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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MARY SEAHAM: A NOVEL. VOLUME 3 OF 3 ***

M A R Y S E A H A M.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GREY,

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

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET,
1852.

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MARY SEAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

Thou hast not rebuked, nor reproached me,
But sadly and silently wept,
And each wound that to try thee I sent thee,
Thou took'st to thy heart to be kept.

C. CAMPBELL.

Six months from the point at which we left our story, a party of gentlemen, who on their way to the Highland Moors, had stopped in Edinburgh for the night, strolled together in the public gardens of the place.

They found little company there besides children and nurse-maids at that time, so that a young lady of quiet, but distinguished appearance, who came towards them and turned down one of the shady walks, with a group of little companions followed by their attendant, more particularly attracted the attention of the strangers.

"What a remarkably pretty, lady-like looking girl, that is; how well she walks," said one.

"So Trevor seems to think," said another, for their friend had lingered behind, and now stood apparently half irresolute, looking in the direction where the young lady had disappeared.

"Come on, don't let us be in his way," and then laughing, they pursued their walk.

Trevor seemed not disinclined to profit by their consideration—he hesitated no longer, but disappeared at once within the shaded path.

Need we say, whose footsteps he followed—or whose the startled countenance, which turned towards him, when having reached the spot where the object of his pursuit had arrived, he in a low tone pronounced the name of "Mary," or how in an opposite direction to that taken by the nurse and children, they were soon walking on slowly, side by side, together.

"But Eugene, is not this wrong?" Mary said, after the first tearful joy of this most unexpected meeting had a little subsided, and her heart rather sunk, to find by her lover's hasty explanation, that no new turn of events, touching favourably on their mutual happiness, had brought him to her side. "Is not this wrong after the agreement we had made?"

"What Mary!" with tender reproach, "are you so little glad to see me as thus to speak? However, as you are so much more scrupulous than affectionate, I am not afraid to tell you that I had not counted upon this pleasure, though I did not think myself bound quite to avoid the place which contained you; but when, by mere accident, I saw you a few yards distant, I think not the most punctilious of your friends, would expect it to be in the nature of man, to look after you and turn coolly the other way."

Mary smiled upon him, as if she needed no other excuse.

"How well you look, Mary!" Eugene continued, gazing on the countenance of his companion, lit up, as it was, by the glow of animated pleasure, "happier, better, than when I saw you last—too well, I am almost tempted to think, and too happy, considering the circumstances of our case. I—you must allow, look far less so."

Mary gazed with tender anxiety into her lover's face. Was she then really to suppose that the change she remarked upon his handsome countenance, since the happy Silverton days, was caused by his love for her?

The haggard cheek—the restless, unhealthful fire which burnt in those dark eyes! A thrill of womanly pleasure was mixed with the tender pain the idea inspired.

"You certainly do not look as well as when at Silverton," she answered with a gentle sigh, as the many associations those words conjured up, rose before her; "but your expedition to the Moors will do you so much good. If you have been in London all this time, I do not wonder at your feeling ill. As for my looks," she added, "no doubt at this moment they are bright and happy—you

must not judge of them in general from their appearance now, not that I mean to say I am not happier, and perhaps therefore looking better than when you saw me last—for then—all was doubt, and dread, and uncertainty, and I was very miserable—but now since all that was removed, I have been happy—yes, truly happy in comparison; though at times I fear I am inclined to be sad and impatient-hearted. I was spoilt at first by too much unalloyed happiness, and it is hard to resign oneself to the long and unbroken separation, I had thought ours must be, but there is the happy prospect at the end—and this year, long and weary as it may seem—must pass away like any other."

"This year—yes!" murmured Eugene abstractedly, gazing on the sweet earnest countenance of the good and gentle speaker—"yes, this year," he repeated with an impatient flash suddenly lighting up his eyes; "but you should have been my wife now, Mary," and lowering his voice, "you *would* have been, if you had loved me, as I thought you did, and had not cut so short what I proposed doing during that drive in London."

Mary looked startled and surprised.

"Eugene!" she said, "I know you do not mean what you say—you never, but in the madness and misery of the moment, could have suggested such an alternative."

"Why not, dear Mary?"

"Why?" with gentle reproach. "Why—for every reason, Eugene."

"Every one is not so scrupulous as yourself, Mary. Olivia thought it a great pity we did not avail ourselves of that expedient; she would have assisted us in every way."

"What, Eugene—you really went so far as to consult with a third person, on such a subject."

"Oh! Olivia and I, you know, are sworn allies; besides, I believe it was she who suggested the idea. Ladies are always the first to originate mischievous designs in our unlucky brains."

Mary shook her head.

"Olivia was very wrong," she said; "she must have known that *I* should never have consented to such an alternative."

"She only knew, or thought at least, that you loved me; and therefore, as with all her faults, she has a warm heart; she could not probably conceive such coldness in your love, Mary."

The tears rose to Mary's eyes.

"Coldness!" she repeated. "Oh, Eugene! how can you apply such a term to my affection?—coldness in rejecting an expedient which I should think the most extreme, and peculiar circumstances alone could justify."

"To what kind of circumstances do you allude, Mary?" Eugene inquired anxiously, and with recovered tenderness of tone, and manner.

"Nothing fortunately, dear Eugene, which can in any manner apply to our case; we who have only need of a little patience for our path to be clear and plain before us. This year over, and if all goes right, you will not, I think, accuse me any more of having acted coldly in this respect."

"No, Mary, as you say—if all goes right, it will be as well; but supposing that at the end of this year—for, remember that time was specified quite at random, and because I had no heart to name a longer period—supposing that the existing obstacle was unremoved, and that another, and another, and another year were to pass before it were possible we could be openly united—"

"Oh, Eugene!" interposed poor Mary, turning very pale; "and is this really likely to be the case?"

"I did not say it was likely—but it is possible—and suppose it so to be?"

He paused for her reply, and still she answered faintly:

"Oh, then, Eugene, the trial would be great, yet we must still trust in God, and abide patiently his good time and pleasure."

"Mary," interrupted Eugene, almost passionately, "your patience indeed exceeds all bounds," and he turned petulantly away.

Poor Mary was cut to the heart by this first manifestation of anything, but the most tender approval on Trevor's part; she exclaimed:

"Oh, Eugene! what would you have me to do?" and the tempter was determined not to throw away the advantage he had thus far gained.

His present object, as may be supposed, was not to have any immediate recourse to the expedient he was advancing, but rather to smooth the way, in case of further exigency. For again with Mary—once more looking on her sweet face—listening to her gentle voice, and feeling the magic charm her guileless excellency never failed to exercise over him, he was as much in love as ever, and determined, whatever might happen, never to be foiled in his endeavours to possess a treasure, whose price he felt, would indeed be "far above rubies."

Nay, he even began to think that he had perhaps been too easily turned from his original design,

and was almost ready to accuse himself of weakness and cowardice; therefore to Mary's question, he replied still somewhat coldly.

"I would have you show that you really loved me, by consenting to a step which might, under certain circumstances, be the only means of securing our final happiness. *My* happiness—that is to say—and your's," he added softly. "I had hoped, dearest Mary, you would also have considered it."

"My happiness, indeed, Eugene; but still deceit of any kind to me is so very repugnant, even in idea, that I scarcely know how I should ever be able to *enact* it—deceit too of such a grave and responsible character—enacted against those dearest to me. What a return for their affectionate and anxious regard for my welfare!"

"Yes," answered Eugene, somewhat hurriedly, "that tormenting point about money matters, and a few more directly touching myself. But I am unwise, perhaps, in so committing myself," he added again coldly. "Your love of *truth*, which do not fancy I cannot thoroughly appreciate, may also force you to communicate all that has now passed between us to your friends and relations."

"Eugene, you are unkind," poor Mary murmured, in accents of wounded affection.

He took her hand, pressing it to his lips in a manner which expressed the tenderest, humblest sorrow—and the ready tearful smile told him he was too easily forgiven.

"What sort of a man is this brother-in-law of yours, Mary?" Eugene then asked.

"A very kind good man," Mary answered. "I am sure, *I* ought to say so."

"And your sister?"

"She is my sister, and therefore when I tell you that she is in my eyes perfection, you will indeed think me partial."

"And you are then altogether perfectly happy," with renewed pique.

This time she only answered him with a glance, her heart too full for words.

"Forgive me, dearest, if I am jealous," Eugene exclaimed, again appeased, "of every one, even your own sister; but I shall be thankful indeed to have no further excuse for the indulgence of that feeling. Oh! Mary, I have often cruel misgivings respecting you."

"Respecting *me*, Eugene?"

"Yes, lest by any means you should during our separation be induced to love, nay, even the idea that you should be *loved* by any one save myself, is almost to me as repugnant."

"What can you mean, Eugene?" turning her eyes upon him, with doubting surprise; "*I* love any one, you cannot be in earnest—as to any one loving me."

"Well, do you think that so very much out of the question—Mr. Temple for instance?"

These last words were spoken in a faltering, agitated voice, the speaker's countenance undergoing a strange, a most displeasing change, whilst an ashy paleness spread over it, his eyes, in which glared a sinister expression, fixed upon the clear open countenance of Mary, who that moment was pensively looking down, or indeed she might well have been startled at the new light which shone from her lover's face.

"Mr. Temple!" she repeated slowly, and sadly "ah, yes!" with a thoughtful sigh, "but surely, Eugene, I satisfied you fully on that point, when I told you I refused him."

"Yes, I know," but in a quick suspicious tone, "why did you sigh when you repeated that man's name?"

"Did I sigh?"

"To be sure, you did; Mary, pray do not let me imagine that you repent—that for a moment you have ever regretted you refused that—man, the idea would distract me."

"Eugene, Eugene! you are very strange to-day," replied the astonished girl, "how is it possible that I could have regretted it, when so soon after I met you—and now—"

Her soft glance finished the sentence, and seemed to express that now such an idea would indeed be madness. Eugene pressed her arm grateful for this soothing assurance, but still seemed not perfectly satisfied.

"And supposing even that you had *not* met with me so soon after," he persisted, "you never *would* have regretted this act of yours? Mary, you do not answer. Is it possible," turning almost fiercely towards her, "that on second thoughts, on mature consideration, you ever could have consented to marry that man?"

Mary's spirit, like that of many persons of her gentle disposition, could be roused by any such unjust or unreasonable display of temper, and she answered calmly:

"Most people would have wondered how it were possible, I refrained from loving that excellent, that delightful man, who for four long years I had daily seen in the exercise of every good and

beneficial work, and of whose amiable and exalted character, I had such full opportunity of judging. It must indeed have been one of the inscrutable ways of Providence, which preserved my heart all whole and entire for you, Eugene."

But the affectionate glance she lifted up towards her lover, was met by one so dark and sinister in its expression, that she started and shrank, as at the same moment, with an impetuous, almost violent movement, her arm was released by her companion.

"This is too much," he muttered angrily, "if I am to stay here only to have rang in my ear the praises of this Temple, as he calls himself, I think it is time that I should be off."

Poor Mary, after one moment's astounded silence, placed her gentle hand tremulously on his arm.

"Eugene!" she faltered, "do not I entreat you look or speak like that, you distress, you terrify me, and really this anger on your part is so unaccountable, so uncalled for, I cannot understand it."

"Not understand it, Mary? Not understand why I should hate to hear you eulogize and wonder at your not having been inclined to marry that detested man? Why I shall next be hearing you wondering what ever made you love me."

Incautious suggestion—why indeed had she loved him? What if Mary, in after hours, when thinking over this scene, should recall that question for cooler discussion, and diving into the recesses of her reasonable soul for its solution, bring forth no more definite response than the reiteration of the question. Why indeed?

Why are we ever inclined to choose the evil and reject the good? Why do we ever love darkness better than light? Why are our eyes blinded, our imagination diseased, our taste perverted, and our heart deceived?

But not now did Mary meditate upon this mystery, she only meekly and tearfully exclaimed against any such imputation.

"Why I love you, Eugene? alas! I begin almost to think you never loved me, or you would not surely distress me by such words and expressions. Mr. Temple—"

"Mary, do not speak that hated name again."

"I will not; too gladly will I avoid a subject which makes you so unlike yourself, but remember, Eugene, it was you who first began it, for it is one I should never have resumed. Mr. Temple," she repeated more firmly, "however I may honour his memory, is as one henceforth dead to me; he has for some time left the country, and it is not probable that I shall ever see him again in this world."

"So be it!" again murmured Eugene through his closed teeth, but added, perceiving probably as his heated spirit cooled, that his violence on this subject was making too much impression on his companion.

"I have indeed perhaps been exciting myself to an unreasonable extent, but I do not know how it is, there was always something from the first, that from what you told me of this Mr. Temple gave me a disagreeable impression, something about him which seemed mysterious, underhand and suspicious."

Mary's voice was about to be raised in indignant refutation of a charge so unfounded, but cautious prudence checked the ebullition which might only have led to fresh irritation on Eugene's part, but, as bright as noontide, open as the day, there flashed before her memory those clear dark eyes, the glance, the countenance of that aspersed one, it must have been a dangerous crisis, for him who had spoken the injurious idea, with such sidelong glance and downcast averted countenance.

Mary's forbearance seemed nevertheless to have restored her companion's equanimity. He was in a moment all affectionate contrition, and Mary all forgiving kindness—still more gratifying Eugene's *exigence* by comparing the unbroken monotony of her present existence with his own exciting career; and telling him how much more there was, therefore, on her side to call forth misgivings on his account, yet how her perfect trust, her entire faith sustained her.

"I am as happy indeed," she continued calmly, "as I can be under present circumstances. I might have preferred perhaps being with my dear brother, but my friends thought that would not quite do at present."

Eugene's brow darkened. He had no great fancy just now for that "dear brother."

"Yes—yes," he said somewhat hastily, "I quite agree with them, you are certainly better where you are, just now; he is too young, and your sister no doubt is, as you say, a delightful person."

"She is indeed," Mary answered with alacrity, "I wish you could know her Eugene. Is it not possible?" Then remembering the circumstances of their meeting she hesitated, and paused dejectedly.

"It seems so strange and unnatural to me," she added, "that none of those I love so well should have ever seen or known you—none but Arthur," she added in a low tone.

There was nothing very agreeable associated in Eugene Trevor's mind at this moment, with the later circumstances of that acquaintance, though he hastened to express slightly his own corresponding regret; however the truth was, as may be imagined, that he felt little inclination at this juncture for an encounter with any of his betrothed's belongings, more especially the dry Scotch lawyer—imagination pictured to him.

If, indeed, it had not been for the nurse and children, he would probably have suggested that Mary should keep silence on the subject of their interview; but as it was, he could only resign the affair into her hands, and rely upon her representation of the circumstance.

He must now think of beating a retreat; but first of all he asked her how long she was to remain in her present abode.

She scarcely knew—probably all the winter.

"And am I never to hear from you, or of you, all this time?" he demanded.

She shook her head sadly.

"I do not know Eugene how—your agreement was you remember, that we should not meet, or even write, to one another."

"Do you and Olivia correspond?" Eugene then asked.

"Seldom: Olivia lately has been a very bad correspondent."

"No wonder; she has had other things to think of lately. She has been going on at a fine rate this season in London, nearly driven Louis mad. At last he took the children down to Silverton, and left her behind."

"Poor dear Louis!" murmured Mary, with sorrowful concern.

"Yes, Mary, you and I would have been very different."

At those words, into which were thrown a most thrilling amount of tenderness, both of look and accent, Eugene paused.

They had hitherto been pacing slowly up and down a certain part of the retired grounds, but now pressing his companion's arm close to his heart, he said in an agitated voice.

"And now, Mary, how shall I ever make up my mind to leave you; and how shall I exist without you?"

Mary had just lifted up her pale face with a look of piteous sorrow, at words which she felt at once were preliminaries to the bitter parting, when their attention was attracted by the voices of her sister's children, announcing them to have advanced in closer proximity than the discreet tact of their attendant had previously permitted. But on glancing in that direction, Eugene was not a little disconcerted to behold slowly advancing amongst the young group, a lady whom it needed not Mary's murmured explanation to denote to him at once as her sister.

There was nothing to do but for them to advance and meet one another. Mary's former pallor had been speedily chased by a deep blush, and with nervous embarrassment she murmured an introduction.

Eugene's manner too was consciously confused.

Mrs. Gillespie, whatever might have been the surprise and interest she felt on finding her sister so accompanied, was all calm and quiet civility, such as that with which she might have received any strange acquaintance of Mary's.

And Eugene—ominous as this cool reception might appear of the feeling generally entertained by the family of Mary towards him—could not but hail it as a relief to the embarrassment of his present situation, and consider the course of conduct she thus pursued, that of a lady-like and sensible person such, as he could at once perceive in their short interview, his sister-in-law elect to be.

So they walked down the shady walk together: Mary anxious and silent, Mrs. Gillespie and Eugene exchanging common place observations respecting Edinburgh, and his intended expedition to the Moors.

Then the lady paused, as if intending to show that she purposed proceeding in a different direction to that of her new companion. And, understanding the hint, Eugene Trevor turned, and taking Mary's hand pressed it as fondly, and gazed into her pale face as significantly as he dared, murmured a few incoherent syllables of parting, then bowed to the sister, and departed.

CHAPTER II.

Tell us, maiden, hast thou found him
Thus delicious, thus divine?

Doth such witchery breathe around him?
Is his spirit so benign?
Doth he shed o'er heart and brain
More of pleasure or of pain?

MOULTRIE.

Mary suffered Mrs. Gillespie to draw her arm affectionately within her own, and the sisters then walked on a little way, in silence, which Alice was the first to break.

"And that then was Eugene Trevor, Mary?" she said half interrogatively, half in soliloquy.

"Yes, that was Eugene," was the answer, accompanied by a deep-drawn sigh.

But there had been something in Mrs. Gillespie's tone which caused her at the same moment to turn her eyes anxiously upon her face, as if to discover what impression the "Eugene Trevor," thus significantly emphasized, had made upon the speaker.

"Is he like what you expected?" she then timidly inquired.

"Yes—no—that is to say, not exactly," was the sister's rather hesitating reply.

"He is looking ill now," Mary continued; "and you did not see him to advantage. It was of course rather an embarrassing meeting for him, under existing circumstances, he not knowing exactly how you might be inclined to approve of our interview, just at present; but I should think from it having been so perfectly accidental, no one could blame him, or object to its having occurred."

"Not in the least, dear Mary, I am sure—if it was a meeting calculated to raise and strengthen your spirits. And it *has* made you happier, I hope," looking rather doubtfully into Mary's pale and anxious countenance, on which too the traces of tears were plainly visible.

"Oh, yes, Alice!" Mary faintly replied. "Seeing Eugene was, indeed, a pleasure most welcome and unexpected; but then you know the parting again for so long a time—and—and—" turning her head away with a sigh, "altogether it might be called rather a painful pleasure."

"But then, Mary, six months will so soon pass away."

"Yes, certainly," hesitated Mary; but there was no very cheerful security in her tone.

Mrs. Gillespie did not press her sister further on the subject just then, for she plainly perceived that altogether it was one in which truly as much of pain as pleasure was commingled. Of course she informed her husband of the occurrence; and Mary too spoke of it as openly as was possible, though the reserve she was forced in a great measure to maintain respecting the substance of the interview, the more confirmed her relations in their suspicions, as to its having been one of no very satisfactory nature.

"And what, as far as you were able to judge, in so short a time, did you think of your intended brother-in-law, my dear Alice?" the husband inquired of his wife the evening after the meeting; "for I know you consider yourself a first rate physiognomist."

"What do I think of him Robert?"—with a sigh—"poor Mary."

"Why, poor Mary, do you not like his appearance?"

"I should not much *like* to trust my happiness, or that of any one I loved, to his keeping."

"Indeed! he is very good-looking at any rate."

"Yes, handsome certainly—eyes, such as you perhaps have seldom, if ever seen, and which, if they would only look you full in the face, are certainly calculated to do a great deal of execution. But he did not look so into mine; and there was something about his countenance altogether which I cannot explain—something which, though I can fancy it well calculated to make an impression—of some sort or another, over one's mind—I confess on mine—to have been one, which is far from *canny*. His looks too bespeak him, I am afraid, to be suffering rather from the jading effects of London dissipation, than the gentler pains and anxieties attendant on his situation, as a lover separated from the object of his affection."

Mr. Gillespie looked concerned at this report, feeling a great interest in his amiable young sister-in-law. And though he generally expressed mistrust, with respect to his wife's too hasty reliance on her first impressions, still he was often in the end forced to acknowledge their frequent accuracy.

Yet at the same time, as the countenance of the lover did not in any way alter the case with regard to Mary's position or circumstances, there was nothing to be said or done by her friends whilst awaiting the issue of affairs, but to observe with regret that though with the same meek "patience, abnegation of self, and devotion to others," their sister pursued the even tenor of her way, the cheerful serenity which before had continued to shine forth in her countenance, and characterize her bearing, had departed. Her mind had been evidently unsettled by the *rencontre* with Eugene Trevor—her heart's calm rest disturbed.

How was it indeed with Mary? Had the hints conveyed by Eugene during their interview depressed her hopes, and re-awakened her misgivings as to the happy issue of the year's probation? Or more bitter still—had anything in that same interview occurred to give that first disenchanting touch, which by degrees detracts from the perfect charm which has hitherto robed our idol, and we see the image of goodness and beauty, whose idol shape we worshipped, melting from our sight, and though still it binds the fatal spell, and still it draws us on, the spirit of our love is changed—a shadow has fallen upon it. We feel it to be "of the earth earthy."

Had Mary received any startling impression, her feelings any *bouleversement*, by beholding Eugene Trevor for the first time so unlike the Eugene she had hitherto loved—under the irritating disturbing influences of opposition and reverse.

But from whatever cause they might proceed, certainly "the gloom and the shadow" spread broader and deeper on her brow; and when on his return from the Moors, Eugene Trevor, probably for the chance of another interview, revisited the Scotch metropolis, he learnt, by particular inquiry of a maid-servant he found standing by the door of Mr. Gillespie's closed house, that the family had left Edinburgh, and gone to the sea-side.

"Were they all well?" he inquired.

"All well, only the young lady, Mrs. Gillespie's sister, a little pale, and pining for country air. So the young Maister Arthur had come, and persuaded them to put up their gear, and take the bairns and all to the sea; but the maister was expected home the morrow, if the gentleman liked to step up and see him."

We may imagine that Trevor had no inclination to tarry for this purpose, and that same day left Scotland *en route* for Montrevor.

CHAPTER III.

He glowed with a spirit pure and high,
They called the feeling madness,
And he wept for woe with a melting eye,
'Twas weak and moody sadness.

PERCIVAL.

It was Epsom week. London was all astir with the influx of company returning from the races.

A pale girl sat alone in one of the apartments of an hotel in Brook Street, listening long and anxiously to the coming sounds of the carriage-wheels, as they whirled along in that direction.

At length a carriage stopped before the door, and in a few moments a lady entered the room, whose showy costume and flushed excited countenance, (forming so strong a contrast to the appearance of the other, whom she warmly greeted,) plainly evinced her to have but just returned from that gay resort, the Stand at Epsom.

"You are come then, dear Mary. I hope you have not been very long waiting."

"No, not so very long," and the eyes of the speaker wandered anxiously towards the door, as if she seemed to expect the appearance of a second person.

Mrs. de Burgh understood that glance too well—she shook her head compassionately.

"Alas!—no, dear Mary; you must not expect to see him just now; he has been unfortunately prevented—that was the reason which made me so late; but I will tell you all about it presently, only let me have a glass of wine first, for I am nearly exhausted."

And during the interval of suspense, whilst Mrs. de Burgh refreshed herself after the fatiguing pleasures of the day, let us remind our readers, that the momentous year had some little time ago drawn to a close. Its expiration had not, however, brought with it, any immediate results.

Nothing had been seen or heard of Eugene Trevor by any of the family for the first month or two. He had been in London only at intervals, and he had not opened any communication with his *fiancée*, till she—on coming to London at the urgent solicitation of her sister Lady Morgan, who was not well—had a few days after her arrival, been surprised by a note from Mrs. de Burgh, whom she was not aware was even in town, begging her to come to her—naming a particular day—at the hotel where she was staying—as Eugene Trevor wished particularly to see her. She added that he would be obliged by her not mentioning the object of this visit to her relations, lest by any chance they might interfere with the interview, and it was very necessary that it should occur, before any more general communication took place.

"Still mystery and concealment!" was poor Mary's disappointed soliloquy. "Why not come here openly and see and speak to me? But I will go this once, as Eugene wishes it, and I cannot refuse

perhaps without occasioning trouble and confusion."

And so she went; for still alas! the attractive chain too powerfully bound her, and her heart could not but spring forward with yearning hope to this meeting once again, with her intended. It may be imagined, therefore, how her heart had sunk within her, at Mrs. de Burgh's disappointing communication.

"Prevented coming," after having had her hopes and expectations strained to such a pitch—and she awaited with painful solicitude the promised explanation.

She had not seen her cousin since her last unhappy time in London, and though, even then, to a certain degree, a kind of estrangement had risen up between them; and all that she had since heard by report of the gay wife's conduct and proceedings, had not greatly raised the beautiful Olivia in her esteem, yet Mary could not but retain a grateful remembrance of the warm-hearted kindness she had received whilst under her roof—and a still more pleasing and vivid impression of the too tenderly cherished associations, with which she was so intimately connected.

But at this moment, the dearest friend on earth would have only been appreciated by Mary, as the being on whose lips she hung for information on the subject, and which she alone at this moment had the power to communicate; and "why had not Eugene come?" was all that spoke in her anxious countenance, or in the faltering tone in which she attempted, with some show of cousinly interest, to make a few inquiries after Louis and the children.

Mrs. de Burgh came at last to her relief—if relief it could be called—for the first thing she heard was, that Eugene instead of coming to see her, intended setting off for Montrevor that very evening.

"And why?" Mary with quivering lips interrupted.

"Having lost a large sum of money on the Derby, he was obliged to have immediate recourse to his father for the necessary cash to cover this unfortunate transaction. He has therefore commissioned me to break to you this intelligence. I cannot tell you, my dear Mary, the state of mind poor Eugene was in when we parted—not only on account of the immediate disappointment this occasioned him; but because this enormous loss must again retard the possibility of his marriage taking place at present. My dear Mary, you are doomed to the trial of hope deferred—the strength and constancy of your attachment has indeed been sorely taxed."

Mary did not immediately reply. She sat very pale, her eyes fixed upon the ground, something more than common disappointment expressed in her thoughtful countenance.

At length she looked up, and said in a grave and anxious tone:

"Does Eugene always lose like this at races?"

"Oh no, dear! fortunately," laughed Mrs. de Burgh, "not often; he is very lucky in general," but checking herself, as she saw Mary's shocked countenance, "I mean," and she hesitated, "that after all he has not so very decided a taste for this sort of thing," and Mrs. de Burgh laughed again, saying: "but, my dear girl, do not look so very serious upon the subject, what is there so very shocking in it after all."

Mary thought it was a subject, to her at least, of most serious importance and concern. A new and uncomfortable misgiving began to arise in her mind.

Was it in any way relating to this propensity in Eugene Trevor, against which Louis de Burgh originally warned her—and did it in reality—more than the reason which Eugene had brought forth to her brother, tend to interfere in any way with her happiness? So strongly did this idea suddenly possess her, that she could not refrain from asking Mrs. de Burgh whether she thought this was the case. Her cousin's evasive answer did not tend much to the removal of her suspicions.

Eugene certainly did play—did bet a little on the turf. She thought Mary had always been aware of that—men must have some pursuit, some excitement. If it were not one thing it was another—equally—perhaps one might call it—"not quite right;" however, all the best men in London were on the turf. Eugene was only like the rest, but with married men, it was quite different.

"Indeed, Mary," the fair lady continued, "Eugene always assures me, he means to give up everything of the sort when he marries, and I am quite sure he will do so. I only wish you were married, dear."

Mary only sighed.

"You are not getting weary of your engagement, Mary?" Mrs. de Burgh inquired.

"Weary!—oh, no, Olivia. I was sighing for Eugene's sake."

"You may well do so, for he is, I assure you, very unhappy at all this delay."

Mary shook her head, and her lip curled a little disdainfully. The gesture seemed to say, "Whose fault is it now?"

Mrs. de Burgh seemed to understand it as such, for she said—

"It is all that miserly old father's fault. He could set everything right at once, if he chose."

"But," said Mary, in a low tone, "I see no end of all this."

"No," hesitated Mrs. de Burgh, "not I suppose till the brother turns up; unless, indeed—" she murmured.

"What?" inquired Mary, anxiously.

"You had better come and stay with me at Silverton," was Mrs. de Burgh's indirect reply.

Mary smiled dejectedly.

"That would never do," she replied, "they would not consent to my doing so, under present circumstances."

"They—who are they? I am sure, Mary, I should not allow any brother or sister to interfere with my proceedings. You are of age, and quite at liberty, I should imagine, to act as you please on any subject."

Mary shook her head. She did not feel quite so independent-spirited as all that—and besides, she did not herself see that such a step would be quite expedient at present.

She did not, however, say this aloud, and Mrs. de Burgh attributed her silence to yielding consent.

"Eugene wishes it very much I can assure you."

Mary looked up as if the tempter himself had murmured the insinuating observation in her ear, for there was something significant in the way Mrs. de Burgh had spoken, which she could not but understand, and still more in the words which followed.

"If you were only married to Eugene, Mary, you might rely on his giving up all objectionable and hurtful things."

"But as that cannot be," sighed Mary, despondingly.

"It could," hesitated Mrs. de Burgh; "it is only your friends' opposition which would stand in the way, until Eugene is able to settle something satisfactory as to his future prospects. Were I you, Mary, if it were only for Eugene's sake, I should not be so scrupulous about securing each other's happiness and his welfare, as he tells me you are."

But Mary turned away almost indignantly. If the proposal had even revolted her spirit when coming from Eugene's own lips, much more so, did it grate upon her feelings, when thus insinuated by those of another.

But whatever might here have ensued, was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. de Burgh. It seemed that he had only arrived in London that day, unexpectedly to Mrs. de Burgh, who otherwise would not have planned the meeting of Mary and Eugene.

He came evidently in one of his London humours, as his wife called it; and though he greeted Mary kindly, she fancied there was a certain alteration in his manner towards her, which she instinctively felt to originate in his disapprovement of the present circumstances of her engagement; she remembered that he never was friendly to the affair, though the direct subject was now avoided by each of the party.

He sat and made captious and cutting allusions to the races, and every one concerned therein, which, whether really intended at Eugene, Mary interpreted as such—and they touched the poor girl to the quick.

Probably she was not far wrong in her supposition as to the pointedness of his remarks, for suddenly glancing on his listener's downcast anxious countenance he exclaimed, addressing his wife:

"Bye the bye, Olivia, I mean to be off abroad in a day or two."

"Good Heavens, Louis! what new fancy is this?"

"Why, I have heard something to-day which has really put me quite into a fever."

"Well, what is it? Some nonsense, I dare say."

"I at least do not think it so. Dawson, who I saw to-day, declares that Trevor, Eustace Trevor I mean, was seen by some one not long ago in Switzerland. Yes," he continued, encouraged by Mary's glance of intense and startled interest, "he was seen with another person—the *keeper* I suppose they talk about—somewhere on the Alps."

"The Alps!—poor fellow! gone there to cool his brain, I suppose," said Mrs. de Burgh, whose countenance nevertheless had bespoke her not a little moved by this communication.

"Cool his brain!—nonsense! cool enough by this time, depend upon it."

"But does Eugene know of this?" faltered Mary.

"I suppose so," replied Mr. de Burgh, coldly.

"Impossible, Louis!" Mary exclaimed with eagerness.

"Well, perhaps so. I don't know at all," Mr. de Burgh continued. "I shouldn't be so much surprised if he did; there are a great many things which surprise me more than that, Mary; for instance you yourself—yes, you, Mary," as she lifted up her eyes to her cousin's handsome face, with quiet surprise, "that you should see things in a light so different to what I should have expected from you."

"Ridiculous!" interposed Mrs. de Burgh—"that is to say that you should have expected her to have seen everything with your own jaundiced, prejudiced perception; but about Eustace Trevor."

"Yes, about Eustace Trevor; he is a subject certainly worth a little of your interest and inquiry. Mary, you should have known *him*," exclaimed Mr. de Burgh, with rising enthusiasm.

"You were very much attached to him then?" demanded Mary, with deep interest.

"Attached to him!—yes, indeed I was; that *was* a man whom one might well glory in calling friend; or," he murmured to himself, "a woman might be proud to worship as a lover."

"Yes," interposed Mrs. de Burgh, "I suppose he was a very superior, delightful person; but I own he always appeared to me, even as a boy, a little *tête monté*, so that it did not surprise me so very much when I heard of the calamity which had befallen him. He was just the sort of person upon whose mind any strong excitement, or sudden shock would have had the like effect."

"Olivia, you are talking nonsense," Mr. de Burgh petulantly exclaimed.

"It was his mother's death, I think, I heard which brought on this dreadful crisis?" Mary inquired.

"Exactly so," answered Mrs. de Burgh.

"How *do* you know?" exclaimed her husband. "What does any one know about the matter?"

"We can only judge from what one has heard from the best authority," again persisted his wife.

"Best authority! well, I can only say that far from being of your opinion, I should have said that Eustace Trevor had been as far from madness as earth from heaven."

"Really, Louis!" exclaimed Mrs. de Burgh, perceiving Mary's look of anxious interest and surprise, "one would fancy from the way you talk that you suspected him never really to have been mad."

"And this the world called frenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness, and the glance
Of melancholy is a fearful gift.
What is it but the telescope of truth,
Which brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality more cold,"

quoted Mr. de Burgh for all reply.

"What *is* all this to do with the point in question?" said Mrs. de Burgh impatiently. "Really, Louis, Mary will think *you* also decidedly have gone mad."

"Mary likes poetry," he answered quietly; "she will not think it is madness what I have uttered."

"But, Louis, what do you really mean about Eugene's brother?—tell me something about him. I have heard so very little," demanded Mary, earnestly.

"Why do you not make Eugene tell you himself? I can only say:

'He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again!'"

"He was very handsome—very clever," said Mrs. de Burgh, taking up the theme more prosaically, "and very amiable I believe, though rather impetuous and hot-tempered; always at daggers drawn with his father, because he spent the old man's money a little faster than he liked, it is said."

"Good heavens, Olivia!" burst forth Mr. de Burgh, passionately, "how can you sit there, and distort the truth in that shameful manner? you know as well as I do the true version of this part of the story. Mary," turning to his cousin with flashing eyes, "Eustace Trevor had a mother; an excellent charming creature, whose existence, through the combined influence of her husband and a most baneful, pernicious wretch of a woman, that Marryott, of whom no doubt you have heard, was rendered one long tissue of wretchedness and wrong, the extent of which I believe is hardly known. Eustace, who adored his mother, keenly felt and manfully espoused her cause; therefore, you may see at once this was the reason of his father's hatred of him, and the old man's treatment of this son, was one shameful system of injustice and tyranny—enough, I confess, to drive any man into a state of mental irritation, possessed of Eustace's sensitive temperament."

Mary's wandering, startled gaze turned inquiringly on Mrs. de Burgh, as if to ask whether this new and melancholy representation of the case could be really true. Mrs. de Burgh looked a little disconcerted, but replied carelessly:

"Yes, poor Aunt Trevor! she had certainly a sad time of it; but then it was partly her own fault. She was a weak-spirited creature. What other woman would have endured what she did in that tame and passive manner?"

"Yes, these poor weak-spirited creatures have often, however, strength to bear a great deal for the sake of others," replied Mr. de Burgh, sarcastically. "It would have been more high and noble-spirited, I dare say, to have blazed abroad her domestic grievances; but she had no doubt a little consideration for her children, and the honour and respectability of their house and name."

"Oh, nonsense! that was all very well when they were children to consider them; but when they were men, it signified very little," said Mrs. de Burgh.

"But *then*," suggested Mary, with trembling earnestness, "then she must have had great comfort in their affection and support."

"Yes," answered Mr. de Burgh, "in Eustace she had, I know, unfailing comfort and support."

"And Eugene?" anxiously demanded Mary. "Surely he too—"

"Of course," Mrs. de Burgh hastened to exclaim, "no one could be fonder or kinder to his mother though, because"—looking angrily at her husband—"he had the sense and the discretion not to quarrel with his father, and strength of mind not to *go mad*—Louis, I suppose, wishes to make you believe that Eugene was not kind to his mother."

"Nothing would make me believe that Eugene was not kind to his mother," added Mary with an earnest energy, which showed with what indignation she would repel this distracting idea.

And Mr. de Burgh replied with great moderation:

"Nor did I say anything of the sort. *I* am not at all in the custom of asserting grave charges against a person, without certain proof. I only saw as much into 'the secrets of the prison-house' at Montrevor as would make me very sorry to have had anything further to do with its interior."

Poor Mary! She asked no more questions, she had heard quite enough to give new and dark impressions to her mind. She saw everything in a still more bewildering and uncertain light—yet felt a vague, indefinite dread of further revelation.

Her sister's carriage being speedily announced, she bade adieu to her cousins, who were leaving London the next day, and

"Went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn,"

bearing in her secret soul restless doubts and blind misgivings, she shrank even from confiding to her most beloved Arthur.

CHAPTER IV.

I knew that in thy bosom dwelt
A silent grief, a hidden fear,
A sting which could be only felt
By spirits to their God most dear,
Which yet thou felt'st from year to year,
Unsoftened, nay, embitter'd still;
And many a secret sigh and tear
Heaved thy sad heart, thine eyes did fill,
And anxious thoughts thou hadst presaging direst ill.

MOULTRIE.

The sequel only brought forth for our heroine further disturbance and discomfort.

The newly-risen impediment to the marriage was of necessity the subject of correspondence. He again threw the blame upon his father, urging his increasing infirmities of mind and body as the excuse.

But the plea appeared to Mary's friends evasive and ambiguous, and greatly indeed was the strength and stability of her affection tried by the urgent solicitations of those so dear to her, that she would consent to break off entirely this ill-starred—and as they the more and more considered it—objectionable engagement.

But no, there was yet one still more dear to her; and to him, through good and evil report, her spirit yet must cling—

"And stand as stands a lonely tree,

That still unbroke, though gently bent,
Still waves with fond fidelity
Its boughs above a monument."

By letter too—for there was one crisis of affairs during which the lovers corresponded on the anxious subject, Eugene failed not to urge the maintenance of an engagement which on his part he declared he would never consent to be the first to relinquish.

Then, how could Mary cast aside an attachment, a hope which had become so linked with the happiness of her existence, that to contemplate its extinction, was to see before her extended

"Dreary and vast and silent the desert of life."

No, rather was she content in doubt, darkness and uncertainty to wait and wander, her hope still fixed upon the distant light in the hazy future.

A position, such as that in which Mary found herself placed—an ill-defined and ambiguous matrimonial engagement—is to a young woman ever, more or less, a misfortune and a trial: something there is in her life

"Incomplete, imperfect, and unfinished,"

comprising also as it must do, much of uncertainty and restless doubt.

The circumstances of Mary's case, rendered hers more peculiarly a subject for such influences. Removed from the sphere in which her lover moved, even their correspondence, after the time just mentioned, entirely ceased; and she heard of him only at intervals—by chance and vague report.

She had longed to have those doubts and repellent ideas, Mr. de Burgh's conversation had insinuated into her mind, cleared away, as she believed they might, by Eugene's own word of mouth. But this had been denied her. She had indeed alluded to the report respecting his brother, which Mr. de Burgh had heard; but Eugene had merely said in reply, that he was taking every measure to ascertain its accuracy; and she heard nothing further on that point.

From Mrs. de Burgh she also ascertained that her cousin Louis had never carried out his proposed expedition, in search of the friend for whom he had professed such warm admiration and interest.

Mary was not so much surprised at this, it being only accordant with her cousin's ineffectual character—warm and affectionate in heart and feeling, but unstable in action and resolve; without self-devotedness or energy in any duty or pursuit, which turned not on the immediate fancy or interest of the moment—something else had probably put the intention out of his head. It did seem to Mary strange and unnatural, that the disappearance of a man such as Eustace Trevor had been represented to her lively and susceptible fancy, should have been so tamely endured by his friends in general, to say nothing of his own brother; but to think on that point was now to raise such a dark and bewildering cloud of ill-defined misgivings, that Mary put it from her mind as much as possible.

There was another point too, on which she indirectly sought enlightenment and assurance. Eugene's mother. Alas! there indeed she had heard enough to make her shudder at the idea connected with much within that house, which she had visited with such pleasure in her unconscious innocence—but more especially with that sinful old man, who, in the garb of venerable old age, had been by her so ignorantly revered; yes, she shuddered to think how appearances may deceive, and shrunk at the thoughts of ever entering again the scene of such wickedness, as long at least as Eugene's father continued there to exist.

That Eugene had in the remotest degree even countenanced that wickedness, was another point she would not allow herself to question—or rather, she put it away, like every other deteriorating rumour, hearsay, or inarticulate whisper, which in the course of time come with its airy hand to point out her lover as unworthy of the devotedness of a heart and affections such as hers; put it away in the utmost recesses of her heart, as we do those things we fear to see or hear substantiated—when even a breath, a word would suffice to destroy the illusion now become so closely interwoven with the happiness of one's existence.

In the meantime, Mary lived chiefly with the Gillespies though her heart's true home was with that dear brother, upon whose progress and success in his profession the chief interest of her life, independent of her one great hope, was centred; and who, on his part, unselfishly devoted every interval between the course of study he so energetically pursued, to her society, endeavouring in every way to promote her happiness or amusement; and chafing inwardly as he did, over the position in which she stood; for her sake preserved outward patience and equanimity, on a point which nevertheless touched him to the quick. Much he heard, too, which made him devoutly wish the engagement with Eugene Trevor to be broken off, without his having courage to take the bandage from his sister's eyes. Much of the private history of these, Eugene Trevor's days—we call them—of probation—nay, the profligate course his love for Mary could not even restrain within bounds. Episodes in his daily walk, with which it is not our intention to sully our pages, but calculated to make the brother's blood boil with indignation at the idea of his pure, spotless sister, becoming the wife of such a man.

But how difficult the task to force on her unsuspecting mind convictions which might go nigh to break her trembling innocent heart—or at least blight the happiness of her life. He must patiently allow fate to work out its course, fervently praying that all might end well.

About a year and a half went by—another six months and Arthur Seaham's term of law study would have terminated; and he declared that to prepare himself for his last important term, it was necessary that he should have some more than ordinary relaxation of mind. He had a fancy to go to Italy, and that Mary should accompany him. She smiled at first incredulously, thinking he was in jest. She thought the idea too delightful to be realised.

He was in earnest, he declared.

But the journey would be so long; and the expense—could they manage it?

What were such considerations to the affectionate brother, when he remarked the glow which had mantled his sister's pale cheeks, or the animation which lit up her languid eye, as in imagination the warm breezes of Italy already fanned her brow—her feet trode lightly on its classic grounds. Their friends had a few prudent objections to the plan—Italy was so far; Germany—the Rhine, were suggested. But no; Arthur saw that Mary's countenance fell when the mark fell short of Italy, therefore he stood firm.

And thither then the brother and sister went, with an old attached maid-servant of the family, who still followed the fortunes of the unmarried daughter; and by the Rhine and Switzerland they proceeded into Italy.

CHAPTER V.

We came to Italy. I felt
A yearning for its sunny sky;
My very spirit seem'd to melt
As swept its first warm breezes by.

WILLIS.

An early morning in Italy! Who that from experience has not enjoyed—can realise the conception, much less describe, the luxurious delight of the first hours of a summer morning in that radiant climate.

"It was the morn of such a day, as must have risen on Eden first," that Mary Seaham went forth from the little inn near Tivoli, to join her brother who had preceded her some little time to make arrangements respecting their intended excursion of the day.

She waited—but when he did not come, could no longer resist the tempting aspect of the scenery without, to stroll onwards from the house towards the merry waters which danced on their musical way not far distant from the spot; and as she proceeded through the fragrant air—beneath the transparent sky, the sigh she heaved could have been caused but by the burden of enjoyment now weighing upon her senses; for all human care—all sadness, all unrest, all passionate yearnings or pensive remembrances—in short, all unconnected with "the mere and breathing charm of life," seemed in that thrilling hour, annihilated and forgotten.

But something glittering on the ground, near a flower she had stooped to pick, suddenly attracted her attention. She took it up and examined it more closely. It was a massive signet ring. What was Mary's astonishment to see engraved upon the seal, the initials "E. T." with the Trevor coat of arms.

Her first thought was of Eugene—could it be that he by some strange coincidence was near? or that he had purposely followed her to Italy? and her heart beat fast, and her cheek glowed at the suggestion. Yet she had never remembered observing such a ring on Eugene's finger, and then—another indefinite recollection of having somewhere before seen that same impression on some letter, certainly not *from* her lover, occurred to her.

Yes—and suddenly the breakfast-table at Silverton, and that letter—the letter to Eugene which she had ever since suspected must have been the turning-point of her previous perfect felicity, but which she had always supposed must have been from Eugene's father. That large red seal the little Louisa had displayed before her eyes. All was now before her. But how then came it lying here upon this foreign soil?

Was it forbidden her to lose, even for a moment, the thrilling consciousness of the fate which bound her, that there should be now thrown across her very path, this startling reminder?

Standing fixed to the spot—turning the signet over and over in her hand, an uncertain, half-

bewildered expression on her sweet face—a sudden idea which crimsoned it to the very temples, then leaving it paler than before—suddenly lit up her countenance.

How, indeed, came it lying there? "E. T." Surely from the old man's finger it had not dropped; and if not from Eugene's, might it, could it have been from that of the lost, unhappy, wandering brother, Eustace's?

With what object, what intent, she scarcely knew herself—but impulse moved her, with beating heart and trembling step, to pursue the path which she had taken, only remembering the while, that last night, after she was in bed, there had been an arrival at the inn. Two gentlemen from Rome, the *cameriera* who called her in the morning told her, had roused the house up at a very late hour; and that one of these belated travellers had nevertheless already pressed the dewy turf before her—that it might be him who was the loser, was perhaps, the paramount idea which now possessed her as she hurried on over this fair Italian ground as light in limb—alas! less light at heart as when bounding over the breezy wilds of her native land.

She had not been wrong in her conjecture. A sudden turn in the lovely vale she had entered presented to her view, at no great distance from the spot she had attained, a broken fountain, the silvery sound of whose ringing waters faintly reached her ear; and near this, half concealed by the branches of a leaning tree, she discerned the figure of a man, standing watching its light and sparkling play.

A few half irresolute steps brought her nearer and nearer still—a few more, and she stood attracted as if by an irresistible spell almost close behind the object of her search. His face had been turned away, but the light rustling of her garments when she drew so near, attracted his attention.

He looked round, and there stood Mary with parted lips and crimsoned brow—that look of strange, deep, and eager scrutiny directed towards him.

Never did the face of mortal man undergo such immediate change, as did the calm, noble countenance which at the same time revealed itself to the intruder; never were two simple words uttered with such thrilling fervency of tone, as was the ejaculation which broke from the stranger's lips.

"Miss Seaham," he exclaimed; and in accents scarce less earnest in its emotion, Mary's trembling lips faltered Mr. Temple's name.

Yes, it was indeed Edward Temple, upon whom she gazed with ill-defined ideas—and feelings of bewilderment and perplexity—her high-wrought expectations unable all at once to sink themselves to the level of natural composure—pale, agitated, and trembling, without further greeting or explanation,

"She showed the ring."

"I found it," she said with almost hysterical incoherency, "and thought perhaps—but your's it cannot be—and yet it is strange—the initials are the same—but—can it really be, that your crest—your arms also are similar?"

For all reply he gently took the ring from her outstretched hand, and in silence seemed to examine it. Then without looking up, and in a low, calm voice he said:

"You expected I conclude, to find the owner had been Eugene Trevor?"

"No, not Eugene," Mary quietly replied, restored to greater self-possession, "but perhaps, I thought—it was a random idea—that perhaps it might have been his brother Eustace."

The ring dropped suddenly from her listener's fingers, as she uttered these last words.

"And what," he murmured, having stooped to raise it from the ground, "and what interest can Miss Seaham take in that ill-starred, that unhappy man; that outcast, alien brother, that her mistake should cause disappointment, such as I so plainly perceive it to have occasioned her?"

Mary probably attributed to wounded feeling the trembling pathos of the speaker's voice, for with all the simple earnestness of her kindly nature, she hastened in gentle soothing accents to reply:

"Mr. Temple—if disappointment was the first impulse of my feelings—believe me, when I say, there is scarcely any one else," with a weary sigh, the tears gathering in her eyes, "with whom a meeting so unexpected, could just now have afforded me such unmixed pleasure."

For one short moment her hand was retained by the so-called Mr. Temple in a trembling pressure, which appeared to speak all his heart's grateful acknowledgement, whilst those dark eyes fixed themselves upon her face with mournful earnestness of expression.

But the next moment, with a low-breathed sigh, which might have seemed the echo of her own, he released her hand, and turned away his head.

"You are kind to say this," he murmured, "for myself, I can only declare this meeting to be a happiness such as I had hardly expected ever to taste again in this world. But," he anxiously inquired, "will you again permit me to inquire the reason of the more than common—nay even, taking into consideration his relationship—more than natural interest, it would appear you feel in the unfortunate Eustace Trevor."

The earnest melancholy of his tone thrilled on Mary's heart.

"Mr. Temple," she said eagerly, "you speak with feeling on this subject, can it, oh! can it be possible that you have ever seen, ever known Eugene Trevor's brother? Oh, tell me if this is really the case, for you say true—in more than common degree—quite independently of selfish motives, connected with my own happiness—has my interest been excited in his discovery. It has been most strongly awakened in the fate, and history of one who has lately been brought before me in a light so charming yet so sad. Oh! Mr. Temple, you do not deny the fact. Then, tell me, only tell me where he can be found?"

Eustace Trevor had turned upon her the full light of his radiant countenance, radiant with a new and strange delight, the nature of which she could not comprehend; but as, with clasped hands and beseeching countenance, she uttered this latter inquiry, it was answered by a gesture, seeming to imply by her listener ignorance in the required information.

"You, then, did not know him?" she resumed, with renewed disappointment in her tone.

"I did know him—ah, too well!" was the murmured reply, his eyes, with a strange and mysterious expression, fixed upon the ground.

Very pale suddenly grew Mary's cheek as she looked upon him thus. Her lips parted, and her heart beat fast as from the shock of a strange and sudden idea, which flashed across her senses. But she put by the suggestion as the wild improbable coinage of her own high wrought imagination. She remembered too what had struck her often vaguely before, and also her brother's remark on a former occasion, with reference to the same resemblance. But when she looked again, the glowing illusion had faded, her companion was again calmly regarding her, again asking—in what she esteemed a cold and careless tone of voice—from whom it was, she had received the impression respecting Eustace Trevor, to which she had just alluded.

"It was his friend, and my cousin—Louis de Burgh, who first spoke of him to me in such warm and glowing terms; but he chiefly raised my interest by the beautiful but melancholy picture he drew of his devoted affection for his mother—that mother," she added in a low, sad tone, "with whose unhappy history, I then for the first time was made acquainted—indeed it caused his very affliction to become almost holy in my eyes—by showing it to have been but the crisis of his high and sacred grief. Mr. Temple," she continued with enthusiasm; "there seems to me something, if I may so speak, almost God-like in the pure and devoted love of a strong proud-hearted man towards his mother; and it *is* God-like, for was not the last earthly thought—the last earthly care of Him who hung upon the cross, even in his mortal agony—for his mother!"

The speaker's glistening eyes were raised above or she might have seen tears indeed,

"Such as would not stain an angel's cheek,"

also irradiating the eyes of that "strong proud-hearted man," as she so expressed herself—who was standing by her side.

But she could not have heard—for it was not breathed for mortal ear, the deep and fervent cry: "My Mother!" which her innocent words, like thrilling music by the winds, struck from the secret chords of that manly tender heart.

But this was a theme Eustace Trevor's melting soul could not trust itself to pursue; not indeed, without it were first allowed him to cast away all subterfuge and disguise, and at the feet of that good, kind, and gentle girl, open his whole bruised and desolate heart, to receive that Heavenly balsam of pity and consolation, she had ready stored within her breast for the faithful son of that wronged and sainted mother!

And could this be done? Had he not for the sake of this same gentle being, in some sort pledged himself to such an extent, that yielding to the impulse would be baseness and dishonour.

Alas! as in all divergement from the direct and natural paths of human action, in whatsoever spirit they may have been entered upon, the time must come—circumstances must arise—when the line of duty becomes bewilderingly shadowy and indistinct, even to the most conscientious and true-hearted.

How few can steer their way unwavering through the straightened pathway of a false position. It is not there, that like a stately ship he can vigorously part the waves of circumstance or temptation,

"And bear his course aright.
Nor ought for tempest doth from it depart,
Nor ought for fairer weather's false delight."

Therefore, with an effort over his feelings which might have made him appear unaffected by the sentiments his companion had so touchingly expressed, he was forced merely to reply: "Yes, Louis de Burgh was his friend; and it would be very gratifying to Eustace Trevor to know that one friend at least in that world he has abandoned, retains him in such affectionate remembrance. And his brother"—he added, with more hesitating restraint in his tone, "did you never receive anything of the same impression from him?"

"Eugene," Mary answered with some slight embarrassment, "rarely ever enlarged upon a theme which of course had become connected in his mind with painful feelings."

"*Painful indeed!*" was the other's significant rejoinder.

"Never but once," Mary continued, "did I venture to question him upon the subject with any minuteness, and then he manifested such strong and painful emotion that I never afterwards approached it willingly. But at that time," she added with a sigh, "I had certainly heard very little of his brother, but the dark and terrible malady with which he was afflicted. Mr. Temple," she continued anxiously, "is not his complete disappearance most mysterious and inexplicable? and does it not appear to you almost impossible, that all the means which have been taken for his recovery could have been so completely unattended by success, supposing he were still alive?"

"But have any such means been taken?" her companion asked with some marked curiosity.

"Oh yes!" she hastened to reply "on Eugene's part at least."

A peculiar smile played on her companion's lips. It did not fail to strike Mary, and the incredulity it seemed to imply caused her feelings now so peculiarly sensitive upon that point, to be immediately up in arms.

"Mr. Temple, can you for a moment doubt this fact, he is Eugene's own brother, and—" she added in a low voice, the crimson blood at the same time mantling her cheeks, as the remembrance that she was addressing a rejected lover, pressed more consciously upon her, "he had interests of a different nature, closely connected with the assurance of his lost brother's fate?"

Mr. Temple started with sudden excitement.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, then averting his head, he added, as if the utterance of each syllable was a separate pang. "Do you mean to say that there is still a question of this marriage?"

"There is," she replied; "though of a very remote and undefined nature, our engagement still subsists."

Having said this with no little embarrassment of manner, the same feeling probably caused her to raise her arm from the fountain, over which she had been unconsciously leaning, and by tacit consent they turned away from the spot, silently beginning to retrace their steps. They had not proceeded thus many yards, when Arthur Seaham appeared in sight, accompanied by a second person, who Mary, with an exclamation of delighted surprise, recognized as Mr. Wynne, concerning whom in the absorbing interest of the last hour she had no time to seek information.

The good clergyman on his part, who had fallen in with her brother at the hotel, was charmed beyond expression by this fortunate and unexpected meeting with his own dear children, (so he called Mary and Arthur;) and peculiar was the glance of interest which beamed from his kindly eyes, as having gazed anxiously into Mary's face, he turned then towards her companion, who nevertheless with his fine countenance only a little paler than usual, was exchanging kind and cordial greetings with young Seaham.

"Oh! Mary, Mary!" the good clergyman whispered, as he drew his fair friend's arm within his own and walked on, the others following together behind, "I have heard sad stories of you, little quiet one, since I saw you last;—trampling noble flowers under your feet, and grasping at thorns, which something in that sweet face of your's tells me have not failed to do their wounding work. This comes of reading all that dreamy poetry I used to warn you against. A good and pleasant thing it is in its degree, but too much of it dazzles and deludes the senses, till at length they come to be unable to discern darkness from light, good from evil. Well! well!" he added, as Mary pretty well accustomed by this time to indirect attacks of this nature, attempted no defence, but with a faint melancholy smile, only drooped her head in silence and resignation. "Ah! well, even now who knows! The Almighty never will permit his little ones to walk on long in darkness, but in the end ever leads them by secret ways into safe and quiet pastures."

CHAPTER VI.

The stern
Have deeper thoughts than your dull eyes discern,
And when they love, your smilers guess not how
Beats the strong heart, though less their lips avow.

BYRON.

The victory is most sure
For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
To yield entire submission to the law
Of conscience.

WORDSWORTH.

"Arthur, this can scarcely be possible," Mary exclaimed with almost trembling solicitude, when alone with her brother, he informed her of the proposal Mr. Wynne had made—and he had unhesitatingly accepted—that he and his friend Mr. Temple should join their party during the succeeding week's tour.

"Not if it is disagreeable to you, Mary, certainly," was the brother's reply; "otherwise I must say I can see no objection to the plan; nor does Mr. Wynne either it seems, as he made the proposal, being of course aware by this time of the past circumstances respecting you and Temple. All that of course is an affair over and forgotten, particularly when made aware how matters stand with regard to your engagement with Trevor; so on your part, you will have nothing to fear. It only rests with him, I should think, to determine whether he is equal to the ordeal of your society, though to judge by his countenance just now, firm and calm as a statue, after a meeting which must have put his feelings rather to the test, I should say there was not much doubt upon the matter.

"Nay, if she loves me not, I care not for her.
Shall I look pale because the maiden blooms,
Or sigh because she smiles—or sighs for others.'

No—no, Miss Mary, that is not our way, however it may be with you ladies in cases of the kind.

"Great or good, or kind, or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair;
If she love me, this believe,
I will die e'er she shall grieve,

"Be she with that goodness blest,
Which may merit name of best.
If she be not such to me—
What care I how good she be."

Thus the brother playfully sung and quoted, though whether the philosophical doctrine the old poet implied in his song had the effect of easing his listener's mind upon the point in question, her faint and absent smile was not exactly calculated to declare; though perhaps could he have read aright the secret history of that anxious countenance, he might have seen how far less any such considerations were agitating his sister's mind than the remembrance of Eugene's strange and angry excitement in the Edinburgh gardens, on the subject of this same Edward Temple; and the question now chiefly agitating her breast to be, whether she could without treason to her lover, place herself in the position and circumstances now under discussion—yet what was she to do? She knew that Arthur could not enter into her feelings on this point; besides, was there not some unconfessed leaning in her secret heart in favour of the arrangement. For that interview of the morning, and the circumstances from which it took its rise; had it not aroused ideas of perplexity, interest, and anxiety in her mind? was there not still much left unaccounted for and unexplained?

She mentioned the ring to her brother. He was surprised, and thought it a strange coincidence, though certainly it did often happen that families of different names, bore the same crests, sometimes the same arms.

Mary's recognition of the impression showed at least there to be, some connection between Eugene Trevor and Mr. Temple. Arthur could easily gain explanation from Mr. Wynne on the subject. He also was often puzzled to know to what family of Temple his friend belonged.

But, before time or explanation was given for any such inquiry, the little party yielding themselves passively as it were to the irresistible force of circumstances which had so singularly united them, were pursuing their way over the enchanted ground Arthur had previously marked out for their excursion, most of which the two more experienced travellers had already explored, but gladly retrode for the benefit of their young companions.

"By sweet Val d'Arno's tinted hills,
In Vallambrosa's convent gloom,
Mid Terni's vale of singing rills,
By deathless lairs in solemn Rome.
* * * * *

Ruin, and fane, and waterfall."

They wandered delightedly, and never did Mr. Wynne and Arthur cease to congratulate themselves and one another; the latter, on the valuable acquisition he and his sister had gained in such able cicerones as himself and his companion; whilst Mary and Mr. Temple, by their silence only, gave testimony to the same effect.

Yes, it were well for the good Mr. Wynne and the young and hopeful-hearted Arthur

"Cheerful old age, and youth serene,"

to yield themselves to the charm of sunny skies and classic ground, and to feel almost as if earth wanted no more to make it Heaven.

"A calm and lovely paradise
Is Italy for hearts at ease."

But for the other two, as may be supposed, there wanted something more, or rather something less, to render their enjoyment as full and unalloyed.

For in spite of all Arthur had urged to the contrary, it was too plainly evident that something there was—a restraint—a consciousness, influencing their secret feelings, and imparting themselves to their outward demeanour, in common intercourse one with another; which no exciting or absorbing diversities of scene or circumstance could entirely dissipate or dispel.

Sometimes indeed, Mary, carried away by the delight of the moment, would forget whose eye had fixed itself for a brief moment, with such earnest interest, on her countenance; or even meet unshrinkingly the glance, the smile of sympathy, which her murmurings of enraptured admiration at times drew forth.

Sometimes unconsciously, as if it had been only as a portion of the magic spell which hung on all around her, she found herself listening to that voice, whose few, calm, graphic words had power to throw desired light on some old haunt or story—or touch with a bright glow the scene before them, or oftener turn away with a startled look of anxious thought as if some sudden association or remembrance recalled her to consciousness, and broke the spell.

"Too happy to be your guide and guardian, through scenes and beauty which even your lively imagination is incompetent to conceive!"

Did the words, which had once proceeded from those same lips, thrill upon her recollection? or was it only the jealous disapproval of her lover Eugene which would start up to trouble her on such occasions?

Whilst Eustace—it would be vain to tell what caused the quick transition of that glance or smile into the cold and rigidly averted brow, or caused to die away upon his lips words whose inspiration sprang from a source which could not be worthily encouraged.

Thus, day after day went on, and brought but diminished opportunity of touching on those points of interest so near her heart, and concerning which she more and more became possessed with the vague and restless fancy, that Mr. Temple possessed more power than any one imagined of enlightenment; for she avoided, as much as possible, finding herself alone with him, and if at times, as inevitably it occurred, they were thrown together apart from the other two, Mary's haunting vision of Eugene's jealous disapproval of her intimacy with Mr. Temple would cast a restraint over her feelings, and made her shrink from availing herself of the favourable opportunity thus afforded.

Of course Mr. Wynne—and through him Eustace Trevor had soon learnt from Arthur every particular relating to his sister's situation with regard to Eugene, and the effect produced upon the latter by the circumstances which transpired, was evidenced only by the calm, rigid expression which settled on his interesting countenance—only subdued into soft and gentle melancholy, when at times, unobserved by herself, his eyes could fix themselves on Mary; and as for meeting her half-way, in any renewal of the subject, so particularly discussed near the fountain that first morning of their meeting, he, with almost equal pointedness, might have seemed to avoid any occasion which could tend to its revival.

On the other hand, from Mr. Wynne the more unconscious and unsuspecting Arthur could gain little satisfactorily information on the topic on which he had promised to make inquiries. He always fought off any cross questioning on any particular subject connected with his friend Temple.

Indeed this was easy enough to do; for heart and soul absorbed in the exciting enjoyment of scenes and circumstances in which he entered with such enthusiastic delight, Arthur was not very capable of pressing hard just now upon any serious point, not immediately connected with the interest of the day or the hour.

But when Mary, with whom the old man had hitherto as skilfully warded off any timid attempts on her part to draw him forth on the subject on which he was vowed to secrecy—when she, one sultry afternoon, had been conversing for some time so delightfully with her dear old friend, concerning days gone by, in the cool marble *sala* of an old *palazzo* near Genoa, where they had found temporary accommodation—without any preparation, fixed her earnest eyes upon her companion's face, and said beseechingly:

"Mr. Wynne, will you answer me one question? you are acquainted I know, with everything concerning Mr. Temple; but I only wish to ascertain one point; was he ever acquainted with Eugene Trevor?"

The good man was taken by surprise, and displayed by his countenance considerable signs of embarrassment, succeeded, however, by equal symptoms of relief, when looking up he beheld Mr. Temple, who had joined them unobserved, and must inevitably have overheard Mary's words, and witnessed the perplexity they had occasioned her friend.

Mary's cheek also flushed deeply; yet when the next moment Mr. Wynne, with some careless excuse for leaving them, had walked away, and she found herself alone with him who best could answer to the question which had scarcely died upon her lips, she took courage, and with her

eyelashes sweeping her varying cheek, in a low, yet steady voice, said:

"Mr. Temple, I was asking Mr. Wynne a question, to which for some reason he did not seem able or willing to reply; will you tell me whether you ever knew Eugene Trevor?"

An instant's pause—then, in a tone in which, though calm, there was something unnatural and strange in the sound, there came the laconic reply—"I did."

And then there was a solemn pause. For what could Eustace Trevor add—how reply to the mute but eager questioning of those eyes, now fixed intently upon him, as if in the verdict of his lips there lay more power to ease the heart of its blind fears and nameless misgivings—more in one calm word of his

"Than all the world's defied rebuke."

Therefore, though Mary held her breath, hoping, longing that he should proceed, yet shrinking from more direct inquiry, there he stood, with lips compressed and stern averted eyes; no marble statue could have remained more mute; till to break the ominous and oppressive silence, Mary pronounced the name of "Eustace Trevor."

Then, indeed, her listener's eyes relaxed their fixed expression—a sudden glow lit up his countenance.

In a low, deep tone, and with a soft, melancholy smile, he demanded:

"And what, Miss Seaham, of Eustace Trevor?"

"What of him? Oh! Mr. Temple, all—everything that you may know—may have reason to suspect or conceive concerning him!"

Another pause; and then the voice of Mr. Temple, with renewed sadness replied:

"What could I tell you concerning him, but that he is a wanderer upon the face of the earth, as you—as everybody are aware."

"But why—but wherefore should this be; why forsake his country, his home, his kindred? Now, when Louis de Burgh gave me reason to suppose all further necessity was removed, his temporary affliction entirely subsided, why not return?"

"Return!" interrupted the other—"return with that brand—that stigma—which once attached to his name, must mark him in the eyes of men—a thing of suspicion, nay, of fear for ever; return, when that return must be to hear that curse in every blast—to be cut off from every hope, every tie which makes life beautiful to other men, or—" he paused; for he was on the point of saying, "or—bitter alternative—brand a still worse stigma on another; on one who however unworthy of such consideration, I must still remember as my brother." Thus he probably would have spoken, had not he been recalled to recollection by the strange and anxious expression depicted on Mary's countenance, and then he added, with an effort at self-command:

"The imputation of madness is a fearful thing, Miss Seaham, to be attached to a man's name; and Eustace Trevor, unfortunate man! is possessed of feelings most sensitive—morbidly sensitive, perhaps."

"It is—it is," Mary faltered, "a fearful thing if suffered to rest there; but surely his is not the course to accomplish the removal of the idea. Let Eustace Trevor but return—let him at least try and experience what a brother's kindness—what a sister's love can do, to wipe from his remembrance the morbid memory of his past affliction; and show to the world (if he fears its altered smiles) that the shock his noble mind sustained was but for a moment; that he is—"

But it was enough—those words, a brother's kindness—still more, a sister's love, had thrilled acutely upon the listener's heart.

And Mary paused, startled to behold the expression in the eyes bent so earnestly upon her.

"A sister's love!" what was such love to him!

However, with another strong effort he said in a voice scarce audible from emotion, "For such a sister's love, he might indeed brave and defy the scorn—the ignominy of the universe; but," he faltered, "it cannot be."

A silence of some minutes ensued. It was broken by Mary, who said in an anxious trembling voice,

"Mr. Temple, I have a favour to ask of you: I know you are acquainted with much of the private history of the Trevors—I am *sure* you are—I therefore entreat you will speak candidly upon the subject, and tell me your own opinion of Eugene Trevor. To you I can speak as I feel I can to no one else. My mind of late has been disturbed by doubts and fears upon the subject of Eugene. I know you *can*, you *will* speak the truth; so conceal not your real opinion from me."

"Miss Seaham, excuse me," Mr. Temple replied gravely, and with a degree of proud coldness. "I must decline to speak in any way of Eugene Trevor. It is a long time now since we have met."

"Oh, why—why," faltered Mary, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, "would you too, like the rest, by your looks, even by your silence, make me suspect the worth, the rectitude of Eugene,

and give me the miserable idea that the affection and heart's devotion now of years have been wasted and bestowed in vain?"

It was a difficult moment for that generous, noble soul. The peculiar situation in which he was placed almost bewildered his sense of discernment between what was right and wrong in his position, and darkened the way before him. How act—how speak—how meet this critical emergency?

The struggle must have been indeed intense, which enabled him at length to rise a conqueror over the conflicting powers which beset his soul, to subdue all selfish promptings of inferior nature—all selfish impulses and considerations; and speak and act as one might have spoken and acted who had never been Mary Seaham's lover, or Eugene Trevor's injured brother.

As a brother to a well-beloved sister—or as one of his high and holy calling might have seized that favourable opportunity for endeavouring to turn a perplexed and trembling suppliant on his counsel and assistance from some dangerous path or fatal delusion, he took up the strain, and implored her not to seek from him any further information on a subject—concerning which he must tell her at once, that for many reasons it was impossible for him to enter—he could not speak of Eugene Trevor. But he implored her to think well of those warnings so strongly pressed upon her consideration by her anxious friends—above all, by the internal evidence of her own pure soul—against a course of action in which the peace and happiness of her future life might be so fatally involved.

"Talk not of wasted affection," he touchingly exclaimed; "affection disinterested and blameless as yours, was never wasted—never bestowed in vain—for some good purpose, the All Wise so willed that you should for a time bestow it, and if He ordains that its waters should turn back, like the rain to their springs, He wills also that they should fill them with refreshment. Miss Seaham, it is not for me to advise you to break off your engagement with Eugene Trevor. I am the last person in the world—situated towards you as I have been"—he added in a low sad voice, "who ought to presume so to do; but let me speak to you, as you may remember I once before addressed you—before it had ever entered my heart to conceive you would stand in the position you now are in towards this Eugene Trevor. Did I not then warn you of the world into which you were hastening so unwarily—of its sins, its sorrows, and its snares; but still more, of its friendships, its smiles, its Judas kisses, awaiting not alone the eagle but the dove—the holy, harmless, and undefiled? And *now* do not my gloomy words find an echo in your heart? does not that look of care, that heavy sigh, confess that it had been better never to have tasted of the feverish joy, the unsatisfying delight, in exchange for the peace and tranquillity you had hitherto enjoyed? Is not your confidence disturbed—your trust shaken in the object on whom your affections have been set? do you not fear to lean more heavily on that reed lest it pierce you—to grasp it firmer, lest you crush, and prove its hollowness? Oh, Miss Seaham! is not this in some degree the case with you? if so, do not seek to dive further into the why or the wherefore. Let God's providence have its way, when, it seeks to turn you from a course it is not good for you to follow. Let faith and patience have their perfect work; seek peace and happiness from a higher, surer source than the dubious object on which your affections have been placed."

Mr. Temple paused, but he had no reason to suppose his earnest appeal had been as water spilt upon the ground; for something in Mary's face—that something, which had become of late its ruling and habitual expression, which might have seemed to breathe forth the Psalmist's weary longing for "the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest"—at rest, from the ever receding hopes—the sickening doubts and apprehensions—the wearying mysteries attendant on her position, which pressed so heavily on a nature formed rather for the peace and calm of gentle emotions, of peaceful joys, than for its strife of passions, its storm of woes; an expression which had appeared to Eustace Trevor to deepen as he spoke, for not for a moment did he dare to interpret it otherwise. Never did he surmise—never *dare* even to desire—that words uttered with such disinterested and single-minded intention, and in accents tremulous with such unselfish emotions, could in any other way affect his listener's heart. That in that hour of languid yearning for strength she felt that she did not possess; for rest and peace founded on some surer basis than that "reed shaken by the wind," such as her inauspicious love had gradually assumed the semblance, she should be most ready to lean her weary head on the noble breast, cling to the sheltering arm of him who thus had counselled her, and placing her destiny in his hands, ask him to guide her future course through the deceitful bewildering mazes of this life.

But no word, no look betrayed the secret impulse of her heart; and in the same anxious strain Eustace Trevor proceeded:

"Darkly, ambiguously, I have been compelled to speak; the subject having been, as you can bear witness, forced in a manner upon me; yet one step further I will take, and leave the rest in the hands of God. This ring," drawing the signet from his finger, where for the first time since the adventure in which it had formed a part, Mary had again seen it; "keep it," he continued, in a voice tremulous with emotion as Mary mechanically received it in her hands, looking wonderingly and enquiringly in his face; "keep it till you see *him*, Eugene Trevor again; then show it to him from *me*—from Edward Temple. Tell him the circumstances under which you received it, and ask him to clear up the mystery concerning it. If he refuses, then for his own sake as well as your own, I conjure you to bid him farewell for ever. If on the contrary, casting off all falsehood and deceit, he lays all before you, then—then—may Heaven direct the rest!"

An hour or two after Mary had been left alone within the marble *sala*, almost as in a dream, gazing upon that mysterious and momentous ring, the little party were proceeding northwards in the cool of the evening, in one of the hired conveyances of the country. Mary, her brother, and Mr. Wynne occupying the interior; Mary being only at a later stage of the journey, confirmed in her supposition of Mr. Temple having proceeded thus far on the outside, for since he had parted abruptly from her he had not again appeared.

Then, however, when, to change horses, they stopped before a road-side inn, her brother suddenly touched her arm, and directed her attention towards the spot, where in the shadow of the door, his features only partly distinguished in the declining evening light, stood the tall and stately figure of Temple, apparently conversing with Mr. Wynne who had just alighted, though his eyes were fixed earnestly in their direction.

"Look, Mary, does it not strike you now?"

"What, Arthur?"

"That likeness; there just as he stands in that uncertain light?"

Mary for all reply shuddered slightly, and turned away her head. The next moment Mr. Wynne had rejoined them, and they started again.

But by the inn-door there still stood that dark figure.

Arthur, with an exclamation of surprise, put forth his head, and inquired why they had left Mr. Temple behind.

"Because—because," Mr. Wynne replied in a peculiar tone of voice, "he has taken it into his head not to travel any further with us just now. I shall rejoin him when I have seen you safe at Genoa, for I cannot make up my mind to part so suddenly with my two dear children. Temple desired me to bid you good bye, Arthur, for he has no great fancy for leave-takings, at any time; and I was to say farewell for him to you too, Miss Mary."

This he said in a more serious manner, taking Mary's hand as he spoke, and gazing earnestly into her face. The hand he held was very cold, and on the pale face there was a strange and anxious expression; but whilst Arthur was loud in his professions of surprise and regret at this unexpected deprivation, Mary uttered no word of astonishment or regret.

CHAPTER VII.

Bear up,
Yet still bear up. No bark did e'er,
By stooping to the storm of fear,
Escape the tempest's wrath.

BEAUMONT.

He doth tell me where to borrow
Comfort in the midst of sorrow.

WITHERS.

It was the eve of the opening assize day, and even in the quiet little town of — might be observed that aspect of bustle and excitement generally prevailing on such occasions.

In a private apartment of the hotel honoured by the presence of the judge himself, sat a young man bending with the intensest interest and attention over the books and papers which lay upon the table before him.

It was Arthur Seaham, whose brave and strenuous exertions had been crowned with honourable success. He had been called to the bar, and was about to start forward with hopeful confidence on his new career, it being his first case with which we find him so zealously engaged.

Happy young man! Many might have envied you at that moment. Young in heart, sanguine and resolute in spirit, with every good and honourable motive to urge you on to exertion—a life of action and reality is before you.

"Life that shall send a challenge to the end,
And when it comes, say—Welcome, friend!"

"*L'action avec un but*"—the auspicious banner under which you launch forth upon your new career.

For some hours the young barrister continued unremitting at his task, and would perhaps have remained so many more, had not another voice than that which had probably during this time

been sounding in his ears—suddenly broke the spell, and flushed his cheek—kindled his eye with a very different inspiration to that which had previously illumined it.

A clear musical laugh which, to Arthur's ear, sounded more like the ringing waters of Tivoli than anything he had ever since heard.

Then the door opening, admitted what might have appeared (to pursue the same strain of analogy) a wandering sunbeam from the skies of golden Italy, in the person of Carrie Elliott, the judge's lovely daughter.

"I am disturbing you, I know, Mr. Seaham," she exclaimed blushing, advancing; "but it is your sister's fault. She says it is quite time that you should be disturbed; did you not, Miss Seaham?" turning to her companion.

Mary, who, with a faint and gentle smile, very different in its character to that which played so brightly on the features of the other, acquiesced in the truth of the assertion. But Arthur did not look very angry at the interruption, and was soon standing by the window entering with a very unbusiness-like spirit into conversation with his lively visitor, who, this being her father's first circuit in a judicial capacity, had been, much to her amusement and delight, suffered to accompany him on this occasion.

To this circumstance had Mary also been indebted for the opportunity thus afforded her of witnessing her brother's first start in his profession; for having been of late thrown somewhat intimately into the society of the judge's family, it had finally been arranged that the two young ladies should have the benefit of each other's society, on an occasion of such especial interest to them both.

"But do tell me something about your case, Mr. Seaham. Is it not a very interesting story? a poor young woman accused of forgery?"

"Yes," Seaham replied, glancing at his sister; "at least an attempt to exchange bank-notes, which on discovery were found to be forged. It is, indeed, an interesting case; and having full internal evidence that she is innocent, I am doubly concerned in her acquittal. That fact at least is in my favour, for I am afraid I shall be never able to plead *con amore* under contrary circumstances. The fact is, this poor woman has been for years toiling hard to amass a sufficient sum to carry her to America to her betrothed husband. When still far from the desired point, sickness and other causes having often interrupted her exertions and retarded her success, she finds her lover, impatient at the delay, beginning to entertain injurious ideas of her constancy and truth. In this distressing emergency, it happened (this is her own statement of the case) that some friend came forward, and made up in those same forged notes the requisite amount; that she received them in perfect ignorance of their real character; but refusing absolutely to give up the name of the guilty donor, she was imprisoned, and now stands arraigned for at least connivance in the delinquency."

"Poor creature!" murmured Mary, "is this then the end of all her deferred hope—and wearing, wasting anxiety of mind and body! Oh! Arthur, in such a cause you must surely be successful; how much you will have to say to soften the hearts of her judges, and lead them to look upon the case with lenity and pity!"

"Really, Mary!" exclaimed her brother, smiling with affectionate interest at the sudden energy with which the subject of discussion had animated his sister; the thrilling pathos of her tone—the brilliancy which lighted up her languid eye—the earnest spirit shining with almost sublimity from her anxious countenance, all which he had but a moment ago observed as affording so sad a contrast to the beaming brightness of her fair companion; "I really believe you would do more for my client in the way of eloquence than I should, if by eloquence the cause is to be gained. Do you not think so, Miss Elliott?"

"Miss Elliott has not yet tested your powers in that way," Mary rejoined with a smile, whilst Carrie only laughed and blushed.

"As for my eloquence," she added with a sigh, "it could only spring from the sympathetic feeling which one woman must have for the sufferings and the trials of another; at least"—in a low tone she added, "she must be very young or very happy," glancing at Miss Elliott, "if she be found wanting in that most powerful of inspirations."

"Poor woman!" interposed Miss Elliott, who perhaps began to fear she might be considered too uninspired in the eyes of the young barrister, "she seems deemed throughout to suspicion. How dreadful to be suspected wrongfully! But, as for that lover, I am sure he cannot deserve all the trouble she has suffered on his account. I dare say, the faithlessness was all on his side, for no person could suspect or doubt any one they really loved. Do you not think so, Miss Seaham?" turning away her face from Arthur to look at his sister with a pretty blush.

An expression of intense pain shot across Mary's countenance.

"I thought so once," was the almost gasping utterance which trembled on her lips; but she paused, merely saying in a low tone, her eyes bent mournfully on the ground, "at any rate, the one who doubts and suspects is the greatest sufferer of the two. Yet there are circumstances, I hope, in which, without faithlessness, our perfect trust and confidence in another may—must indeed be shaken."

"Of course; otherwise the virtue becomes indeed a very weakness," rejoined Arthur with some

moody significance of tone and manner.

"Now, I must go, for I suppose it is nearly time to dress for dinner," exclaimed Miss Elliott, who, though only partially acquainted with the particulars of Mary's love affair, probably perceived that she had inadvertently struck upon some tender string; "I suppose, you will soon be doing the same."

And away the gay-hearted creature glided, singing as she went.

"Now, Mary," Arthur cried, his eyes and ears disenchanted; "wait for me just one minute." And down he sat for the space of several moments, and his pen flew swift as thought over the parchment. Mary also sat patiently, her eyes fixed with a look of affectionate interest on the intelligent countenance of the writer.

At length, his task completed, the pen was thrown, with a gesture of triumph and satisfaction upon the table, and "Now, Mary, it is finished," was the exulting expression of his lips.

There was something in the congratulating smile which met his own, that seemed to change the spirit of the young man's dream; for more thoughtfully he gathered up his papers, whilst "love, fame, ambition," might have seemed at once annihilated from his thoughts, by the tone of voice in which—glancing at Mary, who drew near to assist him—he abruptly murmured:

"Mary, you are not looking well."

"Am I not?" with forced cheerfulness; "ah! I dare say you think so to-day—by comparison."

"Nonsense!" knitting his brows; "I am *not* speaking comparatively, but quite positively. You have been looking less well every day for some time. I am becoming impatient. I want to see you looking better, or I should say, *happier*."

"As happy and bright I suppose as—" began Mary, attempting playfully to divert the dreaded theme.

"Pshaw! as bright as no one. I am thinking only of you, Mary."

"But you should think of some one else, now Arthur, that you are a steady, professional man."

"And now that I am this steady, professional man," taking the words out of her mouth, "I feel that I am justified and competent to offer my sister the settled home she once faithfully promised to share with me. *She* may have altered her wishes on the subject; mine remain unchanged. Still, Mary, (whatever you may have taken into your silly little head,) till your happiness is more definitely secure, you will remain the paramount object of my interest and affection. My dear Mary," as his sister putting her hand in his, and smiling gratefully in his face, still shook her head, as if desiring and expecting for that dear brother, less unselfish aims, and more smiling hopes to cheer him on his promising career.

"God knows," he anxiously continued, "I speak from my heart when I say, that should you give me any hope that I could in any degree succeed in the promotion of your happiness, I should require no greater impetus to any exertion I may be called upon to make, than your affectionate interest in my success. Nay, do you not remember, even when we were children, your encouragement was the greatest incentive to my boyish ambition—how every mark of affection from you was more valuable to me than any bestowed by my other sisters, although I loved them all so well. In short, I declare to you, that the power of making me quite happy lies in your own hands—far more than in any careless-hearted beauty whom I might in a foolish moment take it into my head to ask to be my wife—and find, after all, that she did not care a straw for me. Therefore, dear Mary, only be persuaded to give up this, as I am sure you must begin to feel it, most equivocal and inauspicious engagement, and let us try if we cannot be happy together, in time perhaps—as happy as if no such cloud had ever arisen—and who knows what more propitious fate may not still be in store for you?"

"Mary," he continued, as his sister shook her head despondingly, "only consent to let final measures be taken, and I shall go forth to-morrow with double energy and hope. After all! the pain is more in the idea than in the reality, for the matter is becoming really a mere affair of the imagination; for a year and a half you have not seen or heard of him. But do not think I would make light of the sacrifice. The destruction of a great hope, must be, under any circumstances, a trial hard to be endured. But cheer up, dear Mary, there may be a brighter sun yet to shine upon you. Will you think this over?"

"I will Arthur," she murmured faintly, "I promise you that your mind shall very soon be set at rest on this subject."

She could promise this with a presentiment that the words were not spoken without foundation—with a certain vague, unaccountable presentiment, that some crisis was at hand in which her future fate would surely be accomplished. But she was little prepared for the communication which her brother now gently broke to her—that the opportunity was indeed, very soon to be afforded her, for that in the forthcoming case for which he had just been preparing his brief, Eugene Trevor would have to appear to give his evidence.

CHAPTER VIII.

Un Dieu descend toujours pour dénouer le drame,
Toujours la Providence y veille et nous proclame
Cette justice occulte et ce divin ressort,
Qui fait jouer le temps et gouverne le sort.

LAMARTINE.

The court was crowded early the following morning, for it was not often that cases of such interest as the principal one to be brought forward on this occasion were provided by the inhabitants of —, a town of the principality, in which it is well known, crime, comparatively speaking, is more rare than in other portions of the United Kingdom.

The prisoner had also been long known in the vicinity for her blameless career, and the patient industry with which, under disadvantages and discouragements (for she had been at an early age separated from both her parents, and thrown upon her own resources), she had pursued her laborious course for ten long years, her heart set on an ever receding hope, which she had in the end been doomed to see engulfed by the dark cloud which now overshadowed her fame.

The court, therefore, was crowded as we said before, when a few minor cases having been disposed of, the prisoner for the forgery case was summoned to the bar.

There was nothing in the appearance of the accused which could at first sight strike the vulgar gaze. Neither youth nor beauty to excite the feeling in her behalf; for though to adopt the loving language of the poet:

"Fair she was, and young, when in hope
She began the long journey;
Faded she was, and old, when in disappointment it ended;"

the age of care and trouble, rather than of years, for she was not more than one or two and thirty. Streaks of grey had already spread over her forehead, "and the furrows on her cheek spoke the course of bitter tears." Yet few there were amongst the intelligent and feeling part of her beholders who did not soon begin to have their interest strongly rivetted. And one amongst them, who felt her soul moved to its very depths by pity and womanly compassion the instant her eyes fell upon the pale meek face which bore such deep traces of sorrow—and patience as great as her sorrow.

And yet it was a passive sorrow it expressed, a subdued and passive suffering, which the careless might have attributed to dulness or insensibility, so little did the prisoner appear moved to wonder or self pity, by the sharp sense of unmerited misfortunes.

No—rather as one whose mind is all made up of submission and resignation; who, accustomed to the constant anguish of disappointment, considered as no strange thing this last great grief which had befallen her.

And yet, the indictment being read, the prisoner in a low quiet tone pleaded "Not guilty."

The facts, as commented upon by the counsel for the crown, were undeniably against her. Her case was pitiable, it was true. It seemed that at the very last—besides the sickness which had so often retarded her endeavours—a robbery committed in the little shop, in which she carried on a small precarious trade, had despoiled her of the hardly-earned treasure of years; but this circumstance alone made it more likely that one in her situation should grasp at any means, promising to put such an effectual end to her long course of difficulties and disappointments. She pleaded ignorance as to the nature of the aid administered to her. Had she then only consented to give up the name of the guilty donor, the charge would have been withdrawn; and her pertinacious refusal to do so was enlarged upon by the learned counsel as evidence of her being accessory to the fraud.

From the depositions of the witnesses, it then appeared that Mabel Marryott's father had originally been a farmer in the county of ---shire; that soon after his daughter's birth he had emigrated to Australia; that her mother had not followed her husband's fortunes; had remained in England in the service of a family of consideration and distinction in that above-mentioned county, where she still remained. It appeared that the mother had little intercourse with her daughter. At an early age, the latter had been apprenticed to the business in which she afterwards became a partner; and then, as the phrase goes, this little affectionate parent "washed her hands" of her concerns, and left her to strive for herself. About ten years before, the prisoner became acquainted, and finally engaged herself in marriage, with a young artisan on the point of emigrating to America, a contract which proved indeed one of those "long engagements" so often doomed to misfortune and disappointment. They were not to be united till, by their joint exertions, they had accumulated a sufficient sum to pay the expenses of the voyage, and supply a capital whereupon to begin with comfort their married life. Now, by an accident which had in a great measure disabled the lover from pursuing his customary avocations, much of this labour of love had been cast upon his betrothed, who, in spite of many discouragements and disadvantages

on her side, had, with never-failing courage, persevered in her exertions, up to the time of her last misfortune—that of having all her little possessions stolen—when she seemed, by all accounts, at length to have been well nigh driven to despair, for to add to this distress, her lover's unkindness—"unkindest cut of all," began (as under the curse of absence, the most confiding lovers are too prone to do) to doubt the alleged causes of her protracted separation, and to write bitter upbraiding letters to that effect.

"We then hear," the learned gentleman proceeded, "that the prisoner began to sink and sicken with despair; but suddenly she receives a letter—she does not tell from whom—but saying something about an appointment with some friend, she leaves her home, and returns in a few days, all exulting happiness. She had received a supply of money sufficient for her need, but is confused and mysterious when questioned as to by whom this bounty has been bestowed. Then without further delay she had paid off her debts, procured for herself such necessaries as time admitted, took leave of her friends, and proceeded to Liverpool, and was to have sailed the following morning for America. But in the meantime the notes she had circulated had been discovered to be forged, and a warrant dispatched for her detention; and the examination before the magistrates eliciting nothing from her but her declaration of innocence, and refusal to throw any light upon the facts connected with their receipt, she had been committed for trial. The notes were then produced. They were all dated ten years back, and from the appearance of the paper bore every mark of time and long-keeping; and one circumstance was brought to bear most particularly against the prisoner, which was, that the names assigned upon the bill were those of the firm of Maynard and Co.; and the very house in which the prisoner's mother had resided for so many years as confidential servant, was that of Mr. Trevor, of Montrevor, who was at that time one of the partners in that extensive concern."

The Judge then demanded whether the prisoner's mother was not forthcoming. His lordship was then informed that she was not, as it had been ascertained that she was at that moment lying dangerously ill of a mortal disease. Evidence had however been obtained, that she had not for the last twelve years held any intercourse with her daughter.

The Judge, though considering this point unsatisfactory, forbore further comment, until he had heard the other side of the question, and Mr. Seaham, counsel for the prisoner, accordingly rose up to speak.

No little sensation was created by the able defence of the young barrister. The touching, though simple outline he first drew of the previous history of the accused—her character and conduct, so inconsistent with such grave delinquency as that of which she stood suspected—which he produced many witnesses to testify; all was brought admirably to bear upon the point. Even round the impenetrable cloud in which her silence wrapped the affair, he cast a silvery halo, by the manner in which he treated her conduct in this respect. The moral beauty in which he clothed the idea—the matchless constancy of that poor woman's mind, which few who had heard the details of her history, of her life, could forbear to acknowledge. Who then could feel surprised if now she stood there preferring shame, ignominy, and suspicion to the betrayal of the being who, were it friend or relation—even stranger or acquaintance—had come forward to assist her in her extremity, and though but for a moment, had stood forth in the guise of benefactor, turning her mourning into joy—throwing sunshine upon her weary path! Who could sound the depths of gratitude when once strongly called forth in the human heart—to what even morbid extent, as he owned it might be deemed in the present case, might it not be carried? That the quality of self-preservation—self-defence was greater—many in that assembly might sneeringly assert; but for his own part—he was thankful to say such cynical lessons had not been taught him—he did think that gratitude—disinterested, heroic gratitude, was still a flower not yet quite extinct in the soil of humanity; that in the words of the poet he could assert:

"I've heard of hearts unkind—of hearts,
Kind deeds with ill returning;
Alas! the gratitude of men
Has often left me mourning."

But might there not be a bond stronger even than gratitude which binds the prisoner's tongue in a matter touching so closely her personal welfare? It was his business that day to clear his client, therefore he must add, that very insufficient light had been obtained from a quarter in which much more particular evidence was naturally to have been expected. The prisoner had a mother, which circumstance had before been mentioned, and the truth of which, (even during the brief space of time the matter had been placed in his hands,) he made it his business to ascertain, now lying on her death-bed. Yet how could it be clearly ascertained that this mother has not assisted her daughter in her distress? indeed it seems strangely unnatural that she should not have done so throughout the long probation she had endured, and still more so in this last emergency. Was there no question as to whether the powers of natural affection might not restrain the selfish instinct of self-defence? Was there any proof, though there might be no direct knowledge, that the prisoner had not held intercourse or correspondence with the parent?

It had been stated, that the prisoner had never set foot in the house where the mother had been established so many years—that she never had received pecuniary aid from the family with whom her mother resided; yet the notes had been proved to be exact fac-similes of those delivered by

the bank of Messrs. Maynard and Co., that firm to which the head of the family—whom the mother served at the time of the date of these notes—then belonged.

Arthur Seaham, as he proceeded, could not but experience the happy consciousness of success, could not doubt from the air of satisfied approving attention pervading the large assembly in the midst of which he stood, that whatever might be the verdict of the jury as regarded his client, he was at any rate doing well for himself—that he had not overrated his own powers and abilities; at all events he possessed one great gift of genius, the key to the hearts of men, that he had only to push bravely forward to win himself rank amongst an Eldon or an Erskine. The sun shone full upon a glaring court, upon many approving, admiring, nay, upon many tearful faces; for there were many in court who had known young Seaham from a boy, and whose countenance held an affectionate place in their hearts and memories; and yet, perhaps, there were but three among them all, who made any distinct and individual impression on his senses during the time, and these three inspiring feelings quite distinct from any self-pride, from any ambition in his heart.

One was the prisoner herself—that pale, patient face turned on him with such a meek and quiet confidence, as if on him she had reposed all she felt of trust in human power; her eyes fixed on him, her human counsellor—but her heart resting upon another alone able to defend—even on Him who had said:

"I will never leave you, nor forsake you,"

and in whom, though he were to slay her, she would still surely trust.

The other two we may easily imagine were the faces so striking in their contrast—those two fair members of the court, who occupied convenient places behind the judge's chair, their eyes fixed upon him; the one all bright and beautiful in her excitement—the other becoming paler and paler from the intense and painful interest in which something in the case itself seemed more and more to enthrall her.

At this juncture then, Arthur Seaham had arrived; he had but just said that he had hoped for the appearance of one witness whose evidence might have thrown some important light upon the subject, and to whom he had made too late application, when a bustle was heard outside the court, and murmurs arose that this very witness had just that moment arrived.

Another instant, and Eugene Trevor made his way into the court, pale, eager, agitated; bearing every mark of a long and hasty journey. He approached the bench and spoke with Arthur Seaham apart, as he might have done with any other member of the bar, professionally, as if he had never spoken to him on such different matters, and in such a different character as in their interview at the London Hotel.

The young barrister returned to his seat with altered countenance, and addressing the judge, announced that the gentleman just arrived in court, had not come in the character of a witness; but to declare facts, which at once cleared his client from all further imputations. Mr. Trevor then sworn in, declared as follows:

He had come at the dying request of the mother of the accused, to state her confession as to having delivered the forged notes to her daughter, that daughter she declared—having solemnly taken her oath of secrecy upon the Bible, being in entire ignorance of the real nature of the relief bestowed upon her, or the reason for the secrecy imposed. He then produced certificates from the medical attendants as to the dying condition of the real offender.

To what further transpired, few, beyond those especially concerned in the *éclaircissement*, paid any very particular attention; the general interest being now attracted towards the ex-prisoner, who, whilst listening with signs of strong emotion to the declaration of her innocence, had suddenly fainted, and was carried out of the court; and in a few minutes the hall was almost cleared.

It was nearly an hour before Eugene Trevor was released from the examination to which he was subjected. On leaving the court, he stopped to make inquiries for Mabel Marryott.

The official to whom he applied, informed him that the poor woman had been taken into a private room, where she had soon recovered; and then, seeming to look upon the inquirer as a privileged person, offered to conduct him to her presence.

Eugene did not decline the proposal, but followed the man, who soon arrived at the apartment, the door of which he opened, looked within, directing Eugene to enter.

The doctor had just left his patient, and she was seated in an upright position against a chair, still faint and pale, though restored to consciousness, and receiving in her trembling hands the cordials administered by an attendant, whilst Mary Seaham and Carrie Elliott, like two ministering angels, Faith and Hope personified, hung with kind and gentle solicitude over the poor woman's chair, encouraging her fainting spirit with soothing and congratulatory words.

Well might Eugene Trevor pause at the threshold, ere he dared to introduce himself upon such a scene—into such a company. Perhaps, indeed, he might have made his escape, had not the opening of the door directed the looks of those within, ere he had time to depart unseen.

He advanced accordingly, and at once approaching his foster-sister without raising his eyes to her attendants, stooped down, and kindly, though in a confused and embarrassed manner, inquired how she felt.

The poor woman was much agitated by her foster-brother's appearance. She tried to answer, but in the attempt burst into tears, which the woman who attended her nevertheless pronounced would do her good. Then seeing that the young ladies had already retired, Mabel Marryott signed to the woman also to withdraw; and raising her straining eyes to Eugene's face, gasped forth:

"My unfortunate mother!"

At the same time hiding her face with her hands, as if bowed down with conscious shame and humiliation at the mention of that mother's name before one who, she naturally supposed, regarded that mother with the scorn and abhorrence she too well merited.

But Eugene Trevor seemed to view her emotion in another light, and replied to her ejaculation by confirming with as much consideration for her feelings as the extreme case admitted, his previous information as to her mother's dangerous condition—the crisis indeed of a very painful malady under which she had been for some time labouring—speaking finally of her release from suffering as an event which could only by her friends be desired.

"Release from suffering!" murmured the shuddering daughter in a low and horrified tone. "God grant it; God grant that it may be so, Mr. Trevor; but alas! my unhappy mother! has she seen a clergyman with a view to her spiritual relief? does she show signs of repentance? can we entertain hopes that her sins may be forgiven?"

Then, to her companion's somewhat vague and unsatisfactory answers on this point, she with renewed earnestness begged that she might at least be allowed to set out immediately for Montrevor; and perhaps, by the mercy of God, see her mother before it was too late.

But this proposition Eugene did not encourage; he assured her that it would be too late, that he was sorry to say there had been little chance of Mrs. Marryott's surviving his departure many hours, that she might rest assured that everything had been done for her mother that was right and proper. He then advised Mabel Marryott rather to set about immediate arrangements for her voyage to America, for which she should have every facility. Then pressing some bank notes into her graspless hand, and desiring her to apply to him for anything more which might be required, he turned away as if to escape from any thanks his generosity might call forth from those blanched and powerless lips; but rather, we imagine, impatient to cut short so painful and disagreeable an interview; and in another moment he stood by the side of Mary Seaham who, as we have said, had at his entrance withdrawn with Miss Elliott to the further end of the room.

"Mary!" he murmured in a low voice, whilst Miss Elliott, on perceiving his approach, flew back to Mabel Marryott.

"Mary, will you not speak to me?"

Mary turned towards him, and held out her hand.

"Eugene!" she said in a low agitated voice, then paused, and fixing her eyes on him with an earnest, wistful and distressful look; whilst on Eugene's side might have appeared in his countenance more of embarrassment than pleasure.

The door opened, and voices made themselves heard without. Both looked uneasily and uncomfortably towards it.

"Can I not see you, and speak to you, Mary, more privately before I leave this place? I cannot stay longer than to-day, for I am wanted at Montrevor."

"Yes, Eugene," Mary replied in the same low, hurried voice, yet with more earnest anxiety of manner. "I should like very much to see you. If you will come this evening very late, I shall be probably alone, and we can speak together without interruption."

He pressed her hand in sign of agreement, and hastily left the room, exchanging a slight and hurried greeting with Arthur Seaham who passed upon his way.

CHAPTER IX.

Let after reckonings trouble fearful fools;
I'll stand the trial of these trivial crimes.

DRYDEN.

The time shall come, nor long remote, when thou
Shall feel far more than thou inflictest now;
Feel for thy vile self-loving self in vain,
And turn thee howling in unpitied pain.

BYRON.

To explain the chief incidents of the last chapter, it is our necessary, though repellent task to retrograde some six months past, and enter the gloomy mansion of Montrevor, where all that time its infirm master lay, like a chained enchanter on his bed of sickness.

His son had late that day left for London, amply supplied with those funds to supply his exigencies, which he had little difficulty now in drawing from the resources of the now powerless old dotard.

A few hours later, when darkness had closed in, and the house was hushed and still, a woman's form was seen issuing from the old man's chamber.

It was Mabel Marryott. She was changed from the day we last saw her, sailing along the passages of Montrevor. She came forward with a slow, uncertain step, holding a shawl wrapped loosely over her breast; and the lamp she carried in the other hand showed her countenance to bear a sick and ghastly expression, betokening the painful disease through which she finally perished, to have already laid its sharp fangs on her system.

But though bodily strength might be subdued, no mental debilitation seemed the consequence. She went straight forward to the door of her master's library; entering without a pause of fear, or conscious stricken awe, that gloomy haunt of many sinful and accusing memories, she shut the door behind her, placed the lamp upon a table and sat down to rest, her eyes wandering deliberately round the room fearing little to encounter the spiritual shades of the past—the meek upbraiding of one wronged being's saintly eyes—the noble scorn—the scathing indignation of another's. She feared not yet either angel or spirit, her day of fear was yet to come. She looked round with a keen scrutinizing glance of survey, and then she rose and went composedly to work; she had the field to herself, and one master-key which the old man had managed to keep concealed even from his son, she had contrived by strict vigilance to discover the hiding-place, and get into her possession.

"Thou fool!" might have seemed the utterance of her heart, as with a look of fiendish mockery she flung open the depository into which she thus found entrance, and viewed the glittering treasures it contained. "Thou fool! thou hast indeed many goods laid up for many years, and this night—perhaps this night, this very night, thy dotard soul may be required of thee."

"Thou fool! how long hast *thou* to live," the spirit of air might have echoed in *her* ear, as the woman proceeded on her work of iniquity.

But strange the insane delusion by which each man would seem to deem all men mortal but themselves. Even with that fatal malady gnawing on her very vitals. Mabel Marryott trusting in an arm of flesh, confidant in human skill, was laying in store for herself many years of anticipatory pleasure, ease, and competence.

With a well-filled purse of gold, she then had for the present turned away content—gold which the old man she thought would never rise from his bed to demand, and of which his heirs could guess only the existence; and thus she would have departed, had not her quick eye suddenly discovered a secret recess, which from the difficulty she had in opening it, more keenly excited her curiosity and interest.

By dint of much trouble and exertion the aperture finally yielded, and a heap of papers, which had to all appearance been carelessly thrust in together, was the issue of her research. They were bank-notes. One after another, she read the tempting numbers—hesitated—replaced them, and finally divided and pocketed the half.

Two hours after this deed had been perpetrated, some one came knocking gently at the door of Mr. Trevor's chamber, to which Mrs. Marryott had returned to inform her that a young woman had arrived, desiring to speak with her. Mrs. Marryott kept the person waiting some little time for she was giving Mr. Trevor his arrow-root; but at length went down to her sitting-room, where she found a woman of decent appearance though poorly attired, seated patiently awaiting her coming; a dark cloak wrapped around her, and a large bonnet and veil nearly concealing her face.

On perceiving Marryott she rose, and to the inquiry: "What was her business?" the stranger put back her veil, and showing her pale and anxious countenance, in tremulous accents murmured: "Mother!"

Surprise was at first strongly depicted on Marryott's countenance; but the next instant the hard impenetrable expression of her face returned, in a cold measured tone she demanded what it might be that brought her there?

"Mother; have you no words of kindness to give your daughter?" faltered the poor woman.

"Words of kindness—pshaw! is that all you have come this long way for," the other answered impatiently.

"Alas! no mother," was the sorrowful reply, drooping her head despairingly; "but if you have not even those to give me, how can I ask for more."

"More! ah, I thought so—I thought that pride would have a fall at last: that you would put your virtue into your pocket, and be coming one day crawling on your knees to beg a morsel of bread,

or a hole in this house, from the mother who was not *good* enough for you some years ago. So I suppose your lover won't have you now that you are old and ugly—bah! don't think that I will take you in here; if this house was not good enough for you *then*, it's none the better *now*. At any rate there's no place in it for you, so you must go back from whence you came."

"Mother, mother—do not speak so cruelly—do not blame me, if knowing what was good and what was evil, I could not come to live here, hearing of you what I did. But alas! my spirit indeed waxeth faint, and my strength faileth me. I am worn out with useless labour, and I come to ask a little help from the mother who bore me, trusting that God will forgive both her and me, for we have all sinned—all stand in need of forgiveness. * * Yes, I come to ask for a little help to take me to America—to Henry Wilson, who still waits for and expects me."

"Oh, that's it,"—with a scornful laugh—"it's money you want; those 'wages of iniquity,' which you scorned at so finely long ago."

"Mother—those were strong words perhaps for a daughter so young to use towards a mother, but my heart was grieved for you; it was in sorrowful affection, not undutiful scorn, that I thus spoke."

Mabel Marryott sat down—she had hitherto remained coldly standing—and signed to her daughter to do the same. The submissive manner Jane had assumed, probably in a degree mollifying her hardened spirit; or rather perhaps it was a sort of triumph, to see her virtuous child thus brought low before her. She had quite lived down any womanly or maternal feeling; and would probably, without the slightest compunction, have turned her from the door penniless as she came: yet something—perhaps the idea that it would be disagreeable and degrading to her high pretensions, to have that poor, shabby creature coming begging at the house as her daughter—made her calculate that it might be a better plan to get rid of her at once—easily as it was in her power now to accomplish it. Those notes still in her pocket, she had begun already to repent not having left them in their hiding place—bank notes were terrible things to meddle with, but at any rate no harm could come of their being put in use by one under Jane Marryott's circumstances.

In short, it ended as we all know by those twice guilty papers being transferred into the hands of the innocent; and Jane Marryott—bound by the promise of strict secrecy, which she so resolutely maintained inviolate—left the house without any member of the household having been made aware of her identity, with the unblest cause of fresh misfortune in her possession. With the unhappy sequel we are acquainted.

Six months had passed, and Mabel Marryott lay groaning on a bed of agony. The pains of hell truly had got hold of her, and conscience—faint foretaste of the never dying worm, rose up to torment her "before her time," with the dark catalogue of remembered sin—sin unrepented, and therefore unforgiven. She would not turn to the one sure fountain, open for sin and for uncleanness. She even repulsed all offers of spiritual ministrations from those members of the household who had thought and feeling, to see the awful nature of the dying woman's position.

"No, she wanted no clergymen, they could avail her nothing—could not undo one of the sins she had committed." But at length one day, she sent to desire Eugene Trevor would come himself and speak to her in private. He came, and lifting herself up with difficulty in her bed, she turned her ghastly countenance towards her foster-son as he stood by her side, and fixing her sunken eyes upon him, addressed him thus:

"Eugene Trevor, my daughter is to be tried this week at — for forgery."

"So I was sorry to hear, Mabel; but there seems, I think, every chance of her being acquitted."

"Chance—yes; but I am not going to leave it to chance, and die with this too on my conscience. I have been a bad mother from the first, I forsook the child at my breast for the hire of a stranger, and cast her on the world to shift for herself in toil and trouble; and last of all, by my stolen charity have brought this curse upon her. Yes, Eugene Trevor," she added, emphatically, "I stole those notes from your father's chest, and gave them to the girl—but who *forged* them?"

Eugene Trevor started as if an adder had stung him; and turning ashy pale, sunk down upon a chair that stood near.

"What—what in the name of Heaven do you mean, Marryott?" he stammered forth.

"Eugene Trevor, do not try to deceive a dying woman. I have confessed my part of the business, do not deny yours. There was not much which passed between you and your father that night ten years ago, that I did not overhear, and which now put together, would be enough to commit *you*—but do not fear, I am not going to betray you, only do my bidding; go to — and get that girl free—it matters little to me, who shall be dead perhaps, before the morning, what I'm thought of; go and tell them that *I* gave the notes, and that *she* was ignorant of this falsity—go, get her off, and come back and tell me she is free, and I die silent; if not, as sure as I lie here a dying woman, I send for a magistrate and tell him all."

Eugene Trevor's discomfiture and perturbation at this disclosure may be imagined. He had been surprised at the time of her apprehension, to see the account of Jane Marryott's examination in

the papers, but Mabel had professed such perfect ignorance on the subject—such careless indifference concerning the trouble of her daughter, that though the coincidence of the notes might strike him as singular, it scarcely occurred to him as possible that those half-forgotten instruments of his youthful crime, which he had not for a moment doubted his father immediately destroyed, could possibly have fallen into the prisoner's hands.

There was nothing to be done but to obey his accuser's wishes, knowing well the determined spirit of that fearful woman, so that there would be no other way of preventing her, even with her dying lips, declaring the part he had in the dark transaction in question. He therefore took all necessary precautions and started on his critical commission with as little delay as possible, receiving before his departure, the formal summons from Arthur Seaham to attend as witness on the trial.

CHAPTER X.

Ah, Zelica! there was a time, when bliss
Shone o'er thy heart from every look of his;
When but to see him, hear him breathe the air
In which he dwelt was thy soul's fondest prayer;
When round him hung such a perpetual spell,
Whate'er he did, none ever did so well.
Too happy days! when, if he touch'd a flower
Or gem of thine, 'twas sacred from that hour.

LALLA ROOKH.

Mary Seaham sat alone that same evening by the hotel room fire, expecting Eugene Trevor.

She had told him to come late, because by that time, she knew that her brother, with Judge Elliott's party, would have gone to the county ball held that night in the town; and that the important interview with him, who still deemed himself her lover, might take place without interruption.

Mary had not told her brother of the appointment she had made; so fearful was she that any obstacle should occur to impede or prevent the anxious purpose she had formed. Yet now that the carriage containing Arthur, the radiant Carrie, and their chaperon had driven from the door, and she knew that Eugene at any moment, might be announced, her heart began to fail her, and she almost repented of what she had undertaken. What was she going to do or say—what part pursue?

A dark and bewildered maze seemed to lie before her, and she sat there, pale and trembling at every sound, something grasped convulsively in her hand, her eyes fixed with a dark and anxious gaze upon the flickering fire-flame.

Times indeed were changed, since in serene and quiet happiness, Mary had so often waited at Silverton for her lover's approach. No one could have imaged forth an intended love-tryst from her aspect now. Yet the critical moment came. Eugene entered—the door closed behind him, and once more they were alone together. Mary having resumed her seat, with blanched lips and beating heart—he standing on the hearth-rug looking down upon her like as he had done on that memorable occasion of the first declaration of his love—that beginning of so much happiness—but greater misery to Mary. Alas! was this to be its end?

He began to speak hurriedly of the length of time since they had met, of the strange circumstances of their *rencontre* that day; Mary listening as to a voice speaking in a dream, and assenting mechanically, till finally, as he alluded more particularly to the circumstances of the case, mentioning the name of Mabel Marryott and the astounding facts which had transpired concerning that old—he had almost said *faithful* but he substituted long-established servant of the family. Then the pure blood mounted for a moment to Mary's brow, leaving something like a stern and calm resolution on her countenance; whilst to Eugene Trevor's somewhat complacent communication, as to what he had done for the daughter, the measures he had taken to secure her from further trouble and delay in the accomplishment of her emigration, she listened grave and unmoved, as if she deemed his proceedings in this respect had been but what was strictly due to the innocent sufferer of so much iniquity.

Yes, darker and darker seemed to grow the picture before Mary's eyes that house and home presented, of which she had once contemplated with such innocent satisfaction and happy anticipation becoming the mistress. Sin after sin, more or less strange and terrible to her startled spirit, rose up to scare and to repel her; so much so, that to think that one to whom she had been devoted, should have amalgamated himself even in a passive character with the influence of such a foul and infected atmosphere, was horrible to her feelings, and most 'blessed' indeed in comparison—'when men shall revile you and cast you out of their company'—appeared to her the persecuted in such a case.

Was it that some outward manifestation of these inward impressions revealed themselves upon her countenance, that Eugene regarded her with that keen and scrutinizing expression, as for a moment her eyes were, with a careworn abstracted look, cast downwards upon the ground.

"Now, Mary, let me hear something of yourself," he suddenly exclaimed, breaking off his former topic of discourse; "what have you been doing since I saw you last?"

Mary did not return the question; she did not ask "What have *you* been doing?" but as she looked up into her lover's face, what was it that made it impossible to return the smile, the glance, with which he awaited the reply? What was it that made her turn away her eyes with a pang—almost a shudder at her heart? Alas! what new impression did she receive from looking on that face, which had been to her the beloved dream, the haunting vision of her youth.

Was it come to this. Had absence changed her heart? Had it become strange, untrue, towards her early love? Did she turn her eyes away from her lover's face because his cheek was haggard, his brow sunken, and his eye lost the brightness of those days when

"The sunshine of her life was in those eyes."

Ah, no! she felt that this was not the case. Had she but read signs of grief, of sickness, written there, and her heart would have gone forth to soothe and sympathize with all the truth and fervour of the past.

But no, it was none of these which had laid their signet there. Alas for her enlightened eyes! she felt it was not sorrow—not sickness—but sin; that no cloud had settled on his brow which she could have dared the fond attempt to pierce; and agony to think that it should have come to this; that she should be seated at his side, and feel it were not possible that she could lay her weary head upon that lover's arm, place her hand in his, with the love and confidence with which she had even yearned towards another.

But this had been the vague and passing reflection of a second. With scarcely perceptible pause she had softly replied:

"I have done little, Eugene, which would count for much in your varied and busy existence. The most important feature in my own consideration has been an excursion to Italy, which I took last summer with my brother."

Mary's voice trembled nervously as she uttered these last words, for she felt that now had come an opportunity she must not neglect, for leading on to the critical subject on which she had to speak: and, as if to support her desperate purpose, unclasped the little trinket-case she had all this time still held concealed in the palm of her delicate hand.

"To Italy! oh, indeed;" was Eugene's reply. "I was very nearly going there at the same time; it was just a chance that I did not. My father's illness, a constant tie upon my movements, prevented me at the last moment; how delightful it would have been if we had met."

Mary made no reply, but looked down still with that peculiar expression which could not but strike Eugene as ominous of something of an important and peculiar nature.

"And you were charmed, I suppose;" he proceeded, perusing her countenance with increasing interest and attention; "so much so that I fear you would scarcely have considered my society as an addition to your enjoyment; you have learnt to live too well without me, I am afraid, Mary."

That low and flattering tone of other days thrilled Mary's heart, and flushed her cheek with emotions as of old; but gently removing the hand which for an instant she passively yielded to his pressure, she did not raise her eyes as once she would have done, in tender rebuke at the unjust assumption—she did not say how wearisome and dark had life become without him—how void, wasted and incomplete!—but hurriedly, as if she feared the working of the olden spell, and the consequent melting away of her sterner resolution, she started forward upon the anxious theme weighing on her heart.

"I met with a strange adventure at Tivoli, Eugene; it was about that I wished most particularly to speak to you. One morning, as I was walking out early, I found this ring upon the ground;" and as she spoke she produced the signet from the case, and held it towards him. "You may imagine how surprised I was to see your initials, and your crest; I scarcely knew indeed what to think, till walking on a little further I overtook—Mr. Temple!"

Her listener, who had at first taken the ring wonderingly from her hand; as she proceeded, raised it to the light, and then abruptly, as if for the purpose of closer examination, he started up and approached the candle.

He uttered not a word, but had his face not been turned away, it might have been seen to have changed to an ashy hue.

"I was surprised," Mary proceeded, "for though the initials were thus accounted for, the crest being yours seemed too unlikely a coincidence; indeed I had previously cherished a vague but wild idea that it might possibly belong to your brother, and that his long-wished for recovery was at hand."

She paused, but no comment on her words, no reply, but an almost fiercely impatient interrogative: "Well?" as he turned his countenance, but not his eyes, round upon her, proceeded

from his lips.

"Well, you see I was disappointed," her mild voice resumed more firmly, now that she had launched upon the critical theme beyond recall. "At least," she added, with a wistful earnest glance, "I found, as I said before, that it had been dropped by Mr. Temple. Oh, Eugene! how came it in his possession—that ring, that impression which I remember to have seen upon a letter—that fatal letter which seemed to have been the beginning of so much sorrow and annoyance. Oh! what is this mysterious connection subsisting between you and Mr. Temple? tell me—tell me truly—faithfully—what is it that makes this signet with your arms, your crest, his also?"

Eugene Trevor burst into a forced and insulting laugh.

"Good Heavens, Mary! why not ask that question of Temple himself? how in the world am I to tell whether it might have been begged, borrowed, or stolen by the clerical impostor? Stolen most likely—as I can pretty plainly perceive," fixing on her face a keen and cynical look of scrutiny; "he has managed to steal something else besides. Yes," he continued, "I begin to understand now the secret of the cold looks and measured words with which, after so long a separation, I am received by you, Mary. I see what this excursion to Italy has done for me. It is *I* who ought to ask questions, I think. You saw a great deal of Temple, I conclude, after the first adventure?"

Though Eugene endeavoured to assume a tone of irritated suspicion natural to a man whose jealousy was not unreasonably awakened, there was a look of dark and eager anxiety in his countenance which could not be concealed.

"Yes," Mary continued in a tolerably firm voice, though she had turned a little pale at her lover's implied accusation, "circumstances certainly did throw us together—circumstances neither of his seeking or my own."

A fierce fiery expression shot from Eugene's eye.

"Oh, they did!" he exclaimed, taking refuge in the passionate burst of rage in which his feelings found vent. "I thought so; and this is his most honourable, most virtuous mode of proceeding, insinuating himself into your society, inveigling your affections by his heroic sanctity, and poisoning your ear by base and interested insinuations against myself—if he wishes to circulate his malicious lies, why not speak them out plainly like a man—not send you to attack me in this manner with that accursed ring?" dashing the signet forcibly to the ground.

"Eugene!" interposed Mary, "these reflections on the most honourable and upright of men are unfounded and unjust. There was nothing in the nature of our intercourse with which the most jealous could find fault. He, Mr. Temple, was in a manner forced into joining my brother and myself during a short excursion, by an old friend, Mr. Wynne, with whom he was travelling, and at last parted from us abruptly. As to the rest it is I alone on whom your displeasure need fall; it was by my anxious importunity alone—which he tried in vain to evade—that I drew from him all that I learnt on a subject on which it has become necessary to the peace and quiet of my spirit, that I should be more clearly enlightened. He told me that his lips were sealed upon the points on which I questioned him; but that some mystery does exist—some mystery respecting your brother, Eugene, some mystery in which you yourself, and indeed he Mr. Temple, are strangely, closely confused—is most certain. And then he gave me back that ring, and referred me to you for a true and faithful relation of all I so anxiously desired to ascertain; or for your sake, as well as my own, to bid you farewell for ever. Oh, Eugene! disperse then, I implore you, this dark, bewildering cloud, for I cannot, cannot walk on any more groping in this darkness. Think of me what you please—wrong my motives if you will, but only show me the truth whatever it may be; or, Eugene," she added, faintly, her voice melted into a tone of mingled compassion and concern, "I must indeed put an end at once to my ceaseless perplexity, by bidding you farewell for ever."

Eugene Trevor was calm now, though still livid with the passion into which he had excited himself. He sat down, close to Mary's side, and there was a dogged air of resolution expressed in his countenance.

"I am willing to tell anything that you may wish to ask," he said sarcastically, "to tear off any part of this delightful veil of mystery in which you have been pleased to invest my deeds and actions, for the benefit of your romantic imagination. So pray begin your catechism."

"Your brother?" was the faint and faltering interrogatory, which came from Mary's lips.

Eugene Trevor's assumed calmness vanished; he started up, and approached the fire-place, murmuring hoarsely:

"Well, what of him?"

"Where is he? Who is he? How is it that he does not return or appear in England—in the world? What has he to do with Mr. Temple? For that some mysterious link does exist between those two; I have for sometime had suspicions which I can no longer quell, or put aside as imaginary and vain—by night as well as by day I have been haunted by wild, strange dreams that Mr. Temple and your brother are the same."

She paused aghast, for she had risen and approached Eugene in her excitement, and now stood gazing as Adah might have gazed upon the face of her husband Cain, when for the first time his countenance was revealed to her in all its undisguised hatred and wrathfulness of expression.

"Eugene!" she murmured, her voice melting into a tone of mingled surprize, compassion and concern. "Eugene!" and she laid her hand soothingly on his arm.

He turned his eyes, flashing defiance upon her.

"Well," he cried, "and if they were, pray, what of that?"

"If—if" she cried, returning his gaze unshrinkingly, "then—then your brother, Eugene, should not *now*—never should have been a banished exile from his home and heritage. They have wronged him basely, who ever, on the plea of madness, deprived such a man of honour, hope and happiness. Farewell indeed, Eugene, if this *could* be the case. Farewell, at least, till you have repaired your grievous error, and restored Eustace Trevor to all which has been wrongfully, deceitfully taken from him."

She turned away, but Eugene Trevor seized her hand.

"Stop, Mary," he said in a low voice of subdued and concentrated rage. "Stop, if you please, and hear *me*. You may remember, you said, a little time ago, farewell, *if* I did not reveal to you all you desired to know. I have told you nothing yet, though you seem indeed too ready to conclude every thing of the blackest and most preposterous description against me. But although you are so eager for any excuse to rid yourself of me, for ever; though the heart you once swore would scarcely have been torn from me, were I proved to be the greatest villain upon earth, has shown itself a very woman's in its weakness, its feebleness, its inconstancy. Yes, Mary, villain as you may wish to consider me, *I* preserve at least the virtue of *constancy*. I love you as much as ever, Mary. I will not give you up. What," he exclaimed, fixing his eyes upon her pale and startled countenance, and advancing towards her as she sunk down upon a sofa, "do you own yourself, false and faithless, enough to wish that I should do so? Do you now love this Eustace, this Temple, whatever he may please to call himself?"

"Eugene!" gasped Mary's blanched lips.

"Answer me, Mary, or rather prove it. I see indeed that our marriage has been deferred too long; promise me, *swear*, that it shall take place secretly; there is nothing now that should impede it. I can manage my father now, that that woman will be out of the way. You know, Mary—you cannot wonder that I should have considered her presence as an objection to your entrance into my father's house; the obstacle will now be removed."

But Mary shrank back with shuddering repugnance at the suggestion thus presented to her delicate imagination. *She* invited to take the place of Mabel Marryott—*she* to have room made for her within her lover's home, by the removal of such a being.

"Mary, you are not—you cannot own yourself so faithless and so false as to love that other man."

"No—Eugene—no. What right have you to entertain such a suspicion? but you—you have not told me what I required."

"But I *will* tell you, Mary—I will tell you everything. I will redeem—I will atone for all that I may have done—I will lay my fate in your hands—I will yield my future conduct, my every action, to your guidance and direction. As your husband, I shall be content to give up all, whatsoever your wishes may cost me. But I will wait no longer; say you will be my wife, Mary: and I swear to fulfil whatever you may impose upon me."

He had passed his arm with a kind of reckless excitement round her waist, and now held her tightly towards him, so that her heart beat wildly against his own, though she shrank trembling from the close embrace, and still he repeated, with a voice which sounded to her ear more like hatred than affection:

"Say—promise me, you will marry me in a week, Mary, publicly or in secret, as you will; you are your own mistress, no one can prevent you. Speak, say that one word, Mary, and you shall hear everything as truly as if I stood before the judgment-seat of God."

But Mary's lips could not utter a reply, her breath seemed choked, a mist was before her eyes, though the once most beloved face on earth was bending down upon her, so near that his very breath fanned her cheek. She saw it, but as in a frightful dream changed into the face of a demon, and she felt that breath to be upon her brow like a burning and a blighting flame. Yet in the strange terror, the perplexity of feeling which had come over her, a kind of fascination, which something in that dark, lurid glance fixed so steadfastly upon her, seemed to enthrall her senses. She might perhaps, had it been possible, have forced her lips to give the required promise. But though they moved, they uttered no sound. She grew paler and paler, more and more heavily she pressed against the retaining arm which encircled her, till finally her head lay back on the cushion of the couch; and Eugene Trevor started at perceiving her closed eyes and ghastly countenance, released her from his hold, for she had fainted!

CHAPTER XII.

For thee I panted, thee I prized,
For thee I gladly sacrificed

Whate'er I loved before;
And shall I see thee start away,
And helpless, hopeless, hear thee say—
Farewell! we meet no more.

COWPER.

Eugene Trevor's first impulse was to step back shocked and amazed; but the first paroxysm of passion into which he had worked himself, in a degree cooled by this unlooked for catastrophe, he felt that he had acted in a weak and unreasonable manner.

Yes, to say that he stood there, looking on that good and gentle being, whose pitiful condition only showed the climax to which he had distressed and unnerved her guileless spirit, by the course of conduct he had so unjustifiably pursued—the peace and happiness of whose life he had so selfishly blighted.

That he had looked on her thus, and thought chiefly of himself, was but too true a proof of the purity and genuineness of the feelings, which had prompted him to press upon her their union in so urgent and unjustifiable a manner.

Yes—dark and perplexing considerations as to the position of his own affairs came crowding upon his mind. Mary's suspicions, nay, even amounting to certainty, as to his brother's identity, he had himself recklessly confirmed; but that mattered little, for suspicion once awakened on the subject, the truth in any case, must sooner or later have transpired.

No, he should have long ago have broken off with Mary, as his brother had required; that would have been the only means of keeping that mad enthusiast quiet till his father's death, and his own affairs satisfactorily settled. What infatuation had kept him hankering after that "mess of pottage," which after all, he felt had become far less valuable to him, than all that had been risked through its cause. He had been in love with Mary Seaham three years ago; then he was really and truly in love—in love with her sweet youth—her gentle excellence; and could he then have made her his wife without the trouble and annoyance to which the engagement had since subjected him, he had little doubt that the step would have been for his happiness and benefit; but as it had turned out, he should have long since have given up the inauspicious business—the strength and purity of his affection had not been such as could stand the test of their protracted separation. The crystal stream would soon have palled upon his vitiated taste, had it not been for the excitement of opposition, and the triumph over his brother it procured him.

Added to this, we must in justice say, there had ever remained in Eugene's heart at all times—and under every circumstance, a sort of fascinated feeling towards Mary which had never been wholly extinguished—an influence over his nature wonderful even to himself. But this was nothing to the disquieting fears which now assailed him for the future; he could not well see his way before him, and impatiently—with feelings in which every bad passion was combined, he turned away from the poor girl, who lay there so wan and faded before him; in this moment of excitement, considering her but as the source of the disturbance and perplexity, in which through her, he had involved himself. With but one more glance, therefore, at the pale, prostrate form, he rang the bell with careless violence; and leaving the room, contented himself with desiring the servant whom he met hurrying to obey the summons, to send Miss Seaham's maid to her, and hastily quitted the house.

In no happy mood of mind, Eugene Trevor regained his own hotel, and having made inquiries as to conveyances, started by the night mail from ---, and reached Montrevor the following afternoon.

His first inquiry was for Marryott. He was told that she had expired soon after his departure. "Had any one been with her?" he asked.

"No one; they had supposed her to be asleep for some hours; but at length she had been found by the housemaid who took up her gruel, stiff and cold."

Yes—the sin of that hardened and unrighteous woman had surely found her out. The curse breathed from the pale, meek features of the corpse of her, whose angel heart she had crushed and broken—whose death she had rendered lone and desolate as her life, had come back "on her bosom with reflected blight," she too had breathed forth her expiring sigh in agony unrelieved.

But who wept over her remains—who cared for, who mourned her death? not one within that mansion. Old Mr. Trevor heard of the event, with the satisfaction of a child released from the dominion of a harsh attendant, and took advantage of his disenthralment to creep from his chamber to his study, to enjoy the long restricted luxury of gloating over his beloved treasures; and from whence, overcome by that unwonted exertion, he had but just been carried back to his chamber by his servant, who had discovered him thus employed, when his son arrived.

Eugene's first act was to order the property of Marryott to be submitted to his inspection, and he had but just satisfied himself of there being no more forged notes in her possession, when the officers of the crown employed to make inquiries into the business, arrived at Montrevor.

Their examination of the deceased's effects proved, of course, equally unproductive, as was every

inquiry which was afterwards made. A few questions put to the bewildered Mr. Trevor, to whose presence Eugene tremblingly admitted the officials, showed him incompetent to give any available evidence. Their warrant went no further.

With the death of the self-accused offender, ended every possibility of further enlightenment. She had gone to give an account of her actions to a Judge from before whom all hearts are open and no secrets are hid; and who require no human testimony to decide His just and terrible judgment.

They departed, and Eugene breathed more freely, though far was the removal of this one weight of anxiety from leaving peace and comfort at his heart. The gloom and darkness which brooded over the house of sin and death, lay with a leaden weight upon his soul. For the first time he seemed to be sensible of the foulness of the atmosphere in which for years he had breathed so contentedly—the dark maze in which he had entangled himself. Perhaps it was the influence of *her* presence, which even still, as it had ever done, exercised a power over his feelings—a wish, a transitory yearning for better, purer things; for happiness such as he had never tasted in his world of sensuality.

From whatever it might have arisen, certainly his was no enviable frame of mind, and in the perplexity of the moment he was almost prompted to relax his immediate hold of all his anxious schemes and purposes; put his father under proper guardianship, and leaving the house, the country, for a time, abandon the issue to the future—to fate. If the old man died soon, well and good; he knew his present will would secure him the bulk of his large and long accumulated unentailed property. If he lingered on for years, why even then, he little feared his brother taking advantage of his absence. No, not his brother perhaps, but his friends. Might they not rise up in Eustace Trevor's behalf; and the old man become, as in his present state he was likely to do, a ready tool in their hands, to effect his ruin—for ruin to him any alteration in that will must prove—that will made under his own auspices; at the same time that the deed was executed, which in favour of his brother's alleged incompetency, put all power into his hands, with regard to the management of the entailed property.

No, he must retain his post even to the death, and above all he must gain assurance as to the security of the deed, on which so much depended, and which it had been necessary to humour the old man, at the time, in the whim of keeping secreted in his own possession, without the farther security of a copy—a legal expense against which, he had strongly protested. There was another point too on which he was still painfully anxious. Were the remainder of those forged notes, which his father had evidently neglected to destroy, still in existence, and in the same place from which the rest had been extracted?

With these thoughts on his mind, Eugene went to his father, and with the usual address of which he was full master, broke to him the nature and the cause of the intrusion with which he had that day been terrified and annoyed—in short the whole history of Marryott's share in the forgery case, the origin of which he recalled to his darkened recollection.

The old man was confounded and dismayed—his old panic as regarded his son's youthful delinquency reviving in full force. He, however, held out still, that the notes had been destroyed, and that Marryott must have been a witch to have restored them to existence.

Eugene combated the folly of this idea, at the same time impressing upon him the necessity of ascertaining the better security of any papers of importance, than Marryott's abstraction of the forged notes, proved them to be in at the present moment.

For that purpose he conducted the miserable old man to his study, or rather private room; and with great difficulty induced him to go through an examination under his inspection of all places he thought it likely, the will and the remainder of the notes might be secreted.

But the old man's cunning avarice was a match for the younger one's cupidity.

He had his own peculiar feelings with respect to the will. A jealous tenacity in preserving to the last his power over the disposal of his riches, however other powers might have departed from him, and as to giving up his will to Eugene, that he would never do. He knew where it lay snug and secret, and if Eugene treated him ill, and stole the money over which even now his eyes gloated, and his hands passed so graspingly, he knew what he could do, and as for the notes, he had in truth forgotten that secret hiding-place.

So the search ended for that day without the desired results, for the old man grew faint and feeble, and said he could do no more that time, but would continue the search on the morrow, so, content for the present, his son supported him back to his chamber. He did not leave his bed for the following week, before the end of which period Mabel Marryott was carried out to be buried. And there she lies—the same sun which shines upon the evil and the good, gleams upon the decent stone which perpetuates the dishonoured memory of the wicked—as upon the tomb of mocking grandeur, in which the weary had found rest—that rest "which remaineth for the people of God."

CHAPTER XIII.

Desolate in each place of trust,

Thy bright soul dimmed with care,
To the land where is found no trace of dust.
Oh! look thou there.

The servant had either not understood, or had neglected the orders of Eugene Trevor. Her own faithful attendant had not accompanied Mary, and Miss Elliott's maid, who waited upon her, had gone to the hall to be in attendance in the cloak-room upon her young lady. So that when the poor girl recovered from her temporary insensibility, she found herself quite alone, and nearly in darkness with but a dim and bewildered recollection of what had occurred, the sense of physical indisposition preponderating at the moment. She feebly arose, and managed to drag her chilled and heavy limbs to her own room.

In the morning she awoke restored to a full consciousness of the reality of the last night's events; very dark appeared to her the world on which she opened now her eyes; a vague sense of misery oppressed her—a feeling as if the end of all things was come—that the truth, light and beauty of existence had passed from her for ever—that her life had been thrown away—the best powers of her mind—the affections of her heart wasted on an object suddenly stripped of every false attribute which she had so ignorantly worshipped.

She did not feel inclined, as may be supposed, to face the glare and bustle of the court, and under plea of a headache excused herself from accompanying Miss Elliott and her brother, who, having been obliged to be in attendance at an early hour, had only exchanged a few words with his sister at her room-door previous to his departure.

Mary would, therefore, have been left alone all the morning had it not been for a visit from Jane Marryott, who came to say farewell; and to express her grateful thanks, both for the aid she had received from her legal advocate and the kindness shown to her by the young ladies after the trial.

Mary received her with much kindness, and encouraged her by the sweet sympathy of her manner, to relate "the tale of her love with all its pains and reverses." There was something in the subdued and chastened tone of the poor woman's happiness, as soothing to Mary's own troubled heart, as her meek and patient demeanour during her affliction had been touching; and as to look upon the "grief so lonely" of her upon whose patient countenance, she had read a tale of baffled hopes, and disappointed affection, which had made her think with tears upon her own; so now she did not feel it impossible to accede a smile of melancholy rejoicing in her pious joy, though no answering chord vibrated in her own sorrowful bosom—and she felt that the sea of trouble, and the ocean wide, which had hitherto disunited Jane Marryott from her affianced lover, was nothing to the deep gulf which must, from henceforth, roll between her soul and his, whom she had so long looked upon in that light.

But the faint mournful smile did not perhaps escape the observation of her humble visitor, or fail to touch the scarce less delicate sympathies of one doubly refined in the furnace of affliction. Jane Marryott could not repress a glance of anxious interest on the pale young lady's face, as at the close of her own recital, she respectfully proceeded to express her wishes for the health and happiness of her brother and herself.

She had heard, she continued timidly to say, that Mr. Eugene Trevor was the favoured gentleman who was to make Miss Seaham his wife—then paused, humbly apologising if she had offended by her boldness, for she marked the momentary spasm of painful emotion which passed over Mary's countenance.

She would not have ventured to speak on the subject she added, had it not been for the interest, painful though it had become in its character, which bound her to that family. Mr. Eugene Trevor being as Miss Seaham probably was aware, her foster-brother.

Mary bent her head in sign of acquiescence, and then murmuring that Jane Marryott had not offended, enquired in a low and faltering voice if she had been thrown much in contact with the Trevor family of late years, that if so, she would be much obliged by any particulars respecting it: she need not fear to speak freely on a subject which indeed was one of such peculiar interest to herself, though not now in the manner to which Jane had made allusion. She had indeed been long engaged to Mr. Eugene Trevor, but—Mary felt not strength to complete the communication; her voice died away, leaving her listener to frame her own conclusions from the dejected pause and broken sentence.

"I would do anything to oblige or serve you, dear young lady, though there is little on the subject of that family which can be connected in my mind but with shame and sorrow. However, with the exception of one unhappy visit of mine to Montrevor last year, I have not entered the house, or lived in its neighbourhood, since I was quite a young child; then I remember just having been taken there once or twice to see my mother, and being allowed to play with little Master Eugene, and most distinctly of all going with him into the room where was Mrs. Trevor—such a sweet and gentle looking lady—who spoke very kindly to me; and there too was Master Eustace, a beautiful boy, who seemed very fond of his mother, whilst Master Eugene would not do a thing that he was bid—he was but a child then you know," she added apologetically, "and they say was never taught much to love and honour that parent, by those who took him as an infant from her breast. Alas!

that I, my mother's own child, should have to say it—but such visits were not many; my mother did not care for me enough to run the risk of offending her master by having me about the place. He hated strange children in the house, and when I was taken there it was by stealth. So at a very early age I was sent away to some distant relations in Wales, who apprenticed me to the trade, and all I have since heard of the family has been by hearsay; for there was nothing of all that reached my ear, which made Montrevor a place I could have visited with any comfort or pleasure.

"My mother, when I had grown up, offered me a situation in the establishment, and because I refused to accept it, speaking my mind perhaps too freely, she never afterwards noticed me in any way, withdrawing all support in my necessity; till the unlucky hour, I was induced to give up that patient waiting on God's own time I had hitherto maintained, and turned aside to seek to bring it to pass by ways and means that were not of his pointing out. I might have seen that no good could have come out of gold taken from that house, no blessing be attached to bounty drawn from such a polluted source. God has been very merciful, and made all things to work together for my good; but still even now I rejoice with trembling, and were he again to withdraw his favour—I should only feel that it were due to my past unfaithfulness. Oh, dear young lady! it is a good thing to wait patiently on the Lord, to believe that good is hid behind every cloud of seeming evil; that grief or disappointment, if dealt us, is intended for our future happiness either here or hereafter. May you find this to be the case, and feel it also to your comfort, if I am right in guessing from your countenance that you stand in need of consolation. I am very bold, a humble stranger to speak thus to you, young lady—but you have encouraged me by your kindness and condescension, and we are told never to neglect, to speak a word in season to the weary, and even when you hung over me in my fainting fit yesterday, I marked the contrast between your sad pale face, and that of the bright young lady by your side."

Mary put her hand into the speaker's for a moment as if both in grateful acknowledgement of her sympathy, and as encouragement for her to proceed. There was something inexpressibly soothing to her wounded spirit in the simple earnestness of the poor woman's speech—strength and calm resolution to meet the darkened future, seemed to infuse itself into her own soul as she sat and listened.

At length in a low sad voice she responded:

"Thank you very much for speaking to me in that manner. I feel already that it has done me good, for you are indeed quite right in supposing that I am not quite happy, though my present unhappiness springs from a cause of which you, with all your troubles, have never, I think, experienced the bitterness. I have much on my mind just now, doubts and fears on a subject, on which I am unable to gain any clear enlightenment. You, who perhaps have received information from more authentic sources, may be able to tell me what you may have heard concerning Mr. Eugene Trevor."

Jane Marryott looked pained and embarrassed, and hesitated how to reply.

"Do not fear to speak out plainly," faltered Mary, turning away her head; "anything is better than the uncertainty and vague insinuations with which I have been hitherto tortured."

"Then, Miss Seaham," Jane Marryott answered, sorrowfully, "if I speak plainly as you desire, I am forced to confess that all that I have heard of Mr. Eugene Trevor, makes me fear his being too like his father in disposition to make any lady happy."

"Mr. Eugene Trevor cannot possibly be like his father," murmured Mary, her woman's faithfulness still rising up in her lover's defence.

"God grant that it may not be so in every respect," resumed the other. "But, alas! it is written 'that the love of money is the root of all evil;' and what but the coveting of his father's riches, though it might be for a different purpose than the old gentleman's avariciousness—I mean the spending it on his own selfish pleasures—could have made him act in many respects as I have heard that he has done; though God forgive me for exposing the faults of a fellow-creature."

"Speak on, I entreat," Mary anxiously exclaimed.

"Well, Miss, I mean why did he not stand up, like his brother, for his injured, excellent mother; and if he did not exactly join hand in hand with those who oppressed her, why countenance her wrongs by their contented endurance? then about Mr. Eustace that true and noble-hearted gentleman?"

"Ah! what of him?" Mary eagerly inquired, lifting up her sadly-drooping eyes, and fixing them upon Jane Marryott's face with an earnest, fearful expression.

"He was treated shamefully by his father from a child," was the reply; "but I fear more badly still at last by his brother, if, indeed, it be true that he had any hand in the dark business, in which I am told he was mixed up."

"What business?" inquired Mary, turning very pale.

"It is almost too dreadful a story to repeat—almost to believe; but as I have mentioned the subject, and you, Madam, have made me to understand that you were not without unpleasant suspicions as to its truth, I will tell you what I was informed about the matter. The fact is, that an old servant at Montrevor, who had been much attached to Mrs. Trevor and Mr. Eustace, and who

happened to be a native of the town in which I lived, came to the place, and finding me out, visited me for the purpose, I believe, of venting the bitterness of his soul against my unfortunate mother, who he spoke of as the cause of all the sorrow which happened to those he loved; but when he saw me ashamed and grieved equally with himself, then he opened his heart more gently to me, and told me all about the present subject of his distress, and what had induced him to leave Montrevor, swearing never again to set his foot in it, as long as either Mr. Trevor, his son Eugene, or my mother, darkened its doors. He told me Mr. Eustace Trevor had been attacked by a brain fever, brought on by the shock of his mother's death, such as he had had once before after hard study, when Matthew had himself attended on his young master, who was delirious for some days and nights; but that this last time, neither he, nor any of the servants, were allowed to go near his chamber; and that at last he had been carried away at night to a madhouse, it being reported through the house that he was out of his mind. Matthew went once or twice to the door of the establishment, to request to see his master, but was refused admittance. A week or two after, however, Mr. Eustace came back to Montrevor, and went to the library, where his father, brother, my mother, and a lawyer were assembled, making up papers to deprive him of his property. None of the servants saw him but Matthew, who was told to hold himself in readiness to assist his master, if any attempt was made upon his liberty. This, however, was not the case; he left the house as he came, in half an hour's time. Matthew followed him, and was sent back a few stages off, to bring his master's things away from Montrevor, chiefly for the sake of his mother's picture, which was amongst them. Then he gave Matthew some money, and finally but firmly commanded him to leave him. He said that he was going to quit the country, never to return; wished to retain no one, as that might lead to his discovery, entreating him, if he really loved him, to acquiesce in his wishes. He looked ill, and much reduced, of course, by all that he had gone through, both in body and mind. His beautiful hair had been shorn, and with a smile that went through Matthew's heart like a dagger, he uncovered his wrists, and showed deep marks of manacles that they had put upon him indented there. But he said: 'Matthew, I was never mad; it was only another attack, such as you, good old fellow, nursed me through some time ago; but never mind, there are worse things than the charge of madness to suffer in this world. I am going to leave the country, and my unnatural enemies behind me; and if you wish to serve me faithfully, as you hitherto have done, do not try to follow me or to find me out.' And then when Matthew continued to entreat, he grew firmer still, and told him if ever he found himself importuned by pursuit, either by friend or by foe, or the story of what had happened had got spread abroad, he should suspect him of being the cause. So Matthew was fain, with many tears, to bid him farewell; and very soon after it was that Matthew came to me. But I have shocked and distressed you, dear young lady," Jane Marryott added, observing the look of horror which deepened on Mary's countenance, as she with blanched cheeks and distended eyes listened to the recital. "I have never breathed all this to other mortal ear, and should not to you, had not your questioning drawn me to speak out what I fancied you to have already conjectured. Nay, they say that many of Mr. Eustace's friends were inclined to look suspiciously on the matter; but earthly friends, for the most part, are cold and lax in the behalf of those out of sight."

"And was nothing more heard by Matthew of his master?" Mary faintly inquired.

"Yes, early in spring, Matthew, to his joyful surprise, received a letter from Mr. Eustace, telling him to go to Oxford, and to remove some of the property he had at that place to London, where it was received by a strange clerical gentleman, and taken away he knew not whither. But it was a consolation to Matthew to know, at least, and be assured by the gentleman, that his master was safe and well, although still trusting to his obedience and his silence. I have never since heard or seen anything of Mr. Matthew, for he left to settle in London. I have often thought upon the strange story, and wondered whether anything more had ever been heard of Mr. Eustace."

Jane Marryott ceased; and for an instant Mary sat with clasped hands, and a stunned expression in her countenance, till at length meeting the gaze of her companion fixed upon her, with a look of regretful concern; she held out her hand and with a wan smile, such as wherewith a patient might express his thanks at the performer of some painful but necessary operation, thanked her again for having satisfied her painful curiosity; sweetly—yet with an expression which much belied the assertion—assuring Jane Marryott when she expressed her fears as to the effect upon her mind this communication had produced—that though pain of course such a relation could not fail to cause her—yet it was not more than she had endured of late, nor more for her to listen than some points of her communication must have been to her, Jane Marryott, to reveal; for even in the absorption of her own feelings, Mary had not failed to mark and to compassionate the look of humbled shame and sorrow, which bowed down the daughter's head in those parts of her relation bearing allusion to her mother, whilst at the same time the honest simplicity of her class and character, had forced her to pass through the ordeal without compromise or circumlocution; and thus from the lips of the stranger of yesterday, there had been revealed in a manner calculated to strike entire conviction upon the mind of the listener, every circumstance which before had been concealed by a dark cloud of mystery—or that the tender consideration of friends had dealt out to her, in the vile daily drop of vague insinuation and report.

Stupified and still, she sat for some time after Jane Marryott had taken her departure. Mary having said something at parting about seeing her on the morrow, as Jane Marryott did not leave for Liverpool, the place of her intended embarkation, till she had received the final tidings of her mother's fate; promised to her by Eugene Trevor.

But the interview did not take place. Mary sent her a useful present, but was too unwell to see her when she called.

CHAPTER XIV.

As they, who to their couch at night
Would win repose, first quench the light,
So must the hopes that keep this breast
Awake, be quenched, ere it can rest.

MOORE.

We left Mary yielding herself to the passive impression made upon her mind by the startling results of that strange conversation; then gradually that mind began to rouse itself to think, and form, and deliberate as to what was to be done—or rather *was* there anything to be done? Was hers to be the tongue to blaze about the woman's story, to give substance and a shape to the airy-tongued aspersions brought against her lover's name—was this her woman's part? Oh, no; yet something she had to do—some part to act?

Under the influence of this impulse it was that she arose, and going to a writing-table, sat down, and wrote to Eugene Trevor; not to accuse—not to condemn—not even to attack him in the mildest terms with the grave charge she had heard laid against him.

There was no such spirit as this in Mary; though the mere reminiscences of past words and looks which had escaped her lover in moments of uncontrol, but more still the words he had left unspoken—the looks so sedulously avoided, rose before her remembrance, and flashed fearful conviction on her mind; the more her soul shrunk from the dark idea now connected with her lover's history, the more did her heart bleed for him, who must all along have carried in his breast so heavy a load of conscience, upon whose life one fatal remembrance must have cast its bleak and dreary shade, whose smile must have hidden so aching a heart—whose laugh, which had so often rejoiced her soul, must have rung forth so false and hollow from his breast; and as love seemed startled from its seat, so did a great compassion usurp its place within her soul.

And he, the persecuted, the alien—how far less for him she felt were tears of pity due!

No, addressing Eugene in the subdued and broken terms which more touchingly spoke the feeling actuating her heart than any stern or solemn eloquence of appeal could have done, she began by alluding to the distressing interview of the preceding night; she gave him to understand her determination, that it should be final—that it had become the gradual conviction of her mind, that it was not fit that they should ever be united—before she had seen him, indeed, she had promised her brother that their inauspicious engagement should be brought to an end. Since then a terrible story had been sounded in her ear—one she had not courage to repeat—she would only say it related to his conduct to his brother, of whose identity with Mr. Temple she now was fully aware. Mary asked for no confession or denial of the imputation, but she told him simply where that brother was to be found, and implored him no longer, if innocent, to countenance such an implication, by consenting to continue his present false position in his father's house, under cover of so baseless a plea as that which had made his brother an exile. But if any shade of truth rested on the story, why then what remained, but that full reparation which would bring peace and happiness to his own soul—greater peace and happiness, she was sure, if a single shade of guilt in this respect had laid upon it than he ever could have tasted since the dreadful moment when first it rested there? She was sure, though bitter words had been wrung from him in the excitement of last night's conversation, that he would feel convinced of the disinterestedness of the feelings which prompted her anxiety in this affair—that she would have pleaded for the interest of an utter stranger, as now she pleaded for the valued friend whom, whatever circumstances accrued, it was probable she should never see again. Mary alluded but slightly to the prospects of her own future, and that only to express how its altered aspect would be cheered and brightened by the knowledge that this just and necessary line of conduct had been adopted.

Mary had been interrupted in the middle of her letter by the return of Miss Elliott from the courts. Little dreaming the nature of the correspondence over which she found her sad friend employed, there was enough revealed in her manner and countenance to bespeak the anxiety and painful absorption of her mind.

Even Miss Elliott's glowing description of the success, superior to that indeed of the preceding day which had attended her brother's exertions, in a case of considerable interest and importance (a report delivered not without many beautiful blushes on the fair speaker's part), even this scarcely seemed to have power to concentrate and excite her listener's languid and abstracted attention.

"Dear Miss Seaham, have you been sitting writing here all the time I have been away? if so, it is very naughty of you, for you do not look fit at all for the exertion. I am sure you must be more ill than you will allow us to suppose—and without your own maid too."

"I fainted last night, a thing I have not done since I was a child; of course to-day I feel rather weak and languid, in consequence," Mary replied, seeing it was necessary to account in a more

satisfactory manner, for her wretched appearance.

"Fainted, my dear Mary, what could have been the cause?"

"I suppose the heat of the court, all the excitement and agitation of the day, had something to do with it," Mary answered hurriedly; "but pray do not tell Arthur, I would not have him annoyed with any anxiety on my behalf just now. I feel rather tired, having had a long visit from poor Jane Marryott and this letter too to write; when it is over," with a faint smile, "I trust you will find me a more agreeable companion."

Carrie Elliott took the gentle hint, and pressing her rosy lips on Mary's cheek, in her graceful caressing manner, went away to her own apartments.

"Oh, happy Arthur!" thought Mary as with tears starting to her eyes, she returned to her painful task. "Oh, why is it," asked the swelling heart, "that such different lots are appointed to human beings? why are some destined to be thus privileged and blest, whilst others are suffered, like myself, by a strong delusion, to place their hopes and happiness upon unworthy objects; to feed on ashes—to lean on reeds which pierce them, to be wounded—disappointed in their tenderest affections." What had there been in her blameless life to draw upon her such retribution? But these were but the murmuring risings of the moment—in another, that spirit humble, contrite and resigned, which unquestioning kisses the rod of Him who hath appointed it, had resumed its customary place within the writer's breast.

Eugene's letter concluded, Mary did not pause there. She felt there was one more step to be taken. She wrote to Mr. Wynne; she told him in a few emphatic words, how from a source bearing only too strong a stamp of veracity, doubts and suspicions which had long vaguely agitated her mind, had received perfect confirmation; namely, that Mr. Temple was no other than Eustace Trevor, the brother of Eugene. "But it is not this fact, dear Sir," she continued, "which most concerns and distresses me; it is the strange, and fearful story, which for the first time, in one terrible moment was revealed to me. I allude to the conduct of Eugene towards his brother. You, dear friend, I am convinced, are fully informed of every particular respecting Mr. Eustace Trevor's history. I implore you then to tell me, is there entire truth in this awful tale; and if so, to entreat your injured friend to allow no farther guilt to be accumulated on the unhappy offender's soul. I have even ventured to write to Eugene, and entreated him to take the first step towards atonement and reconciliation; but if my feeble influence fail, then help him to cast aside those morbid feelings and ideas (noble and generous in their origin as they were) which hitherto actuated his conduct, and to return to England—to the world—reassert his rights—the lawful place in his country and amongst his friends. Whether his unhappy brother comes forward in this cause or not, still let him act, as alas! presumptuous as it may be for me to speak thus, to one so far above me, it had been well for all he had long since acted. What but woe could come when the righteous and the true fled before the face of wickedness and deceit—stooped to false disguises with a heart and conscience which could have defied the united malice of the world. Let him return; all that is merciful I am fully convinced, as far as is consistent with human justice, will sway the conduct of one, so true and faithful a follower of that Divine Being, whose long-suffering forgiveness to the vilest offenders against His goodness, no man can fathom."

This letter proved of the two, the most agitating and trying to Mary's feelings; so that when her brother, just after its completion, entered the room, he found his sister's cheeks no longer pale as Miss Elliott had left them, but burning with a false and feverish excitement.

He questioned her affectionately about her health; for though she at first, with a forced vivacity, congratulated him fondly on the brilliant report she had heard of him from so eloquent a source, the brother had not failed in the meantime to observe her quivering lips, the glittering restlessness of her eyes, and the trembling hands with which she sealed the letter before her.

"Dear Arthur," she said, with a melancholy attempt at a smile, "I am as well as one in my position can be, for look," she added hurriedly, "I have done your bidding," and she took up one of the letters and placed it in Arthur's hand.

The brother started as he read the direction, then looked up anxiously into his sister's face.

"Mary, have you really done it?"

She bowed her head.

"And you are finally free of the engagement?"

"I am."

"And you do not repent of what you have done?"

"No."

"And you do not find it very painful?"

A wan smile was the answer.

"Dear Mary!" the brother exclaimed, turning away to hide a bright drop that started to his eye, "how shall we ever be able to repay you for all you have suffered so long and patiently?"

A smile again played upon her lips, as she marked the *we* for the first time used in a speech of this nature, and putting her hand in her brother's, she replied:

"By allowing me to witness your happiness, dear Arthur."

Too much occupied with unselfish concern for his sister, the young man did not understand the speech as it was intended; but after a moment's anxious consideration, inquired:

"Mary, has anything occurred since our conversation the day before yesterday, to hasten this step? I know that Trevor went away early this morning, but had you any meeting with him yesterday?"

"I had," she answered, colouring deeply; "but, Arthur," in a faltering voice, "spare me any further questions; let what I have done suffice."

"Selfish—heartless—double-hearted," were the emphatic murmurings of the young man's lips, as he turned away with dark and moody brow, "would that *I* might ask a few questions of him."

"Arthur!" Mary exclaimed, laying her hands reproachfully on his shoulder, "you will make me believe that after all you are vexed and disturbed that our engagement is over."

"No, Mary, Heaven knows that is not the case; but still, it makes my blood boil to think how you have waited so long and faithfully, and that after all your trust and patience will have been all in vain, that your precious affection should have been wasted."

"Then, Arthur, console yourself with the assurance that I grudge no measure of faith and patience I may have exerted. Faith and patience can never be in vain; would that was all I have now to mourn over. As for wasted affection—affection never can be wasted," unconsciously quoting the words once sounded in her ear, in tones which ever since had lingered there. "My affection, though blind, perhaps, and mistaken, was pure and innocent. God will not suffer it to return fruitless to my bosom."

Arthur Seaham was obliged to go and prepare himself for the judge's dinner, and Mary to exert herself during her *tête-à-tête* evening with Miss Elliott.

The next day she was too ill to rise. Her maid was sent for, and with her Mary a day or two after went to a pretty cottage not far distant, belonging to her brother, where he was soon to join her. The Morgans were not then in the country.

CHAPTER XV.

But now, alas! the place seems changed,
Thou art no longer here:
Part of the sunshine of the scene
With thee did disappear.

LONGFELLOW.

Confess! Record myself
A villain!

VENICE PRESERVED.

Mary Seaham's letter reached Montrevor the day after Mabel Marryott's funeral. Eugene Trevor tore it open eagerly, turned ashy pale as he perused it, then, thrusting it into his pocket, went about his business as before.

Day after day went by, and the letter remained unanswered—unacted upon.

With sullen defiance, or silent contempt, Eugene Trevor seemed to have determined upon treating the earnest appeal the important requisition it contained. The appeal he endeavoured to consider it of a weak, simple woman, who probably looked upon an affair of so serious—nay, he was forced to acknowledge, so fearful—a nature in no stronger light than that of some romantic fiction, only costing the actor engaged in it the struggle of some heroic and high-wrought feeling to bring the matter to a satisfactory issue; and who little knew that it would have been far easier to him to put a pistol to his head, than to draw down upon himself such ruin—in every sense of the word—as the sacrifice so calmly required of him by the fair and gentle Mary Seaham must

entail.

"Senseless girl! what! recall my father's incensed heir to his admiring friends, now all up in arms at the treatment—the persecution, they would call it—that he had received at my hands! restore him in all the strength and brightness of his intellect, striking conviction to every mind as to the truth of the testimonies, which would not fail to start up on every side, to substantiate the false nature of the plea which had alienated him from his lawful rights. Then how would vague reports find confirmation! surmises, suspicions be brought to light! And what would become of *me*? what would become of my debts—my character—my honour—my covetousness?"

If these were in any sort the reflections which influenced Eugene Trevor for the next week or so after the receipt of Mary's letter, that letter seemed to have had at any rate the power of subduing for a time his energies and courage in the prosecution of former designs.

He made no attempt to alter his father's obstinate determination to keep wholly to his bed. He seemed suddenly to have lost his anxiety as to securing the will, and discovering the remaining forged notes. He was moody, gloomy, apathetic. One day chance took him to that part of the house where his mother's boudoir was situated. Pausing as he passed the door, he pushed it open, and entered.

The window was open—the sunbeams played upon the old quaint furniture, the room seemed fresh, and bright, and clear, in comparison with the rest of the house; which ever since Marryott's death and funeral seemed to have retained the influence, and impressed him with those revolting ideas attached to the signs and ensigns of mortality entertained by the mind who cannot, or dare not, look beyond those consequences of corruptibility for the object of that fearful power. A dark, pall-like covering seemed spread over the whole house; a close, sickly atmosphere to pervade it throughout.

But here—all this seemed to have been effectually shut out, as if the destroying angel, as he brushed past with hasty wing, had seen the mark upon that door, which forbade him entrance; and Eugene Trevor went and stretched his head out of the window, breathing more freely than he had done for many a day.

Suddenly, however, he drew back; the action had brought to his remembrance just such another clear, bright sunny day, when he had last stood leaning in that position; but alas! how differently accompanied.

Then alone with a fair, pure, gentle girl—her sweet presence, her tender voice, infusing into his soul an influence which for the time had lifted him almost above himself into a paradise of thought—of feeling he had long since forfeited; and now alone—alone with his own dark jarring thoughts—alone with that juggling fiend impenitent remorse gnashing at his heart—alone with his present disquiet—with the threatening fear of the future—the withering memories of the past. Well might he have cried aloud for the lost dream which suggested this comparison—a dream indeed false and treacherous in its foundation; for except that conscience slept undisturbed, how was he different then to what he is now. And yet he would fain have recalled it, for suddenly with that association seemed to have taken hold upon his fancy a passionate yearning, an impatient regret that he had not been able to secure possession of the being who had at that time certainly exercised a very worthy influence over his affections. A tormenting idea that his marriage at that period might have warded off the evils now circling threatening around his head; or at the worst have given him a fond and devoted sharer in his fortunes, such as in the whole world he knew not where to look for now. For how she had loved him! Yes, it was pleasant and soothing to his feelings, in their present ruffled state, to remember that he had been loved so tenderly, so purely, so entirely for himself alone: and then came the stinging reaction—the remembrance that he was no longer loved—that he had seen a look of fear, almost of aversion, usurp the place of confiding affection in those soft and loving eyes: that finally, she had fainted from mere abhorrence at the idea of the promise he had pressed so urgently upon her—then too, when it seemed she had not heard the story which proved the cause and subject of her letter.

No—but she had been in Italy with his brother, that martyr-hero—fascinated, enthralled, no doubt,—and he must lose, relinquish her too. No, by heaven! that he would not do—that weak, pale, soft-hearted girl, should he passively resign his power over her also? villain or not as she might deem him, he must make her to believe it were cruelty, perjury, and sordid unfaithfulness, to desert him now—to break her vows, because she had discovered that there was one with better claims than himself to the fortune and expectations she had imagined him to possess.

In this new mood Eugene went to pay his customary morning visit to his father's room, and there fresh fuel was added to the fire lately kindled in his breast.

The old man had for the last few days taken a different turn. At first, as we have said, his disenthralment from Marryott's guardianship had been a relief to his mind; but to this feeling had succeeded a restless disquiet as to the consequences of the removal of this Cerberus of his household, and the destruction both of himself and property, fraud, robbery, poisoning, fire, ruin and destruction in every possible shape, seemed to be hanging over his head by a single hair. He was in a perpetual fear whenever he found his son had left the house.

The day to which we allude, Eugene Trevor was assailed with the usual amount of murmuring

and complaint.

"Eugene, a pretty state we are in now. I should like to know what's to become of us if we go on much longer in this manner."

"In what way, my dear Sir? everything seems to go on very quietly; really, with scarcely half a dozen servants in the house, and all the plate safe in the bank, I do not think there's any chance of much harm being done."

"No harm? Gracious powers! how do you know what abominations of extravagance are not going forward—you who are always sleeping miles away from the wretches, and know not how I may be robbed, and cheated, and eaten out of house and home. I'll tell you one thing, Eugene, I am determined I'll get to the offices, if I'm carried there, and see to a fraction every bit of meat weighed that comes into the house, as *you* won't help me."

"My dear Sir, I would do everything in my power, I assure you, but the chief object at present I think will be to try and find some second Marryott, who, I hope," with a sneering emphasis on the words, "you will find an equal treasure of honesty and faithfulness as the other."

"I don't want another Marryott," whined the old man, peevishly; "I won't have a housekeeper at all, with their forty-guinea wages—they are as bad as any of them—Marryott understood my ways —"

"And your coffers too, Sir," added Eugene, with a scornful laugh. "A pretty hoard she had at the bank. I am sorry she made no will; I, as her foster-son, might have been the better for it; but as it is, it belongs to her husband, if he is yet alive."

"What's the use of telling me all this *now*," whimpered the father, "when you let her go on doing it without giving me a hint?"

"Oh, my dear Sir, she saved it for you in other ways! 'Set a thief to catch a thief,' you know, at any rate she let no one rob you but herself, which, as so very old and faithful a servant, of course she considered herself privileged to do; but set your mind at ease," he continued more soothingly, as the old man writhed upon his bed, groaning in agony of spirit, "I'll make it my business to find some honest, decent woman, who at least will not be able to claim the privilege of common property on the above-mentioned score."

"But how can you be sure of her being decent and honest?" still persisted Mr. Trevor; "there's not one amongst the race, I believe, that is so. I'll have nothing to do with any of them. I will tell you what, Eugene," and the old man's eyes gleamed at the sudden suggestion, "the only thing that's to be done—why don't you get a wife, and bring her to live here, and keep the house?"

Eugene Trevor's brow darkened.

"A bright idea, Sir," he responded, ironically.

"Yes, yes," continued the old man; "what are you thinking of, Eugene, that you don't marry? you're getting on in life; I was married before I was as old by half. What's to become of the family and fortune—if there's any left of it—if you don't marry?"

His son's eye brightened.

"And by the bye, now I think of it," the father continued, craftily, "what became of that pretty young lady you brought here with Olivia, to that grand luncheon some time ago? I liked her—her voice was soft and gentle, and her manners sensible and quiet. She was something like your mother, Eugene, when I married her; now why could she not do for you?"

"You remember, Sir, that when I did propose making her my wife, it did not meet with your unqualified approbation," replied his son, evasively.

"Oh, didn't it! but that was long ago—then Marryott was here to look after things, and she, I suppose, didn't like it; but now couldn't you look her out again—she isn't gone, is she—you have not lost her?"

Eugene set his teeth hard together and did not immediately reply; but then he said, fixing his eyes on the old man's face, and speaking in tones of affected carelessness:

"After all, I do not see how *my* marriage can be an affair of such *great* consequence, for you know, Sir, there is Eustace."

The old man's face convulsed terribly—that name had not for many years past been uttered by Eugene or any one in his presence.

"Eustace," he murmured tremblingly, "and what has it to do with Eustace—isn't he mad, or dead, or something?"

"He is not dead, certainly, Sir; and mad or not, he might be coming back any day, to put in claims which would not make my marriage so very desirable or expedient a business."

Mr. Trevor looked fearfully around him.

"But, Eugene," he gasped in a low, breathless whisper, "he's not near—he's not likely to come and threaten me. You must keep the doors fastened—you must keep him locked out."

"Oh, my dear father!" his son responded, "there's no such immediate danger as all that; he's far enough off, and not likely to trouble you: only I mean, if—if anything were to happen—then—then, of course, he would be here to look after his own interests; for he's on the watch for your death, I have been told on good authority, and therefore of course you know it would not do for *me* to run any risk—to marry for instance—unless I can see my way a little more plainly before me."

The old man became livid with rage; all his ancient hatred against his son seemed to revive at the suggestion thus insinuated against him.

"To watch for my death! and what then will that do for him—the bedlamite? Eugene! Eugene!" grasping his arm, "never fear him—go and get married—bring your wife here to look after the house, and I'll live another half century to spite him, and then see who'll have it all. We've got a will, Eugene, haven't we?" chuckling and rubbing his hands exultingly.

"There was one made certainly, and a deed giving me the guardianship over the entailed estates in case of your death, under plea of Eustace's incompetency. But if you remember, you would not have a duplicate made of it. I hope you have it safe."

"I'll look it out, Eugene," Mr. Trevor continued as if effectually aroused by the new friction his old heart had received. "I have it safe enough. I'll get up immediately—no, not to-day, but to-morrow. I'll make a day of it, and put all things right."

"Very well, my dear Sir; keep yourself quiet for to-day. My man is here, you can trust in him should you want anything. I'm going to ride for an hour or two."

"Eh—to ride—where? I can't be left," the old man whispered.

"Oh, my dear Sir, William will take as good care of you as myself. I'm really expiring for want of fresh air, and exercise. I'm going to ride over to Silverton on a little business—to make inquiries you know about my wife," he added, looking back with a laugh as he left the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

Oh! it is darkness to lose love, however
We little prized the fond heart—fond no more!
The bird, dark-winged on earth, looks white in air!
Unrecognised are angels till they soar!
And few so rich they may not well beware
Of lightly losing the heart's golden ore!

WILLIS.

Eugene Trevor accordingly mounted his beautiful horse, all fierce and fiery for the want of exercise, and rode fast to Silverton without scarcely once slackening his steed's pace. Just as he approached the mansion, he raised his eyes to a chamber window above. Strange to say, he never drew near the house without being moved with a pang smiting at his heart, fraught with more or less of regretful recollections; for he could not but remember whose gentle eyes had so often watched for him there.

But to-day, a darker and more determined spirit spoke in the upward "flash of that dilating eye," as his horse's hoofs clattered over the stony approach.

Mrs. de Burgh only, he heard to his satisfaction was at home, and she was confined to her dressing-room with a sprained ankle, but no doubt would see Mr. Trevor—a supposition in which the servant was quite correct.

Mrs. de Burgh was only too delighted to have the tediousness of her confinement thus broken in upon, particularly as she was hoping to hear all about Marryott's death, and the strange circumstances connected with the forged notes of which only vague and contradictory reports had reached her ear.

Having, therefore, first accounted for her accident, and giving vent to some complaining strictures on Louis's unfeeling conduct in leaving her alone; whilst he went visiting and amusing himself in Scotland, making it indeed appear an act very unconjugal and unkind, till it came out that Mr. de Burgh's departure had taken place before her accident; and that she had in her fretful pique never written to inform her husband of what had occurred.

After this the fair lady began to question her cousin concerning the late events at Montrevor, and Eugene Trevor to satisfy her curiosity as far, and in the manner he deemed most expedient.

"So you see, Olivia," he added, "altogether I have had a pretty time of it lately, what with one thing and another, and have been terribly put out."

"Well, I thought there was something the matter, as you had quite deserted Silverton."

"Plenty the matter; but there was one subject I came on purpose to speak to you about to-day; you were always my friend in need, Olivia, and I want to consult you—I mean about Mary Seaham."

"Oh, indeed!" replied the lady, with a suppressed yawn, and a tone in which the words "that weary old subject" seemed expressed; for there is nothing which in the end so much wears out the sympathy and interest of one's friends, however much excited they may have been in the beginning, as a protracted love affair.

"Oh, indeed! have you seen or heard anything of her lately?" Mrs. de Burgh then inquired with assumed interest.

"Yes, I saw her at — after the trial, at which, you know, I had to appear. She was there with her brother, who was retained for the prisoner."

"Indeed, how did she look? is she much altered, poor girl?"

"I don't know," he answered gloomily; "she looked pale; but then, our interview was of no very pleasing nature, and... But I have heard from her since then," he added, in the same tone, without concluding the former sentence; "she writes to break off the engagement."

"Well, Eugene, you can scarcely wonder; you must own, you have tried her patience to the very uttermost," his cousin answered, smiling reproachfully; "but it is just the way with you men," she continued, as she scanned more closely the working of Eugene's countenance, "you would keep us waiting till doomsday to serve your own convenience, without one scruple of concern; but if we begin to show any disposition to be off, then you are, forsooth, the injured and aggrieved; well, however, is it not as well? What profit or pleasure can such an engagement be to you, who year after year seem no nearer the end than at the beginning? and as for your father, I believe he's 'the never-dying one.'"

"But, Olivia, matters have lately taken a different aspect," her cousin muttered, gloomily, "my father is urging me to marry, and would do anything to further it. I would marry her to-morrow, if it could only be managed."

"Well, why not tell her so. I suppose it was only the apparent hopelessness of the case which induced her to give you up—tell her at once."

"I did tell her when I saw her last—more, I pressed an immediate marriage urgently upon her; but," with a bitter laugh, "the idea has become so repugnant to her feelings, that she absolutely fainted with horror and aversion."

"Nonsense, Eugene, from joy most likely."

"Joy, indeed—and that letter she wrote after. Oh, no! she has taken it into her head that I am a villain, and—"

Mrs. de Burgh laughed.

"A villain," she repeated, "not quite so bad as that I hope, though not very good I am afraid. A villain! no, we must manage to get that idea at least out of the young lady's head."

"But how?" Eugene asked.

"Why, really, I don't know; let me see—I will write to her—though letters are not worth much. I wish, indeed, I could get her here away from her relations, who are all such terribly good people."

Eugene Trevor drew his chair eagerly forward.

"What here, do you really mean it—do you think it possible—that there would be any chance of her consenting to come?"

"I do not see why it should be impossible—at any rate we can try, and I flatter myself I am not a little clever about these sort of things. Oh, depend upon it, poor girl, she will only be too glad to be persuaded into loving you again. But then, Eugene, I must be sure that you really are in earnest—that the affair will be really brought to a decided issue, before I move again in the business. I burnt my fingers too severely with it before, and brought upon myself quite sufficient odium. What does Mary say in her letter? I must be quite *au fait* in the business, you know, and understand what I am about."

"You shall know everything," said Eugene, approaching nearer, and subduing his tone to a confidential whisper. "It is a more complicated matter than you suppose. There is one very serious point to be dealt with: you will be surprised when you hear that it relates to my unlucky brother."

Mrs. de Burgh started, and looked a little uncomfortable.

"First of all," he added in still lower tones; "but," pausing suddenly, "will you be so good as to tell that young gentleman not to stare me out of countenance," alluding to his cousin's eldest boy, a delicate and serious-looking child, who sat on his mother's sofa, his intelligent eyes with earnest scrutiny rivetted upon Eugene's countenance, as he sat there with bent brow, and dark look of

brooding care.

"Don't be rude, Charlie; go to the nursery," said his mother, half angry, half amused. "Why do you stare at cousin Eugene? do you not think he is very handsome?"

The boy coloured, but rising slowly, as if to escape an answer to the question, murmured evasively:

"Yes, I'll go up stairs, and look at my pictures about the dark-looking Cain thinking about his brother Abel."

"The strange child," said Mrs. de Burgh, with a little awkward laugh, for she knew the picture to which the child alluded, and was irresistibly struck by the similitude which it seems had suggested the comparison. A dark flush at the same time suffused the temples of her companion; but it had soon passed away. After a momentary pause, drawing near Mrs. de Burgh, and placing his chair a little behind her couch, with eyes bent still on the ground, Eugene resumed the subject thus interrupted. He spoke to her of his brother.

We will not detail the conversation, or how much, or in what manner he revealed or confided of that momentous theme. We must not compromise Mrs. de Burgh by supposing it possible she would have made herself privy to any known questionable transaction; suffice it to say, that it was dusk before Eugene Trevor rose to leave her, and that then the cousins parted most amicably.

Eugene promised to ride over very soon again; and when he had gone, Mrs. de Burgh after lying still meditating for a short time, aroused herself with the philosophical observation that this was a strange world—rang the bell for lights, which being brought, and her writing materials laid before her, she wrote as follows:

"My dearest Mary,

"Eugene Trevor has just been here, wretched beyond description, to tell me you have broken off your engagement with him just as matters were beginning to take a favourable turn, and he could marry you to-morrow. I tell him he deserves this for having taxed your patience so long; but that, as you may imagine, gives him little comfort. But, Mary dear, I cannot believe you so very hard-hearted as to place so final an extinguisher on his hopes.

"He tells me you have listened to reports about him; one scandalous story in particular he mentioned, about his strange and unfortunate brother, in behalf of whom, some romantic adventures in Wales and abroad, gave you an interest unduly awarded. I say unduly—because, however fine and noble a creature Eustace Trevor may be by nature, it is not right that you should be unfaithful and unjust to Eugene through his cause. However, this is an affair which we cannot rightly dispose of in a letter; in one conversation I could put everything before you, dear, as clear as day.

"My dear Mary, come to Silverton; you owe it to Eugene—you owe it to yourself—you owe it to me, who first made you known to my cousin, not to refuse this request. I do not know where to direct this letter, I only know that you are somewhere in Wales, so send it to Plas Glyn, from whence it is certain to be forwarded to you. When I also tell you I am confined to my sofa by a terrible sprain which will keep me a prisoner, Heaven knows how long, you will suspect perhaps a little selfish feeling is mixed up with my solicitude for your visit; but no, indeed, I am too seriously anxious for your own happiness and Eugene's to have any such minor considerations, though a pleasure only too great would it be to me to have my dear Mary with me again.

"Louis will be at home by the time you arrive. I need not say how glad he will be to see you. Eugene shall not come here at all, if you do not like it—he need not even know of your arrival; he seldom comes to Silverton now. Alas, poor fellow! the recollections this place awakens can be but painful to him under present circumstances.

"Mary, Eugene may have some faults, but still I maintain that you might have made him what you wished, and that love so tried as his ought not to be thrown away, as you are about to do. Not many men, after being exposed to the temptations to which Eugene has been subjected, would still, after four years' almost constant separation, be so very urgent in the cause of marriage. But, dear Mary, even setting aside all this, what have you better to do than to come here with your faithful servant? You surely do not mean quite to desert Silverton and your cousins. I want you to see my children; the youngest is such a fine creature. I shall look forward to your answer with the greatest anxiety; you do not know how much may depend on acceding to the request of

"Your affectionate
"OLIVIA."

And this was the letter Mary at last received, after having, day after day, waited in sick and solitary suspense for any answer which she might have received from Eugene Trevor—solitary, for though her brother, as speedily as his professional engagements would permit, had followed her, a summons from Judge Elliott had quickly succeeded, offering the young man some very responsible legal appointment, which required his immediate presence in London. Of course

there could be no question of demur. Mary urged her brother's immediate departure, over-ruling any scruples on his part at leaving her alone, and his earnest desire that at least she should accompany him to town.

No, she persuaded him that she should rather like the rest and quiet of the place in her present state of feeling; "besides, dear Arthur," she said with a melancholy smile, "it is necessary that I should begin to learn to accustom myself to a solitary life."

"I do not at all see that, Mary," Arthur answered almost angrily—"why your's should ever be solitary."

"No indeed," was the affectionate reply; "I know that can never be, with such a brother, and," with a playful smile, "such a sister as I hope soon to have."

"Mary, you have become very anxious to dispose of your brother."

"Yes, certainly I am, to such advantage;" then with gaiety which shot a ray of gladsome pleasure from the young man's bright eyes, she added: "besides, I am as much in love with Carrie as yourself; and she and I are sure to get on well together."

So Mary was left alone, supposed at least to be calmly happy, when alas, poor girl! to such a desirable condition she was as yet very far from having arrived. No, there was as yet too much of suspense and uncertainty still gnawing within her soul.

It is not all at once, without a struggle, and one backward longing look, that we can resign ourselves to the certainty that the hope and trust on which we had flung our all, has proved a lie. There were two letters yet to come ere she could let the black curtain fall over the past for ever.

Alone too, with a dreamy impression stealing over her, that whatever her brother's affection might maintain, this loneliness was a foretaste of her future life. And then the bitter sigh and yearning void, as the thought flew back to visions all too brightly wrought, now for ever flown.

Her faithful servant, who marked her dear young lady's spirits sink lower and lower every day, sighed too over her disappointed expectations, for she thought "it would have been better for Miss Mary to have married Mr. Trevor—even if he were somewhat of a wild gentleman, as they said he was: she is so like an angel that she could tame a lion. So good and tender a heart as hers, was never made to live alone with no one to love her, and to love—and my heart misgives me," added the affectionate servant. "She will never get over the affair. And Mr. Arthur too, he is getting too great a man to have much time to give to her—and there's his heart too, quite gone they say after Miss Elliott, who is as much taken with him I fancy; and after all he is but a brother, and the best of them are not so sure and comfortable like as a husband. But after all," the good woman continued to soliloquize, "a bad character will not certainly do for my young lady, and there's something wrong in the Trevors they say. Who would have thought it, and my Miss Mary loving Mr. Eugene as she did; but she is so good and innocent-hearted herself! At any rate, she must not stay moping here much longer. I can see she's getting quite low and nervous."

These were good Mrs. Hughes' thoughts and reflections on the subject, and it was no inconsiderable satisfaction to her mind, when Mary came to her one morning with a letter in her hand, informing her, that she had received an invitation from Silverton, which she intended to accept, and begged her to prepare without delay for the journey; after which Mary sat down and wrote to Mrs. de Burgh, and also the following announcement to her brother:

"Dearest Arthur,

"You will be surprised—perhaps not well pleased—to hear that I am going to set off to-morrow for Silverton. I have had a pressing letter from Olivia de Burgh; and there are many things that I must have explained by Louis and herself, before I feel that I can with a mind contented and at ease settle down (I do not speak ironically, but with the calm assurance that there will be much of blessedness in store for me) in that estate—a life of single blessedness—which now lies before me.

"Do not then suspect me of weak and wavering motives in the step I am going to take. Believe me when I say, that it is not my intention even to see Eugene. Olivia has promised that I should not meet him unless I desire it; and what could our meeting cause, but pain and discomfort to us both? No, I can no longer fight against the conviction which time and my more experienced perception has forced upon me, that Eugene Trevor is not what my blind affection so long firmly believed him.

"God knows my love was not of an evanescent nature; and irresistible indeed must be the causes which have so undermined it. But still my heart shrinks from doing an act of injustice, by condemning him more than he deserves; and there is one horrible suspicion with which my mind has been distracted, my heart can never rest till it has been more clearly enlightened.

"Oh, Arthur! it is a dark and terrible story, I cannot enter upon it now. Suffice it that, if true, it must cast a shadow on my latest hour of existence. If you knew how it has—how it still preys upon my imagination, even till I sometimes fear the bewildering influence it may produce upon my senses, you would not now blame the impulse which leads me to prefer even the risk of obtaining this fearful certainty—rather than continue groping in darkness—for to such I may compare the condition under which I have for some time

laboured. But Olivia has promised that my mind shall be relieved, and Louis, I know, will tell me the truth. May God give me strength and fortitude to bear it.

"I shall not wish to remain at Silverton longer than is absolutely necessary; if therefore your business will permit you to join me there, I can travel with you back into Wales where the Morgans will by that time have returned, and I can stay with them as they wish, till our plans and prospects, dear Arthur, are more finally arranged."

CHAPTER XVII.

Thou, my once loved, valued friend!
By Heavens thou liest; the man so called my friend
Was generous, honest, faithful, just, and valiant:
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely;
Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart;
But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward.

* * * * *

All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee,
Pr'thee avoid, no longer cling thou round me,
Like something baneful, that my nature's chilled at.

VENICE PRESERVED.

It was as may be supposed, a trying ordeal for poor Mary, her arrival at Silverton. The circumstances attendant on her last arrival, then hopeful, trustful, happy; for what appeared the light fears and imaginary evils which then oppressed her, contrasted with her feelings and circumstances now? The thousand recollections the sight of the place recalled, everything, caused her heart to sink and sicken within her.

With trembling limbs she alighted from the carriage, and in answer to her inquiries for Mrs. de Burgh, was ushered by the servant into the drawing-room.

A gentleman stood leaning his elbow against the marble mantle-piece. The door closed upon her, and she found herself alone with Eugene Trevor. Surprise, distress, displeasure, were alternately displayed on Mary's countenance; and withdrawing the hand which, having hurried forward to meet her, he had seized passionately in his own, she faltered forth in accents choked by indignant emotion:

"I did not expect this; Olivia promised—or I should never have come."

"It was not Olivia's fault, the blame is entirely mine, Mary. But, ... is it really come to this? can you look around; can you remember all that passed between us in this room; nay, what happened on this very spot—here where our vows of love were plighted?"

"I do remember," she replied in accents low and mournful, and leaning in trembling agitation against the very chair on which on that occasion she had been seated.

"Then surely your heart cannot harden itself against me—cannot doom me to misery."

"My letter," Mary faintly murmured, gently but firmly repulsing the effort he made again to take her hand.

"Oh! that abominable story, cooked up against me, which you are so ready to believe—Olivia will explain...."

"God grant it!" she murmured, turning her eyes lighted with a brightened expression on his face; but oh! for one calm, clear, truthful glance in return.

Again painfully she averted her head, and saying faintly:

"I will go to Olivia," moved slowly towards the door. Eugene did not attempt to stay her departure, only darkly eyeing her retreating footsteps, he suffered her to leave the room without stirring from the spot whereon he stood.

Slowly and heavily she ascended the familiar staircase to Mrs. de Burgh's dressing-room. Her cousin, still lying on the sofa, started with affected surprise at her appearance, and stretched out her arms to receive her.

Pale, cold, and silent Mary suffered the embrace, then sinking on a seat, covered her face with her hands, sobbing forth:

"Olivia, this was cruel; this was unkind—untrue; I came here trusting to your word. Where is Louis? he surely would not think this right, would not have allowed me to be drawn into such a distressing position."

"My darling Mary, what do you mean? You have not fallen in with Eugene, I hope? Well, that is too bad of him; and he promised so faithfully that he would leave an hour ago. One of the children let out that you were coming, and you know there is no managing lovers in a case like this; the poor fellow is half mad with wretchedness on your account. However, go he shall, dear, if you wish it—pray make yourself easy on that point. You must have some tea; you are exhausted after your journey; and then we shall be able to talk comfortably together. No one shall interrupt us. Louis has not come home yet, but I expect him every moment; he will be so charmed to see you."

Thus Mrs. de Burgh hurried on with affectionate alacrity, without giving Mary time to renew her reproaches or complaints, but by the tears which from her overcharged heart the poor girl still silently continued to shed.

Mrs. de Burgh did not mind those tears; she rather considered them a favourable sign. Had Mary appeared before her after the meeting into which she well knew she had been surprised—cold, calm, stern, silently upbraiding, she would have feared then for the success of the cause in which she was engaged.

But judging from herself, tears in her sex's eyes were marks of conscious weakness, and the melting mood of feeling rather than of any firmness or serious effect upon the mind; therefore with secret complacency she watched and awaited the close of her gentle cousin's agitated paroxysm of emotion. Then she had strong tea brought, of which she insisted upon her drinking, overwhelming Mary with care and tenderness, in the meantime sending for the children to stay a few moments to divert her thoughts, and restore her by their innocent presence to a more natural state of thought and feeling. Then, after partaking herself of some dinner, which Mary declined to share, she saw her guest ensconced in a comfortable arm-chair by the fire, looking very pale, it was true, and eyes bright only from nervous excitement, but her feelings apparently tranquillised and soothed; then struck bravely forth upon the anxious theme.

With tact, skill, and eloquence which would have graced a better cause, Mrs. de Burgh pleaded in her favourite's behalf—favouritism, alas! we fear drawing its source from principles doing little honour to the object of her partiality, and justifying still less the restless zeal with which she strove to forward a cause, in which the fate of a good and innocent being was so closely implicated.

But though "her tongue dropped manna and could make the worst appear the better reason," the time was past when the willing ear of the auditor could be thus beguiled. She had no longer to deal with the too credulous and easy-to-be-persuaded Mary of other days, but one with eyes too tremblingly awake, and ears too powerfully quickened, to the discernment of falsity from the truth.

Each specious statement rang false and hollow on her unpersuaded mind, touching not one atom of that weight of inward conviction which, alas! had been too firmly rooted there, for aught but the touch of genuine truth to undermine; and when, with her face buried in her hands, she listened with suspended respiration to the story of the brother's madness, which flowed so glibly from those eager, fluent lips, little Mrs. de Burgh deemed now every word thus uttered served but more forcibly to confirm the fearful impression which the simple-minded Jane had made upon her listener's mind.

"And then poor man," Mrs. de Burgh, continued, "after frightening the old man out of his wits by his violence, he fled from the house and hid himself no one knew where. Poor Eugene's anxiety on his behalf was extreme; but of course, as he supposed him to have gone abroad, all researches were taken on the wrong track. There is no one to vouch for the condition of his mind during that interval—when he came to your part of the world it seems that he had pretty well recovered."

Thus had Mrs. de Burgh concluded her plausible relation, pausing not a little, anxious for the effect produced upon her ominously silent auditor. Mary then lifted up her eyes, and with an expression upon her face, the fair Olivia did not know exactly how to understand, replied:

"Yes, he came to us, appearing like some being of a higher sphere, and in accordance with Mr. Wynne's earnest persuasion (Mr. Wynne, a man whose keen and sensitive discernment it would have been difficult to deceive) settled down amongst us at once—unmistakably endued with every attribute which bespeaks the spirit of wisdom and a sound mind. He had spent the winter at —, and often spoke of the solitary life he led whilst at that wild spot. Since that time we have frequently visited the Lake; and very far seemed the idea of madness to have entered the minds of the poor simple people of the place, in connection with that 'great and noble gentleman,' as they called him, who, to their pride and profit, had taken up his abode amongst them for a time. Then he went to ---, and there he was taken very ill at the inn. The landlady and the doctor, who are both familiar to us, never had but one simple idea respecting the nature of his malady. He came to us with the signs of past suffering stamped too plainly on his countenance—suffering which, in such a man, appeared but to exalt and sanctify the sufferer in the eyes of those who beheld him.

"But all this would bear little on the point, were it not for the surer testimony which not myself only, but the many who for five years lived in daily witness of the calm excellency of his life and conduct—the undoubted strength and clearness of his mind and understanding are able to produce. Tell the poorest and most ignorant of the little flock, amongst whom Mr. Eustace Trevor (their beloved Mr. Temple) so familiarly endeared himself, that he—who even, though

interchange of language was scarcely permitted between them, they had learned to venerate as some almost supernatural being—that *his* mind had been ever overthrown by an infirmity which had banished him from society, from his friends; and they would laugh to scorn the imputation, and say 'that the world rather must be mad, that imagined such an absurdity against him.'

Slowly and painfully, as if each word was drawn from her by the irresistible conviction of her secret soul, to which some inward power compelled her to give utterance, Mary offered these assertions. Mrs. de Burgh's countenance when she concluded showed signs of uneasiness, but she only said with some bitterness of tone:

"Those people must indeed be rather uninformed, who are not aware that it is more frequently the strongest and the wisest minds who are most liable to that most deceptive of all maladies; but really, my dear Mary," she continued with increased asperity, "it seems to me a great pity that you did not sooner appreciate the extraordinary perfections of which you speak with such enthusiasm—both you and poor Eugene might then have been spared all the trouble your mutual attachment has thus unfortunately occasioned—though, of course, this is only according to your own view of the case, for it would enter into few people's heads to believe it probable that poor Eustace Trevor could ever marry."

The blood flowed with painful intensity over Mary's face and brow, and a spark of almost fire shot from her usually mild eyes. But from whatever cause the strong emotion proceeded, whether impatient indignation at such unjust and cruel persistence on her cousin's part, or any other feeling, its unwonted force, though momentary, seemed entirely to over-power her self-possession, for though her lips moved, she found no words to reply, but drooped her head in silent confusion before her cousin.

So Mrs. de Burgh continued:

"You, Mary, would have been the last I thought to put such a construction on an affair of this sort. You cannot know the circumstances of the case, and the difficult position in which Eugene might have been placed. That a most violent hatred between him and his father always existed is well known. That Eustace Trevor's feelings in this respect (feelings which it is to be confessed were not without some foundation) after his mother's death amounted to frenzy, as it is easy with his excitable disposition to believe. His violence must indeed have been extreme, for I know from good authority, that it has been impossible ever since to mention his eldest son's name in Uncle Trevor's presence, without sending the old man almost into convulsions. For peace and grief's sake alone, Eugene might have found it necessary to have his brother removed from the house, especially when sanctioned, as of course the action must have been, by medical certificates; at any rate, it is only charitable to suppose error—rather than malice deliberate and propense—to have been the origin of the proceeding."

Mary's eyes were by this time lifted up in anxious attention.

"Yes, yes," she murmured, with clasped hands and agitated fervour; "convince me it were *error*, and I should be thankful—oh, how thankful to cherish the idea; but vain, vain will be the endeavour to reason me into the persuasion that anything short of the most generous misconception could have justified any such proceeding with regard to Eustace Trevor, as the cruel course which was pursued against him; and oh, Olivia, I wonder at you—a woman—advocating such a cause."

Then pressing her hand wearily across her brow, as if she felt the overpowering influence of the dark bewildering theme which had taken such painful hold of her imagination.

Mrs. de Burgh lay back upon her sofa, and was silent. She felt herself getting into deeper waters than she had power or ability to struggle with. She had been persuaded to use all her rhetoric, into arguing a serious but gentle-minded girl into marrying a man, towards whom time and experience had much shaken her estimation.

To sift so particularly a matter, the wrongs and rights of which she had, like the world in general, been contented to take for so many years on credit, she was not prepared; and Mary's rebuke chafed her spirit, and changed in a manner the current of her thoughts.

"How very disagreeable it would be for Eugene, if his brother should ever come forward, claiming rights, of which he had been dispossessed by his brother, under false pretences—" and the fair lady was beginning, for the first time, seriously to agitate her mind with these reflections, when the door softly opened, and Eugene Trevor himself made his appearance.

One uneasy glance directed towards Mary, as if to see how she would take the intrusion; a slight movement of her shoulders, as she met the look of anxious inquiry which Eugene Trevor fixed upon her, seeming to express: "I have done my best—you must now try for yourself—" and Mrs. de Burgh took up her work and applied herself to it assiduously. Eugene Trevor said something not very coherent about his horse not being ready and seated himself a little behind Mary's chair, who had seemed more by feeling than by sight to be aware of her lover's entrance; for she had not lifted up her downcast eyes, fixed so drearily on the fire. And now only a scarce perceptible shudder and more rigid immovability seemed to announce the knowledge of his proximity.

"Mary is very tired," observed Mrs. de Burgh, glancing up from her work.

Eugene bent gently forward, and looked with earnest solicitude into Mary's face. He did not speak, but volumes could not have expressed more than the silent concentrated fervour of those

dark, passionate eyes.

It was impossible not to feel in some degree their power, though the influence which had enthralled her soul in other days, was gone; or remained, to use that most hackneyed of all similes, only as the power of the repellant rattlesnake.

Painfully she turned away her head, whilst the hand of which Eugene gently had managed to possess himself, struggled to free itself from his hold. Probably, Mrs. de Burgh conceived, from all appearance, that this was the momentous crisis which it was her duty to make another effort to assist.

She had a little piano-forte in her dressing-room, removed there to while away the hours of her confinement to its precincts; and she contrived, without disturbing her companions, to wheel her light sofa in the right direction. She then arranged herself in a moment before the instrument, and saying, playfully, "Mary, my dear, you shall have some of your favourite songs to cheer you up a little," she struck the chords, and without waiting for further encouragement or reply, began to sing—perhaps by accident, but more probably by design—her choice falling upon those plaintive songs and ballads with which she delighted Mary that first evening, more than four years ago, of her last visit to Silverton. That night on which her fair hostess was always pleased to consider the magic of her own sweet singing had in no slight degree contributed to weave the fatal spell, whose broken charm it was now so much her object to renew. What better could she do for Eugene's interest, than try this method of enchantment once again?

And could Mary listen, and her susceptible soul not be touched by the memories and associations which must be naturally awakened? Could she sit by Eugene's side, and not be carried back in softened fancy to the time—that time to use the impassioned language of the poet—

"When full of blissful sighs
They sat and gazed into each other's eyes,
Silent and happy, as if God had given
Nought else worth looking on this side of heaven."

Alas! for the spell so irremediably broken, that not even this sweet and subtlest of all human influences can restore.

Mary's soul was stirred indeed within her, but it was with very different emotions than those which were intended to be produced; above all was her heart swelling within her, with wounded, more than indignant feelings, against the pretended friend who had thus made her the unsuspected victim of an unworthy plot.

Therefore the soft music rather seemed to irritate, than to soothe her jarred and shaken nerves—the words of thrilling pathos, which the strain for the most part conveyed, to sound in mocking accents on her ear.

"The sunshine of my life is in those eyes,
And when thou leav'st me, all is dark within."

What to her could such words be, but mockery; when now, alone "the image of a wicked, heinous fault lived in the eye," which once, indeed, had seemed too powerfully to absorb the whole sunshine of her life.

But still she sat there, pale, spiritless, and subdued, as if some spell still bound her, she had not energy to break, however unwillingly she yielded herself to its sway. Sat—till from silent looks, it seemed that Eugene, perhaps encouraged by her passive conduct, began again to urge in low and pleading tones his anxious suit, his father's earnest wishes on the subject—his own broken-hearted despair. Then, it seems, her passive trance had given way, for very soon after, when Mrs. de Burgh, warned by the sound of Eugene's voice, that matters were taking a more decisive and particular character, had begun to strike the chords with considerably proportioned force, she was startled by hearing Mary's low voice close behind her, announcing, in accents tremulous with agitation, her intention of immediately retiring to bed.

The sweet sounds were abruptly suspended; the performer looking up, said, with cheerful *insouciance* which she did not exactly feel, for she was rather disappointed at this ominous sign of the destruction of her hopes that affairs were taking a more favourable turn:

"Yes, dear Mary, certainly, you shall go directly. I forgot that you had had so fatiguing a journey."

Then glanced uneasily round to see how it went with the other party concerned.

Eugene Trevor had approached the window, and having, with impetuous hand, drawn aside the curtain, threw open the shutter, and looked out, as if to ascertain the aspect of the night.

"By Jove, dark as pitch," he murmured moodily; then looking back, cried with a kind of reckless laugh, "Olivia you must keep me here to-night, I think, if you have the least regard for my neck."

Mrs. de Burgh glanced towards the window.

"Is it so very dark?" she asked, evasively.

"Dark—not a star to be seen—but—what in the name of fortune, is that strange sudden light yonder?"

Mrs. de Burgh again glanced towards the window, but from the position of her seat could not gain sight of anything but the thick impenetrable darkness. Mary, however, standing with the candle she had taken up in her trembling hand, mechanically turned her eyes in the direction indicated. They were, indeed, immediately attracted by a red glare, which, rendered more conspicuous by the surrounding blackness, illuminated the distant sky opposite, just across the twelve miles of flat country separating Silverton from that wooded rise, which had so often rivetted her interested gaze, as marking the neighbouring site of Montrevor.

But it must have been a meteorical appearance which had produced the transitory effect, for even as she gazed it seemed to have faded from her sight—or rather, she observed it no more—saw nothing but the dark eye of Eugene Trevor flashing upon her with a lurid glaze, which in the troubled confusion of her ideas seemed in some way confounded with this late aspect of the sky.

"Sullenly fierce, a mixture dire,
Like thunder clouds, half gloom, half fire."

She turned away, lighting her candle with unsteady hand.

"Good night, Olivia," she said gravely.

Mrs. de Burgh held out her hand.

"Good night, Mary. I hope you will sleep well, and be better to-morrow."

By a faint, cold smile, Mary alone acknowledged the kindness of the desire. She was turning silently away, but something seemed to come over her spirit—a chill—a pang—a sinking at the heart—such as those must feel who, be the circumstances what they may, have torn thus away the last link of that broken chain which once, alas! so fondly bound them.

She paused, her softened glance directed towards Eugene. There was no relenting, no wavering in the glance, nothing but a mournful interest, sorrowful regret, offered up as it were, as a final tribute to the past.

But it seemed not that Trevor was in a condition of mind to enter into the spirit of this silent adieu. Throwing himself back upon a chair, without appearing to notice it, and addressing himself to Mrs. de Burgh, he exclaimed in a tone of almost insolent defiance:

"Olivia, I must trouble you to order me a bed also. I shall not turn out this dark night for any one."

It was not so much the words, but the tone in which they were spoken, which seemed to complete the work of disenchantment. The softness passed from Mary's eyes, and her parting look, though still sorrowful, was grave and firm, whilst in a voice, low, but full of dignified reserve, she uttered the words "Good bye."

Simple as was their emphasis, they were not to be mistaken. They seemed to say "Good bye, Eugene, for whether you stay to-night, or go, you and I meet not again." And then she slowly left the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Suddenly rose from the South a light, as in autumn
the blood red
Moon climbs the crystal walls of Heaven, and o'er the
horizon,
Titan-like, stretches its hundred hands upon
mountains and meadow,
Seizing the rocks and the rivers, and piling huge
shadows together.

LONGFELLOW.

Why flames the far summit? why shoot to the blast,
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast?
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin, all dreadfully driven
From his eyrie, that beacons the darkness of Heaven.
Oh crested Lochrel! the peerless in might,

Heaven's fire is around thee, to blast and to burn;
Return to thy dwelling, all lonely, return,
For the blackness of ashes shall mark where it stood.

CAMPBELL.

It was with a numbed and dreary sense of bruised and outraged feeling that Mary—the last fibre of mistaken partiality torn from her heart—the last atom of her false idol crumbled into dust, lay down upon her bed that night.

She had lain there perhaps an hour, when the loud ringing of the hall-door aroused her from the state of dreamy stupor which was stealing over her.

Her first supposition was that her cousin Louis had returned. Then the hasty-ascending footstep of the servant, the quick knocking at the door of Mrs. de Burgh's dressing-room, from which the chamber appointed for Mary was not far removed; the hasty communication then given, the loud and agitated voice of Eugene in reply, his impetuous rush down stairs and from the house—as the banging of the hall-door made her aware—led her rather to conclude that some intelligence of peculiar importance, perhaps relating to the illness of old Mr. Trevor, had been received from Montrevor.

The next moment Mrs. de Burgh's bell rang violently, and very soon after her maid entered Mary's apartment, begging Miss Seaham to go immediately to Mrs. de Burgh.

Montrevor was on fire! Mr. Eugene Trevor had been sent for. Mrs. de Burgh was greatly agitated.

Pale and horror-stricken, Mary hastened to obey the summons. She found her cousin with her sofa pushed towards the window, gazing in strong excitement on the red glare, now again plainly visible in the distance, and so fearfully accounted for.

"Gracious heavens, Mary, is not this terrible! the poor old place. Eugene has gone off distracted, not knowing whether he will find the whole house consumed; as for the wretched old man, God only knows what has become of him! it did not seem that the messenger brought any sure tidings of his safety. How dreadful if he were to perish in the flames!"

"Dreadful, indeed!" murmured Mary; but she was no match for her cousin's volubility. She sank down shivering by her side, her eyes fixed in appalled bewilderment on the awful sign written in the heavens—sign, as it were, of the judgment and fiery indignation which is to devour the adversary.

They sat there long intent upon the anxious watch, though little was to be gleaned from that flickering and unconstant glare, now deepening, now dying into comparative darkness, but that the fire was still in existence.

Mrs. de Burgh had ordered some of her servants to follow Eugene, and render any assistance in their power; one was to return immediately with intelligence. In the meantime she entreated Mary not to leave her, a petition which poor Mary, in her present state of mind, was not inclined to resist.

Coffee was brought up to revive their strength and spirits, during the two hours which at least must elapse before the messenger could arrive, and wrapping Mary in a warm shawl, the weary interval of suspense passed away as quickly as could be expected. It was over at last. The servant returned. Mrs. de Burgh had him up to the dressing-room to hear the account from his own lips.

In a few words the man related, that one entire wing of the house had been past recovery when the party arrived from Silvertown, or before any effectual assistance could be procured. It was the wing containing the private library of Mr. Trevor; there it was supposed the fire had broken out and made some way before discovered by the household.

The catastrophe was supposed to have originated in some way from Mr. Trevor, as he was missing in his own apartment; and it was feared that he had perished in the flames, as he had been known to have some nights before crept stealthily from his bed-room to the study. It did not appear that any of the servants had been sufficiently courageous to attempt his rescue, and of course now all hope of saving the unfortunate old man was at an end, the flames having communicated with the adjoining passages before the alarm was given, though even then Mr. Eugene Trevor had seemed almost inclined to pierce the flames in that direction, so great was his horror at the intelligence.

Mrs. de Burgh at this awful communication fell into a fit of hysterical weeping, whilst Mary, pale as death, speechless, tearless with emotion, sat with her eyes raised and her hands clasped together. "Thoughts too deep for tears" stirred up within her breast—thoughts of death, judgment, and eternity.

How terrible indeed the retribution which had fallen upon the head of that sinful old man. How mighty and terrible the hand which might be said to have taken up the cause of the oppressed, and stopped the way of the ungodly!

Fearfully vivid was the light which guided Eugene Trevor on his course, as like a demon of the night he dashed through the darkness—his neighing, foaming steed bearing him far onward

before the party following him from Silverton.

The conflagration lighted the country many miles around, and fierce was the effort the distracted rider had to make to force the frightened animal to proceed.

When entering the grounds, the flames shone through the leafless trees full upon his path, his dilated nostrils inhaled at every breath air heated like a furnace; and bleeding, panting, trembling in every limb, stopped short before the blazing pile.

A shout from the spectators, now congregated in considerable numbers, announced the anxiously expected arrival of Eugene Trevor. One second's pause, as raising himself in his stirrups, he seemed in one wild, hurried, desperate glance to review the fearful scene—then casting away the reins and springing to the ground, called out in a hoarse loud voice an inquiry for his father; but without waiting an answer—or perhaps reading the full truth too plainly revealed on the countenances of those around him—he darted forward, almost as the servant had related (it might have appeared with the desperate impulse to attempt even then the rescue of his father's remains); when, either repelled by the violent heat or suddenly recalled to recollection, he staggered back, struck his clenched hand wildly against his brow, and turned away just as that part of the roofing gave way; the flames bursting out with increasing fury necessitating a hasty retreat. The conflagration presented altogether a scene of awful grandeur. Engines were playing on the other extremity of the mansion, though little hopes of checking the devastation were entertained.

All the furniture and other valuable property which it had been possible to rescue had been already removed, and now lay strewn out in the park before the house; and there, a little aloof from the rest of the crowd, with arms folded on his breast, stood Eugene Trevor watching the progress of the demolition—the terrible glare distinctly revealing the expression of dark despair settled in his glazed eyes and upturned countenance.

A few gentlemen of the neighbourhood were on the spot, but a feeling of delicacy restrained them from intruding on the sufferer their sympathy at that dreadful moment.

The feelings of a man who stands beholding the house of his forefathers burning before his eyes, with the fearful knowledge that a parent's blackened corpse is consuming to ashes beneath the ruins, might seem indeed to require no other consideration to render their harrowing nature complete. But were these the subject matter of the thoughts which pressed upon the soul of Eugene Trevor at that awful moment?—or had it been the natural promptings of filial piety alone which at first had impelled him to rush forwards in that fatal direction?

Alas! no—rather must we fear it was the impulse of the man, goaded by the consciousness that there too was consuming the papers on whose existence all which he had staked his greedy soul to obtain, and the destruction of which must be the total demolition of all his unrighteous hopes and prospects, bring him to the feet of an injured and offended brother, and prove, in short, his ruin.

The work of destruction continued unabated; portion after portion of the burning mass gradually gave way; the roof of the large dining-room fell in with a tremendous crash, and all the interior part of the mansion being now destroyed, nothing remained but the mere skeleton of one of the oldest, stateliest residences in the kingdom.

By this time, Eugene Trevor had turned away, and exerted himself to speak with the superior servants and superintendents of the estate; and then the friends still lingering by, hesitated no longer to draw near. They first shook hands in silent and sorrowful token of their sympathy with the bereaved man, proceeding to press upon him invitations to accompany them to their respective homes. Eugene received their advances with as much calmness as could be expected; their hospitality, however, he thankfully declined.

If he went anywhere he had promised to return to Silverton, but his presence would be required on the spot some time longer. After he had seen to everything that remained to be done, he should probably go to ---, the town four miles distant. He had hurt his arm by approaching too near the fire, and must have it looked at by a surgeon.

His friends had too much consideration to urge him further, and having received his repeated thanks, and assured them that they could not be of any further assistance, they departed.

The further proceedings of that night, or rather morning (for it was about four o'clock) before the work of ruin was finally achieved, were, as may be supposed, to seek for the remains of Mr. Trevor from amidst the wreck of the fallen house. They were at length discovered.

There they lay: the iron chests which lined the apartment, (once the general library of the mansion, but long since monopolized by Mr. Trevor for his especial use and purposes)—and which alone remained of everything belonging to it, testified to its identity. The existence of these giving hopes of the security of its contents, caused a ray of renovated hope to kindle on the countenance of Eugene Trevor, who superintended the investigation in person.

But the hope was but transitory. The position of the blackened bones indicating his father's remains, plainly betokened the vicinity of the miser to the old oak *bureau*, at the time of his

dreadful death: of that receptacle, of course, nothing now remained but the iron bands which had once so jealously secured its contents, and the blackened ashes of paper in considerable quantity; rendering it still more probable that the horrible catastrophe had originated through their means—namely, that the wretched old man had set some of them on fire during their examination; indeed, within the fleshless hand of the miser, clutched doubtless in his dying agony, there still remained a scorched fragment of parchment, upon which the eager eyes of his son still deciphered a word or two, which at once told him his fate was decided; that it was the unrighteous will on which his future fortunes so strongly depended, the last atom of which, miraculously preserved, he now beheld.

A few moments more, and Eugene Trevor turned his back upon the smoking ruins of his home; and soon, in the hateful light of morning, with bent brow and livid cheek, was riding away to —, with feelings at his heart it would be indeed but a futile endeavour to describe.

With the guilty woe of him who ponders over a well-merited fate—a serpent wound around the heart, stinging its every thought to strife—can alone perhaps suggest a fit comparison, when applied to the state of a man's mind under circumstances like the present.

CHAPTER XIX.

Away, come down from your tribunal seats;
Put off your robes of state, and let your mien
Be pale and humbled.

Mr. de Burgh was in the north of England when he received news of the destruction of Montrevor, by means both of the public papers and a few hurried lines from his wife.

He had been contemplating at the time a speedy return; but this dreadful intelligence hastened his movements, and three days after the fire he arrived at Silverton.

Mr. de Burgh did not see Mary at first. The unrest and agitation of mind under which for some time she had been suffering, brought to a climax by the shock this last dire event had occasioned, produced its physical effect, a kind of low nervous fever, now confined her to her bed.

Her cousin Louis was surprised to hear of Mary's being at Silverton, Mrs. de Burgh having slightly mentioned the fact in her hurried letter to him; nor did she consider it at all necessary to enlighten her husband as to the cause and circumstances of her visit when on the night of his return, Mr. de Burgh commented somewhat sarcastically on the subject.

"Yes, Mary was very kind to come to me, when I told her of my accident and loneliness—indeed I do not see in the least why she should not have come," Mrs. de Burgh remarked.

"Nor I either, if she likes it," he answered drily—"at any rate this fire will bring matters to a crisis both as regards her affair with Eugene Trevor, as it will also a few others."

"Of course you will go and see after poor Eugene to-morrow, and try and persuade him to come here."

"Of course—but as to coming to stay here, I am pretty well persuaded that Eugene Trevor will have too much on his mind just now to think of visiting any where. I shall be curious to know how things will turn out."

"Oh, of course my poor uncle left Eugene all the money," Mrs. de Burgh said.

"Most probably, all his immense savings, but you know the estates are strictly entailed."

"Yes ...," was the answer, with some hesitation; "but if Eustace Trevor does not make his appearance."

"That will not alter the entail whilst he is alive, and every exertion will be made which can lead to his discovery, if his father's death does not, indeed, as there is every likelihood, make him come forward of himself."

"But if he is mad?"

"Pshaw!" was the only reply deigned by Mr. de Burgh, with the expression of indignant incredulity, which any such allusion always excited in him.

Mrs. de Burgh was silent for a few moments, but there was a very significant display of intelligence visible on her countenance.

The fact was, that she was inwardly struggling between a very womanly desire to let out the

secret of which she was in possession, and the unwillingness she felt to gratify her husband by the communication of Eugene's rejection by Mary—also she felt some hesitating repugnance to relate the particulars concerning the identity of the lost Eustace Trevor with Mr. Temple, the esteemed and beloved friend of all the Seaham family. But then her silence would but for a few hours postpone the intelligence—the truth would be revealed by Mary on the first opportunity, if it transpired not through other means. So at length, after keeping it fluttering for some time on the tip of her undecided tongue, the final plunge was taken, some mysteriously oracular words were spoken, which excited Mr. de Burgh's curiosity, and led to the full and final developement of the whole story of "Mr. Temple," and every particular relating to him as received from Mary. The surprise and interest of Mr. de Burgh at this communication, was of course extreme. He was much excited, walking about the room and questioning his wife over and over again on the subject, whilst she having once broken the ice scrupled not to afford him every satisfaction in her power—nay, taxing her imagination and ingenuity to make the romantic story even more extraordinary than it really was.

The following morning Mr. de Burgh rode off immediately after breakfast for the town of —, and on his return late that afternoon desired to see Mary, and though Mrs. de Burgh objected that she was not fit for any exciting conversation—that she was very weak and ill, so much so, that she was going to write to Arthur Seaham to come to Silverton as soon as it was possible—Mr. de Burgh persisted on its being a matter of importance, the more so when he heard, that, on that very morning Mary had received a foreign letter, which Mrs. de Burgh supposed was from her friend the clergyman, the companion of Eustace Trevor, though she had not as yet alluded to its contents, which seemed nevertheless to have considerably affected Mary.

Mr. de Burgh was, therefore, in the course of the evening, taken to Mary's room, where she was lying on the sofa ready to receive her cousin, for whose visit she had been previously prepared.

The interview lasted some time—when Mr. de Burgh left the room, he immediately sat down and wrote a note, which he dispatched without delay. It was, he afterwards told Mrs. de Burgh, when she could induce him to satisfy her curiosity, to the lawyer concerned in the management of the Trevor affairs, whom he had seen that day. He had just written to inform him where Eustace Trevor was to be found, it being proposed to send a special messenger abroad to summon him to England, in order to take possession of his inheritance.

"No will of any kind having been found in existence, Eustace Trevor comes of course into undisputed possession of the property and estates, both entailed and unentailed, that is to say," added Mr. de Burgh, with something of sarcastic triumph in his tone, "if he is found in a fit state of mind to enter upon his rights."

"And poor Eugene," demanded Mrs. de Burgh, bitterly.

"Eugene, I did not see," answered her husband; "a hurt he received the night of the fire, it seems, was inclining to inflammation, and he was ordered to keep quiet; at least, he would not see me when I called at the inn. The lawyer tells me he seems suffering much anxiety and distress of mind; no wonder, for from what I hear, it will go hard with him, if he finds not a generous and forgiving brother in Eustace Trevor; his ten thousand pounds, the portion secured by the marriage settlement to the younger children, will be but a poor set off against the immense expectations on which he had speculated so securely."

"You are very ungenerous and unkind to speak in that way of a fallen man; I hope Mary does not enter into your sentiments, I am sure I shall always stand up for Eugene."

"Oh, no doubt, through thick and thin," was the rather sneering reply, "unkind indeed, I should say, it was cruel kindness 'that the wrong from right defends;' as for Mary, I am glad to find that she has for some time not been quite the blindly obstinate and deluded person I had began regretfully to esteem her, that her infatuation has long since been giving way before the evidences of truth and reason—yes, her charity in the point in question is rather more honourable to her character than that which you profess; there being an old proverb I have somewhere read, which says: 'Charity is an angel when it rejoices in the truth; but (something with a very different name) when it embraces that, which it should only pity and weep over.'"

Tears, indeed; the tears of many mingled and conflicting feelings were trickling through the pale fingers clasped over Mary's aching eyes when left alone by her cousin. The letter that morning received from Mr. Wynne, the superscription of which had been noted down by Mr. de Burgh, held tight in her other hand; that letter, which indeed contained such fearful testimony to the truth of Jane Marryott's story, and all she had heard assigned against him, whom she had once so blindly and ignorantly worshipped. Mr. Wynne related succinctly the whole story of Eustace Trevor's wrongs, as confided by his own lips on his first arrival in Wales. This Mr. Wynne had taken on himself to do unauthorized by his friend; it was all, indeed, which Mary's letter seemed purposed to effect—her own communication of having entirely broken off her engagement with Eugene Trevor, only rendering more wholly out of the question the execution of the step she had so urged upon Eugene's brother.

For her own sake, for her preservation from a fate he so deprecated on her account—he had promised to sacrifice his own interest—to take no step likely to lead to the well-merited discomfiture and disturbance of his brother, or an exposure of the past. The point on which the agreement turned had now been established. He would not too closely inquire by what means, and in what manner; but the promise he must still consider binding on his part, a promise but too

much in unison with the solemn determination of his aggrieved and wounded spirit when last he quitted his father's house, never again to seek a son or brother's place within those dishonoured walls. This had been the substance of Mr. Wynne's letter. How changed the aspect of affairs since the period when it had been penned. How mighty the hand, and by what terrible means had been effected, that which her weak influence had attempted to achieve!

It might, indeed, be called an instance in which the still small voice must fail, but the power of the all mighty one be heard in the fire.

And now, all the past—the strange position in which she stood—the circumstances in which she had become involved, passed before Mary's mind's eye as in a bewildering dream—confused and conflicting feelings she could scarcely divide from one another, troubling her enfeebled spirits; till, at length, those relieving drops had flowed, and prayers mingled with those tears to the all wise and the all merciful disposer of events, in whom she trusted.

It must not be supposed that Eustace Trevor had been unmoved by the urgent appeal conveyed in Mary's letter; that the words she had written, the argument she had used, had unimpressed him with their justice and their truth. They brought to his recollection the words of the psalm sung that afternoon in the little church of Ll— by the simple village choir, when first the fair face of Mary Seaham had cast its softening spell upon his frowning destiny—those words which had even then struck upon his fancy as strikingly applicable to his own strange case, and which from Mary's low sweet voice had thrilled like an angel's soft rebuke upon his ear.

"Since I have placed my trust in God
A refuge always nigh,
Why should I, like a timorous bird,
To yonder mountain fly."

But erroneous as might have been the cause of action, crooked the path he had been morbidly driven to pursue; innumerable causes seemed now to oppose the conduct that angel-like minister with unworldly and too prevailing voice now urged him to pursue. No, for the present let it suffice that she was saved from a fate, which apart from all selfish feelings, he feared for her worse than death; for the rest, matters must take their natural course, work out their own intended end, swayed by the hand which ruleth the universe—much more the affairs of the sons of men; for neither to blind chance, or what men call fate, did Eustace Trevor commit his ways.

CHAPTER XX.

My gentle lad, what is't you read
Romance or fairy fable?
Or is it some historic page
Of kings and crowns unstable?
The young boy gave an upward glare:
"It is the death of Abel!"

HOOD.

It was about ten days after the event recorded in the last chapter, that Mary Seaham, for the first time since her illness, came down stairs; and wearied by the exertion, and left comparatively alone—for Mrs. de Burgh was driving with her little girl, and Mr. de Burgh, and her brother—who had arrived to take his sister away as soon as she was sufficiently strong enough to move—were also from home; only the quiet, eldest boy remained to keep her company.

She was lying late in the afternoon upon the drawing-room sofa, the effects of her still lingering weakness causing a dreamy feeling of weariness to creep over her. Struggling with the sensation, and wishing to arouse herself, she now and then opened her languid eyes, and spoke to her little companion, who sat so seriously at the foot of the couch, amusing himself with the book upon his knee—his favourite book of scripture prints and stories.

He was an interesting and peculiar child, very unlike the girl, who had all the *veille*, excitable disposition of her mother—or the high-spirited, most beautiful child, the youngest boy, of whom his parents were so proud and fond.

"What are you reading, Charlie?" Mary inquired.

"About Cain and Abel. Here is the picture of Cain, that dark, bad man, who hated his brother Abel," the child replied.

"And why did he hate him, Charlie?"

"Because his brother's works were good, and his were evil."

"It is very dreadful not to love one's brother. Always love your's, Charlie," Mary said mournfully.

"I do love him," the boy answered with simple earnestness, lifting up his expressive eyes to his gentle monitor's face; "and look," he continued, sidling closer to her side, "here are two other brothers, who once did not love one another; and one was obliged to go and live for a great many years in a far-off country; but see here, he is returned, and the brothers have forgiven one another; and," continuing in the words of the scripture explanation written in the page, "'Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.' That is a nicer picture, Mary, than that of Cain and Abel, for Abel there is dead, and Cain can never be forgiven; but must wander about the earth with a mark upon his forehead, lest people should kill him; but Jacob and Esau might be friends on earth, and meet again in heaven."

Mary placed her hand fondly and gratefully on the head of her dear little expositor. A tear of happier feeling trembling amidst the lashes of her drooping eyelids, than had gushed for many a day from her perplexed and troubled spirit, for she thought of two other brothers, who, through the mercy of God, were still spared on earth—the one to forgive, the other to be forgiven; and a calm, peaceful, expression stole over the sweet countenance whose placid serenity distressing thoughts had of late so sadly disturbed, till at length, as Charlie went on to read to her, at full, the history, as he said, "of another brother—the best brother of all." "Even Joseph, who was sold for a servant, whose feet they hurt in the stocks, who was laid in irons, until the time came that he was delivered, the word of the Lord tried him;" but who yet, when his brothers were brought to bow down before him, he spoke kindly to them, even to those who had done him such grievous wrong, and kissed them, and wept over them, and made them as rich and happy as he could—the soft monotony of the child's voice lulled her senses to repose; and with that glittering tear still moistening her drooping lashes, and a smile, sweet and innocent as might have been that of the child by her side, she peacefully slept.

The boy's voice then sunk to a whisper, and so absorbed was he in his interesting task, and the carpet of the saloon so thick and soft, that he perceived or heard nothing till a darkening shadow fell upon his book.

Then he quietly lifted up his serious eyes, and beheld a tall stranger gentleman standing at a little distance before him. But the stranger was not looking at him, the little boy: his full, dark eyes were bent with earnest intensity upon the sleeping Mary, who, as she lay there with that still serenity of brow, that look almost of child-like innocence which sleep, like death, sometimes brings back to the countenance, might have well suggested to the recollection of the gazer these beautiful lines of Mrs. Hemans, "The Sleeper:"

"Oh lightly, lightly tread,
Revere the pale still brow,
The meekly drooping head,
The long hair's willowy flow.

"Ye know not what ye do,
That call the slumberer back
From the world unseen by you,
Unto life's dim, faded track.

"Her soul is far away
In her childhood's land perchance,
Where her young sisters play,
Where shines her brother's glance.

"Some old sweet native sound,
Her spirit haply weaves;
A harmony profound,
Of woods with all their leaves.

"A murmur of the sea,
A laughing tone of streams;
Long may her sojourn be
In the music land of dreams."

The stranger's rivetted regard seemed to attract the young Charlie's also, for he now turned his eyes upon the slumberer, and then, as if equally attracted by the angelic sweetness of her expression at that moment, or wishing to demonstrate to the intruder the privileged position he held with respect to the object of their joint attention, he slid still nearer to Mary's pillow, and gently kissed her cheek; then, again looking up, something remarkable in the stranger's mien and countenance—something mournful and tender, yet altogether more noble and beautiful than he had perhaps ever seen before upon the face of man, seemed to inspire favour and confidence in his innocent breast; for the little fellow smiled benignantly and trustfully, as, holding out his hand, he said softly:

"And you may kiss her too, if you like; but very gently: you must not wake her, she has been so ill, poor thing!"

At these words his listener started, dropped the little hand he had kindly taken, the crimson blood suffusing his brow. He cast one hurried glance on the object of their conversation, then with irresolute quietness turned away, and paced the room with hushed but rapid steps, as if to calm some sudden storm of troubled feeling, the boy's innocently spoken words had awakened in his breast.

When next he paused before the couch, the deep flush had passed away, leaving his countenance paler than before, though calmer and more composed; and smiling kindly upon the watchful child, as if to promise him that his injunctions should not be disregarded, he reverently stooped, and "very gently," as the boy had enjoined, touched with his lips the fair white hand which drooped by Mary's side; and when again he raised his head, the wondering child perceived a tear glistening in the tall, pale stranger's eye. And no wonder if the heart of Eustace Trevor swelled with peculiar emotion at that moment! The last time his lips had pressed the form of woman it had been in that kiss of agony, in "that last kiss which never was the last," which, in his strong despair and mighty anguish, he had imprinted on the cold, cold brow of his mother, ere they hid her from his sight for ever!—his then only beloved on earth, with whom all the light and hope of his existence would be quenched for ever!

And must he not now turn away from her he had learnt since to love, with a love such as he had thought never again to feel on earth?—from that being, fair, and gentle, and good as the object of his soul's first pure, faithful idolatry: she whose sleeping smile—cold, pale and tranquil almost as that which had greeted his arrival that night of never-to-be-forgotten misery—now welcomed the exile on his homeless, hearthless, desolate return!

Must he turn away, and never look on *her*—never look on Mary thus again? Was it the last time, as it had been the first, that he should ever dare to press that dear hand as now he had done? Nay, more—must he see it given to another?—would he be called upon to crown the measure of that generous mercy with which he had come, his heart overflowing—by withdrawing the restraining hand he had, for the few last years, held between his unnatural enemy, and that innocent object of his enemy's covetous affections? Was he to be called upon—yes, perhaps by Mary herself—to abstain from his threatened exposure of the past, and stand from between Eugene and herself?—now, in his hour of triumph, to be merciful, generous and forgiving in this also?

For why else did he see her here?—why, if the purport of her letter still held good, that she had bade adieu—cancelled for ever her engagement with her former lover? Why, then, was she here, in the very place where she had first fallen into this dangerous snare?

Ah, no!—he saw it all too plainly! Impelled by the impulse of a woman's mistaken, but generous devotion, her lover's fallen fortunes, whilst engaging her pity, had redeemed his offences in her eyes, and recalled her alienated affections; that she was here, like a ministering angel, to assure him of this—to console him, to sympathize; perhaps to ward off, by her intercession, the disgrace and ruin to which his injured brother's dreaded coming threatened to overwhelm the object of her solicitude.

But he had no time to dwell on these things. There had been something in his touch, light as it had been, which proved sufficient to break the charm of slumber. Mary slowly unclosed her eyes, and murmuring:

"Are you there, Charlie?" looked up and beheld her new companion. One uncertain bewildered gaze she fixed upon his face, then gliding to her feet cried: "Mr. Trevor, are you really come?" and burst into tears.

"Yes, Miss Seaham, I am come," was the reply, in a voice trembling with emotion; and taking the hands she had extended towards him, gently reseated her on the sofa, and sat down by her side, looking with earnest mournfulness in her face.

"Yes, I am come, and thank you for this feeling welcome, which is but too much required, for you may well imagine what a coming, one such as mine must be."

"Yes, yes," she murmured through her fast falling tears; "I know, I feel it must be a fearful trial; your father's dreadful death, the melancholy destruction of your home. But—but, Mr. Trevor, it is the hand of the Almighty—His great and terrible hand—we must look upon it as such; and," lifting up her streaming eyes, "hope for His loving-mercies to shine forth once again. There has been much of dark and terrible in the past, but let us pray that the future may atone. Yes, you have returned, and all may still be right."

"You think so," he replied gently, but still most mournfully; then averting his face, added in low and sterner accents of interrogation: "and my brother?"

"He has been ill," was Mary's low reply, "suffering, it is to be feared, as much from mental anxiety as from physical pain. Oh, Mr. Trevor, your coming to him indeed must prove a relief—a relief from the worst of sufferings—suspense."

"What has he to fear?" demanded Eustace Trevor.

"What? You will learn too soon the desperate nature of your brother's position, unless, indeed, he finds in you one more generous and forgiving than he has any right or reason to expect."

Mary spoke earnestly, but with firmness, almost severity; and as she uttered these last words

Eustace Trevor turned and anxiously regarded her.

"Eugene need have no fears on any pecuniary account," he again repeated; "he will find in me one who cannot set too low a value on that of which he strove so hard to deprive me. Surely you, Miss Seaham, could not have believed me capable of so poor and contemptible a spirit of revenge, as to entertain any doubt or fear as regards my conduct in that respect?"

"No, no," Mary replied, with trembling fervour; "I might have rested well assured as to what must be the high and holy character of *your* revenge. 'If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink;' and oh, Mr. Trevor, by so doing, coals of fire will indeed be heaped upon your unhappy brother's head. But, alas! can *he* suppose you capable of such magnanimity—he of so different a spirit to your own?"

There was a spirit in the mild eyes, a colour on the pale cheek turned towards him, as she thus expressed herself, which caused a corresponding glow to illumine the countenance of her listener, and with still greater earnestness he regarded her.

Mary turned away, bending her head over the boy, who had again drawn caressingly to her side, whilst in low, faltering accents she replied to his inquiries, whether she had come to Silverton since the fire?

"No, the afternoon before it had occurred."

"Had she seen his brother?"

"She had, contrary to her cousin Olivia's promise, that so painful and useless an ordeal should be spared her. She had found him at Silverton on her arrival. It had been an interview most distressing and repugnant to her feelings at the time, though the startling and terrible events, which so closely succeeded, had in a great degree diverted her mind from any selfish consideration. She had since then been very ill. Her illness had detained her at Silverton, but this I shall not regret," she added. "I shall now depart with the happy consciousness, which I have not experienced for the last few years, that all is right which has been for long so very wrong, my mind relieved of its harassing weight of doubt, darkness and perplexity."

"Yes, your sense of disinterested justice may be satisfied; but your heart, will it remain equally so? The cause which you have so generously espoused, established; will not other feelings re-assert their power, and my brother again triumph in the possession of that which, to call my own, I would gladly have cast at his feet the richest inheritance on earth?"

These words were uttered with almost breathless agitation.

"No," was the reply in a voice so low and trembling that the anxious listener had to hold his breath to catch its accents; "such feelings have long been destroyed, and can never re-assert their influence. Even pity is done away save for the wounded conscience, which he who once I loved must carry with him through life; yes, pity even is now scarcely to be excited; and love—can love survive esteem?"

With a jealous, yearning glance Eustace Trevor watched the tears again falling from the agitated speaker's eyes, kissed away by the sympathising child; and then he rose and began again to pace the room as if to stem some fresh torrent of inward emotion which stirred within his breast. But at this juncture the door opened abruptly, and in another moment Eustace Trevor's hand was clasped in Louis de Burgh's, who, followed by Arthur Seaham, entered the room; and Mary, leaning on her brother's arm, left the re-united friends together.

CHAPTER XXI.

Flesh and blood,
You brother mine, that entertained ambition,
Expelled remorse and nature,

* * * * *

I do forgive thee,
Unnatural as thou art—
Forgive thy rankest fault.

TEMPEST.

Arthur Seaham stood at the hall door two days after, looking out for the carriage which was to convey himself and sister from Silverton, some delay having been occasioned by the non-arrival of the post-horses.

Suddenly a single horse's hoof was heard approaching, and he had but just time to retreat out of observation, when Eugene Trevor rode up to the door.

Arthur Seaham could not but feel shocked at his altered appearance—his haggard countenance,

and the strong marks of mental suffering it exhibited. His very form seemed bowed down by the sudden weight of care and anxiety which had fallen upon him; and when, having dismounted, and rang the bell, he stood there, whilst waiting for the servant to attend the summons, unconscious of human regard, holding his horse's rein;—there was something touching to the young man's kindly heart, in the manner in which Eugene Trevor stroked the glossy mane of the noble animal as it rubbed its head against his master's shoulder, looking up affectionately into his face.

The action seemed as expressively as words to say:

"Poor fellow! it must go hard indeed with me before I can make up my mind to part with you; in your eye, at least, is none of the suspicion and distrust I plainly perceive in every other." And softened by this touch of nature, and remembering the attachment to his sister—sincere he believed at the time, which like a fair flower amongst noxious plants had shewn his nature to be so capable of better things—a feeling of regret was excited in Arthur Seaham's mind that that "root of all evil," the promoter of "every foolish and hurtful lust—the love of money," should ever have struck its baneful fibres in this man's heart.

Eugene Trevor had demanded a personal interview with his brother previous to his departure for London, through the lawyer who for many years had been the legal adviser of the family, and whom he still retained on his own account. Eustace Trevor had deemed it expedient to call in another man of business for himself. This person was now at Silverton, with some of the necessary documents connected with the property now devolving upon him; and Mr. de Burgh proposed the meeting of the brothers should take place there.

It was with perfect unconsciousness of what awaited her, that Mary Seaham entered the library some few minutes after, in order to bid adieu to her cousins, who, she had been told, were awaiting her there.

She had closed the door behind her before perceiving her mistake, and stood rooted to the spot with feelings the nature of which may be better imagined than described, at finding herself at this critical moment in the presence of the brothers—those two beings with whom her fate had been so strangely, so intricately involved.

Yes, there stood the one, with look and bearing almost like that said to have distinguished man before the Fall:

"Erect and tall—Godlike erect, with native honour clad,
Within whose looks divine the image of the glorious Maker shone,
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude, severe and pure.

His fair large front and eye sublime"—

Irradiated with that attribute of God himself—a free and full forgiveness of an enemy.

And the other—with whom might his aspect at that moment suggest comparison? Alas! we fear but to

"That least erected spirit that fell
From Heaven; whose looks and thoughts even in Heaven
Were always downwards bent, admiring more
The riches of Heaven's pavement trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy there."

For as there he sat, even as he had done when suddenly confronted that night with his offended, injured brother, in the room of the London hotel, with bent brow and lowering eye, half defiance and half fear; so now still more he seemed to shrink into abject nothingness before him, abashed and confounded by the majestic power of goodness—the awful loveliness of a virtuous and noble revenge. For a few grave, calm, but gentle words from Eustace Trevor's lips had already set his anxious fears at rest—had assured him that the well-merited ruin with which the overthrow, so sudden and unlooked-for, of his unrighteous hopes and machinations had threatened to overwhelm him, would be averted.

And there stood Mary, pale and motionless. Whilst from one to another wandered her distressed and startled glance, she yet saw and marked the contrast; saw—and mourned in spirit that thus too late her eyes were opened; that thus, for the first time, had been presented, side by side to her enlightened perception, the brother whom in her deceived imagination she had so blindly chosen—the one she had so ignorantly refused.

Yes, too late—for could she dare now to lift her eyes to own the full, but tardy abnegation of every thought and feeling of her heart, as well as understanding, to the noble being it had lost?

Oh, no! for those two last days that they had passed under the same roof together—in the same manner, as she had seemed to shrink, with timid, lowly, self-abasement from the brother of her discarded lover, had Eustace Trevor appeared almost equally to avoid any close communion with that brother's alienated love. It was, therefore, influenced by these considerations, that after her first astounded pause, feeling that it was now impossible to retreat, and scarcely knowing what

she did, Mary approached the table over which Eugene Trevor had been leaning on her entrance, but now had risen—holding out her hand, as her kindly heart perhaps, under any circumstances, would have instinctively dictated towards any being suffering under like vicissitude; but something in the grasp which closed over it—a detaining grasp, such as that with which the miser may be supposed to clasp some treasure on the point of making itself wings to fly away, seemed to distress and perplex her.

She turned with downcast eyes towards Eustace Trevor. His face, as she had approached his brother, had been averted with an expression in which, perhaps, was more of human weakness than it had before exhibited; but now he turned again and gratefully received the other she extended, in sign of parting, then as gently released it; and standing thus between the brothers, all the noble self-forgetfulness of Mary's nature seemed to revive within her. She felt that through her means the gulph had further widened which kept them apart—that she had been the shadow between their hearts, as now she stood in person—it was over now for ever. She was to go from between them—from him towards whom her heart had too late inclined, and from him from whom it had declined. Let her last act be at least one more blest in its effects, than had been hitherto her destiny to produce concerning them.

With a smile, faint, sad, and tearful, such as might have seemed almost to plead forgiveness from the one whom she ceased, and the one whom she had learnt too late, to love, she again extended her hands, and with a gentle movement joined those of the brothers together; then hurried from the room.

A few moments more, and Mr. de Burgh who was on his way to seek her had conducted her to the carriage, and Arthur springing in by her side; once more Mary Seaham was driven far away from Silverton.

And the brothers—taken by surprise by Mary's abrupt departure, the eyes of both had followed her from the room with an expression in which emotion of no common kind was visible; then turned silently from one another, only too anxious to be released from a situation, of which they could not but mutually feel the increased delicacy and embarrassment; the lawyers were summoned to their presence; and if a few minutes before Eugene Trevor had pursued with wistful glance the retreating form of Mary, the still more anxious brow and eager eye with which he might have been seen soon after entering with those gentlemen into the discussion of the settlement of his intricate affairs, plainly testified that for him at least there was, as there had ever been closer affections twined about his heart—deeper interests at stake than any that were connected with that pale sad girl, who for so long had hovered like a redeeming angel round his path, but who now turned away her light from him *for ever*.

Not so Eustace Trevor, as absent and inattentive he sat abstractedly by, or paced with anxious steps the boundary of the library, joining only when directly appealed to, or addressed, in the matters under discussion. It was plainly apparent how light and trifling the weight he attached to the heavy demand made under his sanction upon his generous liberality.

Only once he paused, and with more fixed attention looked upon his brother with an expression in which something of noble contempt seemed to curl his lip and to flash forth from his eye.

Perhaps the part he saw him play on this occasion recalled to his remembrance another scene of similar, yet contrary character, when he had found that brother seated in the library of Montrevor, with as much anxious avidity superintending arrangements of no such disinterested nature as those of which he now so graspingly availed himself.

But it was for a moment that any such invidious reminiscences retained their place within that generous soul. Soon had they vanished, as they came—the fire from his eye, the curl from his lip. And again Eustace Trevor paced the room—and thought on Mary.

A few months more, and Eugene Trevor, having settled his affairs to his entire satisfaction—thanks to the most generous and forgiving of brothers—had left England for the continent; and that same space of time found Eustace Trevor established in the neighbourhood of Montrevor, surrounded by admiring, and congratulating friends; superintending the improvement of his property, and making arrangements for the erection of a new mansion on the site of the one destroyed, but chiefly employed in acts of charity and beneficence towards the hitherto neglected poor and necessitous surrounding him, causing many a heart to sing for joy, who for many a long year had prayed and sued in vain at the wealthy miser's door.

CHAPTER XXII.

Alas! the maiden sighed since first
I said: 'Oh, fountain, read my doom.'
What vainest fancies have I nursed,
Of which I am myself the tomb!

L. E. L.

It was a beautiful evening of that next summer year, and a large family-party was assembled at Glan Pennant, now again inhabited by its rightful owner, Arthur Seaham: the handsome dowry of his lovely bride, Carrie Elliott, joined to the emolument derived from the rapid and promising rise in his profession, having enabled him to take possession of his much loved home on his marriage, about a twelve month since.

Not only were Alice Gillespie and her family the guests of the young couple; but Lady Everingham, their eldest sister, who had returned from India, and the beautiful Selina, whose husband was shortly to follow, was staying with their children at Plas-Glyn, with the Morgans; and no evening passed without, as may be supposed, some reunion of this sort taking place at one or the other of the neighbouring residences. But there was one still wanting, on this present occasion, without whom such gatherings could not be complete—one, regarded with a kind of peculiar love by each there present, though by none, perhaps, with such especial tenderness as by the young master and mistress of Glan Pennant; and ever and anon the question as to when Mary would return, and what could have kept her out so late, was heard repeated: the children of the party going back to Plas-Glyn, sorrowful at not having been able to wish that dear Aunt Mary good night.

Some one, at length, remarked that Mr. Wynne had not been seen for the last day or two. Arthur Seaham observed, in reply, that he had been expecting a visitor, with whom he had been probably occupied; and he and Carrie exchanged looks of some significance.

Mary was not a partner in their secret understanding. Calmly, as was her wont, she had been returning homeward, with the happy consciousness that her presence that day had lighted up many a face with sunshine—bound up by its consolation, many a wounded heart—that she could lay her head on her pillow that night, and feel that she had to-day lived to God, and to her fellow-creatures.

And truly many a tongue blessed, and many an eye turned with love and respect, as they looked upon that sweet pale face, returning slowly from her wanderings amongst them. Mary knew she was expected home to tea, but having turned a wistful eye towards her favourite hill, now all red and glowing in the early sunset, finally began the ascent; and once more we see her seated on that cool, quiet spot, her eye fixed on the same fair scene she had viewed with such fond, but hopeful regret, on the evening of her last departure from her mountain-home. And, oh! it was on such occasions, when hours of languid ease returned like this she now enjoyed, that Mary felt the urgent necessity of bracing up her mind and nerves by a course of healthy action, by carrying out into practice the lesson which the great trial of her early youth had taught her—"Patience, abnegation of self, and devotion to others." For then would she feel stealing over her senses the spirit of those days, when she had walked the earth overshadowed by a dream. Yes, the spirit of her dream had changed since last we followed Mary Seaham to this charmed spot!—the shadows of hopes at that time vaguely cherished in her breast, soon, to her sorrow, so wonderfully realized, had passed away for ever, as their idol object had been torn from its shrine.

And now this purer, nobler image, reared upon the crumbled image of the former, engendered by no ideal dreams—no morbid fantasy, but which, by the force of its own glorious strength and beauty, had won its victory over her soul—must this be also doomed to perish—to fade away into a haunting shadow of the past?

Yes, Eustace Trevor must be to her as one dead—not absent!—the dream be dissipated, for the hope was vain on which it was founded: vain—and incompatible with the pure, calm hope it was now the desire of her heart to aspire.

Not very long, therefore, did Mary allow herself to indulge in the beguiling luxury of her solitary repose; but remembering that there were loving hearts at home awaiting her return, she aroused herself from the spirit of reverie which was stealing over her, and waiting but to pluck some few sprigs of the first white heath of the season, with one last, lingering look on the fading beauties of the landscape, she rose and turned to depart; but as if arrested by fear or a feeling of wonder,

"Still she stood with her lips apart,
And forgotten, the flowerets dropped from her fingers,
Whilst to her eyes and her cheeks, came the light and
The bloom of the morning."

For it was no dream—no deluding vision of her imagination out of which she was called to awake—a shadow indeed was upon her path, but it was the form of Eustace Trevor, which in its noble reality stood before her!

The conversation which ensued was not so lengthened as that which had taken place between Edward Temple and Mary Seaham, on that same spot some six years ago; but need we say that its issue was of a very different character, and that this time Eustace did not descend the hill alone.

Mr. Wynne was waiting at the gate of Glan Pennant, when at length the stately figure of his friend, and leaning on his arm the fair and fragile form of Mary,

"The dew on the plaid, and the tear in her e'e,"

appeared in sight.

Hastening to meet them, he wrung the hand of Mary with emotion, but bade her go in fast and make the tea which had been waiting for her ever so long—the water getting cold whilst she was after her old tricks, dreaming on the hills; and Mary, with a grateful smile, having returned the fervent pressure of her good old friend, in broken accents, promised that she would dream no more.

She was not indeed free from a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Wynne, for it was he who, it may be said, had formed the cementing link between the fates of Mary Seaham and Eustace Trevor.

Not that any such was wanting to maintain the strongly rooted attachment of Eustace towards Mary. It was one which must ever have exerted a sensible and indelible influence over his future life, as it had done over the few last years of his past existence. But there were scruples in his mind, the result perhaps of that extreme susceptibility conspicuous in his character, on every point of delicacy or honour, which restrained him from yielding himself to the delightful hope of obtaining the beloved of his brother for his wife; and it was these morbid scruples, as he deemed them, that Mr. Wynne had made every effort to overcome, and that not so much by direct argument, as by bringing before his friend's imagination the lovely picture of Mary's present existence, finally declaring that, through the daily increasing heavenliness of her life and conversation, she was growing so much too good for this world, that they should not be allowed to retain her long amongst them, did not some earthly tie of a very binding nature give her some motive for interest here below; and there was one alone he felt convinced could have that power—for that some secret grief, some sorrow unspoken, unsuspected—some strongly crushed affection, lay at the bottom of Mary Seaham's outwardly calm and patient demeanour, and this in no way connected with the old delusion of her youth, her old friend felt but too well assured.

So on this hint it was that Eustace Trevor came—came with a heart all yearning, tremulous tenderness and solicitude—and once more on the Welsh hill-side, laid the hope and happiness of his future life at the feet of Mary Seaham.

And the world—that part of it at least which had known of the engagement subsisting between Mary and Eugene Trevor—might remark on the singular and interesting circumstance of her union with the elder brother; but as the general understanding had been, that through Eugene's own fault his engagement had been dissolved, and his change of position considerably altering that same charitable world's estimation of the younger brother's character, there were few inclined to make any invidious comment on the new arrangement, nor deem it anything but one—most wise, fortunate, and just.

There was, however, amongst Mary's friends, one who seemed inclined at first to frown on the affair—Mrs. de Burgh was loth to the last to let fall the weapons of defence she had always wielded in behalf of her old favourite, and maintained, that if there was a law against a marriage with two brothers, she considered consecutive attachment to each equally to be repudiated. But as she could not well carry out the argument which her husband so triumphantly derided, she in the end let the subject drop; and finally, with as much kindly warmth as she had bestowed upon the beloved of Eugene, received beneath her roof the bride of Eustace Trevor.

As we are upon the subject, we might as well regretfully state, that Silverton has never yet become quite the perfect seat of conjugal felicity we would fain have left it, but that petty bickerings and debates still occasionally desecrate its inner walls.

Still we hope that, though there are no very conspicuous symptoms of reform, the evil is somewhat on the decrease; that the fair Olivia, as she grows older, steadies down in a degree her high-wrought expectations and ideas; and her husband, in proportion, softens away his asperity and selfish disregard, allowing his natural amiability of disposition to have its own way towards his wife, as well as to the rest of the world. Whilst, at the same time, was there not a mansion in the neighbourhood where a perfect pattern of unity and godly love was exhibited, such as put to shame every spirit of domestic strife which approached it?

In fact, the prosperity of the de Burghs continues so unabated, so little else do they find in life to ruffle the even tenor of their lot, that if they do still indulge in a few domestic quarrels, it would seem to be, that, preserved from every other exciting cause of trouble and annoyance, it must be on the principle adopted by two little sisters of our acquaintance, who, on being reproved for their continual squabbles with one another, begged that they might not be deprived of this privilege, saying that it would take from them their greatest amusement; in short, be so very dull, if they were not allowed to quarrel.

The Eustace Trevors first went abroad: there they revisited those scenes they had last viewed together under such different auspices, but which had been the period from which Mary dated the current of her fate to have been turned—a purer, nobler image to have risen on the ruins of the old; and Eustace Trevor—blessed beyond conception, finds himself in the enjoyment of that most ambitioned privilege, the guide and guardian of his Mary, beneath skies which seemed to

grow still "fairer for her sake."

In about a year's time, they returned to England, where the new mansion awaited their reception. The mansion had been rebuilt much on the same plan as the other, only the position and arrangement of the library was entirely altered. One room, as far as it were possible, had been remodelled by Eustace after the fashion of the original—that one in which at once his happiest and his most agonizing hours in that old home might be said to have been spent.

Mary did not tell her husband, as they sat together in the sunny window of that apartment, the very afternoon of their arrival, what associations were in her mind connected with that place.

Eustace Trevor had had no personal communication with his brother since they parted at Silverton. It is easier for the offended to forgive than the offender to be forgiven, and no true reconciliation could ever heal the wounds, which his injured brother's generous conduct had impressed on Eugene's galled conscience. Besides, what sympathy could exist between two natures so different? what intercourse be established between two individuals whose course of conduct and habits of life were so widely apart?

What were Eugene Trevor's feelings when he heard of Mary Seaham's marriage with his brother, we cannot exactly define; but that it placed only a more decisive barrier between their personal intercourse, may be imagined. He lived on his handsome younger brother's income of two thousand a-year, in London; his brother having paid all his debts, and thus added to his legitimate claim of ten thousand pounds to which alone he was entitled.

The brothers met occasionally in London; but Eugene never accepted any invitation to visit Montrevor, nor was he scarcely heard of amongst his former country friends. Even Silverton was deserted by him.

Some say that the avaricious parsimony of his father is growing rapidly upon him, and this and many other similarities of character and conduct which year after year develop themselves, may well cause Mary gratefully to rejoice that she was suffered before too late to redeem the error of *her first mistaken choice*.

THE END.

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MARY SEAHAM: A NOVEL. VOLUME 3 OF 3

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