

He sat down, poured himself out a tumbler full, and, reclining back in his deep arm-chair, began enjoying slowly the only indulgence he granted to his solitary life. The genial influence of the generous vintage soon became apparent. The sternness of his mouth relaxed; his brow smoothed down; his piercing eyes softened into a sort of careless and jovial good- humour; and when he laid down his glass, it was to thrust his hands in his pockets, and chuckle to himself at the discomfiture of Mrs. Brand.

"Scientific madness, eh—and wanted to hook you into it, and that little bit of mineralogy, too—much the lawyers would have made of it! I am a lucky man; every creature I have to do with tries to cheat or outwit me; that Irish friend of yours, you—"

"Excuse me, Sir," I interrupted, reddening; "cheating implies trust, and you did not trust us. Mr. O'Reilly is the slave to his word. He kept his to you; I had none to keep. You never asked him if he liked to give me up; you never asked me if I liked being here. Do not wonder he did his best to get me back, and I to get away."

I spoke warmly; Mr. Thornton projected his nether lip, and shrugged his shoulders impassionately.

"You ridiculous little creature," he said, "why should I ask you if you liked the medicine which I your physician knew to be good for you? Don't you see that Irishman would have got tired of the young girl, as he once did of the little girl, and sent her off somewhere? I spared him the trouble."

"Indeed," I replied indignantly, "he would not have got tired of me! If I were his own child, Cornelius could not be fonder of me than he is."

Mr. Thornton looked deep into me, and at first said nothing.

"If you were his own child—eh!" he at length echoed. "Fudge!"

"Fudge, Sir! And why should he not like me? He reared me, he taught me, he watched by me when I was ill; he did everything for me. Why then should he not like me?"

I sat within a few paces of my grandfather; he stretched out bis arm, placed his hand under my chin, raised my face so as to meet his bended gaze, and again seemed to read me through.

"Silly thing!" he said, a little contemptuously, and dropped his hand, which I immediately caught, and imprisoned in both mine.

"Oh, Sir!" I exclaimed, "I have kept my word; I will keep it still; but pray let me go and see them—pray do. Where can the harm be in that? Oh! pray, do let me!"

In my eagerness, I could scarcely speak, and the words trembled on my lips.

"So," he said, "that is what you have been getting pale about, is it?— and fretting, eh?"

I could not deny the imputation. He took his hand from me, frowned, and looked displeased.

"Margaret Burns," he observed, sharply, "you are a fool, and I am a still greater fool not to let you rush on your fate. However, I am not going to do it; so just make up your mind to stay here."

With that he rose, took the paper for which he had come back, and left me, bidding me not to forget

that "Chaos and Creation."

He did not come back for three days, which I spent alone in Thornton House. It rained from morning until night, and I felt dull and miserable. I passed the best part of my time in the study, reading; and there my grandfather found me on his return.

The afternoon was not far gone, and the weather seemed inclined to improve. The rain had ceased; yellow streaks of sunlight pierced the gray sky, and lit up the wet park. I sat by the window, through which streamed in a doubtful light; a book lay on my lap unread, and with my two hands clasped upon it, and my head low bent, I was absorbed in a waking dream, when the sound of the opening door roused me. I looked up, and saw Mr. Thornton, in his travelling dress, standing on the threshold, his two hands resting on the head of his cane, his eyes attentively fixed upon me. I said something about his return, and rose. He did not answer, but came in slowly, and began taking off his great coat; then suddenly pausing in the operation, he turned to me, and said abruptly:

"What is it about?"

"What, Sir?" I asked, astonished.

"That you are crying for?"

I hung down my head, and did not reply.

"Has anything or any one annoyed you, whilst I was away?" he asked, in the same short way.

"No. Sir."

"Then what are you crying for?"

"Oh, Sir, you know!" 1 said, with involuntary emotion.

"The old story, eh?" He walked up and down the room with his coat hanging half off from one arm; then suddenly stopping before me, he said: "Since you will be a fool, why be one and have your way. That friend of yours has not yet left Leigh; if he will come here, and comply with a condition that I shall exact, he may take you with him when and for as long as he likes."

I could scarcely believe my senses. I gazed incredulously at Mr. Thornton, who told me not to be bewildered, but see about it. I needed no second bidding, and ran out of the room at once. I met Charlotte on the staircase.

"Charlotte," I said, breathlessly, "can you take a letter for me to Leigh immediately?"

Before the girl could answer, Mrs. Marks, standing on the landing where I had first seen her, chose to interfere.

"Charlotte must get Mr Thornton's dinner ready," she said, majestically.

"Very well," I replied more quietly; "Richard can do it."

"Richard is out," she observed with evident satisfaction.

"Then I can do it myself," I said impatiently.

I ran up-stairs, got ready, and went off at once. It was only when I had passed the lodge, that it occurred to me Mr. Thornton had not perhaps intended me to be my own messenger; but it was too late to retreat; besides I could not resist the temptation of seeing Cornelius again, so I cast thought behind me, and went on.

My heart beat fast as I reached Rock Cottage. The garden-gate stood ajar; the door was open too; I entered and looked into both the parlours, then passed on to the garden, hurried along the gravel path, and caught a glimpse of him going down to the beach. I thought to call him back, but changed my mind, and followed him silently. The path wound away to the sands, sunk between sharp and rugged rocks. Down these, the gate and garden left behind me, I ran lightly. I soon outstripped him, and stood awaiting his approach on a point of rock that projected over the path. He walked with folded arms and eyes bent on the earth. When he was within a few paces of me, I dropped lightly down before him. If I had fallen from the sky, he could scarcely have looked more astonished. He did not speak, but took my hands in his, as if to make sure of my identity.

"I am no spirit," I said, "but real flesh and blood."

The blood rushed up to his brow.

"You are come—come back to me after all!" he exclaimed ardently. "I knew you would." And stooping, he pressed me to his heart with a passionate fondness that made me forget all save the joy of seeing him again. I know not what we said in that first moment. I felt one with him then, and his words of endearment and gladness are irrevocably blended with mine in memory. All I distinctly remember, is finding myself sitting with him in the back-parlour of Rock Cottage, my two bands clasped on his shoulder, my eyes raised up to his, and my ears drinking in with delight every word that fell from his lips. He called me by every fond name he could think of; blessed me over and over, and ended by saying eagerly: "Had we not better go at once, my darling?"

I started and woke from my dream.

"Cornelius," I replied, hesitatingly, "I have not run away—I am come to see you."

He looked transfixed.

"To see me!" he said at length; "and do you think I will let you leave me? No, Daisy, you have placed in my way a temptation mortal man could not resist. I tell you that I have you, and that I will keep you."

He took my two hands in his. I tried to disengage them; but though his grasp was so gentle I scarcely felt it, it held me completely captive. He smiled at my useless efforts; then said with some reproach:

"Oh, Daisy! the little girl whom I carried in my arms seven years ago, was willing enough. I had not, even in jest, to hold her hands. She clasped them around my neck lovingly and trustingly, laid her hand on my shoulder, and had but one fear—lest I should leave her behind."

He released me, and added, in his most fervent and beseeching accents:

"Come with me, Daisy; come with me. If you ever cared for me, show it now—come with me. Don't drive me to do something desperate—I tell you that I will never leave Leigh without you. Come with me!"

He had again clasped his arms around me, and held me within a circle more potent than that of any magic spell. I laid my two hands on his shoulders, and smiled up at him, as I replied:

"I should have told you at once, but I was so glad, that I forgot it; and you are so impatient that you won't hear me out. Mr. Thornton has changed his mind—he says I may be with you and Kate again—all on a condition."

"What condition?" he promptly asked.

"I don't know—he will tell it to you himself, and you will agree to it— won't you, Cornelius?"

"No," he replied, impatiently; "this is a snare. Besides, why submit to a condition when I have you here without one? Oh, Daisy! now is the moment. Fate, or rather Providence, has made us meet—we must not have the madness to part again. I have missed one opportunity—I will not miss another. Trust to me. Cast by all thought, all fear—look not behind or before you. Come, Daisy, not to-morrow—not to-night—but now! Come with me—come!"

He rose, as if to lead me away that very moment; but he still held me fast, and that clasp which the passion of the moment only rendered more secure, his flushed face, eager looks, and feverish accents, all breathed the most vehement and ardent entreaty.

Subdued by his resolute tenderness, I yielded, but for a moment only; the next, I rallied and resisted. I made a desperate effort, and, both bodily and mentally, asserted my freedom.

"No, no, Cornelius," I cried, agitatedly, "I cannot go with you. I, too, have passed my word, and I must keep it—I must keep it; and you must not ask or tempt me to break it—indeed, Cornelius, you must not."

I spoke as I felt, with much distress. Cornelius calmed down at once, and entreated me to be pacified.

"I had forgotten your promise;" he said, "seeing you here, I had but one thought [] to possess and secure that which I had lost. I will submit to Mr. Thornton's conditions, and take you back to him this moment. What more would you have?"

In his earnestness, he again took my hand. My lips parted to thank him, but the entrance of our old servant checked the words. She muttered indistinctly, as was her wont, then kept the door open, and admitted—Mr. Thornton.

For a moment, he stood still on the threshold, and looked confounded.
Neither Cornelius nor I spoke.

"So," he said at length, "I fancy I leave you safe at home writing a letter, and give myself the trouble of coming here to have some private talk with Mr. O'Reilly; and you are actually here before-hand with me."

"I could find no one to send the letter by, Sir," I replied, quite dismayed. "I am sorry if I have done wrong."

"Wrong!" echoed Cornelius, looking displeased, and drawing me towards him as he spoke.

I saw his proud and hasty temper would ruin all; I hastened to interfere.

"I have been speaking to Mr. O'Reilly," I said, quickly, "and he has promised to abide by the conditions. You know, Cornelius, you have promised," I added, turning towards him.

He could not deny it, but reddened, and bit his lip. Mr. Thornton said nothing, but sat down, and looked at us with a keen and attentive gaze, which Cornelius did not seem to relish.

"You wished to speak to me, Sir," he said, at length.

"Yes, Sir," composedly answered my grandfather, "I came here for that purpose, just as you came to me on the same errand seven years ago. Sir, I am a plain man, and I shall speak plainly. I think it is a strange thing that since you in some manner forced this young girl upon me, you are ever doing all you can to get her back—ay, and a very strange thing."

He looked at him fixedly. Cornelius returned the gaze, and the question:

"Is it a stranger thing, Sir, than that you, who accepted this young girl so reluctantly, should since always show yourself so anxious to keep her?"

"Perhaps not," drily replied Mr. Thornton; "but I meant to be brief. What I have to say is this: When I placed her with Mrs. Gray, I never intended, Sir, that you should see her face again. I had my motives. The physician having, however, pronounced her consumptive, I thought, if she was to die, she might as well be humoured. But when I returned, a few weeks ago, I learned that the little thing was alive and well; that you, too, had returned from your travels, and had turned out a most vigilant and attentive guardian; and it occurred to me that I might as well remind you of your promise. For this, too, I had my motives. You redeemed your word honourably, without taking advantage of your position or influence; but it was the old story all over—no sooner was she out of your hands, than you were half mad to have her back again. She, too, wanted to be off; and, to show me what a tyrant I was, and what a victim I made of her, she got thin and sallow with all her might. Sir, I give in; on the condition I shall name presently—she may dispose of herself as she thinks fit. But this time, as well as before, you owe me no thanks. It is to gratify her I do it."

"And this time, as before, it is to please her I submit to a condition," haughtily replied Cornelius.

I still stood by him and gave his arm a warning and entreating pressure.
My grandfather calmly resumed:

"She is young, and much under your influence. I wish her to remain quite free, and shall be satisfied if you will promise not to make a present of her to any bosom friend of yours that might take a fancy to her, you understand."

"Yes, Sir, I understand." replied Cornelius, with subdued irritation, "but I decline pledging myself for her."

"I do not require it," said Mr. Thornton, a little ironically, "I care not a rush on whom the silly thing bestows herself, but I like fair play, and want her to give herself, and not to be given—or taken either. If she runs away without your knowledge, depend upon it I shall not accuse you. I ask you to pledge yourself for yourself—do you object?"

"No, no," I replied eagerly for him, "Cornelius does not object. Bless you, Mr. Thornton, *he* does not want to give me away. Of course he does not. You don't, Cornelius, do you?" I added, looking up in his face, and passing my arm within his.

My grandfather laughed sarcastically. Cornelius looked exasperated. He seemed to be undergoing a sharp, inward struggle; at length he yielded.

"For her sake, Sir," he said, addressing Mr. Thornton, "and hers alone, I yield; I give you the promise

you require. Allow me to add that you either trust me a great deal too much, or far too little."

He spoke with such defiant pride, that I looked half frightened at my grandfather; but he only smiled and rose. I saw he was going, and left Cornelius to bid him adieu.

"Good-bye!" he said, roughly; yet when I passed my arm around his neck, and, for the first time touched his cheek with my lips, he looked more astonished than displeased; but he had so long broken with the charities of life, that to return the embrace probably did not occur to him. All he did was to look from me to Cornelius, and say, with a careless nod:

"She's a pretty little thing," having delivered which opinion, he turned away and left us.

Scarcely had the door closed on him, when Cornelius broke out.

"Oh, Daisy!" he exclaimed, "what have you made me do! And why must I, who hate the mere thought of interference and subjection, thus hold you on the good-will and pleasure of another."

He paced the room with agitated steps. I saw his pride suffered, and following him, I did my best to soothe him; at length I succeeded; he stopped short before me, looked down at me with a smile, and said:

"I almost forgive your perverse old grandfather everything, for the sake of his last words. You are a pretty little thing—and better than you are pretty," he added fondly.

"Then mind you appreciate me," I replied.

He said there was no fear that he should not.

We left Leigh the next day, and Cornelius, according to the philosophic injunction of Kate, locked up the house and brought the key in his pocket.

CHAPTER XIII.

Our journey was short and pleasant. Cornelius seemed quite gay again. In order to surprise Kate, we stepped down from the cab at the end of the lane, talking of that evening seven years before, when he had brought me along the same path to the same dwelling.

"Oh, Cornelius," I exclaimed, looking up at him, "was it not kind of Mr
Thornton to let me come back?"

He looked down at me, and smiled as he replied:

"I don't know that he meant it as any particular kindness to me; but that he could do me none greater, I mean to show him yet."

The lane was long; we walked slowly; the evening was one of early autumn's most lovely ones, brown and mellow, our path was strewn with fallen leaves, but the beauty of summer was still in the sky, and its warmth in the glorious setting sun. As we approached the well-known door, we saw Kate in her hair, standing on the threshold and talking to two little Irish beggars, whom she was scolding and stuffing at the same time. As she turned round, she saw us, and looked at us with incredulous astonishment. I ran up to her, and threw my arm around her neck.

"I am come back," I cried, "indeed I am."

"I see and feel it; but is it for good?"

"To be sure."

She kissed me heartily, then pushed me away and said, "there was no getting rid of that girl, but that she knew well enough Cornelius would not come back without her," then she turned to the two petitioners, bade them be off and never show their faces again, and ended by telling them to call for some cold meat on Monday. This matter dispatched, she shut the door and followed us in. As we passed through the garden, I saw with surprise that it was no longer separated from its neighbour.

"No," said Kate, with some pride, "it is now one garden and one dwelling, Daisy. No more tenants, you know. I like room. Are you too tired to come and see the changes I have made?"

We both said "No," and Miss O'Reilly took us over the whole house at once. It was much larger, and much improved; we had parlours to spare now; drawing-rooms elegantly furnished, bed-rooms more than we needed; so that, as Kate said, if any old friend came from Ireland—though she was afraid they must be all dead, for they never came—or if those two good friends of Cornelius, Schwab and Armari, should leave fair Italy for smoky London, they could be accommodated easily. Thus talking carelessly, Miss O'Reilly took us to the top of the house, where we found the old dream of Cornelius fairly realised: several rooms thrown into one, with a skylight. She laughed at his surprise; pushed him away, and told him to keep his distance when he kissed her, then suddenly flung her arms around his neck and embraced him ardently.

We returned to our old life on the very next day, as if it had known no interruption. I sat to Cornelius, who painted with renewed ardour; towards dusk he took me out walking; when evening had fairly set in, he gave me my Italian lesson, and when that was over, he sang and played or read aloud. He never seemed to think of going out; one evening, when his sister insisted on making him leave us, he returned at the end of ten minutes. "He had not been able," he said, "to get beyond the end of the grove. There was, after all, no place like home."

"Domestic man!" observed Kate, smiling as he sat down by me on my sofa.

Without seeming to hear her, he took up Shakespeare from the table, and began reading aloud the most fervent and beautiful passages from Romeo and Juliet. Then he suddenly closed the book and turning on me, asked how I liked the story of the two Italian lovers.

"Were they not a little crazy, Cornelius?" I replied; "but I suppose love always makes people more or less ridiculous."

On hearing this heretic sentiment, Cornelius looked orthodox and shocked.

"Ridiculous!" he said, "who has put such ideas into your head?" He glanced suspiciously at Kate who hastily observed:

"I had nothing to do with it."

"Do you think I could not find that out alone?" I asked, laughing.

But Cornelius remained quite grave. Did I not know love was a most exalted feeling? That angels loved in Heaven, and that poor mortals could not do better than imitate them on earth? That love was the attribute of the female mind, its charm and its power? On these high moral grounds, he proceeded to give me an eloquent description of the universal passion. It was pure, it was noble, tender and enduring; it was light and very joyous; it had sweetness and great strength; it refined the mind; it purified the heart; and, though seemingly so exclusive, it filled to overflowing with the sense of universal charity. It was a chain of subtle and mysterious sympathies.

Here I rapidly passed my forefinger along his profile, and resting it on the tip of his nose, I said gravely:

"Kate! is it aquiline or Roman? Aquiline, I think."

On feeling and hearing this piece of impertinence, Cornelius turned round on me with such a start of vexation and wrath, that I jumped up, and ran off to the chair of Kate. She only laughed at her brother's discomfiture. He said nothing, but sat fuming alone on the sofa.

"Serve you right," she said, "why will you explain love philosophically to a girl of seventeen? Don't you see her hour is not come, and that if it were, she would know more than you could tell her?"

Cornelius sharply replied "that was not at all the question, but that when he spoke, he thought he might be listened to."

"I did listen to you," I said, "your last words were: 'a chain of subtle and mysterious sympathies.'"

He did not answer, but took up Shakespeare, and looked tragic over it.

"He's vexed," I whispered audibly to Kate. "He looks like Othello, the Moor of Venice. What shall I do? I am afraid of the sofa-pillow, if I go near him! He looked a while ago as if he longed to throw it at me; just because I said his nose was aquiline, and broke his chain of subtle and mysterious sympathies."

"Kate!" said Cornelius, looking up from his book, "can't you make that girl hold her tongue?"

Kate declined the office, and sent me back to him. He pretended to be very angry, but when I deliberately took Shakespeare from him and shut it, he smiled, smoothed my hair, and called me by two

or three of the fondest of the many fond and endearing names in Irish, English, and Italian, which it was now his habit to bestow upon me, and thus our little quarrels always ended.

I was very happy; yet here as well as at Leigh, the restless spirit of youth was stirring within me. Kate had suffered much, she liked repose; Cornelius had travelled, home sufficed him. My sorrows had been few, and Leigh was the extent of my peregrinations. Of home, of the daily comedies and dramas, which can be enacted in a human dwelling, I knew something; but of life, busy, active, outward life I knew less than most girls of my age, and they—poor things—knew little enough. Kate seldom went beyond her garden; when Cornelius took me out in the evening, it was for a quiet walk in the lanes. I said nothing, but I never passed by the landing window on my way to or from the studio, without stopping to look with a secret longing at the cloud of smoke hanging above London. Cornelius found me there on the afternoon which followed his Shakspearian reading, and he said with some curiosity:

"Daisy, what attraction is there in that prospect of brick and smoke?"

"What part of London lies next to us?" I asked, instead of answering.

"Oxford Street; you surely know Oxford Street?"

"I remember having been there two or three times."

"Two or three times! You do not mean to say you have never been in Oxford Street more than two or three times!"

"Indeed I do, Cornelius. I was ten when I came here, always weak and sickly; then we went to Leigh, and we have been back about a fortnight. It is not so wonderful, you see."

Cornelius smiled, smoothed my hair, and said something about "violets in the shade, and birds in their nests."

"Yes, but birds leave their nests sometimes, don't they, Cornelius?" I asked a little impatiently.

"You want to go to town," he exclaimed, astonished.

I smiled.

"Oh!" he said, reproachfully, "have you really a wish, and will you not give me the pleasure of gratifying it? Do tell me what you wish for, Daisy—pray do."

He spoke warmly, and looked eagerly into my face.

"Well, then," I replied, "take me some day to Oxford Street. I know the Pantheon is there, and I remember it as a sort of fairy-palace."

"Some day!—to-day, Daisy—this very day. Though this is not the season, there must be places worth seeing; museums, exhibitions—"

"The streets with the shops, the people, and the great current of life running through them, will entertain me far more than museums or made-up exhibitions."

"Why did you not say so sooner?"

"Kate dislikes long walks."

"But do I?—do I dislike long walks with you, Daisy, in town or country, in lanes or in streets? Is there anything I like better than to please or amuse you?"

Without allowing me to thank him, he told me to make haste and get ready. I obeyed, and within an hour, Cornelius and I were walking down Oxford Street.

London, according to a figurative mode of speech, was quite empty; that is to say, a few all-important hundreds had taken flight, and left the insignificant thousands behind, just to mind the place in their absence. To me, after the long quietness of Leigh, it looked as gay and crowded as a fair. At once I flew to the shops, like a moth to the light, and Cornelius, with a good humour rare in his sex, not only stood patiently whilst I admired, but kept a sharp look out for every milliner's and linendraper's establishment, saying, eagerly:—

"There's another one, Daisy."

But, after a while, I was dazzled with all I saw, deafened with the sound of rolling carriages,

bewildered with the unusual aspect of so many people, and glad to take refuge in the Pantheon, with its flowers, its birds, its statues, its pictures, its fanciful stalls, and its profusion of those graceful knick-knacks which have ever been, and ever will be, the delights of a truly feminine heart.

We had entered this pretty place by Great Marlborough Street. Cornelius began by buying me a beautiful, but most extravagant bouquet, which I had been imprudent enough to admire, and did not like to refuse. As we loitered about, I looked at one of the birds in the cages around the little fountain, and praised its glowing plumage.

"Have it," eagerly said Cornelius, and his purse was out directly.

"No, indeed," I quickly replied, "I do not like birds in cages."

"Well, then, have one of those squirrels."

"I will have nothing alive. And I will not have a plant either," I added, detecting the look he cast at the expensive flowers around us. I compelled him to put back his purse; but as we went on, and inspected the stalls, I bad to entreat add argue him out of buying me, first a vase of magnificent wax flowers; then a *papier-mach?* table, and thirdly, some costly china. No sooner did my eye chance to light with pleasure on anything, than he insisted on giving it to me. At length, I told him he spoiled all my enjoyment. He asked, with a dissatisfied air, if I was too proud to accept anything from him. I assured him I had no such feeling, and that he might buy me something before we went home, if such was his fancy.

"What?" he asked, with a look of mistrust.

"Anything you like; but for the present, pray let me look about."

He yielded; but I wished afterwards I had let him have his own way; for as we were leaving the Pantheon, with all its temptations, and I thought all right, Cornelius suddenly took me into a shop, and before I could remonstrate, he had bought me a light blue silk dress, as dear as it was pretty. I left the place much mortified; he saw it, and laughed at me, telling me to take this as a lesson, for that he would not be thwarted.

We took a cab and rode home; yet it was dusk when we reached the Grove. A light burned in the drawing-room window. We wondered what company Kate was entertaining; and on going up-stairs, found her sitting with our old friend, Mr. Smalley. We had not seen him since his marriage with Miriam Russell. He was now a widower. He looked paler and thinner than formerly; but as good and gentle as ever. He and Cornelius exchanged a greeting friendly, though rather calm and reserved. With me, Mr. Smalley was more open; but as he held my hand in his, he looked at me, and, smiling, turned to Cornelius.

"I should never have known in her the sickly child whom I still remember," he said; "indeed, my friend, your adopted daughter has thriven under your paternal care. Hush, darling!"

He was addressing a child of two or three, who clung to him, casting shy looks around the room, and seeming very ready to cry. To pacify her, he sat down again, and took her on his knee. She nestled close to him, and was hushed at once. Mr. Smalley made a little paternal apology. Darling had insisted on coming with him, and as she would not stay with his sister Mary, he had to take her with him wherever he went.

"Those young creatures," he added, looking at Cornelius, "twine themselves around our very heart-strings. I know what a truly paternal heart yours is for your adopted daughter."

"Ay, ay!" interrupted Cornelius, looking fidgetty, "how is Trim?"

"He died a year ago," gravely replied Mr. Smalley. "Ah! my friend, my heart smote me when I heard the tidings. I had always been harsh to Trim, you know."

"You harsh to any one!" said Cornelius, smiling.

But Mr. Smalley assured him his nature was harsh; though, with the grace of God, he had been able to subdue it a little. Darling, he might add, had been the means of softening many an asperity. He kissed her kindly as he spoke. She was a pale, fair-haired little creature, very like him, and evidently indulged to excess. He was wrapped in her, and when of her own accord, she left him to come to me, he felt so much astonished, that he could speak of nothing else. In her two years' life, Darling had never done such a thing before. Indeed her shyness, he plainly hinted, was alone an insuperable obstacle to a second union.

"Mr. Smalley," I said, "Darling has just agreed to stay with me, if you will leave her."

"You have bewitched her," he replied, giving me a grateful look; but he confessed it would be a great weight off his mind; and with many thanks and evident regret, he left me the treasure of his heart.

Darling soon fell asleep in my arms. One of her little hands was clasped around my neck, the other held mine; her fair head rested on my bosom, and her calm, sleeping face lay upraised and unconscious with closed eyes and parted lips. I stooped, and with some emotion, softly kissed the child of my persecutor. Cornelius, who sat by me, whispered the two concluding lines of Wordsworth's sonnet, with a slight modification:

"How much is mixed and reconciled in thee,
Of mother's love, with maiden purity."

Then bending over me, he attempted to embrace Darling; but his beard woke her; she screamed, kicked, burst into a new fit of crying every time he attempted to sit near me, and said "her papa should take me to Rugby."

"And be your mamma. No, indeed, Miss Smalley," replied Cornelius, tartly.
"She is mine, and I keep her."

To teaze her, he passed his arm around me, and caressed me, upon which Darling got into such a passion, that he asked impatiently "if I would not put the sulky little thing to bed?"

She succeeded on this and on subsequent occasions in keeping him at a safe distance from me. At first her childish jealousy amused him, but as she was in other respects a very endearing little thing, and engrossed me like a new toy, Cornelius did not relish it at all. He looked especially uncomfortable during Mr. Smalley's daily visits, and to my amusement, for I know well enough what he was afraid of, he did not seem easy, until both Darling and her papa were fairly gone.

I always made my own dresses, and I made the blue silk one with great care. It was finished one afternoon before dusk. I put it on in my room, and came down to show it to Kate; she was not in the parlour. I felt anxious to see how it fitted, and got up on a chair to look at myself in the glass over the fire-place. At that very moment Cornelius entered. I jumped down, rather ashamed at being caught. He came up to me, and without saying a word, took a white rose from a vase of flowers, and put it in my hair. I took another, and fastened it to the front of my dress. Then he took my hand in his, and drawing a little back from me, he smiled. I sighed, and asked:

"What shall I do with it, Cornelius?"

"Look pretty in it, as you do now."

"But where shall I wear it?"

"Here, of course."

"It is only fit for a party. Why have we no party to go to?"

"Because people don't ask us," was his frank reply.

"I wish they would."

"To be seen and admired by others besides Cornelius O'Reilly, you vain little creature."

"It is not for that; but I should like a party or so."

"Well, when we get invited, I shall take you," he replied, with a smile that provoked me.

"Yes," I said, colouring, "but you know no one will ask us. We go nowhere; we see no one, not even artists. I wish you would see artists."

"I don't care about English artists," he replied, drily.

"Well then, Irish."

"Still less. The three kingdoms and the principality do not yield one with whom I would care to spend an hour."

"But I want to see artists."

"And am I not an artist?"

"Oh! I know you so well! What is your friend Armari like?"

"A good-looking Italian," replied Cornelius, whistling carelessly, with his hands in his pockets, "rather given to be in love with every woman he sees."

"And Mr. Schwab?"

"A good-looking German, and a professed woman-hater."

"I wish they would come."

"But they won't," he said, with evident satisfaction.

"You are glad of it!" I exclaimed a little indignantly. "You are glad that I have no parties to go to; that I see no one."

I turned away half angrily; he caught me back, ardently entreating me not to be vexed with him; "He could not bear it," he said. Astonished and mute, I looked up into his bending face. The time had been when I had trembled before a look and a frown, and now a petulant speech of mine distressed him thus.

"Forgive me," he earnestly continued, "for not having forestalled your wishes; but I cared so little for other society than yours, that I forgot mine might not be to you so delightful and engrossing. A party, I cannot command, but I shall take you to the play this very evening."

I wanted to refuse, but he would hear of no objection, though I told him plainly he had not the money to spare.

"And if it is my pleasure to spend on you the little I have—what about it, Daisy?"

At length I yielded; and, on his request, went up to ask Kate to join us. She refused peremptorily, and said she liked home best. As she helped me to finish my toilet, she gave me sundry instructions concerning my behaviour. I was to let Cornelius be civil to me, it was his turn now, and if he picked up my glove, carried my shawl or put it on, I was to take it as a matter of course.

"Very well, Kate," I said, "but it is odd."

"Why so!"

"I don't know, but it is odd."

We were entering the parlour where Cornelius stood waiting for me. I gave him the shawl I had brought down on my arm.

"You are to put that on me," I said, "for Kate says you are to be civil to me; so I hope you will, and not disgrace me in the face of the whole house by any want of proper attention due to the sex. I cannot go and tell the people 'you need not wonder at his being so rude; it is all because he knew me when I was a little girl.'"

"Impertinent little thing," observed Kate, "I only told her not to be civil to you."

"Well, am I? I spoke as impertinently as I could. Did I not, Cornelius?"

"Indeed you did," he replied, smiling, and helping me to pin my shawl on.
"Have you any more commands for me?"

"Only just to hold my fan, my gloves, my scent-bottle, my handkerchief, and to give me your arm."

He managed to obey me; Kate smiled approvingly, and we entered the cab which was waiting for us at the door. Cornelius took me to a house which had not long been open, but where both performances and actors were said to be good. We occupied the front seats of a centre box, and commanded a full view of the stage and audience. I was young, unaccustomed to pleasure, and easily amused. I felt interested in the play, and when the second act was over, I turned to Cornelius and said—

"Do you think Lady Ada will marry her cousin?"

"I suppose so," he replied, without looking at me.

"Oh! Cornelius, I hope not; he is not the right one, you know."

"Is he not?"

"Oh! dear, no; what can you have been thinking of?"

"That there never was a more insolent fellow than that man in the pit," replied Cornelius, who looked much irritated, "for the whole of the last act he has kept his opera-glass fully bent upon you."

"Then his neck must ache by this."

"How coolly you take it!"

"What am I to do?"

"Nothing, of course; but surely you will grant that sort of admiration is very insolent."

"How do I know it is admiration? He may be thinking 'poor girl, what a pity she is so shockingly dressed, or has such a bad figure, or has not better features!'"

"Do you think a man loses a whole act to find out that a girl is plain?" sceptically asked Cornelius.

I did not answer. He very unreasonably construed this into being pleased with being looked at. Wishing to get rid of the subject, I asked him to change places with me; he accepted at once, and took my seat, whilst I sat partly behind him. At first this produced nothing; the gentleman with the opera-glass really seemed to enjoy the face of Cornelius quite as much as mine.

"He has not found it out yet," I said. But even as I spoke, the individual I alluded to rose and left the pit.

"Oh! he has found it out, has he?" ironically inquired Cornelius.

The third act was beginning when the door of our box opened, and a foreign-looking man, dark and handsome, entered. I felt sure it was Armari, it was; but it also was the gentleman with the opera-glass, a fact that gave rather an odd character to the greeting of Cornelius.

Most foreigners are self-possessed. Signor Armari was pre-eminently so. He looked at me as if he knew not the use of the opera-glass, which he still held, and even had the assurance to offer it to me. I did not know Italian sufficiently to understand the whole of his discourse; but it seemed to me that its chief purport was an enthusiastic, intense admiration of the golden hair, blue eyes, and dazzling complexions of English ladies—a theme that, by no means, appeared to delight Cornelius. Signor Armari remained with us until the play was over. We then parted from him, and never once mentioned his name, until we reached the Grove.

Kate was sitting up for us. She received us with a pleased smile, asked how we had been entertained, and what the play was about. I told her as well as I could, but, after the second act, my memory was rather at fault.

Cornelius said, pointedly:

"You must not wonder if she does not remember it better. I was talking to
Armari."

"What, your old friend Armari?" interrupted Kate.

"Yes, he is in England."

He spoke with a calmness that astonished her.

"Are you not delighted to see him?" she asked.

"I am very glad to see Armari," he replied, in a tone of ice. "I have asked him to dine with us next Thursday. He has promised to bring Schwab."

"Schwab, too!—was he there?"

"No; he was kept at home by a cold."

"They shall have a good dinner," warmly said Kate. "Midge, is Armari as handsome as Cornelius described him in his letters?"

"He is good-looking," I replied, awkwardly.

"Pleasant?"

"Yes—I don't know—I think so."

"Armari," gravely said Cornelius, "resembles the celebrated portraits of Raffaelle. He is something more than good-looking—he is a delightful companion, and something more than pleasant."

"I am sure he is not the common-place fellow you made him out, Daisy," observed Kate.

"I did not make him out anything; I don't think about him at all," I replied, half vexed.

"Well, you need not colour up so," she said, looking surprised; "and you need not look so glum about it, Cornelius. Tastes differ."

Neither replied. Miss O'Reilly, whose whole thoughts were absorbed in hospitality, did not notice this, but added, with a start:

"How long are they to stay?"

"Two or three weeks."

"Then ask them to spend those two or three weeks here," she rejoined, triumphantly. "I have bed-rooms to spare, you know."

"Here—in the house?" exclaimed Cornelius.

"Where else should I have bed-rooms?"

"Thank you," was his short reply.

"Does thank you, mean yes?"

"No, indeed. What should they do here?"

He seemed impatient and provoked. His sister asked if he would not feel glad to have his friends near him? He replied "Certainly," but that they came to see London, and not to coop themselves up in a suburb. Miss O'Reilly said she would at least make the offer. Her brother looked quite irritated.

"Schwab will smoke you to death," he said.

"As if I were not used to smoking."

"My cigars are nothing to his Turkish pipe. Besides, he swears awfully."

"In German," philosophically replied Kate. "Let him, Cornelius: I shall not understand him; and it will only be the worse for his own soul, poor heathenish fellow."

"He is a confirmed woman-hater."

"Unhappy man, not to know better!—but there is a comfort in it, too. I shall not be afraid of his making love to Daisy."

"He will eat you out of house and home."

"I am astonished at such a mean, paltry objection," replied Miss
O'Reilly, waxing indignant.

"Well, then," he said, impatiently, "take it for granted that I do not want Schwab."

"I suppose you could not ask Armari alone?"

"No," was the prompt reply. "To tell you the truth, Kate, I want to work hard, and their presence in the house would interfere with it."

"Could you not say so at once, instead of abusing that unfortunate
Schwab? Well, your friends shall at least have a good dinner."

Miss O'Reilly was learned in many a dainty dish, and had imparted to me some of her art. Our united skill and efforts produced as luxurious a little dinner for five as one need wish to see. The guests were punctual to the very minute; there was no delay, no spoiling of dishes and chafing of tempers, and all would have gone on admirably, but for an unlucky circumstance. Kate and I did not speak Italian, and the friends of Cornelius did not speak English; bad French was therefore the medium of our

conversation. Kate liked talking, and she sat with a provoked air between her two guests whom I watched with silent amusement. With his dark hair, his classical features, ivory throat, and collar turned down ? la Byron, Signor Armari looked very interesting; but all his vivacity seemed gone. He hung his handsome head with dismal grace, like a wounded bird, smiled at the untouched food on his plate, and gave us looks that seemed to say: "Eat away—eat away."

The injunction was religiously obeyed by his friend Schwab. He belonged to the handsome Germanic type, and was very like an illustrious personage. He had an honest, hearty northern appetite, and marched into the dishes, and tossed off the claret with a careless vigour that edified Kate. It was pleasant to see him dispatch the choicest dainties of the dessert without even a smile. When he came indeed to some tarts, in which I think I may say I had distinguished myself, his countenance relaxed a little; and when Cornelius informed him that they owed their existence to me, Mr. Schwab looked at me with an uplifting of the eye-brow expressive of wonder and admiration.

I had expected a dull evening, and I spent a very pleasant one. The two friends of Cornelius sang and played admirably, and treated us to the most exquisite music I had ever heard. Both Kate and I were delighted, and when they were gone, said how much we had been pleased.

"I like that Schwab," observed Kate, "he is very good-looking, and not the bear you made him out, Cornelius. He has a good appetite, but your great eaters are the men after all. The little eaters are only half-and- half sort of people; and then he sings so well, and so does Armari. How handsome he is; but how melancholy he looks! Is he in love?"

Cornelius looked on thorns, and replied: "he did not know."

To our surprise and vexation, his friends came no more near us. He said they found the distance too great, and spent his evenings with them. I did not like that at all, and one evening spared no coaxing to keep him at home. I passed my arms around his neck, and caressed him, and entreated him to stay with me and Kate. He returned the caresses, called me by every dear name he could think of, protested that he would much rather stay than go, but left me all the same. I had taken the habit—it is one easily taken—of being humoured. I now cried with vexation and grief. Kate said nothing, but privately invited her brother's friends to come and stay with us. They accepted. I shall never forget the face of Cornelius, when she quietly informed him they were coming the next day.

"Coming to stay?" he said looking at her incredulously.

"Yes, coming to stay," she composedly replied, "you did not think I was going to stand that much longer—such a mean way of receiving one's friends. Why, what would be thought of us in Ireland, if it were known! For shame, Cornelius, you look quite dismayed."

So he did, and repeated the word "coming!" with ill-repressed irritation.

"Yes, coming!" persisted Kate, "don't trouble yourself about them. I shall so stuff Mr. Schwab's mouth, as to leave no room even for German swearing, and I shall turn up Signor Armari into the drawing room where he may sing Italian to Daisy. So there's a division of tasks."

"Nice division, indeed," said Cornelius, seeming much provoked. "You forget that I want Daisy."

Our dwelling was honoured the following day by receiving the two strangers. They had made some progress in English; and though Signor Armari was still rather melancholy, we got on much better; but to my annoyance and chagrin, I could scarcely see anything of him or his friend. In the daytime, Cornelius kept me in his studio, which they never entered but twice in my absence; in the evening he either went out with them, or got me in a corner of the sofa, and sat most pertinaciously by me. Once, however, he was late, and accordingly found me between his two friends, hearing them through the universal verb, to love, which one pronounced, "I loaf," and the other, "I loove." They laughed good-humouredly at their own mistakes, and I laughed too; but Cornelius seemed to think it no joke, and looked on with a face of tragic gloom.

He took care this should happen no more. At the end of a fortnight our guests left us. Cornelius saw them off, and came back with a pleased and relieved aspect that did not escape his sister. I was sitting with her in the parlour by the fire, for the cold weather was beginning. He sat down by me, smoked a cigar with evident enjoyment, and declared those were the two best fellows he had ever met with—Schwab especially. Something in my face betrayed me; he took out his cigar, and hastily said:

"What is it, Daisy?"

"What is what, Cornelius?"

"What did Armari do to annoy you?"

"He did nothing."

"Why do you look so odd, then?"

I did not answer.

"Why, you foolish fellow," said Kate, laughing, and not heeding my entreating look, "it was Schwab, that best of good fellows."

"Was he rude or bearish?" asked Cornelius, reddening.

"Rude!" she replied, impatiently, "he was too civil!"

"Schwab!" echoed Cornelius, in the tone of Caesar's 'Et tu Brute'—
"Schwab, too!"

"Cornelius," I said, a little indignantly, "it was Schwab alone, if you please."

He did not heed me; he was lost in his indignation and astonishment.

"Schwab!" he said again—"Schwab, the woman-hater?"

"There are no women-haters," observed his sister; "her tarts softened his obdurate heart from the first day, and Cupid did the rest. Now you need not look so desperately gloomy, Cornelius; he was not more civil than he had a right to be; and when she let him see quietly she did not like it, he, sensible man, thought there were girls as good and as pretty in Germany, and did not break his heart about her. He kept his own counsel, so did we; and but for me, you would be none the wiser."

"Thank you," shortly said Cornelius, "but as I know this much, and as I am sure there is more, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me all about Armari now."

"Ah! poor fellow," sighed Kate, "he is in a very bad way; I noticed he could scarcely eat, and Schwab said he had not slept a wink since that night at the play."

"He will get over it," impatiently interrupted Cornelius. "I have known him seven times in the same way."

"Then he must lead rather an agitated life; but, as I was saying, or rather, as Mr. Schwab told me, he has lost rest and appetite since that night at the play, when he saw the beautiful Mrs. Gleaver in the box next yours."

She knew all about the opera-glass, and glanced mischievously at her brother. He reddened, looked disconcerted, and exclaimed hastily:

"I don't believe a bit of that."

"Yes, you do," she replied quietly, "and now, Cornelius, mind my words: that sort of thing is not in the girl's way, and will not be for a good time yet; perhaps never, for she has a very flinty heart."

"Don't I know it?" he replied composedly, "and was it not Christian charity made me uneasy about poor Armari? I feared lest that brown, golden hair of hers," he added, smoothing it as he spoke, "might prove such a web as even his heart could not break. Lest her eyebrow, so dark and fine, might be the very bow of Cupid. Lest—"

"Spare us the rest," interrupted Kate, "it must be an arrow shot from the eye at the very least. Don't you see, besides, the girl has sense enough to laugh at it all; though I don't mean to say that if Signor Armari loses his heart and gets it back again so easily, he might not have paid her that little compliment. However, he did not, and it is as well, for she does not chance to be one of those soft girls, who, poor things, must be in love to exist; and her jealous grandpapa, who does not care about her himself, and yet won't let another have her, is, if he but knew it, perfectly safe."

"Is he?" said Cornelius, throwing back his head in his old way.

"Indeed he is," replied his sister, poking the fire in her old way, too; "another piece of advice, Cornelius: don't make the girl vain by talking and acting, as if she were the only decent-looking one in existence."

"There grows but one flower in my garden," he said, looking at me with a fond smile, "and so I fancy that every one casts on it a longing eye; as if elsewhere there grew no flowers."

His flower laid her head upon his shoulder, and looking up in his face, laughed at him for his pains.

"Laugh away!" he observed philosophically, "you have opened in the shade, and you know nothing of the sun; but the sun, my little Daisy, will shine on you yet."

CHAPTER XIV.

I have often tried to remember how passed the autumn and winter—but in vain. No striking events marked that time; and its subtle changes I was then too heedless and too ignorant to note or understand. Two things I have not forgotten.

One is that, next to his painting of course, the chief thought of Cornelius seemed to be to please and amuse me. He spent all his money in taking me about, and literally covered me with his gifts. He had an artist's eye for colour and effect, and was never tired of adorning me in some new way more becoming than the last. When I remonstrated and accused him of extravagance, he asked tenderly if he could spend the money better than on his own darling? In short, the great study of his life seemed to be to lavish on me, every proof of the most passionate fondness.

I was and always had been so fond of him myself, that I wondered at nothing, not even at his fits of jealousy; the heart that gives much is not astonished at receiving much, I let myself be loved without caring why or how. I knew he was devotedly fond of me; I feared no rival; I no longer felt the sting of his indifference or the bitter pang of his jealousy. I had nothing to stimulate my curiosity; nothing to desire or to dread; nothing but to be as happy as the day was long.

The other thing, I remember, is that I had in some measure seized on the power it had pleased Cornelius to relinquish. My will was more powerful over him, than his over me. I did not seek for it; but thus it was. It is almost ever so in human affections: perfect equality between two seldom exists; the sway yielded up by one is immediately and instinctively assumed by the other. With the least exertion of his will, Cornelius could again have converted me into a submissive and obedient child; but to govern always requires a certain amount of indifference; and he seemed to have lost both the power and the wish to rule. I should not have been human if I had not taken some advantage of this. I loved him as dearly as ever; but, secure of his fondness and affection, 1 did not, as once, make his pleasure my sole law. I also remembered that we had a few differences; mere trifles they then seemed to me, and Kate herself made light of them.

"Don't fidget," she invariably said to her brother; "she's but a child."

"A child!" he once replied, with a sigh; "you should hear her philosophize with me!"

"Well, then, she's a philosophical child."

"I don't know what she is," he answered, giving me a reproachful look. "I sometimes think Providence sent her to me as a chastisement for my sins."

"Poor sinner!" said Kate, smiling, "what a penance!"

We were all three sitting in the parlour by the fireside. I pretended to be much concerned, and hid my face in the sofa-pillow. Cornelius gently entreated me not to take it so much to heart, assured me I was no penance, but the joy of his life, and the light of his eyes; made me look up, and saw me laughing at him again.

"There," he said, biting his lip and looking provoked, "do you see her, Kate?"

"She is young and merry. Let her laugh."

"But why will she not be serious? Why will she be so provokingly flighty and slippery?"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Kate. "Let her be what she likes now; she'll be grave enough a few years hence."

He sighed, and called me his perverse darling. I laughed again, and bade him sing me an Irish song. He obeyed, and thus it ended.

As I was not conscious of giving Cornelius any real cause of offence, I made light of his vexation or annoyance, of which, indeed, as I have felt since then, he showed me but that which he could not help

betraying. Had he been more tyrannical or exacting, my eyes might have opened; but he could not bear to give me pain. He let me torment him to my heart's content, also disdaining, it may be, to complain or lament. Once only he lost all patience. It was towards the close of winter. Kate was out; we sat alone in the parlour by the fireside. Cornelius had made me put down my work, and sat by me, holding my two hands in one of his, smoothing my hair with the other, and telling me—he had an eloquent tongue that knew how to tell those things, neither too much in earnest, nor yet too much in jest—of his fondness and affection. But I was not just then in the endearing mood. I tried to disengage my hands, and not succeeding, I said a little impatiently:—

"Pray don't!"

He understood, or rather misunderstood me; for he drew away, reddening a little, and looking more embarrassed than displeased, he observed:—

"Where is the harm, Daisy?"

"The harm?" I echoed, astonished at the idea, for between him and me I had never felt the shadow of a reserved thought; "why, of course, there is no harm, since it is you," I added, giving one of his dark locks a pull; "but it gives me the fidgets."

Cornelius looked exasperated.

"Thank you, Daisy," he said, with an indignant laugh, "thank you! I am no one; but I give you the fidgets!"

"Why, what have I done now?" I asked, amazed. "How is it, Cornelius, that I so often offend you without even knowing why?"

"And is not that the exasperating part of the business?" he exclaimed, a little desperately. "If you cared a pin for me, you would know—you would guess."

"If I cared a pin for you!" I began; my tears checked the rest.

He stopped in the act of rising, to look down at me with a strange mixture of love and wrath.

"I'll tell you what, Daisy," he said, and his voice trembled and his lips quivered, "I'll tell you what, it is an odd thing to feel so much anger against you and yet so much fondness. I feel as if I could do anything to you, but I cannot bear to see you shed those few tears. Daisy, have the charity not to weep."

He again sat by me. I checked my tears. He wiped away those that still lingered on my cheek. I looked up at him and asked, a little triumphantly:

"Cornelius, where was the use of your flying out so?"

"You may well say so," he replied, rather bitterly. "Do you think I don't know that if 1 were cool and careless, you would like me none the worse; but what avails the knowledge, since I never can use it against you?"

I laughed at the confession.

"And so that is the end of it," he said, looking somewhat downcast, "there seems to be on me a spell, that will never let me end as I begin. Oh! Daisy; why do I like you so well? That is the heel of Achilles—the only vulnerable point which, do what I will, renders me so powerless and so weak."

"Then you do like me, you see," I said, smoothing his hair, "spite of all my faults!"

"Yes, I do like you," he replied, returning the caress with a peculiar look, "and yet, Daisy, I am getting rather wearied of this task of Sisyphus, which I am ever doing, and which somehow or other is never done."

"It was the heel of Achilles a while back, and now it is the stone of Sisyphus! What has put you into so mythological a mood?"

Cornelius coloured, then turned pale, but did not answer.

"Surely," I exclaimed, "you are not offended now about a few light words! Oh. Cornelius," I added, much concerned, "I see matters will never be right until you resume your authority, and I am again your obedient child. If you had always allowed me to consider you as my dear adopted father."—

I stopped short. He had not spoken; he had not moved; he still sat by me, calm, silent and motionless,

with his look fixed on the fire and his hand in mine; but as I spoke, there passed something in his face, and even in his eyes, that told me I was probing to the very quick, the wound my careless hand had first inflicted.

"Have I done wrong again?" I asked, dismayed.

"Oh, no!" he replied, negligently; "it is only fair; I was once too careless, too indifferent—the girl has avenged the child—that is all!"

"I am sure I have said something you don't like," I observed, anxiously.

Cornelius took me in his arms and kissed me.

"My good little girl," he said, "you are the best little girl in this world; and if you are only a little girl, you cannot help it—so keep your little heart in peace—and God bless you."

He spoke kindly, and rose, looking down at me with a sort of fondness and pity which did not escape, and which half offended me.

"But I am not a little girl, Cornelius," I replied, in a piqued tone.

"Aren't you?" he said, taking hold of my chin with a smile and look that were not free from irony. "I beg your pardon; I thought you were the little girl that so long made a fool of Cornelius O'Reilly!"

I gave him a surprised look; he laughed and took his hat; I followed him to the door and detained him.

"You are not angry with me!" I observed, uneasily.

"Angry with you!" he said, "no, my pet. What should I be angry for?"

"I don't know, Cornelius; but I am glad you are not angry."

He laughed again, and looked down at me as I stood by him with my hand on his arm, and my upraised face seeking his look; assured me kindly he was not at all angry, and left me. From that evening I could not say that Cornelius was less kind or seemed less fond of me, but I vaguely felt a change in his manner; something lost and gone I could neither understand nor recall. At first I was rather uneasy about it, then I attributed it to his painting, with which he was wholly engrossed. "The Young Girl Reading," had been finished for some time, and he was hard at work on his two Italian pictures. Never did he seem to have loved painting better; never to have given it more of his soul and heart.

I went up to him one mild spring afternoon; I found him looking at his three pictures, and so deeply engrossed that he never heard me until I stood close by him.

"Confess you were admiring them," I said, looking up at him smiling.

He smiled too, but not at me.

"Yes," he replied, quietly, "I see better than any one their merits and their faults; but such as they are, they have given me moments of the purest and most intense pleasure man can know."

He spoke in a low abstracted tone, with a fixed and concentrated gaze. I looked at him again, and found him thin and pale.

"You have been working too hard," I said, "you do not look at all well."

"Don't I?" he replied, carelessly.

"No. Kate made me notice it yesterday, and said 'the boy is in love, I think!' I said 'yes, and painting is the lady.' Confess, Cornelius, you like it better than anything else in this world."

"Yes. Daisy, I do."

"Better than me?"

"Are you a thing?"

"You call me a nice little thing, sometimes."

"And so you are," he answered, smiling. "What do you think of that kneeling woman's attitude?"

"Beautiful, like all you do, Cornelius."

"It is beautiful, Daisy; and, alas! that I should say so, the only truly good thing in the whole picture. Well, no matter; with all my short- comings I am still—thank God for it!—a painter."

"And what a triumph awaits you. Oh! Cornelius, how I long to see it!"

He did not reply. Some imperfection in one of the figures had caught his eye; he was endeavouring to remove it, and appeared lost and intent in the task. I withdrew gently, and paused on the threshold of the door to look at him. He stood before his easel, absorbed in his labour; the light fell on his handsome profile and defined it clearly; his eyes, bent on his canvas, looked as if they could behold nothing else; no breath seemed to issue from his parted lips; he was enjoying in its fulness, the delight and the charm which God has placed in the labour dear to the artist's heart.

In a few days more the pictures were finished and sent to the Academy. Cornelius felt no fear. His confidence was justified, for he soon learned, on good authority, that "The Young Girl Reading" and the two Italian pieces were not rejected. He expressed neither surprise nor pleasure. Indeed there was altogether about him an air of indifference and *ennui* that struck his sister. She went up to him as he stood leaning against the mantelpiece, and laying her hand on her arm, she asked a little anxiously—

"What's the matter, lad? That girl has not been provoking you again; she's but a child, you know, and will grow wiser."

"Of course she will," he replied, smoothing my hair, for I, too, stood by him; "a year or two will make a great change, Kate."

His sister smiled a little archly.

Cornelius asked if I would not take a walk. I accepted, and we had a long and pleasant stroll in the lanes, that already began to wear the light and tender verdure of spring.

I saw by Kate's face when we returned, that something had happened. At length it came out. Mrs. Brand had called to see me. Mrs. Brand had learned by the merest chance that I was no longer at Thornton House, and was greatly grieved that I had not made the fact known to her sooner. Any resentment against me, for refusing to enter into her scheme, with regard to Mr. Thornton, did not seem to linger in her mind. She was all cousinly love and affection, reminded me of the promise I had made to spend some time at Poplar Lodge, and had parted from Miss O'Reilly with the avowed intention of coming to fetch me the very next day.

I looked at Cornelius, who smiled, and leaning on the back of my chair, said kindly:

"Why should you not have a little change and pleasure, my pet? You will not stay there more than a week or two."

"Yes, Cornelius, but it is the time of the Academy."

"What matter!" he interrupted; "we know the pictures are all right, and we have months to look at them together."

I was very glad he took this view of the subject; for I wished to redeem my promise to my cousin, whose kindness I could not quite forget; and yet I would not for anything or any one have vexed Cornelius. Thus, therefore, it was settled with the approbation of Kate, who added, however, with a peculiar smile:

"You let her go, Cornelius; but you'll be dreadful fidgetty until she comes back."

"Of course I shall," he replied, smiling rather oddly.

I knew he loved me dearly. I looked up at him with some pride; he looked down with an ardent fondness that went to my very heart. Unasked, I promised not to remain more than a week away.

In the course of the next day Mrs. Brand called for me. Cornelius had gone out early, and had not come in. I told Kate to bid him adieu, and tell him I should not remain beyond the week. She smiled.

"A week, child!" she said; "be glad if he lets you remain three days away."

I laughed, kissed her, and entered the light and elegant open carriage in which Mrs. Brand had condescendingly come to visit her obscure little cousin.

CHAPTER XV.

There is a way of leaning back in an open carriage which only those accustomed to its use can attain—a sort of well-bred indolence—of riding over the world—of indifference to its concerns, which requires long and constant practice. Mrs. Brand possessed that art in the highest degree. Walking in the street, she would have seemed a thin, faded, insignificant woman; but, reclining in her carriage, with her *ennuy?* air, her carelessness, and her impertinence, she was stamped with aristocracy.

We had soon reached Poplar Lodge. It stood about a mile from the Grove, by the lanes, and twice that distance by the high road. I knew the place well—it was small, but the most beautiful residence in the neighbourhood. It stood in the centre of lovely pleasure-grounds—a white and elegant abode, filled with all that could charm the fancy and attract the eye. Pictures, statues, books, furniture, simple yet costly, were there, without that profusion which mars the effect of the most beautiful things. Mrs. Brand perceived my admiration, and led me from room to room with careless ostentation. At length, we came to a small gallery, filled with exquisite pictures.

"There are not many," she said, negligently, "but they are good. All modern, and almost all English. The blank spaces which you see will, I dare say, be filled up from this year's Academy."

My heart beat fast. I thought at once of Cornelius, and I saw his three pictures already hung up in my cousin's gallery.

"And so you like Poplar Lodge," observed Mrs. Brand, taking me back to the drawing-room. "Well, it is a pretty place. And don't you think," she added, sighing as she glanced around her, "that Edward's wife will be a happy woman?"

"I don't know, Ma'am; but I know she will have a lovely house, and delightful chairs, too," I added, sinking down, as I spoke, into a most luxurious arm-chair.

"My dear, she will have what one who speaks from experience can assure you is far above such worldly comforts—a devoted husband."

Mrs. Brand's cambric handkerchief was drawn forth, unfolded, and raised to her eyes in memory of the departed.

"And Mrs. Langton and this place will suit one another so well," I said, looking round the luxurious drawing-room. "I can fancy her wandering about those grounds as lovely as a lady in a fairy tale, or passing from one beautiful room to another, like a princess in her palace. She will be the crowning piece of perfection of Mr. Thornton's dwelling."

Mrs. Brand hastily removed her handkerchief, and assured me:

"That was over—quite over; a most unfortunate affair. It had once been her darling wish to see her friend and her brother united; but even she had felt it was impossible. They had felt it themselves, and had agreed to forget the past."

I smiled at the idea of this hollow truce.

"Besides," pensively continued Mrs. Brand, "I have strong reasons to believe his affections are engaged elsewhere. I hear him coming in; you will notice at once how pale and low-spirited Edward looks."

The entrance of Edward prevented my reply. He started with astonishment on seeing me, and greeted me with a mixture of embarrassment and tender courtesy that surprised me a little. He asked after Mr. Thornton's health.

"I hope he is well," I replied, smiling; "but I am your neighbour now. Is it not delightful?"

I meant delightful to be again with my friends; to my amusement he smiled and bowed.

"Miss Burns has been admiring your pictures," said Mrs. Brand.

Mr. Thornton was happy if anything at Poplar Lodge had afforded me pleasure.

"Anything!" I echoed, "why it is everything. From his appearance I could not have believed the late Mr. Wyndham had such exquisite taste."

Mrs. Brand laughed, and informed me the place was bare in Mr. Wyndham's time. Mr. Thornton's modesty, alarmed at the indirect compliment he had received, induced him to change the subject of discourse by showing me a handsome collection of drawings. We were engaged in looking over them, when Mrs. Langton, who was also on a visit to her dear Bertha, entered.

"Those two are always so fond of drawings!" said Mrs. Brand, rising to receive her.

I looked up, and saw the beautiful Edith glancing at us across the table. She had left by her weeds, and looked wonderfully lovely in a robe of changing silk. She stood with her hand clasped in that of her friend, and her beautiful arm partly left bare by her falling sleeve. Her face was turned towards us; her dark hair, braided back from her fair brow, wound in a diadem above it; her cheeks were flushed like roses; her blue eyes were full of light and softness. "Mrs. Brand," I thought, "you may do what you like, your Edith shall reign here yet."

She graciously expressed her pleasure at seeing me again; and gently sinking down on a divan, looked lovely, until we went down to dinner.

I spent the next day, Saturday, shopping in town with Mrs. Brand, and thought it rather hard work. Sunday I claimed and obtained to pass at the Grove. I came upon Cornelius suddenly, as he sat in the back-parlour by the open window; his elbow on the sill, his brow resting on the palm of his hand. Before he knew of my presence, my arms were around his neck, and my lips had touched his cheek. He started, then returned the embrace with lingering tenderness; and Kate, who came in, laughed at us both, and said one might think we had been years apart.

It was foolish to be glad to see him again after so short a separation; I knew it, but could not help it. He, too, seemed glad; I had never seen him in better spirits; and seldom had I spent even with him, a pleasanter day. With regret, I saw approach the hour that should take me back to Poplar Lodge. Cornelius said he would accompany me by the lanes. They looked very lovely on that mild spring evening, and we talked pleasantly and happily as we walked along. At length we reached the end of a long lane that brought us to a grated iron door—the back entrance of Poplar Lodge.

We stopped short; the place and the moment stand before me like a picture still.

The lane was lonely, and hushed rather than silent. The heavy clouds of night were gathering slowly in the lower sky. In its serener heights, the full moon had risen, and now looked down at us between two of the large poplar trees that had given its name to my cousin's abode. I stood by Cornelius, one arm passed in his, his other hand clasping mine.

"When will you come back?" he asked, bending over me.

"Next Saturday, I hope."

"Not before?"

"No, Cornelius, I could not, you know."

"Can't you try?"

"Indeed, Cornelius. I am afraid I cannot. You know I long to be back with you and Kate."

"Very well, then; Saturday let it be. And yet, Daisy, why not Friday?"

"Cornelius, I assure you I think it would be taken amiss if I were to leave on Friday."

He submitted, gave me a quiet kiss, and rang the bell. A white figure emerged from a neighbouring avenue, and Mrs. Langton, recognising me through the iron grating, took down the key that always hung by the door, and admitted me, smiling. I introduced Cornelius somewhat awkwardly. He stood with the light of the moon full on his face and figure. I caught Mrs. Langton giving him two or three rapid and curious looks, but she only made a few civil and commonplace remarks. He answered in the same strain, bowed, and left us.

"And so, Miss Burns," softly observed Mrs. Langton, as she closed and locked the gate, "that is your adopted father—as Mr. Edward Thornton calls him, I believe."

"Yes," I said, quietly, "Cornelius is, indeed, my adopted father; but he does not like me to consider him so."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, no: he does me the honour to hold me as his friend."

Mrs. Langton suppressed a rosy smile, and talked of the beauty of the evening as we walked through the grounds to the Lodge.

Mr. Thornton was out, and Mrs. Brand whispered confidentially that my absence might be the cause.

He came in, however, sufficiently early, and as I sat apart rather silent, his sister felt sure I suffered from low spirits, and gave him the duty of enlivening me. He smiled, bowed, and settling himself in a comfortable arm-chair by me, entered on the task. But I remained obstinately grave, until, from topic to topic, he came to the Academy.

My cousin gave me the tidings that it was to open in two days. He hoped I would accompany Mrs. Brand. He knew my judgment was excellent, and felt anxious to have my opinion of several pictures he had already secured, and of others he intended purchasing.

"Oh, I shall be so glad!" I exclaimed, with an eagerness that made him smile.

I reddened at the thought that my motive had been detected, and tried to repair my blunder; but do what I would, I could not help betraying my pleasure. I laughed, I talked, I was not the same.

"Have I really succeeded so well?" whispered my cousin.

The spirit of mischief is not easily repressed at seventeen. I looked up at him, and answered saucily—

"Better than you think."

Mr. Thornton laughed, and declared I was the most delightfully original and *naive* girl he had ever met with.

It rained the whole of the following day, which we spent at Poplar Lodge, to the great disgust of the slave of the world. But the next morning rose lovely and serene. At an early hour we were at the doors of the Royal Academy. I knew that the pictures of Cornelius were accepted; on that head I therefore felt no uneasiness, yet my heart beat as we ascended the steps of the National Gallery. A glance at the catalogue dispelled all lingering fear. As my cousin placed it in my hands, he accompanied it with a pencil case, and a whispered entreaty to mark the pictures I approved. I looked up at him, smiling to think he had chosen a judge so partial. We had no sooner entered the first room than Mrs. Brand was overpowered with the heat. When she recovered, she thought she should go and look at the miniatures with her dear Edith. She knew we did not like the miniatures, and requested that we should go our own way. She and her dear Edith would go their own way. We resisted this a little, but Mrs. Brand was peremptory, and at length we yielded and parted from them. Absorbed in the engrossing thought "Are they well hung?" I performed my critical office very inaccurately; but having been so fortunate as to single out two of the pictures Mr. Thornton had purchased, I escaped detection, and received several warm compliments on my good taste. He was informing me how much he relied upon it, when we suddenly came to the two Italian pieces of Cornelius.

"What do you think of these?" I said carelessly.

"Poor, very poor," he replied, and passed on.

I heard him mortified and mute; all my hopes dispelled at once by all this sweeping censure. The pictures of Cornelius poor! Those two beautiful Italian things, which would have filled so well the blank spaces in the gallery! I was astonished and indignant at Mr. Thornton's bad taste. He might mark his own pictures now, I would have nothing more to do with him; he was evidently conceited, impertinent, insolent, and he had neither heart nor soul, for he could not appreciate the beautiful.

Unconscious of my feelings, my cousin went on criticising.

"What are they all looking at?" he said, drawing near to where a crowd had gathered around one of the lower paintings.

"At some stupid picture or other," I replied, impatiently. "It is always the stupid pictures that the people look at."

He smiled at the petulant speech, and, spite of my evident indifference made way for me through the crowd of gazers; but I turned away, I would not look. With an ill-repressed smile of contempt, I listened to the "exquisite," "beautiful," "a wonderful thing," which I heard around me.

"Yes," I thought, scornfully, "much you know about it, I dare say."

"I really think we must mark this one," whispered my cousin. "What do you say?"

I looked up ungraciously, but the book and pencil-case nearly dropped from my hands as I recognized "The Young Girl Reading."

"Don't you like it?" asked Mr. Thornton, smiling.

Oh! yes, I liked it! and him whose genius had created it, and whose master-hand had fashioned it; ay! and for his sake I liked even those who gazed on it, in a fast increasing crowd; and as if I had never seen it before, I looked with delighted eyes at the work of Cornelius. There was something in the admiration it excited I could not mistake. It was genuine and true. He was at length, after seven years of toil, known and famous. Sudden repute must have something of a breathless joy, but it cannot possess the sweetness of a slow-earned and long-coming fame. I felt as if I could have looked for ever; but the crowd was pressing eagerly behind us: my cousin led me away.

"I see you will not mark it," he gaily said, taking the catalogue from me.

"Do you really like it?" I asked, stammering.

"Do I like it? Why it is a wonderful picture! the most perfect union I have ever seen of the real and ideal. It is not sold, is it?"

I replied I thought not. He said he hoped not; that he should be quite concerned to miss it; and he proceeded to pay the genius of Cornelius very high and handsome compliments. I heard him with beating heart and swimming eyes; I felt too happy; it was not more than I had expected ever since the return of Cornelius from Italy; but for being anticipated, his triumph was not to me less glorious and delightful. I could think of nothing else; my eyes saw, but my mind could receive no impressions. Whatever picture I looked at became "The Young Girl Reading" with the crowd around her.

Mr. Thornton thought the heat affected me, and proposed joining his sister. We soon found her with Mrs. Langton. They looked dull and tired. As we entered the carriage, Mrs. Brand asked, with her air of *ennui*, how I liked the pictures, and if I had been amused.

"More than amused," I replied, warmly.

Mr. Thornton half smiled, and looked into the street; Mrs. Brand shut her eyes, and reclined back with an air of satisfaction, and Mrs. Langton flushed up like a rose. I looked at the three, and thought them odd people.

On the following evening, the slave of the world was to receive and entertain her master; in other words, to give a party. I had virtuously resolved not to be amused, and not to enjoy the pleasure I could not share with Cornelius; but when the time came, I forgot all about it. It was my first party, and what a party! The rooms were always beautiful, and when lit up, looked splendid. Then this constant rolling of coming and departing carriages; this pouring in of fashionable, well-dressed people; their flow of easy speech, greetings and smiles, gave the whole something so luxurious and seducing, that I felt enchanted.

Mrs. Langton, who looked exquisitely lovely in white silk—I wore my blue dress—kindly took me under her patronage. She was a world-known beauty, and whenever she went out, drew crowds around her. We were soon surrounded with adorers. All could not reach the divinity, and a few condescended to offer up incense at my humbler shrine. Two young Englishmen, rosy and bashful; a Dane as pale as Hamlet, and a Spaniard, fell to my stare. We also had an occasional dropping of grave gentlemen in spectacles, or dashing, military-looking men, whiskered and mustachioed, with an apparition of fair ladies, duly attended, who smiled and nodded at Mrs. Langton as they passed smelling bouquets or fanning themselves, but who took care not to linger in such dangerous vicinity.

I felt amused and entertained; but my real pleasure began with the daucing. I was fond of it, and I had plenty of pleasant partners. As I once came back to my seat, flushed as much with enjoyment as with the exercise, Mrs. Langton, who would not discompose her beauty by dancing, stooped over me, and gently whispered:—

"You little flirt, one would think you had received world incense all your life. Look opposite," she added, in a still lower tone. I followed the direction of her gaze, and saw in the embrasure of a door, standing and looking at me, with sorrowful attention, Cornelius.

"He has been there these two hours," said Mrs. Langton, smiling, "and you never even saw him, which I hold very unkind to me; for, thinking you would like to meet your friend, I asked a card from Bertha, and did not mention the name to her, lest you should not enjoy the surprise. And here am I actually obliged to tell you all about it."

I know not what I said to her, I felt so disturbed. I knew that I had surrendered myself rather freely to the pleasures of the evening, and he had seen it all, I had never even perceived him. I looked at him across the crowd that divided us. He caught my eye, and turned away abruptly. I rose, and gliding swiftly through the guests, I tried to join him; but he eluded me. I went from room to room, without being able to reach him. At length, I lost sight of him altogether, and gave up my useless search. I had

reached the last room, a pretty little French sort of boudoir, adorned with exquisite Dresden ornaments, and thence called "Dresden" by Mrs. Brand. It was now quite solitary. I sat down, sad and dispirited, on a low couch, and was immediately joined by Mr. Thornton, who had been following me all the time, and gently rallied me on the chase I had led him. He sat down by me, and informed me that he had been wanting to speak to me the whole evening; but I had been so surrounded, that he had found it quite impossible to get at me. I coloured violently: if he had noticed it, what would Cornelius think?

"I wanted to tell you," confidentially observed Edward Thornton, drawing closer to me, "that I have secured 'The Young Girl Reading.' She is mine," he added, with rather a long look of his fine blue eyes.

"You have bought it," I exclaimed joyfully.

"And paid for it," he answered smiling.

"How delightful!" I said, "I mean that you have bought it," I added, fearing I had exposed the poverty of Cornelius by the hasty remark.

He smiled again, and passed his slender fingers in his brown hair.

"Where will you hang it?" I asked eagerly.

"In the long vacant place of honour, between my Wilkie and my Mulready."

For these two great artists, Cornelius felt a warm and enthusiastic admiration. I thought of his pride and triumph when I should tell him this, and I glowed with a pleasure I cared not to conceal.

"Mr. Thornton!" I exclaimed, turning on him flushed and joyous, "you have made me as happy as any crowned queen."

"Why have I not a crown to lay it at your feet?" he very gallantly replied, taking my hand, and pressing it gently as he spoke.

At that moment, through the door which Edward Thornton had left partly open, I thought I caught sight of Cornelius for an instant; the next he had disappeared in the crowd. I snatched my hand from my cousin, started up, ran to the door, opened it wide, and looked eagerly; but Cornelius had again vanished. I returned much disappointed to Mr. Thornton, who seemed amazed at my precipitate flight.

"I had seen Mr. O'Reilly," I said, apologetically.

"Mr. O'Reilly! Ah, indeed."

"Yes; and I wanted to speak to him. It was for that I came here, you know."

My cousin gave me a puzzled look, then suddenly recovering, said hastily:

"Of course, it was. Mr. O'Reilly, as you say."

"I am sure, you think it odd," I observed uneasily.

He denied it with a guarded look. I thought it worse than odd, and my eyes filled with involuntary tears. Mr. Thornton rose and sympathised respectfully.

"My dear Miss Burns," he whispered drawing nearer to me, "I am truly grieved; but your kindness, your frank condescension, made me presume— indeed, I am grieved."

I heard him with surprise. "Decidedly," I thought, "we are all wrong," and aloud I observed gravely:

"Mr. Thornton, is there not some mistake? I am talking of Mr. O'Reilly."

"And so am I," he answered promptly.

"And I should like to see if I could not find him."

He offered me his arm with a polite start, and an air of tenderness and homage that perplexed me; but though we went all over the rooms, Cornelius was not to be found. As the guests began to thin and depart I lost all hope, and releasing my cousin from duty, sat down in one of the nearly deserted rooms. Mrs. Langton at once came up to me, and asked if I had seen my friend. I replied that I had caught sight of him from the little Dresden room, when I was there with Mr. Thornton.

"In the Dresden room," she said, looking astonished; "and do you really, a fair maiden of eighteen, venture to remain alone in a Dresden room? alone with so gay and gallant a gentleman as Edward

Thornton? Don't you know, dear?" she added, edging her chair to mine, and lowering her voice; "he is quite a naughty man! Did you never hear of him and Madame Polidori, the singer—no?—nor of Mademoiselle Rosalie, nor of Madame?—"

I stopped the list by gravely hoping she was mistaken. She assured me she was not, and wanted to resume the subject, but it was one in which I took neither pleasure nor interest; and I listened so coldly, that she reddened, bit her lip, and left me.

The guests were all gone. As she bade the last adieu, Mrs. Brand sank down in a chair by the open window, and sighed to her brother:

"Ah! Edward, as our own English Wordsworth so finely says:

'The world is too much with us—'"

The rest of the sonnet was lost, I suppose, in the whisper that followed. Mr. Thornton seemed to pay it but faint attention; his look was fixed with intent admiration on Mrs. Langton, who stood by a table turning over the leaves of an album with careless grace.

"What a night!" resumed Mrs. Brand; "with that moon and that starry sky, one might forget the world, the vain world for ever, Edward."

Edward still looked at the beautiful Edith, and seemed inclined to make a move in her direction, out of the reach of the moon and the starry sky. But his sister looked at me, and whispered something. He bowed his head in assent, and came up to me. He seemed for some mysterious reason to think it incumbent on himself to be very kind and sympathetic, and to speak to me in a tender and soothing tone. Wrapped up in thinking of Cornelius, I paid his words but faint attention; but as my cousin stood with his hand on the back of my chair, I saw Mrs. Langton look at us over her shoulder in silent scorn. I looked at her, too, and as she stood there in all her wonderful beauty, I marvelled jealousy could make her so blind, as to lead her to fear for a moment a plain, humble girl like me.

CHAPTER XVI.

Although I had not thought it necessary to mention to Mrs. Brand how soon I meant to return to the Grove, she took complete possession of me for the whole of the next day; but, the following morning, I prevented the possibility of her doing so again, by starting out of Poplar Lodge before she had opened her aristocratic eyes. I wanted to see Cornelius, and make him explain his strange conduct.

I went by the lane where we had parted. It was a very beautiful lane— green, secluded, and overshadowed by dark trees. It looked fresh and pleasant on this May morning. The dew glittered on grass, tree and wild flower; the thrush carolled gaily on the young boughs, and the robin red- breast looked at me fearlessly with his bright black eye, as he stood perched on the budding hawthorn hedge. A grievous disappointment waited me at the end of my journey. The blinds were down—the house was closed and silent. I rang, and received no reply. I went to the front, with the same result. For an hour and more I wandered about the lanes; but every time I came back, I found the house in the same state. At length, I returned to Poplar Lodge, where my absence had not been perceived.

Mrs. Brand's party had given her a headache. She lay on the drawing-room sofa the whole day long, and would evidently consider it very barbarous to be forsaken. I remained sitting by her until dusk, which brought Mrs. Langton, and relieved me from my duty. I went out on the verandah for a little fresh air. I had not been there long, when a rustling robe passed through the open window. It was the beautiful Edith.

"Are you not afraid of taking cold?" she asked aloud; then whispered,
"Say no."

As "no" chanced to be the truth, I complied with Mrs. Langton's wish.

"Oh! that exquisite old thorn!" she sighed; then added, in a low rapid key: "I have been so angry. I heard such strange things about you and Mr. Thornton. All the Dresden room."

I laughed.

"What are you two chatting about?" asked the voice of Mrs. Brand from within.

"I am only telling Miss Burns to mind Captain Craik," coolly replied Mrs.

Langton, "he was quite attentive the other night."

"Really, Mrs. Langton," I observed impatiently, "you forget the gentleman you allude to could be my father, and is, after all, a middle-aged man."

"A middle-aged man!" echoed Mrs. Langton, looking confounded. "You are hard to please, Miss Burns; a most elegant and accomplished gentleman—a middle-aged man!"

"If he were an angel, he is not the less near forty."

"Still talking of Captain Craik," rather uneasily observed Mrs. Brand, joining us, "Edith, dear, are you not afraid of the tooth-ache?"

"No, Bertha, dear."

"But I am for you. You must come in."

Mrs. Brand slipped her arm within that of her friend, and made her re- enter the drawing-room. But something or some one called her away, for in a few minutes, Mrs. Langton was again by me. She came on me suddenly, before I could efface the trace of recent tears. The evening was light and clear. She looked at me and said:

"I could have spared you this, Miss Burns. Mr. Thornton—"

"Indeed, Ma'am," I interrupted, "I am not thinking of Mr. Thornton; but I fear Mr. O'Reilly is vexed with me: that is the truth."

I thought this would rid me of her tiresome jealousy, but it did not.

"Poor child!" she said compassionately, "I see you know nothing. Perhaps it is scarcely right to betray Bertha to you; but can I help also feeling for you? Do you know the play of Shakespeare entitled 'Much Ado about Nothing'?"

"Yes, Ma'am, I know it."

"Do you remember the ingenious manner in which two of the characters are made to fall in love with one another? Benedick thinks Beatrice is dying for him, and Beatrice thinks the same thing of him."

"That was vanity, Ma'am, not love."

"Ay, but vanity is a potent passion, and 'Much Ado about Nothing' is a play still daily enacted on the scene of the world."

I heard her with some impatience; I thought her discourse resembled the play of which it treated. She saw plain speech alone would make me comprehend her meaning.

"Our dear Bertha," she sighed, "has quite a passion for match-making. For instance, she will teaze me about Captain Craik, and says he is mad about me. I don't mind it, provided she does not say the same thing to him."

"Oh!" I replied, quite startled, "that would be too bad."

"So it would; but I fear it. Captain Craik has been very peculiar of late."

I felt uncomfortable. It was not to end with Captain Craik we had travelled over the slow ground of this ambiguous discourse.

"Now do you know." resumed Mrs. Langton, "I cannot help fancying that Bertha has been indulging in the same little pastime with you and her brother."

"Not with me," I said, eagerly; "she never even hinted it."

"You are slow at taking hints," replied Mrs. Langton with a sceptical smile.

"But why should she think of me?" I asked, incredulously; "I am not a beauty," I added, looking at her, "I have no wealth—no position. Why should she wish to marry me to her brother?"

"To make a good sister-in-law," answered Mrs. Langton, quietly.

I felt there was something in that, and remained mute with consternation.

"And do you think," she resumed, laughing softly, "he has been quite so slow to take the hint? Why,

child, you have scarcely said a word that he has not modestly converted into a proof of your passion for him. Remember how sympathising he was on the evening of the party; he thought: 'Poor little thing! I must be kind. It is plain she is fretting herself away for my sake.'"

She spoke with evident conviction. I remembered words and looks, and I grew hot and faint.

"Oh, Mrs. Langton!" I exclaimed desperately, "what shall I do? how can I undeceive him?"

"Leave the house at once," she promptly replied.

"Will it not be better to stay for another day or so, just to be cool with him?"

"He will think it shyness."

"And despair if I run away. No, I must stay to undeceive him."

"And to give him time to inform you in his civil, gentlemanly way, how deeply he feels for you."

"Then I can show him I don't want his sympathy."

"He will think it pride or pique. Take my advice, Miss Burns. You are in a false position. Retreat."

She laid her hand on my arm and spoke impressively. But youth is rash; I scorned the idea of flight. Besides I had no faith in her advice. With the frank indignation of my years, I felt how meanly my candour and inexperience had been imposed upon. "So, Mrs. Brand," I thought resentfully, "you had me here, because you thought I might make a manageable sister-in-law! Much obliged to you, Mrs. Brand; you will have your dear Edith, yet. But to go and tell or imply to her brother that I was in love with him, with a man who might be my father!

"Besides, even if it had been true, how barbarous to betray me! And you, too, Mrs. Langton," I thought, looking at her, "you too have not thought it beneath your pride to deceive me: talking ill to me of the very man you love—as much as you can love—accusing him of profligacy! Then, so piqued because I said he was middle-aged!—and so kindly anxious to make me look foolish by running away! Go! no indeed! It is very odd if I cannot finesse a little in my turn, and, without committing myself, get out of this spider's web into which, like a foolish fly, I have got entangled; and it is very odd, too, if I cannot change the web a little, before I spread out my wings and take my flight back to the home foolish flies should never leave."

I was thoroughly piqued, and walked restlessly from one end of the verandah to the other. I set my wits to work; thought rapidly followed thought; schemes were made and rejected with every second; at length, both mentally and bodily, I stopped short. "I have it," I thought, triumphantly; "I am not so dull but that I have noticed certain passages between a fair lady and a certain gentleman; I have always thought they would end by marrying; I am certain of it now. I shall act on that belief; say something; no matter what; he likes my *naivete*—to prove to my dear cousin that I consider Edith as good as Mrs. Edward Thornton. Let him like it or not, I shall take his vexation as excellent sport, glide out of it with a laugh, then beg pardon, apologize, and show him he may marry the Queen of Sheba, for all it matters to Daisy Burns."

I felt confident of success; and, elated with my scheme, I turned to Mrs.
Langton, and said, gaily:—

"I have such a good idea!—only I cannot tell you. But you shall see how it will work."

She bit her lip, and gave me a mistrustful look.

"I have warned you," she said; "I warn you again; do not think yourself equal to Bertha. If she chooses to convince her brother that you are in love with him, I consider it out of the question that you can prevent her."

"I shall see that," I replied, indignantly.

"Yes," said Mrs. Langton, "you will have that satisfaction."

"Then what should I gain by running away?" I asked, a little tartly. "The best thing I can do is to stay, look on, and learn how these matters are managed."

Mrs. Langton gave me another mistrustful look, and withdrew. I saw she did not believe in my sincerity; perhaps she did not think it possible to resist Edward Thornton, and repented having been so frank. Her thoughts did not trouble me. The more I reflected on my scheme, the better I liked it. I enjoyed, in advance, the manner in which my cousin would open his fine blue eyes. I was not vexed with

him; but I remembered the Dresden room, and was determined he should be as fairly undeceived as ever he had been deluded. Absorbed in these thoughts, I remained on the verandah, looking at the beautiful garden and grounds beneath. A visitor came, was received by Mrs. Langton, stayed awhile, left, and still I did not re- enter the drawing-room, where Mrs. Brand and her friend now sat, working and talking by lamp-light. At length, scarce knowing why, I began to pay a vague attention to their discourse.

"I think we are going to have a storm," said the soft voice of Mrs. Langton; "it will clear the air, perhaps. Doctor Morton says the weather has been so unhealthy; typhus so prevalent amongst the poor. He mentioned the case of a labourer who has just died, leaving a widow and nine children."

"Very sad, indeed," composedly replied Mrs. Brand; "but then you know, my dear, typhus is generally confined to the poor—which is a sort of comfort."

"It is not always the case," said Edith; "there have been several deaths amongst tradespeople."

"Ah! poor things, they have to deal with the poor, you see; but what I mean is, that it seldom goes higher up; which is a great comfort, you know; for what good would it do the poor that those above them should die?"

"None, of course. The doctor also mentioned another case—very sad too— such a fine young man, he had been told, an artist, I think; but he did not know his name, who is lying ill—all but given up."

"Really," said Mrs. Brand, "this gets quite alarming. Do you know whereabouts that unfortunate young man lives?"

Until then, I had listened to them as we listen to speech in which we take no interest. I was young, full of health; the evening air felt pleasant and fresh about me; and standing on that cool verandah above a fragrant garden, I recked not of the fevered dwellings where the poor perish, and of the sick chamber where even the rich man may be reached by death; but when Mrs. Langton spoke of the young artist who lay given up, I felt touched. When Mrs. Brand asked to know where he dwelt, I just turned my head a little to catch the reply of the beautiful Edith. She gave it carelessly.

"In a place called the Grove, I believe; is it far off?"

"Two miles away at least," complacently replied Mrs. Brand.

I know not how I entered the room; but I know that the two ladies screamed faintly, as they saw me stepping in, through the open window.

"Miss Burns, is the house on fire?" exclaimed Mrs. Brand.

"'T is he!" I said, with that dead calmness which many find in their woe. "I know it is. We live in the Grove, and there is not another artist in it."

"I am not sure he is an artist," said Edith, rising. "I now think it was an architect."

"There is no architect in the Grove," I replied; "not one."

"My dear," observed Mrs. Brand, soothingly taking my hand, "it is all a mistake, depend upon it."

I looked at her, and shook my head.

"The house was close and silent; the blinds were drawn down. I know why now—lest the contagion should reach me."

Mrs. Brand dropped my hand rather hastily.

"I shall send and inquire at once," she observed. "Pacify yourself, my dear."

She stretched out her hand to ring the bell.

"You need not," I said, "I am going."

"Oh! but you must not!" cried Mrs. Brand, "think of the danger."

I laughed drearily in her face.

"Of the contagion, my dear?"

"Do not fear, I shall come back, Ma'am," I replied, turning to the door.

She followed me.

"My dear, you must have the carriage."

"I shall go by the lanes," I said impatiently. The carriage was, I knew, the delay of at least an hour.

"By the lanes, at this hour? I cannot allow it, Miss Burns."

I turned round upon her.

"But I will go," I said, and even in that moment, I wondered the woman could be so blind as to think her will had the power to detain me.

Without heeding her astounded look, I ran up to my room, took down my cloth cloak, drew it around me, and drawing the hood over my head, I hastened down stairs to the garden. As I passed underneath the verandah, the voice of Mrs. Langton seemed to call me back, but the wind drowned her words, and I ran fast along the avenue. I had soon reached the iron gate; I took down the key, opened the door, and entered the lane. As 1 turned my back on Poplar Lodge, I caught a last glimpse of it rising against a dark sky, with a faint speck of light glimmering from the drawing-room window.

No other light shone on my path; the sun had set bright and glorious, the evening had set in clear and serene; but a sudden eclipse had come; one vast gloom shrouded sky and earth; I never saw summer night like this for intense, for dreary darkness. I knew the way well; I walked straight on, swiftly and without pause, meeting no obstacles, fearing none, like one who passes through vacant space.

Once I thought I heard a voice calling on me faintly in the distance behind; but I heeded it not, I did not answer, I did not look round; I went on as in a dream. Raised beyond the body by the passion of my grief, I felt not the ground beneath my feet; all I felt was that the wind as it swept by me with a low rushing sound, seemed to bear me on through that sombre and melancholy night, as a spirit to its viewless home. At length, the air became of a dead stillness; it was as if I had suddenly entered a silent and sultry region in which there was no breathing and no life. I stopped short; I looked round to see that I had not mistaken the way; a streak of fiery lightning passed through the darkness of the sky; for a moment I caught sight of an open space, in which I stood, and saw before me two long lanes diverging from a half ruined gateway, and vanishing into depths of gloom whence seemed to come forth the peal of far thunder that died away in low faint echoes.

I knew the spot well; I had not missed the right path; I was half way on my journey.

But as if this first flash had only been a signal, the brooding storm now broke forth. Before it fled at once the silence and the gloom of the hour. A low, wild murmur ran along the ground, then rose and lost itself in the wide and desolate hollow of the night; trees tossed about their dark boughs, and groaned lamentably like vexed spirits. As the sound of a loosened flood came the rushing rain, the wind rose ever deepening in its roar; and above all rolled the full thunder, louder than the deafening voice of battle, whilst, cleft with many a swift and silent flash, the dark sky opened like a sea of living fire, below which stretched a long, low moving shore of livid clouds.

I stood still and looked; not with fear—to love and fear for what we love, is to be raised beyond all dread—but I felt dazzled with the ceaseless lightning, and dizzy with the tumult of the tempest; the heavy rain beat full in my face and blinded me; the strong gale rose against me in all its might. I could not move on; I could not turn back, seek shelter, or proceed; for a moment I yielded to the burst of the storm, and let the elements wreak their fury on my bowed head. But a thought stronger than even their power, more fearful than their wildest wrath, was on me. I drew down my hood, wrapped my cloak closer around me, and again went on drenched with the pouring rain, and often arrested, but never driven back by the impetuous blast.

The storm was violent and brief. Soon the wind fell; the rain grew less heavy; the lightning less frequent and vivid; the thunder slowly retreated; the sky cleared, and melted into soft clouds, behind which, for the first time, shone the watery moon. She looked down on me with a wan and troubled face, boding sorrow; her dim light filled the path I now followed; on either side, like gloomy giants, rose the dark trees; the rain had ceased, but as I passed swiftly beneath the dripping boughs, they seemed shaken by an invisible hand to dash their chill dew-drops in my face. The smell of the wet earth rose strong on the humid air; in the ditch by me, I heard water flowing with a low, gurgling sound, and every now and then I came across a shallow pool lit with a pale and trembling moonbeam.

The storm had not terrified me, but now my courage sank. This chill calm after the fury of the tempest; this sound of water faintly flowing, following on tumult so loud, seemed to me to speak of sorrow, death and utter desolation. The nearer I drew to the end of my journey, the more my heart failed me. As I turned down into the lane that led home, the church-clock struck twelve; every stroke

sounded like a funeral knell on my ear; then a dog began to howl plaintively. I turned cold and sick—as a child, I had heard that this was a token of death. Oh! with what slow and weary steps, I drew near that door towards which I had hastened through all the anger of the storm, and which my heart now dreaded to reach. As I stood by it, my limbs trembled, my very flesh quivered, my blood seemed to have ceased to flow, my heart to beat, cold dew-drops gathered and stood on my brow, and something, an inward struggle, an agony without a name rose to my lips, and made one gasp for breath, but could not pass them. Twice I stretched out my hand to ring, and twice it fell powerless. I sank down on my knees; I uttered a passionate prayer: I asked—what will not the heart ask for?—for an impossible boon. "Even if he is to die. Oh God, do not let him die; even though he shall be dead, do not let him be dead!"

I rose and rang. "Now," I thought, "I shall know it all at once in the face of Kate or Jane, whichever it may be that opens to me." I nerved myself to meet that look, as I heard a door opening within, then a step on the wet gravel, and caught a glimmer of light through the chinks of the door. I heard it unbarred and unbolted, then it opened partly; and standing on the threshold with the light of the upraised lamp in his face, I saw Cornelius.

CHAPTER XVII.

I think I could endure years of trouble and toil for the joy of that moment. My heart overflowed; I looked at Cornelius, then threw my arms around his neck, and burst into tears. My hood fell back, and with it my loosened hair.

"Daisy!" he cried, for he had not recognized me till then. "Good God!" he added with sudden terror, "has anything happened to you?"

"Nothing, Cornelius; but I am too happy—too happy—that is all."

He drew back a little; looked at my drenched garments and bare head, as he closed the door, and led me in.

"Daisy," he asked, anxiously, "what has brought you here at such an hour, in such a plight?"

"I thought you were ill, dying, Cornelius! I felt beside myself, and ran home to you like a wild thing."

We stood beneath the porch. Cornelius still held the lamp; its light fell on his pale, troubled face. With the arm that was free he drew me towards him, and looked down at me with mingled grief and tenderness.

"Oh, Daisy!" he exclaimed, "whilst I sat within, sheltered and unconscious, have you, indeed, been exposed to the fury of this pitiless storm—and for my sake?"

I shook back the hair from my face, and looking up into his, smiled.

"Cornelius," I said, "if weary miles had divided us; if rivers had flowed across the path; if I should have walked bare-footed over sharp stones, I would have come to you to-night. I could not have kept away; I feel that my very heart would have flown to you, as a bird to its nest."

"For Heaven's sake, go up to your room at once," he observed, uneasily.
"Here is the light."

I took it, and gaily ran up-stairs. I felt light with gladness—a new life flowed in my veins, a new vigour beat with my heart. I blessed God with every faculty of my being: as sincerely as if the miracle I had asked for, had been accomplished. I had soon changed my things, and went down very softly, not to waken Kate. The door of the back-parlour was ajar, and there I found Cornelius, standing by a newly-kindled fire. As I gently closed the door, I said, smiling:

"I have made no noise. Kate never woke—how is she?"

"She complains of a head-ache. The heat of the day, I suppose."

"Yes," I replied, sitting down, taking his hand, and making him sit down by me on a little couch which he had drawn before the fire. "Yes, every one was out this morning, when I called and found the house shut up. Oh, Cornelius! how I thought of that with terror and dismay, as I came along the lanes."

"The lanes!—you came by the lanes?" cried Cornelius, turning pale: "alone along that desolate road, where a cry for aid never could be heard! Daisy, how dare you do such a thing? How could they allow

it?"

"Cornelius, who would be out on such a night to harm me? As to daring, I would have dared anything. Mrs. Brand remonstrated, and sent, I believe, a servant after me; but I outstripped him easily. Terror lent me her wings."

"I thought you felt no fear?"

"No fear of man, but a most sickening cowardly dread of fever. Oh, Cornelius! if I had found you ill, or in danger of death, what should I have done, what would have become of me?"

The mere thought was a torment that again sent the freezing blood to my heart. I shivered, and drew close to him.

"There! you are quite pale again," said Cornelius, anxiously. "Oh, Daisy! do you then love me so much —so very much?"

I looked up, and smiled at the question. But his face was burning, and expressed mingled pleasure, doubt, and pain.

"Oh!" he continued, taking my hands in his, and speaking hesitatingly, "what am I to think of the girl who forgets her friend?"

"I knew you were vexed and angry about the party," I interrupted. "I saw you."

"And then, on the first false alarm, who returns to him so kindly, on a stormy night, by a dreary way, fearless though alone."

"Now, Cornelius, what have I done that a good sister, or friend, or daughter, would not do?"

Cornelius dropped my hands, and said, abruptly: "Do you not feel chill?"

"Not with that fire. Do you know, Cornelius, now I am here again with you and Kate, I don't see why I should go back to Poplar Lodge. Suppose you ask me to stay. Well, what are you doing?"

He had stood up, and was pouring out a glass of wine, which he handed to me.

"Take it," he said.

"To please you, Cornelius: but I do not want it. The sight of your face at the door was more reviving than wine to me."

I just tasted the wine, and handed him the glass. He drank off its contents. His hand, in touching mine, had felt feverish, and he looked rather pale.

"You are unwell," I said, uneasily.

"Unwell!" he echoed, gaily. "I never felt better."

He poured himself out another glass of wine, but I took it from him.

"You must not!" I exclaimed, imperatively. "Oh, Cornelius! be careful," I added, imploringly.

He laughed at my uneasiness; but there was something dreary in the sound of his laughter, which I did not like.

"I tell you I am well—quite well," he persisted; "but I feel uneasy about you, Daisy. How this night will fatigue you! I dare not tell you to go to your room, lest it should be too chill; but will you try and sleep here?"

"On condition that, when I am asleep, you will go up, and take some rest yourself."

He promised to do so; and, to please him, I laid my head on the pillow of the couch. He removed the lamp from my eyes, but in vain I closed them, and tried to sleep. Every now and then I kept opening them again, and talking in that excited way, which is the result of over-wrought emotion.

"Cornelius," I said, "I am now quite resolved to stay with you. I should feel too miserable to be even a day away. Always thinking about typhus, you know."

"Sleep, child," was his only reply.

I tried; but awhile afterwards I was again talking.

"And the Academy!" I said, "and 'The Young Girl Reading'! Are the other pictures sold?"

I half-rose on one elbow to look at Cornelius, who sat a little behind me. Without answering, he made me lie down again, and laid his hand on my eyes and brow. He possessed, perhaps, something of mesmeric power, for unconsciously I fell asleep; but mine was not a deep or perfect slumber. I was aware of a change that I could not understand or define. I felt, however, some one bending over me, and a long and lingering kiss was pressed on my brow.

"It is Cornelius going up-stairs," I thought even in my sleep, but without awakening. My next remembrance is that I looked up with sudden terror, and that I found myself face to face with Kate, who sat by the table weeping bitterly. I looked for Cornelius and saw him not.

"Kate, Kate!" I cried, starting to my feet, "where is he? What has happened?"

She shook her head and never replied.

I crossed the room and opened the door of the front parlour; it was empty and in confusion; I ran to the front door, opened it, and looked down the moonlit street.

"Cornelius!" I cried, "Cornelius!"

I paused and listened; all I heard was the sound of a carriage rolling away in the distance. My voice died on my lips in broken accents; my arms fell by my side powerless and dead. He was gone! gone without a word of explanation or adieu. In this one circumstance I read a remote journey and a long absence, and yet I would believe in neither. I re-entered the parlour where Kate still sat in the same attitude. I went up to her.

"So he is gone to Yorkshire to see Mr. Smalley?" I said agitatedly.

"He is gone to Spain," she briefly answered.

My heart fell.

"To Spain! for a few months, I suppose?"

"For years!"

"I don't believe it!" I cried, angrily; "he could not, would not do such a thing. You want to frighten me, Kate, but I don't believe you; no, I don't."

"You do; in your heart you do; in your heart you know it."

I did know it; for I gave way to a burst of passion and grief, and spoke to Kate as I never before had spoken.

"Gone! gone to Spain, and for years! Kate! how dare you let him go and not tell me?"

She looked up at me; her eyes flashing through her tears.

"And how dare you speak so to me, foolish girl? Is Cornelius anything so near to you as he is to me? Did you rear him, sacrifice your youth to him, and then find yourself cast aside and forsaken, as I am this day?"

"He reared me," I cried, weeping passionately. "Claim him by all you have sacrificed to him, my claim is all he has been to me! Oh! Kate, why did he go?"

"What right have you to know?" she asked, with a jealous bitterness that exasperated me.

"Every right," I replied, indignantly. "What have I done to be so treated?"

"What have you done? Why, you have done that I believe there is nothing so dear to him as you are; that his last request was, that instead of going with him, I should stay with you and wait your wakening; that his last kiss was that which he gave you as you slept. If you want to know more, here is a letter for you. Ask me not another question; I shall not answer. I have no more to say, and I have enough of my own grief."

She handed me a folded paper. I opened it and read:—

"Forgive me, Daisy, if I forsake you thus by stealth; but partings are bitter things. I wished to spare you some pain, and myself a severe though useless trial. I had promised to leave you and Kate no more; but you must have noticed how restless my temper has been of late; indeed, there is in my blood an

unquiet fever which only liberty and a life of wandering can appease. Good bye, Daisy, God bless you! May you be happy, ay, even to the fullness of your heart's wishes."

Kate need not have asked for my silence. I laid down her brother's letter without a word, not a syllable could I have uttered then; I was hurt; hurt to the very heart. Cornelius had forsaken me cruelly; he had done to the girl what pity would never have let him do to the child; he had left me in my sleep, without one word of adieu.

I felt the shock and bitterness of this sudden separation, and more bitterly still the desertion. How could I, after this, think that Cornelius cared for me? He had liked me, amused himself with me, but I had never been to him that living portion of the heart which we call a friend. I could bear his absence, but that he should not care for me, that he should have been trifling with me all along, I could not bear. I paced the room up and down, vainly trying to keep in my sobs and tears. As I passed by the table, a folded paper caught my attention, I seized it eagerly with that vague hope which clings to everything. In this case it was not deceived.

"Oh! Kate, Kate!" I cried, throwing my arms around her neck in a transport of joy too deep not to make me forget the few sharp words that had passed between us.

"Well, what is it?" she asked, amazed.

"He'll come back; he'll come back; he has forgotten his passport. Oh! I am so glad! so happy; he can't travel without it, you know. I defy him to go to Spain now."

I laughed and cried for joy. She sighed.

"And if he does come back," she said, "it will be to go away again."

"We shall see that," I replied indignantly. "I will not let him, Kate. He has accustomed me to have my way of late, and in this I will have it."

She shook her head incredulously; but I was confident and did not heed her; a low rumbling sound down the street had attracted my attention.

"There he is!" I cried joyfully; and with a beating heart I ran to the street door. I opened it very softly, and keeping it ajar, I listened. The sound had ceased, and for a moment all I heard was the voice of Kate whispering in my ear—

"Daisy, if you let him go this time, I shall never forgive you. Do not mind what I said; keep him; you can if you wish."

I had not time to think on her words or ask her for their meaning; a quick and well-known step was coming up the Grove—the garden gate opened—no bell rang, but a hand tapped lightly at the parlour shutters. I opened the door wide and Cornelius, for it was he, came up to me.

"I have forgotten my passport," he said, in a low tone; "it is on the table in the back-parlour. Is she still asleep?"

Before I could reply, the moon, that had kept hid behind a dark cloud, came forth bright and undimmed; her light fell on my face; I saw him start.

"Will you not come in, Cornelius?" I said quietly. But he stood there at the door of his own home, mute and motionless as a statue. "Well then," I continued, "I must go out to you; perhaps before you cross the seas again, standing on the threshold of your dwelling, you will not refuse to grant me what you did not think fit to give me within it—the luxury of a last adieu—of a last embrace!"

I stepped out to him as I spoke; but he made me re-enter the house, and followed me in.

"Daisy," he said, with a sigh, "I wished to leave whilst you were away, and fate brought you back; I stole away whilst you were asleep, and I was compelled to return and find you awake. I thought to spare us both some pain. I cannot; be it so; you shall have your wish."

His voice plainly said: "Your wish, and no more."

"Very well," I replied, quietly; for though I was resolved he should not go, I knew better than to startle him.

We re-entered together the back parlour; Kate had left it; but the lamp still burned on the table. Cornelius sat down by it; his face was pale, watchful, determined. I saw he was fully on his guard, and prepared to resist unflinchingly to the last. I was as determined to insist and prevail. Oh! daily life, that

art called tame and reproved as dull, how is it that to me thou hast ever been so full of strange agitating dramas, I sat down by Cornelius; I passed my arm within his, and looking up into his face, I said:

"When, a few hours ago, I felt so glad to see you safe, Cornelius, I knew not I was looking my last for a long time."

He did not answer; I continued:

"Oh, if I had known we were going to part, how differently I should have spent this evening! I would not have talked away so foolishly, but have asked you so many questions—settled so many things! whereas now I have only a few minutes, and can think of nothing save that you are going away, Cornelius."

He quailed, but only momentarily; if his lip trembled a little, his unmoved look told of unconquerable resolve.

"You, it seems," I resumed, "had nothing to say to me, Cornelius, or you could not have wished to go away thus?"

He drew forth his watch, and said, briefly:

"I must go soon, Daisy."

"Kate says you are to be years away—is it true?"

His silence was equivalent to an assent.

"Well then, give me the farewell of years," I said, passing my arms around his neck, and compelling his face to look down at mine.

He seemed a little troubled, and made a motion to rise. I detained him.

"A little longer," I entreated; "I have thought of some things about which I wish to question you."

"Pray be quick, Daisy."

"Why do you go to Spain?"

"For change."

"You are tired of us?"

"I am tired of a quiet life."

"Go to France, Cornelius."

"Why so?"

"It is nearer."

"Daisy, I must really go now."

"A little longer; I have something else to say."

"What is it?"

"I have forgotten; but give me time to remember."

I laid my head on his shoulder as I spoke.

"Daisy," he asked, "what have you to say?"

I wept without answering; but saw his eye vainly looking over the table in search of something.

"I have it," I said aloud, "I have it, and I will not give it to you,
Cornelius, for you must not, no, you must not go."

"I knew it," he resignedly exclaimed, "I knew it would come to this; and yet," he added, looking down at me rather wistfully, "it is of no use, Daisy; I must go, and I will go too."

"No, Cornelius, you will not; you never could have the heart to do it.
Besides, why go?"

"For change."

"Change! what is change? If I were an artist I would make variety enough in my own mind to be the charm of daily life; and whilst I painted pictures, I would not care a pin for Spain or Italy. If I were an ambitious spirit, I would not go just when my fame was beginning, when glorious prospects were opening before me. If I were a brother, and had a good sister, who loved me dearly, I would not forsake her. If I were a kind-hearted man, and had adopted a poor little orphan girl, reared her, indulged her, made her my friend, and promised not to leave her, I would not break her heart by running away from her; but when she said to me: 'Stay, Cornelius!' I would just give her a kiss, and say: 'Yes, my pet, by all means!'"

But in vain. I looked up into his face; he did not kiss me; he did not call me his pet; his lips never parted to say, "Yes, by all means!" His head was sunk on his bosom; his arms were folded; his downcast look never sought mine. I left my place by him to sit down at his feet and see him better. I read sorrow on his face, great sorrow, but no change of purpose. I took one of his hands in mine, and gazing at him through gathering tears:

"Cornelius," I said, "are you still going?"

He did not reply.

"Are you still going?" I asked, laying my head on his knee.

He remained silent.

"Are you still going?" I persisted, rising as I spoke, and pressing my lips to his cheek. He never moved; he never answered. The blood rushed to my heart with passionate force. I threw back rather than dropped his hand; I stepped away from him with wounded and indignant pride. "Go then!" I exclaimed, with angry tears, "go, here is your passport; take it and with it take back your broken promise and friendship betrayed."

"Betrayed!" he echoed, looking up.

"Yes, betrayed; I do not retract the word. Want of confidence is treason in friendship, and you have had no confidence in me—why in this house, where as a child I had obeyed you, and could have obeyed you all my life, why did you of your own accord raise me to an equality which was my boast and my pride, when in your heart you meant to treat me as a child to be cheated into a parting? You gave me an empty name; I will have the reality or I will have nothing, Cornelius."

I turned away from him as I spoke; he rose and followed me.

"Daisy," he said, "what do you mean?"

I looked round at him over my shoulder, and replied, reproachfully:

"I mean that you do not care for me."

"I do not care for you!"

"No; you have secrets from me; William never had any secrets; he liked me more than you do, Cornelius."

An expression of so much pain passed across his face, that I repented at once.

"You cannot believe that?" he replied at length; "you would not say it if you were not very angry with me, Daisy, and yet you know, oh! you know well enough I cannot bear your anger."

"Can't you bear it, Cornelius?" I answered turning round to face him, "then don't go; for if you do, I shall be so angry—indeed, you can have no idea of it!"

"None, whilst you speak and look so very unlike anger. Oh, Daisy! which is easier: to part from you in wrath or in peace?"

"Why part at all? why go?" I replied passing my arm within his, and looking up at his bending face in which I read signs of yielding.

"Why remain?"

"Because I wish it," I said, making him sit down.

"Is that a reason?"

"The best of all—for it will make you stay."

He did not say yes; but then, he did not say no.

"Stay! stay!" he repeated with an impatient sigh. "What for? You do not want me."

"Indeed, I do," I replied, triumphantly, "I want you much, very much, just now."

"What for?"

"To advise me about Mr. Thornton."

"Ah! what of him?" exclaimed Cornelius, with a sudden start.

"Nothing," I replied, sorry to have said so much.

He gave me a look beneath which I felt myself reddening.

"He too!" he said, biting his lip and folding his arms like one amazed, "he too! And I was going, actually going, actually leaving you to him."

He laughed indignantly and rose; I eagerly caught hold of his arm.

"Oh, I am not going," he exclaimed impetuously, throwing down his hat as he spoke. "Catch me going now. No, Daisy," he added, resuming his place by me, and laying his hand on my arm as he bent on me a fixed and resolute look, "though I was fool enough to let him have the picture, he shall not find it quite so easy to get the original."

"Oh, Cornelius!" I exclaimed, feeling ready to cry with vexation and shame, "that is not at all what I mean."

"Another," he continued with ill-repressed irritation, "it is the strangest thing, that young or old, boys in experience, or worn and wearied with the world, they all want you."

"Cornelius, how can you talk so! it is Mrs. Langton whom Mr. Thornton likes."

"Mrs. Langton!"

"Yes, Mrs. Langton, the great beauty."

"So much the better," he replied with a scornful and incredulous laugh, "for he shall not have you, Daisy."

"He does not want me," I said desperately; "but if he did, it would be time lost. For I am sure I don't want him."

"You do not like him!" observed Cornelius, calming down a little.

"Very much as a cousin. Not at all, otherwise."

"And you will not have him, will you, Daisy?"

He spoke with lingering doubt and uneasiness.

"I tell you I shall not have the chance," I replied impatiently. "Oh, Cornelius! will you never leave off fancying that everybody is in love with me?"

I could not help laughing as I said it.

"Yes, laugh," he said reproachfully, "laugh at me, because like the poor man of the parable told by the Prophet to the sinful King, 'I have but one little ewe lamb; I have nourished it up, it has eaten of my meat, drank of my cup, lain in my bosom, and been unto me as a daughter.' Laugh because I cannot help dreading lest the rich man's insolence should wrest her from me!"

"No, Cornelius, I shall laugh no more; but indeed you need not fear that sort of thing at all. Neither for Mr. Thornton, nor for any other member of his sex do I care, and when I say that," I added, reddening a little, "you know what I mean."

"Too well!" he replied, in a low, sad tone. "Good bye, Daisy. God bless you!"

I remained motionless with surprise and grief. He rose; Kate entered the room.

"Oh, Kate!" I cried desperately, "after all but promising to stay, he is going. Speak to him, pray speak to him!"

She shook her head and stood a little apart, looking on with quiet attention.

I silently placed myself before her brother, but he looked both sad and determined.

"You cannot have the heart to do it: you cannot!" I exclaimed, the tears running down my face as I spoke; "you cannot!"

"Daisy," he replied, in a tone of mingled pain and reproach, "where is the use of all this? If I could stay, indeed I would; but though I love you so much, that every tear you now shed seems a drop wrung from the life blood of my heart, believe me when I declare that though you should ask me to remain on your bended knees, I should still say no."

"Then I shall try!" I exclaimed, despairingly; but before I could sink down at his feet, he had caught hold of both my hands, and compelled me to remain upright. Hope forsook me.

"Cornelius," I said, weeping, "will you stay?"

"No!"

"Cornelius!" I exclaimed, more earnestly. "Will you stay?"

This time he did not answer, but his half averted face showed me a profile severe, resolute, and inexorable.

"You cannot weary me," I said again; "will you stay?"

He turned upon me pale with wrath.

"Oh! blind girl—blind to the last!" he cried, his white lips trembling.
"You ask me to stay—to stay!"

"Yes, Cornelius, again and again!"

All patience seemed to forsake him. His eyes lit, his features quivered; he grasped my hands in his with an angry force, of which he was himself unconscious.

"Come," he said, striving to be calm, "do not make me say that which I should repent. Let us part as it is—do not insist—do not provoke me to forget honour and truth."

I could see that Cornelius was angry with me; that my obstinacy provoked him beyond measure; but his wrath was the wrath of love; it could not terrify me. I even felt and found in it a perilous pleasure, that made me smile as I replied:

"But I do insist, Cornelius."

His lips parted, as if to utter some vehement reply; then he bit them with angry force, and knit his brow like one who subdues and keeps down some inward strife. Kate quietly stepped up to us.

"The knot that will not be unravelled must be cut," she said. "He will stay, Daisy, if you will be his wife."

The words seemed sent, like a quivering arrow, through my very heart. Cornelius looked confounded at his sister, who only smiled; then he turned to me, flushed and ardent. As I stood before him, my hands still grasped in his—his face still bent over mine, half upraised—his look, overflowing with passion, reproach, love, anger, and tenderness, sank deep into mine, with a meaning that overpowered me. And yet, as if spell- bound by the strange and wonderful story thus, at once revealed to me, I could not cease to hear it. Kate had not spoken—she still spoke in words that echoed for ever. To speak myself, look away, return once more to the daily life beyond which that moment stood isolated, were not things in my power. I felt like one divided from Time by that immortal Present.

"Oh, Daisy!" vehemently exclaimed Cornelius, "how you linger! 'No' should have been uttered at once; 'yes' need not tarry so long. Speak—answer. Must I stay or depart?"

He spoke with the feverish impatience that will not brook delay.

"Stay!" broke from me, I knew not why nor how; but with the word, my head swam; my limbs failed

me; there was a chair by me, I sank down upon it. Cornelius turned very pale, dropped my hands, and walked away without a word. Kate came to me.

"Daisy," she said, taking my hand in her own, "what is it? Are you faint? Have this," she added, handing me the glass of wine which, at once, her brother had poured out.

"No," I replied, "water."

She gave me some. I drank it off, but it did not calm the fever which she took for faintness. I clasped my brow between my hands, to compose and concentrate thought; but my whole being—my mind, faculties, soul, body, and heart, were in tumult and insurrection. I could hear, see, feel—know nothing of that inward world of which I called myself mistress. I rose, terrified at the sudden storm which had broken on my long peace.

"Daisy, do not look so wild!" said Kate; and taking me in her arms, she wanted to make me sit down again; but I broke from her. I passed by her brother without giving him a look, ran up to my own room, and locked myself in like one pursued.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A faint streak of grey was breaking in the east, through the low and heavy clouds of night. I went up to the window, opened it, and kneeling down by it, I looked at that still dark sky, and surrendered myself to the swift current that was bearing me away.

There is a rapture in strong emotions that has subdued the strongest; a perilous charm to which the wisest have yielded. What the storm is to our senses—something that raises, appals and lifts up our very being by its sublimity and terror—the strife of the passions is to the soul. They are her elements, from whose conflicts and electric shocks she derives her strength, her greatness, the knowledge that she is. And for this, though they so often blight her fairest hopes, she loves them.

It is hard, indeed, to be ever striving against those rebellious servants—to feel torn asunder in the struggle; but sweeter is that bitter contest than a long, lifeless peace. The danger lies not so much in the chance of final subjection, as in that of learning to love the strife too well. More perilous than the sweetest music is its tumult; more endless than are all the delights of the senses, and far more intoxicating is its infinite variety. The soul, in her most blissful repose, has nothing to equal the burning charm of her delirium.

My youth had been calm as an ice-bound sea, over which sweep breezes sweet though chill, but that knows neither the storm nor the sunshine of the ardent south. And now the storm had suddenly wakened, and from northern winter, I passed to the glowing tropics. I thought not of love or passion, of bliss or torment; I felt like one seized by foaming rapids, and swept far beyond human ken, with the sound of the rushing torrent ever in my ears. I yielded to a force that would not be resisted.

"Let it," I thought, my heart beating with fearless delight; "I care not whither it sends me; let the eddies cast me adrift—or bear me safely on—I care not—this is to live!"

I strove not against the current; I sought not to know where I was, until of itself the stream flowed more calm, until its mighty voice died away in faint murmurs, and I found myself floating safe in still waters. Then I looked up, and like one who after sleeping on earth wakens in fairy- land, I beheld with trembling joy the strange and wonderful country to which I had been borne during the long slumber of a year. Cornelius loved me! it was marvellous, incredible, but a great and glorious thing for all that. He loved me! my heart swelled; my soul rose; I felt humble, exalted and blest far beyond the power of speech to render. I had no definite thought, no definite wish, but before me extended the future like an endless summer day; beneath it spread life as an enchanted region which Cornelius and I paced hand in hand, bending our steps towards that golden west where burned a sun that should never set.

"Yes, he loves me!" I repeated to myself as I remembered every token unheeded till then. "And do I love him?" oh! how swift came the irresistible reply: "with every power of my soul, with every impulse of my being, with the blood that flows in my veins, with the heart that beats in my bosom." The answer both startled and charmed me. I did not understand it rightly yet, and like one suddenly taken captive, I looked at my bonds and saw incredulously that the liberty of thought, heart and feeling had departed for ever; that an influence as subtle as it was penetrating had taken possession of my being. One moment I rebelled; but after a brief struggle for freedom, I owned myself conquered; with beating heart and burning brow lowly bent, I confessed my master.

Filial reverence, sisterly love, friendship, what had become of ye then? Like weak briars and brambles swept away by a swift stream, ye perished at once on the path of passion. I wondered not that ye should be no more. I only wondered ye had ever been: vain words by which I had long been deluded.

I looked back into my past. Since I had known him, I could not remember the time when the thought of Cornelius had not been to me as the daily bread of my heart. There had been familiarity in my deepest tenderness, and lingering passion in my very freedom. I had felt intuitively that I could not make my love for a man, young and not of my blood, too sacred and too pure, and that love ever craving for a more perfect, more entire union, had caught eagerly at these shadows of what it sought. I had said to myself, to him, to all, that my affection was that of a child for its father, of a sister for her brother, of a friend for her friend, because it had not occurred to me that a closer tie might one day bind us; and what I had said, I had believed most sincerely.

I was very young and very innocent. Of love I had read little, and seen less. So long as it came not to me in visible aspect; so long as I felt not within myself some great change, I dreamt not of it. There is a love that lies in the heart unconscious of itself, like a child asleep in its cradle—and this I had never suspected. There is a love which grows with onr years, until it becomes part of our being; which never agitates, because it has no previous indifference, no remembrance of the time in which it was not, against which to strive; which has purer and deeper signs than the beating heart, the blushing cheek, the averted look—and all this I knew not. Where there is no resistance, there can be no struggle; but because there is no struggle shall any one dare to say— there is no victory? Reduce to logic the least logical of all passions, and argue with a feeling that smiles at argument, and disdains to reply.

Had I then loved Cornelius even as a child? loved him with that purer part of affection which needs not to wait for the growth of years? God alone knows. Love is a great mystery; it is easy to remember the time of its discovery, but wise, indeed, are they who can tell the hour and moment of its birth.

I had the wisdom not to ask myself so useless a question. The past vanished from my thoughts; it was all future now. I looked at the eastern sky; it was reddening fast, and grew more bright and burning as I looked. With the superstition of the heart, I watched the dawn of that day, as that which opened my new existence, and for all of the past that it revealed, and I had never seen; for all of the future that it promised, and I had never hoped. I gave thanks to God.

I know not how long I had been thus, when a tap at my door disturbed me. I rose, opened, and saw Kate. She made me turn my face to the light, then half smiled, and said:

"Cornelius wants to speak to you; he is quite in a way. Pray come down."

I followed her down stairs in silence. She opened the back parlour door, closed it, and left me. I stood still; all the blood in my frame seemed to have rushed to my beating heart. It was one thing to be alone with Cornelius, my friend, and another to find myself thus suddenly brought to the presence of Cornelius, my lover.

He sat by the open window; beyond it rose the green garden trees tinged with a rosy light, and above them spread the blushing sky. A fresh breeze came in bearing soft sounds of rustling leaves and twittering songs of wakening birds. He too had watched the dawning day; but there seemed to have been at least as much sorrow as love in his vigil. He looked pale, weary, and slowly turned around as I entered. He saw me standing at the door, rose, and came up to me without speaking. I looked at him like one in a dream. He took my passive hand in his, and gave me a troubled glance, then suddenly he passed his other arm around me, looking down at me with the saddest face.

"And is it thus indeed, Daisy," he said, in a low tone, "you are pale as death, but as silent; your hand lies in mine chill as ice, but not withdrawn; you yield, mute and meek as a poor little victim to the arms that clasp you! No tears! No words to rouse remorse or sting pride. Nothing but entire sacrifice, and that silent submission."

He spoke of paleness; his own face was like marble, his eyes overflowed, his lips trembled, he stooped to press them on my brow. Involuntarily I shunned the embrace.

"Do not shrink," he observed, with evident pain, "I mean it as the last. Yes! the last. I never intended putting you to such a trial. Never, Daisy," he continued, giving me a wistful look, "anger at your blindness, and the irresistible temptation of a sudden opportunity, did indeed make me forget, in one moment, the dearly-bought patience of a year; passion, roused to tyranny after her long subjection, and sick of restraint, did indeed vow she would and should be gratified, no matter what the cost might be; but I never meant it. You are young, generous, and devoted. Months ago, if I had spoken, I know—and I knew it then—that I could have had you for the asking. But I could not bear to have you thus. When your grandfather placed so great a trust in my honour, and showed so little faith in my generosity, I

laughed at his blindness, for I thought age had cooled his blood, and made him forget the language which is not speech. But alas! I found that I who had taught you many things, could not teach you this lesson. How could I? when what is held the easiest of all, the letting you see what you were to me, I could never accomplish. Do, say, act as I would, the sacredness of your affection ever stood between us. I tried every art, and love has many, but when I spoke so plainly, it seemed as if a very child must have understood me. You looked or smiled with hopeless serenity. I vowed once that cost me what it might, I would not speak until I had made you love me as truly, as ardently as I loved you myself. I waited months, I might have waited years. Well, no matter, it is over now. Be free, forget the trouble of an hour in the peace of a life-time. Be happy, very happy, and yet, oh! how happy, it seems to me, your friend could have made you, if you would but have let him."

He released and left me. Touched with his sorrow, I could not restrain my tears.

"Weep not for me," he said, with a sad smile; "I shall do. It is true that when I came back from Italy, I secretly boasted that I had escaped both the follies of youth and the dangers of passion. But though Fate, which I braved abroad, has, like a traitor, lain in wait for me in my own home, know, Daisy, that like a man, I can look her in the face, stern and bitter as she wears it on this day, too long delayed, of our separation."

"Then you do mean to go?" I exclaimed, troubled to the very heart.

"Can you think I would stay?" he replied, vehemently. "Oh! Daisy, tempt me not to call you cold and heartless, to say those things which a lifetime vainly repents and never effaces. Is it because I have passed through a year of the hardest self-subjection ever imposed on mortal; through a year of looks restrained, words hushed, emotions repressed; a year of fever and torment endured, that not a cloud might come over the serenity of your peace—is it for this, Daisy, that you think my heart and my blood so cold as to wish me to stay; as not to see that between complete union or utter separation there can now be no medium?"

His look sought mine with a troubled glance; there was fever in his accent, and pain in the half smile with which he spoke.

"But why go so soon?" I asked, in a low tone.

"Why? Daisy, you ask why? Because endurance has reached her utmost limits, and cannot pass them; because the rest is an abyss over which not even a poor plank stretches; because the thing I have delayed months must be done now or never: because, hard as is your absence, your constant presence is something still harder to bear."

He spoke with an ill-subdued irritation I knew not how to soothe.

"Cornelius!" I said in my gentlest accents, "if you would but stay and be calm."

"Stay and be calm!" he replied impetuously, and pacing the room with hasty steps, that ever came back to me; "why, I have been the calmest of calm men! When, one after another, they attempted to woo and win under my very eyes the only girl for whom I cared, she whom I looked on as my future wife; as the secret betrothed of my heart: when, to add taunt to taunt, as if I were not flesh and blood like them; as if I had not known you more years than they had known you weeks; loved you, when they cared not if you existed, they allowed me with insolent unconsciousness to behold it all, did I not subdue the secret wrath which trembled in every fibre of my being? What more would you have me do? Wait to see in the possession and enjoyment of one more fortunate than the rest, that which should have been my property and my joy; whilst I looked on, a robbed father, a friend forsaken, a lover betrayed, and behold my child, companion, friend and mistress the prize of a stranger!"

"Do you think then," he added, stopping short, and speaking with calmer and deeper indignation, "do you think then that I have severed you from the lover of your youth, guarded you from my own friends, watched over you as a miser over his gold, suspected every man who looked at you, sickened at the thought, 'Is it now I am to be robbed?' breathed and lived again at the reply, 'Not yet'—to stay and wait until some other comes and reaps the fruit of all my vain watchfulness."

His eyes flashed, and his lips trembled with jealous resentment. Borne away by the force of his own feelings, he had spoken with a vehement rapidity, that left him no room for pause, as they left me no room for interruption. At length he ceased. I looked at him; he had spoken of his patience with feverish anger, of his calmness with bitter indignation; the passionate emotions had left their traces on his brow slightly contracted, on his pale and agitated face, in his look that still burned with ill-repressed fire; but there was sweetness in his reproaches, and a secret pleasantness in his wrath.

"Another," I said quietly, "and suppose there is no other. Suppose no one cares for me."

"No one!" he echoed, drawing nearer, and taking my hand in his, with a sudden change of mood and accent, "No one, Daisy! Oh! you know there will always be one. One who sat with you by a running stream for the whole of a summer's noon, and at whom your face seemed to look from the clear waters until it sank deep and for ever in his heart. One who waking or sleeping, has loved you since that day, and for whom it is you, Daisy, who care not."

I said I did care for him.

"But how, how?" he asked, with an impatient sigh, "you mean old affection, habit, friendship, and I, you know well enough, mean none of those things. I love you because do what I will, you attract me irresistibly. If I had met you in the street by chance, I should have said, 'this girl and none other I will have;' I would have followed you, ascertained your dwelling, name and parentage, ay, and made you love me too, Daisy, cold as you are now."

"I am not cold, Cornelius."

"Alas, no," he replied, a little passionately, "and there too is the mischief. Oh! Daisy, be merciful! Give nothing if you cannot give all. Be at once all ice, and torment me no more with the calm serenity which is never coldness. Do you know how often you have made me burn to remind you, that though I was no one to you, you might be some one to me; that you have made me long for the sting of indifference and pride; for a familiarity less tender, for a tenderness less dangerous? Do you know that if your affection has been too calm for love, it has been very ardent for mere friendship; that it has possessed the perilous charm of passion and purity; passion which would be divine if it could but be pure; purity which, if it were but ardent, would be irresistibly alluring. You have tormented me almost beyond endurance, then when I gave up hope, you have suddenly said and done the kindest things maiden ever said or did. You have deserted me and returned to me, embraced me with the careless confidence of a sister, spoken with the tenderness of a mistress, and perplexed me beyond all mortal knowledge. But why do I speak as if this were over? Daisy! you perplex me still. This very evening have you not declared that you care for no other, then almost as plainly said you cared not for me. Have you not heard me tell you how warmly I love you, yet have you not asked me to stay here in this house ever near you? Nay, though I speak now from the very fulness of my heart, do you not stand, your hand in mine, listening to me with patient, quiet grace? I dare not hope, I will not quite despair; I can do neither, for I protest, Daisy, that you are still to me a riddle and a mystery, and that whether you love him or love him not, is more than Cornelius O'Reilly can tell."

Cornelius had said all this without a pause of rest: he spoke with the daring rapidity of passion which tarries not for words, but with many an eloquent change of look, tone, and accent. I had heard him with throbbing bosom and burning brow. For the first time I was addressed in the language of love, and the voice that spoke was very dear to me. Answer I could not. I stood before him, listening to tones that had ceased, but that still echoed in my heart. When he confessed, however, that he did not know whether or not I loved him, an involuntary smile stole over my face, and this he was very quick to see; his look, keen and searching, sought mine; his face, eager and flushed, was bent over me.

"Look at me, Daisy," he said, quickly.

I looked up, smiling still; for I thought to myself, "I love him, but he shall not know it just yet." But as I looked, a change of feeling came over my heart. I remembered the past, his long goodness, his patient, devoted love, and I could not take my eyes away.

"Well," he said, uneasily, "why do you look at me so strangely? My face is not new to you, Daisy. You have had time to know it all these years."

Ay, years had passed since our first meeting; and what had he not been to me since then? My adopted father, my kind guardian, my secure protector, my faithful friend, my devoted lover! As I thought of all this, and still looked at him, his kind, handsome face grew dim through gathering tears. "I will tell him all," I thought; "I will be ingenuous and good; tell him how truly, how ardently I love him." The words rose to my lips, and died away unuttered. Is the language in which woman utters such confessions yet invented? Oh! love and pride, tyrants of her heart, how sharp was your contest then in mine! He was bending over me with strange tormenting anxiety in his face. I bowed my head away from his gaze. He half drew me closer, half pushed me back; his hand sought, then rejected, mine. He saw my eyes overflowing.

"Oh, Daisy, Daisy!" he exclaimed, "what does this mean?"

"Guess," was my involuntary reply.

"Do not trifle with me," he said, in a tone of passionate entreaty—"do not."

"Trifle with you! Could I, Cornelius?"

"Prove it then."

He stooped and looked up; for a moment my lips touched his cheek, whilst his lingered on my brow. Many a time before had Cornelius kissed me; but this was the first embrace of a love, mutual, ardent, and yet, God knows it, very pure—ay, far too religiously pure to trouble. And thus it was all understood —all known—all told—without a word.

When I felt that the unconscious dream of my whole life was fulfilled; that I was everything to him who had so long been everything to me; when I looked up into his face, met his look, in which the affection of the tried friend, and the love of the lover, unequivocally blended, and knew that no other human being—not even his sister—could claim and fill that place where my heart had found its home, and that as I loved so was I loved,—I also felt that I had conquered fate; that I triumphed over by- gone sorrow, and could defy the might of time. I cried for joy, as I had often cried for grief on that kind heart which had sheltered my forsaken childhood and unprotected youth.

"Tears!" he said, with a smile of reproach; and yet he knew well enough they were not tears of sorrow.

"They will be to me what the rain has been to the night, Cornelius; a freshening dew."

I went up to the open window; I leaned my brow on the cool iron bar; the morning air came in pure, chill, and fragrant. I shivered slightly. Cornelius, who had followed me, saw this, and wanted to close the window.

"Do not," I said; "this cool, keen air is delightful. Then I like to watch the rising of that sun that thought to see you far on your journey, and that shall find you here. Besides, bow beautiful our little garden looks!"

"Then come out into it for awhile."

He took my arm. I yielded. We went down into the garden and paced its narrow gravel path without uttering a word. There came a slight shower; we stepped under the old poplar trees; they yielded more than sufficient shelter. The sun shone through the sparkling drops as they fell, and whilst the fresh rain came down, the birds overhead sang sweetly under the cover of young leafy boughs, as if their song could know no ending. Yes, sweet and near though I knew it to be, it sounded to me as coming from the depths of some dreamy forest far away. I do not think our garden had ever looked so fresh, so pleasant, or been so fragrant as when that shower ceased. The rain-clouds soft and grey, had melted into the vapoury blue of upper air; the warm sunshine tempered the coolness of the breeze, the green grass was white and heavy with the dew of night, and bright with the rain of the morning; the wet gravel sparkled, the dark trunks of the trees trickled slowly, the brown moss clung closer to the old sun- dial, the fresh earth smelt sweet, stock, mignionette, wall-flower, furze, and jessamine yielded their most fragrant odours. Rhododendrons beaten down by the last night's storm trailed on the earth their gorgeous masses, whilst sparkling fox-gloves, with a dew-drop to every flower, still rose straight and tall. We were again walking on. Cornelius suddenly stopped short, and for the first time spoke.

"Daisy," he said, earnestly, "you are quite sure, are you not?"

"Look at that flower," was my only reply.

It was a crimson peony, heavy with rain. I bent it slightly; from the delicate petals, from the heart which seemed untouched by a breath, there poured forth a bright shower of liquid dew.

"What about that flower, Daisy?"

"It is a peony, Cornelius."

"Let it."

"Well, I don't think you can prevent it from being one. Peonies will be peonies."

"Who wants to interfere with their rights? and what have peonies to do with our discourse, unless that you look very like one just now? Oh, Daisy! are you sure you like me well enough to marry me?"

"Don't think, if ever I do such a thing, it shall be for liking,
Cornelius."

"What for, then?"

"To prevent you from marrying any one else."

He still looked uneasy, and yet he might have known that, though it is sometimes very hard to know where love is, it is always wonderfully easy to know where he is not.

"What would you have?" I asked, a little impatiently. "Is it the love, honour, and obey that troubles you? Well, I have loved you all my life, or very nearly. I honour you more than living creature; as for obedience, I could obey you all the day long, Cornelius."

"Do you mean to turn out a Griseldis?" he said, uneasily. "What put such ideas into your head?"

"Remembrance of the time—"

"I knew you would grow filial again," he interrupted, looking provoked, "instead of answering my question, which was—"

"Concerning your wife," I interrupted, in my turn; "what about her? She ought to be a proud woman, and it will be her own fault if she is not happy—ay, a very happy one."

He stroked my hair, and smiled quite pleased.

"I hope so," he said. "And yet you do not know what I mean to do for her, Daisy. I will paint her pictures that shall beat all the sonnets Petrarch ever sang to his Laura. I will win her fame and money: I will dress her as fine as any queen, until my field-flower shall outshine every flower of the garden. Above all, I will love her as knight of chivalry, or hero of romance, never loved his lady."

He spoke with jesting, yet very tender flattery. Love can take every tone, and bend any language to its own meaning.

I know not how long we lingered together in that garden. I was the first to become conscious of time.

"Where is Kate?" I asked.

"Forgotten," replied her low voice.

She stood beneath the ivied porch; her head a little inclined; one hand supporting her cheek. She looked down at us with a smile happy, yet not without sadness.

"Don't think I envy you the pleasant time," she resumed more gaily; "I like to see people enjoying themselves. When I meet couples in the lanes, I either get out of the way, or, if I cannot do that, I give them internally my benediction. 'Go on,' I think to myself, 'go on; you will never be happier, nor, perhaps, better than you are now. Go on.'"

"We want to go in," said Cornelius, as we ascended the steps.

As I passed by her, Kate arrested me by laying her hand on my shoulder, and saymg:

"Look at that child! She has not slept all night, and there is not a rose of the garden half so fresh. It's a nice thing to be young, Cornelius."

She sighed a little, then led the way in to the front parlour, where breakfast was waiting.

"Already!" said Cornelius.

"Yes, already," she replied, sitting down to pour out the tea: "whilst you were in the clouds, the world has gone on just the same. Midge, why don't you sit near him as usual? you are not ashamed of yourself, are you?"

Ashamed! Oh, no! There is no shame in happiness; and God alone knows how happy I felt then sitting by him whom I loved, and facing her whom I loved almost as well. I do not know how I looked, or Cornelius either; for I did not look at him; but I know that Kate was radiant; that every time her bright eyes rested on us, they sparkled like diamonds, and that it touched me to the heart to read the generous, unselfish joy painted on her handsome face.

We were no sooner alone, than with her habit of continuing aloud whatever secret train of thought she chanced to be engaged in, Miss O'Reilly said to me in her most positive manner:

"I am very glad of it."

"Are you, Kate?" I replied, passing my arm around her neck and kissing her.

"Yes, you coaxing little thing; for he is devotedly fond of you, and I believe you like him with your whole heart, though it took you so long to find it out. What would you and he have done without me."

"I don't know, Kate, but how came you to let him think of going?"

"Ah! he quite deceived me in that matter; I never dreamt of it until it was all settled. It was no use my telling him that if you only knew he liked you, you would be glad to have him, as indeed any girl in her senses would. He said you only liked him in a sisterly sort of way, and would be off. I thought I would find out when he was gone, what sort of a way it was, but I had not the trouble."

I smiled. She gave me a wistful look and said:

"Ah! you don't want to be his niece now, do you?"

"No, indeed," I promptly answered.

"And I don't wish it either," she replied with a stifled sigh, "time was when I fretted and repined; when I wished I had been the wife of Edward Burns, and that his child had been my child; but that is over. I am glad now that my heart was denied that which it craved so eagerly; that my youth was cold and lonely; that my sorrow which past, purchased him and you a happiness which will I trust endure. Oh, Daisy! this is a good world after all, and with a good God over it; don't you see how the grief of one is made to work the bliss of another; how because your father and I were severed, the two children we loved so dearly can be united?"

"I see, Kate," I replied looking up into her face, "that Cornelius is good; that I, too, am what is called a good girl, and yet that we are two selfish creatures; that you alone are truly good and noble."

She shook her head with humble denial.

"I am an idolator for all that," she replied, her lips trembling slightly, "and you are blind if you do not see it. When I lost my lover, I set my heart on a child—for what are we to do with our hearts, if we don't love with them?—and he has kept it, and if God, to chastise me, were to take him from me to-morrow, I feel I should love him as much in his grave as I do on earth. If it be a sin, I trust to His mercy to forgive it. Sometimes, when my heart fails me, I cling to the recollection of His humanity. He who felt so much tenderness for his dear mother; who loved His brethren so truly; who cherished the beloved disciple; who wept by the grave of Lazarus, will surely not be very severe on a poor woman to whose whole life he thought fit to grant but one delight and one happy love. Do you think he will, Daisy?"

I was too much moved to reply.

"Now, child," she said gaily, "don't cry, or Cornelius, whom I hear coming down after you, will think I have been scolding my future sister- in-law."

"And would you not have the right to do so?" I asked, kissing her with mingled tenderness and reverence.

As she returned the embrace, Cornelius entered, and from the threshold of the door, looked at us with a delighted smile.

CHAPTER XIX.

How Mrs. Langton explained her conduct towards me, is more than I know; but it cannot have been to the dissatisfaction of Edward Thornton; for within two or three weeks they were married. They went to Italy on a matrimonial tour, and there they have resided ever since, leaving Mrs. Brand in happy and undisturbed possession of Poplar Lodge.

They thought not of us, and we thought not of them, nor of mortal creature, save Kate. The present effaced the past, and absorbed the future. Familiar affection may not have the romance and mystery of the passion which has given one soul and one heart to beings hitherto strangers; but it has a deeper tenderness and far more sacred purity. Love now sat with us at board and hearth; something unknown lingered at twilight-time in the shadow of the room, and morn and eve a charmed presence haunted every garden-path and bower.

Kate allowed us to dream away a few days, then suddenly startled us one evening, by saying quietly:

"Cornelius, when do you mean to write to Mr. Thornton?"

Cornelius started, and turned a little pale; my work dropped from my hands, and I sank back on my chair. Upon which he looked distracted, and seemed ready to quarrel with Kate for having started such an unwelcome subject.

"Nonsense!" she said gaily, "don't you see it is all right."

We looked at her, she smiled kindly.

"You have written to him?" anxiously observed Cornelius.

"I have seen him this very day. You need not open your eyes. What are railroads and express trains for? Why should I not go via Thornton House, and give a look to Rock Cottage; for I trust you do not mean to follow the foolish cockney fashion of associating your honeymoon with hotels and long bills. I shall never forget the impression I received, when Mr. Foster said to his wife with whom he ran away: 'Don't you remember, dear, how they cheated us at that Hotel des Etrangers?' 'Yes, dear,' she replied, 'but you know they were twice as bad at the H?tel d'Angleterre.' Poor things, it was ten years ago, but they had not forgotten it yet."

"Kate," interrupted Cornelius, "what about Mr. Thornton."

"Why nothing save that he seemed inclined to be merry, and said if he had reflected there was a woman in the case, he could have foretold at once what would become of the secret. Don't you see, you foolish fellow, that he only meant this as a bit of humiliation and punishment for you. But that if he did not want you to marry Daisy, he would not have allowed her to be here. For my part I like him, and did not find him so very grim. He showed me his books, instruments, and when I left, hoped he should see me again."

"That is more than he ever did for any one," I said astonished; "Kate, you have made a conquest."

She looked handsome enough for it, and so Cornelius told her. She laughed at us, and bade us mind our own business. More she did not say then, but it came out a few days later that Mr. Thornton had told her the sooner Cornelius and I were married, the better he would be pleased. As this was precisely the feeling of Cornelius and Kate, I yielded.

We were married very quietly one sunny summer morning; then we bade Kate adieu for a fortnight, which we were to spend in Rock Cottage. It was her darling wish that we should go there, and we gratified her.

I remember well how strangely I felt when we reached my old home, now ours. It was not a year since I had left it, but it seemed ages. Everywhere we found touching tokens of the recent presence of Kate, and of her thoughtful tenderness. The sun was setting; we watched it from the beach beneath the pine trees, and never—so at least it seemed to me, and it cannot have been a fancy of mine, for Cornelius said so too—never had the sun set more gloriously, or the sea looked more beautiful than on this the eve of our marriage day.

As in the visions of olden prophets, the cloudless heavens before us seemed to open, revealing depths of blazing light with long golden rays that, as they departed from the sun, grew paler until they faded into the deep evening blue. From the cliff whence we looked down, we saw the heavy billows of the sea rolling away towards the far horizon, and touched with a changing light that seemed both alive and burning.

The glowing heavens were still; the voice of the ocean was murmuring and low; the land breeze was silent, and thus, looking at the two vast solitudes of sea and sky, we forgot earth beneath and behind us, as we sometimes forget life in the contemplation of eternity. I do not think I ever felt existence less than I did then, though so near to him whom I yet loved with every faculty of my being. But there is in true happiness something sublime that raises the soul far beyond mortality.

If I felt anything in that hour, it was that the glorious ideal world which lay before us was not more lovely or more ideal than the new world which I now entered; and where in this life and the next, I hoped to dwell for ever with Cornelius. For to those who love purely, love is its own world, its own solitude, its own new created Eden, green and pleasant where they abide, a new born Adam and Eve, without the temptation and the fall, their hearts filled with tenderness, their souls overflowing with adoration.

I know at least that sitting thus by Cornelius, my hand in his, my eyes like his watching that broad, tranquil sun slowly going down to rest, I had never felt more deeply religious, more conscious of God in my heart. As the bright disk dipped in the long line of the cool looking sea, then sank rapidly, and at length vanished beneath the deep wave; as dark clouds advanced across the sky, and the beautiful

vision was lost in the purple shadows of coming night, I felt that the earthly sun might set, but that within me dwelt the peace and loveliness of an eternal dawn.

When the chill sea breeze began to sweep down the coast, Cornelius made me rise. Through the green garden we walked back to the house. He stopped before the stone steps and said:

"It was here I found you lying eight years ago: do you remember, Daisy?"

"Yes, Cornelius, I was very wretched, very lonely when you came and sat down by me, took me in your arms, kissed me and consoled me."

"God bless you for having remembered it so long!"

"As if it were likely I should forget it! Cornelius, I do not think we have ever sat on those stone steps since that day; let us do so now, and talk of all that has happened since then."

We did so. It was the pure twilight hour, when earth and all she bears lie dark and sleeping beneath a vast clear sky, to which light seems to have retreated. For awhile we talked, but of its own accord speech soon sunk into silence. What we said I do not remember now; but I still remember how solemnly beautiful was that eve; how the calm moon rose behind the house and looked down at us from her lonely place above; how, as the sky darkened, it grew thick with stars; how the pine-trees bowed to the sea-breeze at the end of the garden; how the waves broke at the foot of the cliff with a low dash, pleasant to the ears, and how as I sat by Cornelius I felt I was no longer a poor orphan child, but a happy and loved woman; no longer an object of pity and sorrow, but the proud companion of his life, and the chosen wife of his heart.

Home, realm of woman, pleasant shelter of her youth, gentle dominion granted to her life, I can say that thou hast yielded me some of the purest and deepest joys.

Before leaving Leigh, we saw my grandfather, who received us kindly, and bade Cornelius be fond of me. We have now been married three years. He declares he is more in love with me than on the first day, and I believe it. Kate says "nonsense!" but I know well enough she likes us to be so fond of one another. She, too, is very happy; for though she agrees with me that Cornelius has not yet obtained the position he deserves to have, yet, as he is universally acknowledged to be a genuine artist, as his pictures are prized, and sell well, she assures me that, spite of professional jealousy, he will one day be held second to none. I tell her I am sure of it. Cornelius laughs at us, and thinks the very same thing in his heart, for he works harder, and, though he will not confess it, is more eager and ambitious than ever.

We are, as we have always been, a good deal together; for we have no children to divert my attention. This is the only sore point with Kate. It seems such a thing never happened before in the O'Reilly family, and she cannot make it out. But Cornelius and I do not mind; we are young, happy and leave the future to Providence.

It was last year, when Cornelius went to Spain—for he did go after all, but only for a few months, and I did not like to leave Kate, who seemed to me rather unwell—that I began this narrative. I had just received a letter from William Murray, who wrote to tell me that he was married and happy. My past life seemed to rise before me; so, to recal it, and divert my mind from dwelling too much on the absence of Cornelius, I one evening wrote a few pages, to which, day after day, more were added.

Oh my husband! my handsome, gifted husband! I love you much, very much, more than I shall ever tell you, and far more than I have dared to write even here; but if you should some day chance to see that which I never meant to be seen, know, at least, that to your wife, there never was a pleasanter task than thus to record the story of her long love for you, as child, girl, and woman.

THE END.

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Typographical errors silently corrected:

Volume 1

Chapter 5 : =you no lessons.= replaced by =you no lessons?=

Chapter 11 : =in a lone tone= replaced by =in a low one=

Chapter 11 : =was it not Mr. O'Reilly= replaced by =was it not, Mr. O'Reilly=

Chapter 13 : =Well, what is it?= replaced by ="Well, what is it?=

Chapter 14 : =examined now.= replaced by =examined now?=

Chapter 15 : =it I saw= replaced by =if I saw=

Chapter 19 : =rocks at Leigh,= replaced by =rocks at Leigh,"=

Volume 2

Chapter 1 : =hastily checked,= replaced by =hastily checked.=

Chapter 2 : =knew me not."= replaced by =knew me not.=

Chapter 6 : =I forget it= replaced by =I forgot it=

Chapter 6 : =thing. I am satisfied= replaced by =thing, I am satisfied=

Chapter 6 : =creature you are?= replaced by =creature you are!=

Chapter 6 : =with that you know= replaced by =with that, you know=

Chapter 6 : =answering that question.= replaced by =answering that question?=

Chapter 9 : =bouquet, I meant= replaced by =bouquet I meant=

Chapter 9 : =recal= replaced by =recall=

Chapter 10 : =There reigns= replaced by ='There reigns=

Chapter 10 : =do you advise.= replaced by =do you advise?=

Chapter 10 : =Yung-Frau= replaced by =Jung-Frau=

Chapter 12 : =trumbler= replaced by =tumbler=

Chapter 12 : =You don't Cornelius= replaced by =You don't, Cornelius=

Chapter 12 : =next day, day Cornelius= replaced by =next day, and Cornelius=

Chapter 13 : =not an artists= replaced by =not an artist=

Chapter 16 : =about Nothing?'"= replaced by =about Nothing'?"=

Chapter 16 : =poor you see= replaced by =poor, you see=

Chapter 17 : =Girl Reading!'= replaced by =Girl Reading'!=

Chapter 18 : ="Ashamed= replaced by =Ashamed=

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