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Author: Mrs. Grey

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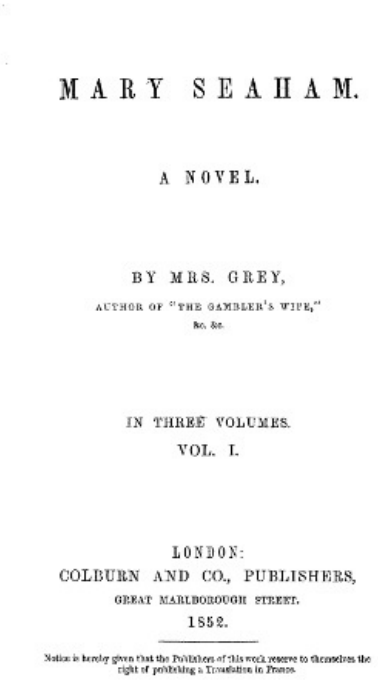

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A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GREY,

AUTHOR OF "THE GAMBLER'S WIFE,"
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

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MARY SEAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

She left her home with a bounding heart,
For the world was all before her;
And felt it scarce a pain to part,
Such sun-bright beams came o'er her.

A. A. WATTS.

The wedding feast was cleared away, the guests had departed, and the last joy peal with its varied chimes, and crashing cannons from the old church tower was sounding musically through the mountain valley.

Over the whole aspect of Glan Pennant was spread that air of almost desolation, ever, more or less, succeeding an event such as had, this day, been celebrated there.

The very servants, to whose festive entertainment the evening had been appropriated, whether able to carry out to the required extent the kind intentions of their employers, or reduced by the fatigue and excitement of the day to the condition of that establishment, Dickens has so ably and ludicrously described, at all events suffered not their notes of mirth to escape the precincts of their apartments. All was hushed as the sleeping beauty's palace in the superior portion of the mansion; and if not quite deserted, to one entering the house at the moment of this opening chapter, it might almost have seemed that the same spell had been cast over its inmates.

Another moment, however, and there could have been distinguished the quick opening and shutting of an upper chamber door, and soon down the staircase, a young lady, divested of all bridal costume, in every day walking attire, might be seen to glide, and passing along the oaken passage to the door of the library, enter that apartment. A profound stillness reigned therein, though the room was not devoid of living occupants.

An old gentleman had quietly yielded himself to the indulgence of an evening nap in a maroon-coloured leather chair; whilst on an opposite sofa an elderly lady had, it seemed, been overtaken by the same necessity, whilst to the murmur of the summer breeze she contemplated the satisfactory completion of the day's great event, over the large piece of worsted work, in which, as it now lay idly at her feet, a little terrier dog had made its nest.

Mary Seaham looked upon this scene and smiled to herself. Her quiet entrance had not disturbed the sleepers. It amused her perhaps for a moment to witness a placid forgetfulness, affording so strong a contrast to the eager bustle which had but so lately subsided.

But her smile, not exactly sorrowful, was gentle and subdued, harmonising entirely with the spirit of her movements, as well as with the whole character of the scene in which she seemed to play so solitary a part.

The smile, however, was soon chased by a slight sigh, and softly calling the little dog, who roused and shook itself at her summons, springing with alacrity to obey her call, she passed through the open window, and with a semblance of relief proceeded across the lawn, her spirit appearing to revive with every elastic step she took, beneath the influence of the fresh and open air.

The clock struck eight as she passed from the grounds, and skirting the village made her way through a romantic dell, where a rapid stream issued from a thick wood, turning the rustic mill situated at its base.

Slowly she ascended a precipitous hill leading to a heath-clad common. Although she had avoided the actual village, where rude attempts at wedding decorations would have greeted her on every side, and her appearance have attracted more notice than would have been agreeable to her feelings just then, she did not escape, during her route, some stray encounters; and many a curtsey, smile, and kindly word, were bestowed upon her, by the good, simple-hearted people she met. Whilst none the less did she prize this greeting, because with the congratulatory expression

of their countenances, something of pitying condolence might be visible.

The poor and humble however devoid they may be of sentiment, have often readier sympathy for the natural feeling of humanity, than we are apt to give them credit, and they could compassionate the poor young lady who had acted bridesmaid to a last unmarried sister—seen that sister carried far from home—and she left behind all alone with the old people.

Perhaps their compassion might extend almost further than the real state of the case required.

It is very sad indeed to be left behind under similar circumstances. The void, the blank, at first experienced, is perhaps one of the most painful of all mental affections that can be sustained. But I think there is something almost more melancholy, in what is sooner or later sure to follow, in more or less degree according to the tone of men's minds or the circumstances of their position—namely, when the aching void begins imperceptibly to assuage, the blank to fill up, and we cease to miss, or with difficulty realize the consciousness of our bereavement; when the strong realities and intimate associations of years seem, as by one magic touch, obliterated, and we would fain recall even the haunting shadows of the past, to assure us that such things have been.

"We cannot paint to memory's eye
The scene, the glance we dearest love,
Unchanged themselves, in us they die,
Or faint and false their shadows prove."

But Mary Seaham was not to be subjected to any of the latter contingencies. She, also was to depart on the morrow from the home of many years, and it is to contemplate scenes which for a long time she may not look upon again, that we find her hastening.

The history of Mary Seaham's present position was this: She was an orphan, and till the return of a brother from the colonies, where he had gone to examine into the state of some very important family property; she was thrown, (particularly since the event celebrated that morning) to a certain extent, alone upon the world. Even had she desired to linger in her deserted home, the privilege was denied her. Circumstances rendering it expedient that Glan Pennant should continue to be let until the final settlement of her brother's affairs, and the Great uncle and aunt who had hitherto rented the place from their nephew, and at the same time filled the office of affectionate guardians to their unmarried nieces, now in their old age, becoming desirous of being established more among their kindred and acquaintances, than in this beautiful but distant, and out of the way country.

They were shortly to leave Wales and settle in London, with an only daughter, who had lost her husband, and lately returned from India, with her children.

The offer had been kindly made to Mary, to make her home with these relations under this new arrangement; but being a stranger to her Indian cousins, together with other motives for its rejection, she declined the proffer, at least for the present, and preferred accepting an invitation to spend the rest of the summer with another cousin and his wife in ——shire, although these relations, except from early associations, which drew her towards them with interest and affection, might be said to be almost equally unknown to her; thus her future prospects, were but of a very dim and uncertain nature.

But Mary Seaham did not take this much to heart. She was not of an age or character, nor did she possess experience sufficient, to feel any great weight of depression on this score.

The melancholy she now felt was rather of the soft, tender nature from which, like the early blossom beneath the influence of the mild spring air, her soul seemed struggling forth with hope and longing towards the uncertain future.

Although now one and twenty, her life had been, in its outward course, so calm and circumscribed, within the current of home interests, and domestic affections; so gently and gradually had the home circle broken up around her, link by link falling away, till she scarcely felt the influence of the change, that it was with confiding pleasure rather than any anxious care, or restless misgiving, she contemplated an entrance upon a changed sphere of action, never doubting but that she should find love and affection, such as she had ever been accustomed to receive, in all those professing friends who now came forward with proffered assistance in her time of need.

"In every heart a home, in every home a heaven."

In the warm-hearted cousin she remembered of old, one in whom she might repose trust and confidence, as in a brother, and in his beautiful and engaging wife the truth and sympathy of a sister.

Seated, therefore, upon the heathy common, there was more of pleasant dreaminess than of regretful sadness influencing her spirit, as her eyes wandered over the prospect spread before her with the attention of one, who would fain engrave each familiar feature on her memory, and bear away therein, a true and vivid picture of their beauties.

The pretty valley we have described lay immediately at her feet, with the woods beyond, amongst which proudly rose the mansion of Plas Glyn, of which her sister, by her marriage that morning with Sir Hugh Morgan, had become the youthful mistress; and a faint peculiar smile played on Mary's countenance as she sat there in her solitary freedom, and dwelt for a moment on this feature of the landscape.

But it had passed away, when her glance turned towards the spot where stood her own more modest, but still fairer home, Glan Pennant—then upwards, where the mountain ridges towering one above the other, were now eradiated by one of those sunsets of rare magnificence, which nature seemed to have called forth on this occasion, as a farewell token of affection to her meek and loving votary.

CHAPTER II.

Once, and once only, let me speak
Of all that I have felt for years;
You read it not upon my cheek,
You dreamed not of it in my tears.

L. E. L.

Whilst thus absorbed, a step whose sound the soft carpeting on which it trod had not permitted her to hear, approached near to where Mary Seaham sat, and a voice broke upon her reverie.

She started a little, but perceiving who was the intruder, with a smile and only a slightly heightened colour, she arose and frankly extended her hand with the gentle exclamation: "Mr. Temple!"

The person thus addressed was a man in the full vigour of his days; of tall commanding figure, whose pale and noble countenance seemed to wear less marks of worldly care than of high and chastened thought.

His temples were already partly bare, but the rest of his thick dark curly hair bespoke the strength of manhood, and his eye, full and eloquent, beamed with a spirit and enthusiasm which might have become a martyr. The black dress he wore, seemed to denote his clerical profession.

"I shall not apologize so much as I should otherwise have done, for thus abruptly disturbing you Miss Seaham;" were the words of his rich full-toned voice, "concluding as I do, that this evening, your meditations must naturally be of somewhat melancholy a nature."

"About an hour ago you would have been but too right in your conclusion, Mr. Temple;" responded the young lady. "The bustle of the day over, the dreary feeling of being 'the last left,' was stealing over me to a most insupportable degree, but since I quitted the deserted house, the influence of this lovely evening has worked most effectually on my feelings. In the open air I think this is generally the case," she added. "However, the sense of isolation and separation, may oppress one in the confinement of the house. Here, one can feel at least that the same blue sky," and Miss Seaham as she spoke lifted up her clear serene eyes to the heaven above, "over-canopies us all. I have," she continued with simple feeling, and a slight suffusion of the eye-lid: "great need for my comfort, to realise that perhaps rather vague idea, for we shall be now indeed a most scattered family. Arthur in America, Jane and Selina in India, Alice in Scotland and Aggy so soon to be in Italy."

She paused, her voice slightly faltering, as if the idea of this domestic dispersion, when thus recorded in words, had brought the truth before her with too much painful reality.

"And you, Miss Seaham," interrogated Mr. Temple, a slight tremor also perceptible in his deep clear voice, and which a kind and friendly sympathy in the young lady's sadness might naturally have occasioned, "do you really desert Glan Pennant so very soon?"

"Yes, Mr. Temple, and had I not relied upon your promise of calling this evening, I should have sent to let you know. I could not have gone without seeing you again. I leave Glan Pennant to-morrow morning. I travel part of the way with the Merediths, and some change in their arrangements make this necessary. I own that it is a relief that I am not to linger any longer here, though this speedy departure has come upon me rather suddenly."

She looked up, as her companion did not immediately reply to this intelligence, and then he inquired seriously if she still kept to her resolution of visiting her relations in ——shire.

She answered in the affirmative.

"It is a long time since your cousin, Mr. de Burgh, and I have met," he, after some little cautious consideration, remarked. "We were schoolfellows and college friends. Our lives have taken a different turn since then, and I suppose our tastes and manners of life likewise. At least I understand"—slightly hesitating—"that he has married a gay wife, and, with his large fortune, I

suppose, acts up to his circumstances and position; but in days of old, I remember Louis de Burgh to have been a man of quieter tastes and habits than his friend Edward Temple."

"I have seen nothing of my cousin since his marriage, nor of his wife either. But their letters are the kindest and most affectionate, as you may suppose," she added, "by my having accepted their invitation to pay them so long a visit."

"Ah, I once knew a great deal of some members of her family," Mr. Temple continued, speaking, not so much in the way of common conversation, than as if moved by some under current of deep and serious interest. "And you think," he added, "that you shall find your cousin's house agreeable?"

There was something dubious in his tone of voice, as he uttered that last enquiry, and Miss Seaham smiled.

"You think perhaps I shall find it too gay to suit my quiet fancy," she said, again raising her eyes to her companion's face.

He looked down upon her, and after a short pause answered with simple earnestness.

"I only think that we shall miss you sadly here."

Miss Seaham shook her head.

"I fear not, Mr. Temple," she said ingenuously; "not half so much, at least, as Selina and Aggy must be missed. I am ashamed of myself, when I think how little I have done, during the last five or six years, in comparison with my more active sisters—how I have selfishly dreamt away my time, whilst they—and Aggy, my younger sister too—have been continually going about doing good. Truly like Wordsworth's old Mathew, I have been, I am afraid,

"'An idler in the land,
Contented if I might enjoy what others understand.'

No, Mr. Temple, I fear you must have found me a very incompetent disciple, and only flatter me when you talk of missing my services."

Mr. Temple smiled.

"I did not indeed speak professionally when I talked of missing you," he rejoined in a low, earnest tone, "though I by no means subscribe to your self-accusations, on the score of uselessness; besides, there are such things as moral influences," he added more seriously, with no assumption of superiority, but almost reverence in his tone and manner, "and in such, I am sure, as more than one can testify, you have not been found wanting, whilst at the same time remember, *Mary* more than Martha found acceptance in the eyes of Him they equally desired to serve."

"Alas! alas! Mr. Temple, if you do not flatter, you make me deeply ashamed, and I fear for the first time," she added with a degree of playful reproach, "I must set you down as an unfaithful pastor—speaking false-praise, when you should be sending me away with serious exhortation and advice as to my future course of life." The colour mounted in sudden force to Mr. Temple's brow.

"Then, God forgive me my unfaithfulness if so it be!" he murmured with strong emotion, "for I do indeed confess, that never did I feel less competent to act the part of Mentor, than I do now, standing before you this evening, only trembling to be awakened from a dream I fear as futile—though not less sweet—as any day-dream which may have coloured the pure light of your existence, Miss Seaham."

She looked up. Startled by the thrilling earnestness of the speaker's voice, and still more struck by the expression of the countenance bent down upon her, Mary Seaham withdrew her gaze in some confusion the crimson blood suffusing her temples, and with averted countenance, she said, with some hurried embarrassment, whilst striving to recover from the sort of alarm her feelings had undergone, yet scarcely conscious of what she uttered.

"I am not sorry then to find that *you* also can indulge in the weakness of a day-dream!"

But the awkward pause then followed—for Mr. Temple was silent after she made this remark and beginning to fear lest she might have offended him by its apparent lightness, she turned a timid glance towards her companion.

He was stooping down caressing the little dog by her side, not looking offended, but grave and abstracted.

She was reassured, and regarding him as thus he continued, seemingly absorbed in his own particular thoughts—his fine, strikingly handsome and intellectual countenance on which seemed to have been originally impressed the stamp of talent of a higher order, and fitted for a wider field of action than the little theatre in which they at present found employment—the feelings to which this observation gave rise, moved her to express herself in accents not devoid of gentle, admiring interest, when she said:

"Mr. Temple, do not think me impertinent, but I sometimes wonder that you should linger so long in this remote, retired spot, where all the good that it is in your power to effect is necessarily of so limited and contracted a nature. Indeed," with a blush and a smile at her own temerity, "I shall feel almost a melancholy regret in thinking of you, when I am away, hiding your talents, wasting

your powers amongst the mountain heather, or on the humble inhabitants of this obscure, though lovely valley."

> "'What dost thou here, frail wanderer from thy task?
> Why hast thou left those few sheep in the wild?'"

quoted Mr. Temple, a look of pleasure nevertheless lighting up the face which he again raised towards her.

"But a self-imposed task may not yours at present be?" persisted Miss Seaham.

He shook his head, but with the same smile continued:

"I never thought to have found *you* my tempter; but now tell me, whither would you direct me?"

"*I* direct you! oh, Mr. Temple, you speak ironically; but surely, there must be ways and means, by which one like you, may more effectually use your powers to the glory of God and the good of mankind, than by remaining in this secluded place, amongst people, who for the most part, do not even comprehend your language. If I understood aright, you only retired for a time, when some sorrow or trouble came upon you. I am very bold, to-night;" breaking off in some confusion, for she perceived a deep palor overspread his countenance, "but, I hope, now that there is such an excellent man as Mr. Lloyd to fulfil your voluntary duties, amongst the poor people of this dear place, you will not doom yourself longer to such—I could almost fancy it—ungenial retirement."

"Where should I go?" he sadly said, but with an earnestness which again surprised and startled Mary, whilst he fixed his eyes on her face as if on her answer his future course depended.

"Where?" she repeated with embarrassment, "you ask *me*, who know so little of the world, *you* who know so much?"

"I do indeed," he replied, with something of bitterness in his tone, "and my experience, my dear Miss Seaham, has not made that text to me so difficult of fulfilment which says, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.' But you will think that I speak to-night more like a disappointed melancholy misanthrope than a minister of that Word, which breathes forth the spirit of peace and goodwill towards men; nor will you think it kind that I thus unfavourably impress you concerning this world, with which, it may be said, you, almost for the first time, are about to make acquaintance."

"*I*, Mr. Temple? oh no, indeed. I look upon myself as far too insignificant a being, one destined to play far too insignificant a part on that great stage to fear much its enmity."

"Or its friendship?" Mr. Temple responded interrogatively; "for we must remember, 'that the *friendship* of the world is enmity with God!'"

He spoke these words with a certain sad solemnity.

Miss Seaham listened to the exhortation in meek, submissive silence, though to look upon her calm, sweet, holy countenance one might have thought the sin of worldliness could scarcely cleave to the soul which seemed reflected thereupon.

A silence again succeeded, broken by Mr. Temple.

"Miss Seaham, do you think you shall find the life in this same great world, so suited to your tastes as that which has glided by so peacefully in this quiet sphere of action?"

"Perhaps not," she answered; but with frank simplicity quickly added, "yet I cannot but fancy I might enjoy this all the more if I were permitted to return from having been parted from my old pursuits for a little time—from having seen more, and entered upon a more varied scene of existence."

"This is but a natural fancy," Mr. Temple resumed, "but the trial is a dangerous one. Of thousands who so return, like soldiers from the battle field, to their peaceful homes, there are few, I fear, who come not back to find their former existence of innocent enjoyment blighted by the wounds and bruises wherewith their hearts and spirits have been inflicted during that sorrowful campaign. They return—may be to live resigned, but seldom happy—happy at least with that same peaceful joy which was before their portion, they come either thus to pass their days or—die."

Mr. Temple paused for a moment, evidently to command the agitation of his voice; he then resumed:

"And, alas! Miss Seaham, it is not always the least proud and unconspicuous objects of assault who are thus brought low—made the mark of this same, blasting world. Not the eagle only, but the dove, is pierced and wounded by the archer. No, the purest and holiest must, more or less, sooner or later, if not amalgamated in its sin, at least be stricken by its sorrow and its evil—I should rather say its evil men 'the men of this world.' Oh, Miss Seaham, beware of such men."

He spoke again with an earnestness so bordering on enthusiastic excitement that Miss Seaham, though almost inclined to treat with playful lightness a warning which might have seemed to exceed the occasion, or her case, suddenly felt the words thrill through her heart with that peculiar feeling, which the superstitious, or sometimes even those who deride such significance, are apt to interpret as a *presentiment*. An involuntary shudder ran through her frame, and "the

evening fair as ever," began to her altered sensation to turn chill and dusk.

"You forget," she murmured, in faltering, almost reproachful accents, "you forget, Mr. Temple, while you thus, in kindness I am sure, diminish any attractive idea I may have formed of society, for it is, I conclude, the society of the world, not anything appertaining to the good and beautiful world itself, which can prove so hurtful and invidious, you forget that I do not voluntarily seek its dangers, or rush upon its temptations, but that I am in a manner thrown upon its mercy. It is not permitted me to stay here. My sister in Scotland would gladly receive me, but she is not entirely mistress of her own actions, and her large family would make such an addition inconvenient. Is it not then natural that thus situated I should, until the return of my brother, accept the pressing invitations of such kindly disposed relations as my cousin and his wife, though their position and circumstances may involve me in a wider and perhaps gayer circle of acquaintance than that into which I have hitherto been thrown."

She spoke in a half pleading tone, and with almost tearful eyes, for the urgent manner in which the subject under discussion had been pressed upon her consideration, began gradually to work upon her mind in the manner we have described.

Mr. Temple listened with eager attention to her words, bending down his head as if to prevent his losing one syllable of their significance, and then when she ceased to speak, his countenance brightened hopefully.

"But were your circumstances—your position the only motive which compelled you to such a resource?" he earnestly rejoined, "and if a hand were stretched forth would you repulse it—a hand which would fain withhold one too pure and good for a soil uncongenial to qualities of that nature, to all that is pure, lovely and of good report. Oh, Miss Seaham, would you, will you reject it when it *is* extended, and with it a heart trembling for the answer which is to proceed from your lips. Yes!" he hurried on as if with the nervous desire to postpone what he so eagerly awaited; "this is as you say, a world most good and beautiful. The glories of the Great Jehovah still gild this ruined earth. Yes, beautiful it is—beyond even what this fair country, wild and lovely of its kind, as it may be, can convey an idea to those whose experience extends no farther. Yes, it is most right and natural that you, with a mind above the common range, should thirst for such enjoyment; and oh! what happiness—what privilege to be the means of ministering to the desire—to be your guide—your guardian dear Miss Seaham, to regions whose charms even your refined imaginative mind is scarce able to conceive. But what do I say? My fears were indeed too well grounded, my dream dissolves apace, if I read aright the expression of that calm astonished countenance!"

CHAPTER III.

And so, beloved one—life's all—farewell!
Still by my hearth thy gentle shade shall dwell,
Still shall my soul, where night the dreariest seem,
Fly back to thee, O soft—O vanish'd dream!

THE NEW TIMON.

What indeed had Mary heard—what did she understand?

Mr. Temple the great, the excellent—he who for the many years he had made that retired neighbourhood his abode, had shone with such bright and exalted lustre among his little circle of acquaintances, inspiring in the minds of all, especially of those best able to appreciate his superiority, the family of Glan Pennant—admiring regard almost approaching to veneration, who to their eyes appeared more to approach in character as far as mortal may without impiety be said to approach, to that Great Being—Him who made himself of no reputation, stooped from his high estate—humbled himself for the sake of the poor and ignorant of mankind—was it he who thus addressed her?

From what could be gleaned gradually from his discourse, by those with whom he became most intimately associated, a man of high family and connections, he had come unknown and lonely, like one dropped suddenly from some higher sphere, divested of all proud pretensions, to act as a voluntary and unostentatious minister to the wants and necessities both temporal and spiritual of the poor and needy, whilst at the same time affecting no misanthropic and reclusive habits, though a certain impenetrable mystery ever hung over his former history, he did not shrink from mixing in social intercourse with the very few families of which the retired neighbourhood could boast, and more particularly with the inmates of Glan Pennant; becoming a zealous assistant in all the charitable pursuits and interests in which the young sisters of the house had engaged with such active and untiring interest, as long as they remain unmarried.

Mary Seaham, perhaps, had been the one whose character and pursuits had thrown her less than any of the family in the way of similar association, and therefore might have been the least prepared to find she had made so strong an impression on Mr. Temple's feelings, as his present

discourse discovered her to have done. But it was not so much surprise, nor on the other hand, was it so much an overwhelming sense of the honour done her by such distinction, as a feeling almost approaching to self-disgust—shame; which for some moments kept her silently rooted to the spot with that expression of countenance, her trembling lover had interpreted as cold astonishment, excited by his proposal.

Ashamed and sorrowful she felt, as one might be to whom some guardian angel—some higher spirit from another sphere—had stooped to offer himself as guide and guardian through this earthly pilgrimage, and she the favoured mortal had turned away, despising the blessed boon thus proffered, saying:

"I will go forth and try whether I cannot walk amidst the dangerous paths alone, or find at least some other Lord to have dominion over me."

Or, as the self convicted Israelite, who seeing the heavenly manna scattered round his path, felt his heart still turn away, after the flesh pots of Egypt.

This we mean to say was the light in which Mary was inclined to view her feelings on this occasion. No one else, perhaps, would have judged them so harshly, seeing in the first place, that the very exalted superiority which in her own eyes made her heart's rejection of Mr. Temple's suit, a reflection on her taste and feelings, would in the opinion of others have rendered it but the more excusable; whilst in the estimation of those possessed of less pure and simple enthusiasm than the lady of his love, the possibility of such high strained excellence existing in the life and character of a man of mortal mould, might have been strongly doubted.

But as it was, Mary Seaham now with downcast eyes and faltering tongue, gave answer when to answer she was able, in such sort as might have suited more an ashamed and humble penitent, confessing to a superior being a sin or an infirmity, than a woman free to choose or to reject, yielding her gentle death blow to a trembling lover's hopes.

"Mr. Temple, how humbling to my feelings is the opinion you must have so flatteringly formed of me, ere you could have addressed me thus; an opinion, alas! how little accordant with reality. I fear, if you read my mind, my character aright, you would start aside at the unexpected fact of discovering worldly tastes and feelings, lying hidden there, dormant only, perhaps, from want of time and opportunity for bringing them forth. What, for instance, would you say, were I to acknowledge that it is not so much the world—in the sense you have described it, with which I am desirous of becoming acquainted, as that very world which you, in your well grounded experience, so much contemn. I mean," she added the colour tinging her cheek, "I mean its society."

"Society!" Mr. Temple repeated, looking down upon her with a sad, but mild and tender expression; "alas! can it indeed be so? your pure hopes and aspirations, do they really tend in that direction?"

"I had always fancied," she pursued apologetically, "that much of good and beautiful—much worthy of interest and admiration, might be met with in that last great work of the Almighty; and I may be said to have comparatively seen as little of that branch of the creation in its varied characters as of any other," she added with a smile.

"And you go forth," he responded, in the same tone and manner as before, "with your unsophisticated imaginings—your poetic fancy—prepared to find this so called society peopled with the beings you have pictured in your dreams?"

"No, no! not quite that," she rejoined with returning animation; "but, Mr. Temple, do you really consider the whole circle of society individually as well as collectively, in so dark a light? Are there no flowers amongst the thorns—no wheat among the tares?"

"Yes truly," he responded with a still more sorrowful and earnest interest, as he marked the glowing cheek and unwonted excitement of the loved enquirer; "but the tares unhappily in that cursed ground—cursed for man's guilty sake!—too much preponderate, and those springing up, choke the wheat till even *they* become unfruitful. But, oh, Miss Seaham! am I answered now? The words, the acknowledgement you have just made are they the vehicles you have chosen, by which to convey your final rejection of that which I have dared to proffer, for if not, here is a hand and heart as ready and willing—if possible ten times more eager—to be allowed to guide and guard you through those dangerous paths you desire to tread. Think not that I will shrink from turning back even to that world I have so condemned; if it be to walk by your side—to protect—to guide—to guard you there. Yes," he murmured to himself, whilst some strong emotion evidently struggled for mastery, as the idea suggested itself to his imagination, and again his cheek became deadly pale. "For her sweet sake—with such an angel by my side—what could I not brave, what could I not encounter? Even thou, mine enemy! thou and thine insidious unnatural machinations!"

Then recollecting himself, Mr. Temple turned in some alarm, lest his half muttered soliloquy might have created unpleasant surprise in the mind of her he was so anxious to propitiate. But his fear was groundless. Mary Seaham, too much engrossed by the more apparent subject of his discourse, so completely absorbing her attention, heeded not the mysterious tendency of these latter words, and when recollecting himself, he again paused in breathless enquiry; she could only shake her head, and with averted face and downcast eyes, sorrowfully confess her unworthiness, and her rejection of such distinguished favour as had been shown her by his offer.

Then in other words more clear and explicit, she faltered forth sentences which tended slowly and sadly to convey with certainty to Mr. Temple's mind—and what to him were the others feelings, bowing down the young girl's heart before him as before a superior being—that the one feeling he required was wanting there—the love which alone could crown his hopes—induce her to become his wife. A dreary pause ensued. It might have seemed that even nature sympathized in the disappointment of one human heart, so hushed and still was all around.

The silence was broken by Mr. Temple. His voice had recovered the wonted calm of its low, deep accents as thus he spoke:

"And in this world of imagination—this dream-land sphere which you own, alas! to have been no coral strands or balmy groves of the natural world, but the glittering shores, the giddy mazes of society—there wherein you have long in fancy loved to wander, and now in the might of your innocence and purity of heart, so confidently and gladly haste to enter and prove their reality. Tell me, amongst all the features of your glowing picture, has your mind formed for itself hopes and aspirations, which have in any degree stood in the way of those which I had dared to entertain? Have your dreams carried you thus far, or do you go into the world, with—at least on this one point, your heart and feelings, I should rather say—your fancy, disengaged?"

He did not speak as if in mockery and disdain to a weak and romantic girl, but with the serious delicate kindness of one whose very skill and knowledge in diving amongst the fantastic images of the human heart, is all the less moved to scorn or derision at the conception of its hidden enormities.

Mary Seaham started. The crimson blood suffused her pure pale cheek. She shrank from the enquiring scrutiny of that dark eye bent down upon her, as if she felt that it had power to draw forth into light and substance every indistinct shadow, each vague imagination which had ever floated across her mind, a power too, which it was not possible by commonplace subterfuge to evade. Something also in that dark eye strangely affected her at that moment; the impression it produced, connecting itself in an indescribable manner, with the very dream and fancy, Mr. Temple's searching words had stirred up within her conscience.

But the sense and spirit of her soul's pure innocence soon came to Mary Seaham's relief. She shook off the morbid consciousness, and with ingenuous courage, turning with bright open face to her inquirer, replied:

"That I have had many a foolish dream, Mr. Temple, connected with the world of my imagination, I will not attempt to deny, but to the dignity of hopes and aspirations, I assure you, they have never yet arrived—never attained to such weight and importance in my mind, as would lead me to the folly or madness of allowing them to interfere with the substantial good—the real blessing which have this evening been laid before my unworthy acceptance, and which—"

"Enough!" interrupted Mr. Temple, as if to save himself, and her, the pain of further explanation as to the motives which had forbidden the acceptance of those acknowledged blessings.

"Enough dear Miss Seaham. Dream on, and never may you wake from the pure and blameless dreams, which, whatever be their nature, can alone have taken rise in such a soul. Never may you awake from these to dark sorrowful reality. But should you so awake, and find those dreams dispersed, and Providence should again place us in each other's paths, remember.... But alas!" he broke off abruptly, "of what avail such imaginings? May God preserve you in this evil world! is all that remains for me to pray."

He wrung her hand in strong emotion, and when Mary Seaham raised her tearful eyes to thank him for his fervent vow, Mr. Temple had turned away, his tall form was already to be seen slowly disappearing across the darkening common—and this long and singular interview was at an end.

Mary in her turn hurried home, and all that had passed seemed to her recollection but as a bewildering dream, when she found herself once more in the quiet library, officiating for the last time at the tea table, which with the hissing urn, she found standing ready awaiting her return.

CHAPTER IV.

They grew in beauty, side by side,
They filled one house with glee,
Their *homes* are severed far and wide,
By mount and stream and sea.

HEMANS.

Pure girl! thy tender presence
Has an unconscious ministry to me,
And near thee, in the night that shrouds me still,
My darkness is forgotten.

WILLIS.

The good old couple, awakened from their refreshing slumber, had already sent a servant in search of their missing niece, wondering a little what could keep her out so late upon this last night at Glan Pennant, after a day of such fatigue, and the eve of her long journey.

But Mary told them that she had been detained talking to Mr. Temple, whom she had met upon the hill, and they were glad that she had seen him, little devising all that parting interview had comprised, or they might not have been quite so well satisfied with the part their niece had taken therein. For it being their chief anxiety to see this last remaining niece well settled in life, now that the critical and uncertain circumstances of the family affairs rendered some secure provision so desirable, and their matter of fact perceptions leading them to regard Mr. Temple in the light of a very exemplary clergyman, of comfortable means—and judging from his gentlemanly carriage and superior conversation, more than from his own profession, or other guarantee—of good family and birth; they had often thought, and even ventured to express in words to each other, what a good husband he would make for their quiet Mary, whose tastes and qualities—judging from the same simple-minded rule of observation, which never saw ought beyond the surface of appearance or boundary of circumstances—the good old couple interpreted, were exactly those befitting her for the vocation to be thereby entailed upon her, namely, that of clergyman's wife, an inference which we have seen from our heroine's own confessions that evening, to have been by no means correctly drawn.

Mary Seaham's four sisters had been severally disposed of in marriage, since by the death of their father, the charge of the orphan daughters had devolved upon them. The eldest in every way—as the eldest daughter of a family is often seen to do—most to the entire approval and satisfaction of her friends.

The superior advantages of a girl's introduction into the world, under the care and superintendence of sensible and estimable parents, had distinguished her opening career above those of her other sisters, and she had been engaged before her father's death to Lord Everingham—whom she subsequently married—a nobleman of high worth and distinction, at this time holding a considerable post in India.

Alice, the second daughter, a few years after, became the wife of Mr. Gillespie, a Scotch lawyer, with whom she had become acquainted whilst visiting some friends in Scotland, and he being a widower, with children already provided for her care, to whose number she had duly added, her's had proved no sinecure undertaking. But laudably had she fulfilled the destiny appointed her, devoting herself in her still youthful years without a murmur or backward look of regret to the life of comparative drudgery which this choice of a husband had entailed upon her—a course of life to which sneerers may be ready to apply the slighting axiom of Iago,

> "To suckle fools and chronicle small beer;"

but which nevertheless, when thus accomplished, may be accounted one of the most honourable a woman can fulfil, the one perhaps best meriting that commendation which the faithful workers in this world's vineyard shall receive at the last day. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," &c., and though some might have fancied, at the time that Alice Seaham, with her refined tastes, and somewhat superior qualifications, was entering on a vocation she was ill fitted to sustain, either with pleasure or profit to herself or others, it surprised them to find how little these characteristics stood in the way of her usefulness, capability, or perfect contentment in the part she was called upon to act on this life's theatre—that part which devolves on the wife of a professional man, with an increasing family, and limited income. How far more usefully and happily employed for herself and others were those refined tastes, and those superior qualifications, though thus adapted, like the beautiful plants and products of the foreign climes, to the common uses and necessities of mankind, than if suffered to expand and expend themselves upon the leafless desert, in selfish, listless, idle inefficiency, often preying morbidly on their own resources for lack of legitimate exercise or healthful outlet—those very tastes and qualifications, proving oftener a curse and a reproach, than a blessing and an ornament to their possessor. For woman's strength and honour lie in her heart, in her affections, in the duties which from them devolve; if she lean upon her own understanding, trusts to the resources of her mind, or intellect, she leans on a broken reed, she makes for herself broken cisterns which can hold no water.

Selina Seaham, the third daughter, and the beauty of the family, only one year before the marriage celebrated on the day in question, consulted the inclinations of her own heart, rather than the prudent wishes of her friends, and gave her hand to an officer, who had immediately after left England to join his regiment in India with his bride; and then the two younger sisters had remained together at Glan Pennant without any seeming prospect of such speedy disseverment as had since occurred, till some months after, Sir Hugh Morgan, the great man of those parts, to the astonishment of all, proposed to the youngest Miss Seaham and was accepted; he being her senior by some five-and-twenty years. And though he had ever been on very intimate and friendly terms with the family, had not shown any tendency that way since the time, when, on the Seahams first coming to settle in the neighbourhood, after their father's death—Mr. Seaham having absented himself from Glan Pennant for some years, for the education of his daughters—

Sir Hugh Morgan made an offer of his hand to the eldest daughter, and finding himself at fault, she being engaged at the very time to Lord Everingham, oddly overlooked the precedence of the genius and the beauty amongst the sisters, and transferred his offer of a place in his hard-named pedigree to the startled Mary, then a girl of scarcely seventeen. But though a man of much honest worth, not to speak of the worldly recommendations of the match, the proposal produced no effect upon the mind of the unambitious maiden, but surprise and repugnance.

"And she refused him, though her aunt did say,
'Twas an advantage she had thrown away.
(He an advantage!) That she'd live to rue it."

Whether or not, she had reason for repentance on this score, may cause, amongst those who follow her future history a difference of opinion. But certain it is, that with not a pang of envious regret on her own account, had she seen her young and blooming sister, Agnes, give her hand that morning, five years after the event of her refusal to the same excellent man, the only disagreeable feeling the occasion excited in her mind being, the difficulty of reconciling herself to the idea, that her dear, pretty, young sister Aggy, should so cheerfully acquiesce in a fate which had once raised in her own mind such unqualified disinclination.

But then she was the only individual in the world, who did not think the fair bride the luckiest creature in the world, and the wisest.

"Who but a fool like me, they think, no doubt," mused Mary Seaham, with a humble sigh, "would have rejected such an advantage as they seem to consider it. True, I was only seventeen at the time, but am I wiser at twenty-one? to-night's experience has well shown forth." And she remembered a certain fable which had composed a portion of her childhood's lessons, 'The dog and the shadow,' and smiled in very scorn and derision at her own puerility.

But alas! there are shadows which our wild and wilful imaginations have conjured up which, scorn and deride them as we may, are destined to cast a darkening influence on our future destinies.

"Our fatal shadows that walk by us still;"

to become, in fact, a substance—a reality—from which we would often fain be able to awake and say: it was a dream.

"Grant us not the ill we ask—in very love refuse—
That which we know, our weakness would abuse."

But it is as well, perhaps, to retrograde, in order to relate the incident which some years ago had cast its beguiling shadows upon the pure stream of our heroine's young existence. She was scarcely sixteen, when, under the *chaperonage* of her sister, Lady Everingham, then a bride, she had found herself at the summer fête, given by the father of her cousin, Mr. de Burgh's beautiful betrothed. Lady Everingham was taken ill soon after her arrival, and returned home with her husband, leaving her young sister under the nominal care of her cousin, Louis de Burgh, and his *fiancée* (the queen of that day's revels), who had, with the most eager kindness, taken upon themselves the charge, but as may be naturally supposed were but far too much better employed to carry out their good intentions, so that Mary, having for some little time kept near them, feeling very greatly *de trop*, being at length divided for an instant from their side, saw the lovers, when next in view, disappear together within the shade of a *bosquet*, and she left alone amidst these few strangers, and indifferent friends, who happened to be near the spot.

Her youth and timidity made this situation of itself one of sufficient embarrassment to her feelings, there being none with whom she felt such a degree of intimacy or acquaintance as gave her courage to claim their protection or companionship, but when these even began to drop off by degrees from the parterre, wherein a portion of the company had assembled, and the last lady had eventually departed without her having the courage to follow in her train, poor Mary's distress was at its climax. Only a group, composed of several gentlemen, with not one of whom she was in any way acquainted, remained behind.

The solitary position in which she found herself, causing her to become a conspicuous object, the timid, though not awkward embarrassment of the young girl as she stood irresolute, whether to remain or to retire, attracted the attention of the party. They all looked at her, one or two exchanged smiles which poor Mary, was very quick to interpret into those of amusement and derision; and crimsoning to the temples, she was preparing to glide away in desperate search of her cousin, when out of that very group from whose fancied satire she was so anxious to escape, a gentleman stepped forward and politely addressed her.

He was afraid that she had lost her friends; could he in any way assist her? She thanked him, and hesitatingly murmured the names of her cousin and his bride elect. But this seemed sufficient explanation to the gentleman, with regard to the situation to which he found the young lady exposed. He smiled good-naturedly—feared she must not find fault with any deficiency in *their chaperonage* just now; and begged her to accept his arm, and avail herself of his escort until she could be restored to the runaways. The speaker was young and handsome. Mary Seaham looked up gratefully into the dark eyes bent down so kindly upon her. The tone in which he mentioned her cousin seemed to denote that an intimacy existed between them. But setting aside these considerations, there was no prudery in that young and innocent heart. She placed her arm

within that of the stranger's with the *naïve* and simple confidence of a child, and suffered him to lead her away from the scene of her discomfiture.

Neither did he seem in any hurry to relieve himself of the charge he had undertaken, for though he met and spoke to many lady friends, to whose care he might, had he desired it, have committed Mary, he did not avail himself of the opportunity but still continued to conduct her here and there—finding she was a stranger to the beautiful domain—to every spot considered worthy of interest and admiration, seeming himself pleased, and interested by the gentle intelligent delight, with which his young companion—now that she was happy and at ease—entered into the spirit of everything around her; her first shyness wearing away, and her innocent re-assurance, being still more effectually established after an encounter with her cousin and his intended. The enamoured pair, reminded, for the first time of the charge they had neglected, by the sight of Mary, if they looked a little surprised at first, to see her thus accompanied, were evidently relieved by finding her in any way happily disposed of; and when playfully attacked by her protector for having so unfaithfully fulfilled their office to his fair charge, they answered in the same tone that Miss Seaham could not have found a better *chaperon* than her present companion. And then the handsome lovers, a more graceful pair at that time could not have been found, gaily kissed their hands, and pursued their flowery path—a path in which there surely seemed as yet to lurk no thorn.

"It was the time of roses,
They plucked them as they passed."

Thus again, left standing alone together, Mary's companion looked at her and smiled. Mary too smiled, but she blushed also and said: "You see they will not take me off your hands; pray do not let me be in your way, but take me to some lady of your acquaintance, who will doubtless let me stay by her side."

"Not for the world!" was the earnest rejoinder, "at least if you are not tired of my society. Dinner—to which you must allow me the pleasure of conducting you—must," he added, looking at his watch, "soon be ready; till then, let me show you the aviary."

And again he offered his arm, and led her in that direction. After which, as she owned at last to feeling a little tired, they seated themselves in the pavilion, where others of the company were assembled, awaiting the banquet to be given in the house. There was one peculiarity about her companion which impressed Mary at the time.

Though animated and lively in his manner and discourse when he did speak, his words were not many, whilst on the contrary the earnest, thoughtful interest with which he seemed to listen to every sentence proceeding from her mouth, trivial and simple as she considered them herself to be, at the same time as it encouraged and irresistibly flattered her modest pride, made her, nevertheless, wonder, and once or twice look up inquiringly into the dark eyes bent down so earnestly upon her face, as she gave utterance to any opinion or remark, as if to discover from what reason this might proceed.

She could not tell what attraction there often is in the simple-minded, guileless nature of a youthful being like herself, to the man plunged in the cares and passions of maturer years, and though Eugene Trevor, at that time was young—not more than five and twenty—a more experienced eye than Mary's might have discerned, *that* stamped upon his countenance, which told him to be, even then, no stranger to those dark storms of passion, or of secret sin which, sweeping over man's breast, blight before its time the freshness, health, and purity of youth.

But how could Mary Seaham read all this? how should her guileless spirit divine the wild, dark thoughts—the sinful purposes, unspeakable, unspoken, which must even at that very time, like so many demons, have been working, suggesting, forming themselves within the soul of him who thus was seated by her unsuspecting side? And well for all of us, that thus it must ever be—

"For what if Heaven for once its searching light
Lent to some partial eye, disclosing all
The rude bad thoughts that in our bosoms' night
Wander at large, nor heed Love's gentle thrall;
Who would not shun the dreary uncouth place,
As if, fond leaning where her infant slept,
A mother's arm a serpent should embrace;
So might we friendless live—and die unblest."

Yet Mary need not have wondered, even had it been given her, to look in less partial light upon the being who by his kindness and other fascinating qualities had so propitiated her sensitive, susceptible young heart.

Must the little brooklet wonder if the heated traveller, passing fiercely on his dusty way beneath the noon-day summer sun, consumed with inward fever and parching thirst; should turn with grateful delight to kneel and bow his head over its cool and limpid waters, blessing unawares the source of such pure refreshment.

But then, alas! he rises like a giant refreshed to pursue his course of ambition, pleasure, sin to

whichever of these that course may tend; and what more does he think of that clear, pure stream, when quaffing freely of those turbid waters, from which at length the fevered votary is fain to slake his fiery thirst?

And thou silly stream, to retain so long the softened shadow of that dark image, which for one brief minute had been reflected on thy limpid bosom!

It was then five years since the period of the little episode we have retrograded to relate, five years which had softly glided over Mary Seaham's head, in the almost uninterrupted retirement of her mountain home, and the simple enjoyments and pursuits this existence provided. Five years, which at her happy hopeful period of life, adds, oftener than detracts, from each charm either of mind or person—when, under such untried circumstances, the heart springs forward upon the wings of hope with freshness yet undiminished, and vigour unabated.

It was then between five and six years after, that Mary Seaham, on a summer eve found herself approaching her cousin's house in ——, which place she had last visited with her sister, Lady Everingham, and from thence repaired to that fête which had proved no unimportant incident in her life.

CHAPTER V.

Then came the yearning of the exile's breast,
The haunting sound of voices far away,
And household steps.

HEMANS.

Silverton was a fine estate, and though the country in which it was situated was tame and unlovely in comparison with that to which she had been for so long accustomed, yet Mary Seaham was not so inveterate a mountaineer that she could look, as I know many do, upon the different aspect of the mother country, with the eye of utter aversion and distaste, and though she could not perhaps have gone so far as to agree with old Evelyn when he, asserts Salisbury plain to be in his opinion, the part of Great Britain most worthy of admiration, yet for the gaze to be able to stretch unbounded over a level tract of cultivated land after having been long imprisoned within the massive confines of a mountainous district, she was not ashamed to own, there may be a certain degree of pleasurable relief.

But as may be supposed, any very critical survey of surrounding objects was at an end, when with that degree of nervousness ever more or less attending an arrival of this kind, she drew near the place of her destination in the carriage which had been sent to meet her. There was no one to receive her at the door when she alighted, but the servants, and its being near the dinner-hour, Mary concluded her cousins to have retired to their dressing-rooms. On making inquiries, however, to that effect she was informed that Mrs. de Burgh had not yet returned from her drive, and Mr. de Burgh was also from home.

Mary therefore accepted the offer of the civil domestic to be shown to the room prepared for her, and retired thither, not sorry to be able to rest awhile, after the fatigues of her long journey before a meeting with her relatives. Perhaps her spirits might be a little damped by the reception, or rather *non*-reception she had met with.

There is so much importance attached to a warm welcome, by those not well initiated in the careless frigidities of general society, that the very sensitive and inexperienced are often more chilled by any such accidental or habitual infringements on this score, than the occasion really requires.

We grow wiser or harder as we pass farther through the world, and learn to look upon it no longer as one large home of loving hearts, such as some may have accounted it; but a stage on which every man is too intent to play his own individual part, to have much respect for these minor charities of social life—the word, the look of kindness, of affection which to the sensitive and unworldly spirit are often of higher price—contribute more to make up the sum of mortal happiness, than the most generous deed, or striking act of beneficence. We grow as we have before said, wiser or more callous, as we pass on through this world of our's—learn to see upon what principle society is founded, and cease to shrink chilled, and wounded, before each touch which falls coldly upon the warm surface of our too *exigente* heart—each unsympathetic glance which meets our wistful gaze.

Mary Seaham sat down by her window, which commanded a view of the carriage road, through the park, to watch for the return of her cousin's wife.

The evening was lovely, and she could not feel astonished that Mrs. de Burgh should have

prolonged her drive. A cool freshness had succeeded the sultriness of the day, and she had perhaps not gone out till late.

The scene too on which Mary looked was pleasant and refreshing to the eye. The wide park with its troop of spotted deer, herding for the night beneath the luxuriant foliage of the trees, which in rich clumps or single majesty were scattered thickly over the demesne, gilded by the still bright but softened sunbeams.

But Mary Seaham was not quite able to enter into the enjoyment, which at any other time would have been amply afforded her.

She raised her eyes and began to feel a regretful longing for the sun-gilt or cloud capped mountains, which for so long had met her gaze, towering above the highest tree-tops of the Glan Pennant gardens—and then a sense of strangeness and desolation came creeping over her feelings.

For the first time she seemed to realize the true nature of her present position—and the sight of some labourers, wending their way across the by-paths from their daily toil, tended to bring her gathering sadness to a crisis.

"They are going home," she murmured, and a few tears stole gently down her cheeks. Then she thought of her sisters—the youngest, in particular, as most lately and intimately associated with her in sympathy and companionship, now so far divided, not only by distance, but by the different ties and interests of her new estate; and then occurred to her the words she had so lately heard.

"Do you think you will find your cousin's house agreeable to you?" and she began to ask herself that question too, though not for the same reason, which had suggested the question to Mr. Temple—not lest it might prove too gay and worldly for her tastes and inclination, but by reason of the loneliness she might therein experience—that worst of loneliness—the loneliness of the heart, or,—

> "She might meet with kindness and be lonely still,
> For gratitude is not companionship."

Why then had she come here, would not her sister Alice, have gladly opened her doors to receive her? And all the comparative inconvenience and discomfort of that arrangement, seemed to melt into insignificance before the other attractions of the picture suddenly conjured up. A sister's warm, and earnest welcome—the familiar family voice which would have greeted her, the tone of which at once would have made her feel at home, though in a strange land, amongst unfamiliar scenes and personages, whilst even the noisy delight of half-a-dozen nephews, and nieces, which would have celebrated her arrival, came before her fancy—as she sat in her silent solitary grandeur—in most alluring contrast with her present undemonstrative, though luxurious reception.

But no! she had been attracted by the urgent and pressing desire expressed in the letters of her cousins, to make their house her home until the return of her brother to England, and there had been something in the impression she had received, or the associations connected with her memories of those relatives, that had moved her, perhaps with little reflection, to embrace the offer.

But now she is thinking on the fête of six years ago—of the urgent alacrity with which her cousin and his beautiful intended had then volunteered their protection and support, and their subsequent neglect and abandonment. Might not this incident be a type of what she had to expect, under her present circumstances?

She did not even, in this mood of dark imagining to which she had yielded herself, carry her thoughts beyond the point of her discomfiture on that occasion, or she might perhaps have had some dream analogous to the sequel, conjured up to brighten the gloom of her present anticipations.

But dreams of any nature came not just then to her relief. She had never felt so wide awake to dull reality, unrelieved but by the meek philosophy with which she determined to make the best of everything relating to her present position, cheerfully and contentedly to submit herself to existing circumstances, keeping ever in view for her comfort the expected return of her much-loved brother from Canada, when whatever turn their fortunes might have taken, "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer," so that brother wrote, the cherished picture of their early youth, might still be realized, and a home provided for his favourite sister, which at least would make her independent of the cold and heartless people of the world, till she found or desired a dearer or a better.

> "Two things are left me for my destiny:
> A world to rove o'er, and a home with thee."

Mary Seaham had just arrived at this point of her meditations, when her maid returned to say that Mr. de Burgh was in the house dressing for dinner, and to inquire whether her young lady would not do the same. Mrs. de Burgh had not come home, but it was already past the usual

dinner hour.

Miss Seaham proceeded accordingly to make the simple toilette she thought suited to the occasion, for she learnt from her maid that there was no company staying in the house, and then she determined to go down stairs, to have at least her interview over with her cousin Louis, whilst awaiting the arrival of her tardy hostess.

CHAPTER VI.

Alas! when angry words begin
Their entrance on the lip to win;
When sullen eye and flushing cheek
Say more than bitterest tone could speak,
And look and word, than fire or steel,
Give wounds more deep—time cannot heal;
And anger digs, with tauntings vain,
A gulf it may not pass again.

L. E. L.

Two little children—a fine girl of four and a delicate boy of three—were passing from the drawing-room, through the vestibule on their way to bed followed by a nurse. Mary Seaham would have stopped to make the acquaintance of her little cousins, but too eager in their amusement, the noisy chase of one another through the long *suite* of rooms, they, like Jaques's careless herd, "jump along by her and never stay to greet her," in spite of the chiding injunctions of their attendant, to wait and speak to the young lady. And Mary walked on into the adjoining saloon.

There she found Mr. de Burgh standing alone, his elbow resting on the marble mantelpiece of the fireless grate, his eyes gazing fixedly through the opposite window.

He did not hear her noiseless approach over the velvet carpet; and she had time at the same moment that she recognized the unchanged, almost feminine beauty, of her cousin's handsome features, to remark no very promising expression, namely, one of dissatisfaction and annoyance, to be now seated on his countenance. It, however, brightened instantaneously, when he became aware of Mary's presence; and with the most affectionate cordiality, he advanced to meet and welcome her to his house. Then seating her on an ottoman by his side, he made anxious inquiries as to her journey and the wedding of her sister, slightly touching upon other family matters, in which, as guardian and trustee to his young cousins, he was concerned. And thus, for awhile, his attention and thoughts seemed diverted from any previous cause of discontent. But his powers of interest or politeness seemed at length exhausted. He became evidently restless and fidgetty, cast sundry impatient, or as Mary was more likely to interpret them, anxious glances towards the window which commanded the same view across the park as she had been lately contemplating, and finally rising from his seat, resumed his former station near the chimney-piece, to watch, as Mary concluded, for the arrival of his truant lady.

Mr. de Burgh had only alluded to his wife's absence during their conversation, by casually mentioning her not having returned from her drive; but Mary Seaham, after noticing with rising sympathy and compassion, the increasing perturbation of her cousin's countenance, and naturally attributing its origin to the tender solicitation of an adoring husband, ventured, after a few minute's silence, in which Mr. de Burgh had been too much absorbed in his own feelings for common discourse, to express in her gentle voice, the hope, that he was not uneasy at her cousin Olivia's remaining out so late.

"Uneasy? Oh no!" Mr. de Burgh exclaimed, aroused by the question, and turning to the speaker with a careless laugh, "Oh, no, not in the least uneasy! I suppose I shall have the pleasure of seeing her back between this and bed-time. Oh no! My present cause of uneasiness is merely at the thought that the dinner—for which about an hour ago I had considerable appetite—must be, by this time, fit only for the dogs to eat: and, also, that you"—he added, softening his voice of irony into one of kind concern, observing probably, that his cousin looked pale, grave, and exhausted, "that you, after your long journey, must be quite faint for want of nourishment; but it is just like her," he continued, in soliloquy, hastily walking to the window, "selfish, inconsiderate, careless of everybody, everything, but her own pleasure and amusement. But at all events," he added, "we'll have dinner, such as it is," and approaching the bell, he rang it impatiently, and desired that the dinner should be immediately served.

If Mary Seaham had looked pale and serious before, she was ten times more so after what she had heard. This outbreak of her cousin took her so by surprise. The bitter words he had spoken with regard to his wife, were in such direct unconformity, not only with anything she had been accustomed to hear from one relative towards another, but, also, with the picture her imagination had previously formed of the mutual happiness and affection of the married pair with whom she

had come to sojourn. She looked back to the devoted lovers in their wanderings through the flowery paths of courtship, devotion she had believed to be but a faint fore-shadowing of the full-crowned sacred bliss, the well-tried love, of a six years' union, such as she had expected it would be now her lot to witness. But those disdainful expressions, this disparaging declamation, came like an icy wreath upon her warm imaginings.

"Selfish!" "Inconsiderate!" Could her cousin's beautiful wife really merit such a character? Or was the accusation merely the casual effusion of a hungry husband's fretful humour. If this were not the case, it spoke indeed little for her own chance of comfort as that lady's guest. Still she was far less affected by any selfish interested consideration, than by the shock her inherent principles and preconceived ideas upon the subject had received.

Louis de Burgh remained too much engaged with his own inward dissatisfaction, for any further conversation; consequently, no more words were spoken till dinner was announced, and then her cousin's arm, with something of revived cheerfulness, was offered to her, and they proceeded to the dining-room.

They were seated *tête-à-tête* at the table, and had not proceeded half way through the meal, which was far from justifying Mr. de Burgh's unpromising prognostications, when the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and a loud peal at the door bell denoted the expected arrival.

Mr. de Burgh made no demonstration of interest or excitement, but continued the occupation in which he was now pleasantly engaged in uninterrupted indifference. Mary, on the contrary, felt no slight degree of nervous trepidation, and laying down her knife and fork, awaited in anxious suspense the entrance of her other cousin.

In less than an instant, Mrs. de Burgh, in carriage costume, made her appearance followed by a gentleman.

"Well, here we are at last," she exclaimed, rushing in with careless abruptness, "and Mary arrived, I declare!" she added, with immediate change of tone, "well, I *am* shocked! I really had imagined that you could not be here till nightfall. But welcome a thousand times!" she continued, advancing with extended hands, and embracing her with an affectionate warmth which almost brought tears into Mary's eyes.

"The fact is," she continued after a few other inquiries, and having thrown her bonnet aside, and put back the ringlets from her face—flushed and heated to a very brilliant hue by the exertions of a hurried drive—she seated herself to partake of the dinner reproduced for herself and her companion. "The fact is, I have really been engaged in your service, for feeling sure you would be horrified to come out of the wilds of Wales, to find us here in as stupid and uncivilized a state of reclusiveness as any of the natives of Kamschatka—though, for what I know," she parenthesized with a laugh, "*they* may have much more society of their kind—feeling sure, however, of the dullness of this place, I determined to drive my ponies as far as Morland, and see if I could beat up a few recruits from the party assembled there, for your enlivenment."

Mary smiled and blushed, hardly knowing how to answer this speech.

"*I* am a person," continued Mrs. de Burgh, "who *can* exert myself a little for the sake of my friends—who *am* willing to take some slight trouble, unconnected with my own tastes and inclinations; to consider that a young lady *may* possibly require a little more amusement than seeing trees cut down—a little more society than a man, his wife and two children."

Mary remarked the flashing eyes of Mrs. de Burgh directed towards her husband, as she made this latter speech with much of marked significance in her look and tone; and with the very contradictory charges brought against the absent wife by Mr. de Burgh fresh in her memory, she would, if she had deemed it smiling matter, have been inclined to smile to see the table thus turned upon him.

Perhaps her cousin was not himself quite unimpressed or unconvicted in his conscience by the unconscious retort, for colouring slightly, and for the first time directly addressing his wife since her entrance, though he had entered into some conversation with the gentleman by his side, he said with a not ill-natured, though somewhat provoking laugh, which nevertheless displayed to great advantage his set of ivory teeth.

"Well, Olivia, pray, the next time let your *unselfish consideration*," with a stress on the latter words, "be a little more considerately timed. To keep a tired guest waiting for her dinner till nearly nine o'clock—for you knew as well as I did, that she was sure to arrive before seven—whilst you are scouring the country in search of people to say pretty things to her on the morrow, is a specimen of attentive consideration, which at least was not dreamt of before in my philosophy."

"No of course not," was the contemptuous reply, "though perhaps Mary Seaham may see the circumstance in a different light, supposing that dinner, as she is a reasonable being, is not quite so important and paramount a point in her existence as in yours. But why you waited for me I cannot tell. You are not usually so painfully polite. I suppose you wanted to show off to the utmost, the great inconsideration which marks my conduct towards yourself and others, and the excessive consideration of your own."

How distressing and astounding all this was to Mary's feelings may be imagined, more especially from being herself made so prominent an object in the debate.

In the first agitation of the meeting, what with the grateful and gratified surprise which the unexpected warmth of her reception had inspired, and subsequently her attention and interest being so much absorbed by her newly arrived cousin, on whose unchanged beauty she could not refrain from dwelling in unfeigned admiration—her opposite neighbour who sat with his back to the now declining light had almost entirely escaped her notice; but now, as with downcast eyes and flushing cheeks, she sat listening in painful embarrassment to this conjugal *tirade*, it occurred to her to lift a timid glance to discern how her fellow-sufferer bore the infliction to which they were mutually exposed. She raised her eyes, therefore, and having done so, that very timid glance was rivetted, and became gradually changed into a gaze of earnest, calm surprise, for as she gazed the indistinctness of the vision seemed to clear away, and the face of him whose kindness had been once so strongly impressed upon her girlish fancy to be revealed to her astonished sight.

The same dark eyes fixed with interest upon her changeful countenance, that very same peculiar smile which he had turned towards her, when they were left standing alone together on the occasion of her second *cavalier* abandonment, by the self-absorbed lovers—seemed to mark his observation of the discomfiture which the startling contrast now exhibited had caused her. A smile—such as moves one to look again, and observe with curious interest the countenance from whence it emanates—in much the same way as one would look upon a book of strange characters, whose mystic language we feel certain could we but read it aright, would unto us a tale unfold of more than common import.

But, setting aside the interest which this unexpected recognition inspired—the encouragement that smile, as on the former occasion just mentioned, tended to convey—Mary Seaham felt—considering the many secret thoughts and feelings which in her idle moments she had once wasted on this—the almost, it might be said, ideal hero of her imagination—wonderfully little affected by the fact of his real substantial embodiment—not more so perhaps, than one might be who awakens from a series of fanciful dreams to see the object who has played therein the most fantastic and highly coloured part, standing, divested of all supernatural and exaggerated characteristics, before his eyes; and with a smile, almost as quiet and confiding as the one with which she had yielded herself to his guidance six years before in the grounds of Morland, she had acknowledged the recognition, ere Mrs. de Burgh, after an angry pause and a killing glance across the table—provoked by her husband's mortifying contradiction of her assertion respecting the knowledge she had entertained of the hour of her guest's arrival (a glance which was probably intended to convey to his conviction how extremely odious an individual she deemed him)—recovered sufficiently to proceed with her relation in the same lively strain.

"I was not very successful," she continued. "Of course, every body is in London; however, I have the promise of a reinforcement in a day or two. In the meantime, determined not to return empty-handed, I pressed this gentleman—whom I found just about to start homewards—into my service, and brought him—I cannot say a willing captive—chained to my triumphant car. Nay, I am glad you are beginning to be ashamed of your conduct," she added, as the accused party, looking at Mary, attempted a smiling refutation of the charge.

"Ah, yes, we will imagine what you would bring forth as your excuse—that you did not expect *such* a young lady, for you know I told you there *was* a young lady in the case, that you cannot deny. Well, Mary and I will forgive you, now you are here, if you will only stay, and withal—make yourself extremely agreeable—but, bye the bye, I ought to introduce you to one another—how very forgetful of me! Miss Mary Seaham or rather Miss Seaham now, I believe I should say—Eugene Trevor."

And Mary Seaham and Eugene Trevor exchanged another smile, as they slightly bent their heads in acknowledgement of the ceremony, but both at the same time murmuring their declaration of a previous acquaintance.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. de Burgh, with some surprise, "when and where could you have possibly met?"

"You forget the fête at Morland, when you so cruelly abandoned Miss Seaham to her fate, whilst you and Louis," with a little covered malice in his tone, "went love-making."

"Ah! to be sure, I do remember something of the kind," rejoined Mrs. de Burgh, "that is to say, of you two being together, but that is so very long ago," she added, in a tone of marked carelessness, and glancing at her husband.

"Not quite six years," said Mary.

"*Only* six years!" interposed Mr. de Burgh, blandly, "I should have imagined it sixteen."

"And I too," rejoined the wife colouring; "but at any rate," she continued, with affected carelessness, "it has been quite long enough to have almost effaced from my mind the impression—almost the recollection of things then existing—you two it seems," glancing from Mary to Mr. Trevor, "have better memories."

Mr. de Burgh retorted with a beautiful smile; that the tablets of their memories had happily been kept apart during that interregnum, that there was nothing like six years of close contact for rubbing out old impressions.

"And then in that space of time," he added, probably with more secret meaning than the not very

original remark expressed, "and then in six years, a great deal of change may have taken place."

"A great deal indeed!" was almost unconsciously echoed by Mary's lips, as her thoughts silently wandered over the domestic changes and family events which coloured her reminiscences of that intervening period, whilst from the soft pensive expression which stole over her countenance, it might have seemed that it was more a soothing relief to take refuge from "the strife of tongues" in the private sanctuary of thought thus suggested, than that any very sharp pang of sadness or regret was roused by this reflection.

"A great deal certainly!" had echoed instinctively from Eugene Trevor's lips. But why has the smile with which he lightly commenced the words, faded away like a gleam of sunshine, from the dark hill side, ere they died upon his lips, what were the suggested thoughts, the awakened recollections he would have wished diverted? What record did the history of these six years inscribe on the tablets of his memory?

What ever it might be, he did not pause to contemplate it long; but pouring himself out a glass of wine, drank it down hastily, as if the ruddy draught could wash away the unrepented sin; the unatoned iniquity of his secret soul—then looked and spoke as unconsciously as before.

"Each mind has indeed," as it has been ably written, "an interior apartment into which none but itself and the divinity can enter. In this secluded place, the passions fluctuate and mingle in unknown agitation. Here all the fantastic, and all the tragic shapes of imagination have a haunt—where they can neither be invaded or discerned. Here projects, convictions, vows, are confusedly scattered, and the records of past life are laid; and here in solitary state, sits conscience surrounded by her own thunders which sometimes sleep, and sometimes roar, while the world knows it not."

We said or quoted something to the same effect in a preceding chapter, and added—that it was well that it should be so.

CHAPTER VII.

There are some moments in our fate
That stamp the colour of our days.
* * * * *
And mine was sealed in the slight gaze
Which fixed my eye, and fired my brain,
And bowed my head beneath the chain.

L. E. L.

Mrs. de Burgh soon after led Mary to the drawing-room, when all that was kind and affectionate, and calculated to reassure her young guest's mind, with regard to her previously conceived misgivings, was expressed by the former lady.

They were, however—owing probably to the lateness of the hour, soon joined by the gentlemen.

Mr. de Burgh immediately sat down by his cousin's side, and, as if with the intention of making himself more thoroughly agreeable than circumstances had previously permitted, he entered into animated discourse, in which, finding Mary perfectly able to sustain a competent and intelligent part, he had speedily passed from the merits and beauty of his children, and such like natural easy points of discussion, to some improvements in the grounds, in which his interest seemed to be at present much engrossed, showing more scientific and general information on the whole than she had previously conceived him to possess;—he, appearing on his part pleased to find so willing and intelligent a listener in his young lady cousin.

Mrs. de Burgh in the meantime had, soon after the conversation commenced between them, called Eugene Trevor away to the open window, and conversed with him at intervals in a low, confidential voice, whilst turning over a pile of new music lying on the ottoman by her side.

At last she called out to Mary, and asked her if she sung.

Mary replied in the negative, but remembering well the beautiful voice possessed by Mrs. de Burgh before her marriage, she rose with glad alacrity to solicit a song from her.

Mrs. de Burgh, whose question probably had been but a note of preparation for her own projected performance, smiled compliance with the request, and proceeded to the piano, whilst Mary, ensconcing herself in a quiet nook between the piano and window, yielded her senses to the soothing enjoyment which poetry and melody conjoined always afforded them; and Mrs. de Burgh sung that evening only English songs, with a beauty and pathos perfectly enchanting.

"My spirit like a charmed bark doth swim
Upon the liquid waves of thy sweet singing,

Far away into the regions dim of rapture,
As a boat with swift sail winging
Its way adown some many-winding river."

Many an evening Mary sat in that same place, and listened with never-tiring pleasure to the same delightful songs, but never perhaps with such pure, unmingled pleasure as had this sweet music on the present occasion inspired her.

"Softest grave of a thousand fears,
Where their mother care, like a drowsy child,
Is laid asleep in flowers."

Once, at the close of a peculiarly beautiful ballad, she lifted up her eyes, those "down-falling eyes, full of dreams and slumber," now gemmed with a delicious tear, to encounter the dark orbs of Eugene Trevor, as he stood shaded from the light, in the deep embrasure of the window.

"You are very fond of music," he said, coming forward with a smile, on finding his earnest gaze thus discovered.

"Oh, very fond indeed!" Mary replied, with a low sigh, which marked perhaps the spell of musical enchantment to have been broken by the question, or it may be—the moment when some other power first fell upon her spirit.

"Though who can tell
What time the angel passed who left the spell?"

"Very fond indeed," she continued; "but who is there that is not fond of music?"

"That man for one," answered Mrs. de Burgh, turning quickly round, and denoting by her glance "that man" to be Eugene Trevor. "He is not, I can assure you; he cannot distinguish one note from another—a nightingale's from a jackdaw's. I believe my singing is the greatest infliction I could put upon him. Can you deny this?"

"Oh, if you choose to give me such a character to Miss Seaham, I can have nothing to say against it, of course. I only hope she will not judge me accordingly."

And Eugene Trevor laughed, and looked again at Mary.

"It is to be hoped not, indeed," chimed in Mr. de Burgh, who, as it seemed, had become by this time tired of remaining *hors de combat*, in the back-ground, and now came forward to join the trio; "for does not Shakespeare say:

"'The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus.
Let no such man be trusted—'"

He just glanced at Eugene Trevor, who, however, did not seem to have paid any particular attention to this severe commentary on his want of taste—then, with a smile at Mary, who also smiled most unconsciously upon his declamation—proceeded to exonerate himself from any share in such dark imputations, by joining his wife in a duet she placed carelessly before him on the desk, and in which, for the first time that evening, Mary had the satisfaction of hearing the voices of the married pair, blended in notes and tones of harmony and love.

At its conclusion, Mrs. de Burgh quickly arose, declaring that they had been very cruel in keeping Mary up so long, and that she must go to bed immediately. Candles accordingly were lighted, and Mrs. de Burgh, before wishing Eugene Trevor good night, impressed upon him again, her orders that he should not desert them on the morrow.

Mr. Trevor shook his head, saying his father would expect him; but that, at any rate, he need not go early, so they could talk about it in the morning, and he shook hands with both ladies in adieu. Mrs. de Burgh accompanied Mary to her room, where, after lingering a little to see that she had everything that she could want to minister to her comfort, she left the pale and now really-wearied traveller to her needful repose. But though somewhat subdued by bodily fatigue, Mary, having humbly knelt and lifted up her heart in prayers of devout gratitude for the mercy which had not only preserved her in safety through her journey, but "brought her to see her habitation in peace, and find all things according to her heart's desire," lay down with a mind divested of much of those gloomy misgivings, which had troubled her spirit on her first arrival.

Was it alone the kindness her cousins had shown her that produced this magic change? Perhaps so, for Mary was just at that age, and more still, of that disposition when a word—a look—the most imperceptible influence suffices to change the whole aspect of existence.

"Even as light
Mounts o'er a cloudy ridge, and all is bright,
From east to west one thrilling ray,
Turning a wintry world to May."

But she did not long remain awake to analyze her own sensations on the subject. The echo of Olivia's "sweet" singing seemed to lull her senses to repose, and she sank asleep to fancy herself again standing with Mr. Temple on the hill-side heath.

At first Mr. Temple it seemed to be, till turning, she thought her companion's form and face had changed into those of Mr. Trevor. And pain, trouble, and perplexity were the impressions produced by the circumstance upon her dreamy senses.

The same hand that had so lately pressed hers so gently on bidding her "good night," was now in her dream wringing it with the fervent emotion, which had marked her rejected lover's sorrowful farewell, till finally she was awakened from her first light slumber, by finding herself repeating aloud in soliloquy these strangely suggested words: "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh! she is guileless as the birds
That sing beside the summer brooks;
With music in her gentle words,
With magic in her winsome looks;

With kindness like a noiseless spring
That faileth ne'er in heat or cold;
With fancy like the wild dove's wing,
As innocent as it is bold.

WORDSWORTH.

Fortunately for Mary Seaham's health and spirits, the following day, she was troubled with no more such bewildering dreams throughout the remainder of that night, and when the bright sun streamed in upon her through the window, thrown open by her maid, she woke up cheerful and refreshed. Accustomed at home to early rising, she found herself on going down stairs—though it was later than her usual hour—the only one of the party who seemed to have made their appearance. Hearing, however, children's voices on the lawn, looking from the window of the breakfast-room which she had entered, she stepped forth, and seeing the little boy and girl sporting amongst the flowers, she made a more successful attempt upon their notice than she had done on a previous occasion. Attracted by her sweet looks, her gentle youthful manner and appearance, the little people soon accorded to her their full confidence and favour, and gambolled in her path or led her by the hand to point out some gay butterfly or beautiful flower, with the same reliance and satisfaction as they would have bestowed upon a new playfellow or long-established friend, whilst—

"In virgin fearlessness—with step which seemed
Caught from the pressure of elastic turf—
Upon the mountains gemmed with morning dew,
In the full prime of sweetest scents and flowers—"

Mary yielded to their capricious guidance, walking by their side, and entering with playful interest into their childish amusements and pursuits.

We have not yet described our heroine as to her personal appearance; and some may ask if she were beautiful, or, as we have never hinted at any such decided perfection, they may more shrewdly divine her, from all they have put together, to have been more pleasing and attractive, and pretty perhaps—than beautiful. And at any other time, perhaps merely taking into consideration the long dark grey eyes with their drooping eye-lids such as I have before pourtrayed, the soft brown hair braided on a fair and open brow; the other features, which, whether regular or not, breathed a softness and an intellect combined, which disarmed criticism, to say nothing of her figure, which, a little above the middle height, light and pliant as became a mountain maid, might have seemed nevertheless, by her movements and habitual carriage, to denote it governed by a soul within, as much, if not more conspicuously inclined to *Il penseroso* than *Il allegro*; but these two so nicely combined, so delicately intermingled, so harmoniously playing one upon the other, that it was hard to separate or distinguish them apart.

"Serious and thoughtful was her mind,
Yet by reconcilement exquisite and rare."

All this taken together, and I might perhaps have conceded to the supposition and replied,

"She was not fair nor beautiful—
Those words express her not."

Mary had never hitherto been much considered in the family, as far as good looks were concerned. The mountain breezes which had dyed with such brilliant bloom her sisters' cheeks, had failed to chase the clear paleness of her own complexion; and therefore those around her who adhered to the usual vulgar idea of beauty, had never thought of giving her equality in that respect,—with the exception perhaps of the good Baronet, who on the principle of "loving others different to oneself," had first coveted the pale violet above the brighter flowers of the family, as in pleasing contrast to his own ruddy hues,—and by him whose refined perception had, as we know long since, discerned and singled out the pearl of great price from the more glittering jewels of the sisterhood.

But as we see her standing before us at this moment, in her delicately tinted attire, watching with a quiet smile of admiring interest the pretty children, who have bounded away together a little in advance—or lifting up her eyes toward the blue sky above, seeming to drink in with a pure and lively sense of rapture, the delight of that most beautiful of summer mornings—

> "A morn for life in its most subtle luxury."

Standing thus, unconscious that human eye was upon her, to have seen her with that glow of youth and hope, and innocent intellectual enjoyment kindling her cheek, few could have looked coldly upon her, and said or thought "she was not fair or beautiful."

Very fair at least she seemed to him, who from an upper chamber window thrown open to cool the fever of his brow, looked down upon this morning scene, and dwelt upon that living object, pleasant and alluring to the thirsting of his heart—the thirsting for that something, purer, holier than his own nature could supply—which sometimes springs up within the soul of him who has wandered farthest from the paths of innocency and peace.

Mary was talking to her cousin Louis, who first joined her on the lawn, when Mrs. de Burgh and Eugene Trevor made their appearance. The latter congratulated Mary when they sat down to breakfast, on her having apparently so completely recovered from her last night's fatigue, and mentioned his having seen her in the garden from his window.

She blushed, and said she had been making acquaintance with the dear little children, whose praises she then rung upon the father and mother's ears. Mr. de Burgh looked delighted, and quite agreed upon the subject, his lady said more carelessly: "They were nice little monkeys; the girl good-looking enough, but getting to that dreadful age when she would require teaching; the boy a puny little fellow, who should be at the sea if everything was done for him that ought to be done."

Whereupon, Mr. de Burgh, who took this remark—probably as it was intended to be—as a reflection upon his own backwardness in forwarding that arrangement, began an assurance, in way of defence, of Doctor somebody's preference of his native country's air to that of the seaside; adding, that it would do the boy much more good to have that long hair cut off which was exhausting all his strength. Mrs. de Burgh declared that he was welcome to have it cut off, for what she cared, for he knew she never interfered in any of his whims, however absurd they might be.

And so it went on for a short time, till Mary began to wonder if every repast was to be seasoned by such agreeable accompaniments, as the bickerings of this and the preceding conversations. But Eugene Trevor, who seemed to be accustomed to this sort of thing, managed, laughingly, to divert the conversation from this exciting topic, and peace was accordingly restored during the remainder of the meal.

But how wonderful it was to Mary, that those two beings, whom nature, as well as fortune, seemed to have crowned with every blessing their bounty can bestow to make this world a paradise—health, beauty, talents, on the one hand; wealth, station, princely possessions on the other—should awaken in her mind feelings of pain and compassion, rather than envy or admiration—as apparently lacking in so lamentable a degree, that first great ingredient in the cup of life—*love*.

How had this come to pass—how had the precious drop been banished from the draught they were about so joyously to quaff, and which seemed to sparkle with such glittering lustre when she had seen them last?

Yet the same changeless heaven was above their heads—and earth should have been to them a still more thornless paradise.

Alas! Mary had not learnt to see by sad experience, how often this is the case with hearts that have once loved with—it might have seemed undying fervour; affection frittered irreclaimably away in the caprice and wantonness of unbroken prosperity,

> "Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
> And sorrow but more closely tied.
> Who stood the storms when waves were rough,
> Yet in a sunny hour fall off,
> Like ships which have gone down at sea,
> When heaven was all serenity."

Soon after breakfast Mary went up stairs to write to her aunt and uncle, then returned and sat with Mrs. de Burgh till luncheon time, when the gentlemen rejoined them, and after that they all went out together—that is to say Mr. Trevor and the two ladies, for Mr. de Burgh soon left the party, to follow his own business and pursuits.

They visited the garden, the green-houses, strolled through some of the most shady and picturesque parts of the grounds, conversing pleasantly the while; and then, rather wearied by their exertions, were about to place themselves on a seat, beneath the cool shadow of some magnificent trees, not far from the house, when a servant was seen approaching to inform Mrs. de Burgh that visitors were in the drawing-room; the Countess of Patterdale, and the Ladies Marchmont.

Mrs. de Burgh made a gesture expressive of distaste at this disturbance, but walked towards the house. Mary did not think it incumbent upon her to volunteer her assistance in the entertainment of these strangers, so remained behind; and a few moments after, she saw Eugene Trevor, who had accompanied his cousin across the lawn, coming back to rejoin her.

"You see I have followed your example, Miss Seaham," he said, sitting down beside her, "and have made my escape. Life is too short, in my opinion, for mortals to be shut up in a room this hot afternoon, making themselves agreeable to three fashionable fine ladies."

"But it is rather hard upon Olivia," Mary said, with a smile.

"Oh, not at all. She is quite equal to the task. A match for all the fine ladies in the land—are you?"

"Oh, no!" Mary answered laughing, "not at all; I have had so little experience in that way."

"Ah, well! Olivia is quite in her element amongst them; her real delight is a London season, where she can play that part to perfection: unfortunately de Burgh's inclinations do not tend that way, particularly now that he has this improving mania upon him."

"It is unfortunate that their tastes in this respect do not agree," Mary rejoined.

"Very unfortunate," he repeated, regarding his companion with the marked interest and attention her simplest expressions or observation seemed to inspire; a peculiarity which, as it had in earlier years excited her wonder, now made as strong though somewhat more undefined impression on her feelings.

The effect it produced was, however, far from being one to embarrass or constrain—on the contrary, there almost might have seemed to be some soothing power—some magnetic influence in this "serious inclination" on the part of Eugene Trevor; for never, with a less unreserved and uncommunicative companion, had she felt more at ease; had her own thoughts and feelings been drawn forth with such freedom and unconstraint. And a calm and pleasant conversation had been carried on between them for nearly three-quarters of an hour before Mrs. de Burgh reappeared, complaining of the length of time her visitors had remained.

Mary did not say anything, though it seemed to her that the complaint was somewhat unreasonable; but Eugene Trevor scrupled not to declare, that he never knew these people pay so short a visit before.

"Ah, it is very well for you to say so, and Mary to think the same," Mrs. de Burgh said, looking rather curiously from one to the other. "You two sitting here so comfortably; but it was very cruel of you both to let me have the whole burden, you Eugene should really have come and taken the Ladies Marchmont off my hands. I had a good mind to bring them out here, just to spite you."

"I am glad you did not," said Eugene Trevor, "or I should have been obliged to run away, as it is necessary that I should do now, my dog-cart having been waiting for me, I believe, more than an hour in the yard."

"What! are you really going?" exclaimed Mrs. de Burgh.

"Yes, my father will fidget himself to death if I do not arrive," was the reply.

"Well, come again as soon as you can."

"Oh yes, you may rely upon that. Good bye," and shaking hands with Mary and his cousin, he left them, and was soon driving rapidly through the park.

"You will find it very dull I am afraid, Mary," Mrs. de Burgh said, as, having watched this departure, she turned slowly to re-enter the house; "but I hope we shall have some people to-morrow."

Mary earnestly deprecated such an idea, and with the utmost sincerity. She felt perfectly contented and happy all that evening, particularly as there was very tolerable harmony kept up between her cousins.

Mr. de Burgh inquired at dinner, though with no great interest "what had become of Trevor?" Mrs. de Burgh answered that he had been obliged to go home to his father who seemed to be in one of those fidgetty moods, when he could not bear to be left alone; and Mary asked very simply if he had no other child?

"Yes—no—that is to say," hesitated Mrs. de Burgh, looking at her husband, "one son died a few

years ago."

"And the other—" proceeded Mr. de Burgh, as his wife did not carry on the reply—but some authoritative look or sign from Mrs. de Burgh which he seemed to have received, interrupted his intended information, and only murmuring "Nonsense!" he was silent on the subject.

"I must drive you over to Montrevor, some day," said Mrs. de Burgh, addressing Mary; "the place is well worth seeing."

"I don't agree in that at all," Mr. de Burgh remarked testily—"at least, not worth knocking up the ponies by so long a drive. What should you take Mary there for? The old man will not greatly appreciate the visit, and I do not think there is any other consideration to make it a desirable excursion."

Mrs. de Burgh shrugged her shoulders; but as if it was not a subject she wished brought under discussion, she allowed it to drop for the present.

CHAPTER IX.

You first called my woman's feelings forth,
And taught me love, ere I had dreamed love's name—
I loved unconsciously....
At last I learned my heart's deep secret.

L. E. L.

Mrs. de Burgh's expedition the preceding day did not prove without its fruits. For the next few days, several idle young men of the neighbourhood, who had nothing better to do, came dropping in to dine or stay a night or so at Silverton.

Mr. de Burgh received these guests with much courtesy and kindness; though apparently regarding them as the visitors of his wife, he left them almost entirely to her entertainment, and went about his private occupation as usual with a scientific friend of his own, who arrived at this time.

As for Mary, although obliged, considering that this gathering had been formed chiefly on her account, to show her sense of the attention by making herself as agreeable as possible, yet before long she began to feel her exertions in that respect a weariness, rather than a pleasurable excitement; and that her powers were not equal when placed in competition with the light and careless spirits around her. Indeed, so gladly would she hail the intervals which set her at liberty, to read, or think, or dream, free from such demands, that she began to suspect very soon that her thirstings after society would easily be satisfied, and that Mr. Temple need not have been alarmed lest she should be too much ensnared by its fascinations; in short, that she was not so sociably inclined in a general way to the degree for which she had given herself credit.

One morning, Mary made her escape about an hour before luncheon from the gay party by whom, since breakfast, she had been surrounded; and seated herself, with a new book of poetry, at the open window of a room leading into a little garden, the luscious perfume of whose flowers were wafted sweetly upon her senses; shaded by the light drapery of the muslin curtains, the sound of laughing, talking, billiard-balls falling at an undisturbing distance from her ear—

"Oh, close your eyes and strive to see
The studious maid with book on knee!"

Mary had not long luxuriated in this enjoyment, when a footstep sounded on the grass without, and a dark shadow obscured the bright light upon her page. Lifting up her eyes, she saw Eugene Trevor standing before her.

He smiled at her start of surprise, and apologised for the abrupt intrusion. He had expected, he stated, to have found her and his cousin Olivia in this, Mrs. de Burgh's usual morning-room; and then Mary—the bright glow with which, although not naturally nervous, this sudden apparition had coloured her cheek, fading gradually away—told him how Mrs. de Burgh was engaged in the adjoining room.

"And you have deserted her?" he said, taking up the book she had laid down and examining its contents with the greatest apparent interest, though he only smiled when she asked him if he were fond of poetry, smiled—and answered, looking into her face, "Some kind," and replaced the volume; then resting against the window-sill, they conversed on other subjects, and were still thus engaged when luncheon was announced.

Eugene Trevor stayed at Silverton that day and part of the next: when all the rest of the party took their departure, with the exception of Mr. de Burgh's own particular friend.

But, somehow or other, Mary had by this time begun to change her mind, and to think—that after

all she might be rather fond of society.

One circumstance a little surprised and puzzled her, before she had been very long at Silverton.

One day, when speaking of Wales, she carelessly mentioned Mr. Temple's name, and alluded to the college acquaintance that gentleman had professed to have once subsisted between himself and Mr. de Burgh. But Mr. de Burgh remembered no person of that name, answering to the slight description she attempted to give—could not the least recall him to his recollection, and as Mrs. de Burgh and Eugene Trevor, who happened to be present, did not seem able to assist his memory in that respect—though Mary also remembered Mr. Temple to have claimed acquaintance with Mrs. de Burgh's family, she did not press the point; a certain conscious embarrassment associated with the object of discussion preventing her from entering into further particulars, though she thought the circumstance rather strange and unaccountable.

Her aunt and uncle mentioned in their first letter that Mr. Temple had called to see them, and had seemed much interested to hear of her safe arrival at Silverton; but those relatives did not remain in Wales more than a week or two after her own departure, therefore with them, intelligence regarding that most remarkable—and to her, now peculiarly interesting—person must cease, at least for the time being, she having no other correspondents at present in the neighbourhood.

Beyond such occasional gatherings as the one just described, there was very little of what could be strictly called company, during the ensuing month—July—at Silverton; and Mary sometimes smiled to think of the exaggerated idea Mr. Temple seemed to have formed, concerning the dangers to which she might be exposed in the evil world she was about to encounter. Yet how did Mary know whether the weapon of danger he most deprecated on her account, might not even then be hanging singly over her head, rendered only still more perilous by the absence of other exciting and diverting circumstances.

We said there was not much actual company at Silverton; but besides an intimate friend or two of Mr. de Burgh's, Eugene Trevor often made his appearance to luncheon, or to dine and spend a night, so that it became at last quite a habit of Mrs. de Burgh's to say in the morning, if they had lost sight of him for many days together:

"I wonder if Eugene Trevor will turn up to-day!"

And often did Mary find herself seated near her chamber window, her eye directed with feelings very far removed from those uneasy thoughts, which had arisen in her mind the first evening she had there taken up her position—her eyes directed across the park, along which perchance the sound of carriage wheels, having previously reached her ears, she might soon behold Eugene Trevor's well-appointed turn-out, with the fine blood horse, urged by its impatient master, advancing at a flying pace towards the house; and then with what ingenuous pleasure would Mary hasten to make her prettiest toilette, now that there was one who, she could not but flatter herself, would be far from indifferent to its effect. Mr. de Burgh, though there might have appeared to be no particular cordiality existing between him and his wife's cousin, never by word or manner testified any distaste to the frequency of these visits, indeed seemed to concern himself very little on the subject.

At length, however, he did say one day, on Mrs. de Burgh remarking Eugene's absence to have been a somewhat longer one than usual: "Well! what of that? It would really seem as if it was impossible to exist a day without Eugene Trevor. Are *you* so very fond of this wonderful Eugene, Mary?"

Poor Mary! this direct question took her quite by surprise, and she was unable immediately to reply.

Mrs. de Burgh came to her rescue. "Oh, never mind him, Mary," she said; "he only abuses Eugene Trevor because he is my relation, and objects to his coming here because he knows he is the only person I care for at all, excepting you Mary, who has entered the house this summer, whilst these tiresome scientific friends of his infest the place continually."

"Well, at any rate I am very glad," Mary was able now to say with a quiet smile, mingled perhaps with a little inward *pique* towards her cousin, "that you do not turn the tables upon Louis by objecting to *his* relations."

"Ah, Mary!" said Mr. de Burgh with his most amiable smile, "are you too taking up the cudgels against me? but I was not aware that I did abuse or object to any one."

"Poor Eugene! no wonder he is glad to come over here as often as he can; it must be terribly dull for him at Montrevor with that old man," rejoined Mrs. de Burgh.

"Then why does he stay?" inquired her husband.

"Why—why—you know Mr. Trevor is ill and cannot bear him to be away. Eugene's kindness and dutiful behaviour in that respect is an excellent trait in his character, you must confess."

"Dutiful behaviour!" murmured Mr. de Burgh rather scornfully, as he walked away. "Pooh, nonsense! Epsom was a failure, and Goodwood remains to be proved."

One of the reasons which had furnished Mr. de Burgh with an excuse for remaining quietly at Silverton all that season, and perhaps had much to do in reconciling his wife to the arrangement, was the fact of Mrs. de Burgh's situation, promising an addition to their family in the early part of the winter; and as the heir was far from being a strong child, the chance of other healthy sons was most acceptable. Therefore, more care than the gay young wife had ever taken of herself, on previous occasions, was rendered desirable.

"Yes!" Mrs. de Burgh said one day, when she was driving with Mary, in allusion to these above-mentioned expectations, "I have been patient all through this season in consequence, although it is provoking that Louis should so selfishly spend his time, interest, and fortune, in the improvement, as he calls it, of this property; of one thing, however, I am quite certain, that he will soon tire of the pursuit, leave everything half done, and take some other quirk into his head, which, no doubt, will be equally tiresome—build a yacht perhaps, and station me and the children at Cowes; whilst he amuses himself with this new toy, and then is astonished at my being discontented, and amusing myself as I best may. Oh, Mary!" she added, "when you marry, never give way to your husband's selfishness in the first instance, or you will find it annihilating at the last."

"Did *you* give way?" inquired Mary, with some archness.

Mrs. de Burgh laughed.

"No, I cannot exactly say I did," she replied. "I had not the slightest idea that Louis would ever have any will but mine; of course, he gave me reason to suppose so before we married; but ere the honeymoon was over, I found out my mistake. Anything that did not interfere with his own pleasure, or inconvenience, I was at liberty to do; but that was not what I wanted. I expected him to be the slave of my slightest wish."

"But was not that somewhat unreasonable?" suggested Mary.

"It certainly proved a mistake; and so we soon began to pull different ways, and I suppose will do so to the end of the chapter."

"Oh, my dear Olivia, how can you talk thus, when you and Louis ought—and do really, I am sure—so to love one another?" Mary exclaimed, feeling shocked and sorry.

"Humph it does not signify much what we ought to do, or what lies *perdue*, when daily and hourly experience makes us most feelingly act and speak to the contrary. As for Louis, the quiet, unresisting manner in which he has allowed me to do things other husbands would have soon prevented, contenting himself with a few cutting words and sneering inuendoes, does not speak much for the depth of his affection. But the fact is, there is not much depth of any kind in Louis's nature—no strength—no firmness of feeling or purpose—nothing to lay hold of except the whim of the moment, and that melts away before you can get a very sure grasp.

> "'One foot on land and one on sea,
> To one thing constant never.'"

Although it was somewhat repulsive to Mary's ideas and principles to hear a wife thus critically expose the weak side of a husband's character, her naturally quick perception of human nature—

> "The harvest of a quiet eye,"

as well as the intimate insight now afforded her, by constant intercourse, into Mr. de Burgh's disposition, made her own this portraiture to be not incorrectly drawn, and to fancy that much of his wife's decline of feeling towards her handsome, captivating husband might have been thus unfavourably influenced by the discovery of these points of character in her cousin Louis.

She could imagine in her own case, that however faithfully, if once beloved, she might have preserved her affection towards such a truly amiable man, that he was not exactly the being who would ever have very strongly impressed or awakened any deep and lasting feeling in her heart—

> "That love for which a woman's heart
> Will beat until it breaks."

Woman, feelingly conscious of her own comparative infirmity of mind and disposition, vague, imperfect in idea and purpose, either for good or evil, naturally inclines towards those of the opposite sex, who carry out to their fullest extent the distinguishing attributes of their nature—masculine stability, and strength of purpose and of action; nay, even to the abuse of this same principle—she is sometimes led more easily to yield her heart to the influence of the firm and well-defined character, under whose most common aspect may be detected a current of fixed purpose, strong, earnest, and undeviating in its course—even though that course may tend to evil—that character be strong in all, that unblinded reason must condemn—than to men of Mr. de Burgh's *calibre*, whose very weaknesses may "lean to virtue's side." Thus many a Medora becomes linked to a Conrad—many a Minna to a Cleveland.

With all this, and in spite of that intuitive sympathy which inclines one woman to side with another, in similar cases of right and wrong, Mary was far from suffering any such consideration to tend to the deterioration of her cousin Louis in her eyes. Nay, as far as concerned the state of feeling to which Mr. de Burgh might have arrived regarding his wife, the more she saw of him, the more was she led to image to herself the bitter disappointment—the great provocation which must have gradually converted into the apparently indifferent and inconsiderate husband, that naturally most affectionate and amiable of beings.

"Till fast declining one by one,
The sweetnesses of love were gone,
And eyes forgot the gentle ray
They wore in courtship's sunny day,
And voices lost the tones that shed
A tenderness round all they said,
And hearts so lately mingled seemed
Like broken clouds, or like the stream
That smiling left the mountain's brow
As though the waters ne'er could sever,
Yet ere it reach the plain below
Breaks into floods that part for ever."

Nor could Mary, though Mrs. de Burgh's extreme kindness to herself made her easily incline to indulgence and partiality, at all times bring herself to approve or enter into her feelings or course of conduct, or be led quite to do, and think as it pleased her beautiful cousin.

One instance of the kind it may be necessary that we should record, both as in it our heroine was more personally concerned, and as forming a more regular link in the chain of our story.

CHAPTER X.

Lo! where the paling cheek, the unconscious sigh,
The slower footstep, and the heavier eye,
Betray the burthen of sweet thoughts and mute,
The slight tree bows beneath the golden fruit.

THE NEW TIMON.

It was a beautiful afternoon, in the first week of August, and the two ladies set off as usual for their afternoon's drive, the little Louisa seated between them. Mr. de Burgh had been on the steps to see the party start, himself lifting the child with his usual tenderness into the carriage—and wishing them a pleasant drive, he casually inquired in what direction they meant to go.

"To Morland, I think," answered Mrs. de Burgh carelessly, as she gathered up the reins, and arranged herself upon her seat.

"To Morland," he repeated.

"Yes! have you any objection?"

"Oh, none whatever!"

"Well, good bye!" and with a light touch of the whip, the pretty ponies were put in motion.

Ere they had proceeded far through the park Mrs. de Burgh said, laughing:

"I told him we were going to Morland, but that is not at all my intention. You need not say anything about it, but I have made up my mind to drive you to Montrevor. Really I ought to go and see old Uncle Trevor after his illness; at any rate, I must speak to Eugene, and make personal inquiries."

"But why tell Louis that you were going to Morland? Oh, Olivia! do not drive there to-day," Mary exclaimed in some consternation.

"Why not," inquired Mrs. de Burgh, looking at her companion in surprise: "you really do not mean to say that I ought to submit to the absurd objection Louis expressed the other night upon the subject?"

Mary could not say with sincerity, that this—or even the unnecessary deceit which her companion intended to put upon her husband—however this might have offended her conscience, was the chief cause which now rendered the proposed excursion so repugnant to her feelings; there was another, of a nature she could not exactly explain; but which nevertheless influenced them greatly on this occasion.

The fact was, upon poor Mary's heart by this time had been worked an impression far from being

of a light or imaginative nature.

The constant visits of the dark-eyed cousin of Mrs. de Burgh, had conjured up feelings as far removed from the dream-like fancy of other days, as is the shadow from the substance, and the very fact of the existence of such feelings made her painfully susceptible to any proceeding which might, in the slightest degree, even on the part of others, make her appear desirous of courting the society of the object who had awakened them—and of whose corresponding sentiments towards herself, she had as yet no certain guarantee.

Mary could not but suspect that this excursion to Montrevor would be only made by Mrs. de Burgh on her account, and that this might be made to appear to Eugene Trevor by his cousin; therefore, when Mrs. de Burgh only laughed at her evident disinclination, she, on the impulse of the feelings with which the idea inspired her, begged that at any rate, if her cousin were really bent upon the plan, that she would suffer her to remain behind. Whereupon Mrs. de Burgh, somewhat coldly drawing in the reins, begged Mary would do as she pleased; if she really had so great an objection to going to Montrevor—perhaps she would not mind returning, as she had a particular wish to go and inquire after her uncle.

Mrs. de Burgh indeed offered to drive her back, but Mary said, she would really like the walk, and accordingly was suffered silently to alight, feeling perhaps a little inclined to doubt, whether she had not gone rather too far in thus decidedly carrying out her own way, yet not liking to give in after she had so strongly expressed her disinclination.

Mrs. de Burgh wished her a pleasant walk, and little Louisa knelt upon the seat and kissed her hand regretfully to her retreating cousin as they went their several ways.

Mary walked slowly, and rather dejectedly back towards the house, knowing that her cousin Louis, with whom she would fain have avoided the necessity of giving the reason of her return, had been on the point of setting off towards a distant part of the grounds when they had left him.

Just as she arrived in sight of the mansion, the sound of a horse's feet met her ear, the next moment a horseman riding up a different approach to that by which she came, appeared in sight. It was Eugene Trevor. He immediately perceived her, and dismounting threw his bridle to a servant standing on the step, and hurried forward to meet her.

Mary was so totally unprepared for a *rencontre*, which circumstances rendered at that moment peculiarly embarrassing to her feelings, that she received Trevor with a coldness and constraint unusual to her manner; and when he mentioned the fear he had entertained of finding them out, she merely answered, that Olivia had gone for a drive, but that Louis was in the grounds, and proposed walking on to find him. Eugene did not object, so they proceeded in the requisite direction.

Then he told her that he had come to say good-bye. A friend of his had engaged a moor in Scotland in partnership with himself, and that he was therefore obliged to set off in a day or two, not much to his gratification—for there were many things which made him regret to leave the neighbourhood just then, and he should be away, he supposed, about a month.

Mary was dismayed to feel how her heart sank low at this communication; she, however, made an effort to rally her spirits; and the subject thus started, she discussed the delights and merits of the grouse-shooting and moorland country, with a careless interest which made her inwardly wonder over her new-found powers of duplicity.

But they fell in with Mr. de Burgh sooner than she had expected, or Eugene, perhaps, had hoped; for in spite of any change which he might have discerned in his companion's manner, his lingering step and earnest attention plainly demonstrated, that the charm he ever seemed to find in her society was not decreased.

Mr. de Burgh was evidently surprised at Mary's re-appearance, but supposing it was a whim of his wife's to put an end to the intended drive, on account of Eugene Trevor's visit, and that she too had returned to the house, he made no further remark upon the subject than his first exclamation, "What come back already?"

On hearing of Eugene Trevor's intended excursion, he entered into conversation with him on the subject. Then he called Eugene's attention to those alterations he was superintending, into which the former entered with all due interest and understanding; and his attention thus engaged, it was not for some time that he was at liberty to turn to Mary, who stood by in the meantime silent and abstracted.

He did not remain much longer; he was obliged to return home to meet a friend, and therefore took leave of Mr. de Burgh and finally of Mary, lingering a little as if he half hoped to have had a companion in his walk back towards the house; but finding this was not to be the case, he went off regretfully alone.

Mr. de Burgh asked Mary if she felt inclined to extend her walk to a further part of the estate. She acceded cheerfully to the proposal, for she fancied her cousin's eye had glanced somewhat anxiously upon her countenance as they stood silently together after Eugene's departure. And so they proceeded, making a lengthened circuit which did not bring them back to the house till a

later hour than they had supposed, and Mrs. de Burgh had by that, time returned.

Mary went immediately to her cousin's dressing-room, anxious to do away with any offended feeling her conduct might have excited. She found Mrs. de Burgh quite amicably disposed. She began immediately to rally Mary on the very clever manner in which she had managed her morning's amusement; she had seen Eugene Trevor, who had told her of the delightful walk they had taken together.

"The fact is," Mrs. de Burgh continued, "I did not go to Montrevor after all. It was too far to go all alone—and returning I met Eugene, and we had a long chat."

"He told you, I suppose," said Mary, "that he was going away."

"Yes, for a month—what shall we do without him in the meantime? By the bye, I told him, Mary, of *your* conduct this afternoon."

"My conduct?" asked Mary in alarm.

"Yes, your insurmountable objection to a drive to Montrevor."

"Oh, Olivia!" in a tone of reproach.

"Yes, I did, indeed; and do you know what he said to this?"

"No, indeed," Mary anxiously replied.

"He laughed quite scornfully and said: 'She shall go there some day,' then spurred his horse and rode off at full speed. Ha! ha!

"'He laughs and he rides away.'

Nay, Mary do not look offended. He did not intend anything *very* insulting I dare say. Go dear, and rest yourself after this long walk Louis has dragged you, and which has made you look so pale."

And thus dismissed, Mary went to her room, but not to take up her usual window-seat. There would be no interest in looking across the park that night. No—nor for a great many nights to come.

Most of that next month passed without much outward change or excitement. Mrs. de Burgh declared that the extreme dulness made Mary look quite listless and ill.

On the first of September, however, there was a shooting party, and a few other gaieties in the neighbourhood, the country houses beginning again to fill.

Mary during this interval of time had received one piece of information, which rejoiced her greatly, if it did not succeed in making her so completely happy as she fancied it would have done a month or two before.

Her brother Arthur wrote word, that he should be in England towards the end of the autumn. He gave no very flourishing account of their property and affairs. He spoke of the necessity for his entering into some profession, and of his wish of following up the study of the law. But all was written in as cheerful a strain as if his communication had been of a contrary nature.

Who but the young can thus look cheerfully into the face of the grim monster poverty, and say "be welcome," feeling now that talents which had otherwise been weighed down beneath the deadening power of affluence, may now be given eagle wings wherewith to mount above to honour and renown? For as the German author writes:

"Riches often weigh more heavily on talents than poverty; but," he beautifully continues, "Just Providence preserve the old man from want, for hoary years have already bent him low, and he can no longer stand upright with the youth, and bear the heavy burden on his head. The old man needs rest on the earth, ever while he is upon it, for he can use only the present, and a little bit of the future, and the past does not reflect for him as in a glass the blooming present."

It was not till the middle of September that Eugene Trevor returned. Mary saw him first again at an archery *fête* given in the grounds of Morland, the scene of their former meeting and acquaintance.

But that it would prove a day coloured by the same bright remembrances, appeared at first unlikely.

For some time, Mary feared that the expectations of his being present at all were doomed to disappointment, for he did not make his appearance till very late; and Mary walked about with her cousin Louis (who on this occasion proved a better *chaperon* than on the former), trying to look more cheerful than she really felt.

An hour before dinner, he was discerned among the gay throng, but as Mr. de Burgh did not direct his course that way, he remained—as Mary was too easily inclined to imagine, coldly aloof—either she thought offended, or discouraged by the recollection of the coldness of manner she had shown towards him on his parting visit, or—(why should she imagine it otherwise?) the new pursuits and scenes of interests in which he had been engaged, had effaced all traces of any slight impression she might have made upon his mind or feelings.

No greeting passed between them until, on their way to the *déjeûner*, Eugene passed her with another lady on his arm, and the one they then exchanged was necessarily slight and hurried, signifying nothing.

His companion was young and beautiful, and Mary, with pardonable curiosity, inquired who she was of the gentleman who escorted her.

She was told it was the young Lady Darlington, lately married, and we will not say that the substance of this communication was not a relief to Mary. They sat at the same side of the table, not very far divided, and Mary's companion must have found her rather an absent neighbour, she so often discovered her attention directed to what was being said by Eugene Trevor, though there was nothing very particular to interest an indifferent listener in his conversation with the young Countess.

Indeed, even to Mary it might have seemed most satisfactorily uninteresting, neither did it appear incapable of speedy exhaustion, for before the close of the repast, the Countess had turned her attention to her other neighbour, a young captain of the Guards, who seemed to have a greater flow of small talk at his disposal, whilst Eugene was joining in general conversation with others of the company, or leaning forward ever and anon, as if carelessly to review the guests beyond.

At length, Mary heard some remarks made upon some figs of peculiar growth, which had appeared upon the table. A few minutes after, a servant, to whom Trevor had been whispering some directions, brought the dish containing them round to a lady, a seat or two below, and said, distinctly enough for Mary to hear:

"Mr. Trevor sends these, Miss, with his compliments, and hopes you will take one, as they come from Montrevor."

The lady, not a very attractive person, acceded to the request, most graciously bending forward to smile and bow her acknowledgment of the flattering attention bestowed upon her.

But Eugene Trevor, who had also bent forward, seemed anything but gratified. On the contrary, he looked back in an irritated way at the servant, as if dissatisfied with the manner in which he had performed his behest; and in a few seconds more he had risen, and was standing himself behind Mary's chair.

"That fool of a man," he said, in a suppressed tone, "evidently would not know a rose from a peony. I told him to take those figs to the young lady with the blue forget-me-nots in her white bonnet, and he took them to your neighbour with the unconscionably large china-asters. You must oblige me by taking one. They come out of my father's hot-house. I had them picked on purpose to send to Silverton, as I remembered hearing you say they were your favourite fruit; but Lady Dorington happened to call, and carried them off for this affair of to-day."

Mary turned her head, and lifted up her face towards the speaker. A look met hers from the dark eyes of Eugene Trevor—a look surely possessed of deeper meaning—which must have been intended to plead a greater boon than her acceptance of the fruit of his father's garden. And though the next moment he was gone, and she left with a beating heart to taste the luscious offering—nay, though he was scarcely many minutes by her side again that afternoon—for dancing quickly succeeded the repast, and Trevor did not dance, while Mary's hand was in great request—yet a feeling of such perfect happiness had suddenly taken possession of her soul, that she was fully contented to feel that, as he stood apart amongst those not joining in the dance, Trevor's eye was constantly following her every movement with earnest, never-diverted attention.

How strange the secret power which sometimes attracts one towards the other, two beings of natures the most opposite!

Perhaps if two individuals had been chosen from amongst that large assembly, by those who knew them best—who on the score of incompatibility were least calculated to blend harmoniously together—it would have been that pure-hearted, single-minded, high-souled girl, whose ideal standard of the good and beautiful was of so refined and elevated a nature, a standard hitherto kept intact by the peculiar circumstances of her youthful existence—from whose very outward aspect seemed to breathe the undisturbed harmony of her lovely character;—she and that man, of a corrupted and corrupting world, upon whose brow was set the mark of many a contracting aim, many a darkening thought, a debasing pursuit, upon whose soul lay perhaps as dark a stain of actual crime as any in that company;—yet it seemed that this mysterious unaccountable power, did from the very first draw their hearts with sympathetic unison one towards another.

Well it showed at least that Trevor's soul was not as yet "all evil," that it could still bow before an image of purity and goodness, such as was enshrined in Mary's breast, and *she*—

> "Why did she love him?—
> Curious fool be still—

Is human love the growth of human will?"

Absorbed in her happy dreams, Mary drove home that evening with her cousins, too happy, even, to be much disturbed by that generally most fruitful source of disturbance, the bitter words passing between her companions.

They seemed now to have been provoked by some imprudence of Mrs. de Burgh's during that day; her husband's animadversions thereupon exciting the lady's scornful resentment; but its exact nature, Mary had too little observed Mrs. de Burgh during the day, to be able fully to understand.

Mrs. de Burgh, on her part, had been too much occupied with her own pleasure and interests to attend much to Mary and her concerns; but she told her, as they parted for the night, that she expected Eugene the next day to dinner.

Mary also had received information to the same effect, communicated in her ear, as she was being handed to the carriage.

Expectation on this point was, however, doomed to disappointment; the next evening, about the time that Eugene Trevor generally arrived, when he was to dine and sleep at the house, a horseman was seen approaching across the park, which proved to be a servant from Montrevor, mounted on his master's beautiful chesnut. He was the bearer of a note to Mrs. de Burgh.

Eugene Trevor wrote word that in returning home the preceding night, with a friend, he had received a kick from his companion's horse, and was now a prisoner to his bed. It was to him a most provoking accident, on many accounts, but he supposed he must submit to at least a week's confinement, as the medical man considered it his only chance of a speedy recovery. Mary looked a little pale at dinner after this intelligence, but was otherwise as cheerful, as calmly happy, as she had been since the *fête*.

Mrs. de Burgh afterwards sent over to inquire after her cousin, and once Mr. de Burgh, having occasion to ride into the neighbourhood, called to see Trevor, and brought back word of his progress towards recovery.

The injury proved, however more tedious than it had at first been anticipated. October had set in before he was allowed to walk; but still Mary's spirits did not fail her.

If "love could live upon one smile for years," much more throughout a few weeks of such unavoidable and accidental contingency.

CHAPTER XI.

I thank thee for that downcast look, and for that
blushing cheek,
I would not have thee raise those eyes, I would not
have thee speak.
Tho' mute, I deem thee eloquent, I ask no other sign,
While thus thy little hand remains confidingly in mine.

HAYNES BAYLEY.

A friend of Mrs. de Burgh's came to stay at Silverton about this time, a lady of a certain age.

She had lately lost her husband.

Though malicious report spoke her to have loved him little during life, she now mourned with considerable effect at his decease; and though there was but the family party—for which circumstance she had been prepared—staying in the house—this being the first visit she had paid since her bereavement, she had not yet—though several days had elapsed since her arrival—been able to muster sufficient nerve to issue from the luxurious apartments assigned to her.

Mr. de Burgh maliciously expressed himself fearful that the cap was not becoming, hearing that the dainty, but not unsubstantial meals so plentifully partaken of by the fair widow in her retreat, did not well agree with any very wearing sentiment of grief.

But Mrs. de Burgh said it was just like his ill-nature on every subject connected with *her* friends —and *faute de mieux*, rather enjoyed the lounge of Mrs. Trevyllian's room, where she spent a great part of her time.

One evening, about the end of three weeks after Eugene Trevor's accident, having remained talking to Mary some time after they had left the dining-room, Mrs. de Burgh announced herself obliged to go up stairs to Mrs. Trevyllian, for the rest of the evening, that lady having made her promise so to do, she being in more than usually bad spirits that day.

"I know you do not mind a quiet evening for once," she added, "and I have already seen you cast

many a wistful glance at those books on the table, whilst I have been talking nonsense; so make yourself comfortable and if you find it dull come up to us. Mrs. Trevyllian will not mind you. You will not have Louis' company to-night, for he has ordered candles in the library, and means to adjourn there with his landscape gardener when he leaves the dining room."

Mary was accordingly left in solitary possession of the fair saloon, through which the soft clear lamps and ruddy fire cast so cheerful a radiance, feeling quite capable of appreciating the enjoyment, nay luxury, of occasional solitude of the kind under similar auspices.

She felt quite sure as she glanced around, when Mrs. de Burgh closed the door behind her, that the *tête-à-tête* of Olivia and her friend would not be intruded upon by her to-night, that for the hour or two before bed-time she should be well able to wile away her moments more agreeably; and when in accordance with Mrs. de Burgh's anticipations, she listened to the retreating voices of Louis and his companion, as issuing from the dining-room they proceeded to the library, and shut the door upon them to pore, for the remainder of the evening, over books and plans—for Mr. L—— had to leave early on the following morning—Mary obediently followed Mrs. de Burgh's injunction, "to make herself comfortable," by sinking back on a luxurious *bergère* on one side of the fire place, and returning to the perusal of a work she had commenced that day—whether for the name's-sake we cannot tell—but when my readers learn its title, they will scarcely wonder if she now proceeded with almost as much absorbing and abstract interest as if in Madeline's own words there had been "no more Eugene's in the world than one"—the strange and mysterious hero of her romantic studies. The book she read was Eugene Aram.

Thus engaged, Mary's attention wholly rivetted by the stirring interest of the story, her taste enchanted by the glowing descriptions; and more than all, her feelings and sympathies affected by the striking sentiments of force and pathos with which its pages abound. She must have become insensible to the existence of common worldly sounds, for that of the door bell at this unusual hour, made no more impression on her senses than any other might have done.

Reclining back in indolent repose, one hand supporting the book, whilst her other fair girlish arm lay in listless abandonment across the arm of the chair, she just heard the door of the apartment open, but never troubled herself to turn her head to look upon the intruder, concluding that it could be only the servant come to attend to the fire, and not till he had crossed the room and stood close before her, did she raise her eyes to behold Eugene Trevor.

Yes, there he was, standing looking down upon her with a smile on his lips, provoked, first by the extreme absorption in which he had surprised her, and then by the gaze of startled wonder, her upraised countenance expressed. But astonishment soon gave way to other appearances. If Eugene Trevor had ever reason to doubt the true impression made by him on Mary Seaham's heart—by this sudden and unexpected arrival after an interval of absence such as had occurred, and from causes such as had existed—he had now taken good means to ascertain its real nature and extent.

Nothing speaks so truly as to the character and durability of the feelings we have awakened, than the effect produced by meetings of this sort.

> "Le plus aimé n'est pas toujours le meilleur reçu,"

some French poet writes, but *rencontres* of this description admit of no such refined and delicate subterfuges. The truth must out in glance, or tone, or countenance,

> "And then if silence does not speak,
> Or faltering tongue, or changing cheek—
> There's nothing told."

And these tell-tale signs were unmistakeably revealed in this unprepared moment upon poor Mary's countenance, when her lover, for so she had lately dared to deem him, so unexpectedly appeared before her sight after three weeks separation.

She knew him during that time to have been ill, and suffering from a dangerous and painful accident. She saw him paler, thinner, than she had ever yet beheld him. They were alone together at this uncommon time and under these unexpected circumstances, and her heart beat fast with feelings she had never before experienced.

And there she sat; the colour fast mounting over cheek and brow, then leaving them very pale. Her eyes half filled with tears, her half parted lips unable to falter forth, but incoherently, the words of welcome, of congratulation, of pleasure at his recovery; which to any other individual under the same circumstances, nay to himself, but a few weeks ago, would have flowed so calmly and naturally from her kind warm heart.

"Eugene Aram" fell unheeded from her hands. To Mary, indeed, at that moment, "there was but one Eugene in the world."

Fortunately for her, he in whose presence she now found herself, however culpable he might be in other points of conduct and of character, was not one, in this instance, to take a vain and heartless pleasure in the discovery he thus made.

> "To trifle in cold vanity with all
> The warm soul's precious throbs, to whom it is

A triumph that a fond devoted heart
Is breaking for them—who can bear to call
Young flowers into beauty—and then to crush them."

Nay, still more fortunately for Mary, he was as much in love himself at this time—perhaps, even still more so—different, totally, in kind, as that love might be; and that he was loved, unsuspectingly, undeservedly loved, by one, in his idea, as far above himself in purity and goodness, as an angel is above a being of this fallen earth—loved even with that excellence with which "angels love good men," filled his soul, at that moment, with emotions of a softer, holier nature, than any which, perhaps, for a long time, it had been his happiness to experience; and a grateful, almost humbled, exultation, if any such feeling was excited by the conviction, lit up with a sudden flash of animation, his keen dark eve. He did not wait for Mary to finish what she had attempted to express on his account. A moment's earnest abstracted pause ensued, then moving quickly from his position on the hearth-rug, as if impelled by a sudden irresistible impulse, he drew a chair close to her's, and sitting down by her side, at once began.

Her face was half averted, but he bent down his that she might catch the low, soft, earnest accents, in which he breathed forth expressions of his joy at beholding her again—how that she alone had filled his thoughts during the period of his confinement—how impatiently he had awaited the moment of liberation—and how, though unavoidably prevented from leaving home as he had intended, in time for dinner, he could not bear to delay one night longer after receiving his release, and had therefore set out even at this eleventh hour—finally, he alluded to the unexpected delight of finding her thus alone, the circumstance affording him, as it did, the joyful opportunity of at once expressing in words, what she must long ere this have inwardly discerned, the admiration, the respect, the far deeper, tenderer feelings, with which she, almost from the first moment he beheld her, had inspired him. He knew he was unworthy to possess so inestimable a treasure, but if any strength or measure of affection could atone for other imperfections, his surely might be sufficient to plead in his behalf, did she not disdain the compensation.

Poor Mary! Her head sank lower, lower, on her heaving bosom, as one by one these thrilling words—these fond assurances—came falling on her ear, or rather sinking into her heart,

"Like the sweet South
That breathes upon a bank of violets
Stealing and giving odour,"

overpowering it with emotions of only too exquisite a nature.

Was not her's a happiness rare and almost unexampled, to find the hero of her maiden meditations thus prove in truth the master and magician of her fate?

Yet even in that moment of joyful agitation, was there no swift under current of thought, and recollection mingling strangely with her immediate sensations; bringing with it, a certain confusion of feeling and idea, similar to the one which had broken her slumbers the first night of her arrival at Silverton?

Alas! if it was the remembrance of the Welsh hill-side which again suggested itself, if the image of her rejected lover standing by her with that suppressed, yet deep and manly grief and disappointment, expressed upon his noble countenance—might there not have been too a voice to whisper in her ear, "And what then is there in this man by your side, that he has thus found favour in your eyes; what superiority and excellence have you fancied in him, that he is thus chosen when the other was rejected?"

But no such voice it seems did speak, or if so, it made itself not heard.

The charmed ear is deaf to whom it whispers—the fascinated eye is blind to whom it would suggest such comparison.

Yes, blind! Blind as the aged patriarch of old. Jacob is blessed: the blessing and the birthright is taken from the rightful claimant. "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed."

Mary has not yet spoken, but there is a silence more expressive than words—and expressive, as that which had followed Mr. Temple's declaration and so coldly fallen upon his trembling hopes, was, to Eugene Trevor, the silence which now hung upon her tongue. That blushing face, those tearful eyes, those smiling lips, spoke all that he desired to hear. They emboldened him so far as the pressing one of the soft hands, which now nervously grasped the chair beside him, and though it trembled, it was not withdrawn; and then the first overpowering flood of agitation subdued—Mary, her emotion soothed and composed, had told her love with "virgin pride—" and now sat calmly happy by her lover's side, listening to his earnest conversation on many points connected with that future now before them; yes whatever might have been the nature of his feelings on the occasion, how intense and delicious were *her* sensations of happiness; for as it is expressed in the pages of the book to which we have, in the last chapter, had occasion to allude:

"In the pure heart of a young girl loving for the first time, love is far more ecstatic than in man's more fevered nature. Love then and there, makes the only state of human existence which is at once capable of calmness and transport."

CHAPTER XII.

She hath flung
Her all upon the venture of her vow,
And in her trust leans meekly, like a flower,
By the still river tempted from its stem
And on its bosom floating.

WILLIS.

Mary did not feel quite equal to face her cousin and his friend in her present state of mind; therefore, on the first movement making itself heard in the direction of the library, she took alarm and escaped up stairs, leaving Trevor, who did not suffer the same shamefaceness, to undergo the encounter alone. Mary first went to her own room, then shortly after, trying to look as if nothing had happened, proceeded to Mrs. Trevyllian's apartment, to wish her cousin good night. She found the ladies both reclining on their respective sofas, and was cordially welcomed by each, as if by this time they had began to have had enough of each other's uninterrupted society.

"Do you know that Mr. Trevor is here?" Mary murmured to her cousin, with averted countenance.

"Why, I fancied you had a visitor of some sort," Mrs. de Burgh replied with a smile of arch significance. "Was I not good to leave you undisturbed?" she added at the same time in a whisper, trying to catch a glimpse of Mary's face, whilst Mrs. Trevyllian turned upon it a glance of such scrutinizing curiosity, that Mary finding this an ordeal, unendurable for the present, bade them "good night," and made her escape back to the sheltered sanctity of her solitary chamber, where no intruding gaze could pierce, to meddle with the shrinking, modest joy, which overflowed her heart.

But it seems that Mrs. de Burgh, with all pardonable curiosity, considering she was not quite unprepared for what Eugene Trevor's visit would bring forth, had gone down-stairs after Mary left her, and had a long private conversation with her cousin; for though she did not disturb her again that night, it being very late before the interview came to an end; yet the next morning, just as Mary was endeavouring to clear her senses, and remember whether what had occurred the night before had been a dream or a reality, Olivia made her appearance to embrace and congratulate her on the happy intelligence she had received.

"You cannot imagine, dear Mary," she said, "how pleased I was when Eugene told me. It is just what I have wished all along. I have always been very fond of Eugene; all that he required was a good wife, such as he will find in you; and I feel convinced that he will make you very happy."

Mary smiled, as if she too felt perfectly satisfied on this point.

"Louis," Mrs. de Burgh continued, "will most likely say that he is not half good enough for you, but I suppose you will not feel much inclined to agree with him there. As far as that goes, I assure you Eugene thinks the same, but that is only as it should be, the more humble men's ideas of themselves, and the more exalted their views of us, the better; they are not often disposed to hold such doctrine. Of course you cannot expect that even Eugene, has been, or ever will be, a piece of perfection in character or conduct; but ah, I see by your face that you think him so now, at any rate, so what signifies the *has been*, or the *may be*? Well, you are quite right. 'Sufficient for the day' is my motto, and, as I said before, I am convinced Eugene will love you as much as ever wife was loved."

Mary's beaming eyes spoke indeed her perfect satisfaction, at this summing up of Mrs. de Burgh's discourse. The rest she heeded not; it agreed so little with the spirit of her pure and perfect love, and she then inquired whether "Eugene," (with a blushing smile, as for the first time she called him by that name,) had made Louis acquainted with the fact of their engagement. She should be very glad if this were the case, as she could not keep it a secret for a moment longer from her kind cousin than was necessary; but Eugene seemed the evening before, rather to wish that she should delay the communication for a day or two.

"Yes," replied Mrs. de Burgh, "he told me so last night, and still would prefer our being silent on the subject just at present. The fact is, he anticipates some little difficulty in reconciling his father to the idea of his marriage. Uncle Trevor is rather a strange old man. Besides being very fond of his son, he may imagine such an event likely to interfere with the comfort he has in his society at Montrevor, not, of course, that Eugene would allow that to be any obstacle; but only he thinks, I dare say, that it is as well to keep the matter as snug as possible, till he has prepared the old man's mind a little for the change."

"Oh, of course," Mary said. "It is much better that it should be so. It is only Louis, who I should not like to keep in the dark longer than was really necessary, staying as I am in his house, and he being so near and responsible a relation. Besides, it will be so difficult when Eugene is here, to prevent letting it appear that something peculiar has happened."

Mrs. de Burgh laughed.

"Well! Eugene seemed to think that he would find it rather difficult too, and for that reason imagined it better to go away this morning before breakfast. He gave out last night, what is partly true, that he only came here *en route* to M——, where he has business to transact; he will return home to-night, and begin operations on the old gentleman. In the meantime, as the most likely means to expedite and facilitate matters, Eugene has set his heart upon a little plan which he commissioned me to lay before you, and also to beseech you, with his most tender love, not to disappoint his wishes on the subject."

Mary's countenance seemed to say that already his request was granted, but she paused for further information.

"He proposes," continued Mrs. de Burgh, "that, perhaps not the next day, but the one following, you and I should drive over to Montrevor to luncheon, and that in this way his father, before he knows of anything being in the wind, should see and know you—and he thinks—as a matter of course, be charmed and delighted, and so half the battle gained at once."

Mary smiled.

"But what will Louis say to this?" she inquired, "he will object now, I suppose, as much as formerly, to our driving to Montrevor."

"*Louis!* how very good you are Mary, why you are not half in love if you would allow ought that Louis could say or think, to interfere with anything in which Eugene is concerned now. But to set your mind at ease on this point, Louis happens to leave home this morning and does not return till the next day, so you need not have to tell any stories on the subject, and perhaps, when you see him again, you may be able to divulge all, and he have no more business to quarrel with your drives to Montrevor."

Mary gave a yielding smile, and we are afraid that even if she had entertained any conscientious scruples after the above discourse, they would have melted quite away after the first love-letter she received, under cover to one addressed to Mrs. de Burgh, from Eugene Trevor on the following morning. A little note which she wrote in reply, necessarily settled the point.

Mr. de Burgh took his departure early the next morning, and his fair lady ordered the pony carriage to come round at noon the same day, for their drive to Montrevor, which was more than twelve miles distant.

"Adieu, happy people, you will have a delightful drive!" sighed Mrs. Trevyllian, who had actually been emboldened by the absence of gentlemen to face the sunshine beneath the cover of her crape veil, and to go out for a stroll upon the lawn.

And a delightful drive it was, at least to Mary. It would have been so, even under less favourable auspices, with the same happy prospects at the end. A visit to her intended, under his father's roof! But even nature seemed to smile upon her hopes. It was a perfect specimen of an October day, with the balmy and refreshing warmth, sometimes characterizing this period of the year; the sky serene and clear, above their heads, whilst the woods and trees which skirted the roads, along which they so swiftly sped, were still in one rich golden glow.

And it was not for Mary, on this happy day, to think, how there wanted but one chill and wintry blast to lay these thousand glories low.

She naturally felt a little nervous when she was informed they were approaching their destination. The trembling happiness of meeting Eugene for the first time since their last eventful interview, made her heart beat fast—and then there was her introduction to his father, the "strange old man," on whom the impression she should make was to her, for Eugene's sake, of such great importance.

Mrs. de Burgh, in her conversation, during the drive, touched in great measure on the subject of this relative.

She described him as having for years lived a very reclusive life at Montrevor; and thus to have acquired peculiarities and eccentricities, even beyond those which in a degree were natural to his habits and disposition—one of which, by her account, seemed to be an inclination to the most rigid parsimony, and she prepared Mary to see some signs of this in the character of their entertainment upon the present occasion.

"Of course," Mrs. de Burgh added, "Eugene does not much interest himself in amending such matters at present, and indeed during his father's life-time—or perhaps till he married—it was of little consequence to him, and to say the truth, any interference on his part would not have been of much avail, for an old favourite servant has hitherto held sovereign sway over the house. However, it will be all very different some of these days," she added with a smile, "when a Mrs. Eugene Trevor comes into power."

CHAPTER XIII.

I know
She prizes not such trifles as these are:

The gifts she looks from me, are pack'd and lock'd
Up in my heart.

WINTER'S TALE.

They entered at last upon the domain of Montrevor, a very fine estate, on much the same scale, and not very different in style, to the mansion of Silverton; a not uncommon similarity which might seem, generally speaking, to run through the estates and great houses of our several English counties, almost as much as their distinctive characteristics are shown forth in the dialect of the common people, and even—as we fancy—in the style and manners of the superior class of inhabitants.

But there was one important point which imparted a very opposite aspect to the two places, and must have at once struck the beholder; whereas the grounds of Silverton, under the influence of Mr. de Burgh's zealous exertions, were undergoing the process of improvement—or at least alteration to a great extent—those of Montrevor, if not quite allowed to run wild, from neglect, showed at least no signs of anything like expensive outlay being wasted on their culture, or arrangement; whilst on the other hand, the frequent sight of naked stumps, interspersed within the still richly wooded domain, gave rise to the suspicion that the woodman's axe found no inconsiderable measure of employment there.

"Yes!" Mrs. de Burgh observed, in allusion to these appearances; "Eugene does all in his power to prevent too great a dilapidation of this kind; so the greatest delight the old gentleman can have is a regular destructive storm, after which he walks about—like a certain duke, whose propensities where restrained by an entail—chuckling over the devastations it may have occasioned, and yet I believe he is richer by far than Louis. I only wish," she added, giving a smart lash to the ponies, as they started aside from some fallen timber which lay near the road, "that he would spare his money a little in the same way; or at any rate, keep it to spend in a more satisfactory manner."

"Is Eugene the eldest son?" Mary quietly enquired, not the least afraid, in her unconscious simplicity of heart, lest the demand might have awakened suspicions that the sight of these fine family possessions had for the first time suggested the important question.

"The eldest son. Oh! I will tell you all about that presently. See, here is the house, and there is Eugene on the anxious look-out."

And what further thought had Mary as to her lover's primogeniture?

With glad alacrity, he hastened to meet them when the carriage stopped before the door, and warm and fervent was the meeting and the welcome he gave to his gentle, happy betrothed.

On Mary's part all nervous discomfort seemed to vanish, as handing her from the carriage he drew her trembling arm within his own, and led her up the steps into his father's halls, thanking her all the time, with the most earnest tenderness for having thus acceded to his request.

"My father," he said, turning to Mrs. de Burgh, as before proceeding they paused for a few moments together to converse, "is quite prepared to see you; and a very charming young lady—" looking with an expressive smile at Mary—"who, I told him, would accompany you; and I suppose luncheon must be nearly ready, that is to say, if there is anything prepared deserving of that name, and really I have been so busy this morning, and am so unaccustomed to eat in this house, that I never thought of making particular inquiries on the subject. But I suppose Marryott will give us something."

"Oh, yes, I dare say!" Mrs. de Burgh rejoined laughing; "and I am so hungry that I shall not much care what it is, so, that there only is 'something.' I have prepared, Mary, for finding that there will be some few points of reformation required in the domestic arrangements of Montrevor; but neither of *you*, of course, can do anything so unromantic as to eat just at present. Come along! where is my uncle—in his library?" and she proceeded to lead the way to that apartment.

In the long, low, and rather gloomy-looking library, on a faded crimson leather chair before a bureau, or old-fashioned writing-table, with drawers innumerable, was seated Mr. Trevor, the unconscious father-in-law elect of Mary Seaham. At the opening of the door, which instantaneously followed Mrs. de Burgh's knock, he hastily closed one of the receptacles over which he had seemed to be bending assiduously, and turning round his head and beholding his visitors, rose to receive them—giving his wasted hand to his niece, and saying in a weak and tremulous voice:

"My dear Olivia, I am very glad to see you."

"And *I* overjoyed to behold you again, uncle. It is really an age since I have had that pleasure; but how excessively well you are looking!" Then turning towards Mary, she added: "Allow me to introduce Miss Seaham—Louis' cousin, you know. I think you must remember her mother."

The old man looked at Mary and bowed with the utmost old-fashioned courtesy, then begged both ladies to be seated.

"I really have been intending to drive over to see you, dear uncle, ever since your illness in the

summer," continued Mrs. de Burgh, "but one thing or the other has prevented me. Besides Louis always persisted that you would only think me a nuisance, and Eugene," she added, looking at her cousin, who laughed at the accusation, "really did not much encourage the contrary idea."

"Eh, Eugene, is that the case?" responded the old gentleman, with an attempt at a jocular smile, which sat ill on his naturally careworn, anxious countenance. "A nice character they seem to give me, and that young lady," glancing towards Mary, "must look upon me of course as a sad old churl."

Mary with a sweet and earnest smile, denied the truth of any such assumption, and Mr. Trevor looked at her again more attentively, as almost every one who did look upon her countenance with any degree of observation, seldom failed to do a second time; not so much for its beauty as for that "something excellent which wants a name," attracting still more irresistibly. Mr. Trevor might have been also not a little struck by the expression of earnest, almost affectionate interest emanating from the gaze, with which he caught the soft grey eyes of this young stranger fixed upon his face; "and why does she look at me in that manner, does the girl want to borrow money?" were exactly the words which might have seemed to suit the first sharp suspicious glance with which he marked the circumstance, though diverted irresistibly and almost instantaneously by the silent magic of her ingenuous countenance.

Mary could not help regarding Eugene's father with a considerable degree of interest and attention, but even under indifferent circumstances, she would not have been quite unimpressed. His long silvery hair falling nearly to his shoulders—the sort of loose vest he wore, and little velvet cap covering the baldness of the crown of his head, gave him on the first *coup d'œil* a very venerable and picturesque appearance. But what on survey most attracted Mary's observation was the likeness, her loving quick-eyed perception perceived, or fancied she perceived between the father and son, allowing of course for the changing effects of age and infirmities, the latter perhaps in as great, if not in a greater degree in this case, than the former, for Mr. Trevor at this time was only seventy.

To the now bent and shrunken form, it was easy to imagine there had once belonged the manly build and middle height of Eugene. In his voice too, there was as much similarity of tone, as could have been preserved between such an unfeebled, time warped instrument, and the full toned organ of the other. Then there were the same dark, deep-set eyes, though dimmed and sunken; the same cast of features, though compressed, sharpened, and marked with signs and characters which she could not forbear to hope even age and infirmity might never mature on those of Eugene; for the impression they imparted was on a closer observation, of a far from agreeable nature.

"Well, Eugene, are we not to have some luncheon? these ladies must be hungry after their long drive," the old gentleman said after he had made civil enquiries as to the length of time Mary had been in the country, remarked on the weather &c.

"Yes indeed, Sir, Olivia professes herself very hungry indeed," Eugene replied, "I will ring the bell and ask if there is anything to be had."

"Yes, do so pray. Anything to be had," he repeated with a semblance of anxious hospitality, "of course there is something, Olivia is not to be starved (with an uneasy smile), eh, Olivia? But do not expect such feasting as you have at Silverton; we are plain housekeepers here at present, Eugene and I. My appetite is gone—irretrievably gone—can scarcely swallow a morsel, and Eugene is not particular. Bachelor fare suits him—Eh, Eugene?" he added with a facetious chuckle, "is not this the case?"

"Certainly, Sir, *at present*" his son replied with a significant laugh, in which Mrs. de Burgh joined, whilst both stole a glance at Mary, who cast down her eyes and blushed, though a smile at the same time played upon her lips.

A servant then entered, and in answer to the bell, announced that luncheon was on the table. Mr. Trevor by the manœuvre of Mrs. de Burgh, was made to offer his arm to Mary, whilst Eugene having smiled expressively upon her as she passed, followed with his cousin.

"What in the world induced you to put us in this dungeon of a room?" he enquired, turning to the butler, who with one other servant composed their attendance, as they entered the vast dining room, the door being thrown open for their reception.

"Yes, the small room would have done perfectly," said his father, glancing somewhat uneasily at the moderate fire burning not very effectually in the cold, bright, spacious grate, "but you and I can dine here Eugene, to-night—and the other fire," looking at the servant as he seated himself at the table, "may be let out."

"Very well, Sir," said the man, as he lifted up the cover of the dish placed before his master at the top of the long table, which might well have accommodated fourteen, a space being thereby occasioned between himself and Mary, and the couple at the bottom, of very formidable extent; and which seemed irresistably to excite Mrs. de Burgh's mirth, while Eugene was half angry, half amused at the stupidity and ridiculous nature of the arrangement.

"What have you there, Eugene?" Mr. Trevor then demanded, as the bottom cover was, at the same moment, removed.

"Potatoes, Sir, hot potatoes, I am glad to say, for we require heat, here, of some kind, excessively.

I shall be glad to yield you and Miss Seaham, the benefit of their vicinity, and save you the trouble of that joint. Roland, bring that mutton here," and the small loin being placed before Eugene, he proceeded to help the ladies, (Eugene was always a silent observer of these little points,) according to his, now not inexperienced, estimate of their several tastes and appetites.

"None for me, Eugene, none for me," Mr. Trevor said, surveying Mary's small supply, not uncomplacently, and helping himself to a potatoe. "Never eat meat at this time, you know, and at any time but with a poor relish. Youth, and health, and spirits, make the best sauces. Eh, Miss Seaham?" in answer to Mary's glance of pitying concern.

"The best to be had here, at any rate," laughed the younger Trevor to his companion, as he impatiently pushed away the cruet-stand, from which he had vainly been attempting to extract, for his own use, some remnant of its exhausted contents, "have them replenished immediately I beg," he added, addressing his servant. "Olivia, pray renew your acquaintance with your favourite old sherry; it will be many a long day before that is exhausted. Has Miss Seaham any? Ah, yes!"—with a smile across the table, which cleared away the momentary cloud that had passed over his countenance, and he proceeded to pour himself out a glass, and several others in succession, though his appetite, in other respects, appeared not much better than his father's.

Mrs. de Burgh and Eugene seemed to keep up a brisk and animated conversation, yet it was easy to perceive that they were not inattentive also to the progress of their opposite neighbours, and that Eugene's eye was continually directed towards Mary, with earnest solicitude as to her comfort and entertainment; whilst the complacent smile occasionally exchanged between him and his cousin, demonstrated their sense of the satisfactory progress she seemed to be making in the good graces of her host. For Mr. Trevor appeared in no way uninfected by the peculiar charm Mary had cast around the son. Her quiet, gentle manners, appeared to soothe him and set his mind at ease, whilst at the same time, the intelligent interest and animation in which she entered into all he said, flattered and pleased him.

"You must send Miss Seaham some more mutton; you helped her to only enough to feed a sparrow, you should make allowance for her long drive," he called out quite reproachfully to his son, as Mary's plate was about to be removed by the servant.

"I shall be happy to send Miss Seaham as much as she can possibly eat," said Eugene demurely, "but," he added, as Mary begged to decline a second supply, "I fancy she will prefer a slice of that cake I see on the side table."

"Cake! is there any cake?" exclaimed the old gentleman, looking round in doubtful search of this reported, and as it would have seemed, unexpected and unusual adjunct to his table.

"Oh, of course," Eugene replied, smiling; "all young ladies like cake, and Marryott knows that too well not to have supplied Miss Seaham with one to-day."

"But Marryott," said the old man, somewhat sharply, "did not know till this morning that we were to have ladies to luncheon. You did not tell her till this morning. Eh? How, then, could she have had one made in time?"

"Well then, Marryott is a prophetess, for, at any rate, here is a cake, and a capital one too," the son added, with a little quick impatience in his tone, though at the same time losing none of the respectful consideration, ever peculiarly observable in his manner towards his eccentric old father.

"Formerly, they used to make me cakes and all sort of good things to take to school when I was a boy; why, I wonder, are these, as well as many other good things, now denied me?" Eugene continued, laughing.

"Because you do not deserve them, I suppose," playfully rejoined Mrs. de Burgh.

"I suppose so," he answered rather quickly, a flush passing across his brow, whilst a slight glance was directed towards Mary, as if conscience suggested to his secret soul, one of those whispers which sometimes disturb the proud heart of man in his most careless moments.

"How, then, are you deserving of this good, best thing you are about to appropriate to yourself?"

Perhaps, too, for at the slightest word, "How many thoughts are stirred," his own careless question might suggest this one reply:

"And where is she, the fond, the faithful, and unselfish administrator to the tastes and pleasures of your boyhood—your thoughtless, selfish, slighting boyhood?—that gentle, excellent being, prized too little on earth, too soon forgotten in death, to whom, alas! you too seldom had recourse but when other resources failed you—who gave and did all unrebukingly, looking for nothing in return—never wearying of doing you good?"

"I think sometimes,"—are the words of gentle Charles Lamb—"could I recall the days that are gone, which amongst them should I choose? Not those 'merrier days' not 'the pleasant days of hope,' not those wanderings with a fair-haired maid, which I have so often and so feelingly regretted, but the days of a mother's fondness for her schoolboy. What would I give to call her back for *one* day, on my knees to ask her pardon for all those little asperities of temper, which from time to time have given her gentle spirit pain."

We do not know—we only imagine—we only hope that some such reflections might have

suggested themselves to Trevor's mind, for they are those which, however unfrequently indulged—like the droppings on a stone, or as angel's visits, few and far between—cannot leave the heart less hard than the nether millstone—less unredeemable than the forsaken reprobate—quite uninfluenced by their softening power, and the careless words which almost uninterruptedly followed this under current of thought, no way militates against our hopes and wishes on that score—for it is by the careless, outward sign that the deep utterance of the heart is oftenest disguised.

"Olivia," he continued, as he proceeded to cut the cake, "shall I give you some? No? Ah, I forgot, married ladies, I observe, seldom do eat cake;" and he sent round the plate to Mary, whilst Mr. Trevor, though he still kept his eye curiously fixed on the object of discussion, as if he could not yet quite reconcile to his mind the phenomenon of its production, was not ungratified to hear Mary praise it, and finally consented to taste a piece, in obedience to her recommendation; pronouncing himself perfectly satisfied with its merits, inasmuch—as it certainly was not too rich.

Independently of the natural promptings of her disposition, which would have led Mary under any circumstances, to pay every amiable and respectful attention to one of Mr. Trevor's age and circumstances, it had been certainly her anxious desire on this peculiar occasion to find favour in the eyes of Eugene's father, and to this effect—to make herself—as the phrase goes—as agreeable as possible; an endeavour all must know, in which—when the heart has so dear an interest as in the present case—it requires no great art or effort to engage *con amore*, and Mary's time and attention thus employed upon the father, it was not very often, though we cannot vouch for how often, her thoughts might have turned in that direction, that she suffered her eyes to wander down the long table towards the son, unless especially addressed.

Perhaps she might not feel quite bold enough as yet to brave the observation of her father-in-law elect in this manner, and it was easy to discover that Mr. Trevor's sharp anxious glances, were of no unobservant a character, therefore it certainly happened that when her eyes did venture to turn from his immediate vicinity, they were oftenest raised towards an object, upon which it was to be imagined, she might gaze *ad libitum*, without risk of incurring suspicion or animadversion. It was one of the family portraits, lining the walls of the spacious apartment, and hanging over the fire-place, facing where she sat; not one of the quiet gentlemen in brown lace adorned suits, and powdered bag wigs, but one whose habiliments pronounced him a warrior of still earlier date; and by that noble countenance, Mary's eyes might be seen very frequently attracted, so much so, that towards the close of the repast, when the servants had retired, Mrs. de Burgh called out, across the table:

"Mary, Eugene is quite jealous—that is to say," correcting herself, "Eugene is very anxious to know whether you have quite lost your heart to that gallant ancestor of his over the mantelpiece, for it seems to attract your most earnest interest and attention?"

Mary smiled.

"Not quite," she said, "though he is very handsome, I confess; but what most drew my attention to the picture, is its extreme likeness to a person with whom I am acquainted."

"Indeed!" Eugene exclaimed gaily, "well I cannot say that much mends the matter, does it, Olivia? A likeness to a person Miss Seaham has seen—a likeness too, she owns so handsome, attracting so much interest and attention, that we have scarcely had one glance cast upon us all this long time. We must really make some further enquiries about this 'person.'"

Mary responded to this fond raillery of her lover by an affectionate beaming smile, whilst Mr. Trevor in whose mind his son's words did not appear to awaken any suspicions, began for Mary's edification, to give an account of the name, birth, parentage and exploits of the warrior in question; which Mrs. de Burgh and Eugene interrupted, in the midst, by rising and moving from the table, and the former proposing that they should take Mary to show her over some parts of the house and gardens.

Whereupon the old gentleman expressed his fears that they would find all the rooms worth seeing, "shut, and covered up, and cold—very cold" (though in truth they could not have been much colder than the one in which they now found themselves) "and the garden very desolate"—and then he went off to his library.

CHAPTER XIV.

And side by side the lovers sate,
* * * * *
Their talk was of the future; from the height
Of Hope, they saw the landscape bath'd in light,
And where the golden dimness veil'd the gaze,
Guess'd out the spot, and marked the sites of happy days.

THE NEW TIMON.

Then once more was Eugene at Mary's side, congratulating himself that the separation from one another—which the stupidity of the servants, out of practice in anything like civilized entertainments had occasioned them was over.

"Is not that flattering, considering who was his partner in this isolation, as he calls it?" replied Mrs. de Burgh. "Stupidity, not at all! poor old Richard wished to do us honour, and he thought he could not do so to greater perfection than by putting us into the largest, coldest room, and at the longest table. Besides it could not have been better arranged, for other reasons. How well you got on with Uncle Trevor, Mary; we see that he is quiet charmed with you already."

"I fear I have had little time or opportunity as yet to win or merit any such unqualified approbation," Mary replied, "though I may hope, that in time,"—looking at Eugene with a smile.

"Oh, I assure you," interposed Mrs. de Burgh, laughing, "that you did a great deal in that short time. First of all you fully proved to my uncle that your appetite was of no formidable dimensions, (I know he holds mine of old in horror) not greatly above that of a sparrow. Then you only took a thimble full of wine; and he obtained full assurance that you had not been in London for ages—had no great longing to go there at all—had been accustomed, and indeed did, prefer the country; and therefore he need have no fear—when the truth is broken to him—of Eugene's being dragged off by you to London every season, his money squandered, as he fancies my husband's is (I wish, indeed, it was so squandered) upon hotel-bills and opera boxes! Oh, you did it capitally, Mary! did she not Eugene?"

"Olivia is too bad, is she not?" was Eugene's reply, having—during Mrs. de Burgh's speech—been gazing with a fond smile into the expressive countenance of his betrothed, as she listened, half amused—half surprised and shocked, to her cousin's unceremonious ridicule of her uncle's peculiarities before his son.

"She is too bad," he continued, "and will give you but a poor idea of what you may expect in this house; when, of course, everything would be set on a very different train on your becoming its inmate."

And Eugene took the hand of his betrothed within his own with such tender affection, that Mrs. de Burgh began to experience something of the uncomfortable sensation of feeling herself *de trop*, to which *chaperones*, or any third person, under similar circumstances, are apt to be exposed. So she proposed an immediate adjournment, deeming this the best measure to be adopted for promoting a more comfortable position of affairs.

They accordingly proceeded through some of the large apartments, handsome rooms, for the most part, though covered and shut up, and as Mr. Trevor had reported, "cold, very cold." Mrs. de Burgh at least found them so, and Trevor having proposed to show Mary a more pleasant and habitable room, which he thought she would prefer, Mrs. de Burgh applauded the plan, and accompanied them up the staircase, but in the gallery suddenly remembered that she had something particular to say to Marryott, and adding that she would go and look for her, and return to them in the boudoir, when they might go out to walk, she left the lovers alone together. Trevor accordingly proceeded to lead Mary in the direction of the room thus specified.

There were pictures on the walls of the corridor through which they passed, and one of these Mary would fain have waited more particularly to survey.

It was a large oil painting, representing a group composed of three boys, from about the ages of ten to fourteen. One, apparently the eldest, was mounted on a handsome pony, the reins of which were held by the second, the most striking in appearance of the party, and whose fine animated countenance was turned eagerly aside towards the third and youngest, a dark-haired, dark-eyed little fellow, carrying a cricket-bat in his hand. A large Newfoundland dog completed the picture.

"Yes," Trevor said, in answer to the look of interest and half-uttered enquiry which a glimpse of the painting drew forth from Mary, "that gentleman with the bat was intended to represent my hopeful self."

But there was something of constraint in the smile which accompanied, and in the tone in which he uttered these words, which instinctively caused Mary to pass on without further demonstration of the wish she felt to pause for its closer inspection.

There might be, for aught she knew, some melancholy associations connected with the brother, she remembered he had lost, perhaps even with the one still living, but concerning whom she had as yet heard so little, and to whom she could not help, from that very cause, attaching the existence of some mystery. But at any rate, she had ascertained that Eugene was not the eldest son.

Their course was destined to meet with one other interruption. They suddenly came upon a remarkable looking woman, tall, and rather handsomely dressed, with remains of considerable beauty, though now apparently past fifty.

Mary at once concluded her to be the Marryott of whom she had heard previous mention, though the ideas she had formed respecting that personage were rather of a more venerable and old fashioned looking person—a housekeeper of the old school, in sweeping serge, high starched cap, and massive bunches of keys at her girdle.

She had, however, a kindly smile, and some few gracious words ready for this—from all she had heard and imagined—old and faithful servant of the family, who drew back with all due deference to let her young master and his fair companion pass.

But Trevor did not testify much more inclination to pause here than he had showed before the picture; he merely said, *en passant*, acknowledging her presence by a hasty glance:

"Oh, Marryott, Mrs. de Burgh has gone to look for you. I want to show Miss Seaham the boudoir; I suppose the door is open?"

The woman answered civilly that it was, though she was sorry to say there was no fire lighted, and they proceeded on their way.

The room which the happy pair finally entered was indeed of a more pleasant, and alluring aspect than any Mary had yet seen. The whole brightness at present pervading the mansion, appeared concentrated within its walls, for all want of fire was supplied by the genial warmth the afternoon sunshine emitted through the pleasant window, near to which Eugene and Mary at once seated themselves, to enjoy under these auspicious circumstances the first *tête-à-tête* interview afforded them since their engagement.

"This is a pretty room, is it not?" Eugene remarked.

"Delightful!" Mary replied, looking around her.

"Yes! and might be made more so," Eugene continued. "The furniture is, as you see, quite old-fashioned; it has been left much in the same state ever since my mother died, nearly nine years ago."

And certainly though that peculiar air pervaded the apartment which bespoke its original occupation by a woman of refinement, there was very little in the furniture or decorations, to show that much expense in the way of modern adornment or improvement had been bestowed upon it, for many years before the period alluded to by Eugene, or those consisting but of the simplest nature; since, for the only signs of costliness in any of its appurtenances it had evidently been indebted to days long gone by.

But Mary said (as her eye wandered round with no slight increase of interest since Eugene's mention of his mother—upon the time-worn instrument whose notes had probably been so long unawakened, the books within the carved oak shelves, the *escritoire*, and work-box,) that she rather liked its simple, old-fashioned appearance.

Eugene smiled upon her, but said he thought there would be some few improvements and additions required before the room would be again quite rendered fit for a lady's occupation.

"It was your mother's boudoir, then," observed Mary; "how fond you must be of it." And she seemed to wish to draw him on to give some particulars of that lost parent, whose memory she doubted not he as feelingly cherished as she that of her own. And Eugene did then speak a few words in commendation of the worth and excellence of the deceased Mrs. Trevor; but still, as had ever been peculiarly the case in his intercourse with Mary, he seemed to prefer that she should rather be the speaker. He was never weary of listening to the most trivial communications she chose to make to him, drew her on, to speak of her sisters, her brother; everything in the least connected with her past or present circumstances; whilst it might have seemed from the little he spoke concerning aught, hearing no reference to the *one event*—his marriage with herself, sooner or later as it might occur, (for of course as yet, no time was definitely specified)—that that subject formed the *nucleus* around which clustered all interest concerning his own affairs, past present or to come.

The moments thus engaged, as may be imagined, glided quickly and imperceptibly away, and Mrs. de Burgh's prompt return was neither looked for nor expected, though nearly an hour had elapsed ere there was any sign of interruption. Mary and Eugene were leaning together over the window, which the latter had thrown open a few moments before, for Mary to gain a better view of the park and woods and church tower, which from their present post were seen to such advantage, and now were tinged by the first brilliant tint of the sun's departing radiance with such glowing hues.

They were leaning thus out of the window together—of course entirely engrossed by the beauties of the scene before them—when a sound within caused them to draw back, and turn their heads, expecting to see Mrs. de Burgh, but in her stead they beheld old Mr. Trevor standing before them. Mary taken by surprise looked a little frightened, but Eugene appeared in no degree disconcerted, however unexpected might be the sight of his father, in a part of the house to which he now rarely found his way; and which circumstance rather gave rise to the supposition that some secret movement of suspicion, that a plot was hatching against him, must have prompted him to so doing on this present occasion.

He merely said in the most natural manner: "Oh! Sir, have you come to look for us? We are waiting for Olivia who has gone to speak to Marryott. Miss Seaham is delighted with this room and the view from the window, but she was just suggesting—"

"What—what?" interposed the old man sharply; "what is there to be done now? nothing that would improve the prospect I am sure. I did that by cutting down the trees. No, no young lady," softening his first quick tone into an attempt at jocoseness, "you come from Silverton, where de Burgh I hear is playing a fine game, doing grand things with the place; but it won't do for me, I am content with it as it has been, and now is. I leave it to Eugene to make ducks and drakes with his property if he pleases, when I am not here to see it, but," becoming considerably excited, "I'll have nothing of the sort going on whilst I'm alive, no—no—not I. Eugene knows that, don't you Eugene? ha, ha!"

"But my dear Sir, you quite mistook me," Eugene soothingly interposed. "Miss Seaham far from suggesting any such expensive improvements as you seem to have taken into your head, was only just now saying," with an arch smile as he glanced at Mary, "how much more she liked this place in its present wild and picturesque disarrangement, than in a state of high and artificial culture. Indeed she is so very simple and unpretending in her taste, that the only thing she could at all suggest, as I was going to tell you to make a place like this, as it is now—quite perfect—would be, plenty of mignonette sown in the beds beneath the windows, as there used to be round her family house in Wales. If there was only this, it seems that all the green-house ruinations might go to the dogs for what she cared."

Mary smiled, and of course did not attempt a contradiction of those points in her lover's exculpation which were rather beyond the mark, for the old man's mind was evidently relieved—his alarm abated.

"Mignonette!" he repeated, "well, I don't see any harm in that. Yes, that might be done—easily done; we'll see about it by the spring. It is a sweet and pleasant thing to have in summer time; we used to have it I think when your mother was alive," looking at Eugene, "but it's worn out since—and Eugene and I," again addressing Mary, "are no gardeners. You've seen the gardens I suppose, though there is little to be seen now. No! eh? why I thought you were out all this time—where's Olivia? what's she saying to Marryott? it's getting late and she has a long drive to take—I am sure it must be four by this time."

"Oh, my dear Sir, nothing like it, besides there is no hurry; no hurry whatever. De Burgh's away, so no matter keeping dinner waiting, (not that I believe Olivia has ever many scruples that way,) even if they are late. Oh, here she is, now we can go out and look about us a little."

Mrs. de Burgh showed a little surprise to see her uncle of the party, but she began to tell him she had been talking to Marryott about a housemaid she wanted. She then professed her readiness to go out, though in half an hour they must be setting off home, therefore they might as well take leave of dear uncle Trevor at once, that they might not have to disturb him again.

This they accordingly did when they reached the foot of the stairs, for Mr. Trevor accompanied them thus far, first staying behind to pull down the blinds and carefully to shut the boudoir door.

He shook hands with his niece with some warmth, and with Mary with most marked politeness, and said, when they thanked him for his kind reception, that he should be very happy to see them again when they had any fancy for the drive; and then walked off towards his library, shutting the door behind him with a noise which was in no slight degree expressive of relief. The rest of the party then adjourned to the grounds, their half hour's perambulations extending nearly to an hour. Then Mrs. de Burgh, professing herself quite tired out, though she sat some time in the gardener's cottage, (either for her own sake or in consideration of her companions,) they went back towards the house, and found the carriage waiting at the door, into which, Mrs. de Burgh having first had a little private confabulation with Eugene, the two ladies entered.

Many last words were exchanged, as Eugene assisted in the arrangement of the extra wraps round Mary which the evening air rendered requisite; but they were at length cut short by Mrs. de Burgh's movement of the reins and the consequent springing forward of the ponies, when he stepped back and regretfully waved his hand in adieu.

"Well, Mary, I think we have done very well," Mrs. de Burgh exclaimed, when they had driven on a few hundred yards. "Now look back and say how you feel when you fancy yourself, in a few months perhaps, established mistress of this fine old place."

Mary turned her head as she was desired, but probably more as an excuse for taking a last look at Eugene, who she could see slowly withdrawing back into the house, than for the reason suggested.

Then indeed she suffered her eye to wander over the wide mansion, but turning back with a half smile—half sigh—she murmured:

"I cannot as yet quite realize that idea, dear Olivia."

"Well, my dear Mary," Mrs. de Burgh gaily replied, "then I hope you may very soon have it in your power to realize the *fact*."

After a day of mental excitement and bodily fatigue such as they had undergone, the ladies did not of course feel equal to keeping up the animated and unbroken conversation of the morning. Mary for the most part of the way, lent back in the carriage in the silent indulgence of the ample source of thought and meditation afforded her by the events of the day, whilst Mrs. de Burgh drove but weariedly, and after her first animated address, made but languid attempts at reference or remark upon the incidents of the visit.

There was one important communication which she did however make in a careless quiet way, perhaps owing to the same physical exhaustion, but which seemed certainly rather disproportionate to the interest and magnitude of the facts it conveyed.

"Bye the bye," she said, *à-propos* to something to which Mary had alluded concerning Eugene, "I promised to tell you about his brother. His elder brother, you must know—"

"Yes," interrupted Mary, "I thought so from the picture I saw at Montrevor, of Eugene—and, I suppose, his brothers, the youngest of whom, Eugene pointed out to me as himself."

"Yes, exactly—did he mention the others?"

"No, he did not, and I did not like to ask him questions, not knowing the exact state of the case."

"No, of course, and the fact is, the subject is a very painful one for him to touch upon to those unacquainted with his family history—more particularly to you; but Eugene wishes you to be told all about it. The truth is, that elder brother, the second you saw in the picture, is unfortunately deranged—that is to say, is subject to occasional attacks of insanity, which naturally unfits him for the position he would otherwise have held as his father's heir; therefore Eugene, ostensibly speaking, holds that place—indeed his father always treats him, and some say has unconditionally constituted him his successor, for I believe the property is mostly unentailed."

Mary did not make much comment on this revelation, and Mrs. de Burgh doubtless thought that she received the communication as coolly as she had herself imparted it; but Mary was far from being at the moment so entirely unaffected as her cousin might imagine.

There is a natural horror associated with the idea of a calamity such as had been related, which more or less revolts the human mind even in the most indifferent cases, and no wonder that to hear of its being so closely connected with the being to whom her interests and affections were so closely linked caused an inward shudder and a dark shadow to pass across the full-tided happiness of her heart. But as we have said, she made few comments on the facts imparted, and Mrs. de Burgh therefore added in the same tone:

"Louis will no doubt be too glad to bring this forward as one of the objections he is sure to make against anything he has not himself concerted or previously approved; but you must not mind him; he is always full of quirks and fancies. By the bye, when is he to be told?"

"I hope very soon," said Mary; "Eugene is to write to-morrow or the next day, if possible, to tell me how his father receives the intelligence, which he means to break to him by degrees, and at the same time he hopes to be able to give me leave to inform Louis. I think," she added, smiling, "that at any rate I shall be allowed to do that; for I have told him, and he is very good and thinks perhaps I am right—that it will be far better for him not to come to Silverton again until matters are more definitively settled—I mean until his father's approval and sanction have been obtained."

"How *very* good of him indeed!" laughed Mrs. de Burgh, with a touch of sarcasm in her tone. "What a *very* virtuous being you will make of Eugene, Mary!"

CHAPTER XV.

But should detraction breathe thy name,
The world's reproofs defying;
I'd love thee, laud thee—trust thee still—
Upon thy truth relying.

HAYNES BAYLEY.

Mr. de Burgh's return was somewhat opportunely delayed until the day following the one on which he was expected, so that Mary had only for one evening to maintain the, to her, very repugnant and unaccustomed system of concealment and comparative dissimulation, to which she was reduced towards her kind and amiable relative, a course she was ably assisted in by his wife. The following morning brought a note from Trevor, written overnight, and despatched before breakfast by a servant; the substance of which was of a most satisfactory nature.

He had broken the news to his father, that is to say, had given him to understand that, sooner or later, it was his intention to take unto himself a wife; that Mr. Trevor had been, of course, at first, a little startled and annoyed, and made fidgetty and uneasy by the intelligence; but that it had seemed no little relief to his mind, when informed that it was the nice, pretty, gentle, *moderate* young lady-visitor of the day before, upon whom his son had fixed his choice; a young lady who, though of good family and respectable position, possessed no extravagant tastes or preposterous pretensions; to sum up all, as complete a contrast as he could wish, to his spoilt, expensive and exacting niece, whom, allowing for the ties of relationship existing between them, he had always held in distaste and terror, as one of the most ill-disciplined of woman, of course according to his

own peculiar notions on the subject.

In short, whatever difficulty might really have attended his important revelation to his father, Trevor only brought forward the smooth side of the matter; and he further desired that no time might be lost in imparting the intelligence to Mr. de Burgh also, as then he should only wait her summons to make all speed for Silverton.

"Why did Trevor's man come scampering here so early?" enquired Mr. de Burgh at the close of breakfast.

"He brought a little note for me," replied his wife.

"What about?"

"Oh, a little private business of mine own; are you very curious?" she added, whilst Mary took little Charlie on her knee, to hide her conscious countenance. "Very well, you may be informed perhaps before long."

She uttered all this with more playful and propitiatory suavity of tone and manner than she often condescended to use towards her husband, having probably in view her forthcoming interview, for she had proposed to Mary that she should first take upon herself to break the intelligence to Mr. de Burgh of *his* cousin's engagement to *her* cousin, Eugene Trevor; an offer to which Mary had willingly acceded.

Accordingly, very shortly after they parted at the breakfast-table, Mrs. de Burgh followed her husband into the library, where he had gone to write his letters.

Mary, as may be supposed, waited with some degree of nervous anxiety for the close of this interview—more perhaps than might have seemed suitable to the occasion, or than she could herself account for. Surely her cousin Louis was of no such very formidable a character. She tried to divert her mind during the interval, by occupying herself with the children, who were playing in the drawing-room, but she soon found the noisy merriment, and exacting attentions of the little creatures—as we are, even with the sweetest and most engaging, all apt to do, when the mind is in any way agitated or over-burdened—an infliction rather than a relief; so she gladly relinquished them to the nurse, who came to summon them for their walk; and then as she justly deemed the *éclaircissement* between her cousins had lasted quite as long as was either necessary or desirable, and that it would be less formidable to join them at once than to wait any longer, in suspense, a formal summons, she determined to proceed to the library, and soon had carried this determination into effect.

Opening the door rather timidly, she found Mrs. de Burgh seated with an expression of countenance plainly evincing that even a discussion in which they were neither personally concerned, had not passed off without giving occasion for altercation between the married pair; but immediately on perceiving Mary, she smoothed her brow, and exclaiming: "Oh here she is! well I will leave you together," smiled encouragement on Mary, and left the room.

Mr. de Burgh, who it seemed had been perambulating the apartment during the latter part of his conversation with his wife, and had paused before the window on Mary's entrance—now turned, and without exactly looking her in the face, held out his hand as he advanced towards her, saying:

"Well, I suppose I ought to congratulate you, Mary."

His countenance too, Mary saw, bore signs of annoyance; but that his recent quarrel might have effected, and she affectionately placed her hand in his, and looked her thanks for the implied felicitations, coldly and cautiously as they were conveyed.

"You have done a great deal in my absence, I find Mary," he next said, throwing himself upon a chair. She thought he alluded to the proposal of Eugene and her acceptance, so answered in her truthful manner, and somewhat apologetically.

"Oh, no! not in your absence; that took place a day or two before you left, but Eugene thought it better that I should—"

"Oh yes!" he answered with some repressed impatience, "I have heard all that—I mean to say that you have been taken to Montrevor to see your future possessions; introduced to the old father—in short, everything has been so well managed between Trevor and Olivia, that there only requires the signing and sealing to make the whole thing sure, before you know *yourself* very well what you are about."

"Indeed, Louis?" Mary answered gently, though at the same time surprised—in spite of Mrs. de Burgh's warning as to the objections she was sure to encounter—at the tone and tenor of her cousin's words; and feeling naturally a little hurt and offended, she added "I do not quite understand you. I assure you, I know very well what I am about."

"Do you?" he said, with something of the sneering way of which Mrs. de Burgh so often complained; "I think not—I don't know indeed how you should—"

"I have promised to marry one whom I love, and whose love for me I feel sure is as deep and truthful as my own," Mary replied, the colour mounting to her brow, and a tear glistening in her eyes,

"Like a child who never knew but love,
And who words of wrath surprised."

"Oh, of course! no doubt of all that," he said, much in the same tone.

"Well! what then, Louis?" she enquired meekly, yet firmly, "Why—what cause?—"

"What cause or impediment why these two persons should not be lawfully joined together in holy wedlock?" repeated her cousin, breaking suddenly into a more amiable and lively tone and manner, as if not proof against the gentle manner in which his ungracious strictures were received. "I will tell you why—he is not good enough for you, Mary, or rather, you are far too good for him."

"Is that all?" Mary's quiet smile might have seemed to express, for she had been previously prepared for this particular objection of her cousin's, by his wife.

"*You* think so, Louis," she replied, "but forgive me if I differ from that opinion."

"Yes, I certainly think so," he coldly retorted, "we read in the bible that 'we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers,'—nay," as Mary attempted to interrupt him, "I do not speak literally—Eugene's religious faith may be, for aught I know, as pure as my own, or yours—but 'what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness, and what companionship has light with darkness—and what concord hath—'"

"Louis, Louis!" Mary interposed, the crimson blood mantling her cheeks and brow, and her gentle eyes flashing fire, "in your exaggerated estimate of my own worthiness you are unjust, you are injurious towards Eugene, as well as unkind to me. Yes, is it not unkindness to bring forth such slighting insinuations against one whom you know I love, must ever love, and whose wife," she added, lifting up her eyes as if she felt the compact signed and sealed at least in heaven, "I have promised to become."

"Well—well, Mary," Mr. de Burgh soothingly replied; not totally unaffected by this unwonted demonstration of excited spirit in his calm and gentle cousin; "I will not ask you not to love Trevor; that I suppose—indeed, I too plainly see would be crying out to shut the door after the horse was stolen, but I may—I must advise you," he added with an expression of great kindness, "as a cousin, feeling himself under present circumstances almost standing in the place of a brother, to be in no haste to involve yourself irremediably in so important and irreparable a step as marriage, without further knowledge, a clearer insight into the nature of the man who will have the rule and influence over your whole future destiny. Oh, to see," he continued, with increased excitement, "how people do rush ignorantly and recklessly upon this matter, it might seem that the happiness of a whole lifetime was nothing in comparison to the gratification of a passing fancy, a temporary infatuation."

He paused, but Mary made no reply. Her cousin spoke feelingly, no doubt, he often expressed himself thus warmly after having been provoked more than usual, or put out of humour by some altercation with his wife. She thought it might be but the angry insinuations of the excited moment—for she often hoped, indeed was sure, that beneath this outward show of bitterness and strife, which bad habit had engendered, in the intercourse between man and wife—a fund of real, genuine affection, one towards another, lay deep and dormant in either heart, but especially in that of the husband's. But what availed all this towards "the mutual society, help, comfort," which, as the marriage service sets forth, "one ought to have had towards the other," whilst the most indispensable requisites to that effect, "to bear and to forbear," were wanting.

"Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Wives submit yourselves to your husbands as unto the Lord." How came it that the injunctions to which they had both listened at the altar had been so soon, to all appearances, forgotten or disregarded?

So Mary, as we have said, made no reply. She only lowered her long dark lashes, and waited in painful silence the close of her cousin's supposed philippic, one with which she considered she had no individual concern. For what had passing fancy or momentary infatuation to do with her own deep, true, steadfast love?

Mr. de Burgh receiving no interruption, in a calmer tone continued:

"And Trevor, he loves you, as he has given good proof, (and for this I honour and applaud him,) and thus loving you, is of course everything agreeable, irreproachable in your eyes. But dear Mary, I speak to one whom I am aware is no rash, unreasonable fool; but a right-judging, thoughtful, superior woman. What do you know of his real character and secret qualities? what *can* you know of the previous tenor of his life?"

Mary lifted up her clear truthful eyes to her cousin's face.

"As to the nature of his character, and the tenor of his life," she quickly replied, "that surely I can have scarcely cause to doubt or question. There could not possibly be anything very reproachable in the character and life of one admitted as a constant and familiar guest in your house, Louis. True, he is Olivia's cousin; but then again, how fond she is of that cousin; and though," she added smiling, "you may have testified no such great affection for him, still how kindly, if not cordially, you have ever seemed to receive and countenance this intimate visitor."

Mr. de Burgh was fairly nonplussed for the moment, by this just, though simple argument. How

indeed, could it be supposed that it should enter into the thoughts of his pure minded cousin, cautiously and coldly to observe, watch, or inquire into the life and character of the man to whom not only her heart had so instinctively and spontaneously inclined—but her love for whom not only circumstance and opportunity, but, if not the connivance, to say the least, the tacit approval of those who were at present responsible for her welfare, had seemed in every way to encourage and facilitate; and Mr. de Burgh could not quite comfort his conscience, as he was at first willing to do, by attributing the blame of this, in his opinion, undesirable issue of affairs to the foolish, inconsiderate match-making propensities of his wife. There was no slight misgiving as to culpable, or rather careless negligence on his own part.

For when or how had he, with no such allowance for cousinly feeling or partiality as Mrs. de Burgh—when or how had he, save occasionally by a few slighting, sneering innuendoes, such as not unfrequently defeat their own purpose, by strengthening and promoting in the generous mind of youth the germs of true attachment which previously have been engendered; how had he—save by those careless and ill judged means—ever warned, cautioned, or even given his young relative to understand, ere it was too late, that there was in the favoured cousin of his wife, and his own cheerful tolerated guest, anything either reprehensible in himself, or objectionable in their attachment, or even union? No, absorbed in his own selfish interests, his own pursuits, he had gone his way "to his farm or to his merchandize," and never given his mind the trouble to think or care whether much might not be doing which it would require more than a few strongly expressed adjurations and highly coloured representations on his part to undo—which, in short, must cause him practically to prove

> "He might as soon go kindle fire with snow
> As seek to quench the fire of love with words."

He probably thought all this during the short silence which succeeded Mary's last address; and had at length nothing better to say in reply, and that with some conscious impatience, than—

"Oh, my dear Mary, as to this view of the matter, in the present state of the world, it would be impossible to shut one's doors or turn one's back upon many a person, whom we should on the other hand be very sorry to see more closely associated with those for whom we feel interest or affection."

"But of what, then, do you accuse Eugene?" Mary inquired, still with the quiet confidence of one whose faith and trust are yet unshaken. And Mr. de Burgh was again at fault.

There is a natural code of honour subsisting between men of any generosity of mind, which sensitively withholds them from a direct exposure of those reprehensible points of conduct or of character for which they have not openly and to the face of the offender testified their blame or abhorrence. And to have now coolly set to work, and laid before the eyes of Mary facts or fancies concerning the man with whom he had ever lived on terms of friendly intercourse, and so deprive him, as was at least his desired purpose, of the blessing which, perhaps for some good end, had been assigned him; all this assumed—when thus by Mary's question brought so directly to the point—an aspect somewhat of a dastardly and serpent-like character.

So, rising from his seat and taking a turn across the room, as if by movement to assist himself in this dilemma, Louis de Burgh replied:

"Accuse! why that is rather a strong term to use, Mary. I should not like to accuse any man, or even to prejudice you against Trevor; but still, without particularising any enormities, there must be many things in the life and character of a man, hitherto so entirely given to the world and its pursuits, which must make him in the eyes of many besides myself, not exactly the person worthy to become the husband of my pure and gentle-hearted cousin."

Mary drooped her eyelids sadly and thoughtfully. Perhaps the recollection of Mr. Temple, and all that he had brought forward against this evil world, of which she now heard her lover so decidedly pronounced the votary, passed before her mind; but of the real nature or extent of that evil she could form but so obscure and vague an idea, that in her present state of feeling it only awoke in her heart a more sorrowful interest, to think that it was Eugene's fate to be exposed to its dread and grievous influence.

"Perhaps you think, as women so often flatter themselves," Mr. de Burgh continued, as she uttered no comment on his words, "that the power of your *love* will suffice to reform all that may be amiss."

"No, no!" interrupted Mary; "believe me, Louis, I have no such presumptuous expectations—no such reliance on my own influence and power, to reform, what a higher strength and higher power alone could effect; but I should indeed have faith and hope—"

"Oh yes, I daresay, and boundless charity to boot!" interposed her cousin with a smile; for he began to perceive, perhaps, that he was making but a bad business of the affair he had taken in hand. "Well, well, Mary; all I can say is, that if Trevor is destined to possess you, he will be more fortunate than many a better man, if I may dare so to express myself before you; for he will, I feel pretty sure, be blessed with one of those loving and amiable, faithful and obedient wives, such as the Church directs us to pray that each woman may become who approaches the altar as a bride, but which petition, I am sorry to say, we do not in *every case* see fulfilled."

"My dear Louis, I fear you are inclined to be very severe to-day on all (I must thankfully own)

except myself; but tell me, if you are not compelled to confess that I also may hope to possess a loving, amiable, and faithful husband (obedient, you know, is not enjoined in his case). You say I do not know enough of Eugene to be convinced of his real qualities; I think you are mistaken in this. It does not surely require a very long acquaintance to discern whether a person is amiable; and I am nearly certain no partial affection would blind me in that respect. I should say Eugene's temper was perfect—oh! of course you laugh at me—I do not quite mean perfect, though even if it were not—"

"Oh no, of course, if he had the temper of the devil—excuse me Mary—I have no doubt you would be content at present; but I do not wish to say anything against Trevor's temper, I would not undertake to do so. He is a good son to all appearance; what kind of husband he will make remains to be proved."

"That he will ever love me less than he does now, I cannot, could not *try* even to fancy," Mary continued, with a voice tremulous with feeling; "and now, at least you must confess that his affection for me is most true, most purely disinterested; that he loves me for myself alone; or how else would he wish to marry one who possesses neither beauty, talents, or fortune."

"By the bye," rejoined Mr. de Burgh, as if the subject had been but suddenly suggested to his mind by Mary's latter words, "I suppose you are aware to what circumstances Eugene is indebted for the position he now, to all appearance, holds as his father's heir?"

"Yes," Mary responded, rather sadly, "to the mental derangement of his brother."

"Yes, that is the plea," Mr. de Burgh coldly replied.

"But," Mary continued, after a pause, and without having been struck by any peculiar emphasis her cousin might have placed upon these latter words, "Olivia, I think, told me at the same time, that this misfortune was purely accidental, that at least there was no hereditary evil of the kind existing in the family."

"Oh, none whatever; most perfectly accidental, I believe," was Mr. de Burgh's apparently careless rejoinder, as he stood looking out of the window, as he had done on Mary's entrance. And here the conversation ended, except that Mary, before leaving the room, approached her cousin, saying in an affectionate tone:

"And now, before I go, Louis, you will wish me joy, I am sure."

"Most certainly, dear Mary," he replied, as he fervently wrung her proffered hand, "all possible joy and happiness that heaven and earth can bestow upon you."

"Thank you very much, dear Louis," Mary replied, "and I may write," she added, more timidly, "and tell him that he may come; I would not let him do so again, till I had informed you of our engagement."

"Oh yes, write of course if you like, most certainly."

And Mary, again thanking him, left the library, and returned to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XVI.

She watch'd for him at dawn, and she watched for him
at noon,
Tho' well she knew she could not hope to see him
come so soon;
She could not rest, but peeping thro' her casement's
leafy screen,
She watched the spot where she was told his form
would first be seen.

HAYNES BAYLEY.

Mrs. de Burgh looked with some anxiety, and Mrs. Trevyllian, who was also present, with some curiosity, into the face of Mary as she entered the apartment; but whatever signs of recent excitement or agitation might be discerned thereupon, there was a happy smile trembling on her lips, which told that all was peace and contentment now, and when Mrs. de Burgh, on contriving to draw her apart, eagerly enquired as to the issue of her interview, Mary answered:

"Oh, all is right! Louis is very kind, and he has given me leave to write immediately to Eugene, and bid him come here." She was sufficiently satisfied to ask no more questions for the present, and Mary went upstairs to write her letter.

When she returned to the drawing-room, Mr. de Burgh had joined the party, and was standing with his back to the fire, looking rather cross, while Mrs. de Burgh was smiling with some

evidently suppressed triumph.

"I suppose," she said, with careless ease, "that we may send a servant on horseback with Mary's letter."

"Oh, certainly! if Mary wishes it; but I think there is no such particular hurry, and that it might very well wait till to-morrow. The horses and servants have had, and are likely to have, plenty to do, with all this scampering to and fro, between this and Montrevor."

Mrs. de Burgh remarked that she never knew anything so ill-natured as he was. Mrs. Trevyllian even looked astonished at such a show of ungraciousness on the part of the handsome Mr. de Burgh; but Mary said good humouredly that the post would do quite as well for her letter, and dropped it quietly into the letter-box on her way to luncheon.

It was—as it turned out—"quite as well," for Trevor was engaged at some county meeting that evening—and had been from home, which prevented his going to Silverton the following day till a short time before dinner.

It was no use now for Mary to take her summer place by the window, and watch for her lover's arrival, for the shades of the October evening had almost closed over the scene before the happy time arrived; but the noise of wheels, along with the quick, sharp sound of the horse's hoofs gladly saluted her ears, and she was down stairs to meet him ere he had many minutes reached the drawing-room.

They were standing together on the hearth-rug when Mr. de Burgh made his appearance.

He shook hands with Eugene Trevor with the most perfect cordiality, and having first rang the bell for dinner, stood beside him conversing in his usual manner on indifferent subjects, Mary, on his entrance, having retreated a little into the back-ground, to talk to the children; and they were thus all spirits and good humour, when Mrs. de Burgh joined them, accompanied by Mrs. Trevyllian, who had been induced to make one of the dinner-party, in order that she might be introduced to, and have an opportunity of beholding Mr. Trevor; she having been—of course in the strictest confidence—enlightened by Mrs. de Burgh as to the position of affairs between that gentleman and Miss Seaham.

At dinner everything went on *à merveille*, sociably and agreeably in the extreme, and as the two gentlemen left the dining-room, the cheerful laugh which was heard proceeding from Eugene Trevor's lips told that if the *great* subject had been discussed during the *tête-à-tête* to which he and Mr. de Burgh had been subjected, nothing but good humour and friendliness, had been the issue.

Before their arrival, Mrs. de Burgh and Mrs. Trevyllian had been in deep admiration of a very beautiful ring, of which the quick eyes of the former had caught sight during dinner, glittering on Mary's finger, where it had been placed by her lover on their private meeting that evening. How Mary prized this first love-gift we may well imagine!

The rest of the evening proved one of undisturbed serenity and enjoyment. Mrs. de Burgh seated herself at the piano, and sang over her most beautiful and touching songs, whilst her husband made himself very agreeable to Mrs. Trevyllian.

How Eugene and Mary occupied themselves it is not very difficult to explain. Mary at least could have entered into the fancy of Madame de Staël, who depicts her idea of one of the highest felicities that could be imagined as belonging to that seventh heaven of which an angel was sent to explore the delights—to be the listening to sweet music by the side of one's beloved.

How, too, this evening must have brought to her remembrance that first night of her arrival at Silverton, when she had listened to those sweet strains with so much more unmingled, unassociated delight; though even then, could she have remembered right, something beyond the mere spirit of the music had faintly stirred her heart in that same hour.

> "That hour when first this glance met thine,
> Yet trembled lest it told too much,
> The hour when first thy hand pressed mine,
> Yet pressed as though it feared to touch,
> When some strange voice appeared to say,
> That each must rule the other's lot—
> Forget it not!—forget it not!"

And so, from this day forward everything with reference to that engagement, seemed to run on as smoothly towards its projected end as ever did the course of such "true love." Mr. de Burgh, however he might continue inwardly to disapprove, appeared to think he had done all that duty and conscience entitled him to attempt; and that he had no chance against love and trust, such as had been exhibited by the object on whom he had made his attack. Even with his wife, he forebore any direct discussion on the subject after this period, with the exception perhaps of the

following short and pithy colloquy, which some time or other had occurred.

"My dear Louis, I really hope you are beginning to think a little better of this affair."

"Indeed! you are quite mistaken on that point."

"At any rate, you have come to the determination that it is a most foolish, if not most dangerous and presumptuous act, ever to attempt to mar a match."

"I have come to the determination that there is *one* thing more foolish, dangerous, and presumptuous, namely, to *make* one."

"Oh, if you mean to apply that to me, you are quite at fault. You seem to give me all the credit of this business; I assure you it is more than I can lay claim to. I never saw a match which seemed more truly one of those said to be made in heaven. Why, years ago, at that fête at Morland before we married, I now perfectly remember Eugene telling me after it was over, that he had never met with a sweeter little girl than that Miss Seaham, whom he had good-naturedly taken under his charge, and the first night he met her here, after Mary's arrival, he hardly took his eyes off her all the evening; whilst Mary tells me she had never forgotten him since he was so kind to her at that *fête*. But even if it were not so, I cannot imagine why you should set your face so much against the marriage."

"Really!" responded the husband, shrugging his shoulders.

"No; any one else would think it a splendid match for Mary."

"I have no doubt of that."

"And, under her circumstances, so peculiarly desirable."

"Oh! certainly—peculiarly so."

"I really think (petulantly) you must be in love with Mary yourself." (A look of ineffable scorn was the sole response.) "That is to say, if you *could* be in love with any one but yourself."

CHAPTER XVII.

The rose that all are praising
Is not the rose for me;
Too many eyes are gazing
Upon the costly tree.
But there's a rose in yonder glen
That shuns the gaze of other men,
For me its blossom raising—
Oh, that's the rose for me!

HAYNES BAYLEY.

And Mary—her love and trust had indeed stood full proof against the breath of warning and insinuation, which had passed over their strength and beauty as unavailingly as the breeze across the hardy floweret.

There is a beautiful description of one of Bulwer's heroines, which so exactly corresponds with the characteristics of our Mary's nature, that we hope we may be excused from quoting it here in application to her case.

"There was a remarkable *trustingness*, if I may so speak, in her disposition. Thoughtful and grave as she was by nature, she was yet ever inclined to the more sanguine colourings of life; she never turned to the future with fear. A placid sentiment of hope slept at her heart. She was one, who surrounded herself with a fond and implicit faith to the# guidance of all she loved and the chances of life. It was a sweet indolence of the mind which made one of her most beautiful traits of character. There is something so unselfish in tempers reluctant to despond. You see that such persons are not occupied with their own existence—they are not fretting the calm of the present life with the egotisms of care—of conjecture and calculation: if they learn anxiety, it is for another; but in the heart of that other how entire is their trust."

Thus the constant intercourse which from that day forth was maintained between them, served but to strengthen the infatuation, (if we are justified in applying such a term to such genuine affection) of Mary towards her lover.

Scarcely a day passed on which Trevor did not arrive to stay, or at least to spend some hours at Silverton. They walked—and often—for there was Mrs. de Burgh's beautiful horse now at Mary's disposal—they rode out together, attended only by a groom.

One day their discourse happened to fall on the subject of Christian names, and Trevor was

telling Mary how hers was, and ever had been (a not uncommon taste amongst gentlemen) his greatest favourite. He had always imagined, that every woman who possessed it must be the epitome of all that was pure, sweet, and gentle; and of course he gave Mary to understand that he saw in her, at length, a perfect embodiment of that idea.

"And you, Eugene, you have certainly a very beautiful name," Mary remarked, after listening with a blushing smile to this tender flattery; and she uttered the name now in question, in accents, which must certainly have rendered it even to its owner "a very beautiful name."

"Oh yes!" he replied, laughing, "a most beautifully romantic, and uncommon name; one ought to be a great hero to possess it."

"It was possessed by a very unfortunate hero," Mary replied.

"Oh! you mean Eugene Aram."

"Yes! have you read the book?"

"Why, no; I cannot say that exactly; (with a smile) but I saw that you were reading it on a certain night of delightful memory; for when you left me in so cowardly a manner to face your formidable cousin alone, he found me standing before the fire, deeply absorbed in your late studies, which I had picked up from the floor, in a jealous way, to see with what romantic gentleman you had been so deeply occupied on my entrance. Fancy my relief to discover it was an Eugene. Of course it was for the sake of his name alone that he won your affections. I was even in hopes that I might find the lady to have been a Mary, but I saw it was Madeline, which I thought a great mistake."

Mary laughed with the sweet laugh which had become so clear and joyous of late.

"I could not discover whether the Eugene resembled me in any way," he continued; "to me he seemed a dark, mysterious sort of fellow."

"He was, indeed," Mary replied, "but a man of extraordinary genius."

"So you will not flatter me by the comparison."

"Flatter you! I do not think you need be ambitious of the compliment. You know, I suppose, his dreadful end."

"Oh yes, of course, at least, I know the real villain was hanged for the murder of Clarke. Well, that would not do for me, certainly: I willingly concede the genius, if that were all its fruits."

"No," continued Mary, more seriously, "but there is one person, whom, above all others I have ever known, might in some points have reminded me of Eugene Aram, had I read the book before, (the Eugene Aram as represented in the novel, I mean,) for the real character, it is said, resembled Bulwer's hero in nothing but his intellect and his crime. Not that Mr. Temple," she continued, "could be called a dark and mysterious character, no, for he gave one the idea of being naturally of a disposition clear and open as the day; but there was a mystery and impenetrability about his coming to Wales, and his former history. And then the seclusion and obscurity to which a man of his talents, nobility of demeanour, seemed to have doomed himself; his great charity; his—"

"Stop, stop, in mercy, Mary; do you think I can listen to all this, without bursting with jealousy? Oh, I have no doubt now, that this noble, excellent, mysterious genius, was a worthy imitation of his likeness, and is guilty of theft, murder, and all other possible atrocities."

Mary smiled at her lover's jesting philippic; but she added with perfect seriousness:

"I do not say that Mr. Temple was any such gigantic genius—rather may he be said to possess a mind which might have arrived at any extent of acquirement, had, in early life, his powers been rightly tested or employed; and as to any guilt being attached to his life or character, the most suspicious person, who had once looked upon his countenance, could not for a moment have retained such an idea. No, it was easy to read there, the history of one who had been more 'sinned against than sinning.'"

Though Mary said all this with no show of enthusiasm, but in the firm, quiet manner of one who, irrespectively of personal feeling, would give all due justice and honour to some highly revered and superior being; her companion seemed not altogether unmoved by her earnestness; for he fixed his eyes attentively on her as she spoke, and although he still assumed a tone of light and playful tenor, there was something of real anxiety, in the manner in which he demanded how it had possibly happened—if indeed it had happened, though he could not bear to imagine the contrary—how it had happened that she was not enchanted into a second Madeline by this most sublime of Eugene Arams?

"Because I suppose," Mary gravely responded, "I had not the high taste and capability of Madeline, for though I honoured and esteemed Mr. Temple, I did not love him; and when he proposed to me the night before I left Glan Pennant, I refused him. I have never told this to any one else—but with you, I suppose," she added with a tender smile, "I must have no secrets."

Her smile was returned with a depth of ten-fold love and tenderness; but Trevor rode on more silently, thoughtfully pondering perhaps on the privilege which he found thus so peculiarly to have been procured him, and the why and wherefore such privilege had been awarded to his share.

There was another point in Mary's disposition greatly in Trevor's favour—the extreme humility of feeling she entertained concerning herself, and the consequent exaltation of her lover's prerogatives; that humility of true love,

"Which does exalt another o'er itself
With sweet will-worship."

For beauty especially, of a degree more accordant with her idea of Trevor's due claims and privileges, she would sometimes in his absence breathe a sigh. True he had had all the world before him, with plenty of time and opportunity before he loved her, of choosing from amongst the most fair and beautiful with whom he must have come in contact; but still when he came to see her placed in contrast with other women, might he not, though she was sure it would not make him love her less—might he not then be struck and mortified perhaps by her inferiority in that respect. Some such ordeal, however, ere very long it was given her to prove.

A very great beauty of the two or three last London seasons, who happened to be staying in the neighbourhood was amongst the dinner guests assembled one evening at Silverton. She of course, like all wandering stars—who under similar casual and unusual circumstances, shine forth in all their glory, "to be a moment's ornament"—created no slight degree of sensation amongst the assembled company, especially the gentlemen; and Miss L—— might certainly have stood the test amongst a score of beauties as to all outward perfection which the severest critics could require. The perfection of well moulded features, brilliant colouring, symmetry of form, all had been bestowed upon her by bountiful mother nature; and Miss L—— walked and moved this night the conscious favourite of that very partial and unequal distributer of her gifts—in short, a very queen and goddess of beauty.

Mary was perhaps the most enthusiastic amongst her dazzled admirers; for she, unlike most of the other guests on this occasion, had not been accustomed to the frequent sight of beauties of every kind and degree, equally in their turn "the Cinthia of the minute," "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." Nor was a shade of envious feeling excited in her breast by all the sensation and attention of which the dazzling beauty was made the object. There was nothing in this which could have stirred the sentiment, even had it been one to which her bosom was more prone. But she had better reason than she had any idea existed, for this unconcern; had she but known how there was more real and abiding influence exercised by the, comparatively speaking, pale, and quiet girl who, without any pretentions to ostentatious retirement, so calmly and gently played her part in society—the more real and heartfelt influence inspired by the nameless charm which she exercised over all those who approached her; no need, indeed, of envy on her part!

"It was not mirth, for mirth she was too still;
It was not wit, wit leaves the heart more chill;
But that continuous sweetness, which with ease,
Pleases all round it, from the wish to please."

No, there was nothing in all this; but still, at times this night, her dark eyelashes might be seen to droop somewhat sadly and seriously on her cheek, and once when she raised them and turned a nervous admiring gaze upon Miss L——, a gentle sigh was breathed unconsciously from her lips.

That bright beauty, who was not, as may be supposed, without some of those beauty airs in which she felt herself privileged to indulge, yet by no means disdained bestowing a few of her most bewitching smiles, upon the handsome, and as she had heard reported, eldest son of the wealthiest commoner of the county, and of course it was not in Trevor's nature to refuse to submit himself in some degree to the distinguished favour; besides, although Trevor and his thoughts were with his own Mary all the evening—and indeed his eyes pretty often too—yet their publicly unacknowledged engagement did not admit of his paying her that particular and undivided attention it was his wont to do on other occasions.

Eugene was therefore, at the moment when Mary gave that sigh, sunning himself complacently, if not a little indolently, in the beams of that radiant beauty's smile and those still more radiant eyes. Mary had no jealous thought upon the subject; she only sighed and wished that she possessed but one tenth portion of the beauty's conspicuous charms for Eugene's sake—for Eugene's glory!

"She looked down to blush, though she looked up to sigh," for surely she had caught that glance, so full of fond reassurance with which her lover tried to attract her earnest, anxious gaze:—

"Yes, lift thy eyes, sweet Psyche, what is she
That those soft fringes timidly should fall
Before her, and thy spiritual brow
Be dark, as if her presence were a cloud—
A loftier gift is thine than she can give,
That queen of beauty,
She may give all that is within her own
Bright cestus—and one silent look of thine,
Like stronger magic, will out-charm it all.
Ay, for the soul is better than its frame,
The spirit than the temple—
Marvel not

That love leans sadly on his bending wing,
He hath found out the loveliness of mind
And he is spoilt for beauty."[1]

A month since the engagement of Trevor and Mary had passed. Before the expiration of this period, the latter, with her lover's full consent, had written to her sisters in Scotland and in Italy, to confide to them her happy prospects, and from the former she had already received in return the most affectionate and fervent congratulations, another drop added to the already well filled cup of Mary's happiness; for before this, there had been times when she could not but feel regretfully the want of that real participating sympathy in her joy, which like as in our sorrow, those bound to us by the ties of close family relationship, can alone fully and adequately impart.

The mind, diverted and absorbed by new interests and attractions, may for a time wander contentedly through other pastures—may find gratification and satisfaction in the new and flattering friendship of other hearts; but when that sorrow comes of which the heart alone can know the bitterness, or that "joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not,"—then, like the child, who beguiled by the flowers of the fields to stray far from the parent home, yet when sudden fear assails his breast, or some bright found treasure fills his little heart with rapture, flies back at once to pour forth his grief or his ecstacy upon his mother's bosom—so then he that was lost is found; the recreant heart or the diverted affections, seldom fail to reassert their power to testify and prove, that those ties which nature's early associations and kindred interests have sanctified and connected, alone in such seasons can suffice to comfort or to satisfy the mind.

Mary often yearned for that true, lively and affectionate sympathy in her present joy which it had been her privilege so tenderly, and cheerfully to impart to each successive sister, when placed under similar circumstances to her own; and she began to think the necessary lack of all this on her own account to be certainly one of the worst consequences which can accrue from being left the last unmarried.

But every thought and feeling of this kind was soon dispelled and changed into those of most unalloyed pleasure and delight.

The long-wished-for and expected news at length arrived. Arthur Seaham wrote to inform his sister that the next American packet which was to reach England, would number him amongst its passengers, and accepting the kind invitation of Mrs. de Burgh, conveyed to him by Mary, he should immediately upon his disembarkation proceed to Silverton.

A truce now to every sigh, lest sympathy should fail, that no dear familiar face was near, in which to see her joy reflected—no dear familiar voice to repeat the glad echoes of her heart.

In Arthur, her own beloved brother, how fully she should meet all this! They two had been sworn friends and special companions from their earliest childhood to their later youth. Whatever turn their fortunes took, they were to have shared them together; one home was to have received them. Where had flown those visions now? But would he not rejoice in the bright prospects of his favourite sister?

How he would love Eugene, if only for her sake! what friends he and Eugene would become—what constant companions should they all be still! Besides, until her brother's return to England, no important arrangement could be set on foot with regard to the projected marriage; therefore her brother's speedy return was on that point alone a subject of congratulation to the parties interested in that event, and to Trevor of course more particularly so.

Now too, Mary would be able to write by the next mail to her sisters in India, and give them that information it had been deemed at such a distance, more satisfactory to defer, until the brother's arrival had placed matters on a more definite and circumstantial footing, and any day from the week succeeding the receipt of that welcome letter, young Seaham might make his appearance.

He would arrive in England perfectly uninformed as to his sister's engagement; but in the joyful letter he would find awaiting him at the post-office at Liverpool, Mary had hinted of some news she should have to break to him when they met, which she was sure would cause him satisfaction —nay, delight!

The happy suspense of the interval which ensued may be imagined. Eugene playfully declared himself quite jealous, though he was at the same time very properly sympathetic on the occasion, a little fidgetty and anxious perhaps, as is but natural for those to be who for the first time see the object of their affections anxiously excited by any feeling or expectation irrelevant to themselves; and he laughingly declared that it was his intention to take the opportunity of her brother's first arrival, to run up to London for a day or two, till the first effervescence of her ecstasy was past, to spare himself the envious feelings its contemplation might excite, whilst at the same time he might prepare his lawyers for the work they soon would have to put in hand.

Mary did not much approve this determination; she told him her brother's arrival would be incomplete unless he were near to participate in her joy, and make Arthur's immediate acquaintance; but as Trevor more seriously assured her, that a short absence at that time would be really indispensable, she submitted with resignation.

The happy hour at length arrived—the afternoon of the same day in which the morning paper announced the arrival in port from Canada of the ship 'Columbia,' and amongst its passengers the name of Mr. Seaham—Mary, who had taken leave of her lover an hour before, and was in her

room recovering from the slight dejection this first parting, even for so short a period, had necessarily occasioned, heard the carriage-wheels swiftly sounding along the park, and a post-chaise, bearing evident marks of travel, soon appeared in sight.

No need to ask her beating heart who that traveller might be. She watched it nearer—nearer—her hands clasped together, almost trembling with the power of that strong delight which overflowed her breast; but the carriage stopped before the door, and then with almost a cry of gladness, she had disappeared from the room.

What would Trevor have said had he seen her then? What indeed! for perchance he may be amongst the number of those who do not know the force and purity of natural affection; and how, far from detracting from other ties, other affections, it is but the fountain in which these have learnt to flow with a singleness and strength to which those unexercised in such a school can seldom attain. Perhaps he may be one of those to whose ear the name of "brother" bears no glad and holy signification.

CHAPTER XVIII.

.... Manhood's earliest youth
Shone from the clear eye with a light like truth.
There play'd that fearless smile with which we meet
The sward that hides the swamp before our feet;
The bright on-looking to the Future, ere
Our sins reflect their own dark shadows there.

THE NEW TIMON.

We will not intrude on the first sacred moments of the reunion of the brother and sister, but rejoin them in the drawing-room, when that tumultuous period being over, there is something more distinct and connected in their words and conduct for the reasonable and indifferent reader to appreciate.

They are still alone together. Mrs. de Burgh is driving Mrs. Trevyllian, and Louis out in the grounds; no one, then, is in the house to break upon their glad communion.

And it was well; for theirs was indeed a joy in which the stranger intermeddleth not. Mary, with the glistening drops gladness had called forth still hanging on her lashes like rain in the sunshine of her beaming countenance, sits on a low seat, and gazes up in the face of her tall, handsome brother, as he stands on the hearth-rug, looking down with caressing interest into her own.

She tells him he has grown ten times more handsome—that she had no idea he was so tall. She gazes up into his clear blue eyes, clear, open, truthful, unshrinking eyes, and it must have been to her like one who gazes on the blue, pellucid, open vault of our summer heaven, after having been long accustomed to the dark, uncertain, latent fire of some tropic sky.

But of course Mary, had no such defined conceptions. She only felt "the sense, the spirit, and the light divine at the same moment in those steadfast eyes," shaded like her own, with the long dark lashes; but which were not so prone, as hers, to sweep thoughtfully and seriously his cheek; the glance might wander too, over that high, white, open brow, as over a pleasant field, which the hand of his Creator had blessed for the expansion and production of all good seeds of intellect, intelligence, and virtue. To look there, was to see that no base, corrupting passion or pursuit had as yet worked their contracting power, that the commerce with the world and its affairs, in which for so young a man he had been so intimately and responsibly involved, had served but to expand and develope the higher, nobler properties of his mind, which else might longer have been kept in abeyance. But it is the expression of that mouth—that smile which more than all bespeaks the pure, the amiable, the genial and pleasant feelings of his nature—attributes which characterize Arthur Seaham's disposition, in a manner rarely seen exemplified, though we may in our experience have seen precedented.

No wonder Mary always doated on this brother, no wonder she looked on him now with almost an adoring gaze, and marvelled how she had been all this time so happy and satisfied without him, nay—almost wondered for one moment how it could have ever come to pass, that she loved another, better even than himself.

But if her admiration was thus strongly drawn forth by her brother's appearance, Arthur Seaham, on his part, seemed none the less struck by his sister's looks; and brothers, it is well known, are particularly disposed to be critical on the subject of the personal appearance of their sisters.

"But Mary," he suddenly exclaimed, taking his sister gently by the arm and bringing her face in direct confrontation with his own, "let me look a little more closely at you. There you sit, staring me out of countenance, paying me compliments till I do not know where to look, and yet think yourself to escape all criticism. Now tell me, pray, what has changed you so? Made you grow so beautiful? Surely you are not the little pale Welsh mountain flower, I left behind me two years

and a half ago?"

"Oh, my dear brother," Mary answered, as she laughingly and blushingly submitted to this inspection, "I assure you I am just the same, just as much a 'bit of white heath,' as you used flatteringly to call me—but—but you know when I was agreeably excited you always told me I was *almost* pretty, and I am *very* agreeably excited at present."

"And have been for the last month or so, I should say," her brother rejoined, assuming the mock air and tone of a judge, as he gravely continued his research; "that is to say, judging from the extent of the influence I see has been exercised upon your face. No, do not tell me, who have been amongst the shrewd, long-headed Yankees, that any true sisterly feelings have given such diamond brightness to your eyes, such radiant beauty to your cheek and brow."

The young man was right. The change he marked was not the influence of the present happy hour; a stronger and less recent power had done the magic work.

Mary had become, within the last few months, what less partial judges than a brother might have rightly owned as "almost beautiful."

"But, Melanie, I little dreamed
What spells the stirring heart may move,
Pygmalion's statue never seemed
More charged with life than she with love.
The pearl-tint of the early dawn
Flush'd into day spring's rosy hue,
The meek moss folded bud of morn,
That opens to the light and dew.
The first and half-seen star of even
Wax'd clear amid the deepening heaven.
Similitudes perchance may be,
But these are changes oftener seen,
And do not image half to me
My sister's change of face and mien;
'Twas written in her very air
That love had passed and entered there."

"Well, well," he continued, as he marked the conscious effect his latter words had made upon his sister's speaking countenance, "tell me all about it, and what is that very interesting piece of news, you mentioned in your letter, awaiting my arrival?"

"Dear, dear Arthur, I am going to be married."

The young man made a theatrical start backwards, of affected wonder and amazement.

"Going to be married!" he repeated, "and how do you know whether I will give my consent?"

"Oh, you will! I am sure you will, when you know and hear all about it; and when you have seen Eugene."

"Eugene! what a very delightfully romantic name, for my dear little romantic sister; and who is this Eugene?"

"Eugene Trevor; the son of Mr. Trevor of Montrevor, in this county."

"And how long have you been acquainted?"

"Oh, ever since I came here in June. I had seen him once before, but that was a long time ago."

"Well! I suppose, I ought to be very much pleased."

"Ought! but you are—yes, though you try to look so solemn—you are delighted at your prophecy—your old *bête noir* being thus effectually removed. Namely, that your sisters would be 'old maids.'"

"Ah! yes—for how could I ever have imagined, that so many eligible husbands should be picked up amongst the wilds of poor old Wales? But you—you very sly little thing—when did you ever hear me express a fear or a wish respecting your marriage?"

"Never, Sir, because I really believe you thought me quite a hopeless subject of speculation; that T was cut out irreparably for 'an old maid.'"

"And I wish to know," he continued without attending to this interruption of his sister's, "I wish to know what has become of all the plans and promises, on which I have been building my hopes and expectations all this time? What has become of my companion, my housekeeper; the pleasant peaceful home we were to share together?"

"Oh, Arthur!" said Mary pleadingly, for though her brother spoke jestingly, she really thought she saw a liquid drop, dim the clearness of his eyes. "Oh, dear Arthur!" and she laid her face tenderly on his shoulder. She could not bear to see what almost brought a reproachful pang to her heart. "Do not say that; my home, I am sure, may still be, as much your home whenever you like to make it so. Eugene says the same—he is quite prepared to love you, as much as I do. Our love, our companionship, need not be at an end; and you, dear boy! you will like Eugene so very much,

and be quite reconciled to my marrying, when you see what a husband I shall have."

"Yes, Mary, if I find him worthy in every respect (but mind—I shall be very difficult to satisfy on that point) then indeed I shall be fully reconciled," straining her to his heart, "for I *am* glad to hear all this dear girl. What I said was only nonsense—of course I am glad—, I should be a very selfish fellow were I not rejoiced to hear anything which is so apparently to your happiness and advantage. Besides," resuming his gaiety of tone, "for the next few years, I am going to be so busy amongst old musty papers, and law-books, and folios, that I should make but a sorry companion for any but the benchers of Gray's Inn."

"Then have you really, dear Arthur, made up your mind to study for the law?"

"Yes really—why, do you not approve, or do you doubt my ability?"

"No, Arthur, not your ability to do anything you heartily undertake."

"Then it is my diligence—my perseverance."

"No, nor that either; but my dear boy, I cannot bear that you should have to toil and drudge at such a very irksome profession."

"Oh, nonsense! you idle girl, that is my own affair. I intend to be a second Erskine or Eldon. The former, you know, was not called to the bar till he was eight and twenty, and had no better preparation than I have had—not so much indeed, for I have already dipped considerably into Coke, Lyttelton and Blackstone, and long had a leaning that way. Ah! already I feel mounting on eagle's wings into the very 'marble chair.' The fact is, the fortune I shall now have remaining from the general wreck, will enable me to give myself every advantage for the next few years in my legal studies, as will render me, when I launch forth on my circuits, not quite dependant on my briefs, which, for the first year or two may not be so plentiful as, of course, I intend they should be hereafter. About five hundred a year I shall have, after you girls' fortunes are paid off."

"Our fortunes? Oh, Arthur! I am sure neither Jane, Agnes, or myself will receive or touch our fortunes now. They must be added to yours; and then I am sure you will be rich enough to work, if you must work, only for your own amusement."

"Thank you, dear Mary, but speak for yourself, and do not be in too great a hurry to do that either, for remember you have another to consult about this cavalier disposal of your property. No, no, my dear girl, money will not be despised under any circumstances, depend upon it. 'All is grist that comes to the mill,' and the larger the mill the more grist only is required. Besides, I am not going to give a portionless sister away, when she may have a snug little six thousand to tack to her *trousseau*."

"Six thousand! oh, my dear brother, how well you must have managed for us, thus to have saved so much more of our fortunes than of your own."

"Oh no, Mary, I did myself full justice, but my sisters' money was in better funds."

"Well, for Selina and Alice's sake I am very glad"—Mary begun.

"But you, are to be so very affluent, that six thousand pounds is but as a drop in the sea. Trevor, then, is an eldest son, I conclude?" the brother inquired.

"Not exactly, but—oh, here is Louis coming, he will be very glad to see you; he is such a kind, affectionate creature, and has been so very good to me."

Young Seaham was warmly welcomed by his cousin Mr. de Burgh, and none the less so by his wife, when she returned from her drive. There was something particularly graceful and agreeable in the manner of both Mr. and Mrs. de Burgh's reception of the guests and friends they entertained at Silverton; and when it happened, as it did on this occasion, that their good feeling towards the person or persons in question were in perfect unison, (a rare occurrence!) they only vied with each other as to who should show forth most attention and kindness.

Mrs. de Burgh was delighted with Arthur Seaham's lively and engaging manners and appearance; Mr. de Burgh fully appreciated the intelligence and good conduct, with which he had conducted himself throughout the late trying and difficult course of business in which he had been engaged, as well as his present praise-worthy determination to embrace some certain profession—although he was perhaps somewhat surprised at the obtuse and weighty matters of the law, being the one on which he had set his mind—as would be indeed all those who only remembered Arthur Seaham as the rather volatile Eton boy, of lively parts and excellent capacity, but little application, except in those few points touching upon his peculiar tastes or inclinations:—or at Oxford, where he had been for two years and a half, and had quitted it with much the same opinion as has been recorded of a celebrated historical character, "rather with the opinion of a young man of parts and liveliness of wit, than that he had improved it much by industry," and therefore many were inclined to entertain the very generally conceived idea, that a man of such calibre could never make a good lawyer.

But to all doubts and objections of this sort, Seaham had ever his favourite example, Lord Chancellor Erskine at hand, to demonstrate how a man who, until his twenty-eighth year, had never looked into a book of law—who then had rather plied his head with Milton and other English authors, than with the Greek and Latin classics—and who brought to bear upon the profession he embraced, no fitter attributes for success than those which were comprised in a

lively imagination, quick observation, and a logical mind, had risen triumphantly to the very top of the tree.

Of course the subject of his sister's marriage was the one uppermost in Arthur's mind just at present, and he listened with eager pleasure to all Mrs. de Burgh had to say concerning the match, which she of course made appear arrayed at every point in brightest *couleur de rose*.

Mr. de Burgh, after his few first cautious remarks upon the subject, was as silent with regard to it towards the new comer as he seemed to have made it a rule to be of late to every one; but then, if this at all struck Seaham, he felt that Mrs. de Burgh really enlarged so much upon the topic that there remained little more to be said—that gentlemen are never so interested and diffuse as ladies on these matters, and probably his cousin thought it better to wait and let Trevor speak for himself in person, when in a week from the time of his departure—during which period letters were daily exchanged between the lovers—he returned.

END OF VOL. I.

[1] *Psyche before the Tribunal of Venus, by* N. P. Willis.

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