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From The Literary Workman.

JENIFER'S PRAYER.

BY OLIVER CRANE.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.

He and she stood in a room in an inn in the town of Hull--and how she wept! Crying as a child cries, with a woman's feelings joining exquisite pain to those tears; which tears, in a way wonderful and peculiar to beautiful women, scarcely disordered her face, or gave anything worse to her countenance than an indescribably pathetic tenderness.

He was older than she was by full ten years. He only watched her. And if the most acute of my readers had watched *him*, they would have been no wiser for their scrutiny.

At last she left the room; he had opened the door and offered his hand to her. It was night; and she changed her chamber-candle from her right hand to her left, and gave that right hand to him. He held it, while he said: "I spoke because I dread the influence of the house we are going to, and of those whom you will meet there."

"Thank you. Good night" And so she got to a great dark bed-room, and knelt down, like a good girl as she was, and cried no more, but was in bed and asleep before he had left the place he had taken by the side of the sitting-room fire, leaning thoughtfully against the mantel-shelf, when her absence had made the room lonely.

Then he ran down stairs and rushed out into the streets of the kingly Hull--Kingston of the day of Edward I. The man we speak of was no antiquary, and he troubled himself neither with the Kingston of the royal Edward nor the *Vaccaria* of the abbot from whom the place was bought; he walked at a quick pace through streets dim and streets lighted, toward the ships, or among the houses; to where he could see the great headland of Holderness, or behold nothing at all but the brick wall that prevented his going further, and told him by strong facts that he had lost his way. So he wandered, walking fast often--again, walking slowly; his head bowed down, his features working, and his eyes flashing--clenched hands, or hands clasped on his breast, as if to keep down the surging waves of memory, which carried on their crests many things which now he could only gnash his teeth at in withering vexation.

He and she had come from Scotland. I have said that she was beautiful--she was English, too; but he was Scotch born and bred, and not dark and stem, or really wild or poetic, as a Scotchman in a story ought to be. He was simply a strong, well-formed man, of dark, ruddy complexion, and fine, thick, waving brown hair. He might have been a nobleman, or a royal descendant of Hull's own king. He looked it all, without being downright handsome. But he was, in fact, only one of the many men who have come into a thousand a year too soon for the preservation of prudence. Between sixteen, when he succeeded to it, and twenty-one, when he could spend it, he had committed many follies, and found friends who turned out worse than declared enemies--since twenty-one he had fallen in love more than once. He

had been praised, blamed, accused, acquitted. But whether or not this man was good or bad, no living soul could tell. He was well off, well looking, well read, and in good company. He re-entered the inn at Hull that April night, stood by the fire smoking, asked for a cup of strong coffee, went to bed.

The next morning the two met at breakfast. They were going south. No matter where. Whether to the dreamy vales of Devonshire, to verdant Somersetshire, or the gardens of Hampshire--no matter. They were going to what the north Britons call the south. And it did not mean Algeria. Railways were not everywhere then as railways are now. They had to travel nearly all day, then to "coach it" to a great town, in whose history coaches have now long been of the past. Then to get on a second day by the old "fast four-horse," and to arrive about five o'clock at a little quiet country town, where a carriage would take them to the friends and the house whose influence he dreaded.

In fact, that night, in the inn sitting-room, he had offered marriage to the girl whom he had in charge for safe guardianship on so long a journey to her far-off home where he was to be a guest. She had felt that he had abused his trust and taken an unfair advantage of her; also, she was in that peculiarly feminine state of mind which is neither expressed by *no* nor by *yes*. She had upbraided him. He, pleading guilty in his soul, was in a horror at the thought of losing her; losing her in that way too, because he had done wrong. Being miserable, he had shown his misery as a strong man may. He spoke, and self-reproachfully; but, as he pleaded, he betrayed all he felt. The girl saw his clasped hands, his bent form, as he leaned down from the chair on which he sat in the straggling attitude which expressed a disordered mind. He spoke, looking at the carpet, not loud nor long, but with a terrible earnestness that frightened the girl, and then she cried all the more, and seemed to shrink away as if in alarm, and yet almost angrily. Why would he speak so fiercely--why had he taken this advantage of her?

Then he had risen up quickly, and said, "Well, you know all now. We will talk of something else." But she only shook her head and moved away, and, as we have seen, went to bed.

The next morning they met calmly enough. On his side it was done with an effort; on hers without effort, yet with a little trembling fear, which went when she saw his calm, and she poured out tea, and he drank it, and only a rather extraordinary silence told of too much having been said the night before.

Now, why was all this? Why were this man and this young English girl travelling thus to the sweet south coast, and to expecting friends?

While they are travelling on their way, we, you and I, dear reader, will not only get on before them, but also turn back the pages of life's story, and read its secrets.

They were going to a great house in a fine park, where fern waved its tall, mounted feathers of green, and hid the dappled deer from sight-- where great ancestral oaks spread protecting branches; where hawthorn trees, that it had taken three generations of men to make, stood, large, thick, knotted, twisted--strange, dark, stunted looking trees they looked, till spring came, and no green was like their green, and the glory of their flower-wreaths people made pilgrimages to see. The place was called Beremouth.

A mile and a half off was a town; one of those odd little old places which tell of days and fashions past away. A very respectable place. There had lived in Marston the dowager ladies of old country families, in houses which had no pretensions to grandeur as you passed them in the extremely quiet street, but which on the other side broke out into bay windows, garden fronts, charming conservatories, and a good many other things which help to make life pleasant. So the inhabitants of Marston were not all mere country-town's people. They knew themselves to be *somebodies* and they never forgot it.

Now, in this town dwelt a certain widow lady; poor she was, but she had a pedigree and two beautiful daughters. Mary and Lucia Morier were not two commonly, or even uncommonly, pretty girls; they were wonderfully beautiful, people said, and nothing less. So lovers came a courting. One married a Scotchman, a Mr. Erskine. They liked each other quite well enough, Lucia thought, when she made her promises, and received his; and so they did. They lived happily; did good; wished for children but never had any, and so adopted Mr. Erskine's orphan nephew--namely, the very man who behaved with such strange imprudence in the inn at Hull. Mr. Erskine the uncle was twenty years older than Mrs. Erskine the aunt. Mr. Erskine the younger was but a child when they adopted him. But he was their heir, as well as the inheritor of his father's fortune, and they loved and cared for him.

Mary Morier did differently. She married at twenty, her younger sister having married the month before at eighteen. Mary did differently, for she did imprudently. They had had a brother who was an agent for certain mines thirty miles off; and there he lived; but he came home often enough, and made the house in the old town gay. A year before the sister married, in fact while that sister was away on a visit to friends in Scotland, the brother came home ill. He was ill for six months. It is wonderful how much expense is incurred by a mother in six months for a son who is sick. It made life very difficult. The money to pay for Lucia's journey home had to be thought of. To be sure, she was not there to eat and drink, but then her extra finery had cost something. George had only earned one hundred a year. It had not been more than enough to keep him. He came home ill with ten pounds in his pocket, beside his half-year's rent, which would be due the next month--certainly money at this time was wanted, for our friends were sadly pinched. But the one most exemplary friend and servant Jenifer was paid her wages, and tea and sugar money to the day; and the doctor got so many guineas that he grew desperate and suddenly refused to come--then repented, and made a Christian-like bargain, that he would go on coming on condition that he never saw another piece of any kind of money.

Mary and her mother looked each other in the face one day, and that look told all. There was some plate, and they had watches, and a little fine old-fashioned jewelry--yes, they must go. They were reduced to poverty at last--this was more than "limited means"--hard penury had them with a desperate grasp.

Fortune comes in many shapes, and not often openly, and with a flourish of trumpets--neither did she come in that way now; but shamefacedly, sneakingly, and ringing the door-bell with a meek, not to say tremulous pull; and her shape was

that of a broad-built, short, wide-jawed, lanky-haired, pig-eyed, elderly man, with a curious quantity of waistcoat showing, yet, generally, well dressed. "Your mistress at home?" "Yes, Mr. Brewer." "Mr. George better?" "No. Never will be, sir." "Bless me! I beg your pardon!" "Granted before 'tis asked, sir." "Ah! yes; I have a little business to transact with your mistress. Can I see her alone?" Mr. Brewer was shown by Jenifer into the little right-hand parlor. He gravely took out a huge pocket-book, and then a small parchment-covered account-book appeared. I believe he had persuaded himself that he was really going to transact business, and not to perform the neatest piece of deception that a respectable gentleman ever attempted. A lady entered the room. "Madam, your son has been my agent for mines three years--my mine **and land** agent since Christmas. He takes the additional work at seventy-five pounds a year extra. The half of that is now due to him. I pay **that** myself. I have brought it" And thirty-seven pounds ten shillings Mr. Brewer put on the table, saying, "I will take your receipt, madam. Don't trouble Georges's head about business; for when you **do** speak of that you will have, I am sorry to say, to inform him that in **both** his places I have had to put another man. I have to give George three months' payment at the rate of one hundred and seventy pounds a year, as I gave him no quarter's warning. That is business, do you understand?" asked Mr. Brewer. "It is for my son to discharge himself, sir--since he cannot"--the mother's voice faltered. "Ah--only he didn't, and I did," said Mr. Brewer. "Your receipt? When your son recovers, let him apply to me. I am sorry to end our connexion so abruptly. But it is business. Business, you know"--and there Mr. Brewer stopped, for Mary Morier was in the room, and her beauty filled it, or seemed to do so. And Mr. Brewer departed muttering, as he had muttered before often, "the most beautiful girl in the world." Still, he had an uncomfortable sensation, for he felt he was an underhand sneak, and that Mary had found him out; and so she had. She knew that her brother had been "discharged" only to afford a pretext for giving the quarter's money; and she was sure that his being land agent, at an additional seventy-five pounds a year, was a pure unadulterated fiction.

Mr. Brewer was an extraordinary man. He had a turn for the supernatural. He would have liked above all things to have worked miracles. He did do odd things, such as we have seen, which he made, by means of the poetic quality that characterized him, a purely natural act. He was praising George for a saving, prudent, industrious young man, who had never drawn the whole of his last year's salary, before an hour was over. And his story looked so like truth that he believed it himself.

Mr. Brewer was what people call "a risen man." But then his father had been rising--and, for the matter of that, his grandfather too. All their fortunes had flowed into the life of the man who has got into this story; and he, having had a tide of prosperity exceeding all others, in height, and strength, and riches, had found himself stranded on the great shore of society, at forty years of age, with more thousands a year than he liked to be generally known. Could he have transformed himself into a benignant fairy he would have been very happy, and acts of mercy would have abounded on the earth. But no--Mr. Brewer was Mr. Brewer, and anything less poetic to look at--more impossible as to wands, and wings, and good fairy appendages, it is difficult to imagine. Mr. Brewer was a middle-aged man, with hands in his pockets; plain truth is always respectable. There it is.

But there was a Mrs. Brewer. Now Mrs. Brewer was an excellent woman, but not excellent after the manner of her husband. She was three years older. They had not been in love. They had married at an epoch in Mr. Brewer's life when public affairs occupied his time so entirely as to make it desirable to have what people call a "missus;" we are afraid that Mr. Brewer himself so called the article, a "missus, at home." Mrs. Brewer had been "a widow lady--young--of a sociable and domestic disposition" who "desired to be housekeeper--to be treated confidentially, and as one of the family--to a widower--with or without children." On inquiry, it was found that young Mrs. Smith had not irrevocably determined that the owner of the house that she was to keep should have been the husband of one wife, undoubtedly dead; the widower was an expression only, a sort of modest way of putting the plain fact of a single man, or a man capable of matrimony--the expression meant all that; and when Mrs. Smith entered on the housekeeping, she acted up to the meaning of the advertisement, and married Mr. Brewer. Neither had ever repented. Let that be understood. Only, Mr. Brewer, when he knew he could live in a great house, dine off silver, keep a four-in-hand, or a pack of hounds, or enter on any other legitimate mode of spending money, did none of them; but eased his mind and his pocket by such contrivances as we have seen resorted to in the presence of the beautiful Mary Morier. He tried curious experiments of what a man would do with ten pounds. He had dangerous notions as to people addicted to certain villainies being cured of their moral diseases by the administration of a hundred a year. In some round-about ways he had put the idea to the proof, and not always with satisfactory results. He held as an article of faith--nobody could guess where he found it--that there were people in the world who could go straighter in prosperity than in adversity. He never would believe that adversity was a thing to be suffered. He had replied to a Protestant divine on that subject, illustrated in the case of a starving family, that that might be, only it was no concern of his, and he would not act upon the theory. And the result was a thriving, thankful family in Australia, to whom Mr. Brewer was always, ever after, sending valuable commodities, and receiving flower-seeds and skins of gaudy feathered birds in return.

Mr. Brewer had a daughter, Claudia was her name. "A Bible name," said Mr. Brewer, and bowed his head, and felt he had done his duty by the girl. What more could he do? She went to school, and was at school when he was paying money in Mrs. Morier's parlor. She was then ten years old; and being a clever child, she had, in the holidays just over, chosen to talk French, and nothing else, to a friend whom she had been allowed to bring with her. A thing that had caused great perturbation in the soul of her honest father, who prayed in a wordless, but real anxiety, that the Bible name might not be thrown away on the glib-tongued little gipsy. It will be perceived that Claudia was a difficulty.

Now, when Mr. Brewer was gone out of Mrs. Morier's house, the mother took up the money, wiped her eyes, and said, "What a good boy George was." And Mary said "**Yes**;" and knew in her heart that if there had been any chance of George living, Mr. Brewer would never have done **that**.

George died. There was money, just enough for all wants. Lucia came home engaged to the married to Mr. Erskine. And when she was gone there went with her a certain seven hundred pounds, her fortune, settled--what a silly mockery Mr. Erskine thought it--on her children. The loss made the two who were left very poor. Lucia sent her mother gifts, but the regular and to be reckoned on eight-and-twenty pounds a year were gone. She who had eaten, drank, and dressed was gone too--but still it was a loss; and Mary and her mother were poor. Also, Mary had long been engaged to be married to the son of a younger branch of a great county family house, Lansdowne Lorimer by name. He was in an attorney's

office in Marston. In that old-world place, the attorney, himself of a county family, was a great man. It was hard to see Lucia marry a man of money and land, young Lorimer thought, so he advised Mary to assert their independence of all earthly considerations, and marry too. And they did so.

The young man had no father or mother. He had angry uncles and insolent aunts, and family friends, all to be respected, and prophets of evil, every one of them. He had, also, a place in the office, a clear head, a determined will, a handsome person, a good pedigree, and a beautiful wife. She, also, had her eight-and-twenty pounds a year. But they gave it back regularly to Mrs. Morier; for, you know, they, the young people, **were** young, and they could work. Mrs. Morier never spent this money. She and Jenifer, the prime minister of that court of loyal love, put it by, against the evil day, and they had just enough for themselves and the cat to live upon without it.

The county families asked their imprudent kinsman to visit them with his bride. How they flouted her. How they advised her. How they congratulated her that she had always been poor. How they assured her that she would be poor for ever. How, too, they feared that Lansdowne would never bear hard work, nor anxiety, nor any other of those troubles which were so very sure to happen. How surprised they were at the three pretty silk dresses, the one plain white muslin, and the smart best white net. How they scorned when they heard that she and Jenifer, and her mother, and a girl at eightpence a day, had made them all. And, then, how they sunned themselves in her wonderful beauty, and accepted the world's praises of it, and kept the triumph themselves, and handed over to her the gravest warnings of its being a dangerous gift.

Dangerous, indeed! it was the pride of Lorimer's life. And Mary was accomplished, far more really accomplished than the lazy, half-taught creatures who had never said to themselves that they might have to play and sing, and speak French and Italian, for their or their children's bread. Mary had said it to herself many a time since her heart had been given to the man who was her husband. A true, brave, loving heart it was, and that which her common sense had whispered to it that heart was strong to do, and would be found doing if the day of necessity ever came. So, at that Castle Dangerous where the bride and bridegroom were staying, Mary outshone others, and was not the better loved for that; and one old Lady Caroline crowned the triumph by ordering a piano-forte for the new home at Marston, with a savage "Keep up what you know, child; you may be glad of it one day." Old Lady Caroline was generally considered as a high-bred privileged savage. But that was the only savage thing she ever said to Mary. She told Lorimer that he was a selfish, unprincipled brute for marrying anybody so perfect and so pretty. And Lorimer bore her misrepresentations with remarkable patience, only making her a ceremonious bow, and saying in a low voice, "You know better." "I know you will starve," and she walked off without an answer.

They did not starve. In fact, they prospered, till one sad day when Lorimer caught cold--and again and again caught cold--cough, pain, symptoms of consumption--a short, sad story; and then the great end, death. Mary was a widow three years after her wedding day, with a child of two years of age at her side, and an income from a life insurance made by her husband of one hundred a year. We have seen the child--grown to a beautiful girl of seventeen--we have seen her in the room with Mr. Erskine, at the inn at Hull.

Mrs. Lorimer went back to live with her mother, Jenifer, and the great white cat.

The year after this great change, Mrs. Brewer died, and Claudia at thirteen was a greater difficulty than ever. The first holidays after the departure of the good mother, the puzzled father had written to the two Miss Gainsboroughs to bring the child to Marston and stay at his house during the holidays. He entertained them for a week, and then went off on a tour through Holland. The next holidays he proposed that they should take a house at Brighton, and that he should pay all expenses. This, too, was done, and Mr. Brewer went to a hotel and there made friends with his precocious daughter in a way that surprised and pleased him. He visited the young lady, and she entertained him. He hired horses, and they rode together. He took boxes at the theatre, and they made parties and went together. He gave the girl jewelry and fine clothes, and they really got to know each other, and to enjoy life together as could never have been the case had they not been thus left to their own way. The child no longer felt herself of a different world from that of her parents--the father had a companion in the child who could grace his position, and keep her own. They parted with love and anxious lookings forward to the summer meeting. They were both in possession of a new happiness. When Mr. Brewer got back to Marston, he led a dull, dreamy life--a year and a half of widowhood passed--then he went to Mrs. Morier's, saw Mary, and asked her to be his wife. It is not easy to declare why Mary Lorimer said--after some weeks of wondering-mindedness--why she said "Yes." She knew all Mr. Brewer's goodness. She preferred, no doubt, not to wound a heart that had so often sympathized with the wounded. She never, in her life, could have borne to see him vexed without great vexation herself. She liked that he should be rewarded. She was interested in Claudia. She liked the thought of two hundred a year settled on her mother. She liked to feel that her own little Mary might be brought up as grandly as any of those little saucy "county family" damsels, her cousins, who already looked down on her, and scorned her pink spotted calico frock.

Mary and Mr. Brewer walked quietly to church; Mrs. Morier still in astonishment, and Jenifer "dazed;" but all the working people loved Mr. Brewer. And they walked back, man and wife, to her mother's house, and had a quiet substantial breakfast before they started for London. And when there Mr. Brewer told her that they were not to return to the respectable stone-fronted house facing the market-place in Marston, but that he had bought Lord Byland's property--and that Beremouth was theirs. Beremouth, with its spreading park, and river, and lake, its miles of old pasture-land, its waving ferns, and dappled deer; Beremouth, with its forest and gardens, royal oaks and twisted hawthorn trees; Beremouth, the finest place in the county. And all that Mary felt was, that he who had kept this secret, had had a true hero's delicacy, and had never thought to bribe her, or to get her by purchase into his home. I think she almost loved him then.

In due time, after perhaps six months of wandering, and of preparation, Mr. and Mrs. Brewer arrived at their new home, made glorious by all that taste and art could do, with London energy working with the power of gold. With them came Claudia. The child loved her new mother with an abandonment of heart and a perfect approval. She was still too young to argue, but she was not too young to feel. The mother she had now got, though not much more than ten years older than herself, was the mother to love, admire, delight in--is the mother who could understand her.

Then Beremouth just suited this young lady's idea of what was worth having in this world; and without any evil thought of the homely mother who had gone, there was a thought that "Mother-Mary," as Mrs. Brewer was called by her step-daughter, looked right at Beremouth, and that another class of person would have looked wrong there--so wrong that her father under such circumstances would never have put himself in the position of trying the experiment.

Minnie Lorimer was very happy in her great play-ground; for all the world, and all life, was play to little Minnie. She loved her new sister; and the new sister patronized and petted her, so all seemed right. It was, indeed, a great happiness for Claudia that her father had chosen Mary Lorimer. Claudia was a vixenish, little handsome gipsy; very clever, very high-spirited, full of life, health, and fun--a girl who could have yielded to very few, and who brought the homage of heart and mind to "Mother-Mary," and rejoiced in doing it. These two grew to be great friends, and when after three years Claudia came home and came out, all parties were happy.

In the meantime Mr. Brewer's way in the world had been straight, plain, and rapidly travelled. The county was at his feet. Mary was no longer congratulated on having been brought up to poverty. Behind her back there were plenty of people to say that Mr. Brewer was happy in having for his wife a well connected gentlewoman. Her pedigree was told, her poverty forgotten. Her singing and playing, dancing and drawing, were none the worse for unknown thousands a year. And people wondered less openly at the splendor of velvets and diamonds than they had at the new muslin gown. To Mary herself life was very different in every way. Daily, more and more, she admired her husband, and approved of him. It was the awakening into life of a new set of feelings. She knew none of the love and devotion she had felt for her first husband. Mr. Brewer never expected any of it. But he intended that she should, in some other indescribable manner, fall in love with him, and she was doing it every day--which thing her husband saw, and welcomed life with great satisfaction in consequence.

It was when Claudia came out that the man we have seen, Horace Erskine, first came to them. He was just of age. Mary did not like him. She could give no reason for it. Her sister had always praised him--but Mary *could* not like him. He came to them for a series of gay doings, and Mr. Brewer admired him, and Claudia--poor little Claudia! She gave him that strong heart of hers; that spirit that could break sooner than bend was quite enslaved--she loved him, and he had asked for her love, and vowed a hundred times that he could never be happy without it. He asked her of her father, and Mr. Brewer consented. It was not for Mary to say no; but her heart went cold in its fear, and she was very sorry.

The Erskines in Scotland were delighted--all deemed doing well. But when Horace Erskine talked to Mr. Brewer about money, he was told that Claudia would have on her marriage five thousand pounds; and ten thousand more if she survived him would be forthcoming on his death-- that was all. "Enough for a woman," said Mr. Brewer; and Erskine was silent. It went on for a few weeks, Horace, being flighty and odd, Claudia, for the first time in her life, humble and endearing. Then he told her that to him money was necessary; then he asked her to appeal to her father for more; then she treated the request lightly, and, at last, positively refused. If she had not enough, he could leave her. If he left her, would she take the blame on herself? It would injure him in his future hopes and prospects to have it supposed to be *his* doing if they parted? Yes, she said. It was the easiest thing in the world. Who cared?--not he of course--and, certainly, not Claudia Brewer. It broke her heart to find him vile. But she was too discerning not to see the truth; her great thought now was to hide it. To hide too from every one, even from "Mother-Mary," that her heart felt death-struck--that the whole place was poisoned to her--that life at Beremouth was loathsome.

She took a strange way of hiding it.

A county election was going on. The man whom Mr. Brewer hoped to see elected was a guest at Beremouth. An old, grey-haired, worldly, statesmanlike man. A man who petted Claudia, and admired her; and who suddenly woke up one day to a thought--a question--a species of amusing suggestion, which grew into a profound wonder, and then even warmed into a hope--surely that pretty bright young heiress liked him, had a fancy to be the second Lady Greystock. It was a droll thought at first, and he played with it; a flattering fancy, and he encouraged it. He was an honest man. He knew that he was great, clever, learned. Was there anything so wonderful in a woman loving him? He settled the question by asking Claudia. And she promised to be his wife with a real and undisguised gladness. Her spirit and her determination were treading the life out of her heart. She was sincere in her gladness. She thought she could welcome any duties that took her away from life at Beremouth, and gave her place and position elsewhere.

Mary suspected much, and feared everything. But Claudia felt and knew too much to speak one word of the world of hope and joy and love that had gone away from her. She declared that she liked her old love, and gloried in his grey hairs, and in the great heart that had stooped to ask for hers.

Now what are we to say of Horace Erskine? Was he wholly bad? First, he had never loved Claudia with a real devotion. He had admired her; she had loved him. He had gambled--green turf and green cloth--gambled and recklessly indulged himself till he had got upon the way to ruin, and had begun the downward path, and was glad to be stopped in that slippery descent by a marriage with an heiress. There was a sparkle, an originality, about Claudia. It was impossible not to be taken with her. But Claudia with only *that* fortune was of no use to him. He knew she was brave and true-hearted; so he boldly asked her to guard his name--in fact, to give him up, and not injure his next chance with a better heiress by telling the truth. *He* told *her* the truth; that he wanted money, and money he must have. She would not tell him that the worst part of her trial was the loss of her idol. It was despising him that broke her heart. But because he had been her idol she would never injure him--never tell.

So the day came, and at Marston church she married Sir Geoffrey Greystock, "Mother-Mary" wondering; Mr. Brewer believing, in the innocence of his heart, that the fancy for Horace Erskine had been a bit of the old wilfulness. "The last bit--the last," he said, as he spoke of it to her that very day, making her chilled heart knock against her side as he spoke, and kissed her, and sent her with blessings from the Beremouth that she had married to get away from.

To get away--it had more to do with her marrying than any other thought. To get away from the house, the spreading pastures, the bright garden, and above all from the *old deer pond* in the park--the most beautiful of all the many lovely spots that nature and art, and time and taste, had joined to create and adorn Beremouth. The old deer pond in the park!

Sheltered by ancient oak; backed by interlacing boughs of old hawthorn trees; shadowed by tall, shining, dark dense holly, that glowed through the winter with its red berries, and contrasted with the long fair wreaths of hawthorn flowers in the sweet smiling spring. There, in this now dreaded place, Horace Erskine had first spoken of love; and there how often had he promised her the happiness that had gone out of her life--for ever. In the terrible nights, when her broken-hearted pains were strongest, this deer pond in the park had been before her closed eyes like a vision. In its waters she saw in her sleep her face and his, so happy, so loving, so trusting, so true. Then the picture in that water changed, and she watched it in her feverish dreams with horror, but yet was obliged to gaze, and the truth went out of his face, and the terror came into hers. And, worse and worse, he grew threatening--he was cold--he had never loved--he was killing her; and she fell, fell from her height of happiness; no protecting arm stayed her, and the dark waters opened, and she heard the rushing sound of their deadly waves closing over her, as she sunk--sunk--again and again, night after night Oh, to get away, to get away! And she blessed Sir Geoffrey, and when he said he was too old to wait for a wife she was glad, for she had no wish to wait. Change, absence, another home, another life, another world--these things she wanted, and they had come. Is it any wonder that she took them as the man who is dying of thirst takes the longed-for draught, and drains the cup of mercy to the dregs?

It was a happy day to marry. Mr. Brewer had not only an excuse, but a positively undeniable reason for being bountiful and kind. For once he could openly, and as a matter of duty, make the sad hearts in Marston--and elsewhere--sing for joy. His blessings flowed so liberally that he had to apologize. It was only for once--he begged everybody's pardon, but it could never happen again; he had but this one child, and she was a bride, and so if they would forgive everything this once! And many a new life of gladness was begun that day; many a burden then lost its weight; many a record went up to the Eternal memory to meet that man at the inevitable hour.

Little Mary was the loveliest bridesmaid the world ever saw; standing alone like an angel by her dark sister's side. She was the only thing that Claudia grieved to leave. She was glad to flee away from "Mother-Mary." She dreaded lest those sweet wistful eyes should read her heart one day; and she could not help rejoicing to get away from that honest, open-hearted father's sight. Her poor, wrecked, shrunken heart--her withered life, could not bear the contrast with his free, kind, bounteous spirit that gave such measure of love, pressed down and running over, to all who wanted it. Her old husband, Sir Geoffrey, resembled that great good heart in whose love she had learnt to think all men true, more than did her young lover Horace Erskine--she could be humble and thankful to Sir Geoffrey; a well-placed approval was a better thing than an ill-placed love. So with that little vision of beauty, Minnie Lorimer, by her side, Claudia became Sir Geoffrey's wife.

Four months past, the bride and bridegroom were entertaining a grand party at their fine ancestral home, and Mr. Brewer was the father of a son and heir. Horace Erskine read both announcements in the paper one morning, and ground his teeth with vexation. He went to his desk and took out three letters, a long lock of silky hair, a small miniature--these things he had begged to keep. Laughing, he had argued that he was almost a relation. His uncle had married "Mother-Mary's" sister. She had had no strength to debate with him. She had chosen to wear the mask of indifference, too, to him. He now made these things into a parcel and sent them to Sir Geoffrey Greystock without one word of explanation. When they were gone he wrote to his uncle, begged for some money, got it, and started for Vienna. The money met him in London, and he crossed to France the same day.

In the midst of great happiness the strong heart of good Sir Geoffrey stood still. His wife sought him. She found him in his chair in a fit. On a little table by his side was the parcel just received. Claudia knew all. She took the parcel into the room close by, called her dressing room, rung for help, but in an hour Sir Geoffrey was dead; and Claudia had burnt the letters and the lock of silky hair.

The business of parliament, the excitement attendant on his marriage with that beautiful girl, the entertainment of that great house full of company--these reasons the world reckoned up, and found sufficient to answer the questions and the wonderings on Sir Geoffrey's death. But when those solemn walls no longer knew their master, Claudia, into whose new life the new things held but an unsteady place, grew ill. First of all, sleepless nights: how could she sleep with the sound of those waters by the deer pond in her ears? How could she help gazing perpetually at the picture on the pond's still surface: Horace and Sir Geoffrey, and herself not able to turn aside the death-stroke, but standing, fettered by she knew not what, in powerless misery, only obliged to see the changing face of her husband till the dead seemed to be again before her, and Horace melted out of sight, and she woke, dreading fever and praying against delirium? She was overcome at last. Terrible hours came, and "Mother-Mary's" sweet face mingling with some strong, subduing, life-endangering dream, was the first thing that seemed to bring her back to better things, and to restore her to herself.

In fact, Claudia had had brain fever, and whether or not she was ever to know real health again was a problem to be worked out by time. Would she come back to her father's house? No! The very name of Beremouth was to be avoided. Would she go abroad? Oh, no; there was a dread of separation upon her. "Somewhere where you can easily hear of me, and I of you; where you can come and see me, for I shall never see Beremouth again." It was her own thought, and so, about five miles from Beremouth, in the house of a Doctor Rankin, who took ladies out of health into his family, Claudia determined to go. It was every way the best thing that could be done, for every day showed more strongly than the last that Claudia would never be what is emphatically called "herself" again. So people said.

Dr. Rankin was kind, learned, and wise; Mrs. Rankin warm-hearted and friendly. Other patients beside Lady Greystock were there. It was not a private asylum, and Claudia was not mad; it was really what it called itself, a home which the sick might share, with medical attendance, cheerful company, and out-door recreations in a well-kept garden and extensive grounds of considerable beauty. Claudia had known Dr. and Mrs. Rankin, and had called with her father at Blagden, where they lived. And there her father and "Mother-Mary" took her three months after her husband's death, looking really aged, feeble, and strangely sad.

After a time--it was a long time--Claudia was said to be well. "Perfectly recovered," said Dr. Rankin, "and in really satisfactory health." So she was when Minnie Lorimer stood in the room at the inn in Hull, talking to that very Horace Erskine, who was bringing her home from her aunt's in Scotland to her mother at Beremouth.

"Sweet seventeen!" Very sweet and beautiful, pleasing the eye, gratifying the mind, filling the heart with hope, and setting imagination at play--Minnie Lorimer was beautiful, and with all that peculiar beauty about her that belongs to "a spoilt child" who has not been spoilt after all.

Claudia--how old she looked! Claudia, with that one only shadow on her once bright face, was still living with Dr. and Mrs. Rankin. It was Lady Greystock's pleasure to live with them. She said she had grown out of the position of a patient, and into their hearts as a friend. "Was it not so?" she asked. It was impossible to deny that which really brought happiness to everybody. "Well, then, I shall build on a few rooms to the house, and I shall call them mine, and I shall add to the coach-house, and hire a cottage for my groom and his wife--I shall live here. Why not? You will take care of me, and feed me, and scold me, and find me a good guidable creature. You know I shall be ill if you refuse."

It all happened as she chose. Hers was the prettiest carriage in the county, the best horses, the most perfectly appointed little household--for she had her own servants. Among her most devoted friends were the good doctor and his wife. Lady Greystock was as positive and as much given to govern as the clever little Claudia in school-girl days. But the arrangement was a success, and "Mother-Mary," who saw her constantly, was very glad. Only one trouble survived; Claudia would never go and stay at Beremouth. She would drive her ponies merrily to the door, and even spend an hour or two within the house, but never would she stay there--never! She used to say to herself that she dared not trust herself with the things that had witnessed her love, her sorrow, her marriage--with the things that told her of him who had ruined everything like a murderer--as he was.

And so, to save appearances, she used to say that she never stayed away from Blagden for a single night, and she never left off black. It was not that she wore a widow's dress, or covered up the glories of her beautiful hair. She was but twenty-nine at the moment recorded in the first page of this story. She was very thin and pale, but she was a strong woman, and one who required no more care than any other person; but she had determined never again to see Horace Erskine. What he had done had become known to her, as we have seen. She only bargained with life, as it were, in this way, that *that* man should be out of it for ever. And for this it was that she made her resolution and kept it.

Horace Erskine had been abroad for some years; but though she had felt safe in that fact, she had looked into the future and kept her resolution. And so she lived on at Blagden, doing good, blessing the poor, comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick, and beautifying all things, and adorning all places that came within her reach. Certain things she was young enough to enjoy greatly; the chief of these was the contemplation of Frederick Brewer, her half-brother, a fine boy of nine years old, for nine years of widowhood had been passed, and through all that time this boy, her dear father's son, had been Lady Greystock's delight. She loved "Mother-Mary" all the better for having given him to her father, and she felt a strong, unutterable thanksgiving that, his birth having been expected, the test of whether or not Horace Erskine loved her for herself had been applied before she had become chained to so terrible a destiny as that of being wife to a thankless, disappointed man. Terrible as her great trial had been, she might have suffered that which, to one of her temper, would have been far worse. So Fred Brewer would ride over to see his sister. Day after day the boy's bright face would be laid beside her own, and to him, and only to him, would she talk of Sir Geoffrey. Then they would ride together down to Marston to see Mrs. Morier and Jenifer, who was a true friend, and lived on those terms with the lady who loved her well; then to the market-place where the old home stood, now turned into an almshouse of an eccentric sort, with all rules included under one head, that the dear old souls were to have just whatever they wanted. Did Martha Gannet keep three parrots, and did they eat as much as a young heifer? and scream, too? ah, that was their nature--never go against a dumb creature's nature, Mr. Brewer said there was always cruelty in that--and did they smell, and give trouble, and would they be mischievous, and tear Mrs. Betty's cap? Indeed. Mr. Brewer was delighted. An excellent excuse for giving new caps to all the inmates, and to look up all troubles, and mend everybody's griefs--such an excellent thing it was that the fact of three parrots should lead to the discovery of so many disgraceful neglects that Mr. Brewer begged leave to apologize very heartily and sincerely while he diligently repaired them. It was a very odd school to bring up young Freddy in. But we are obliged to say that he was not at all the worse for it.

And here we must say what we have not said before. Mr. Brewer was a Catholic. He and Jenifer were Catholics; Mrs. Brewer had not been a Catholic; and Claudia had been left to her mother's teaching. When Freddy was born, Mr. Brewer considered his ways. And what he saw in his life we may see shortly. He had been born of a Catholic mother who had died, and made his Protestant father promise to send him to a Catholic school. He had stood alone in the world, he had always stood alone in the world. He seemed to see nothing else. Three miles from Marston was a little dirty sea-port, also a sort of fishing place. A place that bore a bad character in a good many ways. Some people would have finished that character by saying that there were Papists there. To that place every Sunday Mr. Brewer went to mass. Many and many a lift he had given to Jenifer on those days. How much Jenifer's talk assisted his choice of Mary for his wife, we may guess. When Freddy was born Jenifer said her first words on the subject of religion to Mr. Brewer: "You will have him properly baptized:" "Of course." "Order me the pony cart, and I'll go to Father Daniels." "I must tell Mrs. Brewer." "Leave that to me--just send for the cart." It *was* left to Jenifer. By night the priest had come and gone. It had not been his first visit. He had been there many times, and had known that he was welcome. The Clayton mission had felt the blessing of Mr. Brewer's gold. He had seldom been at the house in the market-place in Marston, but at Beremouth Mary had plucked her finest flowers, and sent them back in the old gentleman's gig, and he had been always made welcome in her husband's house with a pretty grace and many pleasant attentions. Now, when Freddy was baptized, Mr. Brewer went to his wife and bent over her, and said solemnly, "Mary--my dear wife; Mary--I thank thee, darling. I thank thee, my love." And the single tear that fell on her cheek she never forgot.

Then Mr. Brewer met Jenifer at his wife's door. "It's like a new life, Jenifer." And the steady-mannered woman looked in his bright eyes and saw how true his words were.

"It's a steady life of doing good to everybody that you have ever led, sir. It was a lonely life once, no doubt. I was dazed when she married you. But, eh, master; I have *that* to think about, and *that* to pray for, that a'most makes me believe in anything happening to *you* for good, when so much is asked for, day and night, in my own prayer."

"Put *us* into it; let me and mine be in Jenifer's prayer," he said, and passed on.

PART II.

Mary Lorimer returned in safety to Beremouth under Horace Erskine's care, welcomed as may be supposed by the adopted father and her mother. Not that "Mother Mary," as Lady Greystock in the old Claudia Brewer days used to call her, could ever welcome Horace. She had never liked him; she had always felt that there was some unknown wrong about his seeking and his leaving Claudia; she had been glad that a long absence abroad had kept him from them while her darling Mary had been growing up; and it was with a spasm of fear that she heard of his spending that autumn at her sister's. And yet she had consented to his bringing Mary home. Yes, she had consented, for Mr. Brewer in his overflowing hospitality had asked him to come to them--had regretted that they had seen so little of him of late years--and had himself suggested that he should come when Mary returned.

Nine years does a great deal; it may even pay people's debts sometimes. But it had not paid Horace Erskine's debts: on the contrary, it had added to them with all the bewildering peculiarities that belong to calculations of interests and compound interests. He had got to waiting for another man's death. How many have had to become in heart death-dealers in this way! It was known that he would be his uncle's heir, and his uncle added to what he supposed Horace possessed a good sum yearly; making the man rich as he thought, and causing occasionally a slight passing regret that Horace was so saving. "He might do so much more if he liked on his good income," the elder Mr. Erskine would say. But he did not know of the many sums for ever paying to keep things quiet till death, the great paymaster, should walk in and demand stern rights of himself, the elder, and pass on the gold that we all must leave behind to the nephew, the younger one.

But in the nine years that had passed since the coward took his revenge on a brave woman by doing that which killed her husband, great things had happened to pretty Minnie Lorimer. The "county people" had been after her--those same old families who had flouted her mother, and prophesied eternal poverty to her poor pet baby--fatherless, too! a fact that finished the story of their faults with a note of peculiar infamy.

That a man of good family should marry without money, become the father of a lovely child, and *die*--that the mother should go back to that old poverty-stricken home where that stiff-looking maid-servant looked so steadily into the faces of all who stood and asked admittance--that they should pretend to be happy!--altogether, it was really too bad.

Why did not Mrs. Lorimer, widow, go out as a governess? Who was to bring up that unfortunate child on a paltry one hundred a year? Of course she begged for help. Of course they were supported by Mr. Erskine's charity. A pretty humiliation of Lorimer's friends and relations!

Altogether, the whole of the great Lansdowne Lorimer connection had pronounced that to have that young widow and her daughter belonging to them was a trial very hard to bear. They had not done talking when Mary made that quiet walk to church--no one but her mother and Jenifer being in the secret--and reappeared in the county after a few months' absence as mistress of Beremouth. Mr. Brewer had counted his money, and had told the world what it amounted to. And this time he never apologized, he only confessed himself a person scarcely deserving of respect, because he had done so little good with the mammon of unrighteousness. But Mary now would tell him how to manage. He did perhaps take a little to the humble line. He hoped the world would forget and forgive his former shortcomings; such conduct would assuredly not now be persevered in; and that resolution was fulfilled without any doubt. The splendors of Beremouth were something to talk about, and the range of duties involved in a large hospitality were admirably performed.

Old Lady Caroline, whose pianoforte survived in Mrs. Morier's house at Marston, considered the matter without using quite as many words as her neighbors. "That man will be giving money to Lorimer's child." She was quite right. He had already invested five thousand pounds for Minnie. Lady Caroline (what an odd pride hers was!) went to Beremouth, and got upon business matter with "Mother Mary."

She would give that child five thousand pounds in her will if Mr. Brewer would not give her anything. Alas! it was already given. Mr. Brewer used to count among his faults that, with him, it was too much a word and a blow, especially when a good action was in question, and this curious unusual fault he had decidedly committed in the case of Minnie Lorimer. The money was hers safe enough, invested in the hands of trustees. "Safe enough," said Mr. Brewer exultingly; and then, looking with a saddened air on Lady Caroline, he added, gravely, that it couldn't be helped! "The man's a saint or a fool, I can't tell which," was Lady Caroline's very cute remark. "The most unselfish idiot that ever lived. Does Mary like him, or laugh at him, I wonder?"

But Lady Caroline cultivated Mr. Brewer's acquaintance. Not in an evil way, but because she had been brought up to *use* the world, and to slave all mankind who would consent to such persecution. Not wickedly, I repeat, but with a fixed intention she cultivated Mr. Brewer, and she got money out of him.

Mr. Brewer still made experiments with ten pounds. He helped Lady Caroline in her many charities, as long as her charities were confined to food and clothing, so much a week to the poor, and getting good nursing for the sick. But once Lady Caroline used that charity purse for purposes of "souping"--it has become an English word, so I do not stop to explain it--and then Mr. Brewer scolded her. Nobody had ever disputed any point with Lady Caroline. But Mr. Brewer explained, with a most unexpected lucidity, how it would be *right* for him to make her a Catholic, and yet *wrong* for her to try her notions of conversion on him.

Lady Caroline kept up the quarrel for two years. She upbraided him for his neglect, on his own principles, of Claudia. She abused him for the different conduct pursued about his son. Mr. Brewer confessed his faults and stood by his rights at the same time. Two whole years Lady Caroline quarrelled, and Mr. Brewer never left the field. And afterward, some time after, when Lady Caroline was in her last illness, she said: "I believe that man Brewer may be right after all." When she was dead young Mary Lorimer had double the sum that had been originally offered, and Freddy her largest diamond ring.

But another thing had to come out of all this. Mrs. Brewer became a Catholic; and that fact had made her recall her daughter to her side--that fact had made Horace Erskine say, at the inn at Hull, that he dreaded for the girl he, spoke to the influence of the home and the people she was going to--that fact had brought that passion of tears to Mary Lorimer's eyes, and had made her feel so angrily that he had taken an advantage of her.

Here, then, we are back again to the time at which we began the story. Mary got home and was welcomed.

The day after their arrival, if we leave Beremouth and its people, and go into Marston to Mrs. Morier, "old Mrs. Morier" they called her now, we shall see Jenifer walk into the pleasant upstairs drawing-room, where the china glittered on comer-shelves, and large jars stood under the long inlaid table, and say to her mistress: "Eleanor is come, if you please, ma'am."

Mrs. Morier looked up from her knitting. She had been sitting by the window, and the beautiful old lady looked like a picture, as Jenifer often declared, as she turned the face shadowed by fine lace toward her servant with a sweet, gentle air, and smiling said, "And so you want to go to Clayton--and Eleanor is to stay till you come back?" "Yes, ma'am--it's the anniversary." "Go, then," said the gentle lady. "And you must not leave me out of your prayers, my good Jenifer; for you may be sure that I respect and value them." "I'll be back in good time," said Jenifer; and the door closed, and Mrs. Morier continued her knitting.

Soon she saw from the window that incomparable Jenifer. Her brown light stuff gown, the black velvet trimming looking what Jenifer called *rich* upon the same. Buttons as big as pennies all the way down the front--the good black shawl with the handsome border that had been Mr. Brewer's own present to her on the occasion of his wedding; the fine straw bonnet and spotless white ribbon--the crowning glory of the black lace veil--oh, Jenifer was *somebody*, I can tell you, at Marston; and Jenifer looked it.

It was with nothing short of a loving smile that Mrs. Morier watched her servant. Servant indeed, but true, tried, and trusty friend also; and when the woman was out of sight, and Mrs. Morier turned her thoughts to Jenifer's prayer, and what little she knew of it, she sighed--the sigh came from deep down, and the sigh was lengthened, and her whole thoughts seemed to rest upon it--it was breathed out, at last, and when it died away Mrs. Morier sat doing nothing in peaceful contemplation till the door opened, and she whom we have heard called Eleanor came in with inquiries as to the proper time for tea.

I think that this Eleanor was perhaps about eight-and-twenty years of age. She was strikingly beautiful. Perhaps few people have ever seen anything more faultlessly handsome than this young woman's form and face. She looked younger than she was. The perfectly smooth brow and the extraordinary fair complexion made her look young. No one would have thought, when looking at Eleanor, that she had ever *worked*. If the finest and loveliest gentlewoman in the world had chosen to put on a lilac cotton gown, and a white checked muslin apron, and bring up Mrs. Morier's early tea, she would perhaps have looked a little like Eleanor; provided her new employment had not endowed her with a momentary awkwardness. But admiration, when looking at this woman, was a little checked by a sort of atmosphere of pain--or perhaps it was only patience--that surrounded the beautiful face, and showed in every gesture and movement, and rested on the whole being, as it were.

Eleanor suffered. And it was the pain of the mind and heart, not of the body--no one who had sufficient sensibility to see what I have described could ever doubt that the inner woman, not the outer fleshly form of beauty, suffered; and that the woe, whatever it was, had written *patience* on that too placid brow.

"And are they all well at Dr. Rankin's?" "Very well, ma'am, I believe. I saw Lady Greystock in her own rooms an hour before I came away. I said that I was coming here, and she said"--Eleanor smiled--"Lady Greystock said, ma'am, 'My duty to grandmamma Morier--mind you give the message right.'"

"Ah," said Mrs. Morier, "Lady Greystock is wonderfully well." "There is nothing the matter with her, ma'am." "Except that she never goes to Beremouth." What made the faint carnation mount to Eleanor's face?--what made the woman pause to collect herself before she spoke?--"Oh, ma'am, she is right not to try herself. She'll go there one day." "I suppose you like being at Dr. Rankin's?" "Very much. My place of wardrobe-woman is not hard, but it is responsible. It suits me well. And Mrs. Rankin is very good to me. And I am near Lady Greystock." "How fond you are of her!" "There is not anything I would not do for her," said the woman with animation. "I hope, indeed Dr. Rankin tells me to believe, that I have had a great deal to do with Lady Greystock's cure. She has treated me like a sister; and I can never feel for any one what I feel for her." "Lady Greystock always speaks of you in a truly affectionate way. She says you have known better days." "*Different* days; I don't say *better*. I have nothing to wish for. Ever since the time that Lady Greystock determined on staying at Blagden, I have been quite happy." "You came just as she came." "Only two months after." "And did you like her from the first?" "Oh, Mrs. Morier, you know she was very ill when she came. I never thought of love, but of every care and every attention that one woman could show to another. Had it been life for life, I am sure she might have had *my* life--that was all that I *then* thought. But when she recovered and loved me for what I had done for her, then it was love for love. Lady Greystock gave me a new life, and I will serve her as long as I may for gratitude, and as a thanksgiving."

When Eleanor was gone, her pleasant manner, her beauty, the music of her voice, and the indescribable grace that belonged to her remained with Mrs. Morier as a pleasant memory, and dwelling on it, she lingered over her early tea, and ate of hashed mutton, making meditation on how Eleanor had got to be Jenifer's great friend; and whether their both being Catholics was enough to account for it.

This while Jenifer walked on toward Clayton. She stood at last on the top of a wide table-land, and looked from the short grass where the wild thyme grew like green velvet, and the chamomile gave forth fragrance as you trod it under foot, down a rugged precipice into the little seaport that sheltered in the cove below. The roofs of the strange, dirty, tumble-down houses were packed thickly below her. The nature of the precipitous cliff was to lie in terraces, and here and there goats and donkeys among the branching fern gave a picturesque variety to the scene, and made the practical

Jenifer say to herself that Clayton Cove was not "that altogether abominable" when seen to the best advantage on the afternoon of a rich autumn day. A zigzag path, rather difficult to get upon on account of the steepness of the broken edge and the rolling stones, led from Jenifer's feet down to the terraces; short cuts of steps and sliding stones led from terrace to terrace, and these paths ended, as it appeared to the eye, in a chimney-top that sent up a volume of white smoke, and a pleasant scent of wood and burning turf. By the side of the house that owned the chimney, which was whitewashed carefully, and had white blinds inside the green painted wood-work of small sash windows, appeared another roof, long, high, narrow, with a cross on the eastern gable, and that was the Catholic chapel--the house Father Daniels lived in; and after a moment's pause down the path went Jenifer with all the speed that a proper respect for her personal safety permitted. When the woman got to the last terrace, she opened a wicket gate, and was in a sunny garden, still among slopes and terraces, and loaded with flowers. Common flowers no doubt, but who ever saw Father Daniels's Canterbury bells and forgot them? There, safe in the bottom walk, wide, and paved with pebbles from the beach, Jenifer turned not to the right where the trellised back-door invited, but to the left, where the west door of the chapel stood open--and she walked in. There was no one there. She knelt down. After a while she rose, and kneeling before the image of our Lady, said softly: "Mother, she had no mother! Eleven years this day since that marriage by God's priest, and at his holy altar--eleven years this day since that marriage which the laws of the men of this country deny and deride. Mother, she had no mother! Oh, mighty Mother! forget neither of them. Remember her for her trouble, and him for his sin." Not for vengeance but for salvation, she might have added; but Jenifer had never been accustomed to explain her prayers. Then she knelt before the adorable Presence on the altar, and her prayer was very brief--"My life, and all that is in it!"--was it a vain repetition that she said it again and again? Again and again, as she looked back and thought of what *it had been*; as she thought of that which *it was*; and knew of the future that, blessed by our Lady's prayers, she should take it, whatever it might be, as the will of God. And so she said it; by so doing offering *herself*. One great thing had colored all her life; had, to her, been *life-- her* life; she, with that great shadow on the past, with the weight of the cross on the present, with the fear of unknown ill on the future, gathered together all prayer, all hope, all fear, and gave it to God in those words of offering that were, on her lips, an earnest prayer; the prayer of submission, of offering, of faith--"*My life, and all that is in it.*"

Jenifer could tell out her wishes to the Mother of God, and had told them, in the words she had used, but it was this woman's way to have no wishes when she knelt before God himself. "My life, and all that is in it;" that was Jenifer's prayer.

After a time she left the chapel, putting pieces of money, many, into the church box, and went into the house. She knew Mrs. Moore, the priest's housekeeper, very well. She was shown into Father Daniels's sitting-room. He was a venerable man of full seventy years of age, and as she entered he put down the tools with which he was carving the ornaments of a wooden altar, and said, "You are later than your note promised. I have therefore been working by daylight, which I don't often do." She looked at the work. It seemed to her to be very beautiful. "It is fine and teak-wood," said Father Daniels; "part of a wreck. They brought it to me for the church. We hope to get up a little mariner's chapel on the south side of the church before long, and I am getting ready the altar as far as I can with my own hands. 'Mary, star of the sea'--that will be our dedication. The faith spreads here. Mistress Jenifer; and I hope we are a little better than we used to be." And Father Daniels crossed himself and thanked God for his grace that had blessed that wild little spot, and made many Christians there. Jenifer smiled, as the holy man spoke in a playful tone, and she said, "It is the anniversary, father." "Of Eleanor's marriage. Yes. I remembered her at mass. Has she heard anything of him?" "Yes, father; she has heard his real name, she thinks. She has always suspected, from the time that she first began to suspect evil, that she had never known him by his real name--she never believed his name to be Henry Evelyn, as he said when he married her."

"And what is his real name?"

"Horace Erskine," said Jenifer.

"What!" exclaimed Father Daniels, with an unusual tone of alarm in his voice. "The man who was talked of for Lady Greystock before she married--the nephew of Mrs. Brewer's sister's husband!" "Yes, sir." "Is she sure?" "No. She has not seen him. But she has traced him, she thinks. Corny Nugent, who is her second cousin, and knew them both when the marriage took place, went as a servant to the elder Mr. Erskine, and knew Henry Evelyn, as they called him in Ireland, when he came back from abroad. He *thought* he knew him. Then Horace Erskine, finding he was an Irishman, would joke him about his religion, and how he was the only Catholic in the house, and how he was obliged to walk five miles to mass. Time was when Mr. Erskine, the uncle, would not have kept a Catholic servant. But since Mr. and Mrs. Brewer married, he has been less bigoted. He took Corny Nugent in London. It was just a one season's engagement. But when they were to return to Scotland they proposed to keep him on, and he stayed. After a little Horace Erskine asked him about Ireland; and even if he knew such and such places; and then he came by degrees to the very place--the very people--to his own knowledge of them. Corny gave crafty answers. But he disliked the sight of the man, and the positions he put him into. So he left. He left three months ago. And he found out Eleanor's direction, and told her that surely--surely and certainly--her husband, Henry Evelyn, was no other than his late master's nephew, who had been trying to marry more than one, only always some unlooked-for and unaccountable thing had happened to prevent it. Our Lady be praised, for her prayers have kept off that last woe--I make no doubt--thank God!"

"How many years is it since they married?" "Eleven, to-day. I keep the anniversary. He is older than he looks. He is thirty-two, this year, if he did not lie about his age, as well as everything else. He told Father Power he was of age. He said, too--God forgive him--that he was a Catholic."

"But when I followed Father Power at Rathcoyle," said the priest, "there was no register of the marriage. I was sent for on the afternoon of the marriage day. I found Father Power in a dying state. He was an old man, and had long been infirm. The marriage was not entered. It was known to have taken place. Your niece and her husband were gone. I walked out that evening to your brother's farm. He knew nothing of the marriage. He had received a note to say that Eleanor was gone with her husband, and that they would hear from them when they got to England. Why Father Power, who was a saintly man, married them, I do not know. It was unlawful for him to marry a Catholic and a Protestant. If

your sister went through no other marriage, she has no claim on her Protestant husband. If she could prove that he passed himself off as a Catholic, she might have some ground against him--but, can she?"

"No, sir; on the contrary, she knew that she was marrying a Protestant; she had hopes of converting him; she learnt from himself, afterward, that he had deceived the priest. She had said to him that she would marry him if Father Power consented. He came back and said that the consent had been given. He promised to marry her in Dublin conformably to the license he had got there--or there he had lived the proper time for getting one, so he declared. But I have ceased to believe anything he said. Then my brother wrote the girl a dreadful letter to the direction in Liverpool that she had sent to him. Then, after some months, she wrote to me at Marston. She was deserted, and left in the Isle of Man. She supported herself there for more than a year. I told Mr. Brewer that I knew a sad story of the daughter of a friend, and one of her letters, saying her last gold was changed into silver and that she was too ill and worn out to win more, was so dreadful, that I feared for her mind. So Mr. Brewer went to Dr. Rankin, and got her taken in as a patient, at first, and when she got well she was kept on as wardrobe-woman. She had got a tender heart; when she heard of Lady Greystock's trial, she took to her. Dr. Rankin says he could never have cured Lady Greystock so perfectly nor so quickly, but for Eleanor."

"That is curious," said Father Daniels, musingly. "Have you been in Ireland since the girl left it with her husband?"

"I never was there in my life. My mother was Irish, and she lived as a servant in England. She married an Englishman, and she had two daughters, my sister--Eleanor's mother--and myself. My mother went back to Ireland a year after her husband's death, on a visit, and she left my sister and me with my father's family. She married in Ireland almost directly, and married well, a man with a good property, a farmer. She died, and left one son. My sister and I were four and five years older than this half-brother of ours. Then time wore on and my sister Ellen went to Ireland, and she married there, and the fever came to the place where they lived, and carried them both off, and she left me a legacy--my niece Eleanor--oh, sir I with such a holy letter of recommendation from her death-bed. Poor sister! Poor, holy soul! Our half-brother asked to have Eleanor to stay with him when she knew enough to be useful on the farm. He was a good Christian, and I let him take the girl. She was very pretty, people said, and I wished her to marry soon. Then there came--sent, he said, by a great rich English nobleman--a man who called himself a gardener, or something of that sort. He lodged close by; he made friends with my brother. He was often off after rare bog-plants, and seemed to lead a busy if an easy life. He would go to mass with them. But they knew he was a Protestant. Eleanor knew that her uncle would not consent to her marrying a Protestant. But, poor child, she gave her heart away to the gentleman in disguise. He had had friends there--a fishing party. Sir, he never intended honorably; but they were married by the priest, and he got over the holy man, whom everybody loved and honored, with his falseness, as he had got over the true-hearted and trusting woman whom he had planned to desert."

"Well," said Father Daniels, "you know I succeeded this priest for a short time at Rathcoyle. He died on that wedding day. I never understood how it all happened. I left a record to save Eleanor's honor; but she has no legal claim on her husband--it ought not to have been done." Jenifer shrank beneath the plainness of that truth--"**My life, and all that is in it,**" her heart said, sinking, as it were, at the sorrow that had come on the girl whom her sister had left to her with her dying breath.

"She ought not to have trusted a man who was a Protestant, and not willing to marry her in the only way that is legal by the Irish marriage-law." "**My life, and all that is in it.**" So hopelessly fell on her heart every word that the priest spoke, that, but for that offering of all things to God, poor Jenifer could scarcely have borne her trial.

"And if this Henry Evelyn should turn out to be Horace Erskine, why, he will marry some unhappy woman some time, of course, and the law of the land will give him one wife, and by the law of God another woman will claim him. Oh, if people would but obey holy church, and not try to live under laws of their own inventing." "**My life, and all that is in it!**" Again, only that could have made Jenifer bear the trials that were presented to her.

"And if gossip spoke truth he was very near marrying Lady Greystock once--Mr. Brewer, himself, thought it was going to be." One more great act of submission--"**My life, and all that is in it!**"--came forth from Jenifer's heart. She loved Mr. Brewer, with a faithful sort of worship--if such a trial as that had come on him through her trouble!--**that** was over; **that** had been turned aside; but the thought gave rise to a question, even as she thanked God for the averted woe.

"Is it Eleanor's duty to find out if Henry Evelyn and Horace Erskine are one?" "Yes," said the priest "Yes; it is. It is everybody's duty to prevent mischief. It is her duty, as far as lies in her power, to prevent sin."

"And if it proves true--that which Corny Nugent says, what then?"

"Be content for the present. It is a very difficult case to act in."

Poor Jenifer felt the priest to be sadly wanting in sympathy--she turned again to him who knows all and feels all, and she offered up the disappointment that **would** grow up in her heart--"**My life, and all that is in it!**"

She turned to go; and then Father Daniels spoke so kindly, so solemnly, with such a depth of sympathy in the tone of his voice--"God bless you, my child;" and the sign of the cross seemed to bless her sensibly. "Thank you, father!" And, without lifting her eyes, she left the room and the house; and still saying that prayer that had grown to be her strength and her help, she went up the steep rugged path to the spreading down; and then she turned round and looked on the great sea heaving, lazily under the sunset rays, that painted it in the far distance with gold and red, and a silvery light, till it touched the ruby-colored sky, and received each separate ray of glory on its breast just where earth and heaven seemed to meet--just where you could fancy another world looking into the depths of the great sea that flowed up into its gates. It seemed to do Jenifer good. The whole scene was so glorious, and the glory was so far-spreading--all the world seemed to rest around her bathed in warm light and basking in the smile of heaven. She stood still and said again, in a sweet soft voice: "**My life, and all that is in it!**"

Her great dread that day when Mr. Brewer had told her to put him and his into her prayer, had been lest the punishment of sin should come on the man who had deserted her dear girl, and lest that sin's effect in a heart-broken disease should fall on the girl herself.

When Mr. Brewer said, "Put me and mine into that prayer, Jenifer," the thought had risen that she would tell him of Eleanor. She had told him, and he had helped her. But she had never thought that, by acting on the impulse, the two women whose hearts Horace Erskine had crushed, as a wilful child breaks his playthings when he has got tired or out of temper, had been brought together under one roof, and made to love each other. Yet so it had been. The woman who could do nothing but pray *had* prayed; and a thing had been done which no human contrivance could have effected. And as Jenifer stood gazing on the heavens that grew brighter and brighter, and on the water that reflected every glory, and seemed to bask with a living motion in the great magnificence that was poured upon it, she recollected how great a pain had been spared her; she thought how terrible it would have been if Claudia Brewer had married Horace Erskine--Horace Erskine, the husband of the deserted Eleanor; and she gave thanks to God.

Now she drew her shawl tighter round her, and walked briskly on. She got across the down, and over a stone stile in the fence that was its boundary from the road. She turned toward Marston, and walked fast--it was almost getting cold after that glorious sunset, and she increased her pace and went on rapidly. She soon saw a carriage in the road before her, driving slowly, and meeting her. When it came near enough to recognize her, the lady who drove let her ponies go, and then pulled up at Jenifer's side. "Now, Mistress Jenifer," said Lady Greystock, looking bright and beautiful in the black hat, and long streaming black feather, that people wore in those days, "here am I to drive you home. I knew where you were going. Eleanor tells me her secrets. Do you know that? This is an anniversary; and you give gifts and say prayers. Are you comfortable? I am going to drive fast to please the ponies; they like it, you know." And very true did Lady Greystock's words seem; for the little creatures given their heads went off at a pace that had in it every evidence of perfect good will. "I came to drive you back, and to pick up Eleanor, and drive her to Blagden after I had delivered you up safely to grandmamma Morier. Mother Mary came to see me this afternoon. You had better go and see Minnie soon. Jenifer!"--Jenifer looked up surprised at a strange tone in Lady Greystock's voice---"Jenifer," speaking very low, "if you can pray for my father and his wife, and all he loves, pray now. It would be hard for a man to be trapped by the greatness of his own good heart."

"Is there anything wrong, my dear?" Jenifer spoke softly, and just as she had been used to speak to the Claudia Brewer of old days.

"I can't say more," Lady Greystock replied; "here we are at Marston." Then she talked of common things; and told James, the man-servant, to drive the horses up and down the street while she bade Mrs. Morier "Good night." And they went into the house, and half an hour after Lady Greystock and Eleanor had got into the pony carriage, and were driving away. The quiet street was empty once more. The little excitement made by Lady Greystock and her ponies subsided. Good-byes were spoken, and the quiet of night settled down on the streets and houses of Marston.

Jenifer had wondered over Lady Greystock's words; and comforted herself, and stilled her fears, and set her guesses all at rest by those few long-used powerful words--"*My life, and all that is in it!*" She offered life, and gave up its work and its trials to God; and Jenifer, too, was at rest then.

But at Clayton things were not quite in the same peaceful state as in that little old-fashioned inland town. Clayton was very busy; and among the busy ones, though busy in his own way, was Father Daniels.

That morning a messenger had brought him a packet from Mrs. Brewer; for "Mother Mary" since becoming a Catholic had wanted advice, and wanted strength, and she had sought and found what she wanted, and now she had sent to the same source for further help. As soon as Jenifer was gone, Father Daniels put away his teak-wood and his carving tools, and packed up his drawings and his pencils. He was a man of great neatness, and his accuracy in all business, and his fruitful recollection of every living soul's wants, as far as they had ever been made known to him, were charming points of his character-- points, that is, natural gifts, that the great charity which belonged to his priesthood adorned and made meritorious. While he "tidied away his things," as his housekeeper Mrs. Moore used to say, bethought and he prayed--his mind foresaw great possible woe; he knew, with the knowledge that is made up of faith and experience united, that some things seem plainly to know no other master than prayer. People are prayed out of troubles that no other power can touch. Every now and then this fact seems to be imprinted in legible characters on some particular woe, actual or threatened; and though Father Daniels, like a holy priest, prayed always and habitually, he yet felt, as we have said, with respect to the peculiar entanglements that the letter from Mrs. Brewer in the morning and the revelation made by Jenifer in the afternoon seemed to threaten. So, when he again sat down, it was with Mrs. Brewer's letter before him on the table, and a lamp lighted, and "the magnifiers," to quote Mrs. Moore again, put on to make the deciphering of Mrs. Erskine's handwriting as easy as possible. Mrs. Brewer's was larger, blacker, plainer--and her note was short. It only said: "Read my sister's letter, which I have just received. It seems so hard to give up the child; it would be much harder to see her less happy than she has always been at home. I don't like Horace Erskine. It is as if I was kept from liking him. I really have no reason for my prejudice against him. Come and see me if you can, and send or bring back the letter." Having put this aside, Father Daniels opened Mrs. Erskine's letter. It must be given just as it was written to the reader:

DEAREST MARY:

"You must guess how dreadful your becoming a Catholic is to us. I cannot conceive why, when you had been happy so long--these thirteen years--you should do this unaccountable thing now. There must have been some strange influence exercised over you by Mr. Brewer. I feared how it might be when, nine years ago, your boy was born, and you gave him up so weakly. However, I think you will see plainly that you have quite forfeited a mother's rights over Mary. She is seventeen, and will not have a happy home with you now. Poor child, she would turn Catholic to please you, and for peace sake, perhaps. But you cannot *wish* such a misery for her. She will, I suppose, soon be the only Protestant in your house. I can't help blaming old Lady Caroline, even after her death; for she certainly brought the spirit of controversy into Beremouth, and stirred up Mr. Brewer to think of his

rights. Now, I write to propose what is simply an act of justice on your part, though really, I must say, an act of great grace on the part of my husband. Horace is in love with Mary. As to the fancy he was supposed to have for Claudia, I **know** that **that** was only a fancy. He was taken with her wilful, spoilt-child ways--you certainly did not train her properly--and he wanted her money. Of course as you had been married four years without children, he did not suspect anything about Freddy. It was an entanglement well got rid of; and Claudia wanted no comforting, that was plain enough. But it is different now. Horace **is** in love **now**. And if Mary is not made a Catholic by Mr. Brewer and you and old Jenifer, she will say, 'Yes,' like a good child. We are **extremely** fond of her. And Mr. Erskine generously offers to make a very handsome settlement on her. I consider a marriage, and a very speedy one, with Horace the best thing; now that you have, by your own act, made her home so homeless to her. I am sure you ought to be very thankful for so obviously good an arrangement of difficulties. Let me hear from you as soon as Horace arrives. He is going to speak to you directly.

"Your affectionate sister,
"Lucia Erskine.

"P.S.--As Mr. Brewer has always said that, Mary being his adopted child, he should pay her on her marriage the full interest of the money which will be hers at twenty-one, of course Horace expects that, as we do. Lady Caroline's ten thousand, Mr. Brewer's five thousand, and the hundred a year for which her father insured his life, and which I find that you give to her, will, with Horace's means, make a good income; and to this Mr. Erskine will, as Mary is my niece, add very liberally. I cannot suppose that you can think of objecting. L. E."

Father Daniels read this letter over very carefully. Then he placed it, with Mrs. Brewer's note, in his pocket-book, and immediately putting on his hat, and taking his stick, he walked into the kitchen.

"Where's your husband?" to Mrs. Moore.

"Mark is only just outside, sir."

"I shall be back soon. Tell him to saddle the cob." One of Mr. Brewer's experiments had been to give Father Daniels a horse, and to endow the horse with fifty pounds a year, for tax, keep, house-rent, physic, saddles, shoes, clothing, and general attendance. It was, we may say as we pass on, an experiment which answered to perfection. The cob's turnpikes alone remained as a grievance in Mr. Brewer's mind. He rather cherished the grievance. Somehow it did him good. It certainly deprived him of all feeling of merit. All thought of his own generosity was extinguished beneath the weight of a truth that could not be denied--"that cob is a never-ending expense to Father Daniels!" However, this time, without a thought of the never-ending turnpike's tax, the cob was ordered; being late, much to Mr. and Mrs. Moore's surprise; and Father Daniels walked briskly out of the garden, down the village seaport, past the coal-wharves, where everything looked black and dismal, and so pursued his way on the top of the low edge of the cliff, to a few tidy-looking houses half a mile from Clayton, which were railed in from the turfy cliff-side, and had painted on their ends, "Good bathing here." The houses were in a row. He knocked at the centre one, and it was opened by a man of generally a seafaring cast. "Mr. Dawson in?" "Yes, your reverence. His reverence, Father Dawson, is in the parlor;" and into the parlor walked Father Daniels. It was a short visit made to ascertain if his invalid friend could say mass for him the next morning at a later hour than usual--the hour for the parish mass, in fact; and to tell him why. They were dear friends and mutual advisers. They now talked over Mrs. Erskine's letter.

"There can be no reason in the world why Miss Lorimer should not marry Horace Erskine if she likes him, provided he is not Henry Evelyn. He stands charged with being Henry Evelyn, and of being the doer of Henry Evelyn's deeds. You must tell Mrs. Brewer. It is better never to tell suspicions, if you can, instead, tell facts. In so serious a matter you may be obliged to tell suspicions, just to keep mischief away at the beginning. Eleanor must see the man. As to claiming him, that's useless. She acted the unwise woman's part, and she must bear the unwise woman's recompense. He'll find somebody to marry him, no doubt; but no woman ought to do it; no marriage of his can be right in God's sight. So the course in the present instance is plain enough." Yes, it was plain enough; so Father Daniels walked back to Clayton and mounted the cob, and rode away through the soft sweet night air, and got to Beremouth just after ten o'clock.

"I am come to say mass for you to-morrow," he said to Mr. Brewer, who met him in the hall. "No, I won't go into the drawing-room. I won't see any one to-night. I am going straight to the chapel."

"Ring for night prayers then in five minutes, will you?" said Mr. Brewer. And Father Daniels, saying "Yes," walked on through the hall, and up the great stair-case to his own room and the chapel, which, were side by side. In five minutes the chapel bell was rung by the priest. Mrs. Brewer looked toward her daughter. "Mary must do as she likes;" said Mr. Brewer, in his open honest way driving his wife before him out of the room. There stood Horace Erskine. It was as if all in a moment the time for the great choice had come. They were at the door--the girl stood still. They were gone, they were crossing the hall; she could hear Mr. Brewer's shoes on the carpet--not too late for her to follow. Her light step will catch theirs--they may go a little further still before the very last moment comes. Her mother or Horace? How dearly she loved her mother, how her child's heart went after her, all trust and love--and Horace, **did** she love him?--love him well enough to stay **there--there** and **then**, at a moment that would weigh so very heavily in the scale of good and evil, right or wrong? If he had not been there she might have stayed, if she stayed now that he was there, should she not stay with him--more, leave her mother and stay with him? Thought is quick. She stood by the table; she looked toward the door, she listened--Horace held out his hand--"With me, Mary--with **me!**" And she was gone. Gone even while he spoke, across the hall, up the stairs and at that chapel door just as this last of the servants, without knowing, closed it on her. Then Mary went to her own room just at the head of the great stair-case, and opened the doors softly, and knelt down, keeping it open, letting the stair-case lamp stray into the darkness just enough to show her where she was. There she knelt till the night prayers were over, and when Mr. Brewer passed her door, she came out, a little glad to show them that she had not been staying down stairs with Horace. He smiled, and put his hand inside her arm and stopped her from going down. "My dear child," he said, "I have had the great blessing of my life given to me in the conversion of your mother. If God's great grace, for the sake of his own blessed mother, should fall on you, you will not quench it, my darling. Meanwhile, I shall never have a better time than **this** time to say, that I feel more than ever a

father to you. That if you will go on treating me with the childlike candor and trust that I have loved to see in you, you will make me happier than you can ever guess at, dear child." And then he kissed her, and Minnie eased her heart by a few sobs and tears, and her head rested on his shoulder, and she thanked him for his love. Then Father Daniels came out of the chapel, and advanced to where they stood. Mary had long known the holy man. He saw how it was in an instant. "Welcome home, Mary; you see I come soon. And now--when I am saying mass to-morrow, stay quietly in your own room, and pray to be taught to love God. Give yourself to him. Don't trouble about questions. His you are. Rest on the thought--and we will wait on what may come of it. I shall remember you at mass to-morrow. Good-night. God bless you."

"I can't come down again. My eyes are red," said Mary, to Mr. Brewer, when they were again alone. And he laughed at her. "I'll send mamma up," he said. And Mary went into her room. But she had taken no part *against* her mother; so her heart said, and congratulated itself. She had not left her, and stayed with Horace. She had had those few words with her step-father. That was over, and very happily too. She had seen Father Daniels again. It was getting speedily like the old things, and the old times, before the long visit to Scotland, where Horace Erskine was the sun of her new world. Somehow she felt that he was losing power every moment--also she felt, a little resentfully, that there had been things said or thought, or insinuated, about the dear home she was loving so well, which were unjust, untrue, unkind; nay, more, cruel, shameful!--and so wrong to unite *her* to such ideas; to make her a party to such thoughts. In the midst of her resentment, her mother came in. "Nobody ever was so charming looking," was the first thought. "How young she looks--how much younger and handsomer than Aunt Erskine. What a warm loving atmosphere this house always had, and *has*." The last word with the emphasis of a perfect conviction. "And so you have made your eyes red on papa's coat--and I had to wipe the tears off with my pocket-handkerchief. Oh, you darling, I am sure Horace Erskine thought we had beaten you!" Then kisses, and laughter; not quite without a tear or two on both, sides, however. "Now, my darling, Horace has told us his love story--and so he is very fond of you?" "Mamma, mamma, I love you better than all the earth." Kisses, laughter, and just one or two tears, all over again.

"My darling child, you have been some months away from us--do you think you can quite tell your own mind on a question which is life-long in its results? I mean, that the thing that is pleasant in one place may not be so altogether delightful in another. I should like you to decide so great a question while in the full enjoyment of your own rights *here*. This is your *home*. *This* is what you will have to exchange for something else when you marry. You are very young to marry--not eighteen, remember. Whenever you decide that question, I should like you to decide it on your own ground, and by your own mother's side."

"I wonder whether you know how wise you are?" was the question that came in answer. "Do you know, mother, that I cried like a baby at Hull, because I felt all you have said, and even a little more, and thought he was unkind to press me. You know Aunt Erskine had told me; and Horace, too, in a way--and he said at Hull he dreaded the influence of this place, and--and--" "But there is nothing for *you* to dread. This home is yours; and its influence is good; and all the love you command here is your safety." Mrs. Brewer spoke boldly, and quite with the spirit of heroism. She was standing up for her rights. But Mr. Brewer stood at the door. "The lover wants to smoke in the park in the moonlight. Some information just to direct his thoughts, you little witch," for his step-child had tried to stop his mouth with a kiss--

"Papa, I am so happy. I won't, because I can't, plan to leave everything I love best in the world just as I come back to it." "But you must give Erskine some kind of an answer. The poor fellow is really very much in earnest. Come and see him." "No, I won't," said Mary, very much as the wilful Claudia might have uttered the words. But Mary was thinking that there was a great contrast between the genial benevolence she had come to, and the indescribable *something* which was *not* benevolence in which she had lived ever since her mother had become a Catholic. Mr. Brewer almost started. "I mean, papa, that I must live here unmolested at least one month before I can find out whether I am not always going to love *you* best of all mankind. Don't you think you could send Horace off to Scotland again immediately?" "Bless the child! Think of the letters that have passed--you read them, or knew of them?" "*Knew* of them," said Mary, nodding her head confidentially, and looking extremely naughty. "Well; and I asked him here!" "Yes; I know that." "And you now tell me to send him away! My dear!" exclaimed Mr. Brewer, looking appealingly at his wife. "Dearest, you must tell Mr. Erskine that Mary really would like to be left quiet for awhile. Say so now; and to-morrow you can suggest his going soon, and returning in a few weeks." "And to-morrow I can have a cold and lie in bed. Can't I?" said Mary. But now they ceased talking, and heard Horace Erskine go out of the door to the portico. "There! he's gone. And I am sure I can smell a cigar--and I could hate smoking, couldn't I?" Mother and father now scolded the saucy child, and condemned her to solitude and sleep. And when they were gone the girl put her head out of the open window, and gazed across the spreading park, so peaceful in its far-stretching flat, just roughened in places by the fern that had begun to get brown under the hot sun; and then she listened to the sound of the wind that came up in earnest whispers from the woody corners, and the far-off forests of oak. The sound rose and fell like waves, and the silence between those low outpourings of mysterious sound was loaded with solemnity.

Do the whispering woods praise him; and are their prayers in the tall trees? She was full of fancies that night. But the words Father Daniels had said to her seemed to her to come again on the night-breeze, and then she was quiet and still. And yet--and yet--though she *tried* to forget, and *tried* to keep her mind at peace, the spirit within would rise from its rest, and say that she had left an atmosphere of evil speaking and uncharitableness; that malice and harsh judgment had been hard at work, and all to poison *home*, and to win her from it.

And while she was trying to still these troublings of the mind, Mr. Brewer, by her mother's side, was reading for the first time Mrs. Erskine's letter, which Father Daniels had returned. "My dear, my dear," said Mr. Brewer, "a very improper letter. I think Mary is a very extraordinary girl not to have been prejudiced against me. I shall always feel grateful to her. And as to this letter, which I call a very painful letter, don't you think we had better burn it?" And so, by the assistance of a lighted taper, Mr. Brewer cleared that evil thing out of his path for ever.

"Eleanor," said Lady Greystock, "how lovely this evening is. The moon is full, and how glorious! Shall we drive by a roundabout way to Blagden? James," speaking to the man who occupied the seat behind, "how far is it out of our way if we go through the drive in Beremouth Park, and come out by the West Lodge into the Blagden turnpike road?" "It will

be two miles further, my lady. But the road is very good, and the carriage will run very light over the gravelled road in the park." "Then we'll go." So on getting to the bottom of the street in which Mrs. Morier lived, Lady Greystock took the road to Beremouth; and the ponies seemed to enjoy the change, and the whole world, except those three who were passing so pleasantly through a portion of it, seemed to sleep beneath the face of that great moon, wearing, as all full moons do, a sweet grave look of watching on its face.

"Isn't it glorious? Isn't it grand, this great expanse and this perfect calm? Ah, there goes a bat; and a droning beetle on the wing just makes one know what silence we are passing through. How pure the air feels. Oh, what blessings we have in life--how many more than we know of. I think of that in the still evenings often. Do you, Eleanor?"

"Yes, Lady Greystock." But Eleanor spoke in a very calm, business-like, convinced sort of manner; not the least infected by the tears of tenderness and the poetical feeling that Lady Greystock had betrayed.

"Yes, Lady Greystock And when in great moments"--"Great moments! I like that," said Claudia--"when I have those thoughts I think of you." "Of me?" "Yes. And I am profoundly struck by the goodness of God, who endowed the great interest of my life with so powerful an attraction for me. I must have either liked or disliked you. I am so glad to love you."

"Eleanor, I wish you would tell me the story of your life." They had passed through the lodge gates now, and were driving through Beremouth Park. "You were not always what you are now."

"You will know it one day," said Eleanor, softly. "Oh, see how the moon comes out from behind that great fleecy cloud; just in time to light us as we pass through the shadows which these grand oaks cast. What lines of silver light lie on the road before us. It is a treat to be out in such a place on such a night as this. Stay, stay, Lady Greystock. What is that?"

Lady Greystock pulled up suddenly, and standing full in the moonlight, on the turf at the side of the carriage, was a tall, strong-built man. He took off his cap with a respectful air, and said, "I beg pardon. I did not intend to stop you. But if you will allow me I will ask your servant a question." He addressed Lady Greystock, and did not seem to look at Eleanor, though she was nearest to him. Eleanor had suddenly pulled a veil over her face; but Lady Greystock had taken hers from her hat, and her uncovered face was turned toward the man with the moonlight full upon it. He said to the servant, "Can you tell me where a person called Eleanor Evelyn is to be found? Mrs. Evelyn she is probably called. I want to know where she is." Before James, who had long known the person by his mistress's side as Mrs. Evelyn, could speak, or recover from his very natural surprise, Eleanor herself spoke. "Yes," she said, "Mrs. Evelyn lives not far from Marston. I should advise you to call on Mrs. Jenifer Stanton, who lives at Marston with Mrs. Morier. She will tell you about her." "She who lives with Madam Morier, of course?" said the man. "Yes; the same." "Goodnight."

"Good night," said Lady Greystock in answer, and obeying Eleanor's whispered "Drive on," she let the ponies, longing for their stable, break into their own rapid pace, and, soon out of the shadows, they were in the light--the broad, calm, silent light--once more.

PART III.

Lady Greystock drove on briskly. They were out of the shadow of the trees and again on the broad, white gleaming gravelled road that led to the west lodge, and the turnpike road to Blagden. Not a word was spoken. On went the ponies, who knew the dark shadows of the elms that stood at intervals, in groups, two or three together, by the side of the road, and threw their giant outlines across it, making the moon-light seem brighter and brighter as it silvered the surface of the broad carriage drive, and made the crushed granite sparkle--on went the ponies, shaking their heads with mettlesome impatience when the pulling of the reins offended them, not frightened at the whirling of the great droning night insects, which flew out from the oak-trees on the left, nor shying away from the shadows--on they went through the sweet, still, soft, scented night air, and the broad, peaceful light of the silent moon--on they went! Not one word mingled with the sound of their ringing hoofs, not a breath was heard to answer to the sighing of the leaves; the "good night" that had been spoken between the stranger and themselves still seemed to live in the hearing of those to whom he had spoken, and to keep them in a meditative and painful silence.

At last the lodge was reached. The servant opened the gates; the carriage was driven through; the high road was gained, and all romantic mystery was over; the dream that had held those silent ones was gone; and like one suddenly awoke, Lady Greystock said: "Eleanor! how wonderful; you knew that man! Eleanor! he knew you; asked about you; had been seeking you. Why was he there in the Beremouth woods--appearing at this hour, among the ferns and grass, like a wild creature risen from its lair? Eleanor! why don't you speak to me? Why, when he spoke of you by your name, did you not answer for yourself? Why did you send him to Jenifer? Oh! Eleanor; I feel there is something terrible and strange in all this. I cannot keep it to myself. I must tell my father. It can't be right. It cannot be for any good that we met a man lurking about, and not owned by you, though he is here to find you. Speak, Eleanor! Now that I am in the great high road I feel as if I had gone through a terror, or escaped some strange danger, or met a mystery face to face."

Lady Greystock spoke fast and in a low voice, and Eleanor, bending a little toward her, heard every word.

"You *have* met a mystery face to face," she said in a whisper, which, however, was sufficiently audible. "I *did* know that man. And I am not denying that he sought me, and that he had a right to seek me. But many things have changed since those old days, when, if I had obeyed him, I should have done better than I did. I know what he wants; and Jenifer can give it to him. Here we are at Blagden; think no more of it, Lady Greystock."

No answer was given to Eleanor's words; they met Dr. Blagden on the steps at the door. "You are later than usual--all right?" "All quite right," said Eleanor. "The beauty of the night tempted us to come home through Beremouth," said Lady Greystock. "How lovely it would look on such a sweet, peaceful night," said Mrs. Blagden, who now joined them; and then Eleanor took the carriage wraps in her arms up stairs, and Lady Greystock went into the drawing-room, and

soon after the whole household--all but Eleanor--were in bed.

Not Eleanor. She opened a box where she kept her letters, and many small objects of value to her, and carefully shutting out the moonlight, and trimming her lamp into brilliancy, she took out letter after letter from Henry Evelyn calling her his beloved one, and his wife; then the letter from Corny Nugent, saying that Henry Evelyn and Horace Erskine were one; and the one thing that Corny Nugent had sent to her as evidence--it seemed to be proof sufficient. It was a part of a letter from Horace to his uncle, Mr. Erskine, which had been flung into a waste-paper basket, and which, having the writer's signature, Corny had kept, and sent to Eleanor. Not, as he said, that he knew the man's handwriting, but that she did; and that, therefore, to her it would have value as proving or disproving his own convictions.

Eleanor had never brought this evidence to the proof. She had laid by Corny's letter, and the inclosure. She had put it all aside with the weight of a great dread on her mind, and "Not yet, not yet," was all she said as she locked away both the assertion and the proof.

But her husband was at Beremouth now. Yes; and on what errand? She knew that too.

Mrs. Brewer had called that morning to see Lady Greystock. Mrs. Brewer had come herself to tell Claudia that Mary would arrive, and that Horace would bring her. She would not trust any one but herself to give that information. She never let go the idea of Horace having behaved in some wrong way to Claudia. She knew Claudia's disposition, her bravery, her determination; and her guesses were very near the truth. "Mother Mary" had those womanly instincts which jump at conclusions; and the truths guessed at through the feelings are truths, and remain truths for ever, though reason has never proved them or investigation explained them.

Then, too, there was her sister's letter, which Mrs. Brewer had sent to Father Daniels. There the passing fancy for Claudia had been spoken of. In that letter the love of money had peeped out, and supplied the motive; but Mrs. Brewer knew very well that Claudia's disposition was not of a sort to have any acquaintance with passing fancies. If she had loved Horace, she had loved with her whole heart; and if she had been deceived in him, her whole heart had suffered, and her whole life been overcast. "Mother Mary" had felt to some purpose; and now, only herself should say to Lady Greystock that he was coming among them again.

She had arrived at Blagden and she had told Claudia everything; what Horace wished as to Mary, and what her sister and Mr. Erskine desired; and she had not hidden her own unwillingness to lose her child, or her own wish that Mary might have married, when she did marry, some one more to her mother's mind, and nearer to her mother's house. And it was in remembrance of this conversation that Lady Greystock, when she took Jenifer into the carriage, had said: "If you ever pray for my father, and all he loves, pray *now*?"

Something of all this had been told by Lady Greystock to Eleanor. And in the time that the aunt and niece had been together that day, Eleanor had said to Jenifer, "He is down at the park wanting to marry Miss Lorimer."

Jenifer's darling--Jenifer's darling's darling; how she loved "Mother Mary," and Lansdowne Lorimer's child, only her own great and good heart knew. What could she do but go to God, and his priest? What human foresight could have prevented this? What human wisdom could set things right? And after all, they did not *surely* know that Eleanor's husband and Claudia's lover were met in one man, and that man winning the heart of lovely, innocent Mary Lorimer, and pressing marriage on her. But for her prayer, Jenifer used to say, she should have gone out of her mind. Oh, the comfort that grew out of the thought that GOD KNEW! and that her life and all that was in it were given to him. Such a shifting of responsibility--such a supporting sense of his never allowing anything to be in that life that was not, in some way, for his glory--such practical strength, such heart-sustaining power, grew out of Jenifer's prayer that even Eleanor's numbed heart rested on it, and she had learnt to be content to live, from hour to hour, a life of submission and waiting.

But was the waiting to be over now?--was something coming? If so, she must be prepared. And so, diligently, by the lamp-light, Eleanor produced her own letters, and opened that torn sheet to compare the writing. It was different in some things, yet the same. As she gazed, and examined, and compared terminations, and matched the capital letters together, she knew it was the same handwriting. Time had done its work. The writing of the present was firmer, harder, done with a worse pen, written at greater speed. But that was all the change. She was convinced; and she put away her sorrow-laden store, locked them safe from sight, said her night prayers, and went to bed. Not a sigh, nor a tear. No vain regrets, no heart-easing groans. The time for such consolations had long been passed with Eleanor. Within the last nine years her life had as much changed as if she had died and risen again into another world of intermediate trial. A very great change had been wrought in her by Lady Greystock's friendship. Eleanor had become educated. The clever, poetical girl, who had won Horace Erskine's attention by her natural superiority to everything around her--even when those surroundings had been of a comparatively high state of cultivation, had hardened into the industrious and laborious woman. When it pleased Lady Greystock to hear her sing, in her own sweet, untaught way, the songs of her own country, she had sung them; and then, when Lady Greystock had offered to cultivate the talent, she had worked hard at improvement. She had been brought up by French nuns, at a convent school, and had spoken their language from childhood; when Lady Greystock got French books, it was Eleanor's delight to read aloud; and she had made Mrs. Blagden's two little girls almost as familiar with French as she was herself. Those things had given rise to the idea that Mrs. Evelyn, as she was always called, had seen better days; and no one had ever suspected her relationship to Jenifer. Mr. Brewer alone knew of it. As to Mr. Brewer ever telling anything that could be considered, in the telling, as a breach of confidence, that was, of course, impossible.

That night--that night so important in our story, Jenifer, having done all her duties by her mistress, which were really not a few, and having seen that the girl who did the dirty work was safe in the darkness of a safely put out candle, opened her lattice to look on the night. Her little room had a back view. That is, it looked over the flagged kitchen court, and the walled-in flower garden, and beyond toward the village of Blagden and the majestic woods at the back of the house at Beremouth.

Jenifer had gone to bed, and had risen again, oppressed by a feeling that something was, as she expressed it, "going on--something doing somewhere--'something up,' as folks say, sir. I can't account for it. I fancied I heard something--that I was wanted. And I thought at first that some one was in my room. Then I went into mistress's room, without my shoes, not to wake her. She was all right, sleeping like a tender babe. Then I went to Peggy's room. The girl was asleep. I sniffed up and down the passage, just to find if anything wrong in the way of smoke or fire was about. No; all was pure and pleasant; and then I went down stairs to make sure of the doors being locked. Everything was right, sir"--such was Jenifer's account to Mr. Brewer; who, when she paused at this point, asked: "What next did you do? Did you go upstairs again to bed?" "I went upstairs," the woman answered, "but not to bed. I sat at the window, and looked out over the garden, and over the meadows beyond the old bridge, and on to Beremouth. And the night was the brightest, fairest, loveliest night I ever beheld. And so, sir, I said my prayers once more, and went again to bed; and slept in bits and snatches, for still I was always thinking that somebody wanted me, till the clock struck six; and then I got up." "You don't usually get up at six, or before the girl gets up, do you?" "No, sir; never, I may say. But I got up to ease my mind of its burthens. And when Peggy had got up, and was down stairs, I started off for the alms-house; I thought Mr. Dawson might be up to say mass there, for it was St. Lawrence's Day." "Well?" "But there had been no message about mass, and no priest was expected. And as I got back to our door there was Mrs. Fell, the milk-woman. She had brought the milk herself. I asked how that should be. She said they had had a cow like to die in the night, and that their man had been up all night, and that she was sparing him, for he had gone to lie down. Then I said, 'Why, I could never have heard any of you busy about the cattle in the night'--you see they rent the meadows. But she said they were not in the meadows; the beasts were all in the shed at the farm. 'But,' she said, it's odd if you were disturbed, for a man came to our place just before twelve o'clock, and asked for you.' 'For me!' I cried--'a man at your place in the middle of the night, asking for me!' She said, 'Yes; and a decent-spoken body, too. But tired, and wet through and through. He said he had fallen into the Beremouth deer pond, up in the park. That is, he described the place clear enough, and we knew it was the deer pond, for it could not be anywhere else!'" "And did you ask where the man went to?" "No, sir. I lifted my eyes, and I saw him." "And who was he?" "Oh, Mr. Brewer, it must all be suffered as he gives it to me to suffer; but I am not clear about telling his name."

Mr. Brewer took out his watch and looked at it. "It is nearly ten o'clock," he said. "Where's your mistress?"

"Settled to her work, sir."

Mr. Brewer held this long talk with Jenifer in that right-hand parlor down stairs where he had paid that money to Mrs. Morier, when the reader first made his acquaintance. He had great confidence in Jenifer. He knew her goodness, and her patience, and her trust. He knew something, too, of her trials, and also of her prayer; but he had come there to investigate a very serious matter, and he was going steadily through with it.

"Listen, Jenifer."

"Yes, sir."

"Last night, just after our night prayers, Father Daniels being in the house, my friend, Mr. Erskine, who escorted my step-daughter, Mary Lorimer, home, went out into the park, just, as was supposed, to have a cigar before going to bed. Mrs. Brewer and I were in Mary's room when we heard Mr. Erskine leave the house. He certainly lighted his cigar. Mary's window was open, and we smelt the tobacco. Jenifer, he never returned."

They were both standing and looking at each other. "My life, and all that is in it!" Up went Jenifer's prayer, but voicelessly, to heaven. "My life, and all that is in it!" But a strong faith that the one terrible evil that her imagination pictured would not be in it, was strong within her.

"He never returned. My man-servant woke me in my first sleep by knocking at the bed-room door, and saying that Mr. Erskine had not returned. I rose up and dressed myself. I collected the men and went out into the park. We went to the south lodge, to ask if any one had seen him. 'No,' they said. 'But the west lodge-keeper had been there as late as near to ten o'clock, and he had said that a man had been in their house asking a good many questions about Beremouth, and who we had staying there, and if a Mr. Erskine was there, or ever had been there, and inquiring what sort of looking man he was, whether he wore a beard, or had any peculiarity? how he dressed, and if there had ever been any report of his going to be married? They had answered his questions, because they suspected nothing worse than a gossiping curiosity; and they had given him a rest, and a cup of tea. He said that a friend, a cousin of his, had lived as servant with Mr. Erskine; and he also asked if Mr. Erskine would be likely to pass through that lodge the next day, for that he had a great curiosity to see him. He said that he had known him well once, and wanted greatly to see him once more. He, after all this talking, asked the nearest way to Marston. He was directed through the park, and he left them. Our inquiries about Horace Erskine having been answered by this history told by one lodge-keeper to the other, we could not help suspecting that some one had been on the watch for the young man, and taking Jones from the lodge, and his elder boy with us, we dispersed ourselves over the park to seek for him, a good deal troubled by what we had heard. We got to the deer pond, but we had sought many places before we got there; it did not seem a likely place for a man to go to in the summer night. We looked about--we went back to get lanterns--they were necessary in the darkness made by the thick foliage; one side was bright enough, and the pool was like a looking-glass where it was open to the sloping turf, and the short fern, which the deer trample down when they get there to drink; but the side where the thorns, hollies, and yew-trees grow was as black as night; and yet we thought we could see where the wild climbing plants had been pulled away, and where some sort of struggle might have taken place. As we searched, when we came back, we found strong evidence of a desperate encounter; the branches of the great thorn-tree were hanging split from the stem, and, holding the lantern, we saw the marks of broken ground by the margin of the pond, as if some one had been struggling at the very edge of it. Then, all at once, and I shall never understand why we did not see it before--the moonbeams grew brighter, I suppose--but there in the pond was the figure of a man; not altogether in the water, but having struggled so far out as to get his head against the bank, hid as it was with the grass and low brush-wood, the ferns and large-leaved water-weeds; we laid bold of the poor fellow--it was Horace Erskine, Jenifer!"

"**My life, and all that is in it.**" But the hope, the faith, rather, was still alive, that that worst grief should not be in it--

so she prayed--so she felt--for Jenifer! "Master," she gasped, "not dead--not dead--Mr. Brewer."

"Not dead!" he said gravely; "he would have been dead if we had not found him when we did. He was bruised and wounded; such a sight of ill-treatment as no eyes ever before beheld, I think. He must have been more brutally used than I could have believed possible, if I had not seen it. His clothes were torn; his face so disfigured that he will scarcely ever recover the likeness of a man, and one arm is broken." "But not dead?" "No; but he *may* die; the doctor is in the house, and the police are out after the man whom we suspect of this horrible barbarity. Now, Jenifer, hearing some talk of a stranger who seemed to know you, I came here to ask you to tell me, in your own honest way, your honest story."

But Jenifer seemed to have no desire to make confidences.

"Who told you of a stranger?"

"Have you not told me yourself, in answer to my first questions, before giving you my reasons for inquiring?"

"No, sir; that won't do. I judge from what you said that you had heard something of this stranger before you came here."

"I had, Jenifer." And Mr. Brewer looked steadily at her.

"Well, sir?"

"Jenifer, I have really come out of tenderness to you, and to those who may belong to you."

"No one doubts your tenderness, sir; least of any could I doubt it. Tell me who mentioned a stranger to you, so as to send you here to me?"

"Lady Greystock's groom, coming to Beremouth early, and finding us in great trouble, made a declaration as to a stranger who had appeared and stopped his mistress as she was driving through the park last night. He says this man asked if they could tell where Mrs. Evelyn lived, and Mrs. Evelyn, immediately answering, said that she lived somewhere in the neighborhood, and that he could learn by inquiring for you. The groom says that the man evidently knew Mrs. Morier's name, as well as year name; and that after speaking to him, Mrs. Evelyn asked Lady Greystock to drive on, and that she drove rapidly, and never spoke till they had almost got back to Blagden."

"It is quite true," said Jenifer. "He told me the same story this day."

"Can you say where this man is? He will be found first or last; and it is for the sake of justice that you should speak, Jenifer. The police are on his track. Let me entreat you to give me every information. Concealment is the worst thing that can be practised in such a case as this--have you any idea where he is? I do not ask you who he is; you will have to tell all, I fear, before a more powerful person than I am. I only come as a friend, that you may not be induced to conceal the evil-doer."

"The evil-doer," said Jenifer; "who says he did it?"

"I say he will be tried for doing it; and that a trial is good for the innocent in such a case of terrible suspicion as this."

"May be," said Jenifer, "may be!"

Then, once more, that prayer, said, from her very heart, though unspoken by her lips; and then these quiet words--"And as to the man himself. He is my brother. My mother's child by her second husband." "Your brother--he with whom Eleanor lived in Ireland?" "Yes, Mr. Brewer; he of whom I told you when you saved Eleanor so many years ago. And as to where he is--step into the kitchen, sir, and you may see him sleeping in a chair by the fire--any way, I left him there, when I came to open the door to you."

Mr. Brewer had really come to Jenifer in a perfectly friendly way; exactly as he had said--out of tenderness. He had known enough to send him there, and to have those within call who would secure this stranger, whoever he was, and wherever he was found. Now, known, he walked straight into the kitchen, and there stopped to take a full view of a man in a leathern easy chair, his arm resting on Jenifer's tea-table, and sound asleep. A finer man eyes never saw. Strong in figure, and in face of a remarkable beauty. He was sunburnt; having pulled his neckcloth off, the skin of his neck showed in fair contrast, and the chest heaved and fell as the strong breath of the sleeper was drawn regularly and with healthy ease. It was a picture of calm rest; it seemed like a pity to disturb it. There stood Mr. Brewer safely contemplating one who was evidently in a state of blissful unconsciousness as to danger to others or himself.

"Your brother?" repeated Mr. Brewer to Jenifer, who stood stiff and upright by his side.

"My half-brother, James O'Keefe."

"There is some one at the front door; will you open it?"

Jenifer guessed at the personage to be found there. But she went steadily through the front passage, and, opening the door, let the policeman who had been waiting enter, and then she came back to the kitchen without uttering a word. As the man entered Mr. Brewer laid his hand on the sleeper's shoulder, and woke him. He opened his fine grey eyes, and looked round surprised. "On suspicion of having committed an assault on Mr. Horace Erskine last night, in the park at Beremouth," said the policeman, and the stranger stood up a prisoner. He began to speak; but the policeman stopped him. "It is a serious case," he said. "It may turn out murder. You are warned that anything you say will be used against you at your trial." "Are you a magistrate, sir?" asked O'Keefe as he turned to Mr. Brewer. "Yea; I am. I hope you will take the man's advice, and say nothing."

"But I may say I am innocent?" "Every word you say is at your own risk." "I ran no risk in saying that I am innocent--that

I never saw this Horace Erskine last night--though if I had seen him--"

"I entreat you to be silent; you must have a legal adviser"--"I! Who do I know?" "You shall be well looked to, and well advised," said Jenifer. "There are those in this town, in the office where Lansdowne Lorimer worked, who will work for me."

It was very hard for Mr. Brewer not to promise on the spot that he would pay all possible expenses. But the recollection of the disfigured and perhaps dying guest in his own house rose to his mind, and he had a painful feeling that he was retained on the other side. However, he said to Jenifer that perfect truth and sober justice anybody might labor for in any way. And with this sort of broad hint he left the house, and Jenifer saw the stranger taken off in safe custody, and, mounting his horse, rode toward Blagden. He asked for his daughter; and he was instantly admitted, and shown upstairs into her sitting-room--there he found Claudia, looking well and happy, engaged in some busy work, in which Eleanor was helping her.

"Oh, my dear father!" and Lady Greystock threw the work aside, and jumped up, and into the arms that waited for her.

It was always a sort of high holiday when Mr. Brewer come by himself to visit his daughter. When the sound of the brown-topped boots was heard on the stairs, like a voice of music to Claudia's heart, all human things gave way, for that gladness that her father's great heart brought and gave away, all round him, to everybody, everywhere--but **there**, there, where his daughter lived--there, among the friends with whom she had recovered from a great illness and got the better of a threatened, life-long woe--there Mr. Brewer felt some strong influence making him **that**, which people excellently expressed when they said of him--"he was more than ever himself that day."

Now Mr. Brewer's influence was to make those to whom he addressed himself honest, open, and good. He was loved and trusted. It did not generally enter into people's minds to deceive Mr. Brewer. Candor grew and gained strength in his presence. Candor took to herself the teachings of wisdom; candor listened to the advice of humility; candor threw aside all vain-glorious garments when Mr. Brewer called for her company, and candor put on, forthwith, the crown of truth. "My darling!" said Mr. Brewer, as he kissed Claudia; "my darling!"

"Oh, my dear father--my father, my dear father!" so answered Claudia.

Then she pushed forward a chair; and then Eleanor made ready to leave the room. "Yes, go; go for half an hour, Mrs. Evelyn. But don't be out of the way; I have a fancy for a little chat with you, too, to-day." A grave smile spread itself over Eleanor's placid face as she said she should come back when Lady Greystock sent for her, and then she went away. Once more, when she was gone, Mr. Brewer stood up and taking Claudia's hand, kissed her. "My darling," he said, "I have something to say, and I can only say it to you--I have some help to ask for, and only you can help me. But are you strong enough to help me; are you loving enough to trust me?"

"I will try to be all you want, father; I **am** strong; I **can** trust--but if you want to know how much I love you--why, you know I can't tell you that--it is more than I can measure, I am afraid. Don't look grave at me. It can't be anything very solemn, if **I** can help you; or anything of much importance, if my help is worth your having."

"Your help is absolutely necessary; at least necessary to my own comfort--now, Claudia. Tell your father why you broke off your engagement with Horace Erskine."

"**He** did it"--she trembled. Her father took her little hand into the grasp of his strong one, and held it with an eloquent pressure.

"He wanted more money, father. It came as a test. He was in debt. I had loved him, as if--as if he had been what **you** must have been in your youth. You were my one idea of man. I had had no heart to study but yours. I learnt that Horace Erskine was unworthy. He was a coward. The pressure of his debts had crushed him into meanness. He asked me to bear the trial, and to save him. I did. I did, father!"

"Yes, my darling."

He never looked at her. Only the strong fingers closed with powerful love on the little hand within their grasp. "But you were fond of Sir Geoffrey?"

"Yes; and glad, and grateful. I should have been very happy--but--"

"But he died," said her father, helping her.

"But Horace sent to Sir Geoffrey the miniature I had given him--letters--and a lock of my poor curling hair--" How tight the pressure of the strong hand grew. "I found the open packet on the table"--she could not say another word. Then a grave, deep voice told the rest for her--"And your honored husband's soul went up to God and found the truth"--and the head of the poor memory-stricken daughter found a refuge on her father's breast, and she wept there silently.

"And that made you ill, my darling; my dear darling Claudia--my own dear daughter! Thank you, my precious one. And you don't like Beremouth now?"

"I love Beremouth, and everything about it," cried Lady Greystock, raising her head, and gathering all her strength together for the effort; "but I dare not see this man--and I would rather never look again on the deer-pond in the park, because there he spoke: there he promised--there I thought all life was to be as that still pool, deep, and overflowing with the waters of happiness and their never-ceasing music. We used to go there every day. I have not looked on it since--I could not bear to listen to the rush of the stream where it falls over the stones between the roots of the old trees, between whose branches the tame deer would watch us, and where old Dapple--the dear old beauty whose name I have never mentioned in all these years---used to take biscuits from our hands. Does old Dapple live, father? Dapple,

who was called '*old*' nine years ago?" And Lady Greystock looked up, and took her hand from her father's grasp, and wiped her eyes, and wetted her fair forehead from a bowl of water, and tried by this question to get away from the misery that this sudden return to the long past had brought to mind.

"Dapple lives," said Mr. Brewer. And then he kissed her again, and thanked her, and said "they should love each other all the better for the confidence he had asked and she had given."

"But why did you ask?"

"I want to have my luncheon at your early dinner," said Mr. Brewer, not choosing to answer her. "You do dine early, don't you?"

"Yes, and to-day Eleanor was going to dine with me."

"Quite right. And I want to speak to her. Claudia, something has happened. You must know all before long. Everybody will know. You had better be in the room while I speak to Eleanor. Let us get it over. But you had better take your choice. It is still about Horace that I want to speak--to speak to Eleanor, I mean."

"I should wish to be present," said Claudia. And she rose and rang the bell.

"Will you ask Mrs. Evelyn to come to us?" she said, when her servant appeared. In a very few minutes in walked Eleanor.

"Mrs. Evelyn," said Mr. Brewer, "last night you directed a man to seek Jenifer at Mrs. Morier's house. That man was James O'Keefe, Jenifer's half-brother. You knew him?" "Yes, Mr. Brewer, I knew him." "But he did not know you?" "No." "He asked about you. Why did you send him to Marston?" "Because he could there learn all he wanted to know. I am not going to bring the shadow of my troubles into this kind house." "That was your motive?" "Yes. But I might have had more motives than one. I think that was uppermost; and on that motive I believe that I acted."

"That man was in the park. At the lodge-gate he had made inquiries after my guest, Mr. Erskine. That man was at Mrs. Fell's, the dairy-woman, at midnight. He was not through; he had, he said, fallen into the water--he described the place, and they knew it to be the deer-pond."

As Mr. Brewer went on in his plain, straightforward way, both women listened to him with the most earnest interest; but as he proceeded Eleanor Evelyn fixed her eye on him with an anxiety and a mingled terror that had a visible effect on Mr. Brewer, who hesitated in his story, and who seemed to be quite distracted by the manner of one usually so very calm and so unfailingly self-processed.

"Now Mr. Erskine had gone out into the park late. Mr. Erskine, my dear friends,--Mr. Erskine *never came back*." He paused, and collected his thoughts once more, in order to go on with his story.

"We went to seek for him. He was found at last, at the deer-pond, surrounded by the evidences of a hard struggle having taken place there, a struggle in which he had only just escaped with his life. He has been ill-treated in a way that it is horrible to contemplate. He is lying now in danger of death. And this morning I have assisted in the capture of James O'Keefe, whom I found by Mrs. Morier's kitchen fire, for this possible murder. I should tell you that Mr. Erskine is just as likely to die as to live."

"Mr. Brewer," said Eleanor, rising up and taking no notice of Lady Greystock's deathlike face,--"Mr. Brewer, is there any truth in a report that has reached me from a man who was in the elder Mr. Erskine's service in Scotland--a report to the effect that Mr. Horace Erskine wished to propose marriage, or had proposed marriage, to Miss Lorimer?"

"There *is* truth in that report," said Mr. Brewer.

"Then I must see that man," said Mrs. Evelyn. "Before this terrible affair can proceed, I must see Horace Erskine. If indeed it be true that he has received this terrible punishment, I can supply a motive for James O'Keefe's conduct that any jury ought to take into consideration."

"But O'Keefe denies having ever seen him," said Mr. Brewer. "He does not deny having inquired about him. He even said words before me that would make me suppose that he had come into this neighborhood on purpose to see him, and to take some vengeance upon him. Mr. Erskine is found with the marks of the severest ill-usage about him, and you say you can supply a motive for such a deed. O'Keefe, however, denies all but the will to work evil; he confesses to the will to do the deed, but denies having done it."

"I must see Mr. Erskine," was all that Eleanor answered. "I must see Mr. Erskine. Whether he sees me or not, *I* must see *him*."

The young woman was standing up--her face quite changed by the expression of anxious earnestness that animated it.

"I must see Mr. Erskine. Mr. Brewer, you must so manage it that I must see Mr. Erskine without delay."

"But you would do no good," said Mr. Brewer, in a very stern tone and with an utter absence of all his natural sympathy. "The man is so injured that his own mother could not identify him."

"Then may God have mercy on us!" cried Eleanor, sinking into a chair. "If I could only have seen that man before this woe came upon us!"

And then that woman burst into one of those uncontrollable fits of tears that are the offspring of despair. Lady Greystock looked at her for a moment, and then rose from her chair. "Victories half won are neither useful nor

honorable," she said. "Wait, Eleanor, I will show you what that man was."

She opened a large metal-bound desk, curiously inlaid, and with a look of wondrous workmanship. She said, looking at her father, "I left this at Beremouth, never intending to see it again, But it got sent here a few years ago. It has never been opened since I locked it before my wedding day." She opened it, and took out several packets and small parcels. Then she opened one--it was a miniature case which matched that one of herself which had been so cruelly sent to good, kind Sir Geoffrey--she opened it "Who is that, Eleanor?" It was curious to see how the eyes, blinded by tears, fastened on it "My husband--my husband--Henry Evelyn. My husband, Mr. Brewer. Oh, Lady Greystock, thank God that at any cost he did not run his soul still farther into sin by bringing on you and on himself the misery of a marriage unrecognized by God."

"And because your unde, James O'Keefe, heard the report that got about concerning that man and Miss Lorimer, he ran his own soul into a guilt that may by this time have deepened into the crime of murder. Oh, Eleanor! when shall we remember that 'vengeance is mine, saith the Lord?'"

"**My life, and all that is in it!**" The words came forth softly, and Mr. Brewer, turning round, saw Jenifer.

"He has been before the magistrates at Marston, Mr. Brewer. He has denied all knowledge of everything about it. He is remanded on the charge--waiting for more evidence--waiting to see whether Mr. Erskine lives or dies. I hired a gig, and came off here to you as fast as I could be driven. Mr. May, in the old office, says that if Mr. Erskine dies, it will be hard to save him. But the doctor's man tells me Mr. Erskine has neither had voice nor sight since he was found--I saw Father Daniels in the street, and he, too, is evidence against the poor creature. He knows of Corny Nugent's letter; and Corny wrote to Jem also, so Jem told me, and he came off here to make sure that Horace Erskine and Henry Evelyn were the same people. And he walked from the Northend railway station, and asked his way to Beremouth, and got a gossip with the gate-keeper, and settled to come on to Marston. And he met Lady Greys took in the carriage, and asked where Eleanor lived, and inquired his way. Did you know him, Eleanor?"

"Yes, I knew him directly; and it was partly because I knew him that I directed him on to you."

"Then he lost his way, and took to getting out of the park by walking straight away in the direction he knew Marston to be lying in. And he got by what we call 'the threshetts,' sir--the water for keeping the fishponds from shallowing--and there he must have fallen in, for he says he climbed the hedge just after, and walked straight away through the grass fields and meadows, and seeing the lights where the Fells were tending the sick cow last night, he got in there, all dripping wet, as the town-clock struck twelve. He does not deny to the magistrates that if he had found Horace Erskine and Henry Evelyn to be one and the same man, that he might have been tempted to evil; he does not deny that. He says he felt sore tempted to go straight to Beremouth House and have him out from sleep and bed, if to do so could have been possible, and to have given him his punishment on the spot. He says he wished as he wandered through the park that something might send the man who had injured us all so sorely out to him, to meet him in the way, that they might have come hand to hand, and face to face. He says he has had more temptations since Corny Nugent's letter to him, and more heart-stirrings in the long silent time before it came, than he can reckon up; and that he has felt as if a dark spirit goaded him to go round the world after that man, and never cease following him till he had made his own false tongue declare to all the earth his own false deeds--but something, he says, kept him back. Always kept him back till now; till now, when Corny's last letter said that Erskine was surely gone to Beremouth to be married. Then, he said, it was as if something sent him--ah yes; and sent him **here** to see the man, to make sure who he was. To tell you, as a brother Catholic, the whole truth--to keep from the dear convert mother the bitter grief of seeing her child bound to a man whom she could never call that child's husband. So he came, Mr. Brewer. He came, and he was found here--but he knows no more of the punishment of that poor man, that poor girl's husband"--pointing to Eleanor--"than an unborn babe. As I hear him speak, I trace the power of the prayer that I took up long ago in my helplessness--when I could not manage my own troubles, my own life, my own responsibilities, it came into my heart to offer all to him. '**My life and all that is in it.**' You and yours have been in it, Mr. Brewer. Your wife has been in it, her life, and her child's--you, too, my dear," turning to Claudia,--"you whom I have loved like one belonging to me--you have been in it; and that woman, my sister's legacy to my poor helplessness. There were so many to care for, to fear for, to suffer for, and to love--how could I put things right, or keep off dangers? I could only give up all to the Father of us all--'**My life, and all that is in it.**' And I tell you this, Mr. Brewer--I tell it [to] you because my very soul seems to know it, and my lips must utter it: In that life there will be no red-handed punishment--no evil vengeance--no vile murder, nor death without repentance. I cannot tell you, I cannot even guess, how that bad man got into this trouble--I have no knowledge of whose hands he fell into--but not into the hands of any one who belongs to me, or to that life which has been so long given into God's keeping."

Jenifer stopped speaking. She had been listened to with a mute attention. Her hearers could not help feeling convinced by her earnestness. She had spoken gently, calmly, sensibly. The infection of her entire faith in the providence of God seized them. They, too, believed. Lady Greystock, the only one not a Catholic, said afterward that she felt quite overpowered by the simple trust that Jenifer showed, and the calm strength with which it endowed her. And Lady Greystock was the first to answer her.

"It is no time for self-indulgence," she said. "Father, Eleanor and I must both go to Beremouth. And we must stay there. We must be there on the spot, to see how these things are accounted for--to know how matters end--to help, as far as we may, to bring them right."

And so, before two hours were over, Jenifer was back in Mrs. Morier's parlor, and Mary Lorimer was with her; sent there to stay; and Lady Greystock and Mrs. Evelyn were at Beremouth.

There was silence in the house, that sort of woful silence that belongs to the anxiety of a dreadful suspense. Toward evening there were whispered hopes--Mr. Erskine was better, people thought. But the severest injuries were about the neck and throat, the chest and shoulders. His hair had been cut off in large patches where the head wounds were--his face was disfigured with the bandages that the treatment made necessary. He lay alive, and groaning. He was better.

When more was known about the injuries done to the throat and chest, something less doubtful would be said as to his recovery. "If he can't swallow, he'll die," said one nurse. "He can live long enough without swallowing," said another. And still they waited.

At night, Eleanor and Lady Greystock stood in the room, with Mr. Brewer, far off by the door, looking at him. There was no love in either heart. The poor wife shrank away, almost wishing that the period of desertion might last for ever.

A week passed, a terribly long week. He could swallow. He could speak. He could see out of one eye. He had his senses. He had said something about his arm. He would be ready in another week to give some account of all he had gone through. He would be able, perhaps, to identify the man. In the meantime, James O'Keefe was safe in custody. And Jenifer was saying her prayer--"**My life, and all that is in it;**" still quite sure, with a strong, simple, never-failing faith, that the great evil of a human and remorseless vengeance was not in it. And yet, as time passed on, and, notwithstanding every effort made by the police, backed by the influence of all that neighborhood, and by Mr. Brewer himself, not a mark of suspicion was found against any one else, it seemed to come home to every one's mind with the force of certainty that James O'Keefe had tried to murder Horace Erskine--that James O'Keefe had done this thing, and no one else.

Very slowly did Horace seem to mend--very slowly. When questions were put to him in his speechless state, he seemed to grow so utterly confused as to alarm his medical attendants. It was made a law at Beremouth that he was to be kept in perfect quietness. James O'Keefe was again brought before the magistrates, and again remanded; and still this time of trial went on, and still, when it was thought possible to speak to Horace on the subject of his injuries, he grew so utterly confused that it was impossible to go on with the matter.

Was there to be no end to this misery? The waiting was almost intolerable. The knowledge that now existed in that house of Horace Erskine's life made it very easy to understand his confusion and incoherency when spoken to of his injuries. But the lingering--the weight of hope deferred--the long contemplation of the miserable sufferer--the slowness of the passage of time, was an inexpressible burthen to the inhabitants of Beremouth.

One sad evening, Lady Greystock and her father, on the terrace, talked together. "Come with me to the deer-pond, Claudia." She shrank from the proposal "Nay," he said, "come! You said at Blagden that half victories were powerless things. You must not be less than your own words. Come to the deer-pond--now." So she took his arm and they walked away. It was the beginning of a sweet, soft night--the evening breezes played about them, and they talked together in love and confidence, as they crossed the open turf, and were lost in the thickets that gathered round the gnarled oak and stunted yew that marked the way to the pond.

It had been many years since Claudia had seen its peaceful waters; terrible in dreams once; and now saddened by a history that would belong to it for ever. They reached the spot, and stood there talking.

Suddenly they heard a sound, they started--a tearing aside of the turning boughs--a sound, strong, positive, angry--then a gentle rustling of the leaves, a soft movement of the feathery fern--and Lady Greystock had let go her father's arm, and was standing with her hand on the head, between the antlers, of a huge old deer--Dapple--"Don Dapple," as the children had called him--and speaking to him tenderly--"Oh, Dapple, do you know me? Oh, Dapple--alas! poor beast--did you do it--that awful thing? Are you so fierce, poor beast--were you the terrible avenger?" How her tears fell! How her whole frame trembled! How the truth came on her as she looked into the large, tearful eyes of the once tame buck, that had grown fanciful and fierce in its age, and of whom even some of the keepers had declared themselves afraid. Mr. Brewer took biscuit from his coat-pocket, chance scraps from lunches, secreted from days before, when he had been out on long rounds through the farms. These old Dapple nibbled, and made royal gestures of satisfaction and approval--and there, viewing his stately head in the water, where his spreading antlers were mirrored, they left him to walk home, with one wonder out of their hearts, and another--wondering awe at the thing that had happened among them--to by their for ever.

They came back, they called the doctors, they examined the torn clothes. They wondered they had never thought of the truth before.

Time went on. And at last, when Horace could speak, and they asked him about the old deer at the pond, he said that it was so--it was as they had thought. It had been an almost deadly struggle between man and beast; and Horace was to bear the marks upon the face and form that had been loved so well to his life's end. A broken-featured man, lame, with a stiff arm, and a sightless eye--and the story of his ruined life no longer a secret--known to all.

Lady Greystock and Mrs. Evelyn remained at Beremouth. Mary Lorimer was left at her grandmother's under the care of the trusty Jenifer. James O'Keefe had returned to Ireland, leaving his niece and her history in good guardianship with Father Daniels and Mr. Brewer; and Freddy, being at school, had been happily kept out of the knowledge of all but the surface facts, which were no secrets from anybody, that a man who had been seen in the park and was a stranger in the neighborhood had been suspected of being the perpetrator of the injuries of which the old deer had been guilty. Poor old deer--poor aged Dapple! It was with a firm hand and an unflinching determination that the kindest man living met the beast once more at the deer-pond, and shot him dead. Mr. Brewer would trust his death to no hand but his own--and there in the thicket where he loved to hide a grave was dug, and the monarch of the place was buried in it.

Lady Greystock and Eleanor kept their own rooms, and lived together much as they had done latterly at Blagden. When Horace Erskine was fit to leave his bed-room, he used to sit in a room that had been called "Mr. Brewer's." It was, in fact, a sort of writing-room, fitted up with a small useful library and opening at the end into a bright conservatory. He had seen Lady Greystock. He knew of Eleanor being in the house. He knew also that his former relations with her were known, and he never denied, or sought to deny, the fact of their Catholic marriage.

No one ever spoke to him on the subject. The subject that was first in all hearts was to see him well and strong, and able to act for himself. One thing it was impossible to keep from him; and that was the anger of Mr. Erskine, his unde,

an anger which Lucia his wife did not try to modify. Mrs. Brewer wrote to her sister; Mr. Brewer pleaded with his brother-in-law. Not a thing could they do to pacify them. Horace was everything that was evil in their eyes; his worst crime in the past was his having made a Catholic marriage with a beautiful Irish girl, and their great dread for the future was that he would make this marriage valid by the English law. They blamed Mr. Brewer for keeping Eleanor in the house; they were thankful to Mr. Brewer for still giving to Horace care, kindness, and a home. Finally, the one great dread that included all other dreads, and represented the overpowering woe, was that contained in the thought that Horace might repent, and become a Papist.

Mr. Brewer, when it came to that, set his all-conquering kindness aside for the time, or, to adopt his wife's words when describing these seeming changes in her husband's character, "he clothed his kindness in temporary armor, and went out to fight." He replied to Mr. and Mrs. Erskine that for such a grace to fall on Horace would be the answer of mercy to the prayer of a poor woman's faith--that he and all his household joined in that prayer; that priests at the altar, and nuns in their holy homes, were all praying for that great result; and that for himself he would only say that for such a mercy to fall upon his house would make him glad for ever.

There was no disputing with a man who could so openly take his stand on such a broad ground of hope and prayer in such direct opposition to the wishes of his neighbors. The Erskines became silent, and Mr. Brewer had gained all he hoped for; peace, peace at least for the time.

At last Horace was well enough to move, and Freddy's holidays were approaching, and there was an unexpressed feeling that Horace was not to be at Beremouth when the boy came back. Mr. Brewer proposed that Horace should go for change of air to the same house in which Father Dawson was lodging, just beyond Clayton, where the sea air might refresh him, and the changed scene amuse his mind; and where, too, he could have the benefit of all those baths, and that superior attendance, described in the great painted advertisement that covered the end of the lodging-houses in so promising a manner. Horace accepted the proposal gladly. He grew almost bright under the expectation of the change, and when the day came he appeared to revive, even under the fatigue of a drive so much longer than any that he had been before allowed to venture upon.

Mr. Dawson was to be kind, and to watch over him a little; and Father Daniels was to visit him, and write letters for him, and be his, adviser and his friend. Before he left Beremouth he had asked to see Lady Greystock. She went with her father to his room quite with the old Claudia Brewer cheerfulness prettily mingling with woman's strength and woman's experience. He rose up, and said, "I wished to ask you to forgive me, Lady Greystock--to forgive me my many sins toward you!" She trembled a little, and said, "Mr. Erskine, may God forgive *me* my pride, my anger, my evil thoughts, which have made me say so often I could never see nor pardon you." It seemed to require all her strength to carry out the resolution with which she had entered that room. "Of course," she went on, "the personal trial that you brought upon me, here, in my young days, I know now to have been a great blessing in a grief's disguise. Though not--*not yet*--a Catholic, I know you were then, as now, a married man." Horace Erskine never moved; he was still standing, holding by the heavy writing-table, and his eyes were fastened on the carpet. She went on: "Since then your wife, a beautiful and even an accomplished woman, has become my own dear friend. We are living together, and until she has a home of her own, we shall probably go on living together. I have nothing, therefore, to say more, except--except--" Here her voice trembled, and changed, and she was only just able to articulate her last words so as to be understood by her hearers, "Except about my dear husband's death--better death than life under misapprehension. That too was a blessing perhaps. Let us leave it to the Almighty Judge. I forgive you; if you wish to hear those words from my poor erring lips, you may remember that I have said them honestly, submitting to the will of *him* who loves us, and from whom I seek mercy for myself."

She turned round to leave the room. "Stop, Lady Greystock; stop!" cried Horace. "In this solemn moment of sincerity, tell me--do you think Eleanor loves me now?" "I would rather not give any opinion." "If you have ever formed an opinion, give it. I entreat you to tell me what is, as far as you know, the truth. Does Eleanor love me?" "Must I speak, father?" "So solemnly entreated, I should say, *yes*." "Does Eleanor love me?" groaned Horace. "No," said Lady Greystock; and turning round quickly, she left her father alone with Horace, and went out of the room.

Five years passed by. Freddy was growing into manhood, enjoying home by his bright sister Lady Greystock's side, and paying visits to his other sister, the happy bride, Mrs. Harrington, of Harrington-leigh, the master of which place, "a recent convert," as the newspapers said, "had lately married the convert step-daughter of Mr. Brewer, of Beremouth." Lady Greystock always lived with her father now, united to him in faith, and joining him in such a flood of good works that all criticism, all wonderment, all lamentation and argument at "such a step!" was simply run down, overpowered, deluged, drowned. The strong flowing stream of charity was irresistible. The solemn music of its deep waters swallowed up all the surrounding cackle of inharmonious talk. Nothing was heard at Beremouth but prayer and praise--evil tongues passed by that great good house to exercise themselves elsewhere. Evil people found no fitting habitation for their wandering spirits in that home of holy peace. And all his life Mr. Brewer walked humbly, looking at Claudia, and calling her "my crown!" She knew why. He had repented with a great sorrow of those early days when he had left her to others' teaching. He had prayed secretly, with strong resolutions, to be blessed with forgiveness. And at last the mercy came--crowned at last. All the mercies of my life crowned by the great gift of Claudia's soul." So the good man went on his way a penitent. Always in his own sight a penitent. Always recommending himself to God in that one character--as a penitent.

Five years were passed, and Lady Greystock had been at Mary's wedding, and was herself at Beremouth, still in youth and beauty, once more the petted daughter of the house--but Eleanor was there no longer. Full three years had passed since Eleanor had gone to London with Lady Greystock, and elected not to return. They heard from her however, frequently; and knew where she was. When these letters came Claudia would drive off to Marston to see Grandmamma Morier, still enjoying life under Jenifer's care. The letters would be read aloud upstairs in the pretty drawing-room where the fine old china looked as gay and bright as ever, and where not a single cup and saucer had changed its place. Jenifer would listen. Taking careful note of every expression, and whispering--sometimes in the voice of humble prayer, sometimes in soft tones of triumphant thanksgiving--"My life, and all that is in it!"

But now this five years' close had been marked by a great fact; the death of Horace Erskine's uncle, and his great estate passing to his nephew, whom he had never seen since their quarrel with him, but whom he had so far forgiven as not to alter his will.

Horace Erskine was in London; and his Beremouth friends were going up to town to welcome him home after four years of life on the continent.

London was at its fullest and gayest. Mr. Erskine had been well known there, making his yearly visits, taking a great house, and attracting round him all the talent of the day. A very rich man, thoroughly well educated, with a fine place in Scotland, and his beautiful wife Lucia by his side, he found himself welcome, and made others in their turn welcome too. Now all this was past. For two seasons London had missed Mr. Erskine, and he had been regretted and lamented over, as a confirmed invalid. Now he was dead. And after a little brief wonder and sorrow the attention of the world was fixed upon his heir, and people of fashion, pleasure, and literature got ready their best smiles for his approval.

Horace had been well enough known once. Never exactly sought after by heads of homes, for he was too much of a speculation. He was known to be in debt; and all inquiries as to his uncle's property had been quenched again and again by those telling words, "no entail." But Horace had had his own world; and had been only too much of a hero in it. That world, however, had lost him; and as the wheels of fashion's chariot fly fast, the dust of the light road rises as a cloud and hides the past, and the people that belonged to Horace Erskine had been left behind and forgotten. Now, however, Memory was alive, and brushing up her recollections; and Memory had found a tongue, and was hoping and prophesying to the fullest extent of friend Gossip's requirements, when the news came that Horace Erskine had arrived. "He has taken that charming house looking on to the park. Mr. Tudor had seen him. Nobody would know him. Broken nose, my dear! And he was so handsome. He is lame, too--or if not lame, he has a stiff shoulder. I forget which it is. He was nearly killed by some mad animal in the park at Beremouth. He behaved with the most wonderful courage, actually fought and conquered! But he was gored and trampled on--nearly trampled to death. I heard all the particulars at the time. His chest was injured, and he was sent to a warmer climate. And there he turned Papist. He did, indeed! and his uncle never forgave him. But I suspect it was a love affair. You know he has brought his wife home. And she is lovely, everybody who has seen her says. She is so very still--too quiet--too statuesque--that is her only fault in fact. But all the world is talking of her, and if you have not yet seen her lose no time in getting introduced; she is the wonder of the day."

And so ran the talk--and such was Eleanor's welcome as Horace Erskine's wife. Her husband had really repented, and had sought her, and won her heart all over again, and married her once more.

To have these great triumphs of joy and justice in her life was granted to Jenifer's Prayer.

[THE END]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JENIFER'S PRAYER ***

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