Title: Modern Flirtations: A Novel

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Release date: July 30, 2013 [EBook #43358]
Most recently updated: May 28, 2016

Language: English

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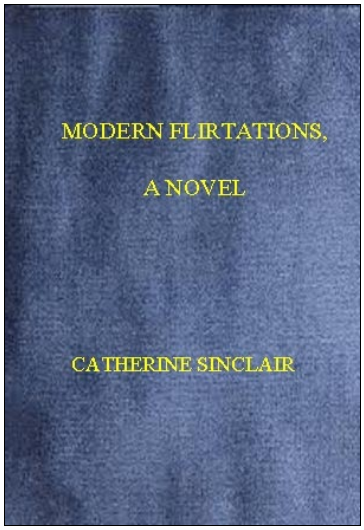

Granville intercepting the Stranger.—See page 176

MODERN FLIRTATIONS,

A NOVEL:

BY CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF "BEATRICE."

Blind Uncle Arthur endeavoring to escape from the flames.—See page 334

STRINGER & TOWNSEND, NEW YORK

MODERN FLIRTATIONS, A NOVEL:

BY CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF

"BEATRICE, OR THE UNKNOWN RELATIVES," "MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS," "MODERN SOCIETY," "HILL AND VALLEY," "SHETLAND AND THE SHETLANDERS," "HOLIDAY HOUSE," "CHARLIE SEYMOUR," ETC.

"I clasped my hand close to my breast,
While my heart was as light as a feather,
Yet nothing I said, I protest,
But, —— 'Madam! 'tis very fine weather!'"

RITSON'S SONGS.

NEW-YORK:
STRINGER & TOWNSEND, PUBLISHERS,
222 BROADWAY.

CONTENTS

PREFACE.

It was the rule of a celebrated equestrian, which might be adapted to authors as well as to horsemen, that every one should ride as if he expected to be thrown, and drive as if he expected to be upset. Impunity in publishing, far from rendering an author presumptuous, should tend rather to increase his timidity, the danger being greater always of venturing too much, than of hazarding too little; and the more cause any writer has to feel grateful for the lenient judgment of an enlightened public, the more circumspect should he become, not to trespass by an obtrusive reappearance on that notice which has already perhaps been, as in respect to the author herself, beyond all expectation favorable.

An old proverb declares that "a goose-quill is more powerful than a lion's claw," and authors have been called "keepers of the public conscience;" but no influence is perhaps so extensive as that exercised by what is termed "light reading," which has now in a great measure superseded public places and theatrical entertainments, affording a popular resource with which the busiest men relax their hard-working minds, and the idlest occupy their idleness. It becomes a deep responsibility, therefore, of which the author trusts she has ever felt duly sensible, to claim the leisure hours of so many, while it is her first desire that whatever be the defect of these pages, no actual evil may be intermingled, and the cause of sound religion and morality supported, for her feelings are best expressed in the words of the poet,

"If I one soul improve, I have not liv'd in vain."

Novel-reading, formerly considered the lowest resource of intellectual vacuity, has been lately promoted to a new place in the literary world, since men of the brightest genius as well as of the highest attainments in learning and philosophy, allow their pens occasionally to wander in the attractive regions of fiction; therefore works of imagination, no longer merely a clandestine amusement to frivolous minds, are now avowedly read and enjoyed, to beguile an idle hour, or to cheer a gloomy one, by men of science, of wisdom, and of piety. Such is the general encouragement given now to works of fancy, that, as the literary existence of authors depends on attracting readers, there will scarcely be encouragement enough soon to induce historians and biographers to dip the pen of veracity into the ink of retrospection, while it is perhaps to be lamented that when so large a proportion of the public attention is occupied by novelists, their works being certain of instant circulation, for a very short period and for no more, few authors afford themselves time to aspire at the highest grade of imaginary composition. When such volumes are really true to nature, they convey very important truths in a form more popular than a dry sententious volume of moral precepts, and perhaps history itself can scarcely afford so graphic a portrait of human life as many of those fictitious volumes, written under the inspiration of genius, which portray in vivid coloring, the thoughts and motives by which men are internally influenced.

The Life of Cleopatra, or the Memoirs of Agrippina, can afford scarcely so much direction to young ladies respecting their views of life and manners in the present day, as might be conveyed by a judiciously-drawn portrait of that world as it is, on the stage of which they are about to be personally introduced; and a large proportion of those elaborate volumes dignified with the name of history, can only be considered in the main fictitious, because, while biographers would confidently state the private opinions, secret intentions, and real characters of illustrious men who lived and acted several hundred years ago, they cannot justly estimate the actual dispositions and motives of their own most intimate friends, nor confidently point out what circumstances have influenced the greatest events in their own day. If two authors, entertaining opposite political sentiments, were to write the history of last year, every fact recorded, and every individual mentioned must inevitably be represented, or misrepresented, according to the writer's own private feelings, while each would believe he was writing unadulterated truth.

Thus poetry and fiction, when true to the principles of human life, exhibit the mind and soul of man visibly to the senses; and history, which has been called "the Newgate Calendar of Kings and Emperors," supplies the facts of human existence, and may be considered a portrait of men's persons and external actions.

In writing a story of domestic life, it is singular to reflect how commonly men are remembered by their eccentricities, and loved for their very faults, while the most difficult task in fiction is, to describe amiable persons so as to render them at all interesting and not utterly insipid. Probably it may be for this reason that modern writers too frequently, instead of describing the principles which ennoble human nature, and the sentiments which embellish life, have painted in vivid coloring, all that is low, mean, and vicious in society, introducing their readers into scenes, the reality of which would be shunned with abhorrence, and flinging over vice such a mantle of genius as converts the deformities of society into subjects of interest—unfortunately even of sympathy.

Were authors obliged hereafter, to live with the characters they create, how few would desire to share with them in such a world! Even where the intention is to represent an attractive character, it seldom appears as one which could be an agreeable acquisition to any family circle; and in works of sentiment or feeling, nothing is less successfully pictured than a generous and refined attachment, fitted to survive every trial or vicissitude of existence, between those who are to love each other for ever. Few stories could be written, if lovers in a romance acted with the slightest degree of confidence or esteem; but such narratives are generally founded on a teazing succession of narrow-minded suspicions, and unwarrantable concealments on the part of heroes and heroines, who condemn each other unheard, and go through volumes of heart-breaking alienation, enough to terminate life itself, rather than ask the most simple explanation, while the reader cannot but feel a certain conviction in closing the last page, that an engagement begun with cavilling jealousies and painful recriminations, can never become productive of lasting peace.

The mothers and daughters in fashionable society have of late been so harshly stigmatized by the press, that it seems as if some authors had taken up a porcupine's quill dipped in gall, to ridicule their conduct and motives, while not a pen has yet been drawn from the scabbard, nor a drop of ink spilled in their justification; but the weight of censure might become greatly lightened by being more equitably divided among all who are entitled to carry a share, and in these volumes an endeavor is made to rectify the balance more justly, though with what success remains to be discovered by the author herself, as not a single friend ever sees her pages, or puts on the spectacles of criticism till after they are printed. The only peculiarity to which she makes any pretension, in once more presuming to publish, is, that avoiding all caricature, all improbability, and all personality, she has introduced a few individuals acting and thinking in the ordinary routine of every-day life, while her highest ambition is to represent in natural colors, the conduct and feelings of men elevated and ennobled by the influence of Christianity.

When Dr. Johnson remarked once that it required a clever person to talk nonsense well, Boswell replied, "Yes, sir! If you were to represent little fishes speaking, you would make them talk like great whales;" and on a similar plan, authors describing society, instead of sketching the good-humoured chit-chat and lively *persiflage* with which the business and amusements of fashionable life are carried on, too frequently fill up their dialogues with set speeches, moral essays, and long quotations, such as never are extemporized in any drawing-room, where too energetic a stroke given to the shuttlecock of conversation makes it instantly fall to the ground. The flagrant impossibilities by which a carelessly-written narrative is carried on, destroys often at once the illusion. Persons are described, who may be overheard speaking aloud their most secret thoughts when supposing themselves alone, soliloquizing audibly in the streets, journalizing a history of their own crimes, becoming permanent guests in houses to which they have no introduction, preserving the noblest sentiments amidst the most degraded habits, and dying enlightened Christians when they have lived as dissolute infidels.

A celebrated mathematician threw aside a novel once in disgust, saying that "it proved nothing;" but in these pages the author has endeavoured to prove much. Amidst the bustle and business, the joys and sorrows of life, she has attempted to illustrate how truly "wisdom's ways are of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,"—how superior is the Christian standard of principle to the mere worldly code of honour or expediency, and how much of the happiness intended for man by his Creator is ruined and forfeited by the perversity of his own will, in neglecting the good of others, and in vainly grasping, like a spoiled child, at more than is intended for his share. While thus writing a fiction, which may perhaps be denominated a large religious tract in high life, the author humbly submits her pages to the judgment of others, and cannot conclude in the words of a more universally venerated, or of a more generally popular fictitious author than the excellent Bunyan:

"Thus I set pen to paper with delight,

And quickly had my thought--in black and white;

For having now my method by the end,

Still as I pulled it came, and so I penned

It down, until at last it came to be,

For length and breadth, the bigness which you see."

MODERN FLIRTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

The newspapers have recently adopted a strange habit of sometimes unexpectedly seizing an individual's name, long since retired from public notice, and gibbetting it up before the world's eye, when least anticipated, by volunteering a paragraph to announce, that some aged lord, or ex-minister, whom no one has remembered to think of for half a century or more, is residing on his estates, and enjoying, the editor is happy to understand, astonishing health, considering his advanced years. In observance of this custom, an exclamation of irritability and astonishment, too violent to be worthy of record, was elicited one day, from a dignified and very distinguished-looking old gentleman, with a venerable head, such as Titian might have painted, and a high lofty forehead bearing the traces of deep thought and feeling, when, after having seated himself on his favorite arm chair at the United Service Club in Edinburgh, his eye rested with a look of kindling amazement on these few lines, in large consequential-looking type, on a leading column of the Courant.

June 1829. "We are happy to inform our readers that the brave and noble veteran, once a distinguished hero in many a well-fought fight, Sir Arthur Dunbar, G.C.B., is yet alive, reposing on his well-earned laurels, at a retired mansion in the marine village of Portobello. Though frequently and most severely wounded in battle, besides being deprived of an arm in Lord Rodney's engagement during the year '82, the Admiral's health continues unimpaired and his cheerfulness invariable, at the advanced age of 70."

"Pshaw! stuff and nonsense! Some enemy is resolved to make a laughing-stock of me in my old age!" exclaimed he, angrily pointing out the paragraph to his gay young relative, Louis De Crespigny, who was familiarly leaning over the high back of his chair; and then crumpling up the offending Courant with an obvious wish that it might be consumed in the flames—"I hope this is only the work of some wretched penny-a-liner; but if I even suspected that my conceited, good-looking scoundrel of a nephew had a hand in the jest, I would cut him off with a shilling,—or rather without one, for I could scarcely raise so much as a shilling to leave him, and he knows that. This is most thoroughly ridiculous! I, who have been dead, buried, and forgotten for years, to be made as conspicuous here, as a hair-dresser's wig-block! The editor shall be prosecuted,—horse-whipped,—or—or made as absurd as he has made me!"

"Why really, Admiral, I wish he had as much good to say of us all, and then the sooner he paragraphs about me the better!—'We are happy to inform our readers that the agreeable and fascinating Cornet De Crespigny, of the 15th Light Hussars, now in his eighteenth year, is still alive!'—the public likes to know the exact age of distinguished men, such as you and I, Admiral!"

"The public is an ass!" replied Sir Arthur, breaking into a smile; "and perhaps I am another, to mind what is said at all, but that rascal of an editor has made me ten years older than I am; besides which, though a grey-haired Admiral of sixty-four is not probably much addicted to blushing, he really has put my modest merit out of countenance. I would rather pay the newspapers any day for overlooking than for praising me. We ought to live or die for our country; but now, when I am no longer needed, let me stay in peace on the shelf, like," added he, giving a comic smile at his empty sleeve, "like a cracked tea-cup with the handle off!"

"But, Sir Arthur!" replied the young Cornet warmly, "you who never turned your back on friend or foe, are not very likely to remain quietly on the shelf, as long as every man who lives must respect you, and every man who dies continues to appoint you, as my father did, his executor, the trustee of his estates, and the guardian of his children, asking you to lend them a hand, as you have done to me in all the difficulties of life."

"I have but one hand to lend, and that is much at your service, in whatever way it can be useful! the other, though absent without leave, has been my own best friend, as the loss of that arm was the luckiest hit in the world. It obtained me a step at the time, and the pension has supported me ever since. What with my nephew's frantic extravagance, and my two young nieces being but indifferently provided for, I often wish, like every body else, for a larger income. Poor girls!" added Sir Arthur, knitting his bushy eye-brows into a portentous frown, which gave to his venerable countenance a look of noble and manly sorrow. "No one can blame them! but it was little short of insanity in my brother to leave such young children under the sole guardianship of a heartless spendthrift like your friend and my nephew Sir Patrick, who would sell his soul for sixpence."

"Yes! and squander it the next minute," added young De Crespigny, laughing. "I saw Pat produce a £20 note yesterday at Tait's auction-room, and a buzz of wonder ran all through the circle of his friends. Such a sight had not been seen in his pocket for many a day, and he threatened to put it up to auction, saying, he was sure we would all give double the value for it, as a rarity, considering the quarter from which it came. He really seems to pique himself on his poverty, and has the art of doing what another man would be cut for, with so much grace and apparent unconsciousness, that his friends really forget to disapprove."

"I never forget!" replied the Admiral, slowly rising and adjusting his spectacles. "I am even told the incorrigible rascal has mortgaged the legacy he pretends to expect from me! He would do anything short of a highway robbery for money, and has done some things that seem to a man of honor quite as bad. But," added Sir Arthur, growing more and more angry, "as long as he can give his friends a good bottle of claret, they ask no questions! Patrick Dunbar has caused me the only feeling of shame I ever had occasion for, and yet to see that proud snuff-the-moon look of his, you would suppose the world scarcely big enough to hold him! With his chin in the air, as I saw him yesterday, he will certainly knock his forehead some day against the sky!"

"You cannot wonder, Sir Arthur, that Dunbar is in immense favor with himself, when he is so admired, and almost idolized in society. He certainly has the handsomest countenance in Scotland;—as my uncle Doncaster says, Pat is a portrait of Vandyke in his best style. With that grand, chivalrous, Chevalier-Bayard look, he is the best rider who ever sat on horseback! I could not but laugh when he mounted yesterday for a ride along Princes Street, and turned to me, with his lively, victorious laugh, saying, 'Now I am going to give the ladies a treat!'"

"The insufferable coxcomb!" said Sir Arthur, relaxing into an irresistible smile of indulgent affection. "From the day he first came staggering into this world to astonish us all, he has thought himself the finest sight between this and Whitehall!"

"Of course he does! Pat is asked for so many locks of his hair, by various young ladies, that his valet keeps a wig to supply them; and he might almost pay his debts with the countless collection he has received of sentimental rings, displaying forgotten forget-me-nots, in turquoises and gold! Who, on the wide earth, except yourself, Sir Arthur, would ever dream of finding fault with our gay, dashing, high-spirited friend, Dunbar, the life of society, the model of dress, equipage, and good living. Why! the very instant he opens his lips, all dulness vanishes like a spectre! I wish the whole world were peopled with such men; but he promises to shoot himself as soon as he sees his own equal. He staked his reputation one day that he would!"

"His reputation!! the sooner he parts with it the better! Let Patrick Dunbar exchange his own with the first man he meets in the street, and he will gain by the bargain."

"Pardon me there, Sir Arthur, your nephew is universally allowed to be the best fellow upon earth!"

"Very probably! 'the best fellow upon earth' generally means a selfish, extravagant, scatter-brained roue; but I must be off! There is a cold, sharp, cutting wind, blowing in at the back of my neck, which makes me feel like Charles the First when the axe fell. If you have any influence, De Crespigny, with my scape-grace of a nephew—all nephews are scape-graces, as far as my experience goes—try to make him more like yourself, and I shall be grateful, with all my heart."

"Like me!!!" said the young Cornet, turning away with a smile; but it was a smile of bitterness, almost amounting to remorse, while he hastily grasped a newspaper, and flung himself into a seat. "No! no! Sir Arthur, he is not quite so bad as that. Dunbar has his faults; he wears them upon his sleeve, and attempts no disguise; but there are many worse men in the world, who are held up as examples by those who know no better. Whenever I reform myself, you may depend upon my lecturing our friend, but not till then. We must both sow all our wild oats first."

"Yes! and endure the fruit of them afterwards," replied Sir Arthur, with a look of anxious kindness at his young relative. "That is the only crop where to sow is more agreeable than to reap! But I waste words! Young men will be young men, and I might as well ask this east wind not to blow, or try to turn the sea from its course, as attempt to stop the mad career of that scatter-brained madcap! It would matter less if he only fell himself hereafter, like a pebble in the stream; but the fatal eddy extends in a wide circle, which must reach the interests of those helpless young girls, my nieces; and I cannot but grieve over the consequences which may, and must befall them, after I go to that rest which is in the grave, and to that hope which is beyond it."

"Never trouble your head about that which shall occur then, Sir Arthur! 'Too much care once made an old man grey.' My motto is, '*apres moi le deluge*!' This little world of ours got on wonderfully well before we came into it, and will do astonishingly well again, after we make our exit," said young De Crespigny, with a strange medley in his tone, of melancholy thought, and contemptuous derision. "Pat tells me that both my young cousins promise to

turn out a perfect blaze of beauty, with long shining ringlets that they almost tread upon in walking, teeth that would make the fortune of a dentist, and complexions that Rowland's kalydor could not improve. Ten years hence, I shall propose to one or both of them myself, if that will give you satisfaction."

"Perfect! but as marrying two sisters at once is not quite customary, let your intentions be limited to Agnes. She is several years the eldest; and I like the good old patriarchal rule of marrying by seniority; besides which, she is quite a little flirt already, though scarcely yet in her teens. She will be a young lady, entirely suited for the ordinary marrying and giving in marriage of every-day life; but little Marion is the very light of my eyes, and I must match her by a very high standard indeed. It will be a dark day for me, if ever I am obliged to part with her at all; and being now only in her sixth year, I may, without selfishness, hope to keep her beside me for my few remaining days. I must begin match-making for Agnes, however, directly, and your offer shall be duly considered. A future peer, with countless thousands in expectancy, and not particularly ill-looking, does not fall in our way every morning."

"So all the young ladies seem to think!" replied the young Cornet, in his most conceited tone. "Girls dislike nothing so much as to marry on a competence; there is a great deal of romance in marrying on nothing, and a great deal of comfort in marrying on wealth; but a mere vulgar competence has neither romance nor reality. Now I can offer both! First, actual starvation on a Cornet's pay; and then, with my uncle's leave, the pumpkin will turn to a carriage, and the mice into horses; but in the meantime, Sir Arthur, Pat tells me you keep a capital chop-house at Portobello, so pray invite me to drop in some day at six, to begin my siege of your pretty niece. I must come and see, before I can conquer," added Mr. De Crespigny, in a tone of peculiar conceit, with which he always spoke either to ladies or of them. "Probably next week I may find my way to this *terra incognita* of yours. Is it across the Queensferry, or where?"

"My good friend! you are not so pre-eminently ignorant of geography as you would appear; for did I not see you honoring that dullest of all dull places, the little obscure village of Portobello, with your august presence, only yesterday. I nearly spitted you on the point of my umbrella, you hurried so rapidly past, evidently wishing to escape from that girl in a cloak, who seemed to beset your footsteps!"

"Impossible!!!" exclaimed young De Crespigny, coloring violently, and starting from his seat. "Could it be in the nature of things that I should cut you!"

"True enough! I might have said, like Lady Towercliffe to Prince Meimkoff, '*vous m'avez coupe*.'"

"Indeed!" continued the cornet, trying to conceal his countenance. "I wish you had cut my throat in return!"

"If it is to be done, I would rather somebody else did! Why, De Crespigny! you will set the house on fire with that violent poker exercise! Your own face is on fire already! Have more regard for your complexion! Ah! now it is pale enough! Are you ill? My dear fellow! what is the matter?"

"Nothing! I am merely looking at the beautiful sunset!"

"What! does the sun set in the east to-night?" asked Sir Arthur, jestingly; "that is worth looking at!"

"I am annoyed with a spasm of toothache!" said De Crespigny, putting a handkerchief to his face, which nearly covered it; and then suddenly throwing open the window, he looked far out, as if in search of his groom. He leaned forward so long, however, that Sir Arthur kindly but vehemently remonstrated on the danger of exposing himself, while in so much pain, to the cold air; enumerated a whole host of remedies for decayed teeth; suggested the great comfort and convenience of having the offender extracted by Hutchins, and ended by hoping his young friend would still have a tooth left for his proposed dinner at Portobello.

"Depend upon me for that," replied Mr. De Crespigny, with forced vivacity. "I shall ferret you out next week. I have little doubt your pasture is excellent in that quarter, and there is no one from whom I would be half so happy to receive a soup ticket."

"Keep your flattery for the ladies, where it will always be acceptable, and where I hear you are already an experienced practitioner in the arts of captivation. As for my dinner, I consider it an imposition to ask any friend, and not give him the best my cook and cellar can furnish; and you may expect whenever you do come, to find a notice over my door, 'hot joints every day!'"

"But it was the society of your house, and not the dinner, to which my agreeable anticipations were directed; and there, you know, I cannot be disappointed! as somebody wisely said, when shown a tempting bill of fare, 'show me a bill of the company!'"

"That reminds me to say, you must not expect my pretty niece to be at my little bathing machine of a house! It would not be fair to inveigle you under such false pretences; but I promise you an old man's welcome, and the best that my cottage can produce; aged as this newspaper makes me I enjoy every inch of life, and hope you, at the same age, will do the same. I may almost apply to my little villa that favourite saying in Spain,

> 'My home, my home! though thou'rt but small,
> Thou art to me th' Escurial.'"

With a cordial shake of the hand, and a smile of cheerful benignity, Sir Arthur withdrew, and as his firm and stately step receded, Mr. De Crespigny watched him with a look of respectful interest, which ended in his turning away after the admiral had disappeared, and heaving a deep sigh, while a cloud of care darkened on his forehead, and a look of angry vexation shaded his previously animated eyes.

Day after day passed on, subsequent to the preceding conversation, during which Sir Arthur frequently postponed his chop, to what he considered an atrociously late hour, in hopes of his promised guest appearing. Once the admiral felt positively convinced that he had seen him enter a Portobello omnibus at four o'clock, but still he appeared not. Week after week elapsed, and still Sir Arthur ate his dinner alone, in long-surviving expectation that either his own not very dutiful nephew, or young De Crespigny, would "cast up;" but at last these hopes and wishes were ended by his hearing that Sir Patrick's embarrassments had caused him to leave Edinburgh by moonlight, and that, soon after, Mr. De Crespigny as suddenly departed, no one knew why, when, or wherefore.

CHAPTER II.

The two most dashing, bold, and mischievous boys at Eton during their day, had formerly been Sir Patrick Dunbar and Louis De Crespigny, who astonished the weak minds of masters and pupils, by the strange and startling invention displayed in their exploits, as well as by the ingenuity with which both got safely out of every threatening predicament, and the sly humor or cunning with which they frequently shifted the disgrace, or even the punishment, of their offences, on others who deserved it less, or perhaps not at all. Invariably at the head of every mad exploit, or at the bottom of every secret design, how they could possibly have escaped being expelled was a frequent topic of subsequent wonder among their contemporaries in the classes; but their delight was to run as near the wind as possible, and still to display their skilful pilotage by baffling justice, and evading the utmost rigor of the law, while always ready rather to do harm than to do nothing.

When very young, the two enterprising friends, both since gazetted into the 15th Light Huzzars, had shown an early predilection for military life, by frequently escaping to the neighbouring barracks, assisted by a ladder of rope on which they descended every night from the windows. A gay, joyous reception invariably awaited these lively boys at the mess-table, where they sung many a jovial song, and cracked many a merry jest over their claret, till, after some hours spent in rapturous festivity, they stole silently back within bounds, and were re-admitted at the window, by their respective fags, who had received orders, under pain of death, to keep awake and answer their signals for the ladder by instantly lowering it. The spirits of both these young companions were more like the effect of intoxication, than mere sober enjoyment; and, on one occasion, they set the table in a roar, by having a rivalship which would best imitate the gradual progress of becoming tipsy, though drinking nothing but cold water; in which exhibition they showed so much talent for mimicry, taking off the surrounding officers before their faces, and making so many home-thrusts and personal remarks, that the scene was never afterwards forgotten in the regiment. On another occasion Sir Patrick caused himself to be placed in a coffin, stolen from the undertakers, and was carried through the barracks by his companions, who made paper trumpets with which they played the dead march in Saul, while all the sentries saluted as they passed. Such juvenile exploits in the dawn of life were now the subject of many a laughing reminiscence, and had been followed by others on a more extended scale and of more matured enterprise, at Mr. Brownlow's, a private tutor, where the two young men afterwards distinguished themselves in a way not easily to be forgotten, causing their better disciplined companions to wonder, though in very few instances to admire.

In the favorite aristocratic achievements of driving stage-coaches, breaking lamps, wringing off knockers, assaulting watchmen, with other fistic and pugilistic exploits, they were nearly unrivalled; and occasionally their genius had soared into an extraordinary display of dexterity, in transposing the signs suspended over shops, and in filching silk handkerchiefs from the pockets of their friends, merely as amateurs, but still the deed was done, and the laugh raised literally at the expense of the sufferer, as the plunder was retained to be a future trophy of success. Each successive stage of their youth, in short, supplied an inexhaustible fund of standing jests and lively anecdotes, the wit of which mainly consisted in their mischief, while they betrayed an utter recklessness about the opinions or the feelings of others, till at length the patience of their unfortunate private tutor was so completely exhausted that he gave them a secret hint to withdraw, which they accordingly lost no time in preparing to do, but not till they had enjoyed a very characteristic revenge. When Mr. Brownlow had taken a party of friends with him one evening to the theatre, Sir Patrick suddenly discharged from the gallery the whole contents of a prodigious bag of flour, which powdered all the heads, faces, and coats, in the pit, perfectly white, and caused an uproar of anger and of irresistible laughter throughout the house; and the same evening Louis De Crespigny, as a farewell frolic, abstracted a stuffed bear from the neighbouring hair-dresser's, and having equipped it in the costume of Mr. Brownlow, hung it from the lamp-post, where a panic-struck crowd was speedily assembled by the alarming report that the reverend gentleman had committed suicide. A strict investigation took place respecting the authors of these unpardonable tricks, but, though suspicion fell at once upon the real culprits, and the circumstantial evidence against them seemed irresistibly strong, Sir Patrick argued his own cause with so much skill and vivacity, while De Crespigny looked so innocently unconscious of the whole affair, that, with a silent frown from the master, of stern reproof and suspicion, they were, not honorably acquitted, but allowed to return home without any public mark of censure or disgrace; and soon after both joined their regiment at Dublin.

De Crespigny and Sir Patrick had but one companion whom they acknowledged as their equal at Eton, in all the spirit, enterprise, and vivacity of their characters, but who was, in a thousand other respects their superior, for seldom, indeed, has there been known, in one so young, a character of as much intensity, or which displayed a combination so singular, of superb talents, rare judgment, sound principle, deep piety, and energetic feeling, as in Richard Granville, an object of admiration to all, and of envy to many; though jealously lost half of its bitterness in association with one so eloquent and single-hearted in conversation, so courteously amiable and conciliatory in manner, and with so fine a principle of tact, ready as far as possible to enhance the pleasures, to palliate the faults, and to share the sorrows of all his companions. Cultivated in all that could adorn the heart as well as the head, in whatever was amiable, high-spirited and generous, Richard Granville had but to follow the impulse of natural feeling as well as of principle, and he out-did the very wishes of his friends, while no one excelled him in all the manly exercises suited to his early years. His countenance was illuminated with an expression of intellectual energy, at times almost sublime, while there was a living grace and amiability in his manner irresistibly attractive. Brave, liberal, and resolute, he entered with eagerness into all the offensive recreations of his companions, and no one excelled him in riding, fencing, and cricket, while he was the best shot in his own country; but he firmly declined ever to squander his time or money on any game of chance, cards, billiards, or gambling in any form. While Sir Patrick's betting-book was from the first a model of skill, in hedging bets, and all the manœuvres of jockey-ology, young Granville said all that eloquence and affection could dictate, to point out how dangerous and dishonorable was the course on which he seemed about to enter, but in vain, for Sir Patrick finished the discussion by offering to bet him £5 he would not be ruined in less than ten years. "I have a fortune and constitution which will last me till thirty," said the young baronet; "and I do not wish to live a day longer."

"It is easy," said Prince Eugene, "to be modest when one is successful; but it is difficult not to be envied." While the very presence of young Granville in the room, with his riotous young associates, seemed as if it held up a glass to their mind's eye, testifying the folly and evil of their course, yet Richard Granville abhorred display, while Sir Patrick and De Crespigny frequently declared he was "too clever and too good for them;" and unavoidable circumstances afterwards combined to estrange the young men still more. A law-suit had been going on almost since the period of their birth, conducted in an amicable way by their guardians, in which the interests of all three were so deeply concerned, and the case so exceedingly complicated, that years passed on, during which the youths had all grown to manhood, and the case remained still undecided; while the one-sided view which was given to Dunbar and De Crespigny on the subject caused in them an angry feeling of hostility and rancour against their amiable and high-minded young relative, who was so enthusiastically desirous to enter the English church, and devote himself to those sacred duties, that he scarcely wished a favorable decree, which would prevent the necessity for his pursuing a profession at all.

A Scotch law-suit may be compared to a game at battle-dore between the tribunals of England and Scotland, while the gaping client sees the shuttle-cock for ever flying over his head, higher and higher out of reach, and sent backwards and forwards with ceaseless diligence, but no apparent progress; or it is like a kitten playing with a ball of worsted, which is allowed to come often apparently within her grasp, and is then, when she least expects, twitched away farther than before. The Granville case had been decided by the Court of Session, against the two cousins, Dunbar and Crespigny, but being appealed to the House of Lords, was recommended for consideration, re-argued, re-considered, and nearly reversed, while replies and duplies, remits and re-revisals, commissions of inquiry, and new cases, followed each other in ceaseless succession, and many of the lawyers who were young men when the case began, grew grey in the service, while it yet remained in suspense. A grand-uncle of Sir Patrick's had fifty years before, bought an estate of £12,000 a-year from the Marquis of Doncaster, to whom young De Crespigny was now heir presumptive; but Mr. Dunbar having, it was conjectured, entertained some suspicion that the title deeds were not perfectly valid, as an entail had been discovered afterwards, by which it was generally thought that the land must be restored to the original owner, he hastily and most unfairly sold the property to the late Mr. Granville for £350,000, and dying intestate, after having lost nearly the whole sum in a mining speculation, it could not be proved whether Sir Patrick's father had acted as an executor for the deceased or not, so as to render himself responsible for his debts, and liable to refund the sum paid by Mr. Granville. Thus, whether the entail held good, and carried the estate back to Lord Doncaster, or whether it had been legally broken, so as to entitle the Granville family to keep it, or whether, if it were refunded, the price could be claimed from the heirs of Mr. Dunbar, still continued a mystery never apparently to be solved.

For many generations past, the ancient Marquisate of Doncaster had been inherited by a succession of only sons, all strict Papists, who had each in his turn been reckoned by the next heirs exceedingly sickly and unpromising, but still the wonder grew, for not one had ever died, till he left a substitute in regular rotation, to supply the vacancy which he created himself; and a long train of minorities in the family had caused the accumulation of wealth and property to be enormous, when the present proprietor succeeded fifty years before our story commences. Nothing could exceed his own astonishment at the unembarrassed magnificence of the fortune, of which he most unexpectedly found himself in possession, as his father had been in the habit of concealing the amount of his own income, and allowing his heir rather less than nothing, saying, that as he himself had never had anything to eat till he had no teeth to eat with, he was resolved that his successor should be similarly treated. In pursuance of this plan, the old nobleman even on his death-

bed, had actually expired with a practical joke on his lips. He sent for his son, gravely told him that with debts, mortgages, and settlements, the very encumbered estate he was about to inherit would scarcely pay its own expenses, and recommended him to live in future with the most penurious economy. When the will was opened, finding to his unutterable joy, that he had merely been played upon by the old humorist, who, in reality left him £40,000 per annum clear, so great was Lord Doncaster's surprise, that he declared his good fortune at the time to be "almost incredible;" and it might have been supposed, that he never afterwards completely believed it, as his personal expenses were always in a style more suited to the old Lord's threat than his performance, and he became a fresh instance of what may be so often remarked, that the most extravagant heirs in expectancy become the most avaricious in possession.

There was one singular peculiarity in the settlements of Lord Doncaster's family, that so long as he had no son, or if his son at twenty-one declared himself a Protestant, he had the power of selling or bequeathing the estates according to his own pleasure or caprice; and the ancestor who had inserted this clause in his deed of entail, made his intention evident, that the succession should go to the Roman Catholic Church, rather than to a Protestant heir; but the present peer had taken advantage, on so large a scale, of his own childless privilege, to sell the family estates, that his two deceased sisters, Lady Charlotte De Crespigny, and Lady Caroline Smytheson, used secretly to complain, that little would be left for their children, if he persevered in turning every acre into gold; yet no one ever could guess how the large sums were squandered or melted away, which the old Marquis was continually raising, unless they went, as was strongly suspected, in the form of "secret service money," among the priests by whom he was surrounded.

Nobody had a better right to be eccentric than Lord Doncaster!—old, rich, unmarried, and originally educated at home,—a misfortune sufficient in itself to engender so many peculiarities, as to render a man unfit for society ever afterwards. The aged peer was shy, proud, and arbitrary beyond all conception, avaricious about trifles, yet lavish to excess on great occasions, suspicious of all men's motives and intentions, and yet confiding to the last extreme of weakness, in the Abbe Mordaunt, his confessor, despising all men, and yet anxious beyond measure for the world's good opinion, addicted to the very worst female society, when he might have enjoyed the best, hating company, and yet sometimes plunging into it, when and where he was least expected, jealous to excess of his next heir, Louis De Crespigny, whom he enslaved to his caprices, as if even his existence were to be given or withheld at his option, yet sometimes whimsically cordial in his manner to him, though ready to take fire in an instant if his condescension led the lively youth into the slightest approach towards confidence or familiarity.

Mr. Howard Smytheson, the wealthy brother-in-law of Lord Doncaster, having purchased most of the De Crespigny estates, as acre after acre, farm after farm, and house after house, came successively into the market, bequeathed them on his decease to an only daughter then an infant, and it became a favorite day-dream with the old peer, that his nephew and niece should be educated for each other, while to this end he tried his utmost power of conciliation with the maiden sister of Mr. Howard Smytheson, to whose care the young heiress had been consigned, hoping that thus all the amputated limbs of his vast property might yet be reunited in their pristine magnitude, to which very desirable end he thenceforth directed his whole conversations with young De Crespigny, to whom he more than hinted that, unless their will were the same about this marriage, his own will after death would be found very different from what his nephew probably anticipated and wished.

The private vices of Lord Doncaster had been so very private, that though much was suspected, little could be known; yet, while he had few visible or personal expenses, and no imaginable outlet for his fortune, he invariably spent all his income, and considerably more, being one of those personages occasionally seen who excite the wonder and speculation of relations and neighbours, by unaccountably frittering away fortunes of almost royal splendor, without any appearance of royal luxury or royal liberality. Wearied of the world, in which he had nothing more to desire, and of himself, as he had nothing to think of or to do,—bored in short with the want of a want, Lord Doncaster's life was indeed a mere heartless pageant of mean ostentation and fretful pride, sternly insulated in a state of solitary old-bachelor despotism, and absorbed in himself to a degree which no ordinary mind could conceive or comprehend. Encumbered with so many unoccupied hours, it was a subject of as much wonder how he disposed of his superfluous time, as of his superfluous fortune; but he settled that question, by remarking one day to his nephew, that "the great business of life is, to shuffle through the day anyhow till dinner time." Like all parsimonious men, Lord Doncaster could not endure to hear any one else reckoned affluent, and Louis De Crespigny knew that a certain receipt for irritating him was, to over-estimate everybody's income, consequently he amused himself occasionally by audibly giving out Lord Towercliffe's fortune to be £15,000 a-year, and estimating his friend Sir Patrick Dunbar's rent-roll at a clear sum of £20,000 per annum, while he slyly watched his uncle's rising choler, and patiently heard, for the fiftieth time, an elaborate explanation, that it was impossible, and a sober calculation which reduced both the offending parties almost to beggary.

In the month of August, as regularly as time revolved, Lord Doncaster delighted to read in the newspapers, his own pompous advertisement, the only original composition he was ever known to attempt, in which he prohibited poachers and strangers from shooting on his moors in Argyleshire, Mid-Lothian, Yorkshire, Galloway, Cromarty, and Caithness, but except the annual appearance of this spirited manifesto, no public evidence ever came forth of that extraordinary wealth which property so extensive must be supposed to produce. No charitable donations bore witness to Lord Doncaster's liberality—no country objects were encouraged by his public spirit—and the monuments daily arising in memory of departed merit, made a vain appeal for his pecuniary tribute of respect and regret, for Lord Doncaster neither respected nor regretted any man.

It was an often-repeated axiom of Lord Doncaster's, that every man cheats or is cheated; but in one instance, and one only, his Lordship had shown apparently some kind feeling, or rather perhaps he might be said to have exhibited a capricious freak of benevolence, though the result had been such as to afford him an excuse ever afterwards for not again attempting a single act of gratuitous liberality.

The nearest relative to his ancient family, after Louis De Crespigny and Miss Howard, was Mrs. Anstruther, a distant cousin, who, after making a low and almost disgraceful marriage, had suddenly died, it was believed by her own hands, thus consigning her two young children to helpless, and apparently hopeless poverty, till at length they were very unwillingly invited, or rather permitted to become residents in an almost menial capacity at Beaujolie Castle, in Yorkshire, where, as they could neither be drowned like kittens, nor shot like puppy-dogs, the Marquis caused them to be treated like the "whipping boys" in Charles the First's time—sometimes employed as playmates to amuse his nephew and niece during their holiday visits to his residence, but more frequently treated in a sort of mongrel way between dependents and slaves by the heartless and tyrannical old peer, who considered them as mere poachers on the preserve of his family honors, having forced their way into existence by some untoward accident, and become absolute blots in the creation, liable to be suspected, and even accused to their faces of every low and vicious propensity, in consequence of which, from an early age, he destroyed their self-respect, and irritated their evil passions by the most rash and unfounded aspersions—theft, swindling, lying, and gluttony, were among the principal counts in his Lordship's indictment, when he sometimes vented a paroxysm of ill-humor on these his unhappy dependents; and many a time the tears of Mary Anstruther, and the flashing eye of her brother Ernest, bore witness to the anger and grief with which they listened to his bitter and often unmerited upbraidings.

At times, however, Lord Doncaster found it convenient for his own private purposes to patronize the Anstruthers, and threatened, in the hearing of all his young relatives, that if Louis De Crespigny's conduct did not in all respects satisfy him, an heir more subservient to his wishes might be found, and though the culprit must be his nephew, he need not be his successor, while the glance of his eye towards Ernest aroused hopes, wishes, and even expectations of the wildest extravagance, which were then confirmed for a time by his being promoted to temporary attention and consideration, not only displayed ostentatiously by their capricious patron, but extending to the increased respect and observance of the servants, the thermometer of whose obedience rose and fell according as the sunshine of Lord Doncaster's favor shone upon his young relative or not; yet brief as these periods of increased importance had always been, they made an indelible impression on the young and ambitious minds of those usually neglected children. "The child becomes a boy, the boy a youth, and then the game of life begins in earnest."

Without education or principle, and with no friend on the wide earth to confide in or to consult, the two young Anstruthers, like weeds that will yet flourish though trampled upon, grew up vigorous in body, and enthusiastically as well as devotedly attached to each other, with a depth and power of affection which appeared, before long, the only redeeming quality in characters wherein strong passions and weak principles promised little, and threatened much, to all with whom they might hereafter become associated.

The resemblance between them was as remarkable as their attachment, both having dark Italian-looking countenances, of remarkable symmetry, with a singularly excitable and determined expression in their large lustrous eyes, while it was remarkable that neither could by possibility look any one steadily in the face. There was a wild, almost feverish brilliancy in the eye of Ernest, expressive of a fiery impetuosity, amounting at times almost to an appearance of insanity, when, after being obliged to crouch and flatter for his bread before Lord Doncaster, he would retire with Mary, and give loose to all the angry torrent of his long-suppressed emotions. The sister's heart cowered sometimes before the flood of invectives and imprecations with which he relieved his heart by speaking of his wrongs, while he seemed to cherish a gnawing belief that fortune herself had shown him a most unaccountable and undeserved enmity, which he was resolved, by fair or by foul means, to subvert. "I shall yet rise above all the accidents of fortune! It shall be done, I care not how, Mary," said he sternly. "We must not be over-particular on that score, for, as the proverb says, 'a cat in mittens will never catch mice!'"

Bold, fearless, and ready, with a keen appetite for danger, a fearless ambition, consummate cunning, and an insatiable thirst for adventure, it seemed

sometimes as if he would put his mind into a pugilistic attitude, and buffet his way forward to pre-eminence in spite of all the malice of fortune and of mankind. With a temper vindictive, harsh, and deadly, his blood mounted like mercury in a thermometer at the very thought of success, and often when he spoke to his sister in the lowest whisper of their future prospects, she would start and look hastily round as if in terror, lest the wild dreams of his undisciplined mind might be overheard and resented, for he nourished a feverish hope, which he called a presentiment, but which amounted almost to a monomania, that the splendid residence in which they were now only tolerated on sufferance, "as reptile dependents," would one day become his own.

If every man living might remove at pleasure all those who stand inconveniently in his way, political economists would have nothing to fear from a too rapidly increasing population, and the day-dreams of Ernest, which gained strength and consistency every hour, were prolific in both deaths and marriages. He carefully collected in the Peerage all the instances there recorded, in which distant relations had succeeded through a long mortality of twenty or five-and-twenty intermediate heirs,—he remembered that neither Louis nor Caroline had yet endured the measles,—he thought their Shetland ponies very dangerous, and, in short, if their days had been measured by him, the measure would have been short indeed. His personal vanity was excessive, and amidst his wild schemes of aggrandisement, the first and foremost had lately been to marry his lively, frolicsome, little cousin, and occasional playmate, Caroline Howard Smytheson, in whose infant manner, heedless and good-humored as she was, he flattered himself there might be traced an evident appearance of preference, while he could not but also remark, that before any of the young party had attained the age of maturity, and Caroline was yet a mere infant. Louis De Crespigny had already begun to exercise his genius for flirtation in the society of his humble cousin Mary Anstruther,—humble only in circumstances, but possessing that pride without principle, which goes before a fall.

Time had ripened the faults of the two young Anstruthers, and perfected also their extraordinary beauty of person, when, after Ernest had attained the age of nineteen, a whim as sudden, and apparently as unaccountable as their adoption, caused Lord Doncaster, or rather the Abbe Mordaunt, unexpectedly to announce that they were dismissed from the house. Various rumours were circulated among the servants to account for this harsh and hasty decision, but nothing could be discovered for certain. Ernest was reported to have expressed himself with the greatest rancour and contempt respecting a report in circulation, that Lord Doncaster intended to marry the Abbe Mordaunt's beautiful niece, then on a visit at Kilmarnock Abbey, near Edinburgh. The Abbe was said to have missed some valuable jewels belonging to his niece Laura, who accused both the Anstruthers of having been seen in her room,—a large sum of money, it was hinted, had mysteriously disappeared—some people said that Ernest had been discovered at a late hour of the night attempting to enter the sleeping apartment of Lord Doncaster, without being able to give any satisfactory account of his intentions, and others declared that Louis De Crespigny's assiduities to Mary Anstruther had recently become rather too obvious, while surmises arose against her character; but whatever might be the cause, they were both hastily transferred on a few hours' notice from the splendors of Kilmarnock Abbey, to a small obscure lodging at Portobello. As Ernest was about to leave that house which had so long been his home, with Mary sobbing in uncontrollable grief on his arm, anger and despair were fearfully stamped on their young faces, when the Abbe Mordaunt advancing silently, placed a small sum of money in their hands, which the young man furiously dashed upon the ground, and trampled upon, saying in accents of strong and almost terrifying vehemence, while his countenance exhibited a dark insidious expression of almost maniacal fury, "I would not be human if I did not hate your niece and you!—my curse shall rest on both till I am revenged! Take back your paltry gold, I shall build up my own fortune, or perish in the ruins! I shall live by my own hands, or —by own hands I shall die!"

From that day forward the names of Mary and Ernest Anstruther never passed the lips of Lord Doncaster or the Abbe, who ordered the servants also to abstain from ever mentioning them, which only piqued the curiosity of the second table into greater activity than ever; but though many vague conjectures, dark suspicions, and absurd rumours, were promulgated throughout the establishment, nothing certain could be ascertained, except that they returned no more to Kilmarnock Abbey, and that a final extinguisher had been placed on all their prospects and hopes from Lord Doncaster.

About this time Mrs. Bridget Smytheson sent Miss Howard, then only six years old, to school, and seemed so little anxious to encourage an intimacy between the young heiress and Louis De Crespigny, whom she had long disliked, that Lord Doncaster, piqued and indignant, angrily reminded her of his sister Lady Caroline's dying injunction, to which she had promised implicit attention, that if the cousins, after they were grown up, could be ascertained to have to have a disinterested preference for each other, every opportunity should be given them to become attached and engaged.

"Certainly, Lord Doncaster; and I shall fulfil my pledge," replied the over-dressed, and rather under-bred aunt, in her usual tone of fantastic affectation; "but these boy-and-girl intimacies are not the most likely to produce that romantic love with which young people ought to begin their married lives; and besides, how could their preference be disinterested, where the brilliant prospects of both are continually descanted on as motives to their union. No! I have a considerable spice of romance in my composition; and when they do meet again, it shall be under very different circumstances."

"What a creature to have the charge of any girl!" thought Lord Doncaster, as he returned from handing her, with every appearance of profound respect, into her pony-carriage. "There is another woman half so insane out of bedlam; and that mad-cap child herself is as wild as a horse with the reins broke. The greatest annoyance on earth is, to have a rich and vulgar upstart among on's near connections."

CHAPTER III.

The life of Louis De Crespigny, from the hour he entered the army, was one continued steeple-chase after pleasure and amusement, in whatever form they could be courted, or at whatever expense they could be enjoyed. At a very early age, he was already a veteran in the world and its ways; for he stood "alone in his glory," the most admired, courted, and idolized of mankind, a perfect adept in all the arts of rendering himself agreeable in society, and possessing many pleasant qualities, but none that were valuable. During a gay career of dissipation and frivolity, he had entered with successive eagerness on a thousand flirtations, though he always forgot to marry in the end, while his heart, like a phœnix, was frequently consumed, yet never destroyed, and always ready at the service of any young lady, with youth, beauty, and accomplishments enough to excite his temporary interest. Being of opinion, that, though not yet a peer, he ought speedily to be one, young De Crespigny openly avowed the impossibility of marrying while Lord Doncaster survived, and jocularly remarked, that it would be a pity prematurely to cut off the hopes of his hundred and one Scotch cousins, who lived, like Ernest Anstruther, on the hope, that if his neck were broken at Melton, his succession might yet be "cut up" amongst them; and to the friendly inquiries of his many relatives, he frequently replied with a condoling look, that he and his uncle were both "hopelessly well."

Lord Doncaster was not even yet, by any means, so great a Methusalemite in age, nor so weighed down by infirmities, as his lively nephew chose among the mothers and daughters of his intimate acquaintance to represent; and some ladies whom young De Crespigny had piqued or affronted, were actually ill-natured enough to hint, that Lord Doncaster was still almost young and almost handsome! They had even been so malicious as to insinuate, that his Lordship might possibly have a genius for marrying his house-keeper, almost the only respectable female who ever crossed his threshold; but Mrs. Fireland's very mature age, and very antiquated dress, shewed how completely she must have given up that point; and even her desire to please him in her own department, became every hour so increasingly difficult, and was attended with failures and disappointments so unforeseen and unaccountable, that the good woman often shook her head ominously, in alluding to his Lordship's numerous whims, saying, in a confidential under tone, which seemed to mean more than met the ear, to the steward, "he's petiklar! he's very petiklar! It would require a person bespoke to order to please his Lordship." And certainly he had become of late years more particular than ever.

One personage only seemed to have the art of doing no wrong in the estimation of Lord Doncaster; and the respect which he withheld from all mankind, was concentrated to an immeasurable degree on the Abbe Mordaunt, who was the Cardinal Wolsey of Kilmarnock Abbey and Beaujolie Castle. Proud, overbearing, harsh, and arbitrary, he ruled over the house, the purse, and even the will of his patron, with despotic and unlimited sway. Men are generally advanced in years before the passions and feelings have stamped their indelible traces, like the impression of a seal, which becomes permanent only after the wax has began to cool; but in every feature of the Abbe's countenance, might now be seen the evidences of a gloomy, severe, and almost ferocious temper, yet never was there a greater triumph of art over nature, than in the skill with which he adapted his looks and conversation to the taste or caprice of those whom it was his interest to govern, and the astonishing facility with which he could call up a bland smile and insinuating voice, to supersede the habitual haughtiness of his tone and manner.

Educated at St. Omers, in all the dark superstitions of that bigoted college, the Abbe was nevertheless far from desirous to seek within the walls of a cloister any protection from those temptations to worldly indulgence, which he had not even the wish to resist. He neither preached nor practised the virtues of his vocation, but paraded a whole troop of vices openly in the public eye; and far from attempting to reform mankind, he never attempted even to reform himself. Though in personal appearance of distinguished ugliness, yet such was the magic of his manner, that even by ladies he was considered perfectly irresistible; and to all, whether old or young, he generally succeeded in imparting a conviction, that he saw in her, for the first time, a realization of female perfection and female fascination. The Abbe was never known to stop half-way in arduously pursuing any object of pleasure, profit, or ambition, nor, whatever might be the impediments, was he ever seen to fail of success; for, like Bonaparte, he did not know the meaning of the word "impossible."

After having recklessly squandered, in a career of almost startling dissipation, the whole of his own patrimony, it was believed that he had obtained fraudulent possession of £10,000 belonging to his very beautiful niece, to whom he must have refunded it had she lived to come of age, or had she married it must have been restored to her children, but about the time our story commences, she was supposed either to have died, or to have retired to a convent abroad, though whether upon conviction or not, might be considered very doubtful, as she had been educated by her mother in the Protestant faith, and it was generally conjectured that to so sudden and entire a removal from all former connections, her poverty more than her will must have consented. Laura Mordaunt had resided much at Kilmarnock Abbe with her uncle, to whom she seemed warmly and blindly attached, but the gossiping world sometimes conjectured that perhaps the evident partiality and admiration of Lord Doncaster might have roused in her some ambitious thoughts, backed by the influence of the Abbe. Among the peculiarities of the Marquis he had always professed a decided contempt for all respectable ladies, and therefore his attentions to Laura Mordaunt were at best a very questionable compliment, and became naturally of a nature which few relatives would have wished to encourage, yet Miss Mordaunt still remained a guest at Kilmarnock Abbey, till the period of her sudden disappearance, which caused so much astonishment among her intimate friends and near connections, that the father of Richard Granville, her cousin, shortly before his own death, wrote an affectionate letter, entreating her to return, were it but for a few months, and to make a home of his house for the future, should it suit her to do so; but to this kind and generous offer no reply ever came, and as all communications were to pass through the Abbe's hands, who alone knew his niece's direction, it might be doubted whether the invitation ever reached that hand for which it was intended.

That Lord Doncaster had cruelly disappointed Laura Mordaunt, as he had already disappointed many others, her friend and cousin had good reason to believe; and though unable to imagine any really romantic or lasting attachment to a man, however elevated in rank or agreeable in manners, of at least fifty years old, yet he knew that Laura, who lived so retired that she could boast of few friends and no admirers, might really have been dazzled with the splendour of his rank or the fascination of his conversation; while it seemed the most unaccountable part of the whole affair, that if such were the case, the attachment had not been reciprocal, between a young and beautiful girl, thrown so continually in his way, and an aged roue, who had so evidently admired her.

If the probable duration of Lord Doncaster's life had been measured according to the estimate formed of it in many an Edinburgh drawing-room, it would have brought a very small premium indeed at the insurance offices. By referring to that valuable record, Debrett's peerage, it was satisfactorily proved that the De Crespignys were a very short-lived family! One Lord Doncaster had died of a fall from his horse at thirty-five; another had been killed in battle, at forty-two; and not one of them had contrived very much to exceed eighty, therefore hopes might be entertained of the popular and fascinating Louis De Crespigny at last gaining the long-expected "step." It might have been supposed by strangers in Edinburgh, that there was but one marquisate in Britain, so frequently were the strawberry-leaves of Lord Doncaster under animated discussion; and any visitor who accidentally took Burke or Debrett in his hand, might smile to observe that the pages naturally fell open where that interesting paragraph presented itself to notice,

"Doncaster, Marquis of. Heir presumptive, Louis Henry De Crespigny."

A tradition prevailed among the elder ladies of fashion now in society, that a splendid set of diamonds, which had been long the ornament and admiration of Queen Charlotte's drawing-rooms, were since entailed, by an old Lady Doncaster, in the family; and many a young beauty, in arranging a bright futurity on her own plan, had frequently worn these far-famed jewels in her imagination, when presented at Court as a Marchioness, the envy and admiration of all her contemporaries. Meantime nothing could be more astonishing than to find how much was known in Edinburgh concerning the modes of life, temper, and character of the present Lord Doncaster, though he lived not only secluded from society, but made it his peculiar study to evade the scrutiny of impertinent curiosity, and was so anxious to check the loquaciousness of servants, that his butler and housekeeper had strict orders to keep up a sort of prison discipline in the establishment, and not to allow a word to be spoken when at meals. It was, however, authentically ascertained by some unknown means, that Lord Doncaster, who had formerly been a man of dissipated habits and irregular hours, now devoted himself to the care of his health as diligently and intensely as a miser does to the care of his money, and that to him it had become a subject of almost avaricious interest. If the Marquis had a finger-ache, it was magnified in Edinburgh into a case of certain death; but after a really severe illness, he was heard jocularly to remark, in sporting phrase, "I have had another round with death!" while he seemed confident, on these occasions, of always coming off victorious, though few among the young ladies of his nephew's acquaintance would have been found ready to back his expectations, while Agnes Dunbar impatiently remarked, that Lord Doncaster had been so long in the world, he seemed not to know how to leave it.

It was generally understood by the juries who sat upon Lord Doncaster's case in society, that his breakfast consisted of strong gravy-soup and poached eggs, which were pronounced to be very plethoric,—he ate no luncheon, which must be very exhausting at his time of life,—he had an enormous appetite for dinner, which would certainly drive blood to his head,—and above all, he took a hot supper, which must be fatal at last;—every newspaper tends to prove, that after eating a hearty supper the night before, people are invariably found dead in their beds the next morning;—and it was already unaccountable how many mornings Lord Doncaster had survived! Any day in the world might bring accounts of his death,—some day must do so, sooner

or later,—hundreds of old people were dying continually, and so might the superannuated peer; yet though his days were numbered in so many houses, they nevertheless seemed to be numberless, while gentlemen, older than himself, were often heard impatiently speculating and wondering what will he would make, and declaring they only wished to live, in order to know the result of so many anxious conjectures, while his dutiful nephew gayly remarked, that his uncle need never wait for parchment to write his will upon, while the skin on his face looked so like it.

Still Lord Doncaster obstinately persevered in living on, while, strange to say, many of the manœuvring mamas who had been heard to declare, that if an old person must die at any rate, they could spare his Lordship better than any other mortal, became mortal themselves, and were first consigned to the tomb. Even some of the young and lovely girls, who had thought, in the morning of life, before the freshness of their bloom had been dimmed, or the lustre of their beauty had decayed, that this one obstacle to their happiness must be removed,—many of these gay, joyous, and unthinking beings had sunk unexpectedly into an early grave, while still Lord Doncaster, in a most provoking and unprincipled manner, disappointed everybody, and continued to exist in a world where he was anything but welcome, resolved apparently, never, in an every-day vulgar way, to die at all.

In the mean time, Louis De Crespigny, devoted to the amusements of life, but independent of all its finer sympathies, seemed to breathe nothing but the exhilarating ether of life, joyous, giddy, and intoxicating. He revelled in a laughing, lively, satirical consciousness of his own exact position in society, and privately resolved to make the most of it,—not that he deliberately made up his mind to deceive,—his code of honor was rigid enough in respect to his transactions with gentlemen, but in the case of young ladies it was otherwise,—

"Man, to man so oft unjust,
Is always so to woman."

With ladies Mr. De Crespigny considered his own brilliant prospects and personal fascinations to be fair, marketable produce, which there could be no objection that he should use to the utmost advantage, for bringing in the largest possible return of pleasure, profit, and amusement. Accordingly, the gay young Cornet, living upon what he could borrow, on the disinterested attentions of manœuvring mothers, and on the expectation of his uncle's speedy demise, made himself the chosen attendant of half a hundred accomplished and perfectly amiable young ladies, who laughed, talked, sang, and danced with him, while he soon became but too intimately known as a ruthless flirt, to many a young heart, and to many a happy home, where he took care that it should be distinctly implied and understood, that nothing but the jealous penuriousness of "that old quiz, Lord Doncaster," impeded his ardent wish to settle for life; while in the mean time, wherever a good table and cellar were kept, he testified exactly such a degree of partiality for the sister or daughter of his host, as made her be considered his wife-presumptive, and secured him a regular knife and fork in the house on all family festivals and state occasions, without any trouble in either ordering or paying for the entertainment. It has been said, that as a rolling stone gathers no moss, neither does a roving heart gain any affection; but whatever might be the case with others, Louis De Crespigny felt himself without a doubt the idol of every drawing-room, where he sentimentalized, rattled, and flirted in every style, with every girl under twenty, as diligently as if he were canvassing for an election, while they talked, looked, smiled, and dressed their very best; and the excellence of any gentleman's wine might be accurately estimated by the thermometer of Mr. De Crespigny's attention to the daughters; but he had a declared abhorrence of family dinners, which looked too business-like and domestic, as if he had really committed himself; though, as Lady Towercliffe remarked to her four daughters one day, "he never said anything to the purpose, when the purpose was marriage."

Though Mr. De Crespigny seemed, at the "dignity dinners" in Edinburgh, to live for no other object on earth, but the one fascinating young lady, with whom it was his game at the time to appear *epris*, and though she might probably be astonished and piqued during the following week, to observe this indefatigable amateur in flirtations equally assiduous in his attentions to another, and shooting like a brilliant meteor in the ball-room, unheedingly past herself, yet she might console herself by reflecting, that Mr. De Crespigny was in the habit of confidentially hinting how much he felt embarrassed and annoyed by the necessity of generalizing his intimacies, that no gossiping reports might reach his whimsical relative. "Because actually!" he one day whispered in confidence to Lady Towercliffe, "when my uncle becomes irritable, he threatens to make all sorts of ridiculous marriages himself; and it would be my last hour in his will, if he thought me heretic enough merely to dance with a Protestant partner. He would not engage so much as a housemaid of your persuasion; but for my own part, I leave all these concerns to the Abbe Mordaunt, who, to do him justice, lets me off very easily."

The difference of faith made wonderfully little difference in the intentions of those young ladies who believed themselves the objects of Mr. De Crespigny's unacknowledged preference, for every bit of millinery in a ball-room was in a flutter of agitation whenever he approached; and certainly no one ever excelled more in making those he conversed with rise in their own opinion, from his tact in showing how very high they stood in his, and the consequence was, that he already possessed a rare and romantic collection of sentimental valentines, sketches with his figure in the foreground, songs with the magical name of Louis conspicuously introduced, withered bouquets, anagrams, anonymous letters, and anonymous verses, all with a too-well-remembered history belonging to them, which called up a smile of derision, or a sigh of self-reproach, according as the case required, but all treasured as relics of former happy hours, which had perhaps been the history of a lifetime to the fair donors, and the diversion of a few days only to himself, while he secretly applauded his own dexterity in escaping the matrimonial noose, and to them there remained only the silent remembrance of that intercourse, now for ever at an end, which they had believed was to last for life.

Mr. De Crespigny's engagement book was nearly as complicated an affair as any ledger or day-book, and much more so than his own banker's account, for he arranged it on the most systematic principles of profit and loss. In whatever house he had been invited to dine, he considered himself as "owing a quadrille" to one of the young ladies at the next assembly. If he had actually "sat under her father's mahogany," as he termed it, she might be perhaps entitled to two dances; and when he had spent the greater part of a summer in her mother's country house, that established a sort of sinking fund in her behalf, which entitled him to have the use of him as a partner, whenever he happened accidentally to be disengaged, though indeed nothing ever occurred accidentally in Captain De Crespigny's arrangements, for he never acted on impulse, but always on systematic calculation. He seemed, with his gay pell-mell manner, the most off-hand, careless, and undesigning of men; but even in the trifling affair of going to a ball, where he might literally have exclaimed, "I am monarch of all I survey," he invariably carried in his mind's eye a list of all those partners with whom policy or self-interest directed him to dance, and very seldom indeed did he swerve from his pre-conceived muster-roll.

It was a singular evidence of young De Crespigny's discretion and skill, that, while paying attentions which should either have never been paid at all, or never afterwards discontinued, and while, with all its fascinations, Lady Towercliffe declared it was dangerous to a young lady's happiness to be even introduced to him, still, in not one instance had "his intentions" ever yet been asked, and neither fathers, uncles, nor brothers had betrayed the slightest symptoms of insurrection against his universal dominion, believing, as his excuse for delaying to propose was so perfectly unanswerable and respectable, that his intentions might safely be allowed to "lie on the table," while they awaited in breathless suspense the *denouement*, certainly to take place on Lord Doncaster's death.

Some of Mr. De Crespigny's brother officers, envious perhaps of his extraordinary success in society, threw out sceptical hints respecting the certainty of his succession, and laughed sarcastically at the indefatigable vanity with which he evidently liked being thus torn to pieces among the chaperons and dowagers of society; but he laughed as heartily as themselves. No one could ever get the start of him in a joke; and his associates, when he came in competition with any one of them, found it no laughing matter. He knew his own power—who does not know that?—and difficulties only enhanced his triumph.

Lord Doncaster often dryly remarked, that the best economist in Britain must certainly be Louis De Crespigny, as, to his certain knowledge, he possessed only £300 a year, and yet he seemed to revel in all the luxuries of life, besides having a great deal over for extravagance. There was no occasion for the young Cornet ever to think of dining at his club, as he might be entertained at the houses of three or four friends in a day, if he could have mustered as many appetites. In summer he incurred no expense, except to pay for his place occasionally on the top of a coach, or in a steam-boat, from one hospitable country house to another, where gigs were sent a stage to meet him on the way, if he were expected by the mail, or if by sea, a chariot might be seen waiting on the pier. He got "a mount" from one friend, the best seat in a barouche from another, and often the vacant place in a britschska from a third party, even to the expulsion of its more legitimate occupiers.

"De Crespigny has nothing on earth, and you see how he looks!" remarked his handsome friend Sir Patrick one day to Sir Arthur Dunbar; "yet how magnificently he contrives to live at the expense of all those deluded mortals who have disposable or indisposable daughters. His future prospects act like a cork jacket in society, keeping him always at the top. Last summer worthy Lord Towercliffe, with his rapidly increasing family and rapidly decreasing income, took De Crespigny in his gig to that old tumble-down castle of his in Argyleshire, where he spent six weeks, ruining the family in champagne and wax candles. The house became rather cold in September, so at last he accepted a cast in Lady Winandermere's carriage to that nest of nieces and daughters at Castle Highcombe, where he found excellent yachting and sea-bathing. There he lingered a month, till the brother of those four pretty Miss Vavasours bid still higher for his company, by offering him a mount at Kelso, and mentioning that he had a first-rate French cook a '*cordon bleu*,' who hires his own stall at the opera during the London season, and enjoys a salary and perquisites amounting to more than the best curacy in the English Church; and all this De Crespigny repays with a few frothy nothings, which he is for ever repeating to any young lady who will lend an ear. Those who beat the bush do not always snare the bird; and I wonder the manœuvring world does not yet see that he is evidently no marrying man."

"What sort of looking individual, is a marrying man?" asked Sir Arthur, slyly. "I am often told that you, for instance, do not look like a marrying man; but pray point me out any one who does, that I may become more a connoisseur on the subject than I am. As for what you say of Louis De Crespigny, it sounds to my unpractised ear very like swindling; and he is not the youth I took him for if he live in such an element of deceit, sacrificing all sense of honor, all confidence, and all good feeling, for a worthless and transient popularity, or worse than all, for motives of mean, heartless self-interest. Such a man is not worth the space he occupies in the world!"

The Admiral's honest indignation would have been vented in still stronger terms, could his upright and honorable mind have been made to understand how entirely every thought, word, and action of Mr. De Crespigny's life was based on the most unswerving principles of cold, hard, unrelenting selfishness, and with what utter carelessness he seemed ready to trample on the wounded feelings of others; for it mattered not to him what degree of confidence he betrayed, or what degree of sorrow he inflicted. If in one house where he had been received as a son or a brother, he no longer found the cordial welcome of other days, a hundred other doors were still opened wide to receive him, where he could boast of having been "very nearly caught," and carry on the same game as before, which was a pastime to him, though fatal to the peace of many, who would willingly have died rather than betray the injury their feelings had suffered, when, after passing through the ordeal of his assiduities, they found themselves beguiled and cheated of all that was deepest and most sacred in their earthly affections—robbed without compunction by one who gave no return—who watched with elated triumph the growing delusion of those whom he had marked as victims to his own self-love, and whom he appeared to consider all in all to his happiness, till they found out at last that they were in reality less than nothing to him; yet the deception admitted of no redress. He lived on in a sort of cowardly impunity; for no young girl endowed with sensibility, and conscious of her own injuries, could desire, after entrusting him with the whole story of her hopes and affections, that the truth should be known; and his was a crime against which no evidence can be brought; for who could describe the tender nothings—the refined insinuations—the looks which say everything and mean nothing—the wordless language of the eyes, with which an undeclared love may be safely and yet obviously professed? What but a smile of ridicule or of censure could attend on such a detail of "unutterable things?" But with Louis De Crespigny nothing was unutterable; for he could say and unsay the same things two hundred times, and they always seemed to carry as much or as little weight as he pleased at the moment, while he entered society as a school-boy rushes into a garden, eagerly to pursue the brilliant insects fluttering in the sunbeams, ready to crush and injure them all for his momentary diversion, and yet on his guard to retreat in good order, should there appear to be the slightest danger of annoyance or discomfort to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

It was impossible to pass an hour in the society of Sir Arthur Dunbar, without seeing much to admire, and much also to love,—there was a sturdy, resolute, old-fashioned sense of honor in all his actions, tempered by the kindest and most considerate attention to the feelings, as well as to the interest of all with whom he might be associated, and his sentiments were tinctured by a generous liberality, only limited in action by the rigid restraints consequent on a very narrow income, which he had never been known to exceed, though he was often heard jocularly to remark, that the surplus, after his yearly accounts were paid, would scarcely buy him a pair of gloves.

Though the fire of Sir Arthur's eyes had been quenched by approaching blindness, and his weather-beaten countenance had been scarred in battle, and hardened by facing every tempest which had blown for half a century, yet his aspect had an air of habitual distinction and conscious dignity which commanded instant respect. There was an energy in the expression of his feelings, and a straightforward pursuit of what he thought right in all his actions, which gave him a singular influence over the affections and the conduct of those with whom he wished to associate, and the admirable use he made of which no one afterwards ever had cause to regret. His early life had been one full of action and of vigorous exertion, seeking, with old-fashioned patriotism, the honor of his country, more than the promotion of his own interests; but in advanced years, when no longer able publicly to distinguish himself, he directed his time and talents to the diffusion of happiness at home, and to a zealous, diligent, and humble preparation for that long and quiet home to which he believed himself rapidly approaching, and which he contemplated with the best of all philosophy,—that of a truly devoted Christian.

With all the blunt frankness of his sailor-like manner, Sir Arthur could nevertheless testify an almost feminine gentleness and sympathy towards the unfortunate. He was often discovered to have exerted clandestinely a degree of activity and zeal in serving the needy and desolate, which to a mind less eager and generous, would have seemed almost incredible,—he never lacerated the feelings of those who came to him for comfort, by attempting to convince the sufferer, as most people begin by doing, on such occasions, that the misfortune, whatever it be, is all his own fault,—and he was quite as ready, as well as better pleased, to rejoice with those that rejoiced, than to weep with those that wept, without ever, at any period of life, having found a place for envy in his kindest of hearts, which

> "Turn'd at the touch of joy or woe,
> And turning trembled too."

With a good humored smile at his own credulity in having believed that Louis De Crespigny could ever be serious in proposing to sacrifice a day of his gay and busy life, to a prosing tete-a-tete on the sea-beach with an old man like himself, Sir Arthur dismissed the subject from his thoughts, and finally relinquished all hope of seeing his young friend, after a short soliloquy, in which he ended, by slyly hoping that the gay Cornet would never cause those who might feel it more, to regret his having jilted them.

Not many days following, the Admiral had retired at his usual early hour to bed, and after some time passed in profound repose, he was suddenly startled into wakefulness at the dawn of day, while the watchman was calling the hour of "Past four o'clock," by a loud and vehement knocking at the front-door of his house, accompanied by the most fearful and vociferous out-cries of "murder!" It was the sharp, shrill tone of a woman in the agony of fear, becoming more and more vehement at every repetition of the cry, while Sir Arthur dressed with the rapidity of a practised seaman, and hurried down stairs, where he found his maid-of-all-work, and his man-of-all-work, already assembled in breathless consternation round a trembling, terrified-looking servant girl, whose eyes were gleaming with an expression of frantic alarm, while, from her incoherent exclamations, Sir Arthur could only gather that some act of unutterable horror had been perpetrated in an opposite house, the windows of which were all partially closed, except one in the upper story, which was wide open, and seemed to be much broken and shattered.

Without waiting another moment to investigate the business, Sir Arthur strode across the street, hurried in at the open door, and guided by a momentary cry of childish distress, he mounted the staircase, with an activity beyond his years, three steps at a time, and precipitately entered the nearest room he could find. There he paused for a moment on finding himself in a splendidly-furnished bed-room, adorned with a degree of taste and elegance, far excelling what was customary in so obscure-looking a lodging, and the Admiral was about hastily to withdraw, when he became suddenly transfixed to the spot, and his eye seemed perfectly blasted by the spectacle which met his agitated and astonished gaze, while several moments elapsed before he had nerve to advance, and ascertain the reality of a scene, which filled him with horror.

On a magnificent couch, the rich coverlet of which was drenched in blood, that had sprinkled the floor, and spouted to the very roof of the room, lay the cold stiffened corpse of a young female, whose head seemed to have been nearly severed from her body, while a violent contusion appeared upon her forehead. The wrist of her right hand, with which she had probably attempted to defend herself, had also been deeply cut, and in her hand she grasped a quantity of dark hair, which seemed to have been torn from the head of her assassin in the struggle for life. Her teeth were clenched, and her eye-balls were starting from their sockets with a look of agonised fear, most appalling to behold, and her long fair hair which lay in disordered billows on her shoulders, were matted with gore.

A table near the bed had been overturned and broken,—a knife of very peculiar form, bent and distorted, lay conspicuously upon the pillow, as if placed there on purpose to attract notice, and the carpet, on which a pool of congealed blood had gathered, was likewise strewed with money, rings, bijouterie, trinkets, and plate.

Nestled in a little crib, close beside the murdered woman, but plunged in a slumber so profound, that it could not be natural, slept undisturbed and uninjured, a lovely boy of about eight years old. His head rested on his arm, and a clustering profusion of jetty black hair fell over his blooming countenance, in which there was a look of almost death-like repose. Awakened with the utmost difficulty by Sir Arthur, the child, who appeared to be of wondrous beauty, opened for a moment, a pair of bright blue, star-like eyes, and with a cry of terror, called for his mother, but a moment afterwards, overcome by irresistible drowsiness, his rosy cheek dropped upon the pillow, his heavy eyes were closed, and he relapsed into the same strange, mysterious insensibility as before.

It was a fearful sight, that young mother, with her look of ghastly agony turned towards the ruddy healthful countenance of her child in his peaceful slumbers, and it was evident that her last thought had been for him, as his clothes were still convulsively held in her left hand, while a vain attempt had obviously been made to tear them asunder,—many deep cuts being visible on the child's night-gown, though his person had been left uninjured.

Sir Arthur compassionately snatched the boy up in his arms, to hurry him away from the dreadful scene, and called the watchman, who instantly raised an alarm, and summoned the whole neighborhood to his assistance, when before ten minutes had elapsed, the room was filled with a crowd of agitated spectators, scared by the tremendous event, and crowding around the bed in every attitude of astonishment, terror, and commiseration, uttering exclamations of alarm, gazing helplessly at the frightful spectacle, and forming a thousand conjectures respecting the tragical event, instead of attempting to give any rational assistance.

"Not a moment is to be lost!" said Sir Arthur, in the steady authoritive tone of one accustomed in great emergencies, to command, "Where are the other servants?" asked he, turning to the girl who had first given an alarm, "and where is your master?"

"I have no master, Sir!" replied she in a low incoherent whisper. "I think the lady was not married; but perhaps, Sir, she might be! A gentleman called here last week."

"What was he like?" asked Sir Arthur, earnestly.

"A sort of clergyman, or gentleman, Sir! I don't know nothing about him, but he visited sometimes at this here house. No good ever came of it though, for my poor young mistress was always in sore distress after he'd be gone away. Last time there be much loud talking and argufying in the parlor, but it was none of my business to listen. I never pays no attention to what the quality says!"

"Here is a most disastrous business!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, in a deep and solemn tone, while he glanced at the crowd of white, livid, ashy faces, collected around him. "Let us remember, my friends, that every trifle we can observe here, may be of the utmost importance in bringing this dreadful mystery to light. Touch nothing, but have all your eyes about you to detect what you can, and let us instantly search the house."

With the little boy in his arms, who had awakened, bewildered and terrified by the sight of so many strangers, Sir Arthur, followed by the whole troop of spectators, who huddled together with evident symptoms of fearful apprehension, proceeded minutely to scrutinize the whole house.

In one apartment on the garret floor, belonging, as the terrified housemaid declared, to a person who had been taken in, she believed out of charity, to teach the little boy, the bed was disordered, as if the sleeper, when hastily rising, had thrown the bed-clothes almost upon the floor. The window-frame was broken to shivers, by some one violently forcing his way out; but no other sign appeared of the room having been inhabited. Not an article of clothing could be found in the drawers; not a book or a paper; and the search was about to be abandoned, when Sir Arthur perceived in an obscure corner of the room, a man's glove, stained with blood, and a red silk handkerchief, from which the initials had evidently been erased with great care, though he hoped that some one more accustomed to such investigations might yet be able to trace them.

The next room which Sir Arthur attempted to enter had the door double-locked; and though the party which accompanied him made a noise of knocking and hammering that might have raised the dead, no answer was returned, till at length, losing all patience, they broke it open, and impetuously rushed forward, all gazing eagerly around, as if they expected an immediate *denouement* of the mystery to take place; but some of those who were foremost shrunk back in astonishment, and hastily made way for Sir Arthur, while the servant girl earnestly whispered in his ear, with a look of anxiety and alarm, "This is Sarah Davenport's room! the child's maid! Better not disturb her, Sir! She is sometimes hardly right in her mind I think!"

When Sir Arthur, disregarding the simple girl's warning, advanced, he perceived with surprise a very young woman, scarcely twenty, who started up in bed, with a look of bewildered perplexity, as he approached, asking in accents of tremulous alarm, what had occurred to cause this extraordinary disturbance. Her cheek was of an ashy paleness, her very lips were blanched, and her voice sounded husky and hollow with agitation; but all this might be attributed to so sudden an inroad of strangers, while again and again she asked with quivering accents, whether any accident had occurred, and why they all appeared so alarmed.

"At all events, my darling boy is safe!" added she, holding out her arms to the child, who instantly recoiled from her, with looks of unequivocal terror, and hiding his face on the shoulder of Sir Arthur, he sobbed aloud with a degree of passionate grief and agitation which seemed almost beyond his years. The observant eye of Sir Arthur perceived that a dark scowl of malignity flitted for a moment across the beautiful features of Sarah, whose brow became singularly contracted over her flashing eyes; but making an effort instantly to recover herself, she averted her countenance, and added in a subdued voice of assumed tranquillity, "The child never knows me in a cap! I forgot to take it off, but the hurry of seeing so many strangers has confused me!"

In an instant she snatched off her night-cap, when her shoulders and neck became covered with a cloud of dark massy ringlets, floating down below her waist, and shading her pallid countenance, which had assumed an expression of livid horror, and unnatural wildness. "Let him come to me now!" added she again, stretching out her arms with a ghastly smile; but the boy struggled more vehemently than before, and clung to Sir Arthur with a tenacity and confidence, which deeply touched the old veteran's heart, who tried to soothe the terrified child by every endearment which his kind nature could suggest, while his attention was nevertheless enchained by observing the rigid, marble look of the young woman's countenance; the dragged and corpse-like appearance which stole over her features, as if she had suffered a stroke of paralysis.

"You have been frightened enough already, poor boy!" said Sir Arthur, soothingly. "No one shall hurt you! With me at least you are safe! Stay where you are, and do not be alarmed! No one shall touch you but myself!"

The child seemed to understand Sir Arthur's promise of protection, and his head drooped sleepily down, while his eyes again closed in that deep unnatural slumber, from which he had been with so much difficulty aroused, till at length,

> "Now like a shutting flower, the senses close,
> And on him lies the beauty of repose."

"Young woman!" said Sir Arthur, bending a look of penetrating scrutiny on Sarah Davenport, "how came you to be quietly asleep, and partly dressed too! while your mistress was murdered in the room immediately below! Did you hear no disturbance? Was no alarm given?"

"My mistress!" exclaimed Sarah, clasping her hands in an attitude of astonishment, and speaking as if every word would choke her, though not a muscle of her face was altered from the fixed and rigid look it had previously worn. "Oh! what will become of me!"

"What will become of you!" exclaimed Sir Arthur sternly, fixing his penetrating eye upon her. "Think rather of your murdered mistress! Come, come, girl! you performed that start very well; but I know good acting! I greatly fear you are more concerned in this horrid business than we at first suspected, and much more than you would wish to acknowledge. Get up instantly, and follow me!"

There was something fearful and appalling in the silence which reigned among the many persons who had gathered around, when Sarah, as a prisoner, was led into the chamber of death. A look of shuddering horror distorted for a moment her pale and haggard countenance, when she was unwillingly drawn forward to the place where her deceased mistress lay, and Sir Arthur, with silent solemnity, pointed to the ghastly spectacle. His eyes were intensely and most mournfully fixed on the prisoner's sullen and nearly livid countenance, while she silently clung to a chair to support herself.

Sarah appeared neither startled nor astonished after the first thrill of horror, but with a cold stony look of almost preternatural calmness, she muttered to herself in a low tone, which became nevertheless distinctly audible to all the spectators, and was evidently meant to be heard,—

"Why am I brought here! I know nothing, about this! The poor lady has committed suicide! No wonder! She often wished herself dead! She had a miserable life of it, and has got rest at last! I wish!" added Sarah suddenly, with vehement, almost frantic energy, "O how I wish that I could change places with her! O that I could be that cold, senseless image, without memory or feeling, without hope or fear, shut up from living wretchedness in everlasting sleep!"

"Let us hope that the Almighty has in mercy received her never-dying soul, and that in His own good time He will reveal the guilty assassins who sent her so suddenly to judgment," said Sir Arthur solemnly. "Unburden your own mind now, by confessing all, and be assured it will relieve the agony you are so evidently suffering. Murder is like fire, it cannot be smothered long."

"I know nothing! What could I know!" replied Sarah hurriedly. "She has destroyed herself, or thieves have broken into the house and robbed her. Could I help that?"

"No one has broken into this house," replied Sir Arthur, scanning the expression of her fixed and apparently unalterable features. "But you can perhaps tell us who escaped by that shattered window above? Not a lock is broken—not a door is injured—not a trinket seems missing, among the many scattered around the room. Here is money in abundance, if gold had been the inducement! Some other motive has provoked this crime—jealousy perhaps—or revenge——"

At the last word an angry hectic rushed over the face, arms, and neck of the prisoner, and her eye glittered for a moment with an unnatural fire, which rapidly faded away, leaving her as pale and death-like as the corpse beside which she stood, and on which her eye now rested with a look of cold and passionless indifference.

"It was only yesterday that she wished herself dead! this is her own doing!" said Sarah, turning away. "Why am I brought here! This is too dreadful! too shocking! It will drive me mad—it will! it will!" added she, with rising agitation; and then suddenly bursting in a hideous maniacal laugh, which rang with fearful sound through the gloomy chamber, and caused the horror-struck spectators to fall hastily back, "I would have saved her! I would! What woman ever sheds blood! but it was too late! I would have saved her, as I saved the child; but it was done—kill me! kill me! if you have any mercy, let me die! let me hide myself in the grave for ever!" Saying these words, with a scream of agony, she fell upon the floor in violent convulsions, from which it was nearly an hour before she entirely recovered, when faint, weak, and exhausted, Sir Arthur suggested that she could be carried to bed; but before she left the room, anxious, if possible, to elucidate the mystery, and to gain some clue for pursuing the actual murderer, he detained Sarah during a moment, and desired that a glass of water might be brought for her, hoping that the violent emotion she had betrayed might lead her to a full confession. Laying his hand then upon her arm, in tones of deep and awful solemnity, he looked at her, and pointed once more to the corpse, saying,—

"By a dark and harrowing crime those lips are sealed in the silence of death! What a tale they could disclose, if they might but once describe all that passed in this room a few hours ago! Those very walls have echoed this very night to her cries! You alone seem able to throw any light upon the horrid deed. You could tell all, or I am greatly mistaken. We shall yet know, at the day of judgment, if not sooner, how this fearful act was done. Consider, Sarah Davenport, that undying remorse will pursue you through life, and be the fitting tenant of your soul, unless by timely repentance you avert the fearful doom, and hereafter your heart will be tortured by the pangs of eternal despair. Unfortunate woman! consider now, or during the long period of your approaching imprisonment, whether it be better to repent and confess at once, or to confess and suffer everlastingly."

Not a word or look gave evidence that Sarah so much as heard Sir Arthur speak. Her large eyes were vacantly fixed on the ground, her hands were

firmly clenched, and her teeth were set with an air of resolute determination, when, after a silence of several minutes, during which her very stillness was frightful, supported by some of the strangers around, she walked with almost mechanical unconsciousness out of the room.

Again and again the house was searched that day—the very floors and wainscots torn up; but not a trace could be discovered to throw light upon the cause or circumstances of this disastrous event; and equally remarkable was it, that no hint could be obtained of who or what the murdered lady had been. There were books on the table in various languages, but not one retained any name written on the boards, though it was evident that on some a coat of arms had once been pasted, and subsequently defaced. Not a letter or paper could be found with either signature or direction, though one or two notes were discovered beneath the pillow of the bed, all anonymous, but written in a similar hand, and containing nothing that could identify the writer; and several sketches of the child, beautifully executed in various attitudes, were found in a portfolio, beside which were written many simple verses, containing the most fervent expressions of tender affection and anxious solicitude for the boy, and the most passionate bursts of melancholy, but all conceived in general terms, which baffled the researches of curiosity.

"This hand is disguised, yet surely I have seen it before," said Sir Arthur, musingly examining the anonymous notes, which related chiefly to remittances of money. "The face of that appalling spectacle sometimes seems also familiar to me. Have I not met with it already, or is this only the delusion of an excited mind? These deep and prominent eyelids—the small aquiline nose—the delicately-pencilled eye-brows—and that month of perfect grace and beauty, which seems still almost to speak without a tongue, in the language of heart-broken misery, telling of deceived affections—of blighted hopes—of unpitied and solitary tears."

Sir Arthur seated himself on a chair beside the couch for some moments in agitated reflection, vainly endeavoring to collect his thoughts, and form them into some tangible remembrance. "It is a strange and bewildering sensation, to look at the mute features of this death-like image, and to feel as if once she had been known to me in her days of youth and bloom. A vague harassing perplexity besets me in trying to realize the floating and flickering remembrance, which dimly mock my efforts to catch them. It seems like starting out on a dark night, and trying to distinguish some busy scene, where figures and lights appear, and vanish again before they can be identified. Where have we met before? Surely in some dream of former days I once beheld those fixed and glassy eyes lighted up with intelligence! but my treacherous memory will not help me—it recalls enough to torture me with perplexity, and not enough to be of any actual avail."

Sir Arthur wearied himself with intense efforts to identify the lineaments before him, but in vain. They were lovely indeed, and many a stranger came likewise to try whether they could be recognised, but without success. The fearful story circulated like wild-fire—the excitement and curiosity it produced became intense; but not a gleam of light was thrown upon the dark and mysterious event.

Among the many who hurried to behold the murdered woman before her remains were disturbed, two gentlemen arrived one evening after dusk, and having ascertained that neither the Admiral nor any other stranger was in the house, they gave Sir Arthur's servant, Martin, who was in attendance, a handsome donation, and desiring him not to follow, hurried up stairs, and remained in the room alone for several minutes. Both were much muffled up, and evidently avoided any scrutiny of their countenances; but they seemed greatly agitated on leaving the room; and as they hastened past Martin, and threw themselves into a hackney coach which awaited them at some distance, one of the party had appeared so overcome, that he could not walk without support. Much conjecture was aroused by this incident, which seemed to increase the mystery and interest attached to the melancholy circumstances, and not a doubt could be entertained that these untimely visitors had a more than common connection with the affair, but of what nature, and to what degree, could only admit of very vague conjecture.

Nothing could exceed the active interest taken in all the proceedings by Sir Arthur, who seemed to forget all his years and infirmities, while keenly promoting the cause of truth and justice. Much as he had formerly bemoaned the trouble entailed upon him by deceased friends, many of whom had bequeathed their estates and children to his guardianship, he felt on this occasion, a pity so intense, for the nameless, friendless, and helpless boy, thus unexpectedly and tragically thrown on his compassion, that he publicly pledged himself to harbor and protect the child in the mean time, trusting that some connections might at last be found, to whom he more naturally belonged. "Life has had a mournful commencement for him, poor boy! His days are dark, and his friends are few," said Sir Arthur, with a strong emotion of pity, "but we must hope for the best hereafter, and do the best that can be done in the mean time, trusting that a wise Providence, who cast him on my care and kindness, will also watch over his future welfare."

On the night previous to that appointed by Sir Arthur for committing to the grave the last remains of the murdered lady, he who had so often faced death in every form, and "kiss'd the mouth of a cannon in battle," yet felt himself awed and deeply affected in contemplating the solemn preparations for committing to the tomb one so young, so deeply injured, and so apparently unlamented. It was with mournful and mysterious wonder that he stood beside the corpse, and contemplated that mortal frame, from which the spirit had been so suddenly and so cruelly driven; and he could not but imagine the scenes of love and joy which those eyes had once probably looked upon—the busy thoughts that had hurried through that lifeless head—the warm affections that had flowed through that heart, now for ever at rest.

While yet his mind was dwelling with painful interest on all the thoughts which crowded through his fancy, Martin hastily entered the room, and in an agitated voice requested Sir Arthur's immediate presence in the entrance-hall, as some persons were there who had orders to communicate only with himself.

On arriving in the passage, Sir Arthur was astonished, and almost startled, to find several porters in the passage, carrying a coffin magnificently decorated, and covered with a velvet pall, on the summit of which was conspicuously placed a large brass plate, with the date of the murder engraved, and bearing no other inscription, but these two words in German characters—

My Wife.

"This is strange!" said Sir Arthur, turning anxiously to the men. "Who sent you here?"

"A gentleman left his orders with the undertaker, Sir. No questions were to be asked; and he paid for everything at once, leaving neither name nor direction," said the man who seemed to have charge of the business. "We know nothing of him; but he desired us to deliver this note into your own hands, and perhaps it may tell you more."

Sir Arthur hastily tore open the letter offered to him, giving an impatient glance at the handwriting, which was exactly similar to that of the anonymous notes he had already so carefully and so vainly scrutinized. He was astonished; and solemn as the occasion was, almost amused to observe that his name and direction had been carefully cut out of the newspaper paragraph which he quarrelled with some weeks before at the Club, and that this unknown correspondent, to prevent the possibility of his writing being detected by those who examined the outside, had pasted these printed letters on the cover, "Sir Arthur Dunbar, Portobello." The packet was sealed with a plain impression on black wax; the paper bore a broad black border; and there was an evident tremulousness in the pen which had inscribed these words:—

"Enclosed is the sum of £200, for the benefit of Sir Arthur Dunbar's adopted ward, Henry De Lancey. The same amount shall be transmitted annually, so long as no effort is made to trace from whence it originates; and the day he comes of age, it shall be increased to £500 per annum. The first attempt to find out his connections will be detected, and shall put a final period to all intercourse. The unfortunate woman was married to one who remained ignorant, till a few hours ago, of the circumstances attending her death. She disgraced his name, and abandoned his house; nevertheless her child may one day, perhaps, be acknowledged; and the whole expenses of his education shall be liberally defrayed, till he is grown up and has chosen a profession."

It was a strange, cold, heartless communication from a parent, without one expression of relenting affection, one word of solicitude for his happiness, or one expression of gratitude to Sir Arthur for taking upon himself so arduous a charge; but still it was to a certain extent most satisfactory, the Admiral being relieved of a great perplexity, by having thus ascertained in what rank of life the interesting boy should be educated, as he felt justified now in obtaining for him the highest cultivation, an advantage to which he attached the utmost importance, often repeating his favorite aphorism, that "principle is the helm, and learning the main-sail, which carries a young man forward in life; but both would be useless, unless the wind, which 'bloweth where it listeth,' be sent from Heaven to guide and direct him safely into harbor."

CHAPTER V.

The day of trial at length arrived, and the court, from the roof to the floor, seemed one sea of faces, crowded together like the "studies of heads" on a painter's canvass. During the legal investigation, which was conducted with deep solemnity and anxious perseverance, the mystery became still deeper, and more inscrutable. No appearance of a robbery could be observed, except that the finger of the lady's hand, on which a wedding ring had probably been worn, was much bruised and discolored, as if, immediately after her decease, it had been violently torn off; and a vain attempt had evidently been made to snatch away a gold chain hung round her neck, to which was appended a small broken miniature frame, set with brilliants, and adorned with what seemed to represent a very antique coronet. The portrait which it once enclosed, had been, with obvious difficulty removed, as the marks were visible all round, of some sharp-pointed instrument having been inserted in the frame, to which there still adhered several broken fragments of glass.

Sarah Davenport, who had been fully committed for trial, on suspicion of being an accomplice, refused to give any references as to character, and was strongly suspected of habitually concealing her real name, and of more than once assuming those that were fictitious, as her clothes and linen appeared to be marked with various initials, but in not one case did they bear those that she pretended were her own. It was evident that she labored under a powerful, but forcibly-subdued excitement; yet, with a tone and manner externally cold and hard as Siberian ice, she persisted in professing her own perfect innocence, and her utter consciousness of anything that might by possibility lead to a discovery of the perpetrators. She coldly, and almost calmly, threw back glance for glance, on the spectators nearest her, who were keenly watching every turn of her countenance, while dark surmises, and fearful conjectures, were whispered in murmurs of horror on every side; but at length her eye wandered to a distant part of the court, when suddenly a livid paleness flashed upon her face—an indescribable but startling lustre glittered in her eyes—her whole frame shook, as in the coldest blast of winter, and with a suppressed groan of agony and fear, she bowed her head upon her hands, and sunk fainting upon the floor. At the same time, a man was observed hastily to leave the court, and, gliding with rapid steps through the narrow passages, disappeared, before any of those who stood near had presence of mind to stop him, or could even identify his appearance.

Nothing apparently touched the feelings of Sarah Davenport, except when a suspicion seemed to be implied that she meant to injure the boy; and when a question to this effect was put to her by the court, she wrung her hands and burst into tears, saying, in accents of piercing anguish, though with a shudder as if death were upon her, "No! oh, no! Who suspects that I would injure a hair of his head! He once loved me! Few—few but he, ever did!—none that have not afterwards given me reason to hate them! I am a solitary, lost, and desolate being; but let him not forget in after years, that I saved his life!—that I saved it at a risk you never can conceive!"

An impulse of mournful interest and astonishment ran through the assembled multitude, when they beheld the rare and singular beauty of the child, after he was led into court; and it seemed as if the spectators had ceased to breathe as soon as he began to answer some of the questions which were skilfully put, to draw out his recollections of past times, and especially the dark history of the last few weeks. He was at first shy and intimidated, but gradually regained an unexpected degree of self-possession, and spoke with a surprising degree of intelligence and distinctness of all he remembered.

The boy retained a faint recollection of having been awakened, on the night of the murder, by some violent scene of strife and horror; but his faculties had evidently been so benumbed by opiates, that no distinct impression remained; and to his own young mind, the whole seemed like a fearful dream, too dreadful to look back upon even yet, except with bewildering terror. He gave a clear account, however, of the last evening he had passed with his mother, of whom he spoke in accents of infantine affection, evidently unable yet to conceive that he should see her face no more.

An old gentleman, he said, had come into the room and spoken angrily to her; while, with astonishing precision, the boy acted over the whole scene, recapitulated some of the language they had used, and described how his mother had hung to him with frantic eagerness, saying she would promise anything, if she might only retain her child; how the stranger, who was very tall, and wore a black coat, had spoken again with angry vehemence before he left the room; and how his mother, when left alone, had prayed and wept over him with looks of agonized and desolate grief, until he had been carried away to bed by the maid, who administered some medicine to him, which she said the doctor had ordered.

He spoke much also of a large room, hung with pictures, in which his earliest days had been passed, and of a small dark apartment close beside it, into which he had often been precipitately hurried, apparently for concealment, and where toys and sweetmeats had been always provided to keep him quiet, while he was punished with the utmost severity, for making the slightest noise; and he still remembered with looks of apprehension, the gentleman dressed in black, who most frequently visited him there, and often caused his mother to weep bitterly.

Sarah Davenport was then recalled, and rigidly cross-examined, respecting the gentleman who had visited at the house; but she doggedly asserted her entire ignorance respecting his rank in life, or connections, and pertinaciously maintained that the lady's death had been her own voluntary act, and that the sleeping potion had been given to the boy by his mother's own imperative orders, as she did not herself know even what it contained.

During a long and anxious consultation of the jury, there was a hushed and intense silence in the court, so still and unbroken, that the breathing of an infant would have been audible, while every eye perused the countenance of the prisoner, with an intensity that brought a hectic flush, burning like fire, upon her cheek, and she gazed around with a glance of anger that caused her beauty for the moment to look like that of a fiend or a fury.

At length, after arduously scrutinizing every atom of evidence that could be gathered, the jury, though morally certain of the prisoner's being an accomplice in the crime, felt unwillingly obliged to bring in a verdict of "not proven," and she was immediately liberated, after which, amidst the yells, jeers, and execrations of the populace who were convinced of her criminality, she hurried from the court, and was seen no more.

Nothing is half so attractive as a mystery, and many crowded at first, with a temporary enthusiasm, to see the beautiful boy, so strangely bereaved, and so cruelly abandoned; but the interest and excitement of hearing and relating his story were soon superseded by greater wonders and fresher news. In a world where all are rushing on headlong in pursuit of novelty, and where events, great or small, are speedily hurried into one common oblivion, people were tired at last of thinking or talking about young Henry and his concerns.

Every one of the Admiral's friends hinted that he could have managed the whole affair ten times better than Sir Arthur; all blamed him for many things, and praised him for very few; the Admiral was wondered at, criticised, discussed, admired, pitied, and censured, more than he remembered to have been for many years before; and the givers of advice were lavish of propositions and objections, all which were borne by their venerable friend with good-humored indifference, whether adopted or not. At length some perfectly new murders from London came on the tapis in society; those who liked reading in the Jack Sheppard style were satiated with studies from the life; the Mording Post assumed a terrifying interest; and the lady of fashion who consulted Sir Henry Halford about her appetite, because she could no longer enjoy her murders and robberies at breakfast, would have thought, when they were coming out hot and hot every week, that it was a wearisome repetition to speculate another hour upon a murder nearly a month old.

In short, "the Portobello story" ceased to be told or listened to. Henry had had his day. There is no such thing now as a nine days' wonder, because nothing lasts so long. Young De Lancey had been talked of as much as any reasonable being could expect to be talked of; and now it was universally voted a bore whenever the subject occurred in conversation; for, as Lady Towercliffe remarked, with a very long-drawn yawn, when, for the last time, it was alluded to in her presence, "It was a shocking, barbarous, and really startling affair; but all stories should be allowed to die out like an echo, which grows fainter and fainter at every repetition. One cannot be for ever talking of the same thing."

When Henry De Lancey lost one parent, he certainly gained another in Sir Arthur, who often afterwards remarked, that in no instance could virtue be more obviously its own parent, than in the case of any kindness he had shown to this fascinating boy, whose gay, joyous spirits became a source of perpetual amusement to him, while the Admiral seemed to derive new life from watching the frolicsome gambols of his young companion, occasionally enlivened by the gleeful vivacity of his niece Marion, when she escaped a single day from the trammels of school, bringing generally in her train two of her favorite juvenile companions, Clara Granville and Caroline Smythe, both several years older than herself.

On many occasions the sensibility of Henry De Lancey seemed already to have attained almost the depth and intensity of manhood, so strong were the bursts of natural feeling with which he occasionally spoke or acted, while it was deeply affecting to trace throughout the extraordinary progress thus early made in his education, the careful culture given to his remarkable abilities—the pains bestowed by his solitary parent to strengthen his mind for future difficulties and sorrows, the earliest and worst of which she could so little have foreseen or apprehended.

With considerable thoughtfulness of character, however, and natural integrity of mind, which Sir Arthur was delighted from the first to remark, yet, when the merry group of young friends assembled together on the shore of Portobello, building houses of sand, or running eagerly in search of shells, it would have been difficult to say which was the most carelessly happy, while the Admiral seemed to borrow their young spirits for the time, and gazed

with ceaseless delight on those joyous countenances, radiant with laughter and smiles, which were archly turned towards their aged playmate, sometimes with a challenge to run after them, or lighted up with smiles of affection when they brought him a bouquet of his favorite flowers, torn roughly from the stems, and crumpled in their little hands.

Sir Arthur often seemed almost ashamed to betray the engrossing interest and delight he felt in his young companion, who gained every day a stronger hold upon his affections, and it appeared as if he were anxious to forget that a time had ever existed when the playful and interesting boy was unknown to his heart; but a circumstance occurred, not long after Henry's adoption, which brought painfully to mind, with greatly increased solicitude, the fearful mystery that hung over his origin, proving also that danger still threatened him from some unforeseen quarter.

While the whole party of his young guests were noisily engaged on the shore in a game at hide-and-seek, one day in the month of July, Sir Arthur had seated himself on a bench within sight of them, sometimes watching their gambols with pleasure, and frequently conning over a newspaper, which proved by undeniable and satisfactory demonstration, that the country was entirely ruined—that the Government was coming to an end—that the Houses of Lords and Commons would be completely demolished—that the ministry had not another day to exist—and, as a grand climax, that anarchy, confusion, bankruptcy, and revolution, were about finally to drop their extinguisher over Great Britain. Sir Arthur had read the same thing in different words every day during fifty years, and under twenty varied administrations; yet still the wonder grew, how a constitution so mismanaged could so long survive, and that when all was wrong at the head of the country, it still had a leg to stand on. The Admiral's patriotic meditations had been several times interrupted by repeated complaints from the little girls, that Henry had hid himself so well, that they could not possibly find him; but he was too much pre-occupied to give the subject much attention, till at length Martin announced that the children's dinner had waited some time, and that still the boy was not to be found, though his companions had been searching for him at least half an hour.

Upon hearing this, Sir Arthur hastily started up, making a considerable expenditure of energetic and wondrous explanations, while he gazed around with increasing surprise at the wide waste of sand, like an Arabian desert, with which he was on every side encompassed, and where it seemed to him as if a mouse could not be long concealed.

A hasty and most anxious search was instantly commenced in the garden, while Sir Arthur and Martin shouted the name of Henry at the full pitch of their voices, but in vain; not a sound was heard in reply, nor was there a spot unexamined in which he could by possibility be lurking.

The Admiral now became seriously alarmed at so unaccountable a disappearance, especially when the child's gardening tools, with which he had been last observed, were found mutilated and broken, at a great distance, on the beach—one of his shoes had fallen off close to the water, and his hat lay nearly buried in the tide. Sir Arthur instantly summoned the police to his aid, but the search continued fruitless, till at length the dreadful conjecture became more and more probable, that Henry must have rashly ventured into the water, and been washed away by the waves—in pursuance of which apprehension Sir Arthur summoned more assistance, that the water might instantly be dragged.

Martin, meantime, no less active than his master, had accidentally met a stranger on the beach, who mentioned, on hearing of his alarm, that on the road to Leith, half an hour before, he had observed a boy struggling and screaming in the arms of a female, dressed like a nursery-maid, who complained loudly that the child would not go home, when a young man, rather strangely dressed, and of very singular appearance, had instantly offered his assistance, and carried him forcibly onwards. This gentleman said he had stopped the woman to remonstrate with her on using the boy so roughly, as a cap was drawn over his eyes, and he seemed to suffer agonies of terror, sobbing convulsively, and trembling in every limb; but the man had answered in reply, with a strong Irish accent, that he would see the child safe to his friends, and let no one do the poor boy "a taste of harm." The stranger added indifferently, that it was no affair of his, therefore he ceased to interfere; but he thought both the man and the woman had a very bad expression, and he would not trust either of them with his dog for an hour, to use it kindly.

Without wasting time in returning to communicate what he had heard, Martin hurried forward to Leith, where, with reckless speed and untiring diligence, he threaded all the narrow streets, and elbowed his way among carts, carriages, parcels, and passengers, till at length he reached the pier, to which he had been so eagerly aiming his steps. At its farthest point stood a smoking steam-boat in full boil, while men and women, boxes, packages, bags, and trunks were pouring in; and at length, as he breathlessly approached within some hundred yards, an arbitrary little bell was rung, to summon stragglers on board, and to hurry stragglers away.

A single plank, connecting the steam-boat with the pier, was on the point of being withdrawn, when Martin approached; and while he paused, in momentary hesitation whether to pursue his almost hopeless search, the steward peremptorily desired him to hasten on board instantly, if he were coming at all, as not a moment more could be lost.

At this moment a cry, almost amounting to a scream of childish joy, became audible on the deck—a young boy was seen vehemently struggling in the arms of a female; and in an instant, pursued by a man who vainly endeavored to overtake him, he rushed past the steward, ran across the temporary bridge, and clasped Martin round the knees, exclaiming, with eager incoherent exclamations of almost hysterical delight, "Take me, Martin! take me! O let me go home to Sir Arthur! I did not come away without leave! I did not, indeed! That naughty, horrid woman forced me! She tied a cap over my face, and would not let me go back! I have been so frightened and so sorry," added the child, bursting into tears, and sobbing as if his heart would break; "I thought Sir Arthur would be angry, and I thought, perhaps, I would never see him again! O take me home, Martin! take me home! and let me never see these people again!"

The boy put his hand, with an air of happy confidence and security into that of Martin, who snatched him up in his arms, with a thousand expressions of joyful surprise; but a moment afterwards, when he recollected himself, his first impulse was to secure the culprits who had decoyed Henry away, and to deliver them up to a magistrate for examination. With this intention, he looked hastily around, intending to cause their immediate apprehension; but the steam-boat had sailed off; and all the gesticulations he could make to bring them back only caused the steward laughingly to shake his head, thinking that Martin had merely missed his passage, as he deserved, for not showing more alacrity in obeying his injunctions to embark.

At Portobello, meantime, Sir Arthur had suffered agonies of grief, and even of self-reproach, thinking he had too securely relied on the safety of his young protege; and with a heavy heart he was still directing his steps, and conducting his assistants to the most probable places for finding the child's body, having already ordered his maid to have everything in readiness, in case a chance remained of his being restored to life, when he felt a gentle pull at the skirt of his coat, and, on looking down, he uttered a volley of joyful exclamations, on beholding the radiant countenance of Henry, whom he clasped in his arms with unutterable joy. While Martin and the boy himself gave each his own history of the strange adventure, Sir Arthur walked up and down in a state of irrepressible irritation, clenching his teeth, and grasping his walking-stick firmly in his hand, as if about to wreak instant vengeance on the miscreants. At length, after exhausting his indignation, he took Henry again in his arms, declaring he would never for a moment lose sight of him again.

Nothing in Henry's narrative threw the slightest gleam of light on the plans or intentions of the strange man and woman, which seemed destined to remain buried in impenetrable obscurity. They had evidently been accomplices in decoying him from home; and the boy had brought away from the steam-boat a small book which they had given him, full of ribald songs and profane jests, but covered with magnificent boards, and clasped with silver hinges, which seemed to have once belonged to some ancient missal, and still retained in the inside a collection of texts beautifully written in a very remarkable hand, which seemed to be that of a highly-educated female.

For some time afterwards, several suspicious-looking people were seen lurking about Sir Arthur's premises, late at night; and one evening a shot was fired suddenly in at the drawing-room window, which passed so near to Henry's head, that his hair was actually disturbed; but though an active police had been placed on the watch, not a trace could be obtained of the authors of this outrage.

As time wore on, and the mind of Henry rapidly expanded on all subjects of classical learning and general science, the fearful and melancholy events of his early years faded considerably from his mind, while he made astonishing progress at the excellent school where Sir Arthur placed him, exhibiting that happy, but rare combination of deep thought, and refinement of mind, with extreme liveliness of fancy, and enthusiasm of character. This threw a perfect witchery over his conversation, which sparkled with vivacity, or flowed with uncommon depth and power, as best suited the occasion, while at the same time, during his intercourse with Sir Arthur, he became imbued with the highest principles of honor and good-feeling; and from his master he imbibed the most enlightened knowledge of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, with the profoundest reverence for its precepts and practice.

Sir Arthur felt a dreary blank during Henry's absence at school, which became more and more intolerable as his eyesight was at length nearly extinct; and he had serious thoughts of engaging a person to walk out with him during the day, and to read to him during the evening, being of opinion that it is the highest wisdom, as well as the best Christianity, cheerfully to meet every appointed privation, and derive from the blessings that remain, as much enjoyment as they can afford.

Sir Arthur often remarked to his friend, Lady Towercliffe, that it is a misfortune to wear out a taste of any inoffensive occupation; and he began to fear it

might be possible for him to survive his enjoyment of reading. "In my long life," he observed, "I have myself travelled all the travels described by others, thought all the thoughts, and felt all the feelings. If I read such a book as Robertson's America, for instance, the question forces itself upon me, 'what the better would I be of knowing this whole volume by heart!' The time was once, when a romance carried me off into another existence altogether, and I seemed to awaken as from a dream, when called back to the ordinary business of life; but now I can anticipate from the first page, the whole *denouement* of every novel, and never for an instant forget my own identity in reading the story."

"It is a shocking symptom of advancing years," said Lady Towercliffe. "But you must wait till I publish."

"Yet," continued Sir Arthur, "there is one volume always new, in which I never can tire of reading my own heart and character; and in the Bible, the descriptions of eastern countries are so like what I have observed myself of the scenery, customs, and manners, that they fill me with recollections and associations that are of endless interest."

No sooner had Sir Arthur mentioned incidentally, to Lady Towercliffe, and several friends, that he would willingly give a handsome salary to a person of good reading and writing abilities, than it seemed as if all the meritorious young men in Scotland happened at that very time to be looking out for precisely such a situation; and it made Sir Arthur almost melancholy in examining testimonials, which ought to have procured any one of them a bishopric, to think that so many admirable youths, of learning and talents, were ready to sacrifice themselves for a mere home, and a pittance of £50 per annum!

No situation ever became vacant in the memory of man, for which Lady Towercliffe had not some protege exactly suited; and no sooner did she hear that Sir Arthur required a secretary and reader, than she wrote him a note of seven pages, closely penned, in which she made it evident that there was but one individual in the world who could suit, or ought to suit, and that one individual was the bearer of her despatch, who waited below for an answer.

It appeared that, with all her zeal in the cause, Lady Towercliffe knew very little of the young man she so vehemently recommended; but having accidentally met him in a bookseller's shop, he had been employed by her to copy some verses in an album, and she thought him, without exception, one of the most civil and grateful creatures in the world, who really deserved encouragement.

When Sir Arthur sent for Mr. Howard up stairs, his kind heart was almost shocked at the tone of wild energy, and the look of feverish anxiety with which he entreated that his capabilities might be tried. His figure, though youthful, was tall, gaunt, and meagre, while his care-worn countenance, which bore a stern and melancholy aspect, was lighted up by large, dark, flashing eyes, in which there gleamed an expression of singular excitement. He appeared young and handsome, but not prepossessing—so gloomy and determined was the expression of his firmly-compressed mouth, that it seemed almost indicative of ferocity; and his eye had that peculiarity invariably expressing evil—an impossibility of looking any one steadily in the face.

"You see me under great disadvantage, Sir Arthur; friendless, homeless, and poverty-struck," said Mr. Howard, with a look of eager, deprecating solicitude, which spoke at once to the generous heart of the Admiral, and filled him with commiseration. "Fate and fortune have hitherto frustrated my efforts, and weighed me down with life-crushing sorrows; but only give me employment, and I would not thank the Queen to be my cousin!"

It was a favorite saying with Sir Arthur, that he would be more ashamed to suspect mankind, than to be deceived by them; and if he had a weakness in the world it was a total incapacity to give pain. Touched by the nervous excitement in Mr. Howard's eye and manner, which he attributed entirely to his necessitous circumstances, he almost immediately engaged him, to the entire satisfaction of Lady Towercliffe, who never asked or cared any more about her protege, gratified that he had achieved "a job," and that by her interest, and hers only, a place in the world had been filled up, which would have been occupied by some one else, perhaps equally deserving, if she had not interfered, and she was satisfied for the present to have been of consequence to somebody, no matter whom.

Mr. Howard generally spoke in a subdued, mysterious voice, as if afraid to let himself know what he was saying; yet sometimes his words came forth with a rushing impetuosity, full of energy and fire, like lightning itself. His hollow, blood-shot eyes, betrayed a wild, watchful, suspicious expression, by no means prepossessing; and there was something inscrutable in the bland, perpetual smile he always wore upon his countenance, and in the frozen tranquillity of his manner, which occasionally, though seldom, gave way to bursts of tempestuous emotion. The very pupils of his eyes seemed to have become darker, with a fearfully wild and ferocious expression when irritated, while the fierce fire flashed out from beneath his lowering brows, with a blaze of inexpressible fury; yet in a moment he could command himself again into a cold, calm, and almost haughty exterior, while the spectral paleness of his handsome countenance made him look like marble itself.

Years passed on, during which Sir Arthur endured, rather than enjoyed, Mr. Howard's attendance, whose pre-occupied air and vague manner continually annoyed him; but his benevolent heart shrunk from consigning the poor man to that hopeless and solitary want which he seemed to apprehend must inevitably follow the loss of his present situation, and from day to day he postponed the decision, till habit grew into second nature, and he became so accustomed to hear "The Times," column after column, spouted forth in a rather theatrical tone by his reader, and to dictate notes and letters to his very silent and diligent secretary, that he almost forgot at last to think of parting with him.

When Henry returned for the first time from school, six or seven months after Mr. Howard had become domesticated at Portobello, the secretary professed a vehement fancy for the boy, would fetch and carry for him like a tame dog, and loaded him with attentions; yet, though in general most affectionately grateful to all who showed him even a trifling kindness, these assiduities and flatteries were lavished upon him in vain. The boy shrunk instinctively from Mr. Howard's notice, but could assign no other reason to himself or others for this apparently unreasonable antipathy, except merely that the stranger resembled somebody he had seen before, but how, when, or where, not a trace remained in his memory. This little caprice did not appear to be noticed or resented by the secretary, till one day, when Henry refused some bon-bons which Mr. Howard offered him, saying, the last he accepted had made him sick, and when the boy soon after flew gaily out of the room, Marion was for a moment startled and surprised to observe the malignant scowl with which the eye of Mr. Howard followed Henry. It was a glance, fell and malignant, that feared to be seen, while his cheek became pale as death, but whether in anger or in sorrow, Marion thought it impossible to divine.

As Henry grew older, his instinctive dread of Mr. Howard seemed only to increase, but he was too considerate to disturb the tranquillity of Sir Arthur by mentioning it, or to injure the poor man himself, by giving way to a feeling of dislike so unaccountable, and yet so perfectly unconquerable; but at length, after many years of such prudent self-restraint, when nearly grown up to manhood he could not help saying one day, in a careless tone, to the Admiral, after witnessing a sudden outbreak of temper in Mr. Howard that morning,

"Your secretary always reminds me, Sir Arthur, of Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea. It seems impossible to get handsomely rid of him, and he will never certainly make a voluntary departure!"

"I fear not!" replied the Admiral, with something between a smile and a sigh. "He does all I desire him, but without interest or pleasure, and he has the most undisguised contempt for every living being, almost amounting to hatred, yet he expresses unbounded gratitude for being harbored in my house. What can I do? It would be cruel to kick the man out of doors, merely because he is unhappy; but I have often observed, Henry, that he is no favorite of yours, though that is the only subject on which you have never been entirely open with me."

"Because I am heartily ashamed of my feelings, Sir Arthur, and you are the last person on earth to whom I wish to tell anything against myself. You have told me there are people with a loathing antipathy to cats, and somewhat similar is the shuddering sensation with which I see your worthy secretary enter the room. A sort of shiver comes over me, and a wish to keep him off—to avoid his very glance and touch. He has a strange under-look certainly! His smile makes me shudder! and yet the feeling is quite undefinable! They say dogs and children have an instinctive liking or antipathy to those who secretly like or hate them, and perhaps my sensation is on somewhat similar grounds.

"There is something fearful in the eye of Mr. Howard, occasionally, when I catch it fixed upon myself," added Henry rapidly, but in a sort of musing, absent under-tone, while his voice acquired a deeper tinge of thought, "I seem to have beheld him once in a dream! When he looks at me in that strange and extraordinary manner, his eyes like the flickering glare of light in a gloomy cavern, I feel and know that at some period in my life I have seen such a countenance before! The time and place have escaped me, but the remembrance is painful, and in his presence I cannot but be convinced that I am in the presence of an enemy. It is a feeling I can neither drive away, nor distinctly realize!"

"Why did you never tell me this before, Henry?" asked the Admiral, rising with agitation. "He has been hardly dealt with by fortune, but surely you do not think——"

"Think!!—; I think nothing, Sir Arthur, for I know nothing, and I ought not to have spoken as I have done,—it was wrong and rash. I shall try to conquer this,—to conquer myself,—and, as they say, acquired tastes are always the strongest, I may yet learn to like Mr. Howard better than any one living; but, in the mean time, Sir Arthur, he does occasionally look to me, very like some stray member of the Lunatic Asylum!"

"I sometimes think," said Sir Arthur, "that Howard has a bee in his bonnet."

"He has a whole hive of bees in his bonnet!" replied Henry in his usual off-hand tone; but when he looked round, as is usual, when people are spoken of, the individual himself, Mr. Howard, stood before him. A mortal paleness had overspread his countenance, contending emotions seemed flitting across his lowering brow, like shifting clouds in a threatening sky, and his eye gleamed upon young De Lancey with a look of maniacal fury; but the same artificial smile was on his lips which he habitually assumed, while, in the blandest tone of courtesy, he turned from the steady penetrating gaze of Henry to Sir Arthur, saying, in a tone of servile cunning, but with a smile the most ghastly that was ever seen on a human face,

"Every fool can find fault, but my livelihood fortunately depends not on any boyish caprice. It is derived from the generosity of a noble mind, unbiassed by cruel and unfounded prejudices, which may, however, yet be my ruin. A small leak sinks a great ship, and even you, my benefactor, may hereafter be influenced by the opinion of one who avowedly hates me, though without cause,—I should have little to dread if he were like you, but then who is? Come what may, however, you deserve and shall ever retain my undying gratitude and attachment. I have met with little kindness in life, and am never likely to forget that little, from whatever benevolent heart it comes. In this bleak, desolate, most harsh and cruel world, you are now my only friend."

"Those who have deserved friends, Mr. Howard, are seldom so entirely destitute of them!" said Sir Arthur, with a certain tone of interrogation in his voice, for he abhorred the slightest approach to flattery, and always had an instinctive apprehension that it was accompanied by deceit. "We are too ready often to throw the blame upon human nature, when our own individual nature is to blame. For my own part, I have met with little unkindness or ingratitude hitherto, and would willingly look upon the sunny side of life, hoping all things, and believing all things, of mankind in general, and of yourself among the number."

The darkened sight of Sir Arthur prevented him from perceiving that in the countenance of Mr. Howard there flitted a quick succession of emotions, fiery and vivid as summer lightning, but Henry observed with astonishment the powerful though ineffectual efforts he made to control his agitation. His hands were clenched, till the very blood seemed ready to spring; he gnawed his nether lip with frightful vehemence, and his eyes shot fire from beneath his dark and frowning brow. With a glance of unspeakable malevolence at Henry, and a hurried bow to Sir Arthur, he hastened with rapid steps out of the room, and subsequently out of the house.

"If there be a madman out of bedlam, Sir Arthur, that is he!" exclaimed Henry, following with his eyes the rushing steps of Howard, as he crossed the garden. "Before I go to college, let me hope you will dismiss him. Give the man a trifling pension, or do anything for him, rather than trust yourself in his hands, for I am mistaken, indeed, if he is not a bad and dangerous man."

"Before you return here, I may perhaps be able to find some other situation for him; but he has done nothing yet, Henry, to forfeit my protection, and I scarcely think he would live, if I dismissed him. He has drank a bitter cup of wretchedness, and without principle or hope, he has more than hinted to me, that death itself will be his resource if I turn him adrift. It was a well-meant officiousness of Lady Towercliffe to force him upon my good offices, and I cannot yet see any easy way to relieve myself of the charge, without causing more distress than I can reconcile myself to occasioning."

"He is certainly a strange, mysterious being," replied Henry, wishing to turn off a subject which he saw was agitating Sir Arthur with perplexity; "but Mr. Howard is not probably the only man on earth whom in the course of my existence I shall not be able to comprehend."

CHAPTER VI.

The most popular girl at Mrs. Penfold's "Seminary for Young Ladies," near Edinburgh, was Marion Dunbar, too much loved by her companions to be envied; admired by all, and almost idolized by each, while beneath the gay, sparkling surface of her joyous disposition, there rolled on a warm current of sensibility and feeling sufficient to repay, and more than repay, all the deep tenderness and enthusiastic affection she excited among the little circle of her young and ardent friends.

Cast in the finest mould of classical beauty, and formed mentally as well as personally in the very poetry of nature, the perfect grace and symmetry of her features became enlivened frequently by a rich and radiant smile, like a Hebe, glowing with the richest hues of health and joy. Her splendid eyes sparkled with every passing emotion, sometimes dimmed for a moment by tears of sensibility, but usually glittering with smiles, while occasionally, when amused or delighted, she burst into a comic, elfish laugh, the very essence of glee and joyousness—a most enlivening accompaniment to what she said, while her conversation, always fresh and unpremeditated, rushed straight from her heart, fresh and natural as a mountain stream.

The color of a violet was not more deeply blue than the dark, unfathomable eyes of Marion, shaded by a fringe of eye-lashes that might have been mistaken for black. No description could do justice to the fascination of her smile, without one shade of affectation, while her pure transparent complexion, fresh as a bouquet of roses, took a richer tint from all the fleeting emotions which chased each other through her mind. A rich profusion of nut-brown hair played around her high arched forehead of alabaster whiteness, and a thousand laughing dimples quivered around her delicately-formed mouth, giving her a merry, joyous look of girlish beauty, varied occasionally by a melting softness of expression when she looked on any countenance that she loved. On one occasion, a celebrated sculptor asked Sir Patrick's permission to take a cast of Marion's head, and on obtaining the desired permission, he observed, that if those features could be turned into marble, he would stake his whole fame on the impossibility of any critic pointing out a single defect. But while admiration is given by the eye of an artist merely to symmetry, expression is the mystery of beauty; and the charm of Marion, in the estimation of her friends, was, that her face seemed like a mirror formed to reflect every emotion of their own hearts.

The most stern and morose of human beings must have been conciliated into some degree of regard by the deep tenderness of a character "without one jarring atom form'd," which seemed made only to love and to be loved. While her gay fancy revelled in "cheerful yesterdays and confident to-morrows," the flowers that grew around her path, the birds that sang as she passed, the very turf beneath her feet, and the sky above her head, called forth her feelings. She had a tear to spare for the sorrows of every one who claimed her sympathy, and a ready smile for the joys of all her companions, while yet a great deal of unoccupied love remained at her disposal, the chief portion of which was bestowed with prodigal enthusiasm on her indulgent uncle Sir Arthur, whose doting affection would have spoiled any other disposition, but only rendered her more keenly to merit and to deserve his partiality.

In the estimation of Sir Arthur, his "little Marion" never became a day older, and he considered her a perfect prodigy in everything she said or did, watching all her words, and entering into all her juvenile feelings with a versatility of mind astonishing at his advanced age. Nothing on earth is more touching than to see the warmth of sensibility and enthusiasm yet surviving the chill of many a year in this disappointing and sorrowing world; but there was a degree of mutual confidence between Sir Arthur and his young niece which can seldom exist with a disparity of years and circumstances. Besides all her feminine gentleness, and almost poetical gracefulness of character, Marion yet displayed at times a power of intellect and an energetic strength of character for which a superficial observer would have been totally unprepared; for her mind seemed always to rise in proportion to the occasion, while she had been born apparently to practise without reserve that beautiful Christian rule, for each individual always to consider himself last. Rarely are deep feelings and intense sensibility united with that high intelligence of mind, and that vivid gladness of spirit peculiar to Marion; but the stream of her mind was deep as well as sparkling, while during her early years sorrow flitted through her cheerful, laughter-loving mind, like the shadow of a butterfly in a bright sunny flower-bed. Pleased "she knew not why, and car'd not wherefore," there was a peculiar grace in all she did, and an infectious merriment in all she said, which attracted a joyous group of companions continually around her, on whom the light of her own buoyant vivacity seemed to be continually and brightly reflected.

Nothing could be more pleasing and characteristic than to observe the refined ingenuity with which, from the earliest age, Marion tried to evade receiving the multitude of little presents with which it was Sir Arthur's delight to surprise her. Trinkets and toys would have multiplied around her, if she had not frequently made an ostentation of possessing more than it was possible for her to use; and when Sir Arthur allowed her a choice in any gift he was about to force on her acceptance, she invariably selected that which seemed least expensive; and her uncle afterwards told, that when, on the twelfth anniversary of her birthday, he clasped a beautiful Maltese chain round her neck, she said to him, with a deepening color and faltering voice, "I would like better to love you for nothing, uncle Arthur! My drawers up stairs are like a jeweler's shop already. You know I inherited half dear mamma's ornaments, and Patrick says you bring Rundell and Bridge in your pocket every time I have a holiday; but I would be quite as happy to see you all for yourself."

The merry-eyed Marion seemed to "wear her heart upon her sleeve," and to see only what was best in all those with whom she associated. With her small means, it was truly astonishing how frequently and ingeniously she invented some unobtrusive way of conferring a favor on her companions, as if she were receiving rather than bestowing one; and it certainly appeared as if she scarcely knew the difference. There was not an individual among her numerous young contemporaries who did not often relate traits of goodness in one whom they always found ready to answer the largest drafts that could be drawn upon her good offices, while the cheerfulness of her mind reflected itself on all.

If one of her young friends rushed joyously forward to announce some unexpected success, Marion's features seemed as if they had been put together only for smiles and laughter, while her bright eye glittered with instant gladness, and a glow of color mounted to her dimpling cheek, as she felt and expressed with spontaneous warmth all that kindness could dictate, and more; but if some unforeseen affliction visited the hearts of her juvenile associates, there seemed no limits to the patience with which she listened to their complaints, or to the eager assiduity with which she endeavored to alleviate their sorrow. The most trifling attentions she never overlooked, were it merely the tying of a string, or the picking up of a handkerchief, which she did with a good-humored grace all her own, and the trifling actions of life are those by which the character can generally be most justly appreciated. Great achievements are a conspicuous embroidery laid on the surface often for effect, but the ground-work and material are formed of what is most unobtrusive and often scarcely noticed. With Marion, every kind and generous feeling was as natural as perfume to the violet, and equally inseparable from her daily existence; her ideas were fresh and vivid, while her manner was thoroughly fascinating and thoroughly feminine, at the same time that all the grace of look and expression added a surpassing charm to her lively and intelligent conversation, every word of which sprang from the spontaneous impulse of a heart full of natural emotion and straightforward sentiments.

Many a difficult exercise she had secretly assisted to write for her young contemporaries, many an unintelligible drawing she had touched up, many a dress she had privately mended, many a little debt she had clandestinely paid for her juvenile friends, and far from wishing to be thanked, she shrunk with modest sensibility from letting her services be over-estimated, even by those whom she had most exerted herself to oblige. Whenever a kindness had been privately done at school, the author of which could not be guessed at nor discovered, few hesitated to declare that it must have proceeded from Marion Dunbar, and none were ever mistaken in saying so.

It was indeed wonderful that the lovely and gay young school-girl found time for a tenth part of her kind and tender affections, at Mrs. Penfold's first-rate seminary for what Sir Arthur called "fiddle-faddle education." There no taste was inculcated for quiet pursuits or domestic intercourse, and it was one of Mrs. Penfold's favorite axioms, that nature is always vulgar; but in her zeal for the honor of her establishment she seemed resolute to make every pupil an Admirable Chrichton,—or more,—not in studying the experience of past ages, and reading the thoughts and feelings which have been recorded for their instruction by millions of the best and wisest of their predecessors in life, but in all the frivolities of existence; and to this end the pupils were stinted in sleep and food, while they pursued a course of application more incessant, though not so profound, as that of students for a double first class at Oxford. The most eminent masters were in hourly attendance to cultivate every thing but the heart or understanding. The various arts of killing or of wasting time were taught in perfection, by the best, or at least by the most fashionable teachers; and, as the Admiral disapprovingly remarked to her brother, "little Marion was surrounded by professors of every thing on earth,—by professors of trumpery in all its branches, but by no professors of common sense!"

With Mrs. Penfold each pupil was a favorite in exact proportion as she appeared likely to acquire a talent for the difficult art of rising in the world, by which she might reflect credit and celebrity on the theatre of her education; and it seemed, therefore, by no means intended as an expression of kindness, when the lady was heard one day impatiently to exclaim in accents of reproach, "Marion Dunbar is all heart, and no head! Some girls do nothing, but she does less than nothing; and though she gets on in years, she gets on in no other thing!"

Wearily busied in being taught, Marion yet felt that there was no incitement, and one only, which made every effort a pleasure, while it gave life to the

dull routine of her heartless labors, and that incitement was her fervent, incessant desire to please, not the dictate of vanity, but of spontaneous sensibility; and while, with her bright and beaming looks, she was by no means a prodigy, Marion very much under-rated her own powers, believing, in the simplicity of her heart, that she really was the most hopeless dunce on many subjects, only able to recommend herself by diligence and by alacrity to oblige.

Even Mrs. Penfold was disarmed of half her severity, by the eagerness with which Marion, buoyant with youth, and joyous as a bird on wing, undertook any task, or suffered any penance to compensate for such little *etourderies* as had caused her to be in temporary disgrace; and the stern schoolmistress herself could not but smile sometimes in the midst of her gravest lecture, to observe the look of extreme anxiety and self-reproach with which Marion listened to the catalogue of her small indiscretions, and the grateful joy with which she heard that there were any terms on which she might yet be restored to favor. Caroline Smythe, her most frolicsome companion, frequently amused herself by inventing imaginary scrapes into which Marion was supposed to have fallen, and by sending her express to Mrs. Penfold for a reprimand, while the lively girl watched, in laughing ambuscade, for the bright beaming smile which flashed into the supposed culprit's countenance, the instant she unexpectedly found herself honorably acquitted.

Thus the foundation of Marion's mind was laid, and these were the light breezes that ruffled the smooth current of her life; but enchanted by the slightest pleasures, few ever bore the burden of her annoyances so lightly, while a brilliant painted curtain hung over the future, filled with images of anticipated joy, to be realized in all their brightness and beauty, as soon as she became emancipated from the dreary thralldom of Mrs. Penfold's manufactory of young ladies.

Meantime, Marion's mind grew and flourished, like some rare and beautiful plant injudiciously cultivated, yet glowing in almost unprecedented luxuriance. Plunged in this inextricable labyrinth of educational troubles, she had to undergo lessons from sunrise till sunset, while all the varied arts, sciences, and languages were piled promiscuously on her brain, like an ill-grown coppice, distorted and stunted for want of more judicious thinning and training. She could name things in every language, but was told nothing of their nature and properties; while, as Sir Arthur complained, "poor little Marion was taught plenty of sound, but no sound sense, except what she had inherited by nature, without paying £100 a-year for it."

In music Marion displayed great taste and expression, while her flexible, richly-toned voice poured out sometimes a flood of harmony most exquisite to hear, as the pathos of her full round intonations drew forth the feeling and sympathy of all her auditors. Expression in music is like expression of countenance, not to be taught or acquired, but the spontaneous result of natural emotion, and with Marion music was almost a passion, for her whole spirit seemed instinct with melody, while her lark-like voice trilled its liquid notes with joyful hilarity.

Signors and Signoras, who might have fitted their pupils to become chorus-singers at the opera, were multiplied around the young ladies at Mrs. Penfold's "College of Frivolity," followed in ceaseless succession by Messieurs and Mesdames, who taught the young ladies to maltreat pianofortes, by playing on them at the rate of 100 miles an hour, or to speak foreign languages better than the natives, and to write them better than they could write their own;—

> While hands, lips, and eyes were put to school,
> And each instructed feature had its rule.

On Sunday evenings, for the sake of effect, the girls were regularly assembled to prayers, which were conducted like those of Frederick the Great's soldiers, being performed simultaneously at the word of command as a part of their exercise, without a semblance of reverence, and within a very limited number of minutes, while they were hastily slurred over by Mrs. Penfold herself, with scarcely an external aspect of solemnity or interest. Sunday had long been considered by all the pupils at Mrs. Penfold's as a privileged day for writing letters, wearing best bonnets, peeping from behind a red silk curtain at the congregation, criticising the clergyman's manner, dress, and appearance, discussing, in suppressed whispers, who it would be possible or impossible for them to think of marrying, and enjoying rather a longer walk than common in strolling to church and returning again.

Any knowledge of the Bible inculcated at Mrs. Penfold's was like all the other acquirements taught in that establishment, more for show than use. Each young pupil could repeat by heart, without hesitation or mistake, the whole history of Jacob, Abraham, and any of the patriarchs, prophets, or apostles, and enumerate all the kings who ever reigned over Israel, but they remained utterly uninstructed respecting the influence which the Divine revelation should obtain over their own life and character, nor were they ever taught to inquire what was their own nature, why they were placed upon the earth, and whither they were likely to go after this perishable world had passed from their sight. Summer flowers alone were implanted in their minds, but no thoughts, hopes, or affections, such as may last for winter wear. To them their birth seemed merely to have been the commencement of an existence, given entirely for their own individual pleasure or advantage, which was finally to terminate at their death.

Before Marion had been long at school, however, she formed an intimacy which produced a permanent and most happy effect on all her subsequent life and feelings. Clara Granville, several years older than herself, had been nurtured, like her brother, in holiness, and in every domestic excellence, while she lived only for the dictates of a chastened and sanctified heart. Delicate in health, and fragile in extreme to appearance, there was something almost seraphic in the delicate purity of her lovely countenance, and in the tranquil composure of her graceful manner. During a long and tedious illness, with which Clara was seized, a short time before leaving school, she testified a tender and almost exclusive affection for Marion, who spent all her leisure hours—or rather moments, for hours were scarce at Mrs. Penfold's—in the most assiduous attention to the beloved invalid, and in imbibing those elements of good, those feelings and principles of religion which were to be guides of all her future life, and thus she became, before long, an enlightened, well informed, and deeply pious Christian, not shrinking from the society of one who excelled herself, but humbly and gratefully seeking, on all occasions, her advice and instruction, while both had their hearts filled with a fervent desire, steadily and consistently to pursue their own best interests, and an anxious wish also to succor and benefit others, in all the troubles and sorrows of life, though Marion was apt to feel like the poet,—

> Ready to aid all beings, I would go
> The world around to succor human woe,
> Yet am so largely happy, that it seems,
> There are no woes, and sorrows are but dreams.

Marion's health and spirits were refreshed and invigorated by frequent excursions to visit Sir Arthur, who endeared himself to his eager young auditors, Henry and Marion, by expatiating with all the freshness of youth, to their wondering ears, on the times long past, when holidays, romping, sight-seeing, birth-days, and festivals, were still in fashion, but these were the days of his own boyhood, before children were too wise and busy to have time for natural enjoyment. The Admiral was thought, by Mrs. Penfold, a sad marplot, having already, as she knew, done all in his power to dissuade Sir Patrick from placing the "little fairy," as he called his favorite, in such a tread-mill as her school-room, where he said the only knowledge to be acquired was, that knowledge of the world which ruins the heart, and where fascination was to be taught as one of the fine arts, but all his representations, whether in jest or in earnest, were in vain. Sir Patrick, being the guardian of both his sisters, had determined to expend a considerable part of the provision bequeathed by their father in training them up as carefully, for the course of fashionable life, as he would have trained a promising race-horse which was expected to win the St. Leger, confidently anticipating a short and brilliant career of admiration and success, ending with a splendid trousseau, a chariot and four, and a profusion of wedding favors.

Even the gay, frolicsome Caroline Smythe, many years older than Marion, and the most seditious and unruly of pupils, became speedily tamed down to mechanical obedience at school, where, losing her naturally intense enjoyment of mere existence, she seemed at best almost a habitual drudge in the usual routine of labor. There was a mystery never apparently to be fathomed about this lively girl, which excited the most intense curiosity among her companions, but though she was gifted with an extraordinary degree of volubility, which astonished and diverted the whole school, talking in a rapid and irregular manner of all events, past, present, or to come, with a brilliant confusion of drollery and humor, still she never dropped a hint which threw the most transient light on her own situation and affairs. No one knew whence she came or who she was, but though defying all the powers of all the masters to render her accomplished, yet Mrs. Penfold evidently treated her with extraordinary consideration, and almost with respect.

Many were the restrictions and directions given respecting her to the scholars and teachers, which seemed to them most unaccountable, and several of which were voted by the juvenile community to be so peculiarly barbarous and oppressive, that though the young lady herself seemed neither surprised nor annoyed by the rigid watchfulness exercised over all her motions, it excited among her companions an indignant pity, and a keen spirit of partizanship. She was never on any occasion known to walk with the governesses and the other girls beyond the narrow limits of the high garden walls, and on Sundays, instead of attending the parish church, it was observed that one of the teachers invariably remained at home to read prayers with her. No general invitations sent for all the pupils by the friends of other girls, were ever accepted for Caroline, who had special permission to visit with Marion at Sir Arthur Dunbar's, but at no other house in the visible world.

She never spoke of home,—received no letters, and once only had a visitor, an object of keen and eager scrutiny to the little gossiping community of

Dartmore House, who discovered nothing more, however, than that Caroline's aunt, Mrs. Smythe, was a gay, fantastic-looking, showily-dressed little woman of no certain age, for whom her niece seemed to care very little, as the whole flood of her affections was concentrated on her companions at school. Money she had in the most lavish abundance, while she squandered it with a degree of reckless, and almost contemptuous profusion, perfectly startling to those who scarcely received as much in a year as she seemed able to spend in a day on presents for those she loved, which was the chief use to which her large funds were devoted.

Marion, the companion and pet of her two elder companions, Clara and Caroline, tried with all her powers to extend her affection also to Mrs. Penfold, but her feelings found nothing to feed upon in the cold, formal, rigid manner, and stern upright appearance of the schoolmistress, who repelled all intercourse with her pupils, considering them necessary grievances to be endured in her house, as a source of existence to herself, but not of pleasure. Towards these little slaves of education, driven from task to task with ceaseless pertinacity, no confidence was shown, and between them conversation became systematically discouraged. A governess was appointed to sleep in each room to secure silence among the pupils, few of whom had that glow of heart and imagination peculiar to Marion, and it was fortunate, perhaps, that her large stock of sympathy was not more frequently in requisition, as the most astounding confidences were sometimes imparted to her wondering ears.

One young lady, in a high fever of romance, described to Marion at great length, in the strictest confidence, an elopement which took place from the school where she had last been educated, on which occasion the young narrator had accompanied the bride part of her way, and returned home without detection, by climbing in at an open window. Another of the pupils asked if she did not think Monsieur D'Ambereau, the Italian master, wore singularly handsome mustachios, adding that it was a very common custom now for noblemen to go about in disguise, teaching at boarding-schools, in order to see the young ladies; and a third of Marion's young friends pointed out to her notice that many a ringlet appeared to be more carefully curled than usual, and many a dress to be put on with unwonted solicitude, when Monsieur Frescati, the singing-master, was expected.

Girls in a boarding school are as unnaturally situated as nuns in a convent, where the feelings and emotions, being checked in their spontaneous course, are thrust into channels for which they never were originally intended. Marion had a sufficient object in view, every time she entered a room, from the desire she felt to please all with whom she associated, which gave a vent to the warmth of her affections in seeking the reciprocal attachment of her companions; but many of the other pupils, shut out from nature with her sunshine and flowers, her feelings and emotions, and wearied by a monotonous, uneventful life of dictionaries and grammars, snatched at every legitimate or illegitimate source of novelty or excitement, and their conversation became as frivolous as a toy-shop, while the hopeless vacancy of their thoughts obtained relief if even a blind fiddler or a hand-organ appeared beneath their windows. It was an object of romantic interest for the day, to most of the girls, if an officer in uniform passed along the high-road within sight; an equestrian in plain clothes, if tolerably mounted, furnished them with a subject of exclamations during the following half-hour, and even the very Doctor, a mere country pill-box, who prescribed for Mrs. Penfold's pupils, being well-dressed, and not much above forty, would himself have been astonished could he possibly have guessed the interest excited by his visits, and the keen discussion that ensued after his exit, respecting his slightly grey hair, and brilliant yellow gloves.

Each young lady at school had a large assortment of romantic stories to relate, in a confidential under-tone, to her listening companions, of lovers who had committed suicide, gone mad, or been, at the very least, rendered miserable for life, in consequence of a disappointed attachment; while the whole party impatiently anticipated the time, not perhaps far distant, when their own turn would come to be idolized, admired, courted, and finally married to some "perfect love," with title, fortune, and establishment all pre-eminently superlative. Pure as the swan that passes through the darkest and most turbid stream, with plumage unsoiled, Marion's mind, in the meantime, remained untainted by the atmosphere of evil and frivolity around her. She caught at all that seemed good, avoided what was evil, and rejected every thought that might injure the unsophisticated excellence of her artless mind.

There arose, however, in time, one source of individual anxiety to Marion, known only to herself and Mrs. Penfold; but it increased in weight and urgency every year, throwing occasionally a shadow of care over that bright young countenance, in general so beaming with joy, though with true philosophy Marion tried often to forget what it had proved impossible for her to remedy. Once a quarter, or at least during every successive "half," the mortifying fact forced itself upon her observation, that no bills were so irregularly paid as her own; for while their amount rapidly accumulated, Sir Patrick's agent forwarded annually the very smallest instalments, with a thousand apologies, and many promises of a final satisfactory settlement at some future period, which period never seemed any nearer; and Mrs. Penfold often dryly remarked, in the hearing of Marion, that "short accounts make long friends."

An appeal to Sir Arthur for his interference often occasionally suggested itself to the mind of Marion; but she knew that his influence was less than nothing, and she greatly feared lest his vehement partiality to herself might lead him to overlook the very limited nature of his income, and to volunteer some generous sacrifice, such as she would rather suffer any privations than occasion. The pension and half-pay of Sir Arthur very barely sufficed, she knew, to defray his extensive charities, and to furnish sometimes the hospitable table, and the bottle of first-rate claret, round which it was his delight to gather a frequent circle of old brother admirals; but his purse was little calculated to stand the shock of such a draft as Sir Patrick would unhesitatingly have drawn upon it, had the idea occurred to him that Sir Arthur might perhaps be induced to take Marion's school bills upon himself.

In no instance was it more obvious than in that of Sir Patrick Dunbar, how precisely in society men are generally estimated at their own valuation. He was, like his sisters, pre-eminently handsome, while the hauteur of his demeanor, bordering on a sort of well-bred contempt for others, rendered his slightest notice an event of considerable magnitude even to many whom the world might have deemed his superiors in rank, fortune, and talents. There were a few exclusives, however, among his own exclusive set, whom he admitted to the most unbounded familiarity and good fellowship, inviting them to entertainments, given much more as an ostentatious display of wealth and taste, than from any feeling that might be dignified with the name of friendship; and thus, by a reckless and unbounded profusion in dress, equipage, and hospitality, unchecked by one sentiment of justice or of prudence, the young Baronet obtained universal celebrity for his generosity and good humor,—anecdotes of which were circulated with delighted approbation in every house.

He was known to have tossed a sovereign one day to an old woman at a cottage door, for merely reaching him a glass of water; he paid the post-boys double always when travelling; he gave ten pounds at a ladies' bazaar, for a paper card-case, which he presented the next moment to Clara Granville; and he sent Marion a magnificent rosewood box, filled with crystal perfume bottles, and gold tops, which cost twenty pounds, when at that very time she had scarcely a frock to put on, and was in agonies of vexation under an unpaid shoemaker's bill.

Sir Patrick's grooms and footmen always roundly estimated his income at £20,000 a year; and his rent-roll certainly exceeded that of all the parents united who paid Mrs. Penfold regularly for cramming their children's understandings; but while Sir Patrick made it a matter of accurate calculation to train Marion with skill and sagacity in the way most likely to take her speedily off his hands, yet it was no part of his calculation to pay for anything in money if he could do so in words; and while he rattled off whole estates in a dice-box, and raced himself into difficulties, entering horses for every cup, and dogs for every coursing-match, he privately resolved that Marion and her embarrassments should always remain both out of sight and out of mind.

Mrs. Penfold's grave and dry expression of countenance became graver and drier every time she contemplated the rapidly-increasing amount of Marion's bill, while she urgently impressed on her pupil's mind the absolute necessity of entreating more zealously than ever for the speedy payment of such very old scores.

Observing Sir Patrick so exceedingly profuse in his expenditure, however, Mrs. Penfold believed there could be no cause to apprehend any defalcation at last, being convinced that he might at any time defray her demands with ease, though the only thing he never found it convenient to command was ready money; and Marion soon discovered that it made him frantic with ill-humor to be asked for any. Of this peculiarity she had once an early instance, never afterwards to be forgotten. Having received from Sir Arthur, on her fifteenth birth-day, the first five sovereigns which it had ever been her good fortune to possess, she accidentally heard Sir Arthur laughingly complain during her mid-summer holidays at home, to Mr. De Crespigny, that he had arrived at the bank that morning too late to present a draft for money, and having given his last shilling to a beggar, he was, according to his own expression, "completely cleaned out," not having enough even to pay for being admitted to the exhibition of pictures, and actually put to some temporary inconvenience by his penniless condition for that day.

In all the pride of exhaustless wealth, Marion soon after stole up to her brother's side, and displayed her glittering treasure; but afraid to be suspected of conferring a favor, with intuitive delicacy she asked Sir Patrick to take charge of it until the following Saturday, that she might consider what to purchase on that day. Scarcely conscious of what she said or did, the young Baronet mechanically dropped the sovereigns into his pocket, where sovereigns in general had a very short reign, and soon after sauntered away to the club.

Day after day elapsed, week after week, and every time Sir Patrick entered the room, or drew out his pocket handkerchief, Marion thought she was on the eve of being paid; but at length her holidays came to a close, and still not a syllable transpired respecting her funds. Rendered desperate at last by anxiety to re-enter school, laden with presents to her favorite companions, Marion, who valued money only as a means of being kind to others, ventured one day, with glowing cheeks, and faltering voice, to remind Sir Patrick, for the first time, of their little pecuniary transactions, which was so very

trifling that he had probably forgotten it.

"You tiresome little dear! am I never to hear the last of those sovereigns!" exclaimed he angrily, throwing down his newspaper. "You deserve not to be paid till Christmas! But here they are! No! I have no change, I see, at present. Well! I shall remember it some other time!"

That "other time" never came, however, and Marion returned penniless to school, sympathizing more fully than she had ever done before, in Mrs. Penfold's lamentations respecting Sir Patrick's carelessness about money,—a subject which supplied that lady with a ready-made excuse, whenever she was out of humor at any rate, for venting it all on her unoffending pupil, whose sensitive heart became so imbued at last with vexation and anxiety, that on attaining the age of sixteen, she ventured to pen an earnest appeal to Sir Patrick, begging with all the eloquence of natural feeling, that if the expenses of her education were inconvenient, she might return home, where she would willingly shew all the benefit derived from the advantages he had already afforded her, by continuing her studies alone, and by devoting herself entirely to his comfort, amusement, and happiness.

This letter, which cost Marion agonies of thought, and a shower of tears, received no answer whatever; and with a sigh of unwonted depression, she dismissed the subject from her thoughts, and trying to hope the best, quietly resumed the course of her occupations, comforted by the consolatory reflection, that in two years she would have nothing more to learn—the whole range of human acquirement being supposed to attain its completion by each of Mrs. Penfold's pupils at the age of eighteen.

Clara Granville, and Caroline Smythe, having attained the highest acme of perfection under the finishing hand of Mrs. Penfold, were about to be emancipated in a few months from the thralldom of school, and to astonish society by their brilliant acquirements; respecting the most advantageous mode of displaying which, great pains had been taken to instruct them, though the inclination seemed wanting in both girls, being already surfeited with admiration and panegyric among their masters and governesses, who vied with each other in praising their two most advanced pupils, by whose influence they hoped hereafter to obtain recommendations and employment.

Marion had strolled one evening with Caroline, farther than Miss Smythe had ever been known to venture before; and the two young friends were seated in an arbor at the extreme verge of the bounds prescribed by Mrs. Penfold, in earnest conversation, while watching with delight the declining sun, which superbly illuminated a heavy mass of clouds in the western horizon. Time flew on, and darkness nearly closed around them while they discussed with lively, careless humor, all the petty annoyances of their daily life, and compared the little hopes and fears they entertained for the future. As the hour became later, Marion felt that the high exhilarating key in which Caroline spoke, and her gay, well-rung-out laugh, made her almost nervous in the obscure and solitary retreat to which they had withdrawn; but ashamed of her own timidity, she determined to conquer or conceal it.

Marion was flattered when a companion like Caroline, some years older than herself, thus treated her with familiarity; though certainly, neither on this occasion, nor on any other, was it with confidence, as no living being seemed entirely in the confidence of Miss Smythe, who, while she appeared gayly and heedlessly to rattle on in conversation, yet kept a cautious silence respecting all that concerned herself.

Many very reserved persons pass for being perfectly open, by means of a frank, free manner, and by speaking in a confidential tone concerning the most private affairs of those with whom they converse; and this Caroline did to excess, asking Marion, with every appearance of kindness, a hundred questions, which in her own case she either could not, or would not have answered, and testifying the most cordial, unfeigned interest in all that related to the prospects or feelings of her companion, who never attempted to conceal a wish or a thought, and often forgot that the trust was not mutual.

Caroline was talking eagerly with great animation, and telling Marion that the only injury she never would forgive, was, if any of those she loved had a sorrow that did not allow her to share with them; and especially if they permitted themselves to suffer from any pecuniary difficulties which it was within her power to relieve, when suddenly Marion laid a hand on her arm, making a hurried signal for silence, while she whispered in a low undertone,

"I have scarcely heard you for the last five minutes. Did you observe that strange-looking man, very much muffled up, who scrambled several minutes ago to the top of the garden-wall? He was staring wildly about him for some time, then gliding noiselessly down, and has suddenly disappeared?"

"Where? where?" whispered Caroline, grasping Marion's hand with a look of wild alarm, and speaking in a low, hoarse tone of extreme terror. "For your life, Marion, do not stir! Tell me which way he went! He must not see us. O how on earth has he traced me out!"

"Who?" asked Marion, bewildered and terrified, when she beheld a degree of frantic alarm depicted on the countenance of her companion, which seemed almost unaccountable. "Dear Caroline! whom do you fear?"

"A madman!" replied Miss Smythe, in accents of mingled anger and disgust. "He has haunted me for years! He threatens either to murder or to marry me; and you may guess which I think the worst! He has even adopted my name! Did you never hear, Marion, that he actually put his marriage to me last year in the newspapers! He besets my footsteps—besieges my dwelling-place, persecutes me with letters, sends me his picture, follows me to church, throws stones at my windows in the night, and frightens my very life out, yet the law leaves me unprotected, because he commits no actual breach of the peace. It was to avoid him that I begged my aunt to let me live here! How did he discover my retreat?"

Caroline seemed to have lost all command of herself in the agony of her fear, and poured out a flood of words in the rapid and subdued accents of extreme terror, while she retreated into the darkest corner of the arbor to screen herself from observation, hastily dragging Marion along with her, and whispering an eager request, if they were discovered, that she would endeavor herself to get off, and fly towards the house for assistance. "Meantime I shall engage his attention; but if he once sees me, all hope of escape on my part would be vain, while the very endeavor might irritate him! Everything depends on you, Marion! Be resolute, and lose not a moment, or you may be too late."

In agonized suspense and apprehension the two friends remained during several minutes, cowering behind the overhanging branches, and scarcely venturing to breathe, while Caroline bent her head eagerly forward to catch the slightest sound, and grasped Marion's arm almost convulsively, as if to secure her being perfectly immovable; at length, after some time, she heaved a deep sigh, expressive of relief, and looked up, saying

"He is surely gone! he must be gone! I never eluded his eye before!—his sight is almost supernatural; but he must be gone at last! Let us hurry home!"

"Stop!" whispered Marion, in an under tone, "I heard a rustling close behind us, among the leaves and branches. Some one certainly approaches!"

"Fly, then, Marion! all is over, and I must face the danger!" said Caroline, with sudden energy, while rising and drawing herself up to her full height, with resolute countenance, though her limbs evidently trembled beneath her, she walked towards the door, saying, in a loud, commanding accent, to a tall man, much muffled up in a loose great-coat, who had now appeared at the door, "Who goes there? Ernest!!" added she, in tones of remonstrance. "How dare you enter my presence again! How dare you intrude here!"

"Be true to yourself and me!" replied the stranger, in a voice which sounded harsh and excited, while the deep, full tones appeared to Marion as if she had heard them before; but the darkness prevented her from seeing him distinctly, even if his dress had not been sufficient to disguise him from the most penetrating eye. "Say what you will, I know you are glad to meet me," added he, in accents of increasing wildness. "All that you do is dictated by others; but Caroline, in her secret heart, loves me! I know that! By your looks, by your voice, by your manner, it was revealed to me years ago! Yes, you love me, and cannot deny it! Speak but the word, and we may both be happy,—happier than the wildest dreams of fancy! No impediment can prevent it! Let your aunt conceal you where she will, she cannot hide you from me. In the farthest corner of the earth—in the deepest dungeon that was ever dug, I shall find you out, and still free you from persecution. She may do her worst, but love laughs at locksmiths, and I can still enable you to elude her vigilance. I come now prepared, if you will but consent to fly with me!—now,—this moment. If not,——"

The madman's voice, which had been loud and vehement, here dropped into a low, stern, inaudible murmur, and his hand plunged into the breast of his coat, seemed as if it grasped some weapon there, while Marion, taking advantage of his pre-occupied attention, darted off with the speed of thought, and almost as noiselessly fled towards the house. A loud, angry cry to stop her, mingled with curses and imprecations, from the madman, while he waved his singularly long arms menacingly above his head, only accelerated her pace, while he followed some steps in pursuit; but terror gave wings to her feet, and rushing into the entrance-hall, she instantly rang the large dinner bell, and raised an alarm, which assembled the whole household, all of whom gazed with looks of panic-struck astonishment at Marion's pale and ghastly countenance.

Not a moment required to be lost in explanation, for Mrs. Penfold seemed at once to guess the whole nature and extent of Caroline's danger, the instant her name was mentioned; therefore Marion had but to point out the direction in which she might be found, when Mrs. Penfold hastened forward, preceded by several of the more active servants.

When Marion had rapidly executed some orders committed to her she quickly returned towards the arbor, but not a trace remained there of any one. The little table had been upset, several branches torn down that surrounded the entrance, and the grass beneath was much trampled and disfigured; but all was silent and deserted. After one hurried glance of alarm and perplexity, Marion hastened forward to the garden gate, which she found had been

violently burst open, and on emerging into the high road beyond, she there found Mrs. Penfold and her servants all crowding round Caroline, who remained in a dead faint on the ground for nearly half an hour.

A carriage was rapidly disappearing at full speed in the distance, but already almost too far off to be distinguished; and Marion perceived the figure of a man lurking behind the hedge close beside her; but when she made it evident that he was observed, he rushed close up to her side, saying, in a threatening tone, between his clenched teeth, "You have provoked a madman!"

Scarcely had Marion time to utter an exclamation of sudden affright, before he sprung over the hedge, and was seen running across the neighboring fields, until his figure mingled with the surrounding gloom, and vanished out of sight.

Mrs. Penfold's chief care, after Caroline's recovery from her alarming swoon, was earnestly to enjoin that the circumstances of this adventure should never be mentioned, or so much as remembered by those who had witnessed them; a story so extraordinary and alarming, being likely to injure her establishment, besides causing much unnecessary gossip among the younger pupils; but had Marion ever been disposed to consign, as desired, the whole adventure to oblivion, she could not but be continually reminded of it for several weeks afterwards, by the startled and agitated manner of Caroline, whose frolicsome spirits had entirely deserted her, while she seemed for some time to be in imminent danger of a nervous fever. If any one appeared suddenly in the room, she almost screamed with the start it occasioned her; she could not bear for a moment to be left alone, and seemed as if continually listening, even when safe in the house, for the sound of steps in pursuit of her. Gradually, however, her mind became more composed, and she ventured one day to take a stroll with Marion in some of the nearer parts of the garden, though even there she scarcely spoke above her breath, and turning hastily round several times, as if apprehensive that some one approached.

Had the far-famed Upas tree grown over the arbor, Caroline could scarcely have shunned more fearfully the slightest approach in that direction, and with equal care did she avoid any allusion to what had occurred there, not a hint of which ever transpired in her most confidential moments. The very sound of her own feet on the gravel seemed to startle her, and as she walked beneath the shade of some tall forest trees which overhung the garden-wall, Marion observed that Caroline trod more cautiously; and though she dropped not a word respecting her feelings or fears, it was evident that her nerves were strung to an agony of sensitiveness, for the fluttering of a bird in the hedge, or the fall of a leaf, made her start, and she seemed about at last to give up the point in despair, and hurry homewards, when suddenly a loud shrill whistle arose amidst the branches of an ash-tree, almost directly over their heads, and before Marion had time to look round, a small packet had dropped at the feet of Caroline.

With a half-suppressed cry of alarm, the terrified girl fled, while Marion, scarcely less frightened, instinctively picked up the parcel, and followed, while again she was pursued by a volley of oaths and imprecations, which ended in a laugh so wild, so maniacal, and so fearful, that for months afterwards it rung in her ears, causing her a shudder of horror and alarm.

When Mrs. Penfold tore open an innumerable multitude of seals which closed the packet addressed to Caroline, she discovered within only a long incoherent letter of several sheets, filled with the most extravagant professions of ardent love, and the most vehement declarations, that nothing on earth could impede or discourage him in his resolution to carry her off, which he seemed still persuaded, with the self-delusion peculiar to madness, must be a welcome assurance to Caroline, whose words and actions he perseveringly attributed to the arbitrary influence of others. Accompanying this farrago of most intolerable nonsense, was a black shade in a wooden frame, representing the profile of a young man, certainly handsome, and which seemed to Marion like features she had known elsewhere, but being frequently addicted to observing resemblances, she felt at once persuaded that this must be some such vague and unaccountable likeness as she had frequently found or fancied before.

Time wore on, and still Caroline lingered at school, unwilling apparently to forsake the comparative quietness of Mrs. Penfold's, where, though her age exceeded by some years that of the other pupils, and though her cotemporary Clara had been already introduced into society, she still seemed anxious to forget herself and her affairs in the multitude of her masters and studies, so completely was she engrossed by which, that she evidently grudged every moment and every thought which interrupted her progress. At length, on the evening previous to that fixed on for her final departure from school, when Mrs. Smythe was expected to convey her home, Mrs. Penfold was bestowing on Caroline some of her last advice, of the most approved mode of "getting on" in society, and especially on the manners and conversation most attractive to gentlemen, when a note was brought into the room, which had arrived by express, bringing the melancholy intelligence that Mrs. Smythe's carriage had been upset a few miles off, causing so severe a blow on the head, that a concussion of the brain had taken place, and she continued insensible, at a village some miles off, where little hope remained of her recovery. The Doctor who wrote these hurried particulars had obligingly sent his own carriage and servant to accompany Miss Smythe to the spot, that she might take a last leave of her dying relative, and he recommended that she should not lose an instant, or it might be too late to find the sufferer in life.

Struck with grief and consternation by this most unexpected and calamitous intelligence, Caroline, though she had never before seemed much to love her aunt, yet now became overwhelmed with the shock, and lost not an instant in hastily preparing to obey the melancholy summons, by throwing on her coat and bonnet, while she rushed into the arms of Marion, and burst into an agony of tears in bidding her farewell.

The French governess who had been summoned to escort Caroline in the carriage, was one of those nervous persons, who became perfectly frantic when hurried, and she flew about the room, uttering a volley of incoherent exclamations, expressive of her wonder and perplexity at so sudden a call on her activity, while her preparations seemed to make no visible progress. There is a secret, mysterious pleasure in being waited for, which every living mortal seems to enjoy when they have the opportunity; and without a thought of Caroline's impatience, her anxiety, and her sorrow, Madame D'Aubert expressed the most eager and vehement solicitude about her own dress, and a resolution not to stir till equipped to her entire satisfaction, for so rare and almost unprecedented an event, as leaving the boundaries of Dartmore House.

Every thing that has a limit, however, must come to an end, and Madame D'Aubert's toilette being at last completed she leisurely advanced, talking to herself and to everybody else, arranging her shawl, and giving a last finish to the contour of her bonnet, before she threw herself with dignified deliberation into the chariot.

Marion had affectionately insisted on conveying her weeping friend to the carriage, while, with all the little arts of affection, she tried to console and encourage her, till at length they exchanged a final embrace, and parted. Scarcely, however, had Miss Smythe placed her foot upon the steps, while the man-servant who accompanied the carriage carefully assisted her in, before Marion suddenly sprung forward with an exclamation of terror, seized hold of Caroline's dress, and before she could speak, dragged her forcibly into the house, exclaiming in accents almost inarticulate from alarm,

"Come back, Caroline! come back! This is some mistake! some dreadful trick! Caroline! dear Caroline! come back! That servant wears the very dress of the person who attacked you in the garden! I cannot see his face, but I am certain it is he!"

Before Marion could finish her sentence, the supposed servant had violently seized Miss Smythe by the arms, and was about forcibly to drag her towards the carriage, when the loud cries of Marion brought assistance. The almost fainting girl was rescued, and the post-chaise secured; but not a trace could be seen of the madman, who instantly vanished; and the post-boy could give no intelligence respecting him, except that he had been ordered out at an inn close by, in urgent haste, that evening, with a promise of double payment if he implicitly obeyed the gentleman, who seemed highly irritable, and swore at him in a most fearful manner, if he made the slightest delay, or so much as asked a direction which way to turn.

The most diligent search was made, but made in vain, by the officers of police, to find out the lunatic's retreat, which eluded their utmost research; and as Caroline Smythe was privately removed soon afterwards from school, where the subject was forbidden ever to be mentioned, the whole story seemed almost buried in oblivion, and Marion herself felt at last as if the entire adventure had been an agitating dream, remembered by no one but herself.

CHAPTER VII.

Marion's sister, Agnes, five years older than herself, after being distinguished as the best musician, best sketcher, best linguist, best everything, at Mrs. Penfold's, had left school with no real knowledge, except of the most frivolous kind, accidentally gathered in conversation, and repeated again in society like a parrot. Formed to excite the most rapturous admiration, by the gorgeous magnificence of her almost regal beauty, art had acted the part of the Fairy Bountiful in forming Agnes, while nature had showered her choicest gifts on Marion.

Agnes was brilliant without being interesting, and dazzling without being attractive, for her mind seemed irremediably and incorrigibly vulgar, selfish, and vain. A good actress, an inimitable mimic, and incomparable in a tableau, she assumed generally a queen-like dignity of manner, "stalking through life," as Sir Arthur said, "with an assured and stately step, as if practising for her appearance as a Duchess at the next coronation."

Admiration seemed to Agnes the only pleasure of life, and amusement its only business; while, if ever she had possessed any sensibility, it was frittered away on the fictitious sorrows of the Adelines and Julias in the volumes which she read with surpassing diligence from a circulating library; though, in all other respects, Agnes wasted her time amidst such listless idleness, that she might have let her nails grow, like those of a Chinese mandarin, to testify how literally she did nothing.

No one, certainly, could excel Agnes in turning up her hands and eyes at the faults of others; but those who trace nothing except evil in their companions, have seldom much good in themselves. Marion found it one of the most important and pleasing studies in the world, to comprehend the character and temper of her friends and connexions, besides her own, with a wish to render herself suitable to them, as her mind, pliable without weakness, was bent on constantly yielding her own wishes to those she loved; but this unobtrusive generosity was only a subject of satirical remark to her sister, who could neither understand nor believe in Marion's utter singleness of heart and disinterestedness; her own sole aim being selfish indulgence, and her sole rule to obtain it in the easiest possible way.

Self-love was the ruling passion of Agnes; love of others the quickening principle, or rather impulse with Marion, who would have zealously planted flowers for even strangers to enjoy; but Agnes would have plucked all those of her friends, and scarcely taken the trouble to rear any even for her own use. Agnes, cold, vain, heartless, and self-sufficient, thought she was made only for this world, and this world for her, and for such as herself, young, gay, rich, and lovely, while all others were mere intruders on the creation. But Marion, on the contrary, followed the dictates of her own heart, in wishing to do good of every kind to every person, while still she had learned to aim above nature, to that high standard of Christian perfection, so exalted, that those who have gained the most elevated human attainment in virtue and excellence, must still consider the structure of their minds, however beautifully decorated with generous sympathies and kind emotions, as being only begun, while they perseveringly aspire upwards, even to the measurement of that Divine Being who left us an example that we should follow his steps.

Agnes had now been, for three seasons, the reigning beauty of Edinburgh! There it is the privilege of every tolerable-looking girl to be considered in her own set pre-eminent, during the first winter after she is introduced; but though the public eye usually grows weary of the same features, however perfect, during a second campaign, Agnes had apparently taken out a diploma of beauty, the reputation for which seemed confirmed to others by her own thorough conviction of being completely unrivalled, and by the exulting consciousness she displayed of her own supreme loveliness. Three seasons of tumultuous joy, triumph, and conquest, had already succeeded each other, during which Agnes was, to use her own expression, "fiercely gay," yet still no younger rival had appeared to eclipse the dazzling array of her charms; and not a whisper was heard that the freshness of her Raphael-like beauty was at all impaired; nor were any ladies ever heard to "wonder" what gentlemen could possibly see to admire in Agnes Dunbar, as not a dissenting voice had yet ventured to make itself audible on that subject.

Agnes began life with that perfect confidence in her own knowledge of the world, universally felt by young ladies under twenty, especially when they have seen very little of it, and with a thousand schemes and projects of perfect happiness. Though one after another her castles of cards fell to the ground, still, in the exercise of persevering energy, she rebuilt the edifice again with new materials, and on what she imagined a better construction, but still in every instance, to her own unutterable astonishment, she found that most unaccountably, "hope told a flattering tale!"

Considering every officer she danced with as a hero, and every gentleman who paid her a compliment as a lover, Agnes wasted her first season, as most young ladies do, in flirting with scarlet uniforms, the inhabitants of which were generally so much alike in ideas and conversation, that if blindfolded, she might have found it difficult or impossible to distinguish which of her countless red and gold admirers happened at the moment to be "doing the agreeable."

All her military victims were dying to know what Agnes thought of their brother officers; whether she intended to adorn the next ball by her presence, or the next concert; how she liked their military band; if she proposed patronising their night at the theatre; whether she preferred a *galope* fast or slow; how she thought the colonel's daughter looked on horseback; whether she did not think it barbarously tyrannical of the commander-in-chief to insist on their all wearing uniforms; how she liked the new regulation jacket; and above all, whether she thought the order for their wearing mustachios an improvement or not!

To all these subjects, and many more of similar import, Agnes lent her very profound attention, not only during the discussion, but in many a solitary hour, while her whole head, heart, and understanding were crowded with the recollection of epaulettes, mustachios, spurs, and gold lace, and she privately believed that the supreme felicity of earth,—all the most refined sensibilities of life, and all its brightest joys, were to be found at Piershill Barracks.

Sir Patrick laughingly alleged that Agnes had rehearsed a set of prepared conversations suited to every different occasion,—a musical conversation for amateurs, full of crotchets and quavers—a hunting conversation about foxes, dogs, and steeple-chases,—a Court of Session conversation for the lawyers,—and a dragoon conversation, discussing at great length whether officers should dance with spurs or without them, and in which she had been known to enumerate correctly, the facings of every regiment in Her Majesty's service.

Her brother often and loudly declared that nothing is more perfectly hopeless, than for any young lady to expect a serious attachment from an officer actually quartered with his regiment, as it was against all rule, and contrary to all nature or custom, for Cupid to attack the army. The mess-table, he assured her, invariably sets its face against matrimony, and the mess-table conversation was an ordeal, through which he protested that few young ladies could wish their names to pass; but nevertheless, Agnes, full of groundless expectations and lively vanity, continued to endure a succession of heart-rending and unaccountable disappointments, from very promising military admirers, who had stolen her bouquets, listened to her music, and drunk Sir Patrick's claret month after month; but no sooner did marching orders come for Dublin, Leeds, or Canada, than these interesting affairs came to an untimely end with a P.P.C. card, or a sort of never-expect-to-meet-again bow, and Agnes was left with the army-list in her hand, wondering what regiment would come next, and whether there were many unmarried officers in it.

"How amusing it is," said Agnes, in a confidential mood, one day to Clara and Caroline, "when I walk about with Captain De Crespigny at the promenades or balls, and see all the other beaux looking angry or disappointed!"

"Nothing on earth is so charming, I suppose, as to be a beauty!" exclaimed Caroline, with a good-humored sigh, and a look of comic humility, "I would sacrifice ten years of my life to be admired for one! To hear people saying, 'Have you seen the lovely Miss Smythe? Is Miss Smythe to show herself at Lady Towercliffe's party?' and then, like you, Agnes, to have all the beaux dying for me!"

"I would rather be married for any attraction in the world, than mere beauty," said Clara, earnestly; "even money is a more tolerable motive. How insufferable it would be to live with a person whose affection depended on whether your hair were well dressed, or your shoes well made!"

"That is the very thing I should like!" exclaimed Agnes, "to see it considered of the greatest consequence whether I wore pink or blue, and whether it were one of my well-looking days or not!"

"But then, Agnes, your well-looking days would occur seldomer and seldomer, while during the very periods of illness and depression, when attention and kindness are most needed, a fastidious husband would feel injured if your complexion were not at its best," replied Clara, laughing. "No! no! give me the happiness that will, as my milliner says, 'wash and wear well!'—good fire-side domestic comfort."

"Comfort! I hate comfort!" said Agnes, indignantly, "a stupid, detestable word, as opposite to real happiness as night is to day! I shall be satisfied with nothing short of felicity."

"But felicity can last only a day, while peace and comfort may be enjoyed for life," replied Clara. "In talking of marriage, you seem to think of nothing beyond the honey-moon, and to forget the hours, days, and years of actual life that must follow!"

"It is absolute nonsense looking so far out to sea as you do, Clara," said Agnes, impatiently. "How I shall enjoy, next winter, perhaps, chaperoning you both to parties if I can find any fascinating victim, tall, thin, and handsome enough to please me."

"But surely you would not, for any consideration, marry yet!" exclaimed Caroline. "Lady Towercliffe says that the holiday of a girl's life is from the time she leaves school till the day she marries, and you should enjoy ten years at least, Agnes, before you are tempted to begin the cares of life."

"Cares!" exclaimed Agnes, with a contemptuous laugh, "I do not mean ever to take any cares upon myself! but, as Captain De Crespigny very sensibly observed yesterday, the husband worthy of me should be made on purpose. In the first place, he must be rich, for I have a scruple of conscience in ever witnessing a poor marriage, where, after the wedding-cake has been eaten, there is nothing else left. In everything,—even in the mere choice of a ribbon,—I am fastidious, and would rather not have a thing at all, than dispense with getting precisely what I like. My intended, then, must have been educated at Eton, for I do think the ugliest bit of human nature on earth is a Scotch school-boy of about fourteen. He must have such a foot! so small! oh! no foot at all. He must employ Buckmaster the tailor, get his shoes from Paris, and never wear the same gloves twice. He must——"

"My dear Agnes! this should be all put into the contract!" said Clara, laughing. "It perfectly ruins me to hear you talk so extravagantly; and, besides, pray be warned in time of your own probable fate, that the beauty of a family, or the beauty of a winter, is said always to make a poor marriage. I never could understand the reason of that; but Lady Towercliffe says, men are perverse beings, who like to criticise and undervalue a professed beauty, while, in the mean time, they are taken by surprise, and fall in love unexpectedly with some obscure girl, whose charms they discover, or fancy for themselves, and whom, probably, not another man living ever thought tolerable."

"For my part," said Caroline, "I shall wait till a person can be found as handsome as Sir Patrick, as agreeable as you tell me Captain De Crespigny is, as clever as Mr. Granville, as merry as young De Lancey——"

"And as rich as Lord Doncaster!" interrupted Agnes.

"No! no!—, a hundred times no!" replied Caroline, coloring, speaking in a singular tone of asperity, "I hate and abhor money as a consideration in marrying! I wish money had never been invented! It becomes a misery for those who have too much, as well as for those who have too little."

"Well! give me money," said Agnes, laughing. "And let me tell you, Caroline, that even if you have eight or ten thousand pounds, which is probably the utmost, you will find it no great inconvenience during the long run of life. Money has its merits, and I should be afraid to marry any man, even the most romantic of my lovers, if it involved the necessity for his sacrificing one of his usual comforts;—if it obliged him to drink his bottle of sherry instead of claret every day, I am not quite sure that he would never begin to grumble! They tell me it should be considered a man does not wish himself twice every day unmarried again. No, no money, is no bad thing, and if you have any to spare, pray let me have the surplus."

"Who, and what are Mrs. and Miss Smythe?" was a frequent question of Agnes to herself, never apparently to obtain a satisfactory answer. On Caroline leaving school, her aunt had taken a villa at Portobello, where the two English strangers excited extreme attention, more from their evident desire to avoid it, than from any thing very remarkable in their appearance or manner, though Mrs. Smythe was certainly of that *genus* old maid so common in England, with a handsome independence, a suite of servants, a pony-carriage, most splendid dress, and some pretensions still to youth and beauty, as any fragment of good looks that yet remained she most liberally displayed; while her manner had a flirting tone of coquetry most unsuitable to her apparent age, forming a singular contrast to the quaker-like simplicity of Caroline's dress.

There was a singular contrast between the gravity of costume affected by Miss Smythe, and the keen festivity of spirit with which she entered into every scheme of amusement, or even, it might be said, of mischief. Her vivacity was occasionally almost overpowering, her fancy lively beyond example, while with her brilliant, yet interesting animation, there was mingled a rare acuteness of mind, a swift comprehension, and an innate passion for all that was amiable and beautiful, which gave liveliness and vigor to what she said, though the rapidity of her mind sometimes led Caroline to a false estimate of persons and circumstances, as she always judged or acted from instantaneous impulse; yet there was a generous frankness in her disposition, which captivated those who knew her, and a graceful simplicity in all she did, which gave it interest; for, without intention, there was something in all her thoughts and actions striking and peculiar.

Her features, though irregular, attracted and enchained the eye, from the magical variety of their expression, and though an amateur of mere beauty might have been surprised and perplexed to divine why her light grey eyes, pale cheeks, and chestnut hair could beguile his attention away from the more perfect contour of others, the amateur of physiognomy was delighted to find there an ever-varying source of interest in watching the bright emanations of thought, feeling, and vivacity, which glittered or sparkled in her eye, or played about her mouth.

When Mrs. Smythe first settled at Portobello, scarcely a week of gossiping, wonder, and conjecture had elapsed, in the little community around, when she requested to have an interview with Sir Arthur alone, which took place immediately, and must have excited much interest in his mind, as the Admiral remained silent and abstracted during the whole subsequent evening, while he strolled slowly up and down the drawing-room, "pacing the quarter-deck," as he called it, for a length of time; and, after being closeted some hours the following day with Mrs. Smythe and his confidential agent, they proceeded to a magistrate's house together, with whom they requested a private conference, the purport of which did not transpire.

From that day, an intimacy, amounting to friendship, was established between Sir Arthur and the two ladies, who seemed on all occasions to look to him for advice and protection, and in whose house they spent a part of every day, to the unspeakable delight of Henry De Lancey, who was charmed, on his return from college, to find so agreeable an addition to the small circle at Seabeach Cottage.

"Years rush by us like the wind;" and how rapid seems the transition from boyhood to mature years! Henry had early attained an extraordinary development of mind and appearance, a strength of intellect and a decision of purpose which seemed to Sir Arthur almost precocious, while every day discovered some new talent, or enlarged those he already possessed, for his mind seemed ever on the wing and full of energy. "Either he is nobly born, or nature has a nobility of her own," thought the Admiral, when viewing the character of his young protege, as it gradually arose to personal and intellectual supremacy. His mind was ardent, courageous, and deeply contemplative, full of generous impulses, but apt to view all that happened to himself through an exaggerated medium. His mysterious history, and the fascination of his manner and appearance cast a spell over the interest and affections of all who beheld his countenance, or heard the sound of his harmonious voice. With a strikingly handsome person, he had already acquired a decided air of fashion and refinement, while a bright vein of almost chivalrous romance which enlivened his mind was subdued by a poetical temperament, inclining him to dwell much on melancholy musings, relating to the strange circumstances of his own early history. Keenly sensitive to kindness or neglect, his love and gratitude to Sir Arthur were without bounds, and his brotherly affection for Marion was tinged with the natural enthusiasm of his disposition, but before long the warmest and deepest feelings of his nature were secretly concentrated on the gay, giddy, and fascinating Caroline Smythe. Every scrap of paper that came in his way became covered with sketches of her buoyant figure and graceful profile, in a variety of animated attitudes; or, on other occasions, verses in Latin or English, little better certainly than the nonsense verses at school, immortalised her charms.

Young as he was, however, Henry's spirit recoiled already from the danger of loving too well, or being beloved by any, when he was taught, in hours of solitary reflection, to remember that principle and honor must forbid him to seek a mutual attachment, while his name and station remained unknown, and, perhaps, disgraceful. There was a bewildering power in Caroline's society, which chained him to her side wherever they met, while, contrary to his resolutions and wishes, his every look, smile, word, and action became steeped in love. Often and severely did he upbraid himself for this vain and dangerous indulgence, but he seemed spell-bound and unable to remember, in her presence, any thing but the delight of listening to her gay sallies and her delicious laugh; though the mirth of her young eyes became veiled often by a look of care as sudden as it was to him unaccountable, being so foreign to the sparkling, almost mischievous gaiety of her nature.

Henry's devoted, and nearly boyish attachment, raised in his heart many a high aspiration after future distinction, many a bright hope of honor, promotion, and usefulness. The model for his imitation in every thing noble and distinguished was Sir Arthur, and he resolved to sacrifice love itself, till he had attained, like him, a name and a station for himself. The very sound of Sir Arthur's step, the very tones of his voice, were dear to him; and, casting aside every softer emotion connected with his romantic reveries respecting Caroline, he became impatient to face the bitter blasts of the world's trials, taking his beloved benefactor for his example, and the Holy Scriptures as his guide.

"Perhaps," thought he, allowing his young mind to wander away from the dull inexorable realities of life, while a rapturous smile of anticipated joy lighted up his countenance. "Perhaps, when honor and distinction have at last crowned my efforts, I may yet be acknowledged in the face of the world, by those connexions who have now so mysteriously cast me off. Perhaps Caroline herself may at last be proud to return that fervent attachment, of which she has not yet even a suspicion! The old proverb says, 'all men know what they are, but none know what they shall be!' I know neither the one

nor the other; but I must not be satisfied with vaguely coveting learning, honor, or usefulness hereafter, contemplating like a mere child the end without the way, but seek them energetically. Nothing is impossible to those who persevere! This may and must be a rough world of difficulty to me, but amidst a thousand buffetings and humiliations to come, I feel an undying hope of success, while even in this scene of hard and trying discipline, my best comfort and encouragement shall ever be drawn from the august truths of religion, in all their awfulness and solemn obligations."

Knowledge is power, and knowledge of character is the greatest power of all; but Henry, in general very penetrating, was perplexed by the flirting, light-headed manner of Mrs. Smythe, whenever she was in the society of gentlemen her own contemporaries in age, and the grave, deferential manner she adopted towards her young companion, whom she seemed to treat almost inadvertently as her superior, though the slightest indication of her doing so usually brought the color of Caroline in vivid flashes to her cheek, and caused an appearance of mutual embarrassment between the aunt and niece, which surprised and puzzled him. Their extraordinary munificence to the poor and public charities also astonished him, as that appeared so widely disproportioned to their visible means and usual expenditure, though it seemed only to please without surprising Sir Arthur, who was accustomed to give so liberally himself, that Henry sometimes feared he encouraged his newly-found friends in a degree of lavish extravagance inconsistent with the ordinary means of single ladies; yet all was given with a graceful negligent indifference to the vulgar subject of pounds, shillings, and pence, quite unprecedented. Subscriptions to church extension, missionaries, schools, Bibles, blankets, food, clothing, coals, money, and medicine, were scattered around them with unsparing profusion, though it appeared to Henry, that, in the case of Mrs. Smythe herself, whose name always appeared ostensibly on the list as the larger contributor, there was less alacrity in giving, than in Caroline, who seemed to be purse-bearer for both, and always defrayed the whole amount.

Among the many things which surprised Henry in Mrs. and Miss Smythe, nothing had that effect more than the keen, intense, and rather satirical interest with which both ladies gathered up every particular relating to the manners, flirtations and adventures of Captain De Crespigny, though it was evident, that while both ladies could relate every particular of his former history and character, neither knew him by sight. Mrs. Smythe mentioned rather contemptuously some vague recollections of him formerly, as a pert, awkward school-boy, while, to Henry's increasing perplexity, the young lady's color visibly rose to carnation whenever he was unexpectedly named, and her eyes usually glittered with a suppressed smile, if any anecdote or description in Sir Arthur's conversation related to him, till at length the curiosity which had so long been evidently fermenting in the minds of Mrs. and Miss Smythe, exploded one day in the form of an eager request, that Sir Arthur would invite Captain De Crespigny to meet them at dinner.

Marion and Henry were amused at the laughing alacrity with which Sir Arthur at once consented, and they observed, after the note was despatched, that many a whispered consultation took place, and many a lively jest passed among the lively trio, to which they were not made a party; while the two ladies appeared evidently in extacies of amusement at their anticipated introduction. Marion would have given worlds to witness the scene; but her furlough from Mrs. Penfold's had expired on the very day of Sir Arthur's party, and she was most unwillingly deposited in a carriage with her baggage, at the moment when Captain De Crespigny alighted, in full huzzar uniform, out of the minibus which had conveyed him from Piershill.

The Admiral's party was exceedingly small and select; but the guests appeared all in gay, buoyant spirits; while Captain De Crespigny, seeing but one young lady in the room, looked upon himself as her natural property, and handed her to dinner, though no formal presentation had taken place.

With Caroline he was, before long, flirting to the top of his bent, while she assumed a charming look of consciousness when he addressed her, receiving the whole artillery of his small talk and civilities with the most interesting expression of naivete, though once Henry observed in her smile so odd a mixture of mirth and malice, while, at the same time, a look of covert humor lurked in her eye, and quivered on her lip, that he could not but wonder at the grave, demure look which she affected.

Nothing was ever more enchanting to Captain De Crespigny than the blushing, averted looks with which Caroline listened to all his insinuated admiration; while now and then she nodded and smiled with the prettiest air of incredulity imaginable, if he professed it more openly. Occasionally, however, Captain De Crespigny was almost put out of countenance by her unexpected replies, or very mal-apropos questions, which gradually led him on, he scarcely knew how, into flirting perfectly *a'loutrance*, while opportunities seemed purposely afforded him with a degree of tact perfectly incredible in one so young, and apparently unsophisticated, to say even more than he ever said before. With a gay, laughing animation, almost amounting to silliness, the young lady archly doubted his sincerity, admired his wit, and slyly misunderstood all his compliments, till he was obliged to repeat his meaning and explain his insinuations, making his professions and speeches all so exceedingly plain and undisguised, that, to his own astonishment, he found himself positively making love, on a very few hours' acquaintance, with a degree of explicitness which had never occurred to him in the whole course of his practice before.

In the evening, Caroline was, after many entreaties, prevailed on to favor Captain De Crespigny with a song; and never had he been so completely perplexed as by those with which the young lady, preserving a look of most imperturbable gravity, proceeded to favor him. She seemed to have a dozen different voices, and half-a-dozen different styles of performance, but had evidently been well taught, and displayed occasionally some beautiful notes. At first her tones were clear and sharp, accompanied by the strangest flourishes and cadences that Captain De Crespigny had ever heard or imagined. In the next song, her voice was low and husky, while her eyes were most sentimentally elevated to the ceiling, with a sort of St. Cecilia expression, rather partaking, however, of the ludicrous, and in her voice another like a mouse in a cupboard. At one time her tone reminded him of a well-known singer at Vauxhall; at another, he felt persuaded she was taking off Clara Novello; occasionally there was so considerable a tinge of the brogue, that he became convinced she must be Irish, and she ended by singing "The Dog's Meat Man," in a tone out-screaming a peacock, but adopting the air and attitude of a Catalani, and concluded with looking exultingly round in expectation of rapturous applause, which Sir Arthur bestowed in abundance, and Captain De Crespigny in comparative moderation, being, for the first time in his life, at a loss to know whether he were treated on this occasion in jest or in earnest.

Repeated subsequent visits at Seabeach Cottage continued the intimacy which Captain De Crespigny had so oddly begun, and his curiosity became more and more piqued by the singularity of Miss Smythe's manner and conversation. She displayed, along with a most extravagant love of amusement, a genius for satire and mimicry quite unprecedented, and in which she most freely indulged. Many a scene was acted over by her, and supported by Henry, with astonishing talent and vivacity; for both seemed to have a similar propensity, being able, after an hour's intercourse with any individual, to imitate his whole peculiarities with almost magical precision—to follow, in an imaginary conversation, the very train of his ideas, and to represent every little trick or habitual expression, every turn of the head, and every tone of the voice, with a gay look of mockery which would have made their fortunes on the stage.

One evening, Sir Arthur having delivered up to his young friends the key of an old chest, filled with velvet coats and brocaded silk dresses, formerly worn by his bye-gone ancestors, Caroline, Henry, and Captain De Crespigny amused themselves by grouping some beautiful tableaux, and by acting charades. At one time, both the gentlemen appeared in similar costumes, as Shakespeare's two Dominos in the Comedy of Errors, when Sir Arthur suddenly exclaimed, as if he had made some great discovery, "How very strange that I never before observed the likeness between you two good-looking young fellows! I declare it is quite remarkable! If you were brothers in reality as well as in pretence, it could scarcely be more striking! Do pray Captain De Crespigny, turn your profile more towards Mrs. Smythe, that she may see what I mean!"

Henry laughingly received these remarks as an undoubted compliment, and bowed with good-humored grace to Sir Arthur, who observed with astonishment that Captain De Crespigny's color rushed to his very temples, and receded again, leaving his countenance pale and almost ghastly, while he suddenly broke off the entertainment, and strode up to the fire-place, where for some minutes he stood, with his back to the company, in evident agitation, while a dead silence ensued.

"Well!" whispered Sir Arthur to Caroline, "I have often been told that people are never pleased with a likeness, but certainly Louis De Crespigny is the most conceited of men to feel so intolerably angry at being compared to my young friend here. There are certainly worse-looking people in the world than Henry!" added the Admiral, with a look of partial affection. "And it was no such insult as De Crespigny seems to think, when I paid him the compliment, to say that he resembled my boy, who is in every respect the pride of my heart."

"I wish the Captain may never meet with a greater mortification," replied Caroline, laughing; "and I am sure he would be much the better of a few pretty severe ones to keep him in his senses!"

Henry meantime had observed with good-humored surprise, and no small degree of perplexity, the excitement, so disproportioned to the occasion, into which Captain De Crespigny had been thrown by Sir Arthur's remark, but with boyish frankness he instantly went up to him, saying, in a lively and rallying tone,

"I am sure Sir Arthur did not mean anything personal, Captain De Crespigny; but his remark only proves my uncommon skill in assuming a likeness to any one I please. My success in disguising myself at college, was often beyond my intentions or utmost hopes. You would not know me yourself, if I represented an old man, or a French hair-dresser, as I have sometimes done!"

"Indeed!" replied Captain De Crespigny, trying to recover himself, "I should think there was not the dress upon earth in which I would not know you again!"

"Well! some day perhaps, as a beggar, I may, with your leave, beguile you of half-a-crown."

"It would be a clever beggar who succeeded in that! but I defy you there. Half-a-crown! why! I have only as much as that to keep me till midsummer! You have my free leave to try me at any time, or in any way you please, and my pardon for all your success!"

"I can only say," interposed Sir Arthur, "that the impudent rascal brought real tears into my eyes, not long ago, by a story he trumped up at my door, which would have deceived the whole Medicity Society. He can make himself appear as old as myself,—and I declare one day he looked not very unlike your uncle, Lord Doncaster!"

A vivid flush passed over the whole forehead and features of Captain De Crespigny at these words; but assuming a sudden tone of liveliness and vivacity, he summoned Henry to continue their entertainments for the evening, which were to be concluded by acting a proverb of which Sir Arthur and his guests were to discover the design. Miss Smythe, dressed in cottage costume, seated herself pensively on a stool, after which Captain De Crespigny, equipped with a bow in his hand, and carrying on his back a quiver filled with all the old pens in the house, to represent arrows, entered in the character of Love, and was about to aim his darts at the peasant girl, when Henry, disguised in a tattered old cloak, to personate Poverty, limped slowly into the room. On seeing this beggarly apparition, Cupid, pushing his hair up till it stood on end, assumed an expression of comic horror, and with a shriek of dismay, rushed to the window, as if about to jump out.

The whole party laughed heartily, and declared that the *denouement* of this piece contained a most salutary lesson against a mere love-match; and Sir Arthur said, for his own part he would attend to the warning,—that all portionless young ladies might consider the case hopeless with him, and he trusted every one present intended to be equally prudent!

"Yes! most assuredly!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, "I am almost tempted how to take my uncle's advice, and propose to my cousin, Miss Howard, the heiress, though love flies out of the window whenever I think of her. She was a little, pert, red-fingered, flaxen-haired child, when we parted last! The memory of that girl often haunts me like a night-mare since; for my poor mother, on her death-bed, got a promise made about our being married, or something of that kind. I never heard the particulars; but I believe we were to be made acquainted, and refuse one another, before either of us could accept any one else; but I should think there could be little chance of anything that depended on my being refused."

Captain De Crespigny was bowing himself off late in the evening, and taking a very particular leave of Miss Smythe, having called up all his most fascinating graces for the occasion, while he felt inwardly gratified by the pleasing conviction that another had been added to the list of young ladies whom he had made miserable for life, when he was surprised to observe her mouth perfectly quivering with suppressed laughter, and an arch, satirical gleam in her eye for which he could not account, though it made him feel somewhat uncomfortable and dissatisfied. If it were possible that any one could be laughing at him, she certainly was! A world of most intolerable ridicule appeared in her expression—an air almost of contempt! and he turned to leave the room with a feeling of mortification and anger which he was ashamed to allow even to himself.

When Captain De Crespigny hurriedly opened the drawing-room door, near which he and Caroline had been standing, he was surprised to see a person lurking close behind it, who darted instantly away, and disappeared; but before the intruder was out of sight, an exclamation of terror and dismay escaped from the lips of Caroline, who rushed towards Sir Arthur, exclaiming, in accents of almost frantic alarm, "He is there! he is there! Oh! save me, Sir Arthur! he is there! That horrid, dreadful man! he is there! Stop him! stop him!"

Captain De Crespigny instinctively ran in pursuit of the retreating figure, and eagerly attempted to seize him; but the fugitive instantaneously opened the house door, and escaped in the darkness, while, apparently to intimidate his pursuer, he fired a pistol in the air, and waved another above his head with frantic gestures of rage and violence.

"It is beyond all measure extraordinary how he got into the house!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, in discussing the event with an aspect of grave perplexity. "My doors are most systematically locked after dusk, and not a window is unbarred, yet the locks are unbroken and the bars untouched!"

"There is something next to supernatural in the way he invariably finds us out, and gets access everywhere," said Mrs. Smythe, in almost breathless agitation. "One would imagine he had some unearthly accomplice to discover where we are concealed, and to assist him in escaping the vigilance of the police. Night and day we have been liable to his incursions. In town or country—in the drawing-room, or beside our carriage—in church, or going to a party—there he is, lurking secretly near us, or terrifying Caroline by his sudden disappearance, and gliding away like a shadow. He baffles every attempt to overtake or arrest him, but seems for ever on the watch! Sometimes he used to make his presence known by throwing a stone at our windows; often at midnight, by singing hoarsely beneath them, and even occasionally by firing a pistol in the air; but I did hope in this remote corner we might have enjoyed peace and safety. How are we ever to venture home?"

"I shall escort you with the whole party in close phalanx," replied Sir Arthur, trying to assume a rallying tone. "Old Martin and myself are quite invulnerable, and I only wish my secretary were here also, as he would be a host in himself; but he is absent on a month's leave, and for the first time in my life I miss him."

The night being impenetrably dark, and not a sound to be heard but the echo of their footsteps on the gravel, when Mrs. Smythe alighted from the carriage to walk across the garden leading towards her house. Sir Arthur immediately desired the servants to bring out lights, when one of the candles having flared up suddenly near Caroline, she thought she perceived the madman close beside her, lurking behind the stem of a large tree. The dark shadows concealed all but his face, in which there gleamed a look of maniacal triumph and malignity, while rushing close up to Captain De Crespigny, he said, in a threatening tone, low and distinct, "He who crosses my path shall die!" and instantly disappeared through the hedge. When Miss Smythe, on hearing his voice, with a stifled scream of terror fled into the house, again that loud and fiendish laugh, which she had already heard once, arose behind her, and rung through the night air in tones of high delirium, causing a cold shudder to thrill through the hearts of even the boldest among her companions, while they hastily followed her, and having placed the trembling girl in apparent safety, soon after took leave, charging the servants to chain and double-lock the door.

It was some hours before Caroline could sufficiently compose her mind to retire; but after the house was sufficiently quiet, and the servants in bed, she sat up reading, with the hope that her nerves might become less painfully agitated. The slightest noise caused her heart to beat almost audibly, and she was conscious that a mouse rattling in the wainscot would have caused her to faint. Mrs. Smythe could scarcely be prevailed upon to leave her alone; but as they both slept on the drawing-room floor, only divided by a thin partition, Caroline induced her, at a late hour, to withdraw, while not a sound now disturbed the deep repose of nature, but "the wailing sorrows of some midnight bird."

The moon had arisen, shining with softened radiance into her apartment, when Miss Smythe arose from her devotions, and she could not but think at the moment what a bright emblem of her divine Saviour that glorious luminary presented to the mind, not glowing, like the sun, with a radiance which no human eye can gaze upon, but reflecting upon the darkened earth a mild, subdued refulgence, perfectly suited for the steady contemplation of those whom it had arisen to benefit and cheer.

> Nature was hush'd, as if her works ador'd
> The night-felt presence of creation's Lord.

Pleased with such thoughts, a gradual composure stole over her senses, and Caroline, at length, seeing her candle nearly burned out, consequently determined to retire for the night. Not a sound was to be heard in the house, but her own light step, as she moved about the room,—the very opening of a drawer, or the shutting of her book, sounded unnaturally loud, jarring upon her nerves with a startling effect,—the shadows in the more distant part of the room looked darker than usual, and the least moan of the wind increased the painful tension of her nerves to agony. Scarcely had she begun to undress, when a sudden noise not far off caused her to start with convulsive terror; her heart became chilled with apprehension, the candlestick which she carried in her hand fell to the ground, the light was extinguished, and she stood trembling and alone in total, impenetrable darkness.

Caroline tried to persuade herself that the sound must have been produced by her own fancy,—she looked around, and all was quiet,—she listened, and all was perfectly still,—she reasoned with herself, and became resolute to try whether sleep might not plunge her into forgetfulness and peace, when her attention was accidentally attracted towards one of the windows, where the bright moonbeams rested on an object which seemed to blast her eyes with horror, and paralyzed her at once in a speechless agony of fear. The top of a ladder rested on the window-sill, upon the summit of which stood the dark figure of a man, his face plastered so close upon the glass, that his nose was perfectly flattened against it, and his hands raised in a menacing attitude towards her. The instant he saw, by Caroline's look of frantic alarm, that she had seen him, he dashed in the window-frame by a single stroke of his

powerful arm, and seemed about to make a forcible entrance, when Miss Smythe, with the energy of despair, threw open the door, and fled, calling aloud, in the sharp, shrill accents of desperation, for help.

The servants were speedily assembled around her, and the instant she felt herself in comparative safety, nature could sustain no more, but, convulsed in every nerve, and throwing herself into the arms of Mrs. Smythe, with a cry of thankfulness and agitation, she fainted.

An instant alarm was given in the neighborhood, a diligent search was made, and the police for several days exerted their utmost activity to detect the miscreant, but in vain. Not a trace remained to convince Caroline that the whole had not been a hideous dream, except that the ladder had been left standing at her window, and turned out to have been stolen from a neighboring garden. The window-frame exhibited a frightful picture of devastation, being literally broken to fragments, and at some distance in the garden a loaded pistol was discovered, perfectly new, which it was hoped might lead to a discovery, by the police tracing out the maker and purchaser, seeing that it had been so recently obtained.

CHAPTER VIII.

Several meetings now took place at Sir Arthur's for the purpose of considering what plans would be best adapted to secure the safety of Mrs. and Miss Smythe, till the dangerous madman who persecuted them could be secured and confined, on all which occasions Captain De Crespigny attended, as he rather enjoyed the excitement and interest with which the story filled up his vacant hours, and, careless of the impression he believed himself to be making on the affections of Miss Smythe, he felt some solicitude respecting her safety, while he expressed ten times more than he felt, and observed, in his usual off-handed style, that this was not the only man whose head she would probably turn; but in his own case, though she had almost put him out of his senses already, yet he would rather make an end of himself than of her.

Caroline drily thanked him for his obliging intentions on her behalf, and after a lively dialogue, in which the gay huzzar actually excelled himself, in his fervent expressions of admiration and regard, he took leave, rather wondering to think how he had been led on in professing so much, and giving himself a lecture as he rode home, on the propriety of beginning to "back out," seeing that he was getting rather beyond his depth. Still there were several of the reasons for meeting next day, usual with those who have a natural desire to improve an agreeable intimacy, a song to be practised, a drawing to be admired; and Miss Smythe having made a sort of promise to let Captain De Crespigny sit to her for his picture in the character of Dromio, as she was an admirable artist, the offer became irresistible. He had never yet entered their own house, as meetings were always hitherto arranged at Sir Arthur's; and a slight feeling of curiosity likewise helped him to the agreeable conclusion, that he must for once, and only once, call on the "Smythes," were it only to ascertain what sort of establishment they had.

Punctual to the appointed hour, Captain De Crespigny's groom rang a consequential peal for his master at the gate of Rosemount Villa, such as had not been heard there since bells were invented, and after a considerable delay, the door was opened by a shabby awkward-looking Irish girl, speaking with a powerful brogue, who curtsied with an appearance of most preposterous respect to Captain De Crespigny as he alighted, and pointed up stairs, begging him to walk in, but without having an idea apparently that she ought herself to usher him into the drawing-room.

Being always pretty confident of making himself welcome, Captain De Crespigny advanced, and in his usual gay, humorous tone, announced his own name at the drawing-room door, while he threw it open and entered. To his surprise, he now found himself in a small, not very splendidly furnished apartment, stretched on the only sofa belonging to which, there lounged, in solitary indolence, with a quite-at-home look, a young man whom he had never seen before. His aspect and dress were equally singular, presenting that happy mixture of the ruffian and gentleman, not very uncommon in Ireland. Attired in a military great-coat, he wore a most preposterous pair of whiskers and mustachios, long, coarse, and dirty, which looked as if they had been curled over knitting wires. Taking the last remnant of a cigar out of his mouth when the visitor entered, and showing not the smallest surprise, with a smile which betrayed a set of dingy, decayed teeth, and a very disfiguring squint, he watched the approaching step of Captain De Crespigny with a *degage* look of indifference, saying, in a tone of easy familiarity,

"Och! sure! I always knew a milithary man, for he enters with his lift foot first! Many deserters who would may-be have escaped, but the thrick betrayed 'em. A curious fact! Will ye be pleased to sit on your four quarthers, Captain?"

A smile of contempt and ridicule curled on the haughty lip of Captain De Crespigny, while he proudly drew back, saying, in a tone of great reserve, and with the very slightest possible *soupcon* of a bow, "Excuse me, sir, I must have mistaken the house!"

"Arrah! not at all! not in the very laste. Sure! I'm here for the purpose!" exclaimed the stranger, starting up from his recumbent position with astonishing agility, and closing the door. "Isn't it relations we shall be before long, and why should we meet as strangers?"

"Relations! what do you mean, sir? Here is some ridiculous blunder!" replied Captain De Crespigny, turning contemptuously on his heel. "Allow me to pass! Good morning!"

"Well! relations or connexions, it's all one," continued the Irishman, with a look of easy good humor. "My aunt, Mrs. Smythe, dropped me a line to say I would be wanted about the settlement, though, for the matter of that, there is not much, I fancy, on either of your parts to settle. More gold on the outside of the pocket than the inside, Captain! Hey! excuse me! but as my aunt says, in the matther of money, we take the will for the deed!"

"You must be slightly deranged, sir," interrupted Captain De Crespigny, in a tone of angry perplexity; "I have heard that a madman is loose about this neighborhood, and I need not go far, I see, to find him."

"What! Hey! Sure you're not going to forswear all, or say thing you have said to my pretty cousin, Caroline. We do make short work of our courtships in Dublin, sure enough; but when my aunt told me this morning how soon you had come to the point with Caroline, and nothing left but to fix the day, I laughed ready to kill myself, and says I, 'you beat all Ireland to sticks!'"

"No more of this folly, sir!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, with rising irritation, and in his most peremptory tone. "Detain me here one moment longer, and I shall send you a shorter way down stairs than you ever tried before!"

"Och, murder! you'll excuse me, sir, but I've not been dipped in the Shannon for nothing! This must all be settled as gintlemen usually settle these affairs in our counthry! Sure you met my cousin at Sir Arthur's many a time, and you'll not be afther denying that she convarsed with you every day for a matther of four hours!"

"Perhaps she had that honor, but what then?"

"Why thin, sir! such things as you said, from such a gintleman, are not easily to be forgotten!"

"You are pleased to be complimentary!" replied Captain De Crespigny, turning round his magnificent head with an air of bitter contempt; "but what of that?"

"I heartily wish," continued the Irishman, with a still stronger brogue than before, "that every young lady who meets with a gintleman such as you, had a cousin like Paddy Smythe to take up her cause, and I am as little to be thrifled with as any man in Ireland! The tongue that deceives me or mine shall never spake again. I have exchanged shots before now on a slighter occasion!"

A momentary pause ensued, during which Captain De Crespigny frowned and bit his lip, in angry embarrassment, while, with a look of unutterable contempt and disgust, he eyed his companion, who thrust his hands into his ample pockets, and paced up and down the room with rapid strides and determined emphasis. At length, stopping opposite to his irritated companion, he eyed him for some moments with a look of stern reproach, saying, in a stronger Irish brogue than ever, and with a torrent of indignation, which gave almost the dignity of eloquence to what he uttered,

"You think there are no feelings in the world to be consulted but your own! perhaps we may prove this a slight mistake! I have married seven of my cousins already to officers quarthered in our neighborhood at Limerick, and Caroline is the last! Captain Mortimer was introduced to Mary at the top of a country dance, and engaged her for life before he reached the bottom. Lieutenant Murray gave his arm to Bessy for the first time going down to dinner at Mrs. Fitz-Patrick's, and offered her his hand before the fish was off the table! We understand these things very soon in Ireland! and I would shed every drop of my blood before Caroline shall be disappointed!"

Captain De Crespigny began now to feel seriously annoyed at his own position! Not having lately been quartered in Ireland, he had forgotten how such affairs are managed there, but at this moment a thousand recollections crowded upon him, of warnings he had received from his brother officers respecting the prudence and circumspection to be exercised beside the Shannon, though most of what they said, had been listened to with the same incredulous attention usually bestowed upon stories of ghosts and witchcraft. Here he was, however, snared like a fly in a spider's web, though without a single doubt of his own powers to escape, and with no stronger objection to call out this insolent ruffian beside him, than the publicity and ridicule he must inevitably incur, if involved in a vulgar every-day duel with a hot-headed Irishman.

Seeing that the affair was likely to take a graver turn than he had imagined, Captain De Crespigny now slowly and resolutely strode towards the hearth-rug, and turning his back to the fire, in that attitude peculiar to Englishmen, calmly and sternly looked in the face of his insolent companion, whose lip became compressed with an air of fierce determination, while his dark eye glittered with a triumphant smile, and in an attitude of perfect *nonchalance*, he returned Captain De Crespigny gaze for gaze, while leisurely resuming his lounging attitude on the sofa. Neither gentleman seemed at all inclined to recommence the discussion immediately, and both looked equally angry, till the Irishman at length opened a pocket-book, to which, he frequently

afterwards referred, with a business-like air, and in a tone of conscious triumph, saying,

"Will you be afther denying all you said to my cousin only last night?"

"I deny nothing, Sir, except the right you or any human being can have, with what I choose to say, five minutes after it has been uttered!" replied Captain De Crespigny, almost delirious with rage, and drawing in his breath between his clenched teeth, while the Irishman eyed him with provoking coolness, and merely muttered in reply, while still referring to the pocket-book,

"That is not our way in Limerick! Scarcely one of my cousins had a case like this! Breach of promise! Sure it would fetch a verdict to-morrow; but the shortest way is the best! Why, Sir! you told my cousin, poor girl! that you wished there were not another man on the earth, in case she might prefer him to you!"

"But luckily there are many, or she would have little chance of a husband!" replied Captain De Crespigny, almost beside himself with rage. "I have said the same thing a thousand times, to a thousand different young ladies, without expecting them ever to think of it more!"

The Irishman looked away for a moment, as if some irresistible feeling had come over him, which he could scarcely suppress, and with a slight quiver in his voice, as if on the very eve of laughter, though Captain De Crespigny was too angry to notice it, he sang, while looking out of the window, these words, with a very marked emphasis,—

"Erin, oh! Erin's the land of delight, Where the women all love, and the men they all fight."

At length, Captain De Crespigny, losing all patience, followed his antagonist to the window, and said, in a tone of angry command,

"Let there be a truce to this most contemptible farce! If you are a gentleman, which I very much doubt, send any respectable friend—a man of honor, if you happen by chance to know such a person—to my barracks, and before to-morrow I shall find, if possible, some blundering Irishman who can understand you, to settle this absurd affair."

"That may soon be done," replied Mr. Smythe, "if I am not satisfied with your intentions."

"Intentions!" re-echoed Captain De Crespigny, in a frenzy of contempt. "My intentions were merely to amuse myself for an hour or two with a rather pleasing young lady, and——"

"Rather pleasing!! you may be proud of your gallantry!" replied the Irishman, with more real indignation in his voice, than it had yet exhibited. "Perhaps, Sir, being the lady's cousin——"

"It is no matter who you are! I am not here to be questioned like a member before his constituents. I did not know the young lady had a relation on earth."

"The more shame to you, Sir, for meaning to deceive her!" replied the Irishman in a tone of stern reproach. "If I were to get all Ireland for holding my tongue, you should hear the truth. But maybe you would be after giving me satisfaction in another way. I'm not such a wild beast as to thirst for blood, it can be done with pen and ink!"

Captain De Crespigny fixed his eyes with stern contempt upon his free and easy companion, who passed his fingers through his long bushy wig, stretched his legs upon the sofa, and spoke with a yawning voice, while he added in a careless off-hand way, "If my cousin could only be persuaded you meant nothing from first to last, there's an ensign in the 42d, with very good prospects, she might have for the asking! Here is a paper. I prepared it in case you might object to the match; and if you'll only sign this assurance that you meant nothing, for the lady's own satisfaction, you are a free man. It will save us both a deal of bother and fighting. A man who has fought a dozen times like me, may go out once too often; and my pistols are all at Dublin!"

Captain De Crespigny paused a moment, irresolute what to do. It was a condescension quite intolerable to have another moment's intercourse with such a man, and to sign any paper at his request, seemed almost a degradation; but then he saw before him a long vista of vulgar annoyance from this forward Irishman. He was aware that hundreds of gentlemen would laugh if the story got any publicity, and that dozens of young ladies would feel themselves aggrieved if it became circulated that his attentions had been so very marked to an obscure Miss Smythe.

The tea-tables, the newspapers, the club, and the mess, were all to be dreaded; and seeing that the Irishman had, with an air of perfect *nonchalance*, buried himself behind a double number of the "Times," which he seemed to be attentively reading, Captain De Crespigny glanced his eye over the paper, and finding that it contained only a short and simple declaration that he never had intended to marry the young lady introduced to him by Sir Charles Dunbar, he hastily signed his name, tossed the paper contemptuously across the table, and with infinite dignity, strode out of the house.

Great was his surprise, when descending the staircase, to hear, in the room he had so recently left a simultaneous burst of smothered laughter from several persons. He could not be mistaken! It seemed even as if there were female voices in the number; but almost bewildered with anger, and happy also to escape, he hastened onwards, threw himself on horseback, and galloped for three hours before he had regained any portion of his usual equanimity.

Had Captain De Crespigny followed his first impulse, on hearing the laughter behind him, it would have been to retrace his steps and re-enter the drawing-room of Mrs. Smythe, when his astonishment would certainly not have been small to see Henry De Lancey laughingly disencumbering himself of his whiskers, wig, and mustachios, while Mrs. Smith exclaimed, in accents of almost convulsive risibility,

"Well done, my adopted nephew! You deserve to be my heir! I have often heard that my old aversion Louis De Crespigny's exploits were inimitable in his line; but we needed such a specimen as this. I bestow the fright upon him with all the pleasure in life!"

"I only hope, if we ever, in the course of years, meet again, that my cousin will not recognise me," added Caroline, smiling. "It was not particularly flattering to see Louis in so much alarm! Yesterday, however, when he saw me last, I was certainly looking my very worst."

"Your worst is better than the best of anybody else," exclaimed Henry, in a tone so exactly resembling that of Captain De Crespigny, that Mrs. Smythe started, and looked round with alarm; while Caroline and young De Lancey burst into a simultaneous laugh of frolicsome glee, and continued the dialogue during several minutes, with great spirit and vivacity, till Henry suddenly became conscious, that in imagining the words of another, he was gradually betrayed into expressing his own real feelings, and that, too, with a depth and fervor which sincerity alone could have dictated.

Checking himself in a moment, while the color rushed to his face, dyeing it red to the very roots of his hair, and instantly receded again, he took a hurried leave of Mrs. Smythe, and turning to Caroline with a quivering lip, he said, in a voice which none but herself could hear, "I must not say in jest what I feel in earnest! Farewell! There are wishes known only to my own heart, and never to be realized, which I must try to forget. You go to-morrow, and we shall probably meet no more! Forgive me, then, if I say, that so long as I live you shall be first in my most respectful and devoted affections; and death only can ever make me forget you."

Before Henry left the ante-room, being in search of his hat, he found it laid beside an open portfolio on the table, which, having, in his haste, accidentally thrown down, he began hastily collecting its contents, when his surprise was great, on turning up one sheet of the drawing paper, to find there a finely-executed sketch, done with all the skill and spirit of an accomplished artist, representing the venerable head of Sir Arthur; and on the same paper—could it be possible!—an almost living representation of himself. The likeness very much flattered, he thought—exceedingly flattered; but still it could be no other; and the picture dropped from his hand in the transport of his delight.

Henry again returned to the portfolio, hurriedly turning the leaves over; and amidst a variety of superbly-finished miniatures, he found his own countenance over and over again grouped in animated contrast with that of Sir Arthur. His heart throbbed with joy, when, after hastily turning to the title-page, he discovered, according to his hopes and wishes, the name of Caroline Smythe; and he leaned his head on his hand, contemplating that name in silent ecstacy, while indulging for one moment the pleasing, but perhaps presumptuous hope, that he had been remembered with unacknowledged partiality, and that the secret was here portrayed with her own pencil.

He was about then to withdraw, when suddenly the raised and irritated tones of Mrs. Smythe became unavoidably audible to him, from the room he had so recently left, saying, in accents of angry remonstrance,

"That look of girlish joy when he comes, and the sadness of your eye when he departs, might betray it to any one less interested than myself; but he has met few ladies hitherto, and on his part it is a mere boyish fancy, which, if properly discouraged, will of itself wear out."

Henry had fled to avoid hearing what was not intended for him, before Caroline replied, in a low, agitated voice,

"I think and hope you are mistaken; but his constancy and disinterestedness shall be tried and proved. I would rather any man should cut my throat for money, than marry me for it. A girl of fortune, like Midas, turns all who look on her into gold; and I am not a gem to attract many lovers, without a very brilliant setting. I have a romantic desire to be chosen for myself alone—a vain dream perhaps never to be realized, unless young De Lancey prove constant. If not, I mean to declare war upon all mankind—to be a perfect Captain De Crespigny for flirtations!—to talk to gentlemen, ridicule, mortify, and humble them!—to do everything, in short, but love or marry any one of them!"

Though Caroline spoke these words in a tone of lively *badinage*, there was a tremulous bitterness in her manner, as she turned away, and contemptuously threw upon the table a massive gold chain which she usually wore, saying, "Lovers! I'll get fifty, and break the heart of every one of them!"

When Captain De Crespigny next visited Portobello, during a review of his regiment, he was surprised to see the well-remembered windows of Rosemount Villa closed, and a ticket suspended over the door, intimating that it was "to be sold or let, furnished or unfurnished; entrance immediately; rent moderate!" and with a feeling of relief he dismissed the whole affair from his thoughts, and the whole family of Smythes from his memory for ever, while humming one of his favorite airs,

"It is good to be merry and wise,
It is good to be honest and true;
It is good to be off with the old love,
Before you be on with the new."

CHAPTER IX.

Among the companions of Agnes and Marion Dunbar, none was more calculated to excite a feeling of enthusiastic tenderness and regard than Clara Granville, whom all approached with a feeling of nearly romantic interest, occasioned by the etherealized delicacy of her lovely countenance and fragile form. Sir Patrick, from her earliest childhood, had always mentioned Clara in terms of such exaggerated enthusiasm, that Agnes, imagining his taste to be very different, believed him to be more than half in jest, though his language and manner seemed daily to become more in earnest, while in terms of rapture he admired her eloquent and intelligent conversation, so different from the flippant nonsense of most girls, and the light gracefulness of her step, saying she looked like some beautiful apparition, less encumbered with body, and more endowed with spirit, than any one who ever before stepped upon the earth. Her pale golden hair, falling like a halo round her fair bright countenance, and the rare beauty of her large downcast eyes, which were generally veiled with a look of deep thought and sensibility, gave a charm so peculiar to her aspect, that the eye loved to dwell upon it as upon some lovely twilight scene, over which the light of heaven was casting its pure and peaceful, yet fading refulgence. None looked at Clara without fearing that she could not be long intended for this world, as the fervor of her mind and feelings appeared so little in proportion to the extreme delicacy of her complexion, which was tinted like a rose-leaf on her transparent cheek, the color flitting with every passing emotion. It did indeed seem as if the sword within must quickly wear out the scabbard; yet Clara enjoyed society beyond measure, and mingled in it with a zest which caused Sir Patrick often to say she must be stronger certainly than she looked, and there was nothing, he thought, more odious in a woman than rude health—a sort of rudeness never certainly attributable to Miss Granville.

Agnes's favorite aversion had always been Clara, formerly her cotemporary and rival at school, though the rivalship was only felt on one side, as Miss Granville would have remained unconscious of its very existence, but for the bitter taunts occasionally levelled at her, and the tone of evident irritability in which Agnes took it always for granted that the jealousy was mutual, attributing thoughts and motives perpetually to her gentle companion, of which so amiable and well-regulated a disposition was incapable. It may generally be observed, that many more quarrels arise from people wilfully taking offence, than from people wilfully giving it; and there is quite as much ill-temper in the one case as in the other. Clara had suffered much on account of her every inadvertent word or action being purposely misconstrued; but she very properly viewed the annoyance as a salutary lesson in circumspection, before entering the great arena of society, and mildly avoided all collision of interests or opinions with Agnes, though her whole powers of conciliation on the part of Sir Patrick gave his sister reason to apprehend that his affections might by possibility be engaged to her. Nothing could be more painfully irritating than the tone of contempt with which Agnes "spoke at" Clara respecting the art and cunning with which some manœuvring misses endeavored to push their fortune in the matrimonial world, by making advances to gentlemen, which she would despise herself for condescending to, and that lookers on see more of the game than is intended. All this was said in such an accidental tone, and in such general terms, that no decided notice could be taken of it by Clara, who nevertheless felt so painful a consciousness of what was meant and insinuated, that she ceased almost entirely to visit Agnes, or to associate with her.

About the time when Mrs. Smythe left Portobello, Sir Patrick returned from spending a month at Lady Towercliffe's in Fife, evidently laboring under a depression of spirits very unusual with him; and when Agnes, perplexed by observing that he did not attempt to throw off the cloud of melancholy, tinged very strongly with ill-humor, which had so suddenly come over him, tried to guess or discover the cause, she found it for some time impossible to gain a glimpse of the truth, though she asked as many questions as might have filled a volume of Pinnock's Catechisms.

At length, after some miscellaneous conversation one day, Agnes inquired for the twentieth time whether the party in Fife had been agreeable, when Sir Patrick shortly and drily replied,

"Clara Granville was there!"

"But had you any new beauties?"

"Clara Granville!"

"Pshaw! Well, then! were there any agreeable people?"

"Clara Granville!"

"You are beyond all bearing absurd and tormenting, Pat!" continued Agnes, with a contemptuous toss of her head; "but I may at least venture with impunity to ask, were any of the ladies well dressed?"

"Clara Granville!"

"That ends my curiosity on the subject of your visit," replied Agnes, angrily affecting to yawn. "Never try to persuade me you care for Clara. She is the most unflirtable girl in the world! As cold as a statue of ice in an east wind! She has the most tiresome style of prettiness that can be conceived, with that alabaster paleness, that petrifying calmness of manner, and a heart like a cucumber! The very style of her dress is wearying, with not a color that one could give a name to; and then her long undertoned tete-a-tete conversations about nobody knows what, as dull and monotonous as a dinner-bell, never enlivened with a bit of gossip, nor spiced with any scandal! There is a whole "Society for the suppression of vice" in her eye every time she looks at one! She would evidently be terrified for the echo of her own voice, and never yet committed the indiscretion of a laugh!"

"Are you done?" asked Sir Patrick, in a tone of concentrated anger, which would have silenced any one but Agnes.

"Done! I could speak for two hours without telling you half how little I think of Clara Granville!" said she, in a paroxysm of eloquence. "One comfort is, however, she will never take!"

"But Clara has already 'taken,' as you elegantly express yourself," exclaimed Sir Patrick, who had been walking vehemently up and down the room during this tirade from Agnes, and now stood opposite to her, with a look of angry defiance. "Clara is surpassingly lovely! Her portrait should be the frontispiece to Finden's next Book of Beauty! She has the loveliness of a seraph!"

"Certainly, if you mean that she looks as if the first breath of wind would blow her down! like an overgrown geranium, that should be tied up to a stick!"

"Clara is delicate and graceful as the first frail blossoms of spring," interrupted Sir Patrick. "She has but one fault in the world, and that is, being faultless! Clara is worth a whole creation of ordinary girls! That look of mild serenity, and those deep, thoughtful eyes, looking as serene as the blue firmament above. Her every attitude is what a Guido might have delighted to paint. Agnes, there is music and rapture in every tone of her voice! At Lady Towercliffe's no one was looked at, nor spoken to, but Miss Granville! She stole into all hearts, without any man guessing his danger till too late! Everybody admired, or, I should rather, say, loved her!"

"You are 'everybody,' then, I suppose, for I never heard of any one else, who for half a moment thought her tolerable. All this nonsense is merely to tease me, Pat. Do confess it at once, and be serious!"

"That I never am when I can help it!"

"Well, then, let it always be a jest and I have no objection to call up a laugh, if it be your humor; but I would engage to walk out of the world at once, whenever Clara has a serious, downright proposal from any presentable-looking man, such as one would not be ashamed to sit in a room with!"

"What do you think of me, Agnes?" asked Sir Patrick, walking straight up to her and looking his sister full in the face, with a momentary attempt to be facetious, while his countenance betrayed considerable agitation. "Would you be much astonished if I had made her an offer?"

"Nonsense, Pat! I would disown you for a brother! Now, do not look like an ogre at me! You will say any absurdity in jest!"

"You know, Agnes, I have been a month in the house lately with Clara!" replied Sir Patrick, in a voice which sounded by no means like jest; "and that month was more than a lifetime in showing me the worth of a real and heartfelt attachment. Even I, mercenary as I am, could value it more than gold! I date the beginning of my existence from the hour I first knew her. There is a depth of mind and heart in the character of Clara Granville, utterly incomprehensible to ordinary observers. She does everything well, and says everything with a grace peculiarly her own. Her manner is the very essence of fascination. Every other person seems coarse and vulgar in comparison; and I even feel so myself! I know you will treat me to a cannonade of abuse against Clara; but that is no matter now," added Sir Patrick, in a tone of deep dejection; "perhaps it may do me good!"

"Wonders occur every hour of every day, but this is the greatest of all!" observed Agnes, drily. "I never thought you would commit such a piece of disinterested nonsense, as to fall in love, gratis, with any penniless girl, and least of all with Clara. If you were to choose among all the young ladies I know, blindfold, you could scarcely choose one more unsuitable! If this indeed be true, Clara may be proud of her conquest!"

"She ought!" replied Sir Patrick, glancing at his own magnificent head in a mirror; "but being in many respects peculiar, she by no means appreciated the honor as you expect!"

"You are possessed by the very genius of nonsense to-day, Pat! but if such a catch as you were to fall in Clara Granville's way, I should like to see her and all her family, not more than happy on the occasion!"

"Well, then! open your ears of astonishment, Agnes! She has actually rather refused me than otherwise! I am positively more in love with Clara, than language can express! I could pursue her to the very ends of the earth! I must, and shall marry her! I would shoot myself to-morrow, if I thought there could be doubt of it," exclaimed Sir Patrick, vehemently, while Agnes became gradually as grave as night. "Clara at first actually accepted me! She was your sister-in-law elect, for three long and happy weeks, and I did not think life could have given me so much to live for; but she afterwards most perversely and unaccountably revoked! What do you think was the reason, Agnes, of all reasons in the world!"

"I am bad at guessing absurdities," replied Agnes, who would have hurled a more angry answer at her brother, had she dared. "Whatever might be the cause, it was very lucky for you, who may, if you know your own value, make the first match in the kingdom!"

"Well, then! actually that she thought my religious principles not sufficiently serious! That her brother disapproved of my morals and conduct! I offered her any terms! To attend chapel with her once every Sunday; to refrain from Sunday dinners, and Sunday travelling! Not even to ride out on horseback that day; and, in short, to pass Sir Andrew's whole Sunday bill in my house; but it did not satisfy her! What would they have!" continued Sir Patrick, gnawing his lip with vexation. "I gave her a *carte blanche* to put my name down as a subscriber to as many tract, missionary, and slave-abolition societies, as she pleased, and asked her how many distressed families she wished me to maintain."

"How excessively handsome!" said Agnes, satirically. "All I need say is, it was very genteel!"

"Yet Clara persevered in giving me a plump decline! No wonder you look incredulous! I can scarcely yet believe it myself! This shall not last, however! I felt piqued at first, and left her. I am always too soon, or too late, in all I do; but it must be tried again and again! I would rather live without the sun and stars, than without Clara Granville! The very repetition of her name is a pleasure! Agnes, what can you do to assist me!"

"Assist! I shall do everything in the world to bring you back your senses, Pat! Rather than see that grave, priggish, matter-of-fact, Clara, my sister-in-law, I would——"

Agnes could not, at the moment, think of any illustration sufficiently strong to exemplify her abhorrence of such a catastrophe, and twisted her ringlets over her finger for some moments, in dignified and portentous silence. At length she said, with an air of supreme contempt, "You know, Pat! Clara Granville has not a shilling in the wide world!—never had! At school she used to be like a bale of cotton from the manufactories; cotton stockings, pink gingham frocks, and horrid grey beaver gloves! She once had a silk dress, and it was turned, I think, three times!"

"Fiddlesticks and nonsense! So much the better! She will be an excellent wife for a poor man; and poor enough I shall soon be! You need not argue with a milestone, but put a good face on the matter in time, Agnes; for during all the four thousand years that men have been falling in love, and marrying, I believe no one ever did so merely to please his sister, and I am not the man to begin! In most respects, I may, perhaps, be sordidly anxious for money, but in the matter of love I have taken the whim of being disinterested. If Clara had the Bank of England for her portion, I could not love her more. As for heiresses, I hear the only one worth a thought, Miss Howard Smytheson, with her million a-year, is bespoke to order for De Crespigny."

"Perhaps he has taken the whim of being disinterested also!" replied Agnes, arranging a favorite curl with great complacency at a mirror. "His uncle is very arbitrary; and like all uncles, continues for ever to think his nephew a perfect boy. He threatened lately to marry himself, if Captain De Crespigny declined! That old dot has some spirit! He seems not to be aware that there is such a thing in the world for himself as a refusal; and certainly, Pat, I can scarcely fancy the woman in existence who could refuse you. I hardly know whether to wonder most that Clara had the opportunity, or that she had the inclination!"

"The whim will soon wear off! She loves me, that is certain; but if even she hated me, it would make no difference in my attachment. I like her the better for showing some spirit, and great disinterestedness. Clara's conduct was like herself, beautiful. Her affections are mine! I see it, and no earthly power can tear her from me! I would follow her to the very grave."

Sir Patrick did not by any means find Clara's resolutions, which were formed upon principle, of such very malleable materials as he had prophesied. His own feelings were, on all occasions, like a whirlwind; and his eagerness, excited to excess by opposition, became unbounded to meet Clara, or to catch the most distant glimpse of her shadow,—but in vain. Day after day he contrived to pass beneath her window, but she had adopted invisibility; and evening after evening, he obliged Agnes, greatly against her inclination, to send the very kindest notes of invitation, which he dictated himself, asking her to the house; but the polite apology which invariably returned, might almost have been lithographed, it became so frequently necessary; yet still Sir Patrick persevered and hoped, saying one day, in a voice of irritability and depression, to Agnes, "It seems as if we were destined never to see Clara again!"

"That would be too much happiness," exclaimed Agnes peevishly; twisting Clara's last reply into a thousand shapes and tossing it into the fire. "This is all so like you, Pat! You invent a thousand reasons for wishing something till it is obtained, and then you care for it no more! If Clara Granville consented, you would be, like Sir Peter Teazle, 'the most miserable man alive before people were done wishing you joy!' Men are all so changeable and selfish!"

"Whether are men or women most selfish, I should like to know?"

"Men, decidedly! From six years old, till sixty, they seem born and brought up to think of no one's comfort but their own, and they always marry to please themselves!"

"Of course! and very right they should!"

Agnes had now got upon a favorite subject of declamation, the selfishness of mankind,—for those who are selfish or ill-tempered themselves, live always under the delusion that they are the only persons living entirely exempt from such faults,—but her eloquence now soon left her "in possession of the house," as Sir Patrick made a rapid retreat, followed by that very effective slamming of the door, so infallible a receipt for obtaining the last word in an argument, and for asserting in undoubted terms, a very decided view of the subject in question.

Though Sir Patrick Dunbar had long been known as a Tattersall and Doncaster man, yet Clara Granville had little suspected that his name was implicated in transactions of rather an equivocal complection, while the good-natured half of the world persevered in calling it scandal, being unwilling very severely to censure the peccadilloes of the handsomest and most agreeable man in their circle of society, living only for the enjoyment of the senses and the happiness of the present hour, while he thought it too long a look-out to anticipate what might happen the day after to-morrow. In respect to Sir Patrick's reputation, a vague understanding seemed to prevail that all was not right, yet no explicit explanation seemed ever to be obtained.

> Some thing there was—what, none presumed to say,
> Clouds lightly passing as the summer day.

There are not only faults in the very best characters, but redeeming qualities also in the very worst, and with much selfishness, the result of a perverted education, the handsome and fascinating Sir Patrick had naturally a good temper and excitable affections, though these were wound up occasionally to the wildest excess, while his fortune was not more recklessly squandered than his attachment in the momentary impulse of an hour.

As, therefore, no man is so thoroughly excellent as to be without errors, neither is any living mortal so depraved as to be without virtues, and the utmost extreme, in one respect or the other, will only be perfected in an eternal world. It often seems to an observer, as if two opposite beings had been kneaded into one, since qualities so contradictory may be traced in the same individual.

Though Sir Patrick Dunbar was eager and rapacious in acquiring money, and would incur any meanness to avoid paying it, he seemed, nevertheless, lavish, and what some people mis-called generous, in squandering what he called his own. Though cold and selfish in general, some fine impulses had been in his nature, which proved him capable of vehement, persevering, and passionate attachment, where his affections, or rather his fancy, had been once engaged; while, at the same time, he was more ashamed to testify any feeling than he would have been to commit a crime, and endeavored to blind

people towards that sensibility which was in reality the redeeming point in his character, by talking often with the utmost contempt and even ridicule of all those for whom he might have been supposed to feel the weakness of a real attachment.

Sir Patrick had indeed been, what his companions called, "fairly caught," by Clara; and his heart, till now hermetically sealed against all real confidence and friendship, was now for the first time unclosed, in its inmost recesses, while even his hackneyed mind seemed to catch a ray of light and warmth from the sunny freshness and purity of Clara's intellectual mind. Her intelligent conversation, enlivened by a vein of sly pleasing humor, had completely taken him by surprise, being as fresh and gentle as a summer breeze, while her appearance, so young, timid, and lovely, caused the eye to rest on her with a sentiment of almost melancholy interest. Clara had only emerged from school, finally, a few days before Sir Patrick met her at Lady Towercliffe's, and her extreme naivete was her first attraction, though that was superseded before long by still greater admiration, while he became hourly more fascinated by her melancholy songs and thoughtful conversation.

To Clara, Sir Patrick had only hitherto been known as a school companion of her brother's, but so conscientiously did Richard Granville invariably abstain from evil-speaking, that, even where justice might have warranted the severest censure, he merely became silent. It is observable that, in the wisdom of Providence, nothing is made in vain. Even the very weeds that encumber our path have, when under proper restraint, their important uses, and in the mind of man, the tendency implanted by nature, to discuss and criticize the conduct of others, has, when properly exercised, its own advantages, by acting as a salutary restraint on the conduct of those who would otherwise do evil with impunity, and by also giving a timely warning, and hanging out a beacon-light to those who would otherwise trust their interest and happiness where such confidence was unmerited, and where all contact is dangerous.

Captain De Crespigny's jilting propensities were the less dangerous, from their being so generally discussed in society, as few were willing that the unwary should suffer, rather than his faults be exposed to censure; but Mr. Granville, by not giving his sister timely warning against the dissipated extravagance and almost infidel principles of his old school-companion, had now, unfortunately exposed her to a danger he had not anticipated, as it never occurred to his imagination, in its wildest fancies, that the reckless, dissolute Sir Patrick, who had long sneered at marriage, and even broken that holy tie for others, might find a charm in the pure, calm, high-minded Clara, which raised him above his ordinary self, and made him appear all she could most like or admire. During their earlier intercourse, she saw nothing in his conversation to disapprove, because Sir Patrick most unintentionally deceived her into a belief of his being very different from what he really was, owing to the respect with which he treated all her opinions; and only when he talked to others, did she become startled occasionally by the tone of careless defiance with which he spoke of all those persons and things which she was most accustomed to reverence and esteem. Before long, his attachment had become so unbounded, that, conscious he could not obtain Clara's hand if she knew his real character, he assumed all that seemed most likely to secure her confidence, and, for the pleasure of being with her, attended church regularly on Sunday at the village. Clara was astonished at his evident ignorance of the forms of devotion; yet knowing his education had been finished by a clergyman, she supposed he must have imbibed a due respect for the ordinances; while Lady Towercliffe, indulging her usual jobbing propensities, was enchanted to make up a match of any kind in her own house, and praised Sir Patrick as the most immaculate and perfect of men.

Clara's intimacy with Sir Patrick had been continually increasing for some time, before his attention became so very obvious as to excite her peculiar interest, or to make her conscious of a necessity for inquiring into the state of her own heart; but, upon doing so, she became instantly aware of the deep hold he had acquired over her thoughts and affections. His frank, off-hand, good-humored manner had pleased her, his amusing conversation had enlivened her, and at length his ardent professions of attachment interested her deeply, being expressed with all the eloquence of natural feeling.

Clara, in the gloomy recesses of Mrs. Penfold's school-room, had learned nothing of the world, and her heart at once, therefore, endowed Sir Patrick with all those amiable qualities which he assumed, while she yielded herself to the most pleasing of all earthly dreams, that of loving and being beloved by one who seemed to deserve and to return her attachment; while her sole hesitation in accepting the offer he soon after made of his hand, arose from her doubts, whether, in the chief essential to mutual happiness, in religious faith, hope, and morality, they were so far of similar mind as to afford a well-grounded prospect of happiness.

In almost undoubting confidence of a satisfactory answer, Clara wrote to consult her brother, then studying for holy orders at Oxford, in whose opinion, on all occasions, she implicitly relied; and it was with grief and astonishment, which no words could describe, that she received a reply, in which Mr. Granville, with affectionate earnestness, reproached himself for not having explicitly laid open to her the character of his former companion and *ci-devant* friend, who was, he grieved to say, a ruined gamester—a bankrupt in fame, as much as in fortune, dreaded by the most respectable among women, and shunned by the most respectable among men, even by his kind, indulgent, but high-minded uncle, Sir Arthur,—an open scoffer frequently at the decencies of life, and still more at its most sacred duties and hopes. "Sir Patrick makes no secret of his profligacy," continued Mr. Granville, "showing the most flagrant dishonesty in the only way a gentleman can be tempted to do so, by not paying his debts, while many poor tradesmen have already been ruined by his extravagance; and he has openly entered into a perfect crusade against religion and morality. In short, my dear Clara, Sir Patrick is by no means to be trusted with the happiness of another, and least of all with yours, being a confirmed roue, still pursuing the very wildest career of unprincipled dissipation. Many have already had reason to mourn they ever trusted him or knew him, for he is the very reverse of all you believe and wish. It would be extravagant to waste a hope upon the reformation of a reckless libertine, who thus outrages every law of God and man; and often have you and I agreed, that it was a thing not to be conceived, a woman who rightly valued her immortal soul placing herself under the authority and influence of a husband who did not! The risk is too great; and how much better to suffer now the sorrow of a separation, than to endure the long agony of an unsuitable union, for which your own heart and conscience would continually upbraid you. If the tenderest affection of a brother can in any degree compensate for the sacrifice, you need not be told, my dear Clara, that I shall bestow it upon you more lavishly than ever; and it will be my first earthly wish, as well as my sacred duty, to render you happier than you could ever be with a man of principles—, or rather of no principles,—like Sir Patrick!"

Had the grave opened at Clara's feet, she could scarcely have been more startled and astonished than by the contents of this most unforeseen letter, the first unwelcome line ever received from Richard. She could have borne anything but to find her lover unprincipled or unworthy; and a wintry chill seemed to gather round her heart, while, with a stifled groan which struggled for utterance, she covered her face with her hand, and sank back upon a sofa. By a powerful effort, Clara preserved herself from fainting—she was resolved not to faint, and she did not—but in the secret chamber of her heart all was darkness, loneliness, and grief. Visions of earthly happiness had glittered for a time, in brightest coloring, before her mind; but now they must be blotted out by her tears. They all lay prostrate and disfigured at her feet, scorched and blasted as if by lightning; and her heart, bewildered by a multitude of thoughts and emotions, seemed full almost to bursting.

Clara wept many bitter tears over her letter, and she not only wept but acted. Without delay, Clara prepared to return to the relation with whom, during her brother's absence, she usually found a home; and before her departure, not only wrote to Sir Patrick, stating in terms of touching grief, all her reasons for so suddenly and unwillingly withdrawing from her engagement to him; but she had a long and most afflicting interview with him, vainly endeavoring to convince her lover, that their total incompatibility of sentiment raised a barrier between them, which forbade the possibility of their union.

Sir Patrick became nearly frantic with vexation, while he could not but admire the beautiful grace of her manner, and the sorrowful modulations of her voice when she spoke, yet unconscious how completely the gentle Clara was ruled by principle as with a sceptre of iron, he seemed utterly unable to comprehend why his talking carelessly, or even contemptuously of religion, should in any degree affect the preference which she had once confessed for him, and which he felt assured she still entertained. With passionate vehemence he urged the depth of his attachment, and his total indifference to everything in life but herself, while he warmly protested that she, and she only, could complete the reformation which her own influence had already begun.

"You love me, Clara, and would cast me off for ever! Impossible! Let us forget all my early indiscretions—my vices, then, if it must be so—but why should every leaf of my past life be turned over now! Since we met I have been an altered being! I am astonished even at myself! If I have deceived you, it is because I deceived myself, but now I am entirely in your power. Use it then kindly, and forget all but my attachment; I have staked my whole happiness in life on the hope of your accepting me. The wish to deserve you shall be a sufficient motive to fit me for all the duties of life. Without you I shall have no object, no hope, not even a home, for never more shall I have one unless you share it. Clara, let me throw myself on your compassion, if not on your love."

"Oh no!" said Clara, hurriedly, yet with a look of pale and tearful distress, "I dare not hesitate! All must be as I have said. It will be most for the happiness of both!"

"Happiness! speak not to me of happiness without you! It is a mockery! Every tie to peace or virtue would then be ruptured."

"There are better ties to virtue and stronger," whispered Clara, in a faltering voice, while she gasped for utterance, and a glow-like sunset was on her cheek.

"No! no! not for me! There may be amusement, frivolity, gaiety, and dissipation; but I never understood the real meaning of happiness till we met. My whole thoughts, feelings, and character have been revolutionized to please you, Clara, but your influence alone could snatch me from evil—from myself—from all on which I have hitherto wasted my existence. For your sake, and for yours alone, I could be all, and more than you wish. Years spent in your society shall prove the extent of your influence."

"By trusting to such a hope, many, like me, have wrecked their whole peace both now and hereafter," said Clara, trying to speak with firmness, but her voice became almost inaudible. "If it were the same thing to will as to do, I have not a doubt of your sincerity; but the mere resolution to change established habits, unless the power be derived from above, is only an air-built castle to which I dare not trust. It would be easy still to indulge myself in romantic schemes of domestic happiness, such as I have lately anticipated, but these hopes could only be blossoms without root or durability, unless they arise from firm principles of religion. Without such a cement happiness has neither worth nor durability."

"Clara! you have never loved as I do!" exclaimed Sir Patrick reproachfully. "I never did, and never can express half what I feel; but you do not yet know the heart you so cruelly undervalue! It seems now as if you would rather cut off your hand than bestow it on me!"

"Perhaps in future years—" stammered Clara. "We are both young; and if, for your own sake, you alter in some respects, we might yet look forward to—to——"

"Speak not of delay! that is worse than death! I never in my life could endure suspense! No! it must—it shall be now, or never!"

"Never, then," replied Clara, in a low, husky, indistinct voice, while, in spite of herself, tears rolled over her face. "It ought indeed to be never! Forget me, as if I were already dead! I must only consent to pass my life with a confirmed and consistent Christian, completely master of himself and of his actions. If we lived for each other, I should have a thousand anxieties, regrets, and sorrows, which you could neither foresee nor understand! Oh no! I must only love on earth one whom I may hope to love hereafter for ever!"

"Must it be my misfortune, Clara, to have known you?" exclaimed Sir Patrick, with agitated energy. "Do you not see that with me, to know excellence is to love it, and that if we were constantly together, I should always be like you. The loss of honor, fortune, or reputation, I might endure; but your loss I cannot, and will not. Tell me, then, are my whole affections to be buried in darkness, never to see a dawn?"

"If my happiness in this world only were at hazard, I would venture all for your sake?" replied Clara, in a low, gentle, tremulous voice. "I feel grateful for your attachment—more than grateful; but marriage is so very awful and sacred a tie! to devote every early thought, every feeling, every hope, every hour of my life to one! I could not and dare not enter on such a duty, without a perfect and unalterable confidence. I feel that to be united in love and duty where I did not esteem is a misfortune I could not survive—which I could scarcely even wish to survive. In giving you my heart, as I have already done, I ventured my all of worldly happiness on that one stake, and have lost it; but there are better hopes and higher duties, which bind me to follow them, even though death were the consequence."

Sir Patrick clenched his hands vehemently together, while his countenance burned, and muttering a curse between his teeth, which chilled the blood of Clara in her veins, he walked about the room with rapidly-increasing excitement, till at length stopping before her, he said, in accents of angry reproach, "You have spoken my doom, Clara, and only from your own lips would I have believed it."

Clara buried her face in her hands, and feeling that her high-wrought fortitude was giving way, she hurried towards the door; but as she tremblingly endeavored to open it, Sir Patrick again seized her hand, saying, "You are mine, Clara; you are bound by a promise that must not be broken!"

"I shall never give myself to another," said she, still hastening away. "Be happy in making others happy. May you yet find one who loves you as I have done, and who shall not hereafter find the same reasons for giving you up. I shall pray for you, and rejoice in all the good I hear. Farewell."

No words could do justice to the silent agony of Clara's young heart, when, in solitary grief, she retraced her whole intimacy with Sir Patrick, and reflected that she had bid a last adieu to one whom she must not esteem, and yet could not but love. All that this world could offer she had rejected for conscience sake. A cold frost seemed to gather around her spirit, while, trembling and depressed, she viewed the desolation of all her lately cherished hopes; and amidst the ruined fabric of her happiness, she now seemed like some solitary pillar, surrounded by the broken fragments of what once supported and adorned it; yet summoning to her aid that Christian firmness, which in her amounted to heroism, she gazed on the shattered wreck without a wish to restore it at the sacrifice of principle, determined, as far as her sensitive nature would admit, to adopt the rule of an aged and experienced Christian, "Hope nothing, fear nothing, expect anything, and be prepared for everything!"

CHAPTER X.

Years having thus rolled on, bringing joy to some, and laying sorrow more or less on all, Marion Dunbar, fresh in the spring-tide of youthful bloom, had nearly completed her seventeenth year, and was hurrying on still in a whirlpool of education at Mrs. Penfold's, exerting herself more zealously for the credit of her teachers than she ever would have done for her own.

One evening about this time a message reached Marion, desiring that she would instantly hasten to Mrs. Penfold's private sitting-room, which was, on all extraordinary occasions, that lady's hall of audience, and a solemn summons to which was usually of ominous import. Marion, however, conscious that her own recent diligence had been quite pre-eminent, and her success most distinguished, heard the word of command with a flutter of pleasing anticipation, for to her the future was always full of hope. Too old now for medals and ribbons, she yet indulged in the gay recollection of her former triumphs, and remembered with a smile, as she hurried up stairs, how often Sir Arthur had formerly declared, while pretending to frown upon her, that "he hated to see girls flouncing about with medals, and defying the world!" yet how silly, when she one day entered his drawing-room, with deepening color and a look of modest consciousness, half concealing and half displaying her honors, he had advanced to meet her, wearing his own Grand Cross of the Bath, to prove, as he said, that he was indeed fit company for so meritorious a young lady.

Humming a favorite air, with a buoyant, joyful step, and radiant smile, Marion hastened to the door of Mrs. Penfold's apartment, where, after trying to compose her features into a suitable expression of sober respect, with dimpling cheek, and still almost laughing eyes, she entered, making, as she had been taught, the usual respectful courtesy exacted by Mrs. Penfold, such as might have been suitable for an introduction at Court, or for a public performer receiving the plaudits of a numerous audience, and then, with a bright, speaking look, full of hope and vivacity, she paused, to ascertain the object of her unexpected summons.

To Marion's astonishment and dismay, Mrs. Penfold was pacing about the room, evidently in a state of furious irritation; while in her hand she carried that endless bill, the growth of many years, for board, education, masters, and sundries, which had so often already greeted the unwilling eyes of her young pupil, whose whole inward spirit recoiled with shame and apprehension, while she silently measured the length and breadth of its contents, every item of which she already knew by heart, and could almost have recapitulated without a prompter.

Had Marion herself been a ruined gamester or a spendthrift, she could scarcely have felt more guilty and ashamed than now; but after standing an entire minute without being observed, and perceiving Mrs. Penfold unable to speak, from the effort it cost to restrain her anger within decent bounds, Marion, with the frankness natural to her candid disposition, came at once to the point, saying, with heightened color, and scarcely articulate voice, while her beautiful deep intelligent eyes were fixed with an earnest gaze on Mrs. Penfold.

"I fear no satisfactory answer has come this term from my brother?"

"No! nor there never will be!" thundered Mrs. Penfold, in a voice that made the gentle Marion absolutely cower before her. "There, Miss Dunbar! look at that bill!" added she, flinging it furiously into the lap of Marion, who had sunk upon a seat. "How much will a shilling in the pound be for that? Four hundred guineas absolutely lost—wasted—squandered upon you!"

Unable to speak from consternation, though such scenes were already but too familiar to her memory, Marion fixed her eyes on the unwelcome bill, apparently examining its contents, while her thoughts were in the mean time painfully occupied in devising what would be right for her to say or do in this unexpected crisis. A long pause ensued, during which Mrs. Penfold seemed resolute not to speak; therefore Marion, with a strenuous effort, endeavored to new-string her nerves, and say something, while the large heavy tears forced themselves into her eyes.

"Mrs. Penfold," replied she earnestly, "you know how ready I would be to send my brother another letter of remonstrance, if that could be of any avail, but now he never so much as answers me. I seem indeed to be quite forgotten by both Patrick and Agnes!"

Marion paused to recover her voice, and to choke back her tears, after which she continued in a firmer tone, while Mrs. Penfold listened, with a dry, harsh, unmoved expression of countenance.

"You are justly dissatisfied about my brother's payment, but if there be the least cause to doubt your being ultimately remunerated, send me immediately home. I dare not go of myself, but you have power to dismiss me, and let it be done. The sorrow and mortification must all be mine, but whatever falls on myself alone, I shall always be able to bear."

"Miss Dunbar! you have anticipated exactly what I am obliged to do, and what it would have been well for me if I had done sooner!" replied Mrs. Penfold, angrily flouncing into a chair, and pirouetting it almost round, so as to look Marion full in the face. "I am sorry for you certainly, because, though your music is not yet exactly such as to do me much credit, and your Italian is sometimes far from grammatical, yet on the whole there cannot be a better-disposed girl, nor one who has testified a more constant desire to please me."

Marion's heart was melted by even this very slight expression of regard, and nothing could exceed the troubled beauty of her eyes, when she raised them gratefully to Mrs. Penfold, but conscious that her presence was not exactly the place for a scene, as that lady had long been considered incapable of a tear or a smile, she averted her face, and struggled for composure.

"I have learned for the first time to-day." resumed Mrs. Penfold, her voice becoming more stern as she proceeded, "that before your father's death, Sir Patrick twice, in the most profligate manner, paid off his creditors with a shilling in the pound! In consequence of great losses now at the Doncaster races, and having paid what he calls his debts of honor to a ruinous amount, Sir Patrick has yesterday fled to the sanctuary at Holyrood House for refuge, and the creditors have already seized everything. No wonder indeed! it was full time! He is all promise and no performance,—for ever feeding us with empty spoons!"

Mrs. Penfold angrily changed her position, and with another indignant glance at Marion, continued,

"Even Sir Patrick's large rent-roll would scarcely suffice in a life-time to pay the half of us off. Good worthy Sir Arthur too, his own uncle, he has cheated, and the property being entailed, we have only Sir Patrick's life to depend upon for what he owes us! This is a very heavy blow to me, and extremely hard to bear!"

While thus bemoaning herself. Mrs. Penfold forgot, like most selfish people, that any one had to suffer besides, though the parted lips, the tearful eyes, and the pallid cheek of Marion testified in a language not to be mistaken, the depth and intensity of her grief, while with astonishment and dismay, she heard this short summary of Sir Patrick's history and circumstances.

Long after Mrs. Penfold had ceased to speak, Marion gazed in her face, as if expecting more, while her every nerve continued quivering with agitation, till at length she closed her eyes in speechless agony, bewildered by the sudden transition from joyful anticipation to blank despair. Formerly she had heard of difficulties and bankruptcies, as she had heard of the plague or the bow-string at Constantinople—things dreadful to those who might be affected by them, but quite foreign to herself, and now, like a clap of thunder, all had suddenly burst over the heads of those who were nearest and dearest to her, with apparently destructive effect. She yet felt as if the whole were some hideous dream from which it might be possible to awaken,—the voice of Mrs. Penfold rang painfully on her ears,—every surrounding object faded from her vision,—her thoughts became confused,—a vague sense of burning misery was at her heart,—and one only wish remained distinctly prominent on her mind—the wish to be alone.

"Indeed, Miss Dunbar," continued Mrs. Penfold, in a monotonous complaining voice, "no wonder you are shocked that I who have labored so hard to realize a small independence, should be swindled out of it in this way by your brother. Lady Towercliffe tells me that among his intimate friends he is known by the nick-name of "Sixpenny Dunbar!" on account of his having so often already played a similar game, but once catch him beyond the bounds of Holyrood now, and he'll never be at liberty to try such manœuvres again. We are to offer a reward of £500 for his apprehension!"

"My poor uncle and Agnes!" exclaimed Marion, in a voice of anguish, while hot tears fell like rain over her cheek, and a confused apprehension of ruin, bankruptcy, and disgrace hovered darkly through her mind, though she scarcely yet knew what to think or to fear. "I must go home, if I yet have a home! Wherever they are, let me find them! I must see my uncle.—Patrick cannot be all you say! oh no! It is some dreadful mistake! Whatever happens, I trust and hope, Mrs. Penfold, you will be repaid. It shall be my first earthly wish—my duty sooner or later, to see it done! Now let me go instantly home!"

Mrs. Penfold most heartily seconded her pupil's desire to depart, while one of the heaviest pangs which Marion had to endure on this occasion, sprang

from the stern angry coldness with which her *ci-devant* preceptress appeared about to bid her a last farewell.

A tumult of gossiping wonder and curiosity arose among the pupils, when it became whispered that Marion was to "leave" on an hour's notice. Many questions were asked, much astonishment was expressed, and even a great deal of real sympathy excited, but Marion shrank from the clamorous exclamations of her young companions, who could not so much as guess the measure and depth of her misfortunes. Often had she shared their sorrows, and willingly would she have accepted any consolation they could offer, but the worst of her trials could not be spoken to mortal ears, and in lamenting for her brother's disgrace, she could only bear her wound, like a stricken deer, into solitude and silence.

There are insects that live a life-time in an hour, and it seemed to Marion as if she had really done so, since the time when sparkling with gladness, she flew to Mrs. Penfold's presence. Now, heavy with sorrow and anxiety, she slowly retraced her steps, and on reaching her room, sank upon her bed in a paroxysm of tears, delivering herself up to many painful thoughts, or rather to her feelings, for she could not think amidst the tumult of an agitated mind, when suffering thus under the most painful of all transitions, from hope to despair.

It was during the unoccupied half-hour after dinner, when Mrs. Penfold allowed her pupils a gasp of rest from their labors during the day, that they gathered in groups at every window, to criticise a hackney-coach and very tired broken-down looking horses in waiting, while the pupils all watched for Marion's departure, anxious to catch a last glimpse of their favorite companion. She had been shut up alone, ever since her interview with Mrs. Penfold, and tried to occupy herself in packing up her few possessions, while endeavoring to compose her mind, both of which tasks occupied more time than she wished or expected. But all now over, and trying to assume an aspect of serenity, with pale cheeks and swollen eyes, she entered the school-room, carrying in her hand a large and very heavy-looking casket.

The young community crowded round to say a thousand affectionate farewells, when, for a moment, Marion looked at them all with her own beautiful smile, but unable to control her emotion, she turned away her head, and burst into an agony of tears.

"Miss Dunbar, my dear! the sooner this is all over the better!" said Mrs. Penfold, hastily advancing, with a look of irritable vexation. "No wonder you are sorrow to leave us; but what can't be cured must be endured. Remember to be diligent in practising your music, as the success of my establishment depends on the conduct of all my young ladies. The only recompense I am ever likely to receive for my care, will proceed from your attention not to do me any discredit. Now, farewell, my dear, and try bear up the best way you can!"

"Mrs. Penfold!" faltered Marion, while a flash of bright intelligence lighted up her eyes; "allow me, for a single moment, to see you alone!"

"No! no! my dear! I hate scenes; therefore let us now take leave. I wish you well!" added Mrs. Penfold, in a tone that sounded marvellously sincere. "I really do! Whatever has happened is your misfortune, not your fault!"

"One single word, if you please," whispered Marion, coloring the deepest carnation, and leading the way to an inner room, while Mrs. Penfold followed, with an air of royal condescension. "The fault is indeed, as you kindly remark, not my own; but for my sake, Mrs. Penfold, spare my brother's name in all you say. It gives me pleasure to think that I can do something towards settling our account myself, and I would think no sacrifice worth a thought, that enabled me to do so. My mother's trinkets were divided between Agnes and me; besides which my dear kind uncle has been lavish in his gifts. This gold repeater cost a great sum, and that locket is set in diamonds."

"Well, my dear!" interrupted Mrs. Penfold, relaxing into a look of graciousness, "such honorable sentiments show that you have not been under my care in vain; and though these pretty trifles are not equivalent to what you owe, yet half a loaf is better than no bread!"

"All that I ever possessed, the gifts or legacies of friends and relations, I leave in pledge with you, Mrs. Penfold, as an assurance, that if brighter days ever come, I would redeem them at twenty times their value. Keep these till then. Whatever ornaments I might ever wear, would be a reproach till you are paid. Some debts never can be sufficiently discharged, and among these is what I owe to your care during many past years."

The bright eyes of Marion were dimmed with tears of sincerity and emotion when she concluded; and, placing the casket in Mrs. Penfold's astonished hands, she hastened out of the room. Giving a last, long look at those inanimate objects to which she had been accustomed, and feeling that even to these she could not without regret bid a final adieu, Marion threw herself into the carriage, and drove off, so overpowered with anguish and anxiety respecting her brother, that she scarcely noticed the phalanx of white pocket handkerchiefs, waved to her as a last farewell from those beloved companions, among whom so large a share of her young affections had hitherto been lavished; and thus she took a final farewell of Mrs. Penfold's finishing seminary for young ladies, where she was never destined to be finished!

CHAPTER XI.

Marion Dunbar being by no means an arrant novel reader, knew nothing of those artificial feelings which too often obliterated the reality. Simple as a field-flower, her natural sensibility remained perfectly fresh and unimpaired, while now, for the first time, experiencing the withering disappointments, and blighting anxieties of life.

As she drove slowly along towards the sanctuary where Sir Patrick had taken refuge, the most prominent apprehension on her mind, was that of finding him on the eve of imprisonment; but she in some degree consoled herself by imagining the services that in such circumstances she might perhaps be able to do him, and the privations she could endure for his sake. The more proud, overbearing, and arbitrary, he had hitherto been, the more touching it appeared to her affectionate spirit, that one seemed born to command, should now be humbled; and impatiently did she long to prove, that, however all things might alter, yet, in prosperity or adversity, in sickness or in health, she was unchangeably the same; while her young heart glowed with the paramount hope of at last becoming useful to her brother, and therefore welcome.

As she proceeded, visions of deep distress and difficulty floated dimly through the mind of Marion, who could not entirely close her eyes against the iron truths, and stern realities of life, while considering how totally unsuited her brother was, to endure the privation of a single luxury, and now he could scarcely have enough to command the most ordinary necessaries.

In the mind of Marion, immediate starvation, and going out as a governess, were the two ideas that most prominently connected themselves with the consciousness of being ruined; for her conception of bankruptcy was of the most terrifying description.

In the few novels she had ever seen, the heroines could always support themselves by selling their drawings; but Marion did not hope to gain an independent livelihood by her slanting castles, and top-heavy trees, though taking in plain work, or teaching music, suggested themselves as possible resources. Marion thought of arrests, bailiffs, writs, and of the world come to an end. The sunny hours of her life seemed suddenly darkened, and she had grown old in a day! In the simplicity of her heart, she imagined that a ruined man of rank and fashion, was like a ruined man in earnest; obliged actually to reduce his establishment! to dismiss his servants! to dispose of his equipages! to make an auction of his furniture! to part with his plate! and really to live as if he were in downright matter-of-fact earnest, poor! "to exist," as Sir Patrick once contemptuously said of Richard Granville, "on twopence a year, paid quarterly!"

The slow-moving hackney-coach stopped at last before the gate of Sir Patrick's new residence, St. John's Lodge, a gloomy antique villa near Holyrood House, with gabled windows, stone balconies, richly carved balustrades, and pointed roof, surrounded by dusty beech-trees, and formal yew hedges, clipped into fifty unimaginable shapes. Marion was surprised, on hastily alighting, to perceive the whole house glittering with lights, and would have supposed she had made some mistake, had not the bell been instantly answered by Sir Patrick's own man, followed by the usual three yellow-plush footmen.

"Faithful creatures!" thought she, having often heard of old servants who insisted on being retained for nothing; "amidst all Patrick's distress, this must indeed be gratifying!"

In a tumult of emotion, Marion, throwing off her bonnet, rushed up a broad well-lighted flight of stairs, while, wound up to a pitch of heroism and romantic self-devotion, she thought only of her brother, impatiently longing to fly into his arms, and to express the whole fulness of her affection, and the whole depth of her sympathy. While her heart sprang forward to meet him, she eagerly threw open a door next the staircase, and entered with a hurried and tremulous step; but suddenly her eyes were dazzled and bewildered by the sight which met her agitated glance, while for a moment she became rooted to the floor, like one who had been stunned by a sudden blow. Marion gazed without seeing, and heard without knowing what was said, so unexpected and surprising was the scene to which she had thus suddenly introduced herself!

A murmur of noise and gayety rang in her ears, while the whole apartment was brilliantly illuminated, and the first object which became distinct to her vision was Sir Patrick, seated at the head of a superbly-decorated dinner-table, in a perfect uproar of merriment and hilarity. Around him were placed five or six of his gayest associates, dressed in their scarlet hunting-coats, and evidently in joyous spirit, like school-boys during vacation, while the whole party presented a most convivial aspect, laughing in merry chorus, and with claret circulating at full speed round the hospitable board.

Marion felt as if her feet had lost all power of motion, while, grasping the handle of the door with one hand, and shading her eyes with the other, she became transfixed to the spot. It was a shock of unexpected joy, and while standing in the deep embrasure of the door, her large eyes dilated, and her lips parted, with an expression of speechless amazement, she looked like a breathing portrait, which an artist might have shown as his master-piece—young, bright, and graceful, as the first crescent of the moon, or like the fabled houri of an eastern tale.

The gentlemen all instinctively stood up with one accord the moment she appeared, giving her looks of embarrassed astonishment and admiration, while Marion hastily retreating, in an agony of confusion, heard her own voice inadvertently exclaim, "Patrick!"

"Marion!" cried her brother, in a frenzy of astonishment more than equal to her own, while the flowing bumper which had been raised to his lips remained suspended there, and in an instant afterwards, his tone of surprise became changed into angry imperative remonstrance. "Marion! what brought you here, child?"

Before she had quite retreated, suspecting the real state of the case, and not wishing for any public explanation, Sir Patrick added, in an accent of careless good humor, "Agnes is up stairs dressing for the ball, so make yourself scarce, and find her if possible. The house is not large enough to puzzle any one long, but I suppose you mistook this room for hers!"

"Patrick is not ruined after all!" thought the delighted Marion, vanishing in a transport of joy, while her brother's jovial companions became vehemently energetic in expressing their admiration of the beautiful apparition.

"Can that be the darling cherub Marion, who used to call herself my little wife? I wish she may do so in earnest now! She is undoubtedly the loveliest creature that my sight ever looked upon, her eyes glittering like stars beneath that rich cloud of hair! Let us drink a bumper to her health!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, in a spontaneous impulse of enthusiasm, filling his glass, and singing in a fine, full-toned tenor, the favorite ballad,

> "I saw her but a moment,
> And methinks I see her yet,
> With the wreath of summer flow'rs
> Beneath her curls of jet."

"That must mean Agnes, for Marion's hair is brown," interrupted Sir Patrick, in a rallying tone, yet his manner betrayed the excited and exaggerated vivacity of one who evidently forced his spirits, endeavoring to banish care by ceasing to think. "Be constant for one entire week, and I shall then think Agnes has achieved a wonder indeed."

"You do me injustice, Dunbar! I must be allowed to beg your pardon! I have not been what is called 'in love' above nine times in my life! Well! you may laugh—anybody can laugh, but I consider that smile of yours exceedingly malicious!"

"When a man is on the ice, you know his best safety is to keep moving," replied Sir Patrick, drily. "People talk of two strings to their bow, De Crespigny, but you are never satisfied under two dozen!"

"*Tant mieux et tant pis!* As Rosamond says, 'Thou canst not tell yet, how many fathoms deep I am in love;' how concealment is preying on my damask cheek, and what violent heart-quakes I am continually enduring! The girl before last that I died for was my idol for an eternity of three months' duration. I might have continued most deplorably in love yet, if she had not imprudently appeared before me one day in an unbecoming east wind, with considerably more color in her nose than in her cheek!"

"You are the most observant of men, De Crespigny! If you only pass a young lady at full speed on a staircase, you can describe her eyes, complexion, figure, and expression, before I could be certain whether she has one eye or two! But what is this Irish story I heard about you! Some lady with seven brothers, and you threatened to shoot them all that she might become an heiress! What were the particulars?"

"You seem to know more than I do, or anybody else!" replied Captain De Crespigny, hastily tossing off a bumper to conceal his confusion. "There are so many girls whose peace of mind I annihilate, that it is next to impossible for me to remember them, but I can think of nothing now except my cousin Marion, who always promised to be beautiful, and has more than fulfilled her promise. Tell me, Dunbar! when does that pearl come out of the shell?"

"If you please, sir!" said a servant, entering, "the hackney coachman is waiting to be paid seven shillings for bringing Miss Dunbar from Dartmore House!"

"Let him wait all night if he chooses!" replied Sir Patrick, angrily frowning away his footman, "as the Irishman said, 'may he live till I pay him!' Tell the man to come again to-morrow—and next day—and the next—to come back in short, whenever he has nothing else to do! Perhaps in a delirium of generosity I may some day think of paying him."

"At our usual rate of payment, seven shillings from you would be equal to £7!" said Captain De Crespigny, laughing, "let him put it down to your account!"

"Yes! I have already more creditors than pence, therefore one more less can be of no consequence! That fellow of mine is the most officious rascal!—and he begins every sentence the same, 'If you please, sir, the plate-chest has been robbed!' or, 'If you please, sir, the bay mare is dead!' But I am never pleased to pay when it can be avoided, and especially now. This is one of my moneyless days! My banker's bulletins continue unfavorable! I cannot raise another shilling! The handle of the pump is chained. All my relations have made wills in my favor, but not one of them will die! As Falstaff says, 'What money's in my purse? seven groats and twopence!'"

"I shall set up a hackney coach, and drive one myself if it pays so well!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny indignantly, "What an extortioner the fellow is! up to snuff and a pinch above it! He deserves to be executed!"

"Don't speak of executions in this house! we have had enough of them already," replied Sir Patrick, forcing a laugh that sounded very like a stage laugh. "What brings me here, if I am to be dunned in the very sanctuary by a set of rascally creditors! You can take the hackney coach home, if the man waits a few hours longer, De Crespigny, and pay him off! It would be difficult generally to say which of us is best off for ready money, but as Jeremy Diddler says, 'You don't happen to have such a thing as ten-pence there, have you?'"

"No! I make it a principle never now to patronize the paper currency or bullion *ca m'est egal*. Scotch notes are so atrociously filthy, and gold is too heavy for the pocket. I am hastening as fast as possible to my last shilling! Money is a bore! As for you, Dunbar, if you wished to borrow a glass of water, I shall not be the man to lend it! I would not for worlds be included among your 'rascally creditors!'"

"They beset my door so incessantly the week before we came here," said Sir Patrick, laughing, "that I played the fellows an admirable trick by connecting a strong galvanic battery with the knocker of the door, so that the more angrily they grasped it, the stronger was the shock they received. I sat with Wigton for an hour at the window in perfect fits, when we saw the look of astonishment and terror with which, one after another, they staggered away. One impudent rascal absolutely succeeded in serving a writ on me for £200, but happening to have as much in the house, I thought it best for once to pay him off, and——"

"This is a most remarkable story! almost incredible!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, laughing; "not so much your being arrested, for that might happen to any of us, any day, but your having £200 in the house, Dunbar! Excuse me there! I have as much credulity as most people, but you should keep to probabilities!"

"If one could pay people off with golden opinions," observed Sir Patrick conceitedly, "I flatter myself in that case, that all my creditors might be more than satisfied."

"When are those fellows to have their next meeting?"

"I wish we knew, that I might give them a harangue on agricultural distress!" replied Sir Patrick, carelessly plunging his whole hand into his luxuriant hair. "It gives me no scruple to disappoint the shop-keeping world! None whatever! These rascals have not the slightest hesitation in making punctual customers pay their bills twice, therefore it is quite fair that others should not pay at all. I could point out a dozen of my tradespeople who, knowing they risk only a sheet of paper by re-sending their bills a year after they are paid, make a practice of doing so. If the ill-used customer produces a receipt, why then, an angry bow and a sulky apology are all the satisfaction to be got; but if the receipt, by good chance, be lost, then he becomes perfectly cheatable, and no remedy can be had but to pay over again! I have seen the thing happen fifty times, long ago, when I really did sometimes pay my debts, and of course never took the trouble to keep any receipts."

"On such occasions," said Captain De Crespigny, "the offending shopkeeper, when proved in the wrong, should be fined double the amount of his bill, to be expended for the benefit of meritorious men like you and me, Dunbar, who cannot pay once. The sight of every poor man I meet gives me a moral to avoid poverty, *coute qui coute*; but as for you, Dunbar, prudence and economy are not certainly to be enumerated in the catalogue of your many virtues! As sure as your name is Patrick, if £1000 dropped into your pocket now, it would be squandered with the liberality of a prince before you walked to the next street."

"Most uncommonly true, De Crespigny!" replied Sir Patrick, ringing to order a fresh bottle of claret. "But in these days of bankruptcies, revolutions, robberies, sudden deaths, and murders, the only way to make sure of enjoying my own is, to spend it immediately. In that case there can be no mistake! I long ago discovered that it is impossible to be both merry and wise; therefore give me joy at any price. Happiness is to be bought, like everything else, if people have only the heart to pay for it. In my opinion a long face and a short purse are the two great evils of existence, both to be avoided at the risk of one's life."

"Perfectly unanswerable, Dunbar! Money is the patent sauce for giving a relish to everything! It throws dust in the eyes of all the world, till they can observe none of our faults, and yet see all our perfections magnified and enlarged, as we see them ourselves. Misers make money the end of life, but we make it the only means of enjoying existence; a sure ticket to pleasure of every kind and of every degree!"

"One of these years, De Crespigny, your grave will be dug with a golden spade! You are growing mercenary! But every man living is, in one way or other, deranged about money;—those who have much, hoarding as if their lives depended on amassing another shilling."

"I wish, Dunbar, you would write a treatise on the art of living well, after we have been obliged to calculate that difficult sum in arithmetic, 'take nothing from nothing, and nothing remains!'"

"Why, really, as a shillingless spendthrift, I could say enough to make all of you misers during life; but for my own part, as long as I possess a guinea, the first man who wants it may get the half. Hoarding is the only enjoyment which increases, I am told, with increasing years; but it is the only enjoyment of life I never intend to taste. I mean always to live rich, that I am determined on; and if I die rich, I shall out-hospital every fool who ever left a will, by endowing a 'Dunbar Dispensary for superannuated *bon-vivants*!'"

"How well the world would get on if everybody were of your way of thinking!"

"Thinking! my dear fellow—I never think! What do you take me for?"

"For a strange being, certainly, and for my own particular friend. Besides, as the poet beautifully expresses it, in speaking of such friendship as ours:—

> "We have lived and *laughed* together,
> Through many changing years;
> We have smiled each other's smiles.
> And—*and paid each other's bills*."

"Thank you, De Crespigny! I shall send a file of mine to you to-morrow! Do you remember the memorable hour at old Brownlow's long ago, when my first bright guinea glittered in our hands, while he detained us to enumerate all the various uses it might and ought to be put to. I never forgot his oration—that is to say, I have thought of other things certainly during the intervening ten years; but it has often occurred to me, that if I had, as he proposed, hoarded my treasure till another came, I should have been a miser for life. I did, however, squander it then, with the spirit of a gentleman; and ever since, whenever any one lectures on economy, I put cotton in my ears. Wigton, the wine stands with you!"

"Capital claret this, Dunbar! My uncle Doncaster would not have quarrelled with Crockford, if he had given him such a bottle as this. Claret is certainly

the poetry of wine, and I should like to have a cascade of this pouring down my throat all day and every day! Your own importation, I suppose? It does your cellar great credit."

"It has been, at any rate, placed to my credit in Morton's books. I am very fastidious now, and owe it to myself to have the best."

"I can't tell what you may owe to yourself," said Captain De Crespigny, laughingly turning his dark keen eyes on Sir Patrick; "but you certainly owe a great deal to other people."

"Very true, and I owe you a grudge for saying so. I never can forgive myself for not having been born to a larger estate! £50,000 a year would have suited me so much better than my paltry pittance of twenty! These are very hard times! The fellow who supplied this claret might have enjoyed my custom for ten years to come, if he would have waited as long for payment! It is a man's own fault always when he loses my business! The moment he takes to dunning, we part. It is a rule with me, and I told him so. He did not take warning!—actually sent in his account a second time!—a most ungentleman-like thing to do!—an offence I never pardon! So now——"

"He may retire from business at once!" added Captain De Crespigny, filling his glass. "Did I not hear that the house had failed next morning! We all know what your countenance is worth!"

"Three farthings a-year, paid at sight! We should make it a principle to discourage duns; but they do occasionally force their way upon me in some unaccountable manner, like a draught of air through the key-hole, and then I can look as grand and immovable as George the Fourth's statue; but fortune will be in good-humor with us again some day, and take me under her especial patronage, when I shall pay everybody thirty shillings in the pound, and——"

"Hear! hear! and a laugh! as they say in the House of Commons!" exclaimed Lord Wigton. "Well done, Sir Patrick, the Great——"

"The great what? Your speech is a fragment," said Sir Patrick, in his liveliest accents; "besides which, it was an interruption to mine, Wigton; and I intended to have said something particularly amusing, if you had not broken the thread prematurely. It is lost to you for ever now! I am dumb as a flounder; and you may pity all the present company, as they have really missed a very good thing."

"We shall place it to your credit accordingly, Dunbar," said Captain De Crespigny, laughing. "It was rather annoying to have perhaps the only good thing you ever could have said in your life nipped in the bud. I hate sometimes to see a joke of mine standing with its back to the wall, and struggling in vain for existence."

"Dunbar has talked himself into such a fit of parsimony," said Lord Wigton, laughing, "that he is ever economizing his words."

"*N'importe*," replied Sir Patrick, gaily circulating the bottles. "You are all mistaken, and you particularly, Wigton. I can economize my way up the hill of life as well as any of you, and shall yet live upon an income of nothing per annum. My plan is, to keep only five hunters—to stay but one month at Melton—to feed upon sunshine—to fill my head with the rule of three—in short, to become actually quite a pauper in my style of life; and, if all things else should fail, I can, as a last resource, turn patriot, and subsist upon liberalism and mob-popularity!"

"That sounds vastly prudent and proper, Dunbar; but all I say is, whatever desperate schemes you arrive at in the way of retrenchment, give me the income you spend, rather than the income you have!" replied Captain De Crespigny. "I took a fit of arithmetic one day, and discovered, upon accurate calculation, that scattering £20,000 a-year on an income of ten, gradually drains off the whole!"

"You are a perfect Babbage, my good fellow; but you know I have expectations from three uncles in Australia, and one in the West Indies!"

"Uncles! except the brave old Admiral, you scarcely possess a relation besides myself in the world; but as long as Sir Arthur lives, you have something to be proud of. The only thing I envy you on earth is for being his nephew. I reverence him. I never pass him, hail, rain, or sunshine, without taking off my hat. He is quite a jewel of a man."

"You shall have him very cheap!" replied Sir Patrick, assuming a careless tone, to conceal a great deal of irritation. "What will you bid? I wish he were 'going! going! and gone!' I never knew such an old bore as he is, always interfering about my sisters, and fussing about my debts. The world ought to be entirely peopled with uncles, aunts, and grandmothers, for they all know so much better how to act than anybody else."

"It is setting a very bad example for old people to live very long. My uncle Doncaster took a twenty years' lease of his house in Belgrave Square lately, and told me afterwards, he thought of having the term 'extended' to the period of his natural life! I am sure his life is perfectly supernatural already! What would the old fellow have!"

"Those superannuated people who outlive themselves have nothing else to do but to sit in their arm chairs and find fault! The world is good enough if they would only think so; but all their world-before-the-flood ideas are picked up in a different state of existence from ours. Everything changes in half a century—customs, dress, modes of thinking, notions of honor, ideas of pleasure, habits of society—all are turned upside down; so there can be no use in your uncle or mine prosing about the past and the future. There is neither past nor future in my plans of existence now."

"Why, really, if men would neither look backwards nor forwards, there is scarcely a moment of any man's life which is not very tolerably agreeable. The rule that carries me joyously forward through life, is to make the best of everything. We borrow all our annoyances from anticipation of the future, which often turns out perfectly groundless, or from regret of the past. We cannot alter the stream of events; therefore I am for floating along the tide with my arms folded, and looking neither to the right hand nor to the left."

"Quite right; and take my word for it, that in this little trumpery world of ours, ruined men enjoy the best of it. We have nothing to lose—our estates are managed for us—we care not the toss of a farthing about politics—we have no fear of a reverse—we are always the most liberal of what we have—and in short, it is true enough, that '*menage sans souci* is the *menage six sous*——'"

"I have generally got through all the difficulties of life hitherto with a hop-skip-and-a-jump; so I mean always to keep myself in practice; but after all, Dunbar, money has its merits, and the best profession for a ruined man is to marry an heiress. They always select the greatest roue who makes them an offer! Why do you not propose to Miss Crawford and her £60,000?"

"I never answer questions in the dog-days! My dear fellow! £60,000 would not be a breakfast to me! It would scarcely supply copper-caps to my gun! Besides which, I cannot make a low marriage, and pick money out of the puddle! An heiress at best always seems to me a personification of all my creditors! A person one should marry to please them! but the only thing on earth I would not sell is—myself!"

"Being beyond all price, of course, Dunbar! I am still insufferably bored at Beaujolie Castle to marry that cousin of mine with a purse as long as her nose, and both I believe are miraculous, but we have not met in the memory of man! Perhaps I may some day yet be obliged to welcome gold from whatever pocket it comes, but I am not very impatient to see Miss Howard at the head of my table!"

"My dear fellow! you would be sitting at the bottom of her table, if Miss Howard Smytheson accepted you! It is unlucky that a fairy-like fortune and a fairy-like person are so seldom united in one individual."

"I have no objection to marry for money as soon as they are. Love among the roses would not be in my line at all, but when I see gold in a beautiful enough casket, then '*les beaux yeux de sa casette pour moi*!' 'Mammon wins its way, where seraphs might despair!'"

"But if we must choose between them, give me love, and let money take care of itself!"

"Splendidly said! you are growing magnanimous, Dunbar. What has happened to you since we met last? Did I not hear some romantic tale of true love lately, connected with yourself and Granville's pretty sister, Clara! 'a portionless lass wi' a land pedigree!' I vehemently contradicted the whole affair, as Lady Towercliffe's entire story was so very unlike you, but——"

Captain De Crespigny paused suddenly—filled his glass—averted his eye—and pushed the bottles hastily round, for he had observed with astonishment that Sir Patrick's under lip became violently compressed, his white forehead became visibly paler, a bright flash was emitted from his eye, and his agitation became so obvious to every one around, that a deep silence fell over the whole party, which soon after dispersed.

CHAPTER XII.

One of the greatest pleasures in life is derived from the unexpectedness of events, without which existence would lose much of its interest, and finding herself thus emancipated from school, settled at home, and relieved from her worst fears respecting Sir Patrick, Marion no sooner escaped from her unexpected glimpse of the jovial party in the dining-room, than, lightly carolling some snatches of a popular song, she flew up stairs the happiest of the happy, to find the scene of Agnes' toilette, whom she discovered at last all joy and flutter at the prospect of a ball at Lady Towercliffe's in the palace.

The softening effect of happiness on stern and rugged natures has been often remarked, but selfishness never slumbers, and the reception Agnes bestowed on Marion partook more of astonishment than of pleasure, and was mingled much more with censure than with approbation. Still, after expressing more wonder than the occasion called for, what could possibly have brought her home, and the most unbounded censure of Mrs. Penfold for her "unjustifiable conduct" in sending her, Agnes, having no one better, or rather no one else to talk to, though not violently delighted at the unexpected meeting, gave some fragments of her attention to Marion, whose deep tender eyes were sparkling with affectionate pleasure on again seeing her sister, while her countenance, from recent agitation, looked like an April face of smiles and tears.

"What a storm in a tea-cup you have had at Mrs. Penfold's! tiresome old cat! I am glad it teased her! Dixon! pin that wreath more to the right:—not quite so far! there!—oh! how perfect!" said Agnes, gazing with exultation at her own extraordinary beauty. "Pat must find out some other school for you, Marion! It would never do to stay idling here! Dixon! never shew me that dress again! Wear it yourself or burn it, but blue always looks vulgar! I have lucky and unlucky gowns! Some in which I meet with all the friends I wish to meet, and dance with all the partners I prefer, but that dress is a happy riddance. I remember once being obliged, when wearing it, to dance three times and go to supper with stupid, tiresome Lord Wigton! Dixon! fetch my bouquet! not that withered old thing, but the one Captain De Crespigny brought me to-night. Fetch it from the drawing-room."

"So that horrid Dixon is still with you!" whispered Marion, as soon as the abigail's last frill disappeared. "I very seldom dislike anybody, Agnes, but she is very odd. There is a strange gleam about her eyes, which look so sharp and penetrating, they have prongs that pierce when they are turned on me."

"Yes!" said Agnes, laughing, "she does sometimes look through me till I feel myself nailed to the wall."

"Moreover, she has such a flattering, fawning, cunning manner, that I wonder you can tolerate her for an hour," continued Marion. "We know so little of her, too, that she is like a person fallen from the clouds!"

"Oh! there you are wrong, for Lady Towercliffe says she is 'a perfect treasure!' Consider, too, what low terms she accepts, merely from her desire to serve me! I never saw a creature so preternaturally anxious to be taken, and now, after two years' practice, she really is excellent. Do you remember at the time I engaged Dixon, what a perfect romance her history was! Pat did not believe a word of it; but to do her justice, she made it very entertaining. I hope, at least, the greater part was founded on fact!"

"Why does she wear widow's weeds,—she did not mention at first having ever been married!"

"No more she did! how strangely beautiful she looks in them, like the abbess of a convent! Her husband, if ever she had one, which I doubt, is said to have died, abroad, and her only wish is never to see strangers. Pat insists she has had some *affaire du cœur*, but I tell him it must positively have been with old Sir Arthur, for she started so visibly one day long ago, and became redder than red, when I said he was coming to dinner."

Seeing Agnes in so unusually gracious and communicative a mood, Marion ventured now to inquire into the state of her brother's affairs, saying, she supposed he must inevitably sell his estate, go abroad, or retrench, as the expedient of planting half-pence, to grow into guineas, had not yet been brought to perfection, even by Sir Patrick, though it had so long been a subject of wonder how he contrived to get on.

"This has been a horrid business!" exclaimed Agnes peevishly; "as for Pat himself, he will do very well! Trust him for taking care of that. He has always money enough and to spare for his own amusement, though sometimes he would hardly even pay the postage of a letter to save my life. Only think of his bringing me here, out of everybody's way, during the most beautiful years of my existence! Our friends will scarcely imagine that I think it worth chair hire to travel from this burying-place to the inhabited world! What can one do. We shall give some quadrille parties ourselves, but scarcely a living soul is within reach except the Towercliffes, and those odious Granvilles!"

"The Granvilles!" exclaimed Marion, in a blaze of joy and astonishment; "dear Clara! is she here."

"Yes; but she cuts this house entirely, and we are hardly on speaking terms, therefore let me beg you not to attempt any violent missyish, boarding-school friendships in that quarter. I cannot enter into particulars, but rest assured that the less you see of Clara the better for me,—and the better, too, for Patrick. Never, for your life, mention her name before him."

"Why?" asked Marion with a look of bewildered disappointment. "Agnes, I cannot give up Clara Granville!"

"Perhaps, then, she may give you up! She abhors the whole family now! If I must not veto her without rendering a reason, let me tell you that there is a very awkward pecuniary quarrel between Mr. Granville, Pat, and Mr. De Crespigny. It is merely one of their madcap tricks, but extremely annoying. You have often heard Sir Arthur tell of three Yorkshire baronets, who signed a mutual contract sixty years ago, that the first of them who married should forfeit £10,000 to both the others."

"Yes; and not one of them ever ventured to dispose of himself at so great a sacrifice."

"Well! some years afterwards, the subject was discussed one day in public conclave, at the Harrowgate ordinary, and what should the late Mr. Granville do, in company with Major De Crespigny and our father, but, like a set of madmen, as they must have been at the moment, drew up, for a frolic, precisely such an agreement for themselves, which they signed and sealed, making some of the 150 strangers present act as witnesses. The whole affair had been long forgotten, when Mr. Granville married some fright of a girl, all nose and freckles, merely because of her being amiable, or some such whim. She lived long enough to make saints of the whole family, and died after her son and daughter were only a few years old."

"Then how is your quarrel with Clara tacked on to this affair, I cannot quite trace the connexion."

"Why! Pat has been very angry at Mr. Granville lately about some unexplainable affront; so, having accidentally found the old Harrowgate document, and being very hard up for money, he and Captain De Crespigny are threatening to levy the fine of £10,000 due to each of them, and poor Mr. Granville is, as you may suppose, rather indignant, having been all his life stringing halfpence together, to pay off his father's debts, though no one could legally oblige him. As Pat says, 'more fool he!' You know our brother's favorite expression of contempt is, to describe any one as 'the sort of man who would lock up his money!'"

"What a shocking affair!" exclaimed Marion, coloring with shame and indignation. "As uncle Arthur says, Patrick would do anything for money short of a highway robbery! Surely, Agnes, he cannot be in earnest."

"Pshaw! never mind being amiable now," replied Agnes impatiently; "we need not act to empty benches! I am already aware that you, Marion, are on the exact pattern of what Mrs. Hannah Moore would bespeak to order for a sister or daughter; but with all you learn at school, pray learn to keep that goodyism out of sight, for I can fancy nothing more intolerable than a young lady turned out on the model of those horrid sententious books, filled with advice to young ladies. Mrs. Ellis writes to the 'Women of England,' but she luckily leaves the 'Women of Scotland,' to their own devices, without troubling us to be exorbitantly amiable."

"I shall be in no hurry to see Clara now!" continued Marion, dejectedly. "I suppose Patrick will be cut by all gentlemen for such unjustifiable conduct."

"Oh dear, no! Nobody is ever cut for anything now as long as he has money! I can scarcely tell the thing upon earth, except cheating at cards, that a man of £10,000 a-year may not do, and yet be as well received as ever,—and ladies ditto! Any woman who can afford a court plume, and many even who cannot afford, may fit on her ostrich feathers, and go to court with as proud a step and as lofty a carriage, as either you or I. Your uncle, Sir Arthur, complains that there is no such as 'moral indignation' in the world now, and so much the better. What good would it do to anybody? If a gentleman once gets into a fashionable club, he is made for life, and may ever afterwards defy the world to look askance at him."

"Then nobody takes any notice of Patrick's affairs?" asked Marion doubtfully.

"No; except uncle Arthur, who makes himself quite absurd about them; refuses to dine here; turns his back on Patrick at the club, in a most un-uncle-like manner; and performs all sorts of antics to testify his annoyance; but we are both rather glad he no longer comes prosing to this house, and that we need never enter his. The Admiral is a fitter companion for those old pictures round the wall than for us. Do not look at me with that hair-standing-on end expression! I can't help what Patrick does, and you will soon get accustomed to such things."

"Oh no, never! I hope never! but Patrick cannot surely push that claim in earnest against the Granvilles. He will refund the money, will he not, Agnes?"

"Perhaps, when all his other creditors are paid off. Now spare the whites of your eyes, and do not look at me as if I had five heads, but pray attend to my injunction, and avoid Clara, who is only fit to be a saint in a niche at her brother's chapel. You may know her at any distance now by her five-year-old dresses and country-cousin bonnets. Richard Granville has taken orders at last, and become a most superb preacher. In short, the Granvilles are good, worthy, dull, respectable people as ever lived, though the very last upon earth that would suit us."

"Do you mean to be severe, Agnes? I hope you are mistaken!" replied Marion, humbled and depressed by all she had heard. "I have sometimes felt, when with Clara, as if goodness were infectious, and never hear of any people better than myself without wishing at least to be in the same room with them."

"Take my word for it, Marion, these enormously good, sagacious persons are better to look at than to converse with. They may be admired at a distance, but the greater the distance the better; and pray never set-up in that line yourself, as nothing is more unpopular. Clara invited me, when we first arrived here, to one of her tea parties! some horrid Granville-ish affair, I have no doubt! But I knew my own value better than to go. Fancy me, Agnes Dunbar, at a good party!"

"I hope you might not be so very much out of place, Agnes!" replied Marion, with an arch and pretty smile. "Whenever I give 'good parties' you shall be the very first person invited!"

"Then take my apology now,—previously engaged! Indeed, I may perhaps consider myself an engaged person in every sense, Marion. Captain De Crespigny has already almost proposed several times, and makes no secret of his attachment. Oh, never mind Dixon! She knows who sent me this bouquet and all about it. Captain De Crespigny tells me he has planted all my favorite flowers at Kilmarnock Abbey, and often says what a resource they will hereafter become to me! Here are all the letters of my name grouped together, Anemone, Geranium, Narcissus, Everlasting, and Sweet William."

"Very ingenious," observed Marion, smiling.

"I promised not to mention whose device it was; therefore, Marion, as I am exceedingly particular about keeping my word, if any one guesses where I got this, remember to recollect that I did not tell. But, Dixon, what is the meaning of this? the geranium is broken and these flowers are so withered, they have not surely been in water."

When Marion looked accidentally at Dixon, she was startled to perceive that a mortal paleness had overspread her features, which bore a strange bewildered expression, while her hand, in which she held the flowers, trembled visibly, but she said nothing, and Agnes, in the triumphant gaiety of her spirits, rattled heedlessly on.

"One of the rooms at Beaujolie Castle, which Captain De Crespigny already calls 'my *boudoir*,' opens into a conservatory filled with rare exotics, but he says I shall be the brightest flower of the whole, though never born to blush unseen, if he can help it! How very droll he is, paying compliments often that would make one feel beautiful for a year. He said this morning, when Patrick complained of the room being hot, that he wished I would fan it with my eyelashes, and asked for one of them to wear as a feather in his Highland bonnet! Yesterday, when I showed Captain De Crespigny this new pearl hoop, he said I spoiled the symmetry of my hand with rings, as there was not a jewel in the world fit for me to wear, and only one ring that ought ever to be placed here! You should have seen his sentimental look on the occasion, which might have done for twenty proposals!"

"One would have been enough," said Marion, smiling.

"What he said was quite sufficiently explicit, and I only wish he would appear a little more diffident, as his look was most provoking self-satisfied, when he added, 'how fortunate will be the happy man who places a ring on that finger!' When speaking of the Admiral, too, he always now calls him 'uncle Arthur!' and yesterday, at taking leave, he said in his half jocular, half serious tone, 'I shall live upon the Bridge of Sighs till we meet again!'"

"Then, pray, let him stay here till he is a little less confident," replied Marion, laughing. "You should teach diffidence in three lessons, Agnes; he has no right to seem sure of success till he has obtained your consent point blank. You have many admirers to choose among."

"Squadrons of admirers, but not so many lovers as you think, Marion! The race of marrying men is becoming extinct in the world, so I must not be severely discouraging to poor diffident Captain De Crespigny, who has been setting his mustachios at me so long. Your notions about keeping people in suspense are quite of the old school, when ladies used all to be upon stilts, but '*nous avons change tout cela*.'"

"I am sorry for it. We should all have been born when Sir Arthur was, and I wish everybody were like him."

"Spectacles, grey hair, and all! Thank you, Marion, but I am not particular, and feel quite satisfied to be a contemporary of Captain De Crespigny. If you could but have heard him this morning when he sang the 'Pirate's Serenade,'" said Agnes, warbling the words to herself,

"This night, or never, my bride thou shalt be."

While Agnes continued singing *sotto voce* for some minutes, her whole heart and thoughts occupied with agreeable retrospections, the eye of Marion again accidentally wandered towards Dixon, and she was startled out of a reverie into something almost approaching alarm, by observing her attitude and expression. With features as pale and rigid as those of a corpse, she gazed at Agnes, and there was an intensity in her look perfectly unaccountable, while a dazzling and terrible light glittered in her eyes. Marion with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of astonishment, when she perceived the extraordinary change in Dixon's countenance, but with a private resolution to watch more narrowly than before, what such evident agitation could mean, she determined as yet to make no remark, but allowed Agnes to rattle on undisturbed, while her own thoughts were filled with perplexity and surprise.

"Yesterday, Marion, Captain De Crespigny actually made me read over with him that proposal scene in the new novel, 'Matrimonial Felicity.' I nearly died of confusion when he doubled down the page, saying, he hoped this was not the last time we should study it together. The story has but one fault, that the hero makes rather a low marriage, and of that Captain De Crespigny expressed an utter abhorrence. I remember ages ago, his making me laugh so excessively with a description of some school-boy attachment he had in Yorkshire. Such a burlesque upon love! It was exquisite! The silver thimbles and wall-flowers he presented to a fair damsel in prunella shoes, and no gloves, while his *gages d'amour* were accompanied with verses borrowed from the Irish Melodies, and passed off as his own. I forgot always to ask what became of the poor deluded girl at last—probably married before this time to some fat farmer or thriving shopkeeper, but for my own part, the misery of an unrequited attachment is what I never can know. Captain De Crespigny really is the only person one could possibly have fancied."

A loud and startling crash at this moment interrupted Agnes' delightful reminiscences. Marion instinctively sprang from her seat with alarm, and looked hastily round, when she perceived that Dixon had tripped over and thrown down a table covered with china ornaments, on which Miss Dunbar had frequently squandered half her income, even at times when she could scarcely afford a dress. The etiquette being now established that all young ladies, of whatever means, shall cultivate a passion for china and hot-house plants, Agnes had made a collection of second-rate vases and third-rate tea cups, interspersed with stunted hyacinths and drooping camellias, at so great an expense that Sir Patrick often recommended her to take a wing of the bazaar and sell off all her trumpery again. The whole assortment now lay in fragments on the floor, while Agnes delivered herself up to agonies of lamentation, scolding, and wondering, over the ruin of her hoarded treasures, while she pointed out with consternation how nearly the table had fallen with its edge upon her own foot, which might have lamed her for life. The "fall of china" is a proverbial trial of temper, and that of Agnes did not prove on this occasion invulnerable, while the epithets, "awkward wretch!" and "stupid idiot!" were audibly lavished on the offending abigail.

Marion appeared exclusively occupied in gathering up the scattered fragments of china, and arranging them together, but her eye was secretly observing Dixon, the strange wild expression of whose features filled her with indefinite apprehension. In her countenance there gleamed, certainly, for an instant, a dark smile of malignant satisfaction. Marion felt sure that it was so. Could the poor creature's mind be shipwrecked? Was she insane? Her look had become fierce and haggard, her forehead of a deadly paleness, and when she caught the eye of Marion earnestly fixed upon her, she started up, with a frown of angry defiance, and hurried out of the room.

"This is a most calamitous catastrophe!" exclaimed Agnes, disconsolately. "How could Dixon be so intolerably stupid?"

"Are you quite certain it proceeded from stupidity? The accident is altogether very strange," observed Marion, going close up to her sister, and relating

all she had observed during that evening in the very lowest whisper, for Marion felt a nervous consciousness that Dixon was not far off, and might attempt to overhear them. A stealthy step was heard on the stair after she concluded, but Marion, thoroughly engrossed with the subject, reiterated once more her conviction that there had been something more than common in the manner of Dixon, whom she advised Agnes to watch very carefully, if she did not part with her soon.

"You were always prejudiced against Dixon, poor stupid fool that she is, Marion. I wish I had sent her adrift before she broke all the china, but it is very unlike you to be so severe! How can you fancy the creature did it on purpose? That is too bad, when you might have seen how ghastly pale she became!"

"I did see, Agnes! and that makes me wonder only the more! No one ever looked like that surely, for breaking a few china gewgaws!"

"Marion! speak respectfully of my treasures! But you are in a most censorious mood this evening: very different from common, when you are generally a knight-errant in all our conversations, defending everybody. But nothing pleases you to-night. My admirer first, then my maid, my china, and even Patrick, who certainly behaved exceedingly ill to-day, in not asking me to preside at his party. The pretext was, that we had no chaperon, but I had the greatest mind, in a fit of offended dignity, to leave his house."

"Your dignity would have been rather put out of countenance, by having to borrow my carriage if you did go!" said Sir Patrick, who had laughingly entered the room unobserved. "Lady Towercliffe may perhaps receive you in time for her six o'clock breakfast to-morrow morning, Agnes, but unless you make more haste, the supper and dancing will be quite out of the question. Past twelve o'clock, and a rainy night!"

Sir Patrick was a good-natured, selfish man, willing that everybody should be happy, provided it put him to no personal inconvenience, and when Marion took this opportunity to explain the circumstances of her very unexpected return, he merely bestowed a contemptuous whistle on the description of Mrs. Penfold's wrath, laughed at Marion's evident anxiety about his embarrassments, and then desired her to set about being happy at home the best way she could, as he thought she might make the rest of her life a holiday now. "And," added he, in his usual gay rallying tone, "forget for ever all your grievances at Mrs. Penfold's, or rather, Mrs. Tenfold's, on account of the breadth of her person and the length of her bills!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Sir Patrick, like most men who are gifted with more head than heart, disbelieved in all such generous emotions and exalted affections as he had not himself experienced. With a lively defiance of received opinions, his vivacity was unchecked by the fear of giving pain or of causing offence, being perfectly reckless on that score, provided only he could enliven the dull routine of ordinary society. Marion's mingled expression of shyness and animation, her light laughter and ardent feelings, were refreshing to a mind so hackneyed as his, and though he often checked her sensitive spirit in its full flow of affectionate confidence, by a retort courteous, or rather discourteous, he was nevertheless vain of the admiration she invariably excited, and read, in the eyes of others, the value he ought to place on her beauty and talents.

Agnes' whole mind was so frothed over with folly, and encrusted with selfishness, that unless the wheel of fortune touched upon her personal comforts, she was as impervious to all external impressions as a tortoise beneath the shell, and it was a useless waste of generous sentiments and kind emotions, whenever the heart of Marion was laid open to her. Agnes, who had long since adopted a company manner, and even a company voice, persuaded herself that Marion also had very cleverly "got up" a character on some imaginary model of excellence, which she acted over to the very life. It seemed to her a naked certainty that the refinement and delicacy natural to Marion's mind were in reality artificial; and though the radiance of her intellect, and the sensibility of her eye, were but in harmony with her actions, all testifying disinterested self-denial and invariable affection, still Agnes convinced herself that Marion lived "for effect."

If Marion ever acted a part at all, it was only in concealing from those who might have ridiculed her, the unfathomable depth of her feelings, since she might as well have asked for sympathy from an ice-berg as from Agnes. Knowing that every evidence of sensibility would be received with scepticism, she silently and hopefully waited till some scope might be afforded her for testifying that all which she might have wished to profess was nothing to what she would do or suffer for those she loved; and if ever Marion repined at any one circumstance in her lot, it was, that she might perhaps pass through life unknown to those she loved the best, because she dared not express, even by a few insignificant words, that affectionate attachment to Agnes and Sir Patrick, which she would have thought any sacrifice a pleasure, to evince in its full and heartfelt measure.

One privilege of friendship Marion enjoyed in unbounded measure with both her brother and sister. She became the usual depositary of their many grievances and disappointments. Marion had the art,—or rather the instinct, for to her all art was unknown,—of listening in perfection. If Agnes received a dress from her London milliner which did not fit, or if Sir Patrick did not obtain an invitation to some jovial party which he had expected to enliven, Marion became of immediate importance. The annoyance he felt on such occasions could scarcely be exceeded—the death of his nearest relation, or of all his relations together, would have been nothing to it; but Marion could always administer some gentle anodyne to the irritated sufferer, and displayed a wonderful ingenuity in turning up the best side of everything, for the advantage and comfort of others. Nothing melted Marion's heart so entirely as to see Sir Patrick for a moment depressed, as the very pride and haughtiness of his spirit rendered it, in her estimation, the more affecting when he seemed at all subdued, and on the evening of Lady Towercliffe's ball, she could not but fancy, before he set off with Agnes, that there was a forced vivacity in his spirits which she had never perceived before, and that the tone of his voice had a melancholy modulation when he bid her good night, accompanied by an unusual degree of kindness, always the very worst indication of Sir Patrick's spirits, the consciousness of which, and a thousand conjectures respecting its cause and extent, dismissed her to bed with an anxious mind and a prayer, even more fervent than usual, for his happiness.

In one house, Marion was understood and loved as she wished to be, and all her young enthusiasm found its best refuge and welcome in the aged heart of Sir Arthur, who felt refreshed and cheered by the companionship of thoughts and feelings as fresh and natural as the flowers in spring, while they reminded him of the time when his own had been as buoyant and untrodden, as hopeful and gay, as full of kind intentions and generous wishes.

The morning after Marion's arrival at St. John's Lodge, she arose by the peep of the day, intent on surprising her uncle with a visit during his early breakfast, and gayly anticipating the look of joyful surprise and perplexity with which she would be welcomed, while she rehearsed in her own happy mind, how best to increase Sir Arthur's astonishment. The day was indeed one of matchless beauty, the sunshine perfectly superb, and all around resplendent with light, gayety, and happiness, the white clouds skimming along like swans on the blue sky, the air perfumed with blossoms, every leaf spangled with dew, the painted butterflies, like winged flowers, hovering over the meadows, and the country people exhibiting looks full of mirth, hilarity, and good humor, as they hastened past to their tasks of daily toil, enjoying those common gifts of a bountiful Providence, the light breeze, the balmy sunshine, the music of birds, the perfume of flowers, and the joy of natural, unfevered spirits.

> "And now, while bloom and breeze their charms unite,
> And all is glowing with a rich delight,
> God! who can tread upon the breathing ground,
> Nor feel Thee present, where Thy smiles abound?"

The whole air seemed full of incense and poetry when the light-footed Marion, with a bounding and elastic step, set forth on her solitary walk towards Portobello, joyous as a bird in spring, pleased with the whole world, and admiring everything with a lightness of heart that cast its sunshine on all she saw. Marion delighted in a wild sense of liberty now, when she contrasted it with her long years of endurance at Mrs. Penfold's; and equipped in exactly such a pink gingham dress as Agnes had censured on Clara Granville, with the free air, like liquid sunshine, playing about her glowing cheek, and her light ringlets fluttering in the breeze, the excitement of her spirits became such that she could have run with pleasure across the daisied meadows, and, "glad as the wild bee on his glossy wing," longed to reach the craggy heights of Arthur Seat, or to linger beneath the old thorns already fragrant with blossoms, and steeped in dew.

Marion had picked some flowers as fresh and blooming as herself, while she hurried through the more inhabited parts of the sanctuary, but when passing beneath the palace windows, her steps were arrested for a moment by hearing the sounds of mirth and music. "Can it be!" thought she, in astonishment, "Lady Towercliffe's ball is yet at its zenith!"

Pitying the dancers much more than she envied them, Marion looked at the scene of glorious beauty around her, and was hurrying forward, humming a light barcarolle in concert with the thousand birds in full chorus on every side, when suddenly a loud shout caused her to start and turn around. Marion now perceived with astonishment that a window of Lady Towercliffe's apartment had been hastily opened, and Sir Patrick stood on the balcony waving his handkerchief impetuously for her to stop, and a moment afterwards she saw him eagerly running after her across the fields without his hat.

"Marion! you lucky girl! stop there!" exclaimed he with breathless animation. "We are all at breakfast, and require one lady more to make up a last quadrille, so come along; you are my prisoner! What makes you look so aghast? Who ever heard of a girl not liking her first ball?"

"Patrick, you are certainly mad!" said Marion, unable to help laughing at the almost delirious eagerness of his manner. "Pray consider! I am not in a ball dress! I am not invited! I shall look like a house-maid!——"

"Nonsense! I wish everybody looked half as well! All these reasons, and fifty more, go for nothing. I have set my heart upon it, and you shall not stand in your own light, like the man in the moon. No, Marion! you are to be published immediately under my auspices. You have often expressed a willingness to die for me any day, but that is not necessary just at present. All I ask is that you shall dance for me! Now, fling that bonnet off, shake your little forest of ringlets, and come along. You will pass muster very well without Cinderella's god-mother to make a metamorphosis."

Unable to resist the outburst of her brother's extravagant mirth, yet shrinking and abashed, almost ready to cry with vexation, Marion was unwillingly led, or almost dragged by her laughing persecutor into the drawing-room, where, with a look of *naivete*, and an aspect lovely in the first blush and freshness of girlhood, she gazed in mute astonishment and almost with dismay at this her first peep into the great world of fashion, wishing for her own part that she could have adopted invisibility, and enjoyed the scene as if she were in a private box at the theatre, for as yet her feelings were "*trop pres de la peine pour etre un plaisir*."

A bright sunshine streamed into the room, while the gas lamps still dimly glared over the breakfast table, at present surrounded by three or four hot, flushed, dusty-looking young ladies, with exaggerated colors, soiled dresses, torn gloves, withered bouquets, and exceedingly disordered ringlets, falling in dishevelled masses over their naked shoulders. These ladies, assuming forced spirits, and an appearance of over-done gaiety, kept up a rattling, flippant dialogue with about twice or three times the number of gentlemen, some in glittering uniforms, padded and stuffed to the very chin, and others in plain clothes, but all over-heated, over-excited, and over-fatigued, while, in spite of parched lips and blood-shot eyes, they were still endeavoring, with

all their might, to be fascinating.

To Marion's unaccustomed eye the whole party seemed like a set of second rate actors from the theatre, not calculated, by their aspect, to elicit very rapturous applauses, and she privately wondered they were not ashamed to look each other in the face when in so ridiculous a plight. Even Agnes, her own beautiful sister, looked very unlike Agnes! and she felt astonished to find that it might actually be possible to spend an hour in her company and not be admiring her, but in Marion's very private opinion, her appearance was now as if some sign post painter had done a resemblance of her sister in the very coarsest coloring, and in the most overdone style of dress and expression.

Agnes had a great deal to say, and no diffidence to prevent her saying it all, therefore she was now plunged into the midst of a very animated dialogue with Captain De Crespigny, talking with a look of conscious beauty and conscious success, in the only style she could talk, nonsense, and making a lavish expenditure of smiles, attitudes, and exclamations, to give herself the appearance of vivacity. Her hair was in a most disastrous state, and her complexion everything but what it should be, while her dress had so completely fallen off at the shoulders, that she might appropriately have sung her favorite air, "One struggle more and I am free."

The expression of Agnes' countenance became at once perfectly natural, when she turned round, and for the first time observed, with a start of genuine astonishment, that Marion was beside her, looking at the moment like some being of a better world, or like some graceful water lily rearing its pure and beautiful head above the turbid pool.

Marion glanced at her sister in a state of smiling embarrassment, as if desirous to claim her protection amidst a scene so new and strange, and taking possession, with a confiding look, of Agnes' arm, joy seemed rushing out of her bright animated eyes, and dimpling in her cheeks, when, under her sister's protection, she gazed around with an expression of timid amusement and curiosity.

"Marion, what mad freak is this?" exclaimed Agnes, with a hot red blush of angry surprise; "Patrick, do take her home!"

"Not till she has been my *vis a vis* in this quadrille, and then we must all disperse," replied Sir Patrick, with a boyish mischievous laugh, while noticing a haughty flash pass swiftly over the brow of Agnes; "I had difficulty enough in getting Marion to come at all, so she shall not escape me now. De Crespigny, have you engaged a partner?"

"If I had I would have strangled her!" replied Captain De Crespigny, with an admiring glance at Marion, who stood with her downcast eyes shaded with their long deep fringes, while an arch young smile played round her mouth, and dimpled her cheek.

"Will you then take the very great trouble of dancing with Marion?"

"I shall be too happy," replied he, throwing a world of expression into his fine animated eyes. "I shall do so with all my heart!"

"Marion, your old friend and cousin, Louis De Crespigny. Did you ever see such an ugly fellow?"

"That is the very thing I pique myself upon! I am like the Skye terriers, admired chiefly for my surpassing ugliness," said Captain De Crespigny laughingly, observing the smile and the blush with which Marion listened. "You think me plain; but I wish you saw my uncle!"

"Wear a mask, De Crespigny, if you ever become as hideous! But in respect to looks, the most unendurable of all living beings is a handsome vulgar man, like the description I hear of that creature Howard, Sir Arthur's pen-and-ink man. I could forgive his vulgarity, if Marion did not tell me that he presumes to be handsome, which renders him utterly insufferable! I wish somebody would put him to death!"

"The fellow has never yet shown himself to me," replied Captain De Crespigny, carelessly. "Now, Miss Dunbar, allow me the honor of the next quadrille with you; and if there be a dozen more," added he, with his most ineffable smile, "so much the better! I consider any other gentleman who asks you to-night as my personal enemy!"

Marion stole a frightened glance at Agnes, while timidly accepting the offered arm of Captain De Crespigny; but her sister had turned away with a look of superb disdain, and was engaged in lively conversation with Lord Wigton, a tall stripling, who seemed as if he was never to be done growing, and who copied Captain De Crespigny in everything, from the pattern of his watch-chain to the choice of his partners.

Agnes felt invariably more astonished at any deficiency of attention, than at the most devoted assiduity, having accustomed herself to believe that she was always the first object of interest to every gentleman in the room, though diffidence or caution might cause them to exercise their self-denial for a time, by keeping aloof; and it was with more commiseration for Captain De Crespigny's privation in losing her, than for her own, that she accepted the school-boy Peer as a partner, while secretly amused and flattered by the ludicrous expression of awe and admiration with which he usually offered himself. Having talked, flirted, and laughed, through one quadrille and several reels, the clock struck eight. It was an unspeakable triumph to Lady Towercliffe, that her ball had thus been kept up the latest of any during the season; and now the whole prepared for retiring to their fevered pillows.

Captain De Crespigny, after uttering, as usual, in his most ingratiating manner, a million of absurd nothings, took a sentimental leave of Marion, saying, with his very best smile, and a sigh to correspond, "I shall always remember this evening with pleasure—always! Ten minutes of unmixed happiness are something in this world to be thankful for. Life has nothing more delightful."

These words were said in his usual gay, off-hand tone, while Captain De Crespigny felt perfectly charmed to think what an impression they must be making on the heart of his young and unsophisticated partner. He was at the same time astonished himself, to find on this occasion how much more his heart was on his lips than it had ever been before. Marion was the only girl Captain De Crespigny had yet seen whom he did not feel a wish to trifle with; for during the last half hour, he had been not only amused, but deeply interested, by discovering in her conversation a degree of matured reflection, of *naivete*, humor, and good sense, accompanied by a brightness of expression in her deeply-speaking eyes, much in contrast with what he had ever been accustomed to before. Nothing is so rare in manner as to be perfectly natural, without a *soupcon* of affectation; and to this charm was added another, quite as new and unexpected to Captain De Crespigny, though by no means so acceptable, as he became not only astonished, but piqued, at the gay, indifferent carelessness with which Marion heard, as words of course, not more belonging to her than if they had been addressed to any one else, his well-turned compliments and insinuated admiration.

Not to be met half-way was new and astonishing to Captain De Crespigny! It seemed perfectly unaccountable, little as he knew how long his character for a ruthless flirt had been placarded before the eyes of Marion, who no more credited the sincerity of his professions now, than if he had been an actor performing on the stage. She considered that it was his part for the evening to scatter civilities indiscriminately around him, while his real feelings were, she believed, privately consecrated to one, and to one only. Marion's own heart was in armor, protected by the belief of Captain De Crespigny being her affianced brother; and therefore she received his *adieux* with a quiet, demure look, succeeded by an arch smile, as the idea crossed her mind how completely she was in the secret of his attachment, and how little he seemed to guess that she was.

When Captain De Crespigny observed Marion's good-humored, careless manner in taking leave of him, he began to fancy it just possible she might still be quite indifferent to his attentions; but he rather indignantly resolved that this should not continue long. It would be a distinction, he knew, to follow in the train of a young beauty so admired as he saw that Marion must be; for a hundred tongues were already talking around him of her matchless loveliness, while he alone had yet enjoyed an opportunity of discovering that much as she was to be admired by those who saw her, she was still more to be loved by those who knew her; for she seemed to unite in herself all that he had ever praised in a thousand others before, though he carried no plummet in his mind fitted to measure the depth of hers. Captain De Crespigny had been accustomed, hitherto, always to feign more than he felt; but now, for the first time, he found it necessary to conceal, even from himself, the extent of his feelings; for it seemed as if the last few hours had rendered Marion perfectly known, and for ever dear to him. Slowly strolling homewards, therefore, he gave vent to his thoughts, by singing, in a voice like moonlight, soft and clear, the words of a favorite song:—

"And fare thee well, my only love
And fare thee well a while!
And I will come again, my love,
Though it were ten thousand mile."

CHAPTER XIV.

Marion had a genius for being happy, and much as the unexpected ball had amused her, she hurried along the road to Portobello, her cheek dimpling at the recollection of all that had passed, while she confidently anticipated one pleasure yet to come from it, the amusement she knew Sir Arthur would derive from her adventure; for never did two individuals, when together, seem to converse more in accordance with Dr. Johnson's rule, than Marion and her uncle, that "the aged should remember that they have been young, and the young that they must yet be old."

As Marion arrived within sight of the cottage, her step became more buoyant, and her thoughts more joyous, when, seeing Sir Arthur at his open window, she waved her handkerchief to him; and Henry, leaping out from a height of about ten feet, ran laughing to meet her, his rich brown hair waving in the wind, his color heightened by the exercise, and his eye sparkling with the joy of this very unexpected meeting.

While Marion poured out the tea, and poured out, at the same time, a whole flood of recollections and circumstances connected with the ball, Sir Arthur equalled her utmost hopes, in being amused and enlivened by the description, while he said, in a rallying tone, looking fondly at her bright, happy countenance, "My dear Marion, you will never get on in the fashionable world! You look too pleased and happy, like a girl in the Christmas holidays. That will never do. It is the fashion to be exceedingly fastidious and discontented. You must positively give yourself some airs, or I shall have to be angry at you."

"You, uncle Arthur! Do let me see you angry! I cannot fancy such a thing. But pray, publish a volume of advice to young ladies on their first coming out. It would be a great pity for the rising generation not to benefit by your remarks," said Marion, gaily seating herself at the window. "I feel this morning as cheerful as that view of yours from the window, where the waves are dancing in sunshine, the ocean one liquid diamond, the sands all sparkling with gladness, and the white-winged vessels gliding joyfully along."

"External things take their expression from the feelings with which they are looked at," replied Sir Arthur, with sudden emotion. "That wide desert of sand seems to me this morning boundless as human wishes, and barren as their reality. I would not willingly throw a cloud over your happy face, Marion; but it must be! How strange, that even you, young and joyous as you are, must be doomed, like all the children of man, to sorrow! The delight of seeing you here, my very dear girl, had banished all care from my mind for a time; but it is on your account, far—far more than my own—that I feel anxious and melancholy."

Marion put her arm gently within that of Sir Arthur, and looked affectionately, but silently, in his face, while he continued, in accents of manly regret and indignation, while there was a mournful tenderness in the look he turned on his niece,

"You have not heard, Marion, that the little I ever had has been made less by a mean transaction of my nephew's. For my own part, this matters little, as it is not in the nature of things, that with all my accumulated infirmities, I should live as much as a couple of years. My sight has almost entirely failed, my general health is equally bad, and my long-faded spirits owe their best support to religion, and to the affection of yourself and Henry."

Marion silently and tearfully kissed her uncle's check, and pressed his hand more closely in her own, while he proceeded, in accents of increasing emotion,

"My boy here wishes, as he ought, to pursue a profession, and Henry will be an honor to any one he enters. He has never cost me an anxious thought, nor a single shilling. I trust his anonymous annuity will be always continued, and that on his account I need not lament my impoverished circumstances; but my chief earthly care is for you, Marion. Though Agnes, too, shows me little attention, and no kindness, I cannot forget whose child she is, nor think of her future life without anxiety. I had hoped to have the means of being useful to both of you while I lived—to have offered you a shelter here, in case, as I expect soon, there should be no other for you—and to have left you both at last above absolute penury, when I am at rest in the grave. It is for your sakes only that I would now cling to the tattered shreds of my worn-out existence; but this is a difficult world for unprotected, portionless girls, in which to buffet their way onwards. Remember, dear Marion, it is my misfortune, not my fault, if death now overtake me before I can do anything for my brother's children."

Marion clasped her arms round Sir Arthur's neck, and wept in silence. There was a weight of grief in all he had said, for which she was totally unprepared, and which she felt in every fibre of her heart. Sir Patrick's disgraceful conduct, and the impending departure of Henry, so long her companion and friend, were afflictions for which she was in some degree prepared; and they seemed as nothing, compared with what her venerable uncle said, for the first time, of himself. He was a strong-minded man, unwilling to obtrude his infirmities and feelings on the notice of any one, anxious always rather to borrow cheerfulness from those around, than to cause anxiety or grief; but a sense of its absolute necessity had induced him to show Marion, in some degree, her real position, and in doing so, had obliged him for once to speak of his own pecuniary losses and growing frailty. Long as the Admiral had been threatened with blindness, brought on by the pernicious climates in which he had served, the apprehension of actually losing him had hitherto been so far from Marion's thoughts, that she frequently pleased herself with anticipating the time when she might herself supply, by reading to him and walking with him, the place of that gloomy and spectral-looking Mr. Howard, one of the few people in the world whom Marion disliked, at the same time that she almost envied him for being so constantly in the society of Sir Arthur, and for being so indispensably useful to him.

Marion felt that all the world would be cold and bleak to her indeed, as if the sun had left the firmament, if she lost the warmth of affection and kindness to which, from infancy, she had been accustomed, in the house of her beloved uncle, the only parent she had ever known. If such a misfortune were to come, who would then advise her—who would then be interested in her feelings—who would believe in the sincerity of her affections—who would be happy when she appeared, and grieved when she departed? All this rushed upon Marion's young mind when she arose to depart, while bitter tears coursed each other down her cheeks, and large drops stood in the nearly blinded eyes of Sir Arthur, which he endeavored to hide, as he affectionately embraced her, saying, in a tone of dignified, but melancholy composure,

"Come back soon, my dear girl! Let me see that face often, while I can see at all! You are the ivy giving life and cheerfulness to a blasted tree."

"Let me remain with you always!" whispered Marion, in a tone of the deepest earnestness, "dear uncle Arthur! It is impossible to tell how happy I could be with you, but I have an abhorrence now, not to be expressed, of my present situation. It seems little short of swindling even for me, to live as I do, with all our debts unpaid. When I sit down at my brother's table, or wear the dresses he gives me, I cannot but feel myself an accomplice. It is degrading to my very heart, and I would not willingly do it. Take me home, dear uncle, to the best home I have ever known. Let me read to you, write for you, walk with you, and we shall be so happy—so very happy together."

"It may come to that too soon, dear Marion, and when it does, no parent ever received his own child with more pleasure than I shall welcome you. Even with all my shame and sorrow, then, for your brother, my very heart shall rejoice to see you, but not yet. Patrick is your guardian—a most unfit one certainly;—but while he is able and willing to receive you, which cannot probably be long,—it would ill become me to interfere. In remaining with him, you fulfil your father's will, who bequeathed you to his care,—a trust he has but little deserved. Remain with him, however, at present, and do not feel answerable for his actions or circumstances, over which you have no control."

CHAPTER XV.

Marion's walk back from Portobello was of a very different aspect from her gay outset in the morning, and nature seemed to have suddenly gone out of tune as she gazed around, with an altered eye on the sombre massy hills with their giant shadows, throwing into mysterious obscurity the tall ancient buildings of the doleful Canongate, which looked like the ghost of a departed city; and the melancholy magnificence of Holyrood reminded her of greatness in adversity, while she reflected that the royal houses of Stuart and of Bourbon had there found a dismal refuge in their utmost destitution. But more immediately connected with herself, and more interesting still to her thoughts, though rather a sinking in poetry, was the consideration that there her own brother had been driven by his folly and indiscretion, and that her father's family, so long respected in Scotland, seemed now about to be finally extinguished in penury and disgrace. It was a misfortune without remedy, for Marion knew the limit of her influence with Sir Patrick to be less than nothing, and she believed that not a living being possessed more. She had never heard a surmise of his attachment to Clara, or deep and unconquerable as it was, she might have entertained some hope that the love of virtue and goodness in others, might lead to a respect for it in himself, though none can doubt the melancholy truth, that, as fevers are infectious, but health is not, so moral evil is far more contagious than moral good.

After a hurried walk, Marion reached home in some trepidation, lest she might be too late to dress for dinner, an offence which Sir Patrick always visited with his utmost indignation; but on entering the house, she was alarmed and surprised to hear, from the butler, that Agnes had been seized with sudden illness very soon after her return from Lady Towercliffe's ball, and that she was unable to leave her bed.

Marion flew, rather than walked up stairs, and entered her sister's room with the most affectionate solicitude, but great was her astonishment to find Agnes stretched almost insensible on the bed, and evidently in an agony of suffering, pale, cold, and languid. Her spirits were evidently in the lowest depression, and, for the first time in her life, she seemed to consider herself a mere mortal like other people.

Dixon, in the mean time, watched over the invalid with an air of excessive, almost exaggerated solicitude, emitting a series of very ostentatious sighs, while she kept her place close beside the bed, so as to exclude every one else, and made eager signs to Marion when she entered, to leave the room without speaking, and not approach her sister, or agitate her in any way.

Without heeding any such signals, however, Marion approached the bed-side with noiseless steps, and quietly assuming the place which had been occupied by Dixon, gently took hold of Agnes' hand, which felt so cold and clammy, that she started with a degree of alarm, greatly increased by the sight of the invalid's altered aspect.

"Have you called in a doctor?" said she, anxiously. "Surely Patrick does not know how very ill you are, Agnes?"

"Dixon says he thought nothing of it, and recommended me to put off my illness till after the assembly: unfeeling wretch! when I shall perhaps never recover. Since then he is gone hunting," added Agnes, with a peevish look at Marion, as if it were her fault, "and he will not return home before night!"

"Who said Patrick had gone out hunting? It is not the case. I met him in the passage, and he had been told you complained only of a slight nervous headache!" said Marion, glancing at Dixon, whose countenance wore an expression so sinister and peculiar, that Marion felt the color rush to her face with surprise, but turned away instantly to conceal how much she had been startled by it, though determined privately to watch Dixon's face more narrowly than before, while feeling a vague apprehension of she knew not what.

"Miss Dunbar must be kept quiet," observed Dixon, in a harsh sulky voice, "she ought not to speak. It only fatigues her, and she should see no one!"

"Who ordered that?" asked Marion with a scrutinizing look at the abigail's averted face. "I shall remain here, Dixon, therefore leave the room yourself at present."

While she angrily and slowly prepared to obey this authoritative command, Agnes turned her pallid face towards Marion, saying, in a faint voice, and with a look of extreme lassitude,

"Dixon says I have been in a delirium. She is probably right, for I could have been certain that when the shutters were closed, I heard a voice in the farthest corner of my room. It sounded like muttered curses, and a dark figure crossed the fire-place. Could it be a dream? I was too weak to move—my hand trembled, so that I could not reach the bell, but surely I heard a low, strange, unearthly laugh. It was horrible! but a moment afterwards Dixon appeared, and she says I was in a deep sleep, evidently dreaming some horrible dream!"

"It is impossible sometimes to distinguish between a dream and a reality, especially when we are ill," said Marion soothingly, for she was alarmed at the look of terror and perplexity with which Agnes mentioned these circumstances, and privately determined, as soon as possible, to communicate on the subject with Sir Patrick. "I must be allowed, Agnes, to sleep in your room to-night."

"Dixon maintains that this is all mere fatigue, after the excitement of Lady Towercliffe's, but I was never yet wearied with being flattered and admired! This morning, however, strange to say, my spirits are dreadfully depressed. Nothing gives me pleasure. I can scarcely imagine any earthly thing that could interest me. Though the ball turned out pleasanter than any ball ever was before, and Captain De Crespigny seemed, as usual, the most lover-like of men, yet this morning, if he proposed to you, or even to Dixon, I should scarcely care. Everything seems a blank. I feel a sort of depression and horror not to be described or imagined."

"I desired you, Dixon, to leave the room," exclaimed Marion, astonished to perceive her still lurking about the bed. "Go instantly," added Marion in a more peremptory tone, for there was something that terrified her in the woman's look. "What do you think, my dear Agnes, can be the cause of this very sudden illness? Did you eat any supper?"

"Nothing; I Jephsonized completely; tasted not a morsel, and drank still less! That good creature, Dixon, brought me a cup of tea from her own breakfast, on my return home, merely to lay the dust in my throat, but, *entre nous*, I tossed the greater part out of that window clandestinely, as it had an odd, disagreeable taste, like stuff-petticoats! Poor Dixon would be mortified if she knew what I thought of her 'delicious mixture' at, probably, 3s. 6d. the pound. It is a pleasure to see any human being so attached as she is to me."

Marion's color deepened at the tone of reproach in which these last words were spoken. It was impossible, she thought, that they could be seriously considered applicable to her, and yet both the look and accent seemed to say so, and the ready color flushed her cheek when she felt that no attachment could have equalled her own, had she dared to express it either in word or deed.

As Agnes declined sending for a doctor, and seemed already better, though unable for more exertion, Marion took up a book, and remained silently by her side, watching, with anxious solicitude, every variation of her countenance, and, with affectionate ingenuity, anticipating all her many wants, the most troublesome of which appeared to be a craving and intolerable thirst.

After some time the door opened, and Dixon was about to enter with a tray containing Agnes' dinner, but on seeing Marion still there, she started and seemed about hastily to withdraw.

"Come in," said Marion, looking with astonishment at the abigail's countenance, which was flushed and inflamed, as if she had been intoxicated. "Come in."

"When Miss Dunbar is ill, she always likes her dinner alone," said Dixon, pertly. "This is only a plain pudding, so I shall keep it warm below."

"My sister will not like it the less for my helping her," said Marion, affectionately turning to Agnes. "You may leave it with me, Dixon."

Marion was surprised to see the woman visibly change color when she said this. The abigail instantly compressed her lips as if to prevent their quivering, fixed her wild glaring eyes on Agnes, and then gave an anxious glance at the dinner tray.

"This pudding seems excellent," continued Marion, helping Agnes; "but surely there is rather too much sugar scattered on the top! Sugar!" added Marion in accents of astonishment, when she had put it to her lips; "this is not sugar! stop, Agnes! stop! I charge you not to taste it!" exclaimed Marion, hastily dashing the spoon out of her sister's hand, as she was raising it to her mouth. "What can this mean? There is something here I do not understand. It must be explained!"

Bewildered and amazed, Marion looked round, and beheld a dark scowl of rage and fear, like insanity itself, never afterwards to be forgotten, which

disturbed the countenance of Dixon for a moment, and then she became of a livid, unnatural whiteness, when, in a low, subdued voice, she uttered,

"I know nothing about it; the cook seasons Miss Dunbar's dinner; if this is not to her taste, I can take it away."

"Marion, what is the matter? I hate all this fuss. Pray do not make a scene when I am so ill. Dixon manages for me without half this trouble. The pudding seems good enough."

Marion trembled visibly as she got up, but without saying another word she rang three times for the cook, who expressed the greatest astonishment when the pudding was shown to her, saying, in a tone of pique, as she supposed her skill was in question,

"I put none of that there powdering on; sure it be something very queer; neither sugar, salt, nor mustard! It would be of little use in a kitchen, with no taste? I declare," added she, suddenly changing color, "to my thinking, it be nothing better nor worse than arsenic!"

A stifled cry of astonishment and consternation escaped from Marion at these words, while she hurriedly exclaimed, "Stop Dixon; do not let Dixon leave the house! Send for an apothecary. Where is Patrick?"

The powder, on being analyzed, proved, indeed, to be arsenic, which Dixon bought on the previous evening, on the usual pretext of poisoning rats; but while Marion was raising an alarm, the culprit herself absconded, carrying off all Agnes' trinkets and money, which she must previously have secreted; and notice of the robbery was immediately sent to the police. Among her valuable collection of jewelry, Agnes bestowed the most audible lamentations on a splendid locket set in diamonds with her brother's hair; but her secret regrets were the deepest for a crystal scent-bottle, with a gold top set in turquoises, which Captain De Crespigny had presented on the previous evening, pretending he had lost it to her in a bet.

"One would fancy," said Agnes, in her usual rallying tone, the first time she saw Captain De Crespigny after her recovery, "that Dixon had been some old admirer of yours. Not a vestige is left of anything I ever received from you! The last year's annual which you gave me, the music which you copied for me, even my withered bouquet of the night before, all gone at one fell swoop, leaving not a wreck behind!"

Captain De Crespigny colored violently, and strode to the window in evident confusion, which Marion could not but remark with astonishment and perplexity; but Agnes, quite unconscious of his agitation, rattled on with increasing animation.

"I always now put my money and everything valuable in the most conspicuous part of my room, to save anybody the trouble of murdering me for them. I have a perfect horror of being murdered! It never occurred to me, however, that the treasures which for certain reasons I value most, were in any danger, being of no intrinsic value to other people. I really would have died in defence of my little scent-bottle."

Captain De Crespigny had recourse now to the poker, an inestimable refuge in all cases where the concealment of emotion is an object, as his heightened color could excite no reasonable surprise after the exertion of lifting it, and the noise he made afterwards seemed equivalent to a reply.

"It was, after all, a most terrifying escape!" continued Agnes, rather delighted than otherwise by the importance she had acquired by this adventure, and holding it up continually in every light that she could. "That horrid Dixon! she always had a half-crazed look! You must remember my telling you so, Marion?"

"I remember it perfectly it was I who said so to you!" replied her sister, laughing,

"Ah! that is exactly the same thing!"

"Not in the least," persisted Marion, good-humoredly smiling. "All great discoveries occasion disputes about the originators. Watt and Bell about steam, and you and I about this poisoning affair!"

"Well, it was clever of you, Marion! I shall do as much for you another time. That ungrateful creature! The arsenic would probably, at the very least, have spoiled my teeth, and perhaps made my hair grow grey! That I never could have survived!"

"The strangest thing of all is, that there seems to have been so much malice in the whole business," continued Marion. "She might easily have carried off all the plate, or Patrick's gold dressing-case! What could ail Dixon at you, Agnes? You were kindness itself to her."

"This is an odd world, and very remarkable things happen in it," observed Sir Patrick, with a yawn. "But you may talk till you are both in your coffins, without making anything new of this business. Your affair has been the wonder of the house for two entire days, Agnes, without a single new fact having come out, and there is De Crespigny strolled into the garden to escape being wearied to death. I really think two days long enough to discuss any one subject, and the less you annoy yourselves about it the better. If the culprit is above ground, the police will ferret her out; and my advice to both of you is, to eat your puddings for the next month without sugar!"

Agnes assumed a look of majestic ire at this very cavalier allusion to her adventure, and threw herself back in her arm-chair, with an exceedingly ill-used aspect, heaving a succession of indignant sighs, which continued most provokingly unnoticed till they amounted at last almost to groans of suppressed anger, while Sir Patrick, taking up the "Times," concluded, by saying, in a tone of absent, careless indifference,

"One has no leisure now to be happy and sorry about everything that occurs. I remember once seeing a very impudent, forward-looking actress perform Juliet at Covent-Garden, when De Crespigny whispered to me, in his droll way, 'Depend upon it, this is not the first lover whom that young lady has met on a balcony!' and you may depend upon it, Agnes, this is not the first poisoning experiment your abigail has attempted: I hope she will never try her skill on me! What would you say if she were to administer a dose of zinc some day, and turn you blue! I often wonder that no jealous woman ever wreaked her vengeance in that way! It would be a capital joke!"

Agnes had been greatly flattered, and if any attention to herself could have surprised her, she might have been astonished at the intense interest almost inadvertently betrayed by Captain De Crespigny, in the mysterious circumstances of her lately discovered danger. When the particulars were first mentioned, he turned as pale as death, and asked with startling eagerness, for a minute description of the abigail's appearance, to which he listened with almost breathless attention. From that moment he became indefatigable in his efforts to trace out the fugitive, in which he seemed most truly and heartily in earnest, writing advertisements himself for the newspapers, to offer a reward for her apprehension, and never seeming to tire of hearing all that could be remembered or related, respecting the period of her being first engaged by Agnes, her dress, manner, age, and appearance, while his color varied visibly from red to pale several times during the narration.

"It is altogether most flattering to me!" observed Agnes next day, when pointing all this out to Sir Patrick. "Captain De Crespigny has been sometimes most maliciously accused of insincerity towards young ladies; but when he is in earnest you see how very much in earnest he is! It would be impossible for him to be more deeply interested and agitated on the occasion, if his own life, instead of mine, had been endangered. I wish everybody else had shown as much feeling!" added she, glancing angrily at Sir Patrick, who was carelessly whistling a tune, and beating time with a riding whip on his boot. "Well!" exclaimed Agnes, getting more and more irritated, "if I did not see that one person at least cares more for me in the world than you do, I would be ready yet, without giving Dixon the trouble, to poison myself! I would spend my last shilling on a dose of arsenic!"

"I am not sure that poisoning in such a case would be the best plan!" replied Sir Patrick, describing circles on the carpet with his whip, and speaking in a tone of most provoking *nonchalance*. "In the first place, if people are so very indifferent, it might be no great punishment to them; and besides, I do not exactly see how poisoning would improve your own prospects, either in this world or the next! In respect to my friend De Crespigny, it is quite a catch for any idle man like him, when something occurs that he can be interested in, for he was dying of too much leisure; but as for his ever falling seriously in love with any young lady in the creation, let me warn you, Agnes, once for all, that there cannot be a more hopeless hope invented or dreamed of."

CHAPTER XVI.

Marion found it more and more difficult every day, to account for the bitter, angry contempt with which Agnes spoke of Clara Granville, her dislike to whom never seemed for an hour to lie dormant, as she was perpetually making allusions to her, which caused very frequent irritation between herself and Sir Patrick, who sometimes angrily left the room, and yet occasionally joined in her invectives against the whole Granville family, in a tone of reckless, angry derision, which was to Marion completely perplexing and unaccountable. If Agnes felt dull or out of spirits, she complained of being excessively Granville-ish; or if Sir Patrick were observed for a wonder, in any single instance, to economise, she called him a Granville-ist; but if her brother either laughed, or flung himself out of the room, according to the humor he was in, it was in a fit of Granville-ism; and Marion became surprised to perceive that the mention of that name was never, even by chance, like that of any other name, a subject of indifference; and conscious that some secret was connected with it, not imparted to her, she carefully avoided all allusion to Clara.

Agnes one day jestingly announced to Sir Patrick that the Granvilles had taken out perpetual tickets at the Charitable Soup Kitchen, and meant to dine there every day on broth; and the next morning she rather inconsistently found fault with them, because at least twenty poor people assembled at their lodgings every day, to be fed, as if it were a House of Refuge.

Marion observed that all the innumerable books for charitable subscriptions, which were circulated from door to door, Agnes liked to examine, for the gossiping amusement of ascertaining how much was given by each or her friends, though never for the purpose of adding her own name, as her purse was a complete valetudinarian, always complaining of exhaustion, yet always capable of any exertion dictated by inclination; and Sir Patrick also, though he generally swore an impatient oath or two, when he saw the succession of dingy looking books brought into the drawing-room, sometimes amused himself with a supercilious glance at the contents.

Whenever the object was judicious, the Reverend Richard Granville's name, and that of his sister, appeared for a small sum, such as they might be able to afford; and Marion felt convinced there was much single-hearted goodness, and courageous disregard of mere appearances, when beneath the pompous £5 5s., of Lady Towercliffe, she saw the modest unobtrusive ten shillings, or half-a-crown of Miss Granville. It was probably all Clara could give, and she did not feel ashamed to proclaim the very small amount, though Agnes, like most persons who are mean themselves, in respect to giving, was splendid in her notions for others, and exclaimed outrageously against the absurdity of bestowing a paltry trifle at all.

"Five shillings to the Infirmary! did ever anybody hear such nonsense! as if an Infirmary could be supported on five shillings! It is so like Clara Granville's trumpery ideas! I daresay she thought the fortune of the institution made by such a donation! It will scarcely buy a packet of James' powders for one of the invalids!"

"But when Clara spares five shillings, are we to give nothing!" asked Marion, seeing Sir Patrick's pompous butler, as usual, carrying away the book untouched.

"Better give nothing than make ourselves ridiculous, like the Granvilles. Nobody will guess that this book was brought here! I wish Clara had given her superfluous money towards the better equipment of their own one solitary man-servant,—the merest attempt at a footman I ever beheld, with such a lodging-house look! Like the waiter from some second-rate inn! Did you ever see anything so ugly, and out of taste, as that little yellow cottage of the Granvilles', standing close to the old palace, like a kippered salmon nailed to the wall!"

An angry flush burned upon the cheek of Sir Patrick, who did not trust his temper with a reply to Agnes' tirade; and Marion hastily withdrew her eyes from his countenance, on perceiving that he had bit his lip till the blood seemed ready to spring, while his eyes flashed fire. In a moment afterwards, he whistled half a tune, threw open the window, and finally hurried out of the room, while Agnes looked mysteriously at Marion, and said nothing, though the expression of her eye plainly told that something was wrong.

Sir Patrick never entered a church; but Sunday being a day of impunity, when he might go to his club, and become a gentleman-at-large, without the possibility of being arrested, he invited a weekly supper party to meet him at Douglass' Hotel, every Saturday night, punctually at twelve o'clock, which held together till so late an hour on Sunday mornings, that once having carried a candle to the door, when letting out Captain De Crespigny, the day-light flashed in upon them, and they saw the congregations passing along every street to church.

Sir Patrick's life had now become one continual subterfuge. '*Il jurait bien, mais il payait mal*;' and he was heard frequently to declare, that he could not but fancy it might be, to an old experienced fox, a great amusement, when he afforded a good day's hunting to sportsmen, from the strange delight he felt himself in baffling duns and teasing bailiffs. He cared for nothing, not even for his debts and creditors, but over-reached everybody, paid nobody, and treated all mankind in different styles of insolence; but his favorite diversion was, nearly to out-stay the hour of twelve on Sunday night, knowing that his ill-treated creditors had offered a reward of £500 for his capture, and that the whole way along the High Street, emissaries were ambuscaded, in the eager hope that some fortunate night the clock might strike Monday morning before he was safely sheltered within the sanctuary.

Once Sir Patrick had indeed lingered several minutes too late; and when he approached the ditch, forming a line of demarcation between the debtor's refuge and the world in general, a rope was drawn completely across the street, while two men like constables, in large loose duffle coats, and hats slouched over their faces, had taken their station, each holding it resolutely at opposite ends, in the certain expectation of entrapping him, though the courage of both seemed for a moment to waver, when they saw the tall, well-knit, and finely-proportioned figure of Sir Patrick, as he strode onwards, with his usual military bearing and commanding aspect. After exchanging a look, however, they tightened the rope, and were about, with a rapid manœuvre, to coil it round him, when Sir Patrick, seeing their intention, rushed forward on the nearest, and levelled him to the ground with a single blow, saying, "You dastardly rascals! do you suppose that a dozen such fellows could be a match for any gentleman!"

"I'm a better gen'lemen than you, Sir!" said the other, in an insolent blustering tone. "Every guinea in your pocket, Sir, there's ten men in the world have a better right to than you have! I think a gen'leman born means a gen'leman as pays his debts!"

"Then here is what I owe to you!" replied Sir Patrick, flinging him almost across the street, with a violent blow on the head. "Only dare to stand in my way again, and every joint or bone in that miserable carcass of yours shall be fit for the surgeons. I intend to keep this rope till the day you are hanged!"

Agnes made her Sundays literally a day of rest, by remaining most of the morning in bed, to recover the fatigues of the previous week; and even in the afternoon, a "Sunday shower" often kept her at home. She had been taught at Mrs. Penfold's, to consider the most superficial attention to religion, as being little short of angelic, and to believe that the utmost extreme of rational devotion, if she wished to be inordinately pious, would consist in going once every Sunday to a pew in some fashionable chapel, where the stream of the preacher's eloquence might be permitted to flow in at one ear, and out at the other, without there being any occasion for her to analyse or understand what he said, satisfied that her duty was more than done by appearing there at all,—besides which, she occasionally read prayers at home, in a careless mechanical way, which was anything but praying—she had a magnificently bound bible on her toilette, more for ornament than for use—she wore all her dresses for the first time at chapel, dined on roast beef every Sunday, and spent the evening in writing letters or in reading, or rather in sleeping over some volume of religious poetry or tales—what Sir Patrick laughingly called "a half-good book."

Both Agnes and her brother spoke with unmitigated and indiscriminating reprobation of Methodists, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Independents, or any other sect of whom they knew the name, because, having always belonged nominally to an orthodox chapel, they considered it a matter of course, when thinking about the matter at all, that they must be orthodox too; though, if Agnes had been obliged to give a summary of her own doctrines, it would have been a confused medley, containing many of the heresies she reprobated by name, without knowing their nature. Thus sailing down on the stream of her own inclinations, without effort or reflection, Agnes would have been indignant and astonished beyond measure to be told, that she was not performing in a most commendable manner "The Whole Duty of Man," or at least more than the whole duty of woman, while she looked upon all those who evinced a greater reverence for religion as mean hypocrites or fanatical enthusiasts—being very much of opinion with the divine, who said that orthodox meant his own opinion, and paradox other people's.

Marion silently, and very unobtrusively, pursued the even tenor of her own way, with that deep and ardent devotion of spirit which had first been awakened to life by the happy instrumentality of Clara, whose apparent estrangement from her family now she deeply deplored, while many an anxious conjecture frequently crossed her mind, whether she, along with her brother and Agnes, must share in that alienation which she could neither fully understand nor in any degree diminish; and on the Sunday morning after her arrival at St. John's Lodge, before setting out for chapel, she had been surprised and mortified to observe, that Agnes' occupation in bed consisted in tearing up, to make matches, a numerous collection of notes from Miss

Granville, all containing apologies for not accepting various invitations to St. John's Lodge. "What can this all mean?" thought Marion, in agitated perplexity, as she pursued her way to chapel. "It is very unlike Clara to be so repulsive! and equally unlike Agnes to be importunate! I fear something is greatly wrong; but Clara is too just and too good to mingle me in any quarrel of which I do not so much as know the cause. When we meet I shall at once ask Clara for an explanation. We must all yet be reconciled and happy, as in former days."

There is nothing which extravagant people grudge so much as paying for a pew in church; and those often who squander money upon everything else, meanly evade subscribing this just and necessary tribute for the maintenance of religion and good order in society. It is astonishing how many who pay their way with lavish liberality during the interval to concerts and balls, will stand, week after week, like paupers, in a chapel-aisle, begging for a seat, rather than hire one for the season; and on this occasion Marion, finding that neither Sir Patrick nor Agnes had ever imagined any necessity for providing themselves with a local habitation of their own, followed a stream of people into chapel, and stood for some time near the door, in that most awkward and conspicuous of all situations, waiting for the chance of being shown into a seat by some compassionate pew-opener.

The street had been crowded by a dense mass of carriages, while Marion felt almost bewildered by the loud crash of equipages driving up and driving off, breaking the line and backing out, as if they had been assembled on the benefit night of some popular actor, while a flood of pedestrians crowded along the foot-path, as if their lives depended on being first. She was astonished also at the unprecedented concourse of people already assembled in chapel, with looks of eager excitement and flushed expectation. Every aisle appeared filled to excess, and the staircase seemed one solid mosaic of faces, while the congregation were all crushing, elbowing, and pushing forward, in impatient haste. Voices were heard, at length, speaking aloud, in angry contention, for places—a sound which grated strangely and startlingly on the ear in a sacred edifice; and when at length the heat became unbearably intense, a loud crash was heard, of persons breaking the window for air.

Marion, intimidated at having ventured alone into so dense a crowd, and at a loss to guess what could occasion so much excitement, would have made her way out; but the pressure behind rendered it as impossible to retreat as to advance. On few occasions do people betray so great a want of kind consideration, and even of hospitality, as when comfortably ensconced in an extensive pew at church, occupying room enough for three or four others, and carelessly staring at those who are vainly waiting, with hesitation and confusion such as Marion's, in hopes of being obligingly accommodated with a place. Her color deepening every moment, and her veil drawn closer, Marion shrank from notice, while one person after another elbowed his way forward, and closed the door of his pew, with the authoritative, self-satisfied air of a proprietor, heedless how others might be situated; and still Marion anxiously glanced around her in vain, for the obscurest nook in which to subside unseen.

At length, when the first loud peal of the organ had sent forth its solemn tones, summoning every heart to devout attention, Marion felt a gentle touch given to her arm, and on looking round, her hand was clasped for a moment with a look of heartfelt affection by Clara Granville, who silently led her to the seat, at some distance, from which she had followed her, and giving one more affectionate pressure of the hand to Marion, she composed herself into a look of devout and fervent attention, forgetful evidently of all but the important services of the hour, while Marion's heart beat with rapture to find herself once more beside her most beloved friend, and that friend unchanged.

The prayers were not merely read, but prayed—not in the every day matter-of-course tone, so common in the pulpit, nor in a pompous, self-sufficient, commanding voice, but with deep thrilling solemnity, and in a manner calm, graceful, and dignified, by a young clergyman of most intelligent and serious aspect, who evidently felt all he said, and became so utterly absorbed in his duty, that it appeared as if he almost imagined himself alone, and visibly present with the Divine Being whom he addressed.

The young preacher's appearance was singularly striking and prepossessing. His dark Spanish-looking complexion, and rather foreign features, were animated by an expression of the brightest intelligence, while in his eye might be traced the calm dignity of a highly cultivated intellect, and the benevolence of a Christian who hoped all things and believed all things, judging others as he would himself be judged. In preaching, he avoided the arena of controversy, but his arguments were clear and comprehensive, his eloquence irresistible, as much by the fire and splendor of his genius, as by the depth and solemnity of his reflections, while the attention was enthralled, the judgment convinced, the heart awakened, and the inward feelings touched in their most secret recesses. Without a thought of affectation, he was simple, dignified, full of earnestness, self-conviction, and fervent devotion, while there were passages of grandeur when he alluded to the solemn mysteries, and higher truths of revelation, which might have made a mere philosopher feel as if the wing of his imagination had been broken in attempting to follow; and yet there were thoughts and illustrations so clear and comprehensible, that any ignorant child from a charity school might have understood them.

Amidst the brighter scintillations of his genius, it was evident that he understood the whole alchemy of human nature, and while almost insensibly revealing the magnificent proportions of his own mind, he understood and sympathised with all the trials, temptations, and sorrows of human nature, and considered the whole art of happiness for man to consist in unreserved and heartfelt submission of his own will, his own hopes, wishes, and affections to the will of his Maker, desiring to have nothing, to be nothing, to do nothing, and to expect nothing, but according to His wise and holy decrees—to let the stream of events run on, seeking to extract the best happiness from them as they occurred, without one rebellious wish that they had been otherwise, but only with a fervent prayer that they may, and a firm belief that they shall, carry him forward, though the course be rough and perilous, to a calm, bright haven of ceaseless and unutterable joy.

When the congregation had dispersed, with a degree of silence and solemnity very different from their noisy and irreverent entrance, Marion walked for some time, leaning on the arm of Miss Granville, but so entranced that she was unable yet to break the chain which had carried her mind and feelings captive to another and a better world. She had never before felt so deeply impressed with the transitory nature of all around her, the insignificance of those joys and sorrows with which she was encompassed, and it seemed to her but a day or an hour, till the curtain of eternity should rise, and the glories of a great hereafter become visible to her sight.

"You have been deeply interested by all we have heard?" said Clara, in an accent of gentle interrogation, but with an expression of peculiar meaning in her countenance, which Marion was at a loss how exactly to interpret.

"Interested!" exclaimed Marion, with youthful enthusiasm. "If all the sermons I ever heard were compressed into one, they could scarcely equal what has been said to-day!"

"Do you remember the preacher?" asked Clara, coloring and smiling. "But no! how could that be possible, when you never met before! Here he comes! Allow me to introduce you, then, to my very dear brother Richard. You know each other already, by the description of one who loves you both!"

Mr. Granville advanced to Marion with frank and prepossessing kindness, but though his manner was most ingratiating, his countenance wore an expression of pre-occupation and fatigue, while he walked hurriedly past, after cordially shaking Marion by the hand, who observed to Clara with surprise, that his hand felt as cold as ice.

"That is always the case with Richard after preaching," replied Miss Granville. "The solemn feeling of responsibility which he has on entering the pulpit, often agitates and overawes him to a degree you would scarcely credit. The extravagant enthusiasm with which he has lately been followed, makes him still more anxious to use rightly while it lasts his influence with others, though, as he says, nothing is so transient in this transitory world as the popularity of a preacher, and his chief solicitude is to remind men that it is the word preached, and not the preacher, which they are come to hear, and always to preserve the simplicity of his own mind, unadulterated by any inordinate wish for applause."

"I am sure his words and thoughts have all the force of genuine feeling," said Marion, earnestly. "He preaches from heart to heart, which is the only way to strike a light between them. It seemed to-day, as if he were steering us through an ocean of immeasurable thought."

"But," replied Clara, "Richard is deeply impressed with the danger to a preacher himself, arising from the adulation with which he is followed by crowds in search of novelty, who give that respect to the mere ambassador delivering his message, which he wishes to claim solely and entirely for his Divine Master. He quoted to me yesterday a quaint old author, who says that God humbles men in this life, that He may exalt them forever; but Satan exalts men in this life, that he may cast them down for eternity. It is a solemn truth, and Richard feels the danger as he ought."

"Then it is a danger no longer, if seen and rightly avoided," replied Marion. "He already lives, I have heard, in a better world, while he acts in this, but so much applause must be apt sometimes to draw down your brother's thoughts from heaven to earth, if he hears all that is said and thought. Lady Towercliffe remarked, as we came out, that his eloquence does him immortal honor."

"Yes! as Richard himself once observed, 'immortal honor for twenty-four hours, or perhaps a week;' but that is no object of legitimate ambition to a preacher of immortality. My brother is blessed with one Christian attainment almost in perfection, and that is an actual dread of worldly applause. No penny trumpet could be more insignificant in his estimation than the enthusiasm of a few excitable young ladies, and I have seen him often carefully avoiding those, who would be 'frothing him,' as he calls it, with preposterous praise. He compares popularity to the sails of a windmill, raised to the clouds one minute, and down below zero the next; but fashionable notoriety has no attraction for one who aims at real usefulness. If he did not despise

it, he would despise himself. He is engrossed with the fervent, heartfelt hope of doing good according to his opportunity, and in perfect simplicity performing his duty to God and man."

"How mean and low in comparison do those appear who are living only for the opinions of men, and the trumpery tinsel of this world, yet how difficult it must be to rise above earthly ambition," said Marion. "No patent of nobility could confer half the distinction on your brother that he enjoyed to-day, surrounded by a multitude all aroused to enthusiasm by his words. A mere author writes in solitude, and never knows the full influence of what he has written; but an orator reaps an immediate harvest of honor, and sees it before his eyes, which must be ten thousand times more apt to intoxicate him with success."

"Yes," replied Clara, "no enthusiasm can rival what is felt at the moment for a popular preacher. His eloquence rouses feelings stronger than in any nature, while men become conscious that it would be their highest honor and best safety to encourage such thoughts as he suggests. You would smile sometimes to see how Richard's steps are beset as he leaves the chapel, by crowds anxious to catch a glimpse of his countenance, to request an introduction, to express their warmest thanks, to entreat he will print his last sermon, or to beg for an autograph."

"It is taking pains to destroy what they most admire, when people throw such temptations to vanity in a clergyman's way," said Marion. "Even I could not but perceive, as he passed, the reverential glances, and the whispered announcement of his name on every side, as he hurried onward, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left; but he sets an example of what he teaches, to live for high and holy purposes. It is only by carrying a light himself, that a clergyman can give light to others."

"Yes, Marion! it was not in mere words, of course, or of sacrilegious presumption, that Richard declared, on being ordained, his own solemn conviction that he was specially called to be a minister of the church. Unlike the Jews, who had Christ in their Bibles, but not in their hearts, his whole spirit was imbued with the pure holy faith and morality of the everlasting Gospel, and he considered it the highest of earthly honors to be consecrated for that solemn office."

"I was often told formerly," said Marion, "that your brother had talents which would have raised him to eminence—or rather to pre-eminence—at the bar, and in the House of Commons—or, as Pat has always said, meaning the greatest compliment of all—on the stage; but, dear Clara, how different, and how greatly superior, to feel, as he must do, with an approving conscience, that all his abilities, time, and strength, are consecrated to an object, which his heart, without one momentary feeling of doubt or self-reproach, may delight in—that all his studies, duties, and occupations increase his own fitness to be happy for ever; while, at the same time, they are for the good of all mankind, and for the glory of God. Your brother most truly said to-day, that a sinner is 'the drudge of Satan;' but if there be real greatness upon earth, I think it is that of an honored and useful minister in the Church of Christ, whose character is modelled upon the Holy Scriptures, as some insects take their hue from the leaf on which they feed."

"True, Marion! Richard's profession is, indeed, in the way he fulfils it, 'twice bless'd,' as a means of both giving and receiving happiness. It is with him a labor of love, in which every duty is a pleasure, and his object is, to keep us in mind of our individual importance in being believers; for as the glory of the sun is reflected in a single drop of dew, so may the character of Christ be represented in that of the humblest Christian; and like a stone in an arch, each atom has a place to fill, which must be conscientiously kept, whether more or less important and conspicuous, with unswerving steadiness, for in no other can it be so advantageously situated."

"I am entirely convinced of that," said Marion. "As your brother said to-day, Christians must never feel themselves raised above the homely duties of every-day life, nor give mere moralists occasion to say that their faith is not evidenced by their works."

"No," replied Clara, "let the ravens croak while the eagle pursues his steady flight towards the sun, heedless of all but his high destination. Yet, as Richard says, Christian mothers should instruct their own children, wives should find their first earthly duty in associating with their husbands, the heads of houses should watch conscientiously over the belief and conduct of their servants, a clergyman's vocation is within his own parish, and every family should be a little kingdom in itself, ruled and governed by the law and the Gospel of Christ, so that, as benighted wanderers in the dark are often cheered and guided by seeing, as they hurry onwards, the light and warmth gleaming round the hearth of a stranger, the sinner, also, in his dark and dreary course, when he beholds a passing glimpse of that peace and joy which are to be found in a Christian household, and there only, might be tempted and encouraged to go home and do likewise."

"I wish it were so oftener," said Marion, while her thoughts reverted sorrowfully to St. John's Lodge.

"It is in speaking with single-hearted simplicity of home duties and home affections, that Richard always excels himself," continued Clara, warmly. "There he preaches as he practices, for he cultivates happiness to diffuse it all around him, and he is, in reality, all that other men wish to appear. He deprecates, in general, pulpit oratory, as men are often apt to mistake mere excited feeling for true devotion; and he considers that attention in church at most to be depended on that which does not require to be pampered with novelty. Eloquence has so often been perverted to such evil purposes, both moral and political, that Richard sometimes tells me, he thinks, on the whole, this world would have been a better world without oratory at all, because brilliant talents and enthusiastic tempers usurp so often the place due only to principle."

"It often occurs to me," said Marion, "that half the actual history of our own lives is unknown to us now, but will be probably revealed hereafter;—in what respect, for instance, our circumstances in life would have been altered, had we on various occasions acted differently—how near we may have been to meeting with great events which never actually occurred—what impression has been made on others by our conduct and actions—who really loved us, and what is the extent of good or evil which our conversation or our writings may have done in the world. To your brother how many interesting discoveries would such revelation probably disclose!"

"Richard's own endeavor is generally to maintain a calm, rational, and argumentative style of reasoning with his congregation, and yet he is carried away irresistibly by his feelings, sometimes into such a burst of eloquence as we heard to-day," added Clara; "you would sometimes fancy, even in conversation, that Richard's mind, like some great volcano, was undergoing an overwhelming eruption, while he pours forth in resistless torrents, the burning lava of his thoughts and feelings."

Marion listened with increasing interest to Clara's remarks, and watched with affectionate sympathy, the kindling brightness of her friend's expressive eyes when she spoke of that brother so tenderly beloved, and so unspeakably respected, of whom, from his earliest boyhood, she had heard nothing but praise, for none had ever measured the stature of his mind without finding it higher than they anticipated. Marion felt an unenvying happiness in the happiness of Clara, and yet a tear suddenly started into her eyes, and a pang of unutterable sorrow struck upon her heart when she reflected, that, not many years ago, her own brother, Patrick, had been the friend and companion of this highly-gifted man, but that now they were friends no more, and becoming every day less suited to be companions.

CHAPTER XVII.

From that memorable Sunday when Marion first renewed her friendship and intimacy with Clara, her fair young countenance brightened into its sunniest smiles, while day after day she carried her work to the little "cottage of contentment," where Clara generally received her in what she called her summer drawing-room, a small bowling-green in the garden, bright and shining as an emerald, beneath a grove of overhanging lilacs and laburnums. There Mr. Granville frequently brought out books, which he read aloud and discussed, developing the lofty aspirations of a mind fitted to be high among the highest in learning and intellect, while his thoughts were like a well-tuned instrument, from which every chord sounded to the praise of their Divine maker, and his conversation was, as Pascal said of the Holy Scriptures, even more addressed to the heart than to the head.

When reading aloud, Mr. Granville evinced so much interest, with so quick a consciousness of the author's meaning, and so true a sympathy in his sentiments, that it seemed as if he must himself have composed every line; and when he occasionally lent Marion any volume that she particularly liked, she found his favorite passages marked, and the margin enriched by so many interesting notes, that she followed with delight the course of his mind, while at the same time storing her own memory with high thoughts and refined sentiments.

There was a degree of soul and spirit in the countenance of Mr. Granville, which marked him as no ordinary man, and an indefinite charm in his grave and courteous manner, suited to his holy profession, and displaying the calmness and polish of one accustomed to good society. He had an energy of expression irresistibly influential, while illustrating with an eloquence peculiarly his own, all the highest and holiest principles which can occupy the human heart. His master mind conversed of Milton, Spenser, Cowper, Montgomery, and of all the pious authors dear to every lover of nature and of highly-wrought genius and devotion, while the most phlegmatic must have been roused, and the most passionate become subdued, by the indisputable dominion of a great mind, for his genius appeared to look upon the trifles of existence with the passing glance of an eagle in its lofty ascent.

Marion and Clara were often entertained by Mr. Granville when he related characteristic anecdotes of pious and literary men with whom he had associated, enlivened by original remarks, shewing strong powers of observation, and displaying the best side of human life; yet his wit and humor were evidently chastened and subdued by a thoughtful estimate of existence, and by a continual consciousness of his high vocation, while Marion scarcely knew whether to be most astonished at the versatility of his talents, or at the extent of his information. No subject seemed strange to him, no country unknown, no science unstudied, no book unread,—while with ready memory and practised judgment he spoke as he thought, betraying no reserve or affectation: and religion still, like a golden thread, was to be traced running through his whole conversation.

Marion's was a heart which required something in those she loved to reverence and look up to; but here she had found that in its fullest measure, and under the happiest auspices, among friends with whom she had never spent an hour without feeling the happier and the better for it. Now for the first time she discovered that there is an aristocracy of conversation, which avoids everything low or mean in its origin, while a new world of ideas opened upon her, in listening to sentiments of high honor, and to feelings of universal benevolence. The genius of Agnes for conversation lay only in the line of scandal, and she was in the habit of sweeping away characters like cobwebs, at a single stroke, by remarks full of flippancy, and often using her talents as a mimic, while with tricks almost amounting to buffoonery, she rendered the best and most estimable of her friends, though above the reach of censure, at all events ridiculous. Ill-nature was to her conversation what fuel is to the flame; and Agnes piqued herself on her penetration in discovering the motive of others for all they did, while invariably tracing it to something mean or contemptible; but with Richard and Clara an equal ingenuity was shewn in tracing it to good; and while in the one house every individual discussed was brought down to the same level of absurdity or selfishness, it was cheering and gratifying to a heart like Marion's, that at Mr. Granville's, the characters and feelings of every one living were respected and elevated.

At St. John's Lodge, when Marion heard Sir Patrick and Agnes discuss their acquaintances, she could not but wonder sometimes where all good or commendable people had hid themselves, as it seemed as if they must have fled from the face of man, or have closed their hearts in disgust from all association with the mean and paltry world of fashion and frivolity; but now at last she had discovered some whom malice itself could scarcely criticise; and in thus associating intimately with the "excellent of the earth," she felt an increasing ambition to resemble them.

None were more fitted than Clara and Richard to appreciate the single-hearted excellence of Marion's disposition, her utter disregardlessness of self, her anxious desire to please, her gay spirits, brilliant without effort, her heart generous without guile, and her thoughts fresh and unsophisticated as the gentle summer breeze from the mountains. No one could look at Marion, and not wish to be her friend.

There was a tone of frank and entire confidence in her manner, which instantly gained that of others in return—a softened sensibility in her expression—a deep fascination in her smile—and in her voice a tone of joyous hilarity, indicative of her sunny mind, though, like her countenance, it was capable of intense expression, and deepened sometimes, now, into a tone of reflection and feeling beyond her years, while before long it appeared evident, in Clara's opinion, that she had become all and everything in this world to Richard, and Richard to her—that her amiable, single-hearted *naivete* of disposition had at once carried all the outworks of Mr. Granville's affection, and that already she was established not only in his friendship, but in something more.

Unsuspicious of Mr. Granville's increasing preference, Marion smiled and talked in his society with unembarrassed vivacity, or in their graver moods replied to his remarks as she might have done to those of any aged clergyman. The perfect harmony of their tastes, and the sympathy of their feelings, produced that gradual communion of thought which is the essence of friendship, while heart answered to heart, as if each had a telegraph instantaneously to reveal all that passed within. The highest qualities of Mr. Granville's mind, as well as the deepest feelings of his nature, were brought into visible exercise, while he who had hitherto lived only for others, now felt that there was not a link in the chain of human sympathies and affections which had not become sacred and dear to himself. There was even something that might be considered romantic in his feelings—a poetry of the heart, which led him to believe that a refined and sanctified love, such as men read and write of, but seldom feel, might yet exist on the earth—such love as could survive the lapse of time, the withering influence of prosperity, the chilling blast of adversity, and the growing infirmities of age, till at length, nourished and perfected by every vicissitude of sunshine and storm, it should be transplanted in renewed holiness and beauty to another and a better world.

Marion's character was rapidly matured and developed by her intercourse with Mr. Granville, who raised in her ardent mind the most enthusiastic interest; and while with timid pleasure, but increasing confidence, she joined in the conversation, her voice dwelt on his ear long after she ceased to speak, her looks were imprinted on his memory in his most solitary hours, and to Marion a new degree of interest and of happiness had suddenly become known, when with a vivid blush, and a beaming smile of pleased emotion, day after day, she thought over all that had passed, though ignorant yet of the extent to which her heart and feelings were already engaged. How much of life's most interesting emotions now passed through her mind during a few weeks, the heart of Marion alone could testify; while the attachment of Mr. Granville was concealed from common observation, to be only the more ardently testified towards herself; and their happiness being the result of no precipitate impulse, they became attracted together by that love of excellence, which is the only permanent source of mutual attachment.

Marion's mind had always a propensity to admire, and whether in nature or in art, she found it more congenial to her feelings ever to seek for beauties rather than defects, therefore now she was delighted to associate with one who not only appreciated everything as she did, but pointed out unexpected excellencies in all the objects of animated nature, in all the books she read, and even in many of the companions with whom she associated. With Richard and Clara she first visited the abodes of poverty; and in attending to the sufferings and sorrows of others, she saw that Miss Granville found the best relief from a depression of spirits, under which Marion could not but see with surprise and regret, that her friend had recently suffered. Clara's piety was testified in deeds much more than in words, for good actions she evidently considered as the necessary embellishments of that holy faith which alone can render any mortal acceptable in the eyes of his Divine Maker, while salvation by the cross of Christ is the pivot on which all depends—the crowning stone to the arch, giving stability and grace to the whole fabric of Christian hope.

Miss Granville gave not only her time and money, but her feelings and sympathies to the poor; while it evidently cheered her very heart when she could do a kind action; and though ever ready, heartily and gratefully, to acknowledge the Divine goodness to herself, whether in joy or in sorrow, yet nothing appeared so keenly to stir up her gratitude as any opportunity allowed her of doing a benevolent or a friendly action, as she considered that the knowledge of religion, without active exertion, testifying our love to God by our love to our fellow-creatures, was worse than useless. "The most depraved of sinners," as Mr. Granville said, "could repeat the creed, but a Christian only can believe and follow it like Clara."

> Graceful and useful in all she does,
> Blessing and blest wher'er she goes.

Marion, on returning one day over the hills and through the fields, with Mr. Granville and Clara, from a tour of interesting visits to the abodes of chilling poverty and agonised wretchedness, such as she had never even imagined, could not but contrast the smiling aspect of nature in all the sunny joy and verdure of spring, with the mournful lot of man as she had so recently witnessed it.

"How strange," said she, "to take a bird's-eye view, as we do this evening, of that great city, all glittering in sunshine, and every window illuminated with a flood of light, as if nothing but festivity and joy were there, and yet to know what a world of anxiety, and fear, and pain, and sorrow, are all fermenting within its walls! Silent as the whole scene appears, yet, for every window we can look upon, there is probably some living being full of schemes, hopes, and fevered wishes, dissatisfied with his own lot, and envying that of another! What an awful world this is to be born into, when, amidst its many pleasures and its many beauties, we yet consider all its solemn responsibilities and fearful trials!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Granville, in that voice, the deep melody of which was like no other voice, "we are placed here in a great theatre; and while, as interested spectators, we admire the decorations, let us remember, in respect to the actors, that nothing is either ours or theirs, but each has his part to perform, for which he is responsible, and all shall then be swept away to take an abiding place, according as we are fitted for it, in that real and unchangeable scene for which here we are only rehearsing our parts. If actors on the stage were to become actually and permanently for life, the great characters they represent, provided only they supported the part well for a night, the stake would be nothing in proportion to what a Christian shall gain if grace be given him to fulfill his allotted part in this short and transitory life, which is but a final rehearsal for eternity."

"Very true," said Clara; "this world is a mere preparatory school, where, like wayward children, we become surprised and irritated at the slightest correction, being most unwilling to acknowledge that it is either required or deserved."

"Yet," added Mr. Granville, "nothing brings out the best qualities of man like suffering. It is a hard rub given to gold, which becomes only the brighter; and I often think how much interest and dignity is bestowed on every event of our short lives, by thinking that we are trained and disciplined as a part of a mighty plan which has been going systematically on from the beginning of time, and must be continued to the very end."

"As you observed yesterday," replied Clara, "we are woven into the web of human life which is passing on daily into eternity, carrying us along on its surface with irresistible speed. We have no choice allowed either in coming into the world, or in going out of it; but the existence thus given to us leads on to an eternity of joy or of insufferable misery, according to the state of preparation in which we are found at last. It often occurs to me, as a solemn reflection, that the two principles of good and evil are, as long as we live, to continue at war in our minds, but that, like fire and water, one of these will finally extinguish the other, and that, when death overtakes us, we shall then become either entirely holy or entirely reprobate."

"It is a solemn truth," said Mr. Granville, with his usual tranquil dignity of manner. "The tide of this world's history rolls on, while generation after generation, like the successive billows on a troubled ocean, rises and swells into momentary importance, till it be dashed in pieces and followed by another; but one great Omnipotent power directs the whole, and watches over each insignificant atom as it is hurried along. He, by whom the very hairs of our head are numbered, ordains for our good and for His glory, all events and circumstances, whether great or small; and if our wills are implicitly conformed to His, we shall see the trifles of this life through a blaze of religious light, which will display us their importance as a means of attaining good, but their insignificance if pursued as an end."

"Even now," observed Clara, "the very occupations and habits essential to a Christian life, in themselves confer a degree of happiness which the world cannot give, and does not know—a faint but pleasing emblem of what is promised in a better state."

"It appears to me," said Mr. Granville, "that those who live for mere amusement, are no wiser than if they embarked for a voyage round the world, in a little pleasure-boat, dancing lightly on the billows, with its white and flowing sails glittering in the sunbeams, rather than in a strong and sturdy vessel, cutting its dignified way with deep, steady and undeviating course, in gladness and in safety, through tempest or calm, whether the breeze be adverse or favorable. Life is one long struggle, where the Christian must learn to hate much that he naturally loves, and to love much that he naturally hates, continually steering his course against nature, to advance in grace."

"I have heard it said," observed Marion, "that Paris is the place, of all others, where men can most easily do without happiness, because if any one can entirely forget himself in mere pleasure, it is there."

"How often have I pitied those who squandered their years abroad on an aimless, amusement-seeking life," said Clara. "What a weight of *ennui* they must endure! What a sense of utter worthlessness they must feel! A fever of delirious pleasure is probably the best they occasionally enjoy! I have sometimes been astonished lately, when in confidential conversation with the gayest, and apparently the happiest of my companions, to find that they were actually laboring under the deepest depression of spirits."

"You need never be surprised by such discoveries, for I meet with them continually in my clerical visitations," replied Mr. Granville. "The bright sun above our heads was not created to look down on scenes of merely selfish enjoyment. It cannot be; and if a thermometer could visibly display the relative degree of cheerfulness enjoyed through life by the slave of amusement, who consults only the impulse of his own passions, or the servant of God who obeys the dictate of reason and revelation, how astonished most men would be at the measureless disparity of actual felicity. The one wrapped up in selfishness, yet anxious to escape amidst a wild uproar of amusement, from his own thoughts; the other retiring often, voluntarily, to the companionship of his reflections, while his heart expands to embrace the true interests of all mankind; the one rich in everything but real happiness; the other poor, perhaps, in respect to wealth, but yet possessing great riches."

"I am more and more convinced every day," said Clara, "that no living creature has a sufficient portion of happiness for himself, unless he shares that of others, while imparting his own; and that no kind of traffic brings so large a return to all parties, as that of giving and receiving the sympathy and good offices of Christian kindness. It is twice, or rather thrice blessed!"

"I often think," said Marion, "if we could step into the chamber of any person's mind, and look around us there, how astonishing it would be to survey even that of our most intimate friend! Many would appear large and spacious, bright, well furnished, and in good order; while others that make a tolerable appearance in society, because they need only show a few samples in the window, would turn out to be filled with rubbish, narrow, gloomy, and disordered."

"Some minds," replied Mr. Granville, "resemble a show-house laid out for display, where strangers are brought to envy, admire, and exclaim; but home-feelings are the real ornaments of life, which I covet for myself, and for those who are dearer to me than myself."

"It would be curious," observed Clara, smiling, "if every human being might choose the sort of happiness which, in a future life, he wishes to enjoy! There would be a strange diversity of inclination! I suppose a foxhunter, who now finds his best enjoyment in riding six hours a-day, would then bespeak a horse which was never, in a long course of ages, to tire, accompanied by a fox ready to be killed every three hours. A gourmand would ask for a perpetual dinner, and a perpetual appetite; and Captain De Crespigny would wish for a continual succession of young ladies, all living on his attentions, and dying of broken hearts when he disappointed them."

"Only ask yourself in respect to any earthly pleasure, if you would wish it to be continued for ever, and that will convince you more than anything, Clara, that this world is not our home," said Mr. Granville. "There is never a moment of our lives in which we could hear with any satisfaction that what we then enjoyed was to continue throughout eternity. No! there is a mighty vacuum in our souls, which can only be filled by that which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' and which it hath not entered into the heart of man yet to conceive."

There is a free-masonry,—a sort of electrical connection between those who suffer and those who sympathise. It was evident to Marion that, beneath the look of calm, deep, and chastened composure, which might be traced in the large lustrous eyes of Clara Granville, there was the heavy aspect of one who had suffered, as well as thought much. The high arched forehead, in which the meanderings of the smallest blue vein was visible, and the ethereal transparency of her alabaster cheek, gave an almost poetical, but very melancholy expression to her countenance, and there was a subdued tenderness in her voice and manner, most touching to the heart.

She seemed like a lily blighted in the storm, and often did Marion wonder what that sorrow could be, which shunned all notice, and seemed to bury itself beneath a multitude of thoughts and occupations for the good of others.

Once, and only once, Marion observed an alteration in the settled composure of Clara's manner, the occasion of which caused her considerable surprise. Hitherto, when she inadvertently mentioned Sir Patrick, the Granvilles insensibly changed the subject almost immediately, but without the slightest appearance of dislike or resentment, while Marion could not but silently blame her own forgetfulness of her brother's conduct to Mr. Granville, which she thought might well render his name unacceptable in their family circle. One day, however, her eyes were accidentally fixed on Clara, when she mentioned that Sir Patrick had escorted her to the chapel door on the previous Sunday, and seemed more than half inclined to enter, but had suddenly

burst away in a most unaccountable paroxysm, and hurried out of sight.

A deep and sudden blush overspread the pale cheek of Miss Granville, who hastily looked up, and meeting Marion's eyes, the color rushed in torrents over her face, arms, and neck, and her long eye-lashes became heavy with tears, while her emotion growing evidently uncontrollable, she threw down her work, and glided out of the room.

"Clara dislikes him for his rapacious conduct to Mr. Granville. Why can I never learn to avoid Patrick's unlucky name," thought Marion. "It comes in *a propos* to everything or to nothing. I am unaccustomed to think before I speak, but this will make me remember to forget him in future. I could not have believed that Clara would feel that affair so very acutely."

Marion's thoughts now reverted with some anxiety to her brother and sister. They were either ignorant of her renewed intimacy with the Granvilles, or indifferent to it, but which might turn out to be the case, however important to her own happiness, she scarcely dared to investigate, and day after day passed on finding her almost domesticated with her newly-restored friend, and scarcely missed apparently by Agnes. Marion was truth itself, and would have abhorred any clandestine engagements, but after having mentioned the first few times that she was going to call on Clara, the intimation being received by her brother and sister in solemn silence, she thought it unnecessary to make a repetition of the announcement; yet, as her feelings became more deeply and engrossingly interested, her anxiety became the greater to know what Sir Patrick might say or think on the occasion; and to Marion's experience it became true as to that of the poet,

"Love's first step is on a rose; the second finds a thorn."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It is the greatest height of wisdom to be happy, but the happiest periods of existence are the most difficult to describe; and from this time forth, within the domestic circle of Mr. Granville, Marion was introduced into a scene of such refined and intellectual enjoyment, that it seemed to her as if she had hitherto beheld the picture of life, painted only by some inferior artist, coarsely daubed over with glaring hues, and vulgarly discolored; but it now appeared to her in all the graceful symmetry, subdued harmony, and exquisite coloring of a great master.

Marion's natural taste had revolted from the mean, reckless, exaggerated caricatures of happiness, which had been exhibited to her in Sir Patrick's riotous revellings, and in her sister's feverish excitement; while Agnes wasted her heart and feelings in building up romances for herself, very much in the Minerva press and Adela-de-Montmorency school; but now the morality appeared in all its true fascination and inestimable worth to Marion, when she saw real felicity formed upon that divine model, which she had before imagined, but never seen.

While sharing the pure joys and peaceful happiness of Clara and Richard, scarcely a thought of Marion's heart remained unspoken, except her secret and increasing consciousness of the wide disparity between that home, where she found nothing but a heartless desolation or neglect of her best feelings, and the beautiful exemplification of domestic felicity to which she had now been introduced. Every occupation or amusement in which she engaged with her friends, became enhanced in pleasure and importance, by the consciousness, that beyond the mere gratification of the moment, it was consecrated to a higher and better aim; that it might be remembered hereafter without remorse, and that it was but a link in the bright chain of eternal happiness for which they were all preparing, and which they expected all to enjoy together, by the light of that sun which never sets, but shines beyond the grave.

The Christian friendship of a brother and sister for each other, is perhaps the purest and happiest of all earthly attachments, for there is not an hour of life from childhood to old age, in which they have not experienced the same joys and the same sorrows, known every vicissitude of existence together, acquired the same habits, wept for the same sorrows, rejoiced in the same prosperity, and cherished the same hopes. The affection of Clara and Richard was not the transient union of two individuals thrown together by the accident of birth, united by mere instinct, living in contact for convenience, and expecting to be finally separated by death; but it was the deep, strong, heart-felt attachment of a Christian family, linked together for mutual support in sunshine or shadow, tenderly to assist each other along the difficult path of life, happy in the blessings that were given them now, and happier still in the expectation of those yet to come in that "new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

As Mr. Granville's character became more known to Marion, and the interest with which he listened to her thoughts and feelings perceptibly increased, she could not but secretly indulge sometimes in the thought, presumptuous though it seemed to herself, how different life might yet become, if the preference already so obviously testified were by any "strange impossibility" to increase, till he became allied, to her by the strictest tie of perpetual friendship, and their lives and affections were mingled into one. Marion's young heart glowed with emotion when she thought how her feelings would all then be understood, her affections appreciated, her happiness cared for, and every trivial incident of her life rendered doubly important, because it belonged to another as well as to herself—to one who would share all her thoughts, direct all her actions, and mingle with every Christian motive to exertion, the desire to please him in her own happy home.

The attachment of Agnes for Captain De Crespigny was like that of a child for its rattle, compared with the ennobling sentiment of which Marion's heart was capable, for there a mine of undiscovered affections lay buried and unknown, while every deeper emotion had hitherto been repelled or neglected by all around, except her uncle, and she could not but tremble to think, if her affections were ever warmed into life by reciprocal attachment, how inconceivable must be the misery or the happiness which would ensue. She indulged in no fallacious expectations of life, no romantic dreams of never-ending happiness and never-dying love, which originate in unreasonable expectation, and too certainly end in bitter disappointment; but, to be the object of Mr. Granville's unchangeable confidence and affection, his companion in sickness as much as in health, the sharer of his sorrows as well as his joys, a participator in all his duties, and, most of all, to testify her gratitude for his preference, by devoted attachment on her own part, not bounded within the perishable limits of a mere earthly tie—these were the silent, unspoken wishes of Marion, which glanced through her mind often, as she hurried home, late and unwillingly, to St. John's Lodge, and which caused her bright eye to beam with additional lustre, or brought the color in a richer carnation to her cheek.

Events always happen when least expected, and if there be a day in life when any one in this world of change can feel peculiarly certain that nothing remarkable shall occur, that is probably the period when the most remarkable events take place. Marion had gone with Clara and her brother to spend a quiet day among the romantic glens of Roslin, when, finding herself alone with Mr. Granville, in one of the most beautiful parts of the rocky glen, she was suddenly astonished by his making her, with manly frankness, and yet evident diffidence, an explicit declaration of his attachment. He said, on the occasion, all that could be said by such a man, with the eloquence of deep emotion; and, encouraged by the timid pleasure with which Marion evidently listened to his words, Mr. Granville laid open the whole depths of a heart in which all that was ennobling in nature had become embellished by all the purifying influences of religion, while she, with tears and blushes, heard thus unexpectedly what promised her the utmost sum of human felicity, and she attempted not to conceal how highly, beyond all expression, she appreciated his preference and attachment.

There is a language of the heart which words cannot express,—thoughts, feelings, and affections too deep to be told, but revealed only in the eyes and voice, when with sincerity of emotion, such as Mr. Granville's, a long concealed attachment is at last declared.

"I have asked myself a thousand times whether I could make you happy, and if I believed," said he, "that there lived a man upon the earth who could love you more, or make you happier than myself, I would endeavor to resign all hope; but I know the lasting nature of my attachment, which time itself cannot alter, nor death finally extinguish; and if such affection as mine, with nothing else to offer, can make you happy, it will be a new motive to exertion on my part, and a new source of thankfulness to the Divine Giver of all good. Your brother knows better than most men the pecuniary embarrassment in which a long-continued law-suit has plunged me, and that my future income may not perhaps be large, but consult him,—and my very dear Marion, as I must for once be allowed to call you, consult your own wishes and your happiness. Before giving me a final answer, take some days to consider——"

"Not an hour,—or a moment," replied Marion, frankly, but with a faltering voice and glistening eye, while a vivid blush dyed her cheek, "I need only consider whether my own heart be worthy of you! I have thought sometimes,—I have dreamed of such happiness as ours shall be, but little did I hope ever to see it more than realized now!"

Love is with lovers an endless subject, and hours appeared like moments, while they conversed together on the past and the future with new feelings of confidence and joy, and the whole beautiful scenery around seemed as it were haunted by the spirit of thought and of enjoyment, while it was with a thrilling emotion of deep gratification that Marion now felt undoubtingly conscious that she had become indeed an object of preference to Mr. Granville, that she would be thought of always by one whom she could never forget, that she knew the whole story of his heart and affections, and that these were devoted,—ardently devoted to herself; and now resolutely discarding every apprehension of future difficulties or sorrows, all around took the color of her happiness, and she lived only in the joy of the present hour. Nothing required concealment between them, and it seemed the sole object of both to open up the most secret recesses of their minds, comparing opinions and feelings, while before long it appeared strange to Marion that a time had ever existed when their hearts were unknown to each other. No caprices, no misunderstandings, no jealousies could arise between them, for there seemed to be but one heart and one mind in common, from the moment when Marion whispered her confession, that their attachment was reciprocal.

> Oh! there are looks and tones that dart,
> An instant sunshine through the heart,
> As if the soul that minute caught,
> Some treasure it through life had sought.

At length they were warned to return homewards, by the golden light of a setting sun, which yet looked in glowing majesty over the distant hills, and sprinkled its glory on the highest tops of the trees, till they were tipped with fire; but Marion paused, in delighted admiration, on the centre of a rustic fairy-bridge, like a spider's web, thrown across the narrowest and deepest part of the swollen stream. Among rock and moss, tufted with weeping birch, the overhanging cliffs here formed themselves into two sides of a natural arch, in which nature had apparently omitted the key-stone, though art had supplied the deficiency, by a slight bridge, underneath which the sparkling waters boiled and thundered on with bewildering rapidity, like a stream of light, bounding and leaping, with a clamorous brawling uproar, along the rocky channel, and disappearing behind a bold promontory, over-grown with

tall pines, and twisted with the knotted and gnarled roots of many an ancient oak.

The country seemed indeed clothed with a prodigality of beauty—the wild confusion of rocks—the feathered branches of a hundred trees—the sparkling sunbeams, sprinkled like scattered leaf-gold on every object—the shadows interlaced upon the verdant grass—the yellow broom, glowing with its sunny hues—the groups of well-conditioned cattle ruminating on the meadows—and the stream, now murmuring in wild music over its rocky bed, and dimpling into smiles beneath the sunshine, while the mind and conversation of Mr. Granville travelled into the highest regions of thought, and Marion compared the bright gay aspect of all around to her own happy feelings.

"It is a pleasure to think," said Marion with animation, "that the poorest and most destitute of human beings might enjoy the beauties of nature as we do now, and all the pleasures, too, of confidence and affection, if they but knew how to value them. God gives all that is most precious to his creatures in common; and how little of our real happiness in life is derived from the mere vulgar display of wealth, equipages, jewels, and external splendor. It is not the materials of our happiness which are so important, as the way in which we build up the fabric."

"I have sometimes been ready to regret," answered Mr. Granville, "that in offering you my hand and fortune, I offer you so little; but I never desired wealth for myself. No man living cares less for luxury; and we may trust that my devoted affection shall succeed in shielding you from the thousand inconveniencies of a very limited income."

"It is the heart I value," whispered Marion. "With all my faults, the love of money never was one. We shall be rich in happiness, and in all that Providence gives to the most favored of those who trust in Him."

"Yes! such mutual confidence as ours, with Christian contentment and cheerfulness, are the real elixir of happiness," replied Mr. Granville. "It is by closing our eyes against the pure enjoyments prepared for us by the God of nature, and opening them to the artificial wants invented by man, that we lose all the simplicity, and most of the real felicity of life. One can scarcely wonder, in a scene like this, that many Christians think this beautiful earth, in a purified state, shall hereafter become the place of our eternal happiness; but wherever the presence of God is, that, and that only will constitute heaven."

"And who could wish for more?" said Marion. "That should in itself excite all our gratitude and joy."

"Yet this noisy turbulent stream, rushing wildly past in its angry career, is like the troubled course of human wishes, thoughts, and speculations, with which we are continually disturbing that calm, unruffled state, in which our minds would best reflect the light of heaven," answered Mr. Granville. "No one ever had a plummet long enough to measure the depth of that love to man, which has placed us as probationers in our sin-blighted world; and even if we had no futurity of glory promised us, and were finally to perish at death, we have cause to be thankful for seeing so much natural beauty, and so much intellectual enjoyment, while permitted to remain here."

"Yes!" replied Marion, "considering that we have forfeited every blessing, I think any man who has enjoyed life as he ought to, might give a receipt in full, as having received a thousand mercies to which he had no claim."

"But who can imagine the magnificent expansion of mind hereafter, when the whole scheme of nature, of providence, and of grace, shall be fully revealed, and our capacities enlarged, to comprehend and appreciate the mighty plan," continued Mr. Granville. "Now, even the wisest and best of Christians must be satisfied with the intelligent ignorance of knowing that he knows nothing; for even angels, travelling on the wings of thought for thousands of years, cannot yet understand the whole counsel of God; but our present business is to study and practise here the temper and manners of that celestial city in which we hope hereafter to reside, that our attachment, begun indeed now upon earth, may be blessed and perpetuated throughout eternity."

C'est bien d'etre avec les gens qu'on aime—leur parler, ne leur parler pas. The eye of Mr. Granville now gazed in delighted admiration on the whole circumference of earth and sky, with a keen perception of their beauties, and an intelligent recollection that while the eternal sky and the decaying earth form an apt emblem of soul and body, all the works of nature may be brought beautifully to exemplify the works of grace. Marion and he long stood still together in that companionable silence, which became so soothing and delightful to their spirits, that neither seemed willing to break the spell.

Both Marion and Mr. Granville delighted in devoutly contemplating the glories of creation—nature's system of divinity—those "elder Scriptures writ by God's own hand"—the majestic display of Almighty wisdom, power, and goodness, in the grand theatre of human life, as well as in the minutest events of their own existence.

> This is religion—not unreal dreams,
> Enthusiastic raptures, and seraphic gleams;
> But Faith's calm triumph—Reason's steady sway—
> Not the bright lightning but the perfect day.

Thus musing together, in silent, speechless happiness, Mr. Granville was suddenly roused, by observing a young lady approach with agitated and disordered steps, leaning on the arm of a more elderly female, and walking at a pace of such unusual rapidity, that it almost amounted to running. They both glanced frequently and hurriedly behind, as if under great alarm, while so remarkable an expression of terror was evident in all their looks and movements, that Mr. Granville, without a moment's hesitation, stepped forward, and courteously volunteered his services, while Marion with delighted astonishment, recognised her friend and companion, Caroline Smythe.

"You seem alarmed! Allow me to offer my assistance!" said Mr. Granville. "Shall we accompany you?"

"No! no! I am safest alone!" gasped the younger lady, in accents of wild alarm. "He carries pistols! He is perfectly insane! Stop him if you can! Oh! stop him! Do not let him follow! Direct him wrong! Do anything! Try, if you possibly can, to detain him!"

Mr. Granville glanced swiftly round, and observed, with surprise, not far from the bridge, and turning the sharp corner of a projecting rock, the figure of a tall, powerful young man, of rather gentleman-like appearance, wrapped up to the chin in a large cloak, who instantly, on perceiving strangers, muffled his face closely in his handkerchief, and drew down his hat, but approached with rapid strides and violent gesticulations, apparently speaking to himself, and muttering curses with terrifying vehemence. Not a moment was lost in hesitation, before Marion assisted the elder lady in supporting Caroline onwards, who evidently suffered under a mortal terror, while they rapidly dragged her across the fragile bridge, on which Marion and Richard had so lately enjoyed some brief and happy moments.

Mr. Granville, in the mean time, approached the stranger so as to stand directly in his path, and necessarily to impede his progress, while he steadily fixed his gaze upon the blazing eye of the madman with a calm and commanding look, which testified an unflinching determination to obstruct his onward career, and a steady resolution not to be intimidated by the air of scowling defiance with which he was met.

"Stand back!" exclaimed the stranger, in a tone of maniacal fury. "Life and death are at stake! stand back! delay me one moment, and you die!"

"Is the bridge secure?" asked Mr. Granville, catching hold of the madman's arm when he was rushing past, and instantly stooping down as if to examine the foundation, when, by a powerful effort of strength, he suddenly hurled the whole fabric into the eddying stream, which washed the shattered fragments in a moment out of sight.

With a cry of almost fiendish rage, and setting his teeth till it seemed as if they would be ground to powder, the maniac sprang like a tiger on Mr. Granville, and would have collared him; but with great agility he eluded the madman's grasp, and fixed his eyes with an expression of stern resolution upon his frantic antagonist, till his face cowered beneath that steady gaze, when he said in a calm, slow, resolute accent,

"Those ladies shall pass on unmolested. It is base and cowardly to terrify timid females whom we are bound with our very lives to protect. Go back as you came, and beware of touching them or me."

A wild and hideous laugh was the maniac's only reply, and his eyes gleamed more and more fiercely, while he gnawed his lip with rage, but at length suddenly bursting with irresistible fury past Mr. Granville, he took a long, quick run to where the bridge had formerly stood, and instantly, with a single bound of marvellous agility, leaped across. Richard Granville was for half a moment bewildered with astonishment at this unexpected achievement, and saw with consternation and dismay that it would be vain to attempt impeding the infuriated maniac, who turned a deaf ear to his loudly vociferated remonstrance, and deliberately fired a pistol in the air, while he held up another in a menacing attitude towards Mr. Granville, and then replacing the deadly weapon in his breast, he hastily disappeared along the same path which had been so recently pursued by the ladies.

Richard, heedless of any danger to himself, became now most seriously alarmed for the safety of Marion and her companions, therefore he delayed not an instant to scramble across the stream where it was fordable, and to follow at his utmost speed. In the impetuosity of Mr. Granville's career, the ground receded beneath his feet, and as he rushed onward a band of iron seemed to restrain his breath, for the road became steeper and more solitary, while long grass and weeds had grown over the wheel tracks, and the way was impeded by wild straggling hedges, which threw their sprays of brier and thorn almost entirely across the way. At length meeting a couple of countrymen, he hurriedly explained his apprehensions, when they mentioned having met a strange, wild-looking man, proceeding with long strides in an opposite direction. To Mr. Granville's great relief, however, they seemed to think that no ladies could have gone in that way, and after prevailing on the two laborers, with a bribe, to assist him in capturing the maniac, he resolutely and fearlessly pursued his course.

Marion, meantime, had accompanied the two ladies in their most unexpected flight through the forest, at a pace which precluded the possibility of speaking, except that now and then an ejaculation of terror, or an expression of fervent thankfulness was wrung from them when they glanced around, giving a fearful idea of instant danger. Caroline's pallid lips were parted, her eyes straining forward with impatient apprehension, and every limb nerved for exertion, while she silently pursued her way, though her feet seemed to herself as if they had become lead, in her vehement efforts to fly onwards; and the countenance of her aunt expressed scarcely less terror.

Without speaking, Marion did all in her power to accelerate their progress, but at length Caroline's footsteps faltered, her eye became dim, and she staggered back, faint with fatigue, seeing which Marion silently pointed to a large empty barn which stood beside the road, and having supported her within the door, Caroline fell helplessly on the floor, covering her face with her hands, and trembling visibly in every limb.

Marion brought water, rubbed Caroline's temples, and tried by every means to soothe her with the hope of being safe, but in vain—her tongue grew parched, her eyes became glassy, her features almost livid, and she faintly pointed towards the door, which Marion barricaded to the best of her ability. Caroline threw herself back on a heap of straw, and covered her face with her hands in a helpless agony of fear. Several minutes afterwards elapsed in breathless silence on the part of Marion and Mrs. Smythe, when Caroline at length started up, eager to pursue her course towards the nearest village, now scarcely a mile off, while her companions earnestly entreated her to rest rather, and compose herself.

"He has lost the track! he cannot be following us now," said Marion, in accents of trembling alarm, the agitated tone of which belied her words, while an icy chill had crept through her veins. "Let us rest here, we are safe now! He will hurry past! He will not think of searching for us in this place!"

"He will! he will! when the fit is on nothing escapes him," replied Caroline, who felt a choking sensation in her throat which impeded her utterance. "Oh! think of the fearful past! that dreadful night when he first became insane! Why did I believe him when he promised never to terrify me more! a horrid dread is upon me! a strange ringing in my ears! a weight of lead upon my heart!"

"How wonderful that he never can be traced! that he always finds us out! that if there ever be a moment when we feel peculiarly safe from his presence, he comes!" whispered Mrs. Smythe, in an under tone, as if afraid that the very walls might re-echo her words. "We must leave this neighborhood, we must take new precautions till he can be found and shut up."

Before Caroline could utter the affirmative, which trembled on her lips, her eyes became stony with a look of sudden fear, her hands were faintly clasped together, her parched and livid lips were parted, and with a half uttered shriek she threw herself behind Marion, riveting her arms closely round her waist, when, the next minute, a window of the barn was dashed in with a violence which nothing could resist, and the maniac, giving a wild cry of malignant triumph, began to clamber in, clinging to the window-sill with his long bony fingers, while concealing his face, so that nothing could be seen but his eyes, which burned like living coals.

"You have deceived me once, but you shall deceive me no more!" said he, in hoarse, deep accents, and with a ghastly look, while the terrified girl seemed to wither beneath his glance. "I cannot breathe while you live! I have shed blood before now, and none can tell who did it! You may call, but there are none to help—you may weep, but I cannot pity—you may fly, but there is no escape! My heart is turned to stone! My blood is liquid fire! Strange figures are gibbering behind me! Unearthly voices are whispering in my ear! I will do it! Yes! when I stand on the scaffold to be executed I shall not be nearer death than you are at this moment."

Marion, conscious that the madman's fury was not directed at herself, and feeling the courage which arises from desperation, resolved, at whatever cost, at least to delay, if possible, any catastrophe which she might not be able finally to prevent, and anxious, even for an instant, to take the maniac's eye off the trembling girl beside her, she now walked resolutely forward to the window, though trembling as much as if she were about to throw herself beside a wild beast in his cage. Her teeth chattered with terror, and the words seemed to stiffen in her throat as she uttered them, but still she persevered, saying in a gentle, soothing accent:

"You are a gentleman, and cannot want money! What would you have? Who has injured you? Tell me why you pursue us? Think for one moment how many years you have to live, and how miserable you may be for ever, if you do a rash act now! Pause and consider, for the curse of God and man will be upon you!"

The madman gazed for an instant at the pale countenance of Marion, every feature in which quivered with emotion; he seemed almost ashamed of his own fearful violence, and was about, in a calmer tone, to reply, when the barn door was suddenly burst open by the two countrymen, who entered with Mr. Granville.

"He shall die!" muttered the maniac between his clenched teeth, "Both! all! all! The power of life and death is here!"

Marion heard a sound of terror close beside her—it was a click, as of a pistol being cocked, the muzzle of which was directed towards Mr. Granville, while the maniac deliberately took his aim; but with a sudden impulse of desperation, she threw her arm upwards, and struck the fatal weapon, which instantly went off with a report that stunned her senses.

Nearly blinded by the shock, Marion staggered backwards as if about to fall, yet strained her eyes, in speechless agony, to ascertain if Mr. Granville were saved. There was blood upon his cheek, but he rushed forward at once, and pinioned the madman's arms within his own, while the two countrymen assisted; and after a severe scuttle, the maniac, perfectly mastered, lay panting on the floor, while he glared on Mr. Granville with a frown of baffled malignity, uttering execrations both loud and deep, so dreadful to hear, that Marion's heart quailed within her at their awful import, though unable to look round, while occupied in applying restoratives to Caroline, who had sunk, with a heavy groan, perfectly insensible on the floor.

After more than ten minutes, during which not a pulse could be felt, Caroline was carried into the air by Mr. Granville, when the wind, playing on her cheek, brought on a gradual restoration to life—a slight fluttering was perceived at her heart, a faint color tinged her cheek, and with a deep-drawn sigh and a bewildered look, she suddenly started up, as if about to renew her flight.

"Dear Caroline!" said Marion, calmly, "all is safe! Do not agitate yourself. We have had, indeed, a wonderful escape."

Miss Smythe embraced Marion in a transport of joy and gratitude, after which she turned to Mr. Granville, uttering the warmest expression of her thanks, while he, with an evident desire to conclude a discussion obviously so agitating to the two ladies, proposed, after amply remunerating the two countrymen, his assistants, to hurry forward and send conveyances from the neighboring inn. With one anxious look at the pale, exhausted countenance of Marion, Mr. Granville hastily disappeared, meditating, as he hastened along, with deep interest on his recent adventure, and with pleasing emotion on the happy *eclaircissement* which had that morning taken place with Marion, binding them to each other by the strong ties of honor, principle, and affection.

Half an hour afterwards, Richard returned with two carriages, in one of which he placed the ladies, whom he met advancing along the road; but after proceeding forward with the other, to secure his prisoner, he was startled and astonished to discover that the maniac and his two keepers had entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Well! I do declare! some people have the most marvellous good fortune!" exclaimed Sir Patrick next morning turning to Marion, with a newspaper before him. "Here is an account of Granville—Richard Granville—being engaged in a splendid adventure. I might live for ever, and not meet with such a thing. He has rescued Miss Howard, the heiress, from that mad cousin who haunts her with some love-and-murder threats, and who will positively some day assassinate her, like the Miss Raes and Miss Shuckburghs of former times. These very good people, like Granville, who profess to be quite above the world, are all very fond of money. Ten to one, Granville marries Miss Howard in a month."

"So the young lady is to be murdered first, and married immediately afterwards!" said Marion, laughing to see her brother's impetuosity. "The heroine of that story is, after all, only my old school companion, Caroline Smythe. She has been persecuted by this man, she tells me, ever since her childhood, but now he must be put in confinement for life; and—and—as for Mr. Granville,—Patrick,—with your leave, I have a very private and particular reason for believing he is—previously engaged."

A brilliant blush mounted to Marion's temples, while her brother might have almost heard her trembling; but a smile of conscious happiness played round her mouth, while her long eyelashes drooped over her burning cheeks when she spoke these words in an accent of pleased but tremulous emotion; and Sir Patrick, after gazing in her countenance for a moment with an expression of angry perplexity, suddenly started on his feet, crumpling up the newspaper in his hand, with a fiery exclamation of rage, saying,

"Speak again, Marion; tell me what this means. The most uncommon thing in this world is a direct answer; but your blushes are like no other person's, for they betray everything. Girls, from the very beginning of time, have always found out the very last man on earth they ought to like, and live in a state of romantic misery till they can marry him. But it shall never be! I hate and detest Granville! He has injured me! He has caused all my recent sufferings. He shall feel what I have felt. I have the power now, and the will to be revenged. In his sacred profession he dare not and cannot marry you without my consent—and never! no never, shall he have it. Marion, you are a mere child yet! you do not know your own value, and would let yourself go at a mere pepper-corn rent! Granville would become a perfect beggar if he loses our law-suit. You ought to be offered the first match in Scotland."

"So I am," replied Marion, in a low and gentle voice. "Mr. Granville scarcely has his equal in the world."

"Pshaw! nonsense! I have other views for you! Marion, you have not an idea of the sensation you make. My friends are all raving about you. I never understood till now why you cared so little about any of them. Let Agnes look to her laurels, for I am in more than one secret already that would astonish her. Granville must be allowed to follow up his adventure with the heiress. Never mention his name to me again. You may depend upon it, in a month he will be ready and willing to marry Miss Howard."

"Let your consent depend upon Richard's constancy, and then I shall be secure," answered Marion, with a playful smile. "He shall be at liberty to change his mind on a moment's notice; but, in the mean time, Patrick, I have a great idea that he will continue always the same; and be assured that I certainly shall."

"Pshaw! nonsense, Marion! You never could be satisfied with the stupid sort of happiness to be found in a hum-drum parsonage. Give me no more of your love-in-a-cottage ideas, when I know you have a chance of—of, no matter who! somebody worth a dozen Mr. Granvilles, and who could buy him up a hundred times over."

"One Mr. Granville is quite enough," replied Marion, smiling. "If he were like the Emperor of China, cousin-german to the stars, and uncle to the moon, I could not think more of him. Riches are only to be valued for the use people make of them, but he is 'more bent to raise the wretched than to rise.' Very little is essential, Patrick, 'when humble happiness endears each scene;' and nothing more is indispensable to me than to be so loved by one who is deserving of my love in return. How much rather I would live with a poor man who is liberal, than with a rich man who is avaricious; and Richard's wealth, though not great, is furnished with wings to fly away on a thousand embassies of mercy and liberality."

"I wish mine had wings to come, instead of to go; but say what you will, it bores me to hear of Granville, he is so absurdly different from everybody else."

"So much the worse for everybody else," observed Marion, with a good-humored smile. "Is that the blackest count in your indictment?"

"And bad enough, too! I'm told there's not a garret nor a dingy cellar-full of misery in the city, where Granville is not upon visiting terms. He is a perfect Humane Society in himself. I daresay he will receive a public dinner and a piece of plate from the beggars at last."

"Let me entreat, Marion," said Agnes, who had entered during the discussion, "that you will not be running about with those Granvilles, in search of typhus fever or small-pox. You really ought to be fumigated every time you return from these houses, where the people are all dying of dirt."

"When Lady Towercliffe recommended her husband's old castle in the country to me once, for the shooting, she finished the catalogue of its many perfections, by saying, 'and we have such very pleasant beggars!" observed Sir Patrick, laughing. "I should certainly have been tempted to bag a few brace of them! The Irish fellow whom you may remember besetting my door so long in Edinburgh, without extracting a *sous*, came up to me lately, in the coolest manner imaginable, and said, 'you must find another beggar, Sir Patrick, for the situation here is not worth keeping!' I gave the rascal half a sovereign for his humor, and never saw his face again."

"It is all very well, if beggars find us out, to give a trifle, and so get rid of their importunity," said Agnes, in her most benevolent accent, "but the idea of setting out on a crusade to find them out, is rather too amusing. I am immensely charitable, however, in referring cases of distress to my friends, but benevolence is the most expensive of all virtues to set up for."

"Better do too much than too little," replied Marion. "We must not suppose every man in want is either a knave or a fool, and no remembrance will last so long in our minds as the good we have done, or left undone, for we gain the highest happiness to ourselves by dispensing it to others. Yesterday, Mr. Granville relieved a poor man from actual starvation, nearly ninety years old."

"Was he an orphan?" asked Sir Patrick, in a rallying tone. "What could the old fellow be doing in the world so long! but if I might be allowed to give an opinion, which I never do, it is, that you should avoid those dens of infection and filth."

"There is no absurd romance in their benevolence, and Clara is never permitted by her brother to visit anywhere, till he has personally ascertained that there is no contagion of either the scarlet, yellow, or typhus fever in the house," continued Marion; "but we accompanied him last week to see a poor woman who was in a darkened room, with her face muffled up, and yet I could not but fancy the tone of her voice familiar to me. I was on the point of telling her so when the door opened, and who should come in but my uncle's clerk, Mr. Howard, who seemed so caught! One seldom can know who are charitable and kind in this world, for I never suspected him of being a good Samaritan. He said it must have been a mistake about my ever having heard the poor creature's voice before, as to his certain knowledge she has been bedridden these ten years; therefore, Clara and I gave her all we could spare and came away. There was only one seat in the room, and nothing else but the naked walls!"

"How very indecent!" said Sir Patrick, taking up the newspapers, "those *pauvres honteuses* have a sad life of it! You will positively draw tears from my eyes!"

"Nothing will do that but a mouthful of mustard," replied Marion, with a brilliant smile. "It would be more to the purpose if I drew a shilling from your purse! You have no idea, Patrick, how many starving people there are in the very houses that you see from these windows!"

"Well, really! I wish everybody had £5,000 a year," observed Agnes, yawning. "If we could build an addition to the world it would be a great convenience! There certainly are too many of us!"

"That is a most original and interesting remark of yours!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, laughing. "We have certainly more cats than can kill mice. I did hear that it was very seriously debated at the Speculative Society lately whether the creation of the world had been on the whole an advantage to Ireland or not! How the question was decided I forgot to ask!"

"No doubt the existence of every living being must be an advantage, if rightly used," observed Marion, in a gentle, diffident voice, "but if not, then certainly it were better never to have been born."

"That is your last new importation of Granville-ism," said Agnes, satirically. "Well, I would much rather, Marion, that you took the typhus fever, than that you became a methodist!—Pray do not infect me with either the one or the other."

"There is always more contagion in what is evil than in what is good," replied Marion. "Fevers are infectious, but health is not. Most of the illness I have seen lately arises from bad food, or rather from no food at all."

"It occurs to me," said Sir Patrick, throwing down his newspaper, "that as all rivers are formed of drinkable water, it is most unlucky that the ground is not formed of eatable bread! What a world of trouble it would save about the corn laws!"

"But in such a case," replied Marion, laughing, "no man would work, and the stones on the road might have to break themselves!"

"If the weather, too, were permitted to be regulated by act of Parliament, how droll it would be to read a petition from the farmers of Mid-Lothian against the late excessive rains, or from the hackney coachmen against a long continuance of fine weather. How I should like to see the summer with which any one of my tenants would be satisfied!"

"Of course it is their business to complain, or you would increase their rents. If a farmer came to your factor in ecstacies with his crops, and wishing a renewal of his lease, what terms would satisfy you? We are all like buckets in a well—what raises one depresses another, *ainsi va le monde*."

CHAPTER XX.

Marion was no miser of happiness to hoard it all up for her own use, and most willingly would she have imparted a share of her present joyous feelings to Agnes, but in vain did she look for any encouragement to the frank, confiding, and sociable nature of her own disposition, from a sister who had no desire to share in the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of a disinterested attachment, such as she could neither understand nor approve.

"Perfect happiness and a hut in the country!" said Agnes, contemptuously, while the warm blood mantled into Marion's cheek, but instantly putting her features in order to look composed and indifferent, she turned the conversation to no particular subject.

Too happy to be silent, Marion next selected for her *confidante* the very last person upon earth whom it would have occurred to most young ladies to entrust with the progress of a love affair, while, from Sir Arthur, she received the deepest and most affectionate interest in return for all she told him, though he acted like a perfect incendiary, by adding fuel to the flame, inviting Mr. Granville to his house whenever he could come, and praising him whenever he departed.

With daily increasing solicitude, Marion's elderly confidant listened to all the simple romance of her thoughts and feelings, delighted with the overflow of a heart which had nothing to conceal. Neither overvaluing nor undervaluing the gifts of fortune, Sir Arthur felt unspeakable comfort in the belief that Marion would now be better protected and cared for through life, than could have been hoped, from the few years that remained to himself, or from the heedless indifference of her brother, who had never shown her much regard till now, when he testified his care in the way least acceptable to Marion, by an angry, resolute opposition to her marrying and settling, as he persisted in saying, "upon ninepence a-day."

The difficulty increased every week, of joining that happy circle where her most delightful hours had been passed, and a thousand impediments were now contrived by Sir Patrick to prevent Marion from visiting even at Sir Arthur's; while the young Baronet filled his house at St. John's Lodge with so many of his friends, that the Admiral laughingly observed one day, while he seemed possessed by the very spirit of raillery and good humor, "I think, Marion, your brother is actually laying siege to you now—or rather, it is turning into a blockade! I suppose he expects some of those half-witted blockheads fluttering about the house to eclipse Granville, which is of course extremely probable! Now, for the twentieth time to-day, let us discuss my nephew elect. He seems—rather amiable!"

"Seems! dear uncle Arthur! he is all that he seems, and a hundred times more! He is—need I say what he is?"

"No! no! I remember to have read novels long ago, and know all about it! Marion, you may well feel proud of being admired and beloved by one who is himself admired and beloved by all! I cannot think," added Sir Arthur, with a sly smile, "what in all the world Mr. Granville sees to fancy in you!"

"That is exactly what puzzles me! I often wonder why he likes me!"

"Because, I suppose, somehow or other, he cannot help it. Now, Marion, you have the worst of memories I know, for what Mr. Granville says; but do try if you can recollect a few of his last conversations to entertain me with. You will have so many lovers soon at St. John's Lodge, that it may perhaps become impossible to distinguish Granville from the rest, or one from another!"

"No! that can never be! Patrick's friends are scarcely my acquaintances, and not at all likely to become admirers. I feel and fully appreciate my own happiness now in being chosen and preferred by one whose thoughts and wishes are all such as my own may be ready and willing to echo—who can lead my thoughts upwards as well as onwards, whose attachment is founded on the purest sentiments—and, not the least of his attraction, dear uncle Arthur, who loves and honors you as I do!"

"Merely because I am your uncle! Depend upon it, all my great merits are eclipsed by that one! Well! I must put up with it, till he knows better! I need not send to the circulating libraries for a romance now, as there are so many to interest me at home!"

These words of Sir Arthur's referred not merely to the growing attachment of Richard and Marion, but Caroline Smythe, who was about soon to depart for England, had in the meantime become a constant and prominent member of the gay little circle at Seabeach Cottage, where her friends exerted their utmost endeavors to restore the tone of her nerves and spirits, which were still much affected by her recent alarm, and none succeeded so well in diverting her thoughts, and beguiling her time as the lively, animated Henry De Lancey, who became himself daily more entranced with the happiness of being in her society. His preference for Caroline was testified in the way most truly flattering, being more betrayed than professed, yet his whole heart was visible in every word and action, while he evidently became every day twenty times more deeply in love than at first, and the interesting countenance of Caroline grew more interesting from the additional depth of expression to be traced there. Sir Arthur, happy in the happiness of others, appeared to cast aside all care, while sunning himself in the joyous smiles of those who had so long been the dearest objects of his solicitude, and day after day the intimacy and mutual affection of all parties appeared to be riveted by fetters which never could be broken, though it sometimes crossed Marion's mind as a cause of surprise that Sir Arthur, who did nothing without reflection, should appear never once to apprehend the difficulty into which Henry's attachment would evidently plunge him.

There was something irresistible in the fascinations of young De Lancey's character, the warmth of which seemed as if it must have been nurtured beneath a brighter sun than that of others, while there was an irresistible captivation in his joyous, youthful aspect, his frank and graceful carriage. Mr. Granville, who had a genius for making society agreeable, as well as improving, treated him with the confidence and companionship of a brother, almost insensibly developing the graces of a heart fitted to awaken the deepest interest, and drawing forth a power of mind and character in Henry, of which he could scarcely before have deemed himself capable, while leading him often away from the common-place nothings of the passing hour, to the highest regions of thought and to the brightest aspirations after future distinction, after immortal wisdom and undying happiness.

"We must live and act for others," observed Mr. Granville one day in his usual tone of energetic animation. "The miser who collects useless hoards which are lost to him at death, is not more absurd in his vain pursuit, than the mere philosopher who lays up stores of knowledge to perish with himself. The good or the evil which may be done by the most insignificant individual both now and to generations yet unborn, is incalculable; and the only important question we can ask of ourselves, in which no other can be concerned, is, 'What shall I do to be saved?' That, each man must seek to ascertain for himself; and who would not say that the greatest fool on earth is he who forgets to ask it at all,—or who asks it with indifference!"

"I am more and more convinced," said Henry, "that religion is the greatest support in life, and the only one in death. On our hearts it is like the calm serene light given by the moon when she soars vividly along the heavens amidst clouds and darkness, pouring celestial light upon the earth in pure and holy splendor, beautiful and sublime, yet often how melancholy and solemnizing,

> 'Thoughts of immortal beauty spring to birth,
> And waft the soul beyond the dreams of earth.'"

Henry scarcely ventured to tell his own heart how deeply and engrossingly he had become attached to Caroline, while in secret he remembered every word or look which had endeared her to him, with a pleasure and emotion till now unknown, and which could not but be most painful in his solitary hours of reflection, when he considered the uncertain tenure of his own situation in life, and his ignorance respecting that of Miss Smythe, though he felt soothed and comforted by the consciousness, that to her he was evidently not indifferent, and that Sir Arthur either seemed blind to their increasing preference, or pleased to witness it.

Henry had seated himself one morning in a small ante-room, repairing his fishing tackle, and though voices became audible in the drawing-room, in animated conversation, he continued perfectly heedless of what was passing, till at length his own name, spoken in accents always dear to him, irresistibly enchained his attention. Sir Arthur was requesting Caroline to sing one of his favorite melodies, and she gayly resisted his entreaties, saying, in her liveliest accents, "No! no! wait patiently till the evening. That was copied for me by Mr. De Lancey, and I promised he should be present the first time it was performed. I can refuse you nothing, Sir Arthur, so I must seek safety by flight!"

Nodding and smiling, with one of her archest looks, Caroline tripped lightly into the room, where Henry sat, so shaded by the window-curtain, that he was perfectly invisible, when a moment afterwards she was followed by Mrs. Smythe, who said in an excited tone of angry remonstrance,

"Is there no end, Caroline, to this extraordinary intimacy of yours with young De Lancey! It really is becoming absurd! Sir Arthur is very much to blame in giving it any encouragement! A youth without prospects! without so much as a name!"

"With no seat in Parliament! no diplomatic appointment! no family living! no title!" pursued Caroline, laughing. "You know, my dear aunt, I never centered all good in birth and station!"

"Neither did I suppose you would dispense with both!" replied Mrs. Smythe, in a tone of increasing bitterness, and hurrying towards the door, evidently so irritated, that she dared not trust herself to remain. "Rather than have my niece united to a nameless outcast, living upon the bounty of Sir Arthur Dunbar, or of connections who are probably disgraced by his existence, I would prefer seeing you married to the Twopenny Postman, for he at least is independent, and has something."

A glow like fire rushed through Henry's frame at these words, and before Mrs. Smythe had closed the door, the hot blood seemed boiling in his veins with agonized shame and sorrow. Pale and red by turns, he leaned his head on his hands in solitary desolation, and quivered in every nerve with grief and self-reproach. The whole harvest of his happiness seemed blasted at a single breath; his mind was a wild chaos of conflicting emotions; and one only thought rose paramount to all, that he had been held up to ridicule and contempt, perhaps deservedly, in the eyes of that one beloved being, the object of his dearest, first, and only attachment, He wreathed his hands together, and bent his head in a tempest of emotion, while the whole rich treasure of his affections and hopes lay mouldered into rubbish at his feet; for he felt and knew that all Mrs. Smythe had said, was but too painfully true. A dark extinguisher had fallen over every earth-born wish. He felt that it had been unpardonable even to desire that the happiness of another should be linked with his uncertain fate; and he struggled long, though vainly, for composure, while contemplating the destruction of that one hope which had contained the sum of all his earthly wishes.

"I will yet deserve her or die!" thought Henry, overleaping impossibilities, or, with the sanguine feelings of a young and ardent mind, not even seeing them. "My pleasing dream has ended for the present; and how could I ever expect it should be otherwise! but I cannot and will not blot out from the picture of my future life, that form which embellished every hope of my existence! Days and nights of laborious exertion shall be as nothing, if I can but prove myself worthy of Caroline,—if I can but, at the remotest period of time, call her my own. Were it not for such a prospect I should become indifferent even to myself!"

Henry's musings were disturbed by a slight noise near him, and when, with a flashing eye, he started and looked up, the very object of all his thoughts, hopes, and regrets was beside him, and he beheld Caroline, her cheeks suffused with the deepest emotion, and her downcast eyelashes sparkling with tears, while in hurried accents of extreme agitation, she spoke to him almost inaudibly:

"Is it the affairs of the nation you are so deeply meditating on, Mr. De Lancey, or your own affairs?"

"My affairs!" exclaimed Henry, in a tone of deep depression, while his dark lustrous eyes became dim and glassy with emotion. "I have no affairs! a creature of charity,—of the most generous and noble-minded benevolence,—but still a dependent on the bounty of others! In your presence I could forget the mystery and bitterness of my lot,—but I forget it too much! I am not answerable for my feelings, but I am for my actions; and I must leave you for ever! I can never know the rapture of a requited attachment; but why should I not acknowledge the feelings of admiration that must be common to all in your presence. I am a nameless outcast; but pardon my folly and infatuation in having loved you, without a hope of return. My mother perished, as you know, under fearful circumstances; and who can tell whether my father may not have died like a felon! My worst enemy can say, or suspect nothing worse than I sometimes fear; and I deserve all I suffer for having one moment forgotten the dark mystery of my lot."

"You were here, then, Mr. De Lancey, some moments ago," said Caroline, in hurried accents! "You overheard all that my aunt so imprudently said! you! you!—you—what must you think!"

"I dare not trust my lips with the expression of half what I think and feel," replied Henry, in a low, deep, broken voice, and fixing his troubled eye on Caroline. "Let me speak for once to you on that subject which another began! Let me for once relieve my heart, by saying how entirely,—how unchangeably I love you. What bright visions of hope have flitted before my fancy, all blighted now for ever! I know the utter despair that ought to attend my attachment. Love, to others a blessing, must ever be to me a curse; yet I would rather love you without a hope of return, than gain the hearts of a thousand others. I neither ask nor expect encouragement; only believe and pity me! In the long absence which awaits me from home, let me be consoled by thinking, that I am not utterly despised and forgotten,—that when time and distance have separated us, I may still preserve a place in your memory, though not perhaps remembered, as I shall remember you."

Caroline listened with deep delight to this renewed confession of Henry's long-cherished attachment. It seemed as if she could have listened for ever, but was unable to reply during several minutes of agitated silence, till at length, with a strong effort, she said in faltering accents, yet with some of her usual vivacity—

"You said this once before, and I never forgot it. You were very dull not to read my heart long ago. If I felt less I could say more. Be constant for two long years, and we may be happy! I need then consult no one's wishes but my own. Sir Arthur knows all. He has been entrusted with my thoughts from the first moment, when you told me that—that our attachment was reciprocal!"

"Can it be!" exclaimed young De Lancey, in accents of the wildest joy, while, in a transport of emotion, he clasped her hand in his own, and those words were at last spoken between them, which pledged Henry and Caroline to each other for ever. "I am not then doomed to pass through life alone and uncared for. You will accept a heart that never has loved, and never can love another! I am now afraid only of being too happy! The tide of my whole existence is changed! The two years you bid me wait shall not be wasted. For your sake I shall strenuously seek to become the architect of my own fortunes, to throw off the trammels of obscurity, to carve out for myself a name which you shall not be ashamed to hear. The world is before me, where, with buoyant hopes and resolute will, surely I may achieve something, when my ardent aim and eager hope shall be to enjoy honor first, and love hereafter. For years I have not known a moment of solitude, as your image has been my perpetual companion, and now there is no futurity of life to either of us, in which we shall not both be interested, for, believe me, no one on earth was ever loved with greater depth and constancy of attachment than yourself."

The feelings of a lifetime are sometimes concentrated in a single hour, and so it was with Henry and Caroline, who talked of the past and of the future with buoyant hopes and entire affection, but not yet with an entire confidence; for it was evident that Miss Smythe, in speaking of her own connexions and prospects, became agitated and reserved, while she concluded the conversation abruptly, by saying,

"I shall feel proud and happy to think that the motive for all your exertions is derived from a generous and disinterested attachment to myself; and whether success or failure be the consequence, we shall at last share it together, for better or for worse. All real happiness must spring from the heart. I care neither for splendor nor amusement—they are the mere outside crust visible to the vulgar eye; but friendship and—and attachment, founded on religion, these are the jewel in the casket, outweighing all else."

"Without them, none can know the greatest joys or the greatest sorrows of this world," said Henry, with emotion. "For your sake I have now a thousand ambitious desires that never would have occurred to me for myself alone. If there be anything in me deserving your regard, I wish it were ten times redoubled, and that, besides, I had fortune, talents, estates, and friends, beyond the utmost desires of all your connexions."

"Then," replied Caroline, with a penetrating look at Henry, but in a careless, off-hand tone, "if we are to suppose a shower of fairy gifts called down upon us by our own wishes, I shall, perhaps, ask to become, for your sake, very beautiful, very fascinating, and, above all, very rich."

"You have everything already, except the wealth," said Henry, warmly; "and I should abhor an heiress! I would not sacrifice my independence in life to any woman—scarcely even to you! A man's office is to confer, not to receive."

"Men of even very large fortune seem, in these days, to feel otherwise," observed Caroline, smiling. "They have a sort of mercantile idea on the subject of marrying, that it would be very presumptuous in a young lady, without sufficient capital, to expect a partnership in their house."

"I have little, indeed, to offer, and even that little based upon a mysterious uncertainty," replied Henry. "Yet unless I could bestow something besides myself, and something more than I ask in return, I never would marry. It is a mean, degrading position, for any man to be a pensioner on his wife, when even the very gifts which his affection might induce him to give her must be purchased with her own money. No! dearest Caroline, we shall be contented on very little, and we might be miserable on a great deal. Your happiness shall be my first, almost my only consideration. Our affection will be riveted by the sacrifices we daily make for each other, till it becomes woven into our very being; while, come what may, we are above adversity, and equal to prosperity, strong in mutual attachment, and in one common hope for time and for eternity."

"May we live to realize all you say," replied Caroline, with tears starting to her eyes, while a smile was on her cheek. "The picture is drawn by a masterly hand. In this world the sun itself has many dark spots, and I do not expect or hope that we shall be without our share of difficulties and sorrows; but our happiness is rooted in a soil that cannot fail, for we shall advance together, in social and unlimited confidence, through the land of fleeting shadows, to

the land of bright and permanent realities, of unimaginable and unceasing enjoyment."

"How different is the happiness of the Christian from that described by the poet," said Henry.

> "My hope, that never grew to certainty,—
> My youth, that perish'd in its vain desire;
> My fond ambition, crush'd e'er it could be
> Aught save a self-consuming, wasted fire!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Captain De Crespigny continued to visit at St. John's Lodge almost daily, having now adopted a quite-at-home style, dropping in at all hours of the morning or evening, partly in the character of a cousin, partly as a convivial friend of Sir Patrick's, and solely, in the estimation of Agnes, as her devoted admirer; but not one of the motives which ostensibly brought him there was the real one. He kept up long, animated, horse-and-dog conversations with Sir Patrick, and love-and-nonsense conversations with Agnes; but his whole thoughts and attention were secretly devoted to Marion, to so engrossing an extent, that he became astonished even at himself. She was always exceedingly busy about something when he called—more frequently out of the room than in it, while he staid, and so constantly sat down to write letters or notes while he talked to Sir Patrick, that one day, in a tone of pique, he said, writing at such a rate, she would soon be several volumes a-head of Sir Walter Scott; but still Marion continued as much pre-occupied in his presence, and as good-humoredly indifferent as before. She treated him, as the friend of Sir Patrick, almost like a brother, and was not in the slightest degree agitated, when he flew, with fascinating *empressement*, to light the taper for her, to open the door, or to pay any of the ten thousand little attentions with which he was accustomed to dazzle and delight the hundred and one other young ladies among whom he had hitherto divided himself. It was absolutely insufferable to see her so perfectly self-possessed and conversible, without a thought of being admired, always ready with a reply when he spoke to her, and amused with his jests, but not sufficiently interested by his presence, to attempt being either attractive or repulsive. Seeing him approach the table one day several times while she was writing, Marion said at last,

"Is there anything here I can give you? anything you want?"

"Yes!" said Captain De Crespigny, in a low, agitated voice. "I do want more than I dare ask; more than I shall perhaps ever obtain."

Marion at these words glanced with astonishment towards Agnes, and privately thought her sister's lover must require very great encouragement indeed, if he were not satisfied with all he got; but unwilling to interfere in any differences that might have arisen between them, she calmly resumed her employment, unconscious that the eyes of Captain De Crespigny were fixed upon her with a look of disappointment and pique, because she had not so much as favored him with a conscious blush.

Nothing surprised and amused the young mind of Marion half so much, as the light raillery and gay persiflage, which continually passed between her brother and Captain De Crespigny, whose conversation was enlivened with sallies of good-humored malice against each other, and lively satire, which sometimes approached the verge, and often even passed the verge of civility, while each seemed to have conferred on his friend the royal privilege of saying or doing no wrong, so that the pointed arrows they levelled at each other became feathers before they reached their aim.

"I must give the Abbey people a ball!" exclaimed Sir Patrick one day, after whistling for some time with his back to the fire. "The Children of the Abbey, as we gentlemen in difficulties are called! A dance of ruined people! What a capital hit!"

"Like Holbein's dance of death!" observed Marion. "Our creditors would all come, I suppose, and take out a dividend in cakes and ices! You are, of course, not serious, Patrick!"

"Why not? You are always ready with an opinion, like a lawyer expecting a fee; but remember, Marion, the attorney waits at least till he is asked! I am as serious now as I ever am about anything. Let me make the neighbors and the neighborhood expire with envy and admiration! You know the last kick of a dying horse is always the strongest. Agnes, fetch your visiting book, and we shall get up a splendid impromptu, to be paid for with my surplus income! Ah! here comes De Crespigny, as he always does, at the very moment we were wishing for him."

"Because there is never a moment, I suppose, that you are not wishing for me!" replied he, fixing his expostulating eye on Sir Patrick. "I owe myself to society, and make a duty of paying visits from pure benevolence, because in every house I find people perfectly dying for my arrival. If I had three hands to shake, I would divide them equally amongst you; but I have only one to offer," added Captain De Crespigny, with lively emphasis, as he extended his to Agnes, who stood nearest him.

"You belong, I believe, to the Modest Assurance Company," said she, with a blush and a smile. "But after this little outbreak of vanity, we really do want your advice."

"That is a thing I never either give or take. The word should be drummed out of the English language."

"Then," added Sir Patrick, "pray lend us your opinion."

"No, Dunbar! I lend you nothing! Remember our agreement. Can't afford bad debts! Better give you half-a-crown than lend you a shilling."

"De Crespigny, your wit is as sharp to-day as that American scythe, the shadow of which cut a man's leg off! I owe you one for the last hit!"

"Ten to one you never pay me! I have serious thoughts of taking rooms in the sanctuary myself soon, because it displays beauties and attractions beyond any other part of the world. Positively, I see no place like it, and no people like its inhabitants."

Sir Patrick's hearty laugh rang through the room, while Agnes smiled with conscious triumph; and Marion, who had been for several minutes planning an escape to the Granvilles, thought this a favorable opportunity to steal off unobserved, and had safely reached the door, when Sir Patrick hastily summoned her back.

"Marion! where are you shying off to so hastily? Are you under a vow of solitude? There is no keeping you in the room for a minute now."

"Never mind me!" said Captain De Crespigny, assuming a tone of good-humored conceit, to disguise a great deal of real pique. "I am not so bad as I look."

"No!" replied Agnes, laughing. "That is exactly what the keeper at the Zoological Gardens says of the ourang outang!"

"Don't be put out of countenance by her, De Crespigny! you'll do," said Sir Patrick. "I've seen worse looking people in the world! I knew a gentleman once, much plainer than you are, who got on very well!"

"Sir Patrick Dunbar, for instance, or some other, with no pretensions whatever! Really, old fellow! I am much the best looking of the two, if people would only think so. It is astonishing the sort of men who pass themselves off upon the world for being handsome—quite an imposition."

"Quite!" replied Sir Patrick, and the two gentlemen laughingly glanced at each other. "I am quite obliged to you for that remark; but as I see the watch of your wit is wound up for a reply, pray let it strike."

"No, I am not revengeful! As somebody said to somebody, some day when they were talking about something, I have 'a soul above buttons.' But positively," continued Captain De Crespigny, gazing around, as if he had made a sudden discovery, and letting his eye rest upon Marion, "to do ourselves justice, Dunbar, we in this room are a remarkably good looking party."

"To be sure we are! You never said a truer thing!" replied Sir Patrick. "So obvious, indeed, that it was scarcely worth remarking. I remember the time, De Crespigny, when you used to copy me—to imitate the inimitable; and positively, with such tolerable success, that I very nearly bowed to myself one day for you."

"Well, Patrick!" said Agnes, "I do think you are like nobody else, and like nothing human I ever saw; and yet I have a great turn for finding out resemblances. How very like Wednesdays are to Thursdays!"

"Astonishingly so!" replied Captain De Crespigny, adding, with one of his most indescribable looks, "but I see not the slightest resemblance between your sister and you."

Agnes smiled one of her brightest smiles at what must, she thought, be intended most unquestionably as a compliment; but though the difference appeared obvious enough, the superiority, judging from the direction and the expression of Captain De Crespigny's eyes, was not by any means so decided a point as Agnes seemed willing to believe.

"De Crespigny!" said Sir Patrick, with one of his most satirical looks. "Do you really now, in serious earnest, call yourself dressed? It is very well as a

joke; but you are surely not got up in that style for the day? In the name of all that is hideous, who is your tailor, that I may avoid him? Does he call that thing you wear a coat?"

"No!"

"Then, pray, what does he call it?"

"A surtout! and such a one as you never had since you wore a cap and cockade! It is a real original Dodds! I could bet the amount of your bill, whatever that may be, probably with several years' interest—a few hundreds—that you will never be half so well fitted. If you want a coat—a real undeniable, irreproachable coat, fit for a gentleman to be seen in—employ my tailor in St. James' street; he will make a man of you!"

"From a certain cut of tigerism in the collar, I guessed he lived in Cheapside or the Strand! Never employ him again! I would not allow him to dress me if he offered to do it for nothing! Have more regard for yourself, De Crespigny, and never be betrayed into trusting him again. He is totally incapable of his business! You might as well expect a Whig Ministry to form a tolerable Administration. The thing is not upon the cards!"

"Pray, attend now to my cards!" interrupted Agnes. "If you are got upon politics, there will be no slipping in a word edgewise about my ball; and the joy of planning it quite turns my head."

"You turn every other head, so it is but fair that your own should share the same fate!" observed Captain De Crespigny, with a light and careless laugh; but what he said was neither lightly nor carelessly received by Agnes; for the color rushed in vivid brilliancy to her cheek, while she bent her head to conceal a smile of pleasure; yet when Marion looked up suddenly from her drawing, the eyes of Captain De Crespigny were again fixed on herself, as he added, "I wish those I admire the most had a few imperfections to make them human."

"I should not think any one thoroughly liked me who saw them," observed Agnes, in a tone of gratified vanity. "And now for business, Pat! Here is a correct list of our acquaintances!"

"But I want an incorrect one!" replied Sir Patrick, jocularly seizing the catalogue of names. "I hate anything correct! Let me see! Here are some tolerable people enough! This is not a bad world, after all, if one could pick out those who are ornamental, and pass an act of extermination upon all who are objectionable in manner, appearance, circumstances, or disposition. In such a case, it might really become fit for a gentleman to live in!"

Agnes' visiting-book was now carefully revised, while the party seemed to think they had met only to pass sentence on all their acquaintances. No subject appeared so exhaustless as the faults and follies of their particular friends; their poverty, wealth, avarice, or extravagance; while the liveliness of their conversation, instead of emanating, like that of the Granvilles, from the gay fancies and spontaneous sparklings of their own minds, was almost entirely derived from the follies and personal defects of others; and Marion could not but remember with a smile the country clergyman, who said once from the pulpit, that "people should never speak ill of their neighbors,—except among a few friends!"

"Let us invite only the tolerable-looking girls in each family, and no chaperons with turbans and large caps to overshadow the room," said Captain De Crespigny, drawing a broad dash of his pen through the name of Lady Towercliffe. "Her large, featureless face, looks like a wax doll which had been put before the fire till it melted; and she is as dull as a dormouse."

"We did enough for her in going to that heavy turn-out of a ball," added Sir Patrick. "I very nearly 'struck work,' on finding myself expected to dance with one of those plain, elderly daughters. Lady Charlotte is quite a *laide ideal*."

"I was pressed into the service, too!" continued Captain De Crespigny, in an injured tone, "and did not recover the annoyance till—till my last quadrille!" added he, glancing expressively at Marion. "If one must dance with plain girls at their own parties, I wish they would wear veils."

"Poor Lady Charlotte's figure is a perfect pyramid, narrow at the shoulders, and becoming thicker to the ankles," observed Agnes, laughing. "She got no partner the first half of the night, but being very fond of dancing, she stood near the corner of every dance, and was turned sometimes by mistake!"

"Very good for an impromptu, Agnes! The old girl gets a partner once a-year, I believe," added Sir Patrick. "If people will not be beauties, I can't help it; but I wonder at any one who had such a foot as Lady Charlotte's, would wish to live. It is so enormous that the eye cannot take it in all at once! The gout is nothing in comparison! De Crespigny, if you are ever shipwrecked at sea, you could desire no better boat than one of her shoes, and a paddle!"

"Her hand, too!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, shrugging his shoulders, and admiring his nails. "Mine is ashamed to look so insignificant beside it! Positively I awoke one forenoon, after my hand had been stung by a wasp, and seeing something so large, red, and swelled, I never recognized my own, but seized hold of it in the most friendly manner, saying, 'Ah, Lady Charlotte Malcolm!——'"

"I have heard," observed Marion, "that the celebrated Hogarth often lamented how completely his sense of the ridiculous had destroyed his sense of the beautiful; so that even in the face of an angel he could not avoid observing something to caricature; and I think some of us, if we do not take care, will soon be in danger of a similar calamity."

"Well!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, eagerly, "Let me enjoy a jest to-day, even if I were to die for it to-morrow."

"You, gentlemen, are both too bad!" said Agnes, lazily extending her own beautiful foot on a footstool. "Charlotte Malcolm has already a whole tier of double chins; her throat must have once belonged to a flamingo, and her complexion is like the models we see from abroad in terra cotta; but then, to do her justice, she dresses to perfect desperation; and," added Agnes, in her most amiable voice, for she always assumed the affectation of extreme candor in discussing other young ladies, "I am told Charlotte is very good tempered; at least so Lady Towercliffe says."

"And pray, what does that signify to me!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, contemptuously. "If there is nothing better to be said for your friend, then, Agnes, for ever hold your tongue. Amiable qualities are quite at a discount in general society! What does it matter to a man dancing a quadrille with any girl, that she is miraculously amiable, if she be miraculously ugly too! She may be a perfect termagant at home, for anything I care, provided she bring plenty of small talk into the ball-room; and I would not give a single sous to know whether her milliner's bills be paid, provided only she is well dressed. I would not take such a looking girl as Lady Charlotte Malcolm for my fifth wife!"

"You have quite burned her in effigy, now," observed Marion, looking up from her work. "Suppose we start some person, for variety, whom everybody must admire and praise!"

"That should be yourself, then!" said Captain De Crespigny. "Who else could answer the description?"

"I remember visiting at old Vivian's last summer, where the girls were all terrifyingly plain; their faces, like the dairy-maid, and their figures like the churn," said Sir Patrick. "One day I could not resist asking their old governess, in confidence, what could be the reason why the fourth daughter invariably took precedence of all the others, when she whispered in a confidential tone, 'because she once had a proposal.'"

"If young ladies take precedence on such grounds," observed Captain De Crespigny, with a glance towards Agnes and Marion, "I know who ought soon to leave all others behind! My cousins here have the game in their own hands; four by honors and the odd trick."

"Young ladies had much better gain precedence by accepting offers than by refusing them!" said Sir Patrick, whistling himself off to the window. "She's daft to refuse the laird o' Cock-pen!"

"I once saw a man who had been refused!" said Captain De Crespigny. "He should have kicked himself out of the world after such an adventure! From that day to this I have lived in a nervous horror of being rejected! I am the most marrying man in the world, but I never can venture to make an offer. I do wonder how people set about it! The author who published a complete letter-writer, should give us a complete manual of proposals for all occasions! I am so horribly diffident! Even coming into a room you have no idea how much I suffer from shyness!"

"It is astonishing, then, what a good face you manage to put upon it," said Marion, dryly. "I never guessed you were at all shy!"

"No! nor that I am a lover out of place, in want of a situation! Would it be a good plan, Miss Marion Dunbar, to advertise? You, being pen in hand already, shall write the advertisement. Describe me as made of every creature's best! How would it do to make a raffle of me? Twenty thousand tickets at one guinea each. How many will you take?"

"I have no money to waste," replied Marion. "But perhaps some young ladies with more, if they could be quite sure of a blank, might venture on one ticket, out of charity, hearing you are so anxious to go off."

"I do wonder if anybody would take me," continued Captain De Crespigny, in a tone of careless conceit. "I have the greatest mind to try Lady Charlotte Malcolm! Do you think, Miss Dunbar, I might have any chance?"

"Not the slightest!" replied Agnes, laughing. "I could bet my longest ringlet that she would reject you at once. Charlotte complained to me long ago how forward gentlemen are—always proposing, on the slightest encouragement."

"Remarkably true! I am positive that nine out of ten were refused last winter. We are a most unfortunate set of old fellows, Dunbar. Nobody appreciates us. I had made myself a promise to go off this season! positively my last appearance. But," added Captain De Crespigny, dropping his voice into a low tone of apparent feeling, "the more I am desirous to recommend myself, the less I succeed. If it were possible for either of you ladies ever to see me indifferent about pleasing, then you would be astonished at my success. Did Dunbar never mention, that in the company of those I do not care for, I am quite another man?"

"No!" replied Agnes, blushing and smiling. "Patrick is aware that we always judge of people's merits for ourselves."

"What would I not give to hear that verdict pronounced! If you have tried me by a court-martial, you may at least let me know the sentence!"

"It would do you good, De Crespigny, to hear those girls discussing your demerits! Your vanity requires lowering a peg or two!" said Sir Patrick, with a mischievous laugh. "You owe me countless thanks for putting in a word of defence now and then to protect you, for positively they are too bad. On the score of conceit and extravagance, I undertake to be your champion. Such faults are like the spots upon ermine, rather ornamental than otherwise; but if any one says you dress ill, I have not a syllable to say. Let me advise you, as a friend, to discard that tailor. He is atrocious. It would be the utmost stretch of my friendship to be seen with you anywhere to-day, except in some rural parts of the country; so now for our walk."

"Dress as you may, Dunbar, you will never look like me!" replied Captain De Crespigny, as they lounged off together. "It was a problem of Euclid, which we settled at Eton long ago, and may demonstrate now, that A B C can never be equal to D E F. Good morning, ladies! *au revoir!* we must fly. In your society I resemble the gentleman we used to read of in our school books, whose wings were melted because he ventured too near the sun."

The more Marion saw of Captain De Crespigny, the more astonished she became at the multiplicity of his talents for conversation, and at his universal craving to be admired, while all the *petits soins* which he lavished on herself, she, as a matter of course, set down to his extraordinary vanity, which could not allow the most insignificant of mortals to escape his fascinations; but to have supposed his attentions to be indications of love, she would have considered as absurd a blunder as to mistake an oyster-shell for an oyster.

Captain De Crespigny sketched caricatures with inimitable humor, sung with taste, and with every appearance of feeling, and his versatility of powers in talking were almost incredible. He discussed science occasionally with any blue-stocking, like a philosopher—looked dismal upon politics with members of Parliament—talked agriculture and fat cattle with country gentlemen—could describe the state of New Zealand, as if he had visited the country, to old ladies, with large families of enterprising sons. He was musical with the musical, sentimental with the sentimental, and apparently at home equally in poetry or metaphysics. With a smile for one, a sigh for another, and a jest for a third, his small-talk for young ladies might be minced into the smallest grains of sense or nonsense; while at the same time he could even get up a very plausible religious conversation, on the most approved model, when in company with any one like Marion, to whom he thought it might render him more acceptable. The true secret of Captain De Crespigny's almost universal popularity, lay in his appearing so flatteringly interested by whatever occupied the attention of others; and whether it were the last snowstorm, or a newly discovered star in the firmament—an old pedigree or a new bonnet, he seemed equally ready to follow the lead of any young lady, being sufficiently delighted in his own private mind, to imagine how every word he said, and every look he looked, would be afterwards treasured and remembered by those whom he had no particular intention of remembering himself.

Marion observed narrowly and anxiously Captain De Crespigny's conduct to Agnes; but even her discernment, quickened by the most affectionate solicitude, could bring her to no conclusive decision respecting his intentions, though she could not but feel sanguine at one time, and justly indignant at another, according as the thermometer of her hopes and fears rose or fell; yet she strongly suspected that Captain De Crespigny was but indulging his own ambition—that he wished to be thought of and talked about—to become devotedly loved—to be necessary to the happiness of another—to constitute that happiness for a short time, and then to destroy it as a useless toy, which had amused him for an hour, and might be broken without remorse. "How different! oh! how very different from Richard Granville!" thought Marion, with a glowing smile. "To him the peace of no living mortal is insignificant; and when loved or trusted, who ever was so considerate, so totally unselfish, so free from vanity and caprice! No Christian can doubt that happiness and principle are one."

The name of any individual more than commonly interesting is apt to occur often in conversation, *a propos* to everything or nothing; and Captain De Crespigny's penetration very soon discovered, that the Granvilles were never heard of or mentioned by Marion with indifference; therefore being anxious to fathom her secret, and to ascertain the extent of her intimacy with them, he tried the experiment one day, by professing an enthusiastic admiration for the extraordinary eloquence of "Dick Granville!" in whom he appeared suddenly to have discovered a thousand new and unheard-of good qualities, while with humorous pertinacity he defended him from all the satirical cuts with which Sir Patrick tried to lower his importance in the eyes of Marion; but Captain De Crespigny, unconscious of the lead which he was expected to follow, rattled on in his accustomed way,

"Granville always was one whom nothing could spoil! So different from young Meredith, who used one short month since to go about with a quiet country-curate look, but since he has become rather popular in the pulpit, he enters a room with his chin in the air, and all the self-confidence of a great lion. Weak heads are easily intoxicated."

"And people here do all in their power to ruin those they most admire, by very overdone adulation," added Agnes. "It would be a very strong fortress of humility that could withstand all the absurd mobbing which Mr. Granville has to undergo."

"As Lady Towercliffe said to me yesterday, in her usual slip-slop style of talking, 'Mr. Granville is so very eloquent, so benevolent, so learned, so pious, and has such a neat foot!'" continued Captain De Crespigny, laughing. "Really, Dunbar! if you and I quarrel with everybody better than ourselves, we shall find no one left to associate with! I have but one weak side on earth, Miss Marion Dunbar, and it is that of always standing up for the absent."

"They very often require it; and whether in jest or earnest, I am glad you do," replied Marion, finding herself obliged to speak, while her look of agitated consciousness, occasioned a thrill of jealousy in the heart of Captain De Crespigny, which brought a sudden flush into his countenance; but he assumed a careless tone, to conceal his real feelings, and turned to Sir Patrick, saying, "*a propos* of absence, the Granvilles are never here now! I remember the time when that pretty sister and my cousins were like the three graces, perfectly inseparable!"

At these words, Sir Patrick colored to the very temples; and instantly afterwards becoming pale as marble, he stooped to pat his dog, and then impatiently whistled Dash, along with himself, out of the room first, and finally out of the house; while Marion's eye was turned towards Agnes, with a deep and searching look of enquiry and astonishment.

CHAPTER XXII.

Nothing had ever surprised and annoyed Captain De Crespigny more than the unadmiring indifference with which, week after week, Marion received his visits. Her easy, good humored courtesy of manner was unpardonable! No peculiar consciousness became visible in her manner, when he addressed her; no accession of sensibility in her voice; no agitation in her smile; no increase of her natural timidity; no desire of captivation, nor the slightest coquetry in displaying her own fascinations.

To be thus treated like a cousin or a brother was mortifying in the extreme, and appeared to him perfectly unaccountable, because he little guessed the contrast which incessantly presented itself to Marion's mind, between the low, every-day tone of his thoughts, on all the essential objects of existence, and the elevated sentiments or generous feelings, to which she had lately become accustomed in the society of Mr. Granville. Captain De Crespigny's conversation always diverted her on account of its eccentricity; but in the selfishness and vanity he inadvertently betrayed, she saw how little he could know the real nature and value of that happiness springing from principle and affection, which alone could satisfy her heart.

Formerly, Captain De Crespigny would have gloried in surmounting difficulties, if he had ever found any difficulties to conquer; and now he was determined not to become discouraged, though he felt, if such a thing could be possible, almost humbled. His eye followed Marion wherever she turned, and he was now for ever by her side, though she evidently made it her continual business to avoid him, as she had latterly become more aware than before of his assiduity.

Fortified by the consciousness of her own secret engagement, and by the knowledge that Agnes had a well-founded belief in his attachment to herself, Marion's countenance, which told every transient emotion of her heart, never betrayed a thought of love; and it seemed to Captain De Crespigny as if her heart must be of granite, so cold and hard beneath a smiling stream. She was long of even suspecting the worst, and would not fully believe when she did, that his volatile fancy had really changed; yet a spell seemed over her, that she could not escape from Captain De Crespigny's society, without giving offence to Sir Patrick and Agnes, who both, for different reasons, insisted on her being present when he called, though, unlike her sister, who would have sacrificed every one to herself, she would have sacrificed herself for every one, and only thought with considerate affection, how she could best spare the feelings of Agnes, and at the same time escape from occasioning any jealousy, the fear of which now haunted her like a perpetual night-mare.

One morning, when Agnes was seated in a state of exceedingly full-blown satisfaction, expecting Captain De Crespigny's usual visit, and considering him as much her own property as either her reticule or her work-box, she observed Marion, who had occupations for every hour of the day, hastily gather up her drawing materials, and glide towards the door, evidently anxious to escape without observation, but in vain.

The barometer of Agnes's countenance had become exceedingly stormy, while watching Marion's progress; and being one who rather enjoyed the excitement of a quarrel than otherwise, she asked Marion in a voice raised an octave higher than usual, which sounded as sharp and cutting as an east wind, where she was about to go, adding, in her most sarcastic tone,

"Pray inform me, Marion, why I am to be left in solitude here, when everybody knows that in a place like this I cannot possibly receive visitors alone. One would suppose that you wished to prevent me from seeing Captain De Crespigny this morning."

"By no means, Agnes. But is there any occasion for me to remain, when Patrick of course accompanies him here as usual?"

"Nonsense, Marion. You know perfectly well that Patrick may or may not be here, for that all depends on whims like your own, and nothing renders it correct to receive gentlemen in the morning, except there being two of us at home. I expected more friendship and consideration from you; but people never will think of any one but themselves!"

"You are like a Hebrew scholar, and always read me backwards, Agnes. I have only to know your wishes in order to comply with them," replied Marion, good-humoredly re-seating herself, and adding, with a beautiful timidity of manner and voice, "I cannot but think that, until you are actually engaged, it would perhaps be better if—if—Captain De Crespigny's attentions were not to—to be at all divided."

"Divided!" exclaimed Agnes, looking perfectly sublime in her anger. "What can you mean?"

"Excuse me, Agnes," replied Marion, trying to steady her voice, and to hide her confusion. "I mean that Captain De Crespigny has the reputation of being a confirmed flirt; that I hope and trust, if it be really for your happiness, he is, as you think, irretrievably attached and engaged to yourself; but if a housemaid enter the room, he cannot resist attempting to look handsome, and to attract her admiration; therefore you cannot but suppose he will endeavor to waste some of his fascinations occasionally upon me, and till he is my brother, I would rather avoid any such absurdity."

"Your meaning is plain enough now, and requires no interpreter!" said Agnes, with an angry toss of her head. "Every one must see and know, that Captain De Crespigny is exclusively and entirely devoted to me."

"That is a point, Agnes, of which no third person can be an adequate judge," replied Marion, evasively; "but I am as anxious to believe it as yourself."

"If you entertain any fear of causing me a disappointment, make your own mind perfectly easy, as mine is. If Captain De Crespigny could hesitate a moment between us, I should scarcely think him worth living for, and still less worth dying for. Be assured I shall never endure a moment's uneasiness on your account. Here he comes, regular as the rising sun, and quite as welcome."

After all the lively badinage of Captain De Crespigny's first reception was over, Marion quietly retreated into the deep embrasure of a window, where her work-table stood, and busied herself with answering some notes, while almost entirely shaded from observation; yet still Captain De Crespigny's eye incessantly wandered to the place where she sat, for there was something unintentionally *piquante* in the total indifference with which she thus secluded herself from his attentions and civilities. Observing, at length, that Marion had begun carefully pruning the dead leaves from a bouquet of rather drooping flowers, which seemed still vainly affecting to look fresh and gay, he broke off in the middle of a sentence from Agnes, and clandestinely approaching the table when Marion was looking in another direction, he stole them all away, and substituted one so fresh and fragrant that Marion uttered an exclamation of rapturous admiration. She neither blushed nor looked down, however; but as if it were no more than an every day civility, held it up to Agnes for admiration, and endeavored to attract her towards the table by the perfume of her beautiful flowers.

"Nothing withered or blighted should ever be here," said Captain De Crespigny, in his most sentimental tone. "I should like, in one respect, to resemble flowers, which give nothing but pleasure to all who see them. Are you writing prose, or is this Poet's Corner? If I had the pen of Moore, I could find one subject for my muse more beautiful than any he ever wrote upon, and feelings more deep than he ever expressed! My eyes have ached for the last half hour with trying to see you; and half my eye-strings are cracked with looking from so great a distance."

Marion was now seriously annoyed, and a glow of indignant vexation mantled upon her cheek; but Captain De Crespigny, mistaking her blushes and silence, began to flatter himself that the fortress was not so impregnable as he had feared. A scrap of paper lay on the table, which Marion had carelessly flung aside, after trying a pen, by writing down several times her own Christian name, and Captain De Crespigny having picked it up, laughingly added to it the name of De Crespigny.

"How does this look?" asked he, showing her the signature of "Marion De Crespigny," while a gleam of light shot through his dark eye-lashes. "This is a valuable autograph, which I shall certainly preserve. The signature is not yet a common one, but I hope it may become so, as no other looks half so well to my eye—or to my heart."

"There may be another that I should very much prefer," replied Marion, decidedly, while the bright carnation mounted to her cheek, and she turned her large eyes towards Agnes, who stood at some distance placid and secure, in the certain belief that her own supremacy was established, and that the conversation probably related to herself. "Give me back that paper, Captain De Crespigny, for it contains a mischievous forgery—a name that can never exist upon the earth."

"But it may in fairy-land, and it shall!" replied he, with undaunted pertinacity. "The fates are perpetually weaving people together, and may do something for me! When we are unwillingly separated for a short period, sometime hereafter, I shall every day see this name appended to the most interesting accounts of your garden, your lap-dog, and——"

"And my sister!" added Marion, coldly. "She is always the first object of interest to me. Agnes! do come here and admire the last few stitches I have added to this bible-cover."

"How well it will look at Beaujolie Park!" muttered De Crespigny, almost inaudibly, in that low musical voice which had been irresistible, and with a significance of manner which Marion seemed not to remark. "I hope one day to see it there."

"I intend it as a present to Agnes," replied Marion, dryly.—"That and the prayer-book are both for her dressing-table."

Captain De Crespigny, assuming a look of respectful despondency, examined the volumes during several minutes in silence; but having accidentally opened the service of matrimony, he smilingly pointed it out to Marion, saying, "he hoped this might be considered a good omen," and doubling down the page, he placed the prayer-book opposite to her, saying, "Let me request you will study that till we meet again, as I wish to ask your opinion of it."

Before Marion had time to reply, or to hurry away, as she had been for some time projecting, Agnes advanced with an air of exceedingly forced vivacity, while there was a perceptible flutter of anger in her tone, and Marion felt as much confused as if she had been guilty of a real indiscretion, when she saw that her sister's face had become as white as the wall, her eyes glassy, and her manner unusually excited, though she tried to assume a careless tone, saying:

"What is all the world talking about here? Captain De Crespigny, you must have learned the whole mysteries of worsted work by this time!"

"I was merely showing your sister that most interesting of all compositions, the marriage service," replied Captain De Crespigny, throwing as much meaning into his voice as it could carry, "and mentioning that the fashionable blacksmith for these occasions now is my cousin, the Dean of Chester."

Agnes looked down with an interesting blush, and Marion looked up with a start of astonishment, at the hardened intrepidity of manner in which Captain De Crespigny carried on his double game, adapting his tone equally to suit either or both of his companions; and it was with a sensation of extreme relief that she saw him at last rise to take leave, looking most charmingly distressed; but he had glanced at his watch, "never being able to measure time at St. John's Lodge," and an unlucky engagement obliged him to depart.

"All engagements are unlucky," observed Agnes, impatiently. "I never made one yet, without afterwards finding it a tyrannical restraint."

"There is only one engagement I ever wish to make," replied Captain De Crespigny, in a sentimental voice, but carefully looking at nobody. "I hope soon to make an engagement for life!"

"What is all this!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, entering the room. "Can De Crespigny not be persuaded into remaining with you two or three hours longer, girls?"

"We have not yet tried the experiment," replied Marion, seeing Agnes unwilling to speak. "I intend to be busy this morning reading your favorite character in Shakespeare, Malvolio. He had the very common fault of over-estimating himself."

"To some people that is impracticable!" replied Captain De Crespigny, with a self-satisfied smile. "The world really spoils me for one."

"Perhaps," observed Sir Patrick, "you flatter yourself, and that is the most dangerous of all flattery."

"Not to me! I only wish it were possible for me to think as much of myself as every body else does."

"I hear old Doncaster is likely to make a die of it soon; therefore wait till you are established at Beaujolie Park, and then you shall see how much we all think of you!" replied Sir Patrick, laughing. "I hope you mean to be the most hospitable Marquis in the whole peerage of England?"

"Most undoubtedly! Hospitality is my weakness, if I have any! Dunbar, my very dear friend, I make a point of your coming to dine with me once a-year at Beaujolie Park! I am sorry it will not be in my power to offer you a bed; but the Highflyer passes my door at nine every evening. I wish for a very long visit from you! We are old friends, my good fellow! so I must really stretch a point! I am quite serious! therefore come by the early mail for breakfast, and take the evening one for your departure! I always was, and always shall be the most hospitable man upon earth! Have you half a moment to spare to-morrow? I want you to help me in my bargain for a bay horse with Duncombe of ours. He has the prettiest sister in the world, if that will be any inducement to come. I wish he would throw her into the bargain! Good morning! I could not stay a minute longer to save all your lives!"

"How I do sometimes hate Captain De Crespigny!" exclaimed Agnes, with angry vehemence, after he had made a very conceited exit from her presence, accompanied by Sir Patrick, while she watched him from the window, as he sprang upon his horse, and galloped out of sight. "I know he is perfectly devoted to me! I cannot allow myself to doubt it! My whole happiness in life is cast on that die, and must not be lost! No!" continued she, speaking to Marion in a tone of unwonted perplexity, "it would indeed be a disgraceful triumph, to awaken in my heart affections which, if they must die, I shall die with them. My hopes and feelings appear all frozen into icicles this morning; yet I can scarcely tell why! A sensation of utter discouragement torments me! What is man, and what is woman that trusts him? If all my happiness is now torn up by the roots, I shall never again incur the grief of forming any earthly plan! I shall continue for life a bankrupt in hope and peace! Do not speak to me, Marion! Do not look as if you believed the worst! I will not hear it! I know you wish to say and do all that is kind; but I detest sympathy! I abhor being pitied! and I will not be advised."

Even after she had retired to the gloomy solitude of her lonely room, Agnes buried her face in her hands, as if she would hide herself from the whole world, and struggled to banish thought; yet the suspicion would force itself into her mind, that Captain De Crespigny intended to treat her as she had seen him treat others; and though formerly she had often laughed at the credulity of those girls who believed half the rubbish he talked to them, now she repeated to herself all his professions of admiration, his looks, smiles, innuendoes, implied flattery, and openly expressed interest, till her cheek regained its bloom, her eyes their brightness, and she looked into her mirror with perfectly restored self-complacency, and with renovated confidence in the truth, honor, and sincerity of Captain De Crespigny.

CHAPTER XXIII.

One of the best receipts for happiness in this world is, to make the utmost of small pleasures, and the very least of small vexations, which was the plan on which Marion invariably lived; and it often seemed as if all the duties of affection and friendship were written with a sunbeam on her mind. She now resolved, with characteristic kindness and good sense, that as her presence at St. John's Lodge could do no good to her sister, it should at least do no harm; therefore she determined if possible to obtain leave of absence for a few weeks from home, and to explain in writing to Agnes, her own opinion of Captain De Crespigny's conduct, and the reasons on which it was grounded; being convinced that in all the important affairs of life, perfect frankness between friends is, however painful, an imperative duty, and that no one, on any occasion where he has to act or to feel, should be left in the dark as to his own actual position.

With a somewhat tremulous voice, and heightened color, Marion proceeded next morning into her brother's private sitting-room, where, surrounded by a perfect armory of rifles, double-barrelled guns and pistols, she found him selecting his weapons for a pigeon-match to "come off" that day, between himself and Captain De Crespigny, of whose arrival he was in momentary expectation; and he seemed by no means inclined at first to lend her much of his notice.

"I came to mention, Patrick, that if you have no objection, it is my wish to spend a fortnight now, with uncle Arthur," said Marion. "We have met very seldom of late, and Henry De Lancey is going off soon to join the army. Did you hear that a commission in the same corps as Captain De Crespigny, has been sent to him lately by his unknown friends. The regiment is going soon, I am told, to Canada, but he is to join the depot for some months at Portsmouth."

"Well! but what does all this matter to you! I shall not give my consent if you ask me till midnight!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, peevishly; for he felt by no means disposed that his house should lose the attraction of Marion's resplendent beauty. "If Sir Arthur in his dotage, chooses to make himself ridiculous about this anonymous youth, is that any reason why the whole family should go wild about him? Besides, Marion, you confessed long ago, that Mr. Granville visits at our uncle's; and I am determined that you shall learn to know your own value better than to take him! What has he to offer you but that trumpery little cottage, like a Tunbridge-ware work-box, a kitchen garden stocked with cabbages, or gooseberry bushes, and to live upon brown bread and water. But I begin to suspect, Marion, that you are one of the very few people in this world who like their own way; therefore it is my duty to keep you here out of danger."

"I wish to escape a danger, rather than to encounter one," replied Marion, with an ingenuous blush. "You know, Patrick, that I consider Agnes almost engaged to Captain De Crespigny. It would be a very great disappointment to me, and I think to yourself, if, after all that has passed, he become merely general in his attentions—showing no preference to one of us more than for another. You always wish me to be in the room when he calls,—and—and ——"

"Oh! I understand!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, fixing his hawk's eyes on Marion, and trying to conceal a smile beneath a look of stern interrogation. "Agnes is jealous!"

"No! not in the very least! I trust she has no reason—that she never can have any. It seems like vanity in me to mention the subject even to my own brother in confidence, but I will be perfectly honest. You know, Patrick, I saw no society at school. I am not at all aware what is customary; but your friend often says things to me that I am sure he would not like Agnes to hear."

"You are young and green in this old world, Marion, if you fancy that Agnes is ever to catch such a will-o'-the-wisp as De Crespigny. *Il s'aime, et n'a point de rival*. He plays with hearts as if they were shuttlecocks; and indeed some hearts are little better. It is an absurd affair of vanity on both sides, and the sooner the thing goes off the better. I know you are a perfect coward in giving pain, and that Agnes considers herself sole proprietor of De Crespigny's attentions; but who made her so? That bubble will burst ere long; and if he is inclined to try a little harmless flirtation with you, what occasion is there to go off in a tangent about that, I should like to know! I must insist, Marion, on your doing all that is possible to make this dull, out-of-the-way house of mine, agreeable to my friends, for it is impracticable to exist here without society, which is the best weapon to kill time with. I shall take it as a mark of your sisterly kindness, to receive De Crespigny as all other young ladies receive him everywhere. If he only opened his mouth wide enough, I know at least a dozen girls who would jump down his throat, and '*il faut jouer le jeu, selon les regles de la societe dans laquelle vous etes force de vivre*.' My deepest resentment shall rest on either Agnes or you, Marion, if my most intimate companion be banished from our society, either by the one liking him too much, or the other too little."

"But, Patrick! if you think Agnes lays too much stress on Captain De Crespigny's very marked attentions, and lover-like language, why do you not warn her against becoming really attached to him?"

"Pshaw! nonsense! She will come to her senses soon, if she has any senses to come to. Agnes' hopes are all certainties; and she expects by shutting her own eyes, that everybody else shall become blind; but she or any one might see with half an eye, that De Crespigny cares no more for her than the poker does for the tongs. Agnes has been given to expecting impossibilities from childhood, when she used to be angry at her wax doll for not answering her when spoken to. If she did not flatter herself so egregiously, the flattery of De Crespigny would do her no harm. His love affairs flame up and go out again like a lucifer-match box."

"Yet, Patrick," replied Marion, trying to steady her voice, and to look excessively firm, "I must make a point of going for one week to uncle Arthur. If Agnes is to be disappointed, let me not have any part of the blame, either from her, or from myself."

"My good Marion! what trash you talk! It puts my mustachios out of curl to hear you! Agnes is no more engaged to De Crespigny than I am to Mrs. Penfold! There is no necessity on that score for your becoming a porcupine, and setting up your quills at my friend. *Il n'a fait, que remplir son role de jeune homme*. Agnes thinks every partner at a ball would gladly become a partner for life, and if any one of them were to mention the ring of Saturn, she would consider it a proposal; but her lovers all drop off like nine pins at last. Many a time she has seen the 'decline and fall' of her empire already, and it will be the same thing now in De Crespigny's case. 'Old birds are not caught with chaff.'"

"You mean that the chaff is Captain De Crespigny, of course," replied Marion, with reproachful gravity. "But the subject might have been illustrated with a more graceful allusion to Agnes' lovers."

"As for Agnes' lovers, no one can tell who they are; yet depend upon it, De Crespigny is not in the number. As usual, she is always flirting with the wrong man! Agnes has about as much chance of him as the man in the moon!" continued Sir Patrick, with increasing vehemence. "She might as well attempt to overtake last year! Open the door of your understanding, Marion, and listen to me: De Crespigny will no more propose to her than you will to the Archbishop of Canterbury! Anybody may see he is merely amusing himself!"

"Then he deserves to be hanged!" replied Marion, indignantly. "Surely, Patrick, you should not have allowed this to continue so long, and to go so far, under your own eyes, unless you really believed that Captain De Crespigny was as much attached to Agnes as she is certainly to him."

"Or at least to his future title and estates! My dear friend, one would suppose you had swallowed a whole circulating library this morning! Are you a believer in broken hearts? My good Marion, they were exploded long ago, like ghosts and witchcraft! Nobody now dies of love except on the stage. You do not actually suppose Agnes will expire with the disappointment! She knows better. Why, Marion, you must expect to go through half-a-dozen such affairs before you get safe into the harbor of matrimony."

"I hope not! My heart would not stand quite so much breakage," replied Marion, coloring and laughing, while she added, in a lower tone, "besides which it is already in very safe keeping. I have given it away, you know, Patrick, once for all."

"Pshaw! Marion, none of your sentimental vagaries! Your attachment is, of course, to be a *chef d'œuvre d'amour*; but nothing lasts for ever now. If there were no disappointments in such a love-in-a-cottage affair as yours, what would become of poets and novel readers! Agnes understands the game of life better than you do. In her estimation, it is like a rubber at whist, where hearts are trumps, and the prize a good establishment in common with the first partner who offers. De Crespigny knows all this, and cannot be expected to place any great value on a second-hand heart, much the worse for wear. The intimacy between them has chiefly arisen from our relationship, he being her cousin only once removed."

"I wish he were removed altogether. Captain De Crespigny ought to suffer all the bitterness of disappointment himself, when his insatiable vanity inflicts

it so heartlessly on others."

"Suppose you take that method of revenging Agnes," replied Sir Patrick, with a penetrating look. "He is the best catch going, and very civil to you. De Crespigny's attentions are an honor to any one, and would be quite a feather in your cap."

"So he seems to think; but I have no desire for such feathers. I make it a rule," said Marion, archly, "never to refuse any gentleman till he has proposed; but the honor of making him miserable for life never can be mine, though he so well deserves it. I suppose, being a Roman Catholic, he has bought an indulgence for deceit, or I should rather say falsehood."

"What old-fashioned bread-and-butter ideas you have, Marion! Everybody has been ill-used by somebody, and nobody minds it now. Agnes will continue incurably heart-broken, til some new lover pays his devoirs, and then you will understand her better, Marion. *On garde long temps son premier amant quand on n'en pas un second.*"

"I judge of her by myself; and if once so cruelly deceived as she is, Patrick, my heart could never venture on any second attachment—never! Once awakened from such a dream, I neither could nor would attempt to dream it over again. My ideas of mutual attachment are not borrowed from novels or poems, because I never had time to read one at Mrs. Penfold's, but from conceiving what it might be to have a companion for life, from whom no thought should be concealed, and all my happiness derived. Who could ever place such trust in Captain De Crespigny, if he has really, as I may say, swindled Agnes out of her time, thoughts, and affections, without intending amply to repay them with his own? I am rapidly disliking him, Patrick; and the longer we talk, the more anxious I become for your leave to be out of his way entirely. Depend upon it, I shall be excessively rude to your friend the next time we meet. So, pray, let me go to-morrow."

Hearing a slight noise, Marion looked round, and she would have felt it rather a relief at the moment if the floor could have opened under her feet, when, with a gasp of consternation, she beheld Captain De Crespigny standing in an attitude of perplexity and irresolution near the door, evidently, for once in his life, feeling almost awkward, and very nearly abashed, though a moment afterwards he regained his usual matchless intrepidity of countenance and manner; when Sir Patrick advanced, with extended hand, to welcome him, saying,

"Ah! De Crespigny! is that you?"

"The same and no other," replied he, bending his riding-whip till it nearly broke; but assuming an Irish accent to conceal his annoyance. "The top of the morning to you both. How is every inch of you?"

"Very tolerable, indeed! It always does me good to be astonished, and certainly your apparition came rather unexpectedly. It made my mustachios perfectly stand upon end; and Marion will not require a stroke of electricity for some time after this! She seems rapidly petrifying into stone!"

"Miss Marion Dunbar! if my presence be unwelcome, I wish it were possible to dissolve away in the likeness of a sigh!" said he, with a comic smile. "Shall I invite myself to sit down, or will any one else do so?"

"If you are so exceedingly ceremonious, perhaps Marion ought to reach you a chair," replied Sir Patrick, while his face became perfectly crimsoned with trying to suppress a burst of laughter, when he observed the graceful timidity of Marion's manner, contrasted with the easy assurance of Captain De Crespigny's, who looked at her with undisguised admiration. "I had been inwardly betting with myself for the last half hour that you would drop in exactly as you did. Here is an undeniably fine day, so that ends all discussion of the weather, and now for our pigeon-match."

"Any match you please in this house. I have been sitting for the last ten minutes tuning your sister's guitar, and she sent me here for the strings. How much her dog Darling has improved in the tone and expression of his barking."

"Agnes is perfectly dog mad since you gave her that pert ill-tempered little animal. As Lord Byron said, 'nobody need want a friend who can get a dog.' She wears a lock of his hair set in gold—has got a supply of sheets and towels for him, marked with his name—helps him before any of us at dinner—teaches him to bark Toryism—and says dogs have all the good qualities of mankind, with none of the evil. I wish those who preach sermons against cruelty to animals, would also say a little against over-indulging them, especially in the case of lap-dogs."

"It is an amiable weakness," observed Captain De Crespigny, in a tone that sounded very like contempt. "I suppose your sister would scarcely be outdone by Queen Henrietta Maria, who rushed through a shower of bullets to save her favorite lap-dog. I envy the whole canine race. They have, like ourselves, fox-hunting and grouse-shooting for amusement; and moreover, they are such favorites with the ladies! Horses are slaves and drudges from youth to age, bearing a yoke from which nothing can deliver them except death; but dogs generally meet with some return for their attachment, and are always believed to be sincere in what they profess. What do you say, Miss Marion Dunbar? Have I not reason to envy your estimation of Darling?"

Marion colored to the very temples, embarrassed by the consciousness of all that Captain De Crespigny had evidently overheard, and after saying a few inaudible words, she would have hastened out of the room; but on looking round, Sir Patrick, who privately thought that on the present occasion there might be one too many, had strolled off to the drawing-room, and as Captain De Crespigny continued speaking, she could not, without actual rudeness, withdraw. A blush is one of the most beautiful phenomena in nature, and so thought Captain De Crespigny, when he perceived Marion's color flitting like an aurora borealis, while for a moment she remained completely abashed, and then, with a look of apprehensive timidity, re-seated herself.

"Excuse me, Miss Dunbar!" said he, in a tone of unwonted gravity and respect, while his usual self-confident audacity seemed entirely to have forsaken him. "I became inadvertently a listener to-day, when my name was mentioned by you in terms of which I must entreat an explanation. You will think me perhaps rather too much of the free-and-easy school, if I take this liberty; but the value I place upon your good opinion and cousinly regard is such, that I shall neither eat nor sleep till you have enlightened me respecting the offences for which I am to be thus condemned unheard."

"Pray forget all that was said! I am unaccustomed to—to conceal my thoughts!" replied Marion, trying to look particularly firm; but seeing that Captain De Crespigny still waited with an obvious resolution to obtain something more explicit, she felt herself urged on to say what, under ordinary circumstances, she would have sunk into the earth rather than utter; therefore assuming a certain haughty dignity of manner quite unusual with her, she added, "If I did not almost consider you a brother, I should not remain in the room now; but I do most sincerely regret that your name occurred in our conversation at all, and particularly in a way for which I ought to apologise."

"As for my name, Miss Dunbar!" replied Captain De Crespigny, in a rallying tone, "make any use of it you please. Take it yourself, or give it to your dog, and I shall feel honored; but pardon me for being desirous that you, more than any other person in the world, should understand how perfectly unfounded is the idea of my being engaged to—to any lady."

"From all that has passed, Captain De Crespigny, and from what I have myself heard you say, I could scarcely have believed it possible that there could be any mistake," replied Marion, indignantly. "I shall never pardon myself for having betrayed such unfounded expectations; but let it be understood, that I spoke only my own thoughts, in which no other person is implicated."

"And the misapprehension was most natural—perhaps unavoidable, Miss Dunbar, considering how little you are yet accustomed to the *persiflage* of every-day society," replied Captain De Crespigny, looking perfectly irresistible. "But allow me the privilege of a cousin, to give you some little knowledge of the world as it is."

"You have done that already," replied Marion, coldly; "and I mean to be as long as possible of learning more. It certainly does not improve upon acquaintance."

"We have all much to complain of, undoubtedly! If the gossiping world here had its own way, I should be married to as rapid a succession of young ladies as the Sultan in the Arabian Nights. Reports grow here like hops. Old women round a tea table make up their budget of scandal, without giving due allowance to the altered customs of society, and my name is for ever going about the world like a cricket-ball. Every gentleman asks his partners to dance now, as nearly as possible in a tone as if he were engaging a partner for life, and says all that words can express, without attaching any permanent meaning to it, provided he has never asked that one conclusive question, which I have never yet ventured to put, though most anxious soon to do so, if I had the slightest encouragement from one whom, above all others, I admire,—Madam, will you marry me?"

Captain De Crespigny said these last words very much as if he meant them now to be serious, and fixed his eyes—eyes accustomed to do wonders—on Marion, who felt the color rushing painfully into her cheek; but angry at herself for blushing, she turned away in silence, while he added more energetically than before,

"I would not, for all the worlds upon earth, lose one iota of your good opinion. That really is precious to me. Allow me, irritated as you evidently are, in some degree to justify myself respecting my cousin Agnes. Strike, but hear me. She knows the world, having already smiled on hundreds of admirers,

and blushed for dozens; therefore I am but one in a crowd, who, like the kings in Macbeth, 'come like shadows and so depart,' being scarcely missed in the rapid succession which follows; and, to use a vulgar proverb, 'there are some ladies with whom one shoulder of mutton very soon drives down another.'"

Captain Be Crespigny paused; and had Marion been less agitated, and less anxious to terminate the interview, she could have smiled at this unusual fit of humility, which made him willing, for once, to suppose that his attentions could be insignificant; but seeing that she was now about to make a hasty exit from the room, he rapidly continued, with a slight relapse into his ordinary tone of conceit:

"I am vain enough to think that I deserve to be preferred for something better than the mere accident of birth and fortune, with which the very meanest of mankind may be endowed; but there are ladies—observe I name nobody—who, if they were informed that a gentleman waited in the next room ready to marry them, with double my income, rank, and property, would ask no other question, but put on a veil, get up a fit of bridal hysterics, and proceed to chapel. Such intimacies as mine with your sister are like a tread-mill, always apparently getting on, but never advancing, while neither of us ever dream of going a step beyond it. Agnes is formed to be gazed at with wondering admiration—to make conquests, but not to keep them. I would no more think of being seriously in love with her, than with a piece of Dresden china in a shop window. She should be shut up in a glass case, to be admired and forgotten every day. It is not the mere symmetry of form or features that could permanently interest me," continued Captain De Crespigny, looking a million of things; but Marion's eyes were fixed on the door, while her whole countenance was in a glow of indignant vexation, and he continued to speak with increasing ardor. "There is beauty in an icicle, and beauty in a sunbeam; but how different. Can you wonder—can you blame me—that I see the disparity in mind as much as in appearance between yourself and your sister. She is like an amusing book, destitute of interest, to be taken up with pleasure, but laid aside without regret. She might beguile a weary hour; but you would prevent the possibility of any hour ever becoming so."

"Captain De Crespigny, I know not what the *persiflage* of society entitles you to say, and it would be well for the happiness of others if they understood your ideas upon that subject as well," replied Marion, with restored firmness—and never had she looked so tall. "You forget the confidence that subsists between sisters, and that I am aware you generally express very different feelings, which I must still hope, for your credit, are the real truth, otherwise nothing you can say shall ever convince me that Agnes is not extremely ill-treated. I only wonder very much that she cares for you at all. I have been betrayed into speaking on this subject—I shall regret having done so as long as I live—but I must be true to my sister now, in saying what I think of your conduct, that it has been most heartless and most unjustifiable. Let me request you never again to speak to me as you have done to-day."

"No! not till the next opportunity. You should be angry often, Miss Dunbar, for it becomes you, and is the only thing that can bring you to the level of an ordinary mortal; therefore, let me detain you by the right of cousinship, if by no other, even against your wishes, one moment longer to propose terms of peace. I am going next week to do penance at Beaujolie Park with my very long-lived and not very much respected uncle, who insists on my escorting him to Harrowgate. He may, perhaps, be unreasonable enough to detain me two months, during which it would have amused me beyond measure could I act the invisible gentleman and observe your sister; but what I cannot do myself you may and must. If Agnes does not flirt in a young-lady-like manner with every man she meets, then I make you a very safe promise, that the rest of my life shall be devoted to her, and nothing you ever read in a romance shall exceed my devotion and constancy; but you must be honest, and if the day after my P.P.C. cards are left, you perceive her quite as happy to see Captain Digby, or Lord Wigton, or Sir Anybody Anything, as ever she was to see me, then I am to be honorably acquitted; and you will consider me entitled," added Captain De Crespigny, with one of his most expressive looks, "to seek for happiness where I could be sure of finding it, if only fortunate enough to be thought deserving; but, unless a preference be reciprocal, the expression of it is little believed or valued."

"Captain De Crespigny," replied Marion, looking a thousand ways to avoid meeting his eye, "whoever you may hereafter prefer, I can wish no greater happiness to any one than I enjoy myself, being engaged to one in whom I can place the most perfect reliance. My brother has probably told you already, what I am always proud to acknowledge, that your old friend Mr. Granville, is attached to me, and we await only Patrick's consent to our marriage, having fortunately obtained my uncle's."

The color mounted in brilliant hues to Marion's cheek when she spoke, for it was evidently a strong effort to do so at all, and her eyes were fixed on the ground, or she would have been astonished and shocked at the effect her words produced on Captain De Crespigny, who bit his lip till the blood nearly sprung out, while his face became for a moment pale as death; but, after fixing a long scrutinizing look on Marion's countenance, to read its expressions, he said, in a voice so altered from his usual tone of gay hilarity, that she could scarcely have recognised it:

"Dunbar will never consent. Impossible! He knows your value better. It cannot be. A parson with nothing but his pulpit! I never dreamed of such a thing—never. A life of Sunday schools and clothing societies in that bauble of a cottage. Pshaw! No girl ever ends by marrying the first man she likes, and no more will you. I shall make you prefer me in a month."

"Probably not, as I rather dislike you now," replied Marion, suppressing a smile.

"That will wear off. It is best, as Mrs. Malaprop says, to begin with a little aversion. You will at last like me beyond any one in the world."

"Extremes meet sometimes; but I must explain myself once for all now, Captain De Crespigny, that no one may ever be led into a mistake. My brother wishes us to be responsible for making this house, as far as we can, agreeable to his friends, but only as Patrick's friend can I ever now have pleasure in seeing you here, as, in another respect, I heartily disapprove of your conduct, and I will not appear for one moment to participate in the sort of farce you would carry on here with myself,—and with others. Let us be on terms of cousinly civility for the future, and never on more."

"Well, then, I am satisfied to be received on your terms," replied Captain De Crespigny, with an exceedingly dissatisfied look. "Let me be welcomed on your brother's account, until I can make myself welcome on my own. As for constancy in this world, it is all very right and very desirable, but, as I hope one of your admirers may soon discover,

> "Rien n'est plus commun que le nom,
> Rien n'est plus rare que la chose."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Captain De Crespigny remained in his sitting-room till a late hour the following night, looking over papers and preparing for his departure to Yorkshire, after which he seated himself before the dying embers of his fire to muse, for the twentieth time, on all that had passed between himself and Marion. More in love with her than he had ever believed it possible to be with any one, he recalled again and again to mind the thrilling tones of her voice, and the matchless loveliness of her countenance, till at length his attention being roused by the clock striking two, he looked at the candles burning dimly in their sockets, and prepared to wish himself good night.

When about to rise, his attention was suddenly arrested by a rustling noise behind. The shadow of a figure became visible on the opposite wall; it was distinctly outlined, and began slowly to move, when, springing to his feet with an exclamation of astonishment, Captain De Crespigny's eye fell on the tall figure of a woman enveloped in dark draperies, who stood like a phantom close by his side, without speech or motion. While his eyes were riveted in silent consternation on this mysterious apparition, gradually the cloak was thrown aside, the veil dropped, and a countenance became disclosed so white and rigid, so soul-stricken in sorrow, so utterly without life or motion, that it seemed as if nothing on earth could have looked so supernaturally wretched. No moisture flouted over her large dilated eyes, which were glassy and fixed, her parted lips were livid as death, a mortal paleness was on her forehead and cheek, and not a sound became audible, for the grave itself was not more silent. With her emaciated hands riveted together, she stood the very image of woe; while nothing human appeared in her face but its expression of mortal anguish.

Captain De Crespigny gazed at this mysterious apparition, unable to believe the evidence of his senses. A vital horror thrilled through his heart; his eyes closed as if he would willingly have closed his vision against a sight which blasted him; but at length, by a strong effort compelling himself to speak, he said, in a low, doubtful tone, "Mary Anstruther! Impossible! I was told long ago you were no more."

A few quivering, inaudible murmurs, were for some moments her only reply, as if unable yet to command herself, till at length, in a tone so low, hollow, and concentrated, that it seemed scarcely human, but resembled a dreary echo from the tomb, she said, fixing a ghastly look on Captain De Crespigny,

"No wonder you disown the wreck! I scarcely know myself in mind or body. Ages of misery have made me the creature I am! Not want, nor suffering, nor humiliation, though these are what you consigned me to, but the bitter agony of being despised and forgotten by yourself,—by you for whom I steeped my very soul in guilt! You start!—You would deny this; but when the Abbe Mordaunt, to gain possession of his niece's fortune, wished me to assist in getting her driven from the house, was it to serve him that I did so? Was it for his offered bribes that I lent my aid to that guilty work! Oh no! but her child stood in your way, and therefore I consented. You never knew what I had done for your sake; but was it not one of the many promises that you have broken, that sooner or later you would declare me—even me, the wretched Mary Anstruther, your wife. Madness and despair drove me on! I slandered her to Lord Doncaster—got her driven from his house—made my brother believe she had misrepresented me—that she had caused our disgrace and banishment—and you know the fearful end of all. I never, never thought of blood! Oh never! He was mad then! He has been mad ever since; and who can wonder! Her cry rings for ever in my ears, the sharpest on earth—a cry for life. It haunts me night and day! Go where I will, the shadow pursues me. A shapeless horror is on my mind! The fear of discovery follows me like a spectre! A whispering sound is in my ears, desolate and dreary thoughts, and fearful dreams, darkness, poverty, and solitude; my pillow is a pillow of fire; my brain is scorched,—wherever I turn, dead eyes are staring in their sockets at me. Oh! if rivers of tears could restore that murdered being, I might have peace!"

The wretched creature's words poured out like the rushing of a mighty torrent, while her very reason seemed stretched to it utmost verge. She leaned against a table, which quivered beneath her trembling form, while her dragged and ghastly features were turned towards Captain De Crespigny, and she fixed on him, with a look of dismal meaning, the blackest eyes that ever vied with night. Vainly he endeavored to withdraw his gaze from that wild and haggard countenance, or to shut his ears against the tempest of her words; but there was a compression at his heart, till his very breath seemed difficult to draw, while he listened to her almost frenzied ravings. At length, in a voice of deep and solemn import, he addressed her, while the color fled from his very lips with agitation, and a cold shudder crept through his frame:

"Tell me, Mary, I adjure you, what all this means! I have sometimes suspected that Henry De Lancey might be the natural son of my uncle; never till this moment did I fully imagine that the murdered woman was actually married. I must know all. Rather than remain in this suspense, I will ask Lord Doncaster himself. I am not a man who would inherit one acre unjustly, or sit tamely down under the suspicion that I might be swindling another out of his rights. Vague apprehensions have sometimes crossed my mind; but give me only a certainty one way or other. If beggary itself be the consequence, I shall act like a man of honor, and let the law take its course."

"Ask nothing! suspect nothing! The dark and dreadful story is buried in her grave, never to be heard of more. It rests upon the Abbe Mordaunt's conscience, and on him be the curse! Look here!" cried she wildly throwing off her cap, while her hair, which streamed like a long banner behind, was perfectly white and silvery. "This was the work of a single day, and my heart is no less changed. The world itself has altered! Oh! who can tell the unimaginable wretchedness that surrounds me! You believed that I was dead! Would that it had been so! I wish it, and well may you!" A strange smile gleamed upon her features for a moment, and vanished. "When shall I become like the dust I tread on? When shall I find beneath the green turf a chamber of darkness, of silence, and perhaps of peace! Often, often do I ask myself why I consent to live, when there are a thousand ways of escaping to my only refuge,—death! It is a horrid thought, but it will come. There is no future in my life! Houseless, friendless, penniless, and without hope,—a fiery anguish is at my heart, as if hell itself were there!"

"Mary Anstruther!" said Captain De Crespigny, in a hurried tone of great agitation, "I wronged you once. I acknowledge it with sorrow and remorse. We were young indeed then, and you had no cause, surely, to complain of my liberality. I offered you——"

"Yes! yes! yes!" replied she, with frantic vehemence, while her eyes, glazed, and without moisture, were darkened by the shadow of deep despair. "You offered me everything but what you had promised, and what alone I would accept. You took from me every blessing of life, and offered me money! I hated you for supposing me mean enough to accept it. I would rather die in the street, or perish on a dung-hill, than receive your alms. My name branded with infamy, not a roof to cover me, and not a friend in all the earth to pity me; my brother now a terror and a reproach to all who know him; crazed myself in mind and heart, aloof from all earthly sympathy, branded and alone—what remains for me? Yet I would rather die in an hospital than owe the very air I breathe to you."

"Why, then, do I see you here?" asked Captain De Crespigny, endeavoring to steady the tremulousness of his voice. "I would serve you yet, if possible. I cannot entirely forget former times!"

"Former times!" exclaimed the miserable being, with a heavy sob, while a rush of agony poured itself out in her voice, and clasping her hands over her burning eyes, tears, such as she had not shed for ages, fell like rain over her face. "Who talks of former times! You! who made my whole life, past, present, and future, one long agony of suffering! Do you remind me of former times! Oh! bring them back—those days which now seem like a dream, when I was young, innocent, and happy! Who so gay then as I—whose step so joyous—whose eye so bright—who so admired; and," added she, her voice changing to a low, deep tone of anguish, "who so loved? It was the delirium of an hour, and what am I now? Of all the wretched outcasts on earth, the most wretched; while he who has made me so thinks it degradation to waste a thought upon one so lost."

There was a pause for some moments, and she added, in a deep, sepulchral voice,

"A wide gulph separates us now. I know and feel that. I do not even wish it otherwise. You are courted and admired in every house, while I wander like a solitary ghost upon the earth! A furnace of guilt and horror burns within me! No language is dark and dreadful enough to express what I endure. The fresh green turf, and the blue sky above, I dare not look upon; for they speak of days that are for ever past—of that short summer filled with hope and joy, which has been followed by this dreary, endless winter——"

Captain De Crespigny's eye quailed beneath the look of chilling despair fastened upon himself. The hurricane of her feelings had been exhausted, but there was an unearthly fixedness in the eye of Mary Anstruther. In her voice, too, a cold, calm, almost spectral solemnity of tone had succeeded to the wild expression of her manner. Her expression was that of a lull after a storm, the ground-swell that follows the hushing of a tempest; and she again stood as at first, pale as death, still and motionless as a corpse, while the long drapery of her cloak hung as a winding-sheet around her wasted limbs.

"If there be any thing on earth I can do for you, speak but the word, and it is done," said Captain De Crespigny, with undisguised emotion. "My purse, if you will yet accept it, is yours; but remember your very life is at stake in coming here. I have shut my eyes already too long! I cannot conceal from my own mind that the man who calls himself Howard, and lives with Sir Arthur Dunbar, must be your brother. He has hidden himself always from me, and I

should scarcely even know him if we met, but this shall not last. Tell him he must go! Once,—and once only, I may for your sake connive at his escape from justice, but let Ernest cross my path again, and no earthly power shall induce me to neglect the sacred law that bids us deliver up the murderer to justice. You also at St. John's Lodge, would once have followed the example of your unhappy brother's crime. You escaped on that occasion, and I have tried to convince myself it could not be,—that you were already in another world,—but I will not, even for the sake of our early days, be made a participator in crime. Go, then, to some distant country together. The sword of the law is suspended over both your heads. Fly for your very lives. The means shall not be wanting,—and tell your guilty brother, as I tell you, that if he delays, cost what it may,—and I know the cost to me will be great indeed, justice shall have its course."

"Let me then drink my cup of sorrow to the dregs!" replied Mary, in a low deep whisper. "He will not go! No earthly power can rule him,—no terror in life intimidates him. For myself; I dread nothing now but a prolonged existence. The sooner it is ended by any hand but my own, the better. Yours is indeed the fittest. That will only complete the work which you began. Give us up then to justice. In remembrance of those days when among the green lanes of England you promised to love me,—me only till death,—deliver us up now to the rope and to the scaffold. Yes!" added she, with a look of fevered anguish, and a frightful hysterical laugh, "This is as it should be; cheated of innocence, blighted in affection, blistered in heart, trodden down with contempt, driven almost to madness, and delivered up to death. Such be the fate of all who ever trust in man."

"Leave me! leave me!" said Captain De Crespigny, visibly shuddering. "If you desire vengeance, the sight of you, Mary Anstruther, such as you are now, is more than I can bear. Leave me!"

"Vengeance!—No!—It was for a good purpose I came, and let me not forget it," said Mary, in a low, broken, bewildered voice, while a gleam like sunlight on the stormy wave seemed for a moment to restore the softness and beauty of youth to her countenance. "I would save you from death. My wretched brother long ago suspected that you were the author of my ruin. That secret he never could wring from me, and he never shall. Oh, no! I ask no revenge on you. I am grieved, even once to have reproached you; but it is done, and my tongue shall be silent in the grave before you hear it again. Ernest swore an oath,—a deep, deep oath, that if you had indeed deceived me, nothing should screen you from his vengeance. Already he was irritated, believing you wished to marry Miss Howard, and on that subject you know how long he has been crazed. Ernest never forgives, and never forgets. He lives but for revenge. He would make you drink a cup bitter as his own. On that fatal night to which I never dare to look back, the knife he used was yours,—yes! it was stolen for the very purpose, and you know its peculiar form. He intended, if detected, to accuse you as an accessary to the murder. His plans are skillfully laid, and he threatens thus to hurl you from the eminence on which you now stand in society——"

"Impossible! absurd! Nothing but derangement could make your brother imagine any mortal would believe a fabrication so atrocious and improbable!"

"It will at least excite interest, and his plans are but too well laid. My story might then become public; and little as the world thinks in general of such sorrows as mine, there are some who would pity me. Ernest has the cunning of madness; and he thinks if you and Henry De Lancey were removed, he must succeed to Lord Doncaster. If I live, his strange and deadly scheme of revenge shall be circumvented; yet beware of Ernest! Your life is not safe for an hour! Night and day,—alone or in company, at your table or in your bed, wherever you turn, and wherever you go, beware; for none but myself can tell what his love or his hatred are. I would prevent mischief for his sake, and—and even for yours."

A dark convulsion passed over the unhappy woman's countenance,—she gazed for several moments at Captain De Crespigny in silent, disastrous wretchedness, and with the livid smile of a broken heart, she disappeared.

Captain De Crespigny scarcely slept that night,—the moaning of the wind sounded dismal as the cry of departed spirits in his ears, and when at last his eye closed in feverish, restless slumber, he suddenly started up, thinking his name had been called out with a shriek of anguish in accents to which he had long been a stranger, and unable to tell whether it had been a dream or a reality, he watched for some time in agitated silence, and towards morning fell into a deep repose.

CHAPTER XXV.

When Captain De Crespigny called two days after this at St. John's Lodge, to take leave before setting out for Yorkshire, he looked so absent and so agitated, that Agnes became quite elated and flattered by what she attributed to his unconquerable regret at being obliged to take so long a leave of herself. She even forgave him for enquiring almost immediately what had become of Marion, and answered with careless vivacity, "She is gone to her favorite home at Portobello. Marion perfectly idolises her uncle. I should require to attend a series of lectures on naval tactics, and to take a course of nautical novels for a month, before I could get on with the Admiral as she does! My sister talks about the battles of Trafalgar and Camperdown, as if she had fought at them herself, but really somehow or other, I never can find a word for good, worthy sir Arthur!"

"And yet," observed Sir Patrick, "you never seem very much at a loss for conversation, Agnes, when I have the pleasure of seeing you! It is years, countless years, since I have entered his house, or since he has entered mine; but suppose we go down together some day, and cut out Marion at once, by doing the agreeable in our very best and most fascinating style!"

"If my uncle Doncaster were such a man, I should certainly make up to him greatly!" said Captain De Crespigny, in a tone more than commonly in earnest. "It would be well worth your while to try."

"Sir Arthur has nothing to leave! you are quite mistaken there!" replied Agnes, inadvertently. "When we were perfect children, and all on the very best terms, he used to say that it would be quite enough for an old sailor like him, if he could bequeath us his watch and enough to bury him! As Pat says, he might make his will on his thumb-nail. Oh! rest assured he has nothing to leave!"

"I did not suppose he had," continued Captain De Crespigny, gravely. "A small income in his liberal hand has done more good than the very largest in any other person's. It is an odd phenomenon in nature, that the lightest purse always is the most open to others, while the heavier a purse grows the more its mouth becomes contracted! A sort of spasmodic affection, I think!"

"I wonder if it will ever be engraved on people's tomb-stones how much they die worth?" said Agnes. "That would be all the good many people can ever get by their wealth, and what they are much more proud of, in this mercenary world, than of any personal good qualities."

"Young ladies are for ever working me purses, and I have nothing to put in them!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, throwing his own up in the air, and catching it again. "Sir Arthur and I are both fighting under the banner of poverty now; and that one word expresses in a small compass all earthly annoyance."

"Oh, no! There are many things worse!" exclaimed Agnes magnanimously. "What a vulgar, low, mercenary idea! so like you, Patrick!"

"Thank you, Agnes! If your good opinion were worth a farthing, I should grudge to have lost it!"

"But Dunbar! *revenons a nos moutons*," interrupted Captain De Crespigny, trying to look indifferent. "Surely there is no just cause or impediment why we may not ride down to Portobello this morning, and call on good, worthy Sir Arthur together. It is a perfect disgrace to us both that we never go near his house, much as I always have respected him, and always shall."

"This is a very sudden fit of cordiality! When did you feel the first symptoms coming on?" asked Sir Patrick drily, while Agnes began vehemently winding some skeins of silk. "Let me feel your pulse, De Crespigny. I am ready to bet your uncle against mine—and the odds are considerable—that half an hour since, you would no more have thought of paying a P.P.C. visit to old Sir Arthur, than to Lord Nelson's monument. My dear fellow, I know you—and you ought to know me better than to suppose me capable of paying a dull, penitential visit there!"

"Well, be it so! This is no time for me to recommend disinterested attentions, Dunbar, as I am on wing for Yorkshire, obliged during a whole long dreary month to play the amiable! Did you ever try that experiment, Miss Dunbar?"

"Of being amiable? no, never! I am not come to that yet! Whenever people mention a young lady as being amiable, you may depend upon it she has nothing better to recommend her. I leave mere hum-drum good qualities to such people as Clara Granville."

"Omit her in your conversation altogether, Agnes! I told you already, that she must never be named here," interrupted Sir Patrick, with angry vehemence. "Why will you continually intrude that family on our conversation?"

"I do not, Patrick. I beg leave to deny the honorable gentleman's last assertion! It is three days at least since I have so much as named Clara Gran——"

Before Agnes could finish her sentence, Sir Patrick, always afraid to trust his temper when irritated, as he knew the hurricane to be fearful if allowed to rage, had strode to the door, and burst out of the room, as if the very house were scarcely large enough to hold him. This *denouement* Agnes had confidently anticipated, being perfectly aware that her brother never withstood a second repetition of Clara's name, therefore she had artfully tried the experiment of producing an explosion, which might at any hazard expel him, and secure to herself a *tete-a-tete* leave-taking with Captain De Crespigny, from whom she now confidently anticipated a formal declaration.

When Sir Patrick's angry footsteps died away in the distance, it was not without some real agitation, therefore, and a great deal more assumed, that Agnes allowed her long, dark eye-lashes to droop over her cheek, and called up a rather ostentatious blush, while she sat for several minutes in silent embarrassment; but though Captain De Crespigny assumed his most fascinating expression, he seemed resolute not to begin the dialogue; and while affecting to be considerably embarrassed himself, an arch smile nevertheless glittered in his eye, and played about his mouth.

"Is it true," asked Agnes, at length, in a subdued voice, and without looking up, "that you are actually going for some months to-morrow? I must tie a knot on my pocket handkerchief, not to forget you during so long an absence."

"I would much rather tie a knot of a different kind," said Captain De Crespigny, in his usual rallying tone. "But necessity has no law. Going, going, gone! Positively the last time! Knocked down to Miss Dunbar. A great bargain. The best article on hand."

"You are an admirable auctioneer, and shall dispose of me next," said Agnes, laughingly selecting a rose-bud from her bouquet. "I must give you something to take away, very beautiful, and which I am sure you will like."

"That must be yourself, then," replied Captain De Crespigny, looking most cruelly charming. "I hear the young ladies are all to wear black crape on their left arm after my exit. I did expect a public dinner from them, but that is too common-place. My tailor received one lately on removing from one street to another, and the waiter at Carlisle on retiring from his profession. I wonder nobody ever voted me a testimonial. My speech on the occasion would be exquisite."

"Patrick thinks you very much addicted to make speeches," replied Agnes, with sly emphasis. "I suppose, as you are setting out so suddenly, that Lord Doncaster is seriously ill now. A number of old people have died off lately. He must be two hundred at least, for I have heard of him so long! I remember three years ago hearing that his memory had failed."

"Not at all—not in the very least. He thinks himself younger and handsomer every year. He is actually addicted still to flirtation in all its branches. He told me the last time we parted, that many ladies, if he chose, would prefer him to me. Perhaps they might. I dare say he was in the right. We never grow old in our family—never! and we have all excellent memories," continued Captain De Crespigny, fixing his dangerous eyes on Agnes. "Mine will be stored with many never-to-be forgotten recollections of the last few months, 'remembered,' as public orators say, 'till the latest moment of my existence.' Memory has put all these scenes in her pocket for me, to be enjoyed hereafter; and how delightful would a life-time be, made up of such hours as I have spent in this house! I feel myself striking root in it, like a cutting of geranium!"

"Indeed!" replied Agnes, smiling most benignly; "geraniums are very great favorites of mine—very great, indeed—so I wish you were metamorphosed into one."

"If all the events of life could be modelled on a plan of my own, what a pleasant little place the world would be!" said Captain De Crespigny, admiring the polish of his boots. "I might then continue here some time longer, as a volunteer in the corps of your victims, who are as numerous now as a disbanded army. Do pray let us call over the muster-roll of your admirers and count them. I could die in my chair with curiosity to know how many they are!"

"Not above three or four cases of life and death!" said Agnes, laughing. "But you jest at scars who never felt a wound."

"I most heartily sympathize with them all," replied Captain De Crespigny, with an extra-sentimental sigh. "I have gone through every sorrow of life myself—outraged affections, and all that sort of thing. You cannot conceive, Miss Dunbar, how like we victims are sometimes to the frog in the fable, inflated with empty hopes."

"I must shut my eyes to that."

"Your eyes should never be shut. They are much too beautiful! With respect to your admirers, they might say, like the weather-cock to the wind, '*Si vous ne changez pas, je suis constante!*' The whole world has been pulling caps for you all winter, and you pretend to have limited yourself to three or four victims! Impossible! You are concealing the half of them! Forgetting Captains A——, B——, C——, and D——. I have as many young ladies as that dying for me. Now, do let us run over an authentic list of their names. Show me all your court-yards at once. I could bet the finest camellia at Loddige's, that you do not name them all."

"Who shall I say?" exclaimed Agnes, getting up an extempore blush, and her archest smiles. "I have a most inhospitable memory for bores, and shall forget two-thirds of them. Captain Digby, slightly wounded; Colonel Meade, pierced through the heart; Captain O'Brien, slowly recovering; Mr. Deveril, despaired of; Lord Wigton,——"

"Killed outright!" interrupted Captain De Crespigny. "You mention him in rather a more relenting tone than the rest, like Bonaparte, when he wept over one wounded man, alter condemning hundreds to death. But you are come to a period already. Is there no other worthy of remembrance?"

"Only one, whom I cannot name!" replied Agnes, turning away. "Last, but not least."

"Ah! some poor fellow with nothing, I suppose—waiting, perhaps, for the death of a rich relation; but those tiresome old bores always live for ever, and a day besides. Whoever he is, let me advise you not to think of him; a man should as soon ask the sun in the hemisphere to wait for him, as a young lady in the full blaze of her beauty and attractions. No, no, Miss Dunbar, take my advice. Be like time and tide. I have a real cousinly interest in your welfare, and should be delighted, on my return, to find this room fragrant with cake, and glittering with favors. I shall come down on purpose, if you ask me! I positively shall!"

If a look could kill, Captain De Crespigny must have withered away beneath the glance of Agnes' eyes, which streamed with indignant flashes of anger and surprise; but unconscious, apparently, of being otherwise than most agreeable, he continued, in his most captivating manner.

"I must be off now to Macleay's. Half a dozen friends are dying to obtain a likeness of me, and a deputation of ladies made me promise lately to sit for them. I wonder what can induce me to take so much trouble," added he, with a gay, triumphant laugh. "The painter is quite afraid he shall be robbed and murdered for it."

"Humility is not certainly your cardinal virtue," said Agnes, with a look of angry scorn, which few could have withstood. "You cultivate an extensive acquaintance."

"Very! I must really see whether people can be induced to cut me, for it is exceedingly troublesome. I know sixty-four families with three young ladies in each. It would puzzle the calculating machine to make out how many that amounts to. But, meantime, I must unwillingly say the most hateful of all words—farewell. I have been putting off time here, expecting Dunbar for the last half hour, though little able to afford so many minutes. My idiot of a watch must surely be too slow, or your brother would have been back about the sale of mad Tom. I have twenty minds to buy him, if Dunbar did not ask so very long a price."

"You are intending, I believe," asked Agnes, "to enter him for the—the Chiltern Hundreds?"

"Not exactly! but the Doncaster St. Leger. He would be the first horse in that line, though asses are perfectly accustomed to them. Good morning! *au revoir!* I mean to Londonize for a few weeks, then go to Paris, and afterwards disperse myself over every corner of the uncivilized globe. Can I do anything for you anywhere? Geneva velvets? Parisian bonnets? Swiss muslins? I am at your service in every quarter of the world. May I beg my very best regards to your sister."

So saying, Captain De Crespigny bowed himself out of the room, with very much the air of a popular actor who expects three rounds of applause, and Agnes having, with a face as unmoved as if it had been enamelled, coldly given him her hand, with an ill-supported smile on her quivering lip, wished him a pleasant journey, and turned almost haughtily away; a bolt of ice seemed to have fallen upon her heart, and in that small moment was comprised the agony of ages; but the greatest wonder in nature is the entire self-command given to many, and especially to women, by means of which they can hear what involves the happiness of a life-time, and yet betray no visible emotion.

The strongest feelings on earth never are discovered. Feeble minds can conceal nothing, but those who have strength of mind to suffer most deeply, are those who have strength of mind also to hide what they do endure. On slight occasions, Agnes was a most accomplished fainter; but now, having stood, with a specious smile on her countenance, till the door had finally closed, she rushed to the privacy of her own room, and closed the door, then seating herself, in all the luxury of solitude, she meditated with silent astonishment on all that had passed.

No coroner's inquest can be summoned on a deceased flirtation, and whether it die a natural death or a violent one never can be known, as it may be caused merely by some trifling oversight, perhaps by the cruel aspersion of an enemy, or simply by whim and caprice, as in this case seemed the most probable, and to Agnes the most mortifying. Wounded in all her most sensitive feelings, a crowd of angry and depressing thoughts crowded into her brain, while she could not but feel that the arrows which had struck her were most cruelly barbed and most skilfully aimed. It was harrowing to her vain, proud spirit, to imagine that Captain De Crespigny could really be indifferent. It seemed, indeed, almost impossible! Could his carelessness be all assumed! Had he, indeed, an honorable scruple of engaging her upon the uncertainty of his uncle's demise. It might be so. Agnes felt that entire despondency would come soon enough, if come it must; and anxious to believe in Captain De Crespigny's attachment, she seemed now resolved to keep up the farce with herself a little longer. She felt certain that he had cast back a look of regret on leaving the room, which spoke volumes, and these volumes she filled up according to her own imagination. The parting had, perhaps, been as painful to Captain De Crespigny as to herself, but what could he do if Lord Doncaster always continued to be the "undying one," standing in the way of their mutual happiness. Agnes now lived over every scene which had passed between herself and her supposed lover. She could not imagine those feelings expressed to any other which seemed created by herself alone. She recapitulated all his civilities to herself, remembered how his last sigh had been sighed, how his last look had been looked; and, after a glance at the mirror, which proved as usual an effectual safety-valve to any feelings of mortification, she became at last restored to the agreeable conviction, that the most considerate, self-denying, and constant of lovers was Captain De Crespigny.

"And," exclaimed Agnes, with another triumphant glance at the mirror, "as he said only yesterday, '*on peut fuir sans oublier*.' Let him admire any other if he can!"

I'll still believe that story wrong,
Which ought not to be true.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The intellectual powers and literary acquirements of Henry de Lancey were first-rate, and feeling a consciousness of ability, he ardently longed to coin them into fame and distinction. Full of high aspirations, there was something grand in the outline of his head, and in the expression of his speaking eyes, while animated by his desire to render himself worthy of Caroline, and to reward the care of Sir Arthur by his own exertions. He longed now to run the race of life with others—to be useful among men—to win for himself a place in society—to write his name perhaps in the records of time—but above all, to promote the cause of truth, religion, and holiness. He had learned in the society of Mr. Granville to believe that true happiness is not to be found in the temple of fame, nor in the temple of pleasure or of fortune, but in the temple of God; and at one time his thoughts and studies were turned towards the church, with a fervent desire to take orders, till the tide of his plans became entirely changed by the unexpected arrival of a commission in the 15th Huzzars, then quartered in Canada, which he felt bound, from whatever hand it came, to accept.

Henry had been deeply affected when first told all the peculiar circumstances of his own history, but Sir Arthur accustomed him from the first to discuss the subject confidentially, that every recollection might be preserved which he yet retained of those earlier days, now involved in impenetrable mystery, which none but himself had witnessed, but the secret of which Sir Arthur still entertained a sanguine hope of at last developing, while often, when gazing with almost parental affection at his promising young *protege*, he prophesied that his unnatural connections would yet be forced or persuaded to acknowledge him.

Though lines of deep thought were already riveted on the youthful countenance of Henry, yet his manner became full of life and animation; and in personal courage he was the boldest of the bold, displaying a fearless energy of character, which caused the Admiral to express, on the night when they were about to part, a confident hope that, though the service of his country had not been his choice, yet he was well suited to his profession, and his profession to him.

"Let me only become another Sir Arthur Dunbar, and my utmost ambition will be gratified!" exclaimed Henry, warmly clasping the hand of his benefactor. "Often—oh, how often! I shall look back upon the only home, and the best friend I have ever known!"

They were to meet no more, as young De Lancey had engaged his place in the earliest coach next morning, and Marion saw, by the paleness of his cheek, and the compression of his lip, that though for worlds he would not have compromised his manhood by weeping, yet, moved as much by Sir Arthur's evident grief as by his own, he had the utmost difficulty in suppressing a burst of tears.

The aged Admiral grasped his young friend's hand in silence, and leaning for some moments on his arm, he walked up and down the room with heavy measured steps, his eyes cast down, his noble forehead clouded with care, and his brows knit as in deep and painful thought. He too seemed to dread the greatness of his own agitation, being little fitted now to bear any, yet it seemed to Marion as if a tear had forced its way into his glazed and nearly blinded eyes, though carefully screening it from observation, and evidently unwilling or unable to say a word. After several minutes had elapsed, Henry broke the long silence, exclaiming, in a low, tremulous tone of incoherent agitation,

"Before my voice fails, Sir Arthur, I must speak!—I must say something, to tell you what I feel——"

"No! no! my dear boy! I know it all! I will believe more than you say, but spare yourself and me," interrupted Sir Arthur, in a tone of calm and serious affection. "We know each other, Henry."

"But once—only once let me say all that has been treasured in my heart for years! Can I leave the happiest home which ever blessed a son with his father, and not remember that but for you I should have been a friendless outcast! Every act of kindness you have shown me, every smile of regard, every token of confidence, crowds upon my memory now, and increases the store of obligations which it is my pride and my happiness to owe you. If you could but read my heart, Sir Arthur, I need not speak; for there you would see love without bounds, and gratitude which it shall ever be my delight to cherish! If I am better than the brutes that perish, you are, under Providence, the cause; and I shall be worse than the worst of them, if I ever for one hour overlook what I owe to you, or forget the principles of honor, duty, truth, and piety that you have taught me."

Henry paused in speechless emotion, he clenched his hands together, the youthful fire of his eye became dimmed, and he hurried to the window for several moments, where, having in some measure recovered his composure, he turned round, and saw, for the first time in his life, tears rolling down the face of Sir Arthur—the tears of a good and venerable man, of all sights upon earth the most affecting; and overcome with emotion, Henry took his benefactor's hand in his own, with an expression of the deepest solemnity and respect, saying, in rapid but tremulous accents,

"It might soothe the very bed of death, for you, Sir Arthur, to remember what you have done for me!—more than almost any man can ever do for another. The first of earthly blessings is to be loved; and yet, but from your kindness to me from childhood, no eye would ever have saddened at my departure, nor brightened at my return! With not a friend upon the visible earth but yourself, the child perhaps of shame and misery, I must have become lost indeed! The thought of this will be nearest my heart when it ceases to beat! If I perish abroad—or if—if we meet no more on earth, take all I can offer, Sir Arthur, my fervent prayers that you may be rewarded."

Sir Arthur mournfully held out his hand to Henry, who kneeled down and kissed it with the profoundest reverence; then starting hastily up, he seemed about to rush out of the room, when he was arrested by the deep, solemn voice of the Admiral, whose eye had now become calm and steady, while in a low and impressive voice he said,

"It is true, Henry, we shall probably meet no more! I know, and so must you, that this is our last interview on earth; but long after I am at rest in the grave, may you remember, and may you deserve the fervent blessing I now give you, trusting that both my children, yourself and Marion, may hereafter enjoy as bright a destiny as any child of earth can know in this suffering and sin-blighted world. In speaking of the past, Henry, do not suppose that the obligation is all on your side! No! your dutiful affection has more than re-paid me. It is something to know that my aged years have not been spent in vain—that I leave a record in your heart, where my name will be respectfully and affectionately remembered! No man living can endure the thought of being utterly forgotten; and to you, my young friends, I commit my memory. The earth will lie lighter on my grave for the belief, that you have loved me so well, and will so truly lament me. Your young spirits have cheered my heart—your welfare has deeply interested me; and I know that one day or other, my young soldier will do me honor in his profession, and not forget to shed a tear over my remains."

Many were the tears of both Henry and Marion at these words; but Sir Arthur calmly continued in a firmer voice,

"When I called you back, my dear Henry, it was not for any vain attempt to express my feelings,—that would be impossible,—but to mention how, in all probability, you may one day be able more than to return the little I have done. It is easy for men to wrestle through the difficulties of life, and with such talent and enter-enterprise as yours, to conquer them all. For other reasons, too, I have no doubt of your at last being most happily settled for life, but many anxious thoughts beset me respecting Marion. The uncertainty of Richard Granville's prospects, and the certainty that my nephew will refuse his consent to her marriage, weighs heavily at my heart. I do trust that a long life of happiness awaits you both; but if my worst anticipations were ever to be realised—if your brother, Marion, a bankrupt already in fortune and character, were hereafter to desert you—if your sister, heartless and vain, should throw herself away, and leave you in bleak and sorrowful loneliness,—then remember, Henry, my solemn and last injunction is laid upon you, to act as a brother towards Marion,—much may then be in your power—more than you now expect—and you must then protect her, as I would have done myself, considering all that you may ever do for her, as done for me."

"It would be something to live for, if I had a hope of being useful to Marion, Sir Arthur! Under any circumstances that would have been a pleasure; but now it has become ten times more a sacred duty than ever. Your injunction shall remain with me till my dying hour!"

In the solitude and silence of his own apartment, Henry gave ample vent to his long-suppressed anguish, while mourning over the sad conviction, that he had now seen, probably for the last time, that generous and noble-hearted benefactor, whom he loved with an enthusiasm to which no words could do justice. Though every action of his life had been actuated by grateful attachment, he now felt as if his existence had been wasted without sufficiently testifying his ardent affection, and he wondered to think that any opportunities were ever formerly overlooked, of conversing with Sir Arthur, and attending on him. Henry thought of his growing infirmities, of his solitary home, of his high spirit, and of his resolute mind, now enervated by advancing years, and mourned to think that in sickness, or even at the hour of death, he himself must no longer be at hand, to console and support his benefactor.

Exhausted nature at length needed repose, and amidst the stillness and darkness of a night which had already seemed interminable, Henry felt himself slowly sinking into the calmness of slumber, when suddenly he was awakened to consciousness by a slight rustling sound from beside his bed, and the

noise of some one breathing, as if trying in vain to suppress it. Uncertain what this might be, he opened his eyes, and lay perfectly immoveable; but gradually his heart almost ceased to beat, and quailed with a feeling of supernatural apprehension, when the curtains were slowly opened, and a dark form cautiously stooping over him, gazed into his face, till he felt the warm breath upon his cheek.

In the dead hour of the night, Marion was startled out of a dull, heavy, unrefreshing sleep, by a sharp shrill cry for help, which seemed to proceed from Henry's room, and was succeeded by stifled cries, and the sound of a violent scuffle. Springing out of bed with an instantaneous decision, Marion flew towards the spot, calling loudly for assistance, and the instant she opened the door, some one, uttering a wild and fearful shriek, rushed violently out, striking her what seemed at the moment a severe blow on the arm, but an instant afterwards she became deluged with blood.

Henry was in the act of eagerly pursuing the rapidly receding figure, when, seeing Marion stagger backwards, he caught her in his arms, supported her to a chair, and hastily bound up her wound, which was bleeding profusely.

"Leave me! I am well! Look to my uncle," cried she, eagerly. "He must have been alarmed! How was it, Henry? Are you hurt? Is Sir Arthur safe? Oh! there he is!" exclaimed she, rushing into her uncle's arms, and bursting into tears.

"Here is Mr. Howard too!" added Henry, turning round, as that gentleman entered with a calm but rather anxious look, while the paleness of his cheek was almost startling. "You seem, Sir, to have dropped ready dressed from the clouds!"

"I seldom retire early to bed," replied he, with a quick, sharp, scrutinizing glance at Henry. "Hearing a tumult in the house, I—I——"

"You gave it time to subside before attempting to interfere," added Henry, with a thrilling emphasis in his voice, while closely observing Mr. Howard's countenance. "There is a strange and fearful mystery here!"

"There is!" replied he, gnawing his nails to the very quick, while he shot a momentary glance of rancorous detestation at young De Lancey, after which, his features became as passionless and immoveable as if they had been fixed in a vice. "The whole affair is mysterious—very——"

"What! you already know all!"

"I do!—I—I met the man rushing out of the house," answered Mr. Howard, with the air of one outfacing an accusation, but his voice became low and suffocated. "I attempted to stop him, but——"

"I am glad you did!" observed Sir Arthur, looking anxiously at Henry, and then gazing intently on the sallow countenance of Mr. Howard, which became gradually dyed with the deepest hectic; his lips were now closely compressed, he raised his tall figure to its full height, and closed his eyes, as if wishing thus to exclude some fearful spectre from his mind, but after a momentary struggle, he became once more calm and resolute, with a singular serenity of look and manner.

"You met some one in the passage! The assassin must have escaped long before!" muttered Henry, in a vague and dreaming tone; but his brow grew darker, and there was an anxious intensity in his look and voice, when he added in a tone of resolute determination, "Let me be plain with you, Mr. Howard! Your expression of countenance when I saw you last night, filled me with astonishment—almost with apprehension; it was a look never to be forgotten! Your manner now perplexes me! There is something amiss which I cannot understand, but for your sake as well as my own, this very strange affair must be fully investigated!"

"You suspect me!" exclaimed Mr. Howard, with a sudden laugh of terrible mirth, and in a voice elevated into accents of indescribable fury, while his eye throwing off the torpor in which it had been shrouded, glittered with the fearful brightness of delirium, his veins became swollen, and his figure dilated beyond its ordinary height, assuming an aspect of rage and of almost supernatural strength, such as insanity alone can give. "You suspect me, and you have dared to confess it. Many a word lightly spoken carries weight. The arrow has been shot at random, but you are right. Lightning rushes through my brain! I would be destructive as a whirlwind to you, De Lancey, as I once was to your wretched mother. She stood in the way of my advancement, as you may yet do,—she accused, betrayed, and ruined my sister," continued he in a rapid voice, insupportably shrill and piercing. "You too have injured me, and you shall suffer for it as she did—she died!"

With the spring and the strength of a tiger, he rushed toward Henry, and a knife which he had plucked from his sleeve, gleamed like lightning in the air, when suddenly Sir Arthur placed himself so as to intercept the madman's career, and fixed upon him his commanding eye, with a look of calm, stern, and lofty composure, while Henry vainly strove to advance before him, and Marion, with frantic vehemence, called for help.

"Take my life, if you must have blood. I have trusted you, Howard,—shown you kindness when no other hand was stretched out in compassion, and through my heart only shall you reach that boy!" said Sir Arthur, firmly. "I am old, and ready to die, but he is a son to me, and shall not perish in my sight."

"Your life! no! not yours," replied the maniac, in accents of vehement horror, yet still fastening his glaring eyes on Henry, with looks of deadly malignity. "May my hand wither before it injures one hair of your venerable head! May my life be sacrificed first, and my limbs be manacled in chains! But for him, his days shall be few! He bears a charmed life, or he must have died long ago! I would extinguish all mankind!—the whole human race, if I could; but there are two whom I have sworn to destroy, and he is one! I have said it! The will and the power are mine! I cannot fail! His life shall be hunted by night and by day! This knife shall be plunged to the very hilt in his blood! I have said it. One blow—one mortal blow, and it is done!"

Having said these words, with gestures of outrageous madness, he bounded towards the door, broke through every impediment with a strength which ten men could scarcely have mastered, and giving a loud delirious cry of insufferable wildness, he instantaneously vanished.

Before long, the neighborhood was aroused, lights gleamed and reddened in the opposite windows, shouts arose among the assembling crowd, and a rapid search was made for the frantic and mysterious criminal, but not a trace of any living being could be discovered, and when they paused to listen, not a sound broke the stillness of the night.

"This is my second preservation from a violent death!" said Henry, in once more taking leave of Sir Arthur. "And most forcibly do all these circumstances bring to mind the horrors of that fearful night which first threw me on the care of my benefactor. It is exactly such a shadowy form bending over me in the silence of midnight, which has often from that hour haunted me in my dreams. I am ready, I trust, to brave any danger in the open face of day; but there is something terrible to me, I confess—something vague and appalling in the stealthy, mysterious, death-like approach of an enemy evidently insane, who has pursued me with remorseless hatred from childhood to the present hour, breaking upon me in the darkest hours of midnight, and invading me amidst the moments of helpless repose; but I am under the care of one who slumbereth not, nor sleepeth, and to Him I confidently commit myself."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Every man should be considered accountable to Providence, not only for diffusing as much enjoyment around him as he possibly can, but also for being as happy himself as is consistent with the many gifts bestowed on him individually; and it is a duty to look back with self-reproach on any hour of existence, which, on account of our ill temper or discontent, has been less enjoyed by ourselves or by another, than it might have been; yet it is an obvious truth, that all men might be happier than they are, if mankind would but make the best of life for themselves and others. Never had this remark appeared so undeniable to Marion as now, in the case of Agnes, who alienated Sir Patrick more and more by her peevishness, though the arrows of her satire had more poison than point in them, and he was always ready enough to enter on a skirmish in the diamond-cut-diamond style of conversation, while it often blistered the very heart of their gentle sister, to hear the bitter taunting remarks and repartees which they levelled at each other.

One day, Agnes, in a magnificent fit of ill-humor, had seated herself at that universal refuge for idleness and discontent, an open window, complaining that the dulness of Edinburgh was quite maddening; while it became evident that the needle of her temper pointed in the most stormy direction. It was a favorite doctrine with Agnes, that *ennui* is peculiar to intellectual beings, and that those who never suffered from it were like cows or sheep, scarcely to be considered rational. On the present occasion, therefore, she was relieving the intolerable tedium which oppressed her, by delivering her opinion to Sir Patrick, in no measured terms, on the unutterable cruelty of his leaving her stranded in Edinburgh, while she understood he was going soon to amuse himself abroad.

She seemed inflated with ill-humor, like a spider, bursting with its own poison, and her countenance had assumed not the most amiable expression in the world, while Sir Patrick snatched up a newspaper, which he began intently reading upside down. Having successfully and distinctly proved that she was a martyr to the injuries which "patient merit of th' unworthy takes," and her brother being apparently on the point of falling asleep before her face, Agnes suddenly rose from her seat, with an exclamation of annoyance and astonishment, saying,

"I do believe here is that old formality, Sir Arthur, going to call! Getting slowly and with difficulty out of a ragged, ruinous-looking hackney coach, as frail as himself! I had no idea he was become so aged and infirm! What a bore! I do wish we might enjoy the privilege, after being grown up, of choosing our own relations. *J'ai pitie de moi-meme!*"

"What can bring the old fellow here?" exclaimed Sir Patrick, crumpling up his newspaper, and approaching the window with an angry whistle. "He looks, in those glittering spectacles, like a post-chaise, with the lamps lighted. I must be grown quite respectable when the Admiral honors me with a visit. Has anybody paid my debts?"

"I declare," said Agnes, "Sir Arthur gropes his way along as if he came from the Blind Asylum, and his dear, puckered old face looks as dry and cracked as an old picture!"

"Suppose I stay in the room *incog.*, to hear all the civil and agreeable truths our worthy uncle will say of me," said Sir Patrick, laughingly throwing himself into a large arm-chair, in a distant corner of the room. "I should certainty realize the old proverb about listeners hearing no good of themselves. Sir Arthur is so blind he will never see me, and it is certainly no bad joke for a rainy day."

"I think it would be a very bad joke, indeed, Patrick," said Marion, coloring. "But I am sure you would not play upon our uncle's infirmities, and I shall certainly ask you some question the moment he enters, to betray your ambuscade."

"Marion! for a young lady who professes timidity, you exhibit a tolerable share of decision!" replied Sir Patrick, looking with surprise at the glowing countenance of his sister, whose voice quivered with agitation. "However, since you are determined to make a scene between Sir Arthur and me, I shall be off, not feeling in the humor for one of his lectures to-day! He will be a whirlpool of rage at this raffle I am making of the family plate and pictures. Perhaps he means to take a ticket! Do not mention, for your lives, girls, that I am in the next room, unless he be come on a matter of life and death! Exit Sir Patrick in haste!"

When Sir Arthur entered the room, there was a look of unwonted care in his fine countenance, and less firmness in his step than usual. He silently but cordially shook hands with Agnes, while a look of almost compassionate kindness beamed in his countenance, and Marion, with girlish delight sparkling in her eyes, and dimpling in her cheeks, led him to a chair, on which he sat down for some moments without speaking, apparently fatigued and agitated, while she filled up the pause which ensued, by taking his hat and stick, placing her arm within his when she seated herself by his side, and showing a thousand demonstrations of her heartfelt affection and respect.

"Uncle Arthur!" said Agnes, observing him at length glancing round the room. "You have never been in this house before?"

"No! nor I never expected to enter it!" replied he, in a tone of profound sadness. "Never!—urgent duty brings me now! This then is the family residence to which the Dunbars of Dornington are at last degraded! Is your brother at home?"

"No!" replied Agnes, with the most perfect intrepidity of countenance. "You must have met him in the Park."

"I did not perceive him, and it was as well," answered Sir Arthur with melancholy sternness. "The seldomer we meet the better. It is a disgrace to be in the room with Sir Patrick."

"Uncle Arthur! you are growing angry and personal," interrupted Marion, in a beseeching tone, while she shook his hand caressingly in her own. "That is the harshest thing you ever said of our brother!"

"May he never deserve more, or he shall have it," continued the Admiral, with angry vehemence, while his neckcloth seemed growing too tight for him. "Sir Patrick is, without meaning to flatter him, about the greatest scamp I know. His last step in the regiment was purchased, I am told, over the head of a young officer from whom he gained the money at play! but, Marion, my dear girl, I am not come to quarrel with you, the dearest niece in the world—nor with Agnes, though I could wish that she came sometimes to see me."

Sir Arthur held out his hand to both his nieces, and added, in a tone of hurried agitation, "If you had witnessed, Agnes, the many long years during which your father and I associated together on terms of more than brotherly confidence, you could not wonder that now, living in an empty world, the grave of all who started in life beside me, amidst old remembrances, vanished pleasures, faded health, and lost affections, I cling to whatever reminds me of him, and that nothing can make me cease to love you all—all without exception—even that disgraceful scoundrel your brother. I would close these eyes in death, only once to see him, the man his father's son should be; but I might live for ever if I wait till then!"

Marion was grieved and alarmed to perceive her uncle's increasing agitation, while he hastily turned away to hide it, but the breeze which had ruffled his mind soon passed away, and though his hand still shook with emotion, he added in a calmer tone of deep-rooted anxiety,

"I have been told this morning, that Sir Patrick intends to cut his stick, and take flight immediately to the continent, therefore I am here to ascertain, my dear girls, what is to become of you?"

"I scarcely know indeed!" replied Marion, in a tone of irresistible depression. "Patrick seems to have no settled plan. He did talk of hiring a lodging for us, and engaging some old lady for a chaperon."

"And for such a scheme, my dear Marion, where in all the wide world is he to get money—or even credit? Not in the name of Sir Patrick Dunbar!—a name that, in my brother's time, stood proudly forward as a warrant for everything honorable, soldier-like and generous!—a name, till now, never sullied by dishonor."

Sir Arthur's voice faltered, a hectic color burned on his cheek, he remained silent for several minutes, and then continued, after a strong effort to recover himself,

"It is no matter! Patrick adds a nail to my coffin every day, but I am the last wreck of an old generation, and have already outstaid the period intended for man! My head is whitened by the frost of more than eighty winters—my heart seared with the wear and tear of life—my very existence a perpetual miracle! It would people a city if all could be revived whom I have intimately known in those days when the dearest ties of life were clustered around me, but now I am a scathed and solitary ruin. How truly has it been said, that the remembrance of youth is a sigh, yet all has been ordered as it should be, and that wind is ever the best which will carry us most safely to the end of our voyage."

Sir Arthur paused with a look of solemn and inexpressible emotion, and Marion pressed her uncle's hand affectionately, hot tears coursed each other down her face, and she gazed earnestly at his countenance, while, looking at her with his usual expression of benignity and kindness, he continued, "You are the chief, or rather the only objects of my care, for all my wishes and hopes on my own account might now be contained in a nut-shell. I am a stranger in this altered world, soon—very soon to depart. There is one heart in my brother's family, Marion, that feels as his child ought to feel, and one eye that will be dimmed with sorrow when I am no more. For your sake, and yours only, need I wish to live! Well may the young weep for sorrow—they have long to endure it, but for me, the end of all earthly things is at hand. Many a warning bell has reached my ear already, and I would wish only to see you launched under safe protection in the stormy ocean of life. With no guardian but a brother worse than nobody, and an old, infirm uncle tottering into the grave, my dear girls, what are you to do?"

Marion glanced at Agnes, who tried to preserve her usual air of consequential indifference, and pulled her *bouquet* to pieces, with an expression of silent and majestic impatience, but she neither looked up nor answered.

"While I live, you can always confer a pleasure by taking shelter with me," continued Sir Arthur, in the warmest tone of kindness; "and all that an old man can do to make you happy shall be done, though that, I fear, is little or nothing."

Agnes, evidently not much delighted at this unexpected proposal of being located at what she always called "the Admiral's humdrummery," now assumed a pre-engaged look, while practising a particularly graceful attitude in the opposite mirror, and drawing out her long glossy ringlets with a cold, artificial smile, she answered, "Thank you, Sir Arthur! I am sure we are most excessively obliged. Probably now that Marion is so well disposed of, my brother may take me with him to Paris!"

"Reckoning without your host, Agnes!" whispered Sir Patrick, entering with a look of assumed bravado, but of evident embarrassment. "Wishes cost nothing; but how could such an idea ever enter your ingenious head? Pray strike a light and look for your senses! Ah! Sir Arthur! A hundred thousand welcomes. I am happy not to have missed your kind visit!"

"That would have been a mutual misfortune!" replied the Admiral, drily, and drawing himself up to his full height, while Sir Patrick bowed and smiled with an air of sarcastic gratitude. "Certainly, for some years past I am not owing you many visits."

"Why, no! I hate to see people running themselves into debt; therefore believing you might find it inconvenient to return my cards, I have not been very troublesome in the way of calling; but," continued Sir Patrick, stealing a look of laughing condolence at Agnes, "my sisters are exceedingly delighted by your very considerate offer of a home during my absence. The plan will suit admirably! They both want sea-bathing, and—society, Agnes?"

"In respect to society I can promise nothing. I would raise a regiment of beaux if possible, but my house is a mere Greenwich Hospital for years past, visited only by a few veterans as aged and broken as myself."

"I wish they had all gone down in the Royal George," muttered Agnes, whose face now looked like a thunder cloud. "A set of resuscitated mummies, with scarcely a complete set of limbs and features amongst them. I would rather live in the moon, where there is at least one entire man to be seen."

"We instituted a club lately," continued Sir Arthur, "in which no member was eligible who had not been deprived of one limb at least in the service of his country. With many of my friends all is lost but honor! That is what a man should die rather than lose! It was long a hereditary heir-loom in our family, Patrick! entailed upon you, Sir! handed down untarnished from father to son, generation after generation! And where is it now? Lost in the kennel, the race-course, the stable, the gambling house, and every receptacle of infamy and shame, while I live to see the Dunbars of Dornington utterly ruined, as well as utterly disgraced!"

"Not as long as you live!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, advancing with sudden emotion, and grasping his uncle's hand. "Your name, Sir Arthur, will shed a lustre over our house after mine has been blotted out for ever from the memory of man!"

"Why should it be so?" asked Sir Arthur, speaking in a tone of deep vehemence and solemnity, while his noble and serious countenance assumed an expression of that affection which nothing could extinguish. "Patrick! it is long lane that has no turning! Be like your father in mind, as you are in person, and let me leave you my best blessing at last!"

"Too late! too late!" replied Sir Patrick, walking hurriedly up and down the room, and then suddenly resuming his usual tone of reckless gayety. "No! no! as Joseph Surface remarked, 'too good a character is inconvenient!' You are unadultered gold, Sir Arthur, but I must only set up for being a genuine Bristol farthing."

"Yet, Patrick! even if honor were like truth, at the bottom of a well, it is worth diving for; and the best throw on the dice is to throw them away."

"Your whole nature and mine are different, Sir Arthur! A wasp may work his heart out, but he never can make honey," replied the young Baronet, hurriedly. "I have neither wishes, plans, nor hopes for myself! Already I am older in heart than you, and neither know nor care how short a time I have to exist! *N'importe!* It would not certainly be convenient for me at present to fly off like a kite, with both my sisters at my tail, therefore we are all most grateful for your kind invitation to them, and shall accept the honor you offer with pleasure."

"Be it so then," replied Sir Arthur, in a calm, dignified, but mournful voice. "If my nieces will be content with little, they may be as happy as if we had much. I am most anxious to invent anything which might add to their enjoyment, and Lady Towercliffe tells me, Agnes, that your whole heart is bent on spending a month at Harrowgate! If that would really be any pleasure or advantage to you, tell me so, and I shall endeavor if possible to go there myself, though now, in my old age, very like Punch, who could act only in his own box."

"Oh! not for worlds would we ask you to go, dear uncle," exclaimed Marion, venturing in her eagerness to speak before Agnes, and shocked at the idea of a journey, the fatigue and expense of which she knew the Admiral was so little able to incur. "We shall be more than happy at home! do not think of such a thing!"

"But if I may be permitted to have an opinion, being the person consulted, Marion, let me say that nothing on earth was ever more enchanting than this delicious proposal. You have made me the happiest person alive, Sir Arthur!" exclaimed Agnes, for once condescending to look perfectly pleased. "I must endeavor not to go mad with joy! You are our very best friend! My dear uncle, all I can say is, YOU ARE A GENTLEMAN!"

"Well, Agnes! That being the case," replied Sir Arthur, smiling, "how soon can you be ready to start?"

"To-night!—this minute!—wait till I put on my bonnet!" exclaimed Agnes, in accents of the liveliest glee. "I am quite impatient to set about forgetting Edinburgh!"

"Well done, Lady Towercliffe! Harrowgate was a capital hit!" cried Sir Patrick, laughing satirically. "Before taking a voyage to India, there is no place like it for young ladies! Why, Agnes, it is a perfect emporium of *beaux*! You will live there at the rate of twenty new victims a-day! A down-pour of marriages takes place at the end of every season. Several jewellers have made large fortunes at Harrowgate, merely by providing wedding rings! and a confectioner is kept at each hotel, with nothing else to do but to make marriage cakes! Sir Arthur must take a dozen lessons in match-making, from some of the manœuvring mammas and aunts."

"An unmanœuvring uncle is all we shall require," answered Agnes, looking daggers at Sir Patrick, in all the dignity of having been extremely ill-treated. "In my humble opinion——"

"Humble, Agnes!" interrupted Sir Patrick. "Did I hear aright? Where did you ever learn the meaning of that word?"

"As for manœuvring or match-making, I leave all that sort of thing to such persons as Lady Towercliffe," observed Sir Arthur. "She and other old ladies have such an intense curiosity about weddings, that I do think, even when laid in their graves, they would like to be told who are going to be married. In such affairs I would be out of my element, like a bear in a boat, not knowing how to proceed,—but at my age——"

"Your age, uncle Arthur! You are no age at all," interrupted Agnes, in high good humor. "You are not a day older since we were first acquainted! As Harrowgate is the greatest marriage manufactory in Britain, I should not wonder if you were to pick up a wife there yourself! Indeed, no single man ever escapes, and I shall make it my business to get you off!"

"By all means!" replied the Admiral, entering good-humoredly into the jest. "I have no doubt some young lady will fall desperately and hopelessly in love with me! Are those new spectacles becomingly put on? My eyes are so fine, they must be kept under glass! My hair has had rather too much of the bleaching liquid lately, but do you recommend a wig, Agnes, or the vegetable dye?"

"I would not alter a hair of your head, uncle Arthur," said Marion, smiling. "And I am sure you will have more admirers at Harrowgate than any of us. I should like to know," added she, after the Admiral had departed, "out of the prodigious incomes enjoyed by thousands of persons in Britain, how much is spent during the year in really generous actions,—in actions of such disinterested liberality as our dear kind uncle's, when putting himself to all this expense and inconvenience for our sakes,—for ours, who never can make him the smallest return."

"To say the truth," replied Agnes, laughing, "I merely go to Harrowgate for Sir Arthur's good. It will renew his youth to be forced into balls, beguiled into pic-nics, and enlisted into dinner parties. A diet of ice and lemonade is excellent for old people."

"You are lucky girls!" exclaimed Sir Patrick. "A month at Harrowgate! why! you might be married five times over in that time! It is not the most impossible thing in the world that I may come there myself, to meet De Crespigny! The matrimonial horizon looked rather dark and unpromising in this quarter, Agnes; but your extraordinary merit is quite unknown as yet in the English hemisphere. The world shall see you, and you shall see the world now, under Sir Arthur's auspices. Good worthy old soul! his very walking-stick is respectable!"

"Then I wish you were like it," said Agnes, in her most stinging accent. "Sir Arthur's respectability might be divided among a dozen of people whom I know, and each would get a share larger than he had before."

"You will perfectly canonize him, now that he can be made useful! Agnes! you jumped at Sir Arthur's offer as an ex-minister would jump at a seat in the cabinet! You showered down thanks on the Admiral's devoted head, like *bon-bons* at the carnival!"

"No wonder!" said Marion. "Think of dear uncle Arthur leaving his old friends, his old habits, and his old home for us, when he has said and thought so often, that his next journey would be that long and last one, which we must all travel, never to return."

"It is vastly kind, as you say, Marion!" added Agnes, flippantly. "Leaving that old fireside, where he has so long been spinning interminable yarns, spoiling old servants, reading old magazines, dozing over antiquated newspapers, letting himself be cheated by beggars, and getting convivial over very weak negus."

"Agnes, how long is it since you lost your senses!" asked Marion, indignantly. "Nothing short of that could account for your holding up our venerable uncle to ridicule, even with no one to hear you but ourselves, who know his inestimable worth and kindness."

"Well, girls, the best reward you can give him, is to look delightfully with all your might, and to waltz and quadrille yourselves into husbands immediately!" said Sir Patrick, in a tone of lively exultation. "Now, tighten the drums of your ears and listen, for I am about to give you a popular course of lectures on the important subject of match-making. Marion, you are a flower that has bloomed in the shade, and must now be displayed in the sunshine; therefore you ought to know that fortune is like a game at blind man's buff, where the timid and retiring are forgotten, while the bold and forward alone put themselves in the way of receiving her favors. Agnes has frittered away her time only too long already on the mere minnows of society, danglers and detrimentals of the younger species; but I must tell you plainly,——"

"Never tell me anything plainly," interrupted Agnes, laughing. "But you are altogether mistaken, for I have often wished that people would get rid of their younger sons now, as Tom Thumb's father wisely did, losing them in a forest and leaving them to starve."

"Then take my advice, and never dance with any. I warn you against fashionable huzzars, all spurs and gold lace, with more bullion on their jackets than in their purses; *attaches* who are not to be attached, ready to fall into flirtations but not into love; Honorable Edwards and Honorable Fredricks, who never are, but always to be rich, investing their whole fortunes in white kid gloves, and offering, perhaps, to share their starvation with you; and," added Sir Patrick, with a glance at Marion, who blushed deeply, but said nothing, "remember, above all, I forbid reverend divines, young or old, especially those who have no living and no prospect of a mitre. You should each knock down a coronet for yourselves, and avoid the most detestable of all poverty,—genteel poverty; at the same time, do not gamble too deeply in life. Ascertain well, '*sur quel pied a danser*.' In a sickly season, even a fifth son is not to be despised. Take a smaller certainty rather than a greater possibility, and lose no time, or the bridge may break down before you run across it."

"Your advice to me is perfectly superfluous," replied Agnes, looking very superb, and giving a contemptuous toss of her head. "I detest economy, and abjure all penny weddings, having no genius for turning or dying silk dresses,—putting servants on scanty allowance,—driving about in hackney coaches,—locking up jellies,—counting out eggs,—or measuring small beer! I am sworn at Highgate always to prefer the best partners, and generally have them."

"How would you like," said Marion, "to have been the young lady long ago in London, who could not dance with the King of Prussia, because she was previously engaged to the Emperor of Russia?"

"That would suit me exactly. I should like to carry my head as high as the Pope's tiara. But I have reason, as you know, to expect hereafter one of the proudest coronets in Britain; and shall certainly not remain a day longer than I can help dependent, Patrick, on the most singularly generous, liberal, and considerate of brothers,—with the one only fault of caring for nobody but himself. If I were drowning, you would scarcely stretch out your little finger to save me, in case it might become wet."

"Quite right, Agnes, not to depend on me, or you would have little to depend upon. My pockets are to let unfurnished now! I shall perhaps go to Australia,—or probably measure the depth of the Serpentine some evening; though, in the mean while, I may put up with life a little longer, bad as it is. Now, therefore, Agnes, hear my last advice. You have the world upon a string, and shall see a large assortment of admirers to choose among. When torrents of proposals are pouring in upon you, as they will and must do soon, get safely into the haven of matrimony, or you will be shipwrecked for ever. Accomplished misses are quite a drug in the market now; but you ought to be ashamed, Agnes, of missing that little pigmy peer, Lord Bowater, two years ago, when you had three days the start of every other young lady in making the acquaintance. He treated you shockingly, to fall in love at first sight with that paltry Miss Gordon. As for any other coronet you are ever likely to wear, I know of none that even a telescope could give you the most distant prospect of. Now wait till I am out of the room before you faint!"

"Marion!" said Agnes, yawning outrageously when her brother had departed, and looking unspeakably forlorn, "How often I have laughed ready to die, at the case of other girls, without ever dreaming it could in any degree resemble my own! Every year that worthy, old, respectable Lord Towercliffe, as fond of home as uncle Arthur or any garden snail, suddenly breaks up his comfortable establishment in the country, and comes to town with the declared intention of giving Charlotte and Maria 'proper advantages!' The poor girls, then, see their father obliged to undergo the wretchedness of frequenting a club, to form suitable acquaintances, and suffering hourly martyrdom in being absent from his farm, his stud, his improvements, and all that interests him in life, while our active, energetic friend, Lady Towercliffe, plunged into a wilderness of blond and feathers, rushes eagerly from house to house, followed by her flock of disposable daughters, whom she is perpetually puffing off, like Robins the auctioneer. Then follow dinner parties, given at an expense which the young ladies know to be ruinous, balls, soirees, flirtations, disappointments, and at last the family coach trundling slowly back at a funeral pace to St. Abbsbury, where the lodge-keeper despondingly counts heads as they pass, to see whether their numbers continue still undiminished! It is altogether horrid, and perfectly laughable, too!"

"Not very laughable!" said Marion, coloring; "whether Lord Towercliffe takes the affair good-humoredly or otherwise, it must be most degrading and humiliating for the young ladies. I can fancy nothing more odious!"

"A grand skirmish ending in defeat!" added Agnes, ironically. "I remember formerly, when these Malcolm girls were in their school-room, the chief bugbear hung over them, if they neglected the arts of dress and fascination, was, that they would inevitably die old maids. They were educated for the profession of matrimony, and were each taught to expect a husband of rank and fortune, at the very least, equal to their father's."

"Yes," said Marion, "Lady Towercliffe would consider any one of her very plain daughters as perfectly disgraced, either to marry in a grade the least degree below her own, or not to marry at all, therefore they are allowed no alternative. The position of young ladies during the present time seems far from enviable. In these days of clubs, money-making, and old bachelorism, not a third of those who grow up now will be married at all, and perhaps not a third of those who do marry will be happy! It seems to me strange and unaccountable that parents who have any consideration for the happiness of their daughters, inculcate no ideas into their minds and hearts unconnected with matrimony, and, like Lady Towercliffe, drive them forward to the public view, a mark for censure, gossip, and ridicule, till they find shelter in some other home, where it is five to one that they will be miserable."

"Yes, miserable indeed," added Agnes, indolently, "men are all so selfish. Husbands expect the whole time, thoughts, and affections of their wives in return for the very little they choose to spare from their horses, dogs, and clubs. On these their whole income is to be squandered, while they keep to that favorite rule—'What is yours is mine, and what is mine is my own.' The ladies must be invariably in good humor and lively spirits at home, perfectly well dressed, with a cheerful fireside, and a luxurious table; but, at the same time, we are never to ask for money or to have any bills! our servants are all to be first-rate on the very lowest wages, and our children in the best order without ever being punished or thwarted!—a fairy's wand could not do

the half of it."

"I am often amused now," said Marion, "to hear people say of the dullest and most unprepossessing old bachelor in the world, 'I wonder he never takes it into his head to marry!' while they observe, in discussing any girl more beautiful and fascinating than another, 'How very surprising that she has never got married!' when, at the same time, there is not perhaps a single year of her life since she was born that she might not have been established if she chose. I believe that the vulgar consideration of money makes all the difference; for if ladies had the fortunes, instead of gentlemen, they would be quite as uncertain and capricious, off and on, about marrying or not marrying, as—as even Captain De Crespigny!"

"One of the last times he called here," said Agnes, "when lamenting, as he often does, his unmarriageable state of poverty at present, Captain De Crespigny said, in his droll way, that he would some day bring a bill into Parliament, ordaining that every old bachelor who could maintain a wife for himself and will not, shall be obliged to support one for somebody else, who wishes to marry and cannot afford. Now, Marion, let us put all our Harrowgate irons in the fire, and prepare to be admired by all admirers next week at the Granby!"

"You know, Agnes, though I do not tease you or Patrick by often alluding to what you call my sentimental vagaries, that there is only one person in the world by whom I have any ambition to be admired; though our engagement must be postponed, till Richard is in circumstances to marry with prudence. Without reference to that, however, in respect to Harrowgate society, it is said to be more like a low farce than a genteel comedy!"

"A little of both! but we shall be in the best set. I hope Sir Arthur will not be teasing us with any of his world-before-the-flood ideas, about late hours, waltzing, and all the other enormities of fashionable life! It is my duty, really, to give him a few presentable ideas now, for he lived in the dark ages, when old Queen Charlotte used to keep the ladies all so preternaturally precise and decorous. Most of the Admiral's notions he had from his mother, who lived, I believe, with Queen Elizabeth!"

"But Agnes! even the prejudices of our uncle should be attended to. He shows us greater kindness than we ever have known, or can know from any body else, and the whole wealth of his affection is devoted to us."

"Well, then! I wish his love could be turned into money! I often think if our skins were made of gold, that Patrick would flay us alive! Of course I shall not fly in Sir Arthur's face upon every trifle, for we must humor him sometimes! One day, long ago, I took him in delightfully, by saying that if he disapproved of waltzing, I hoped he would not object to a galope! At Harrowgate, the military men will all fortunately be out of uniform, therefore Sir Arthur need never guess who or what they are, as he has a most inconvenient dislike to my being so intimate with the army list, and one really cannot do without a few tame officers running about the drawing-room."

"But, Agnes! as Patrick says, you cannot live upon fried epaulettes, therefore it would look much better not to be surrounded by so great a variety of officers! It scarcely seems respectable to be, as Patrick called you long ago, the member for Barrackshire!"

"Marion! you are most ridiculously circumspect for your years!" replied Agnes, in her most stately tone; "you have certainly commenced life at the wrong end, and will be beginning to grow young, when I am thinking it time to grow old—if I ever do!"

"I wish not to buy experience at so dear a rate as most girls do, but rather to benefit by that of others,—to reach the kernel at once, without having any trouble in breaking the shell!"

"Pshaw, Marion! I would feel myself a fool for a week, had I spoken such nonsense! It gives me the tic douloureux to hear you. Who would think of listening now to every old hack, worn out with the vicissitudes of life, and only fit to make you melancholy before the time! But take your own way," added Agnes, who allowed Marion her own way, as the Vicar of Wakefield's daughters were allowed their pocket-money, which was never to be used. "You go upon the impossible plan of pleasing everybody; but remember the wise old proverb,—'Cover yourself with honey, and the flies will eat you up.'"

When Marion spoke from the heart to her sister, she was accustomed to find herself talking to the winds, therefore she now concluded the conversation with a lively good-humored reply, and sat down to the pianoforte. Her music was as different as her conversation from that of Agnes, who but little appreciated it, and generally left the room, humming a tune as soon as Marion struck her first chord; but, on this occasion, she for once remained stationary.

The style of Agnes' singing was a brilliant bravura, which, in any public performer, might have commanded whirlwinds of applause, but while her clear soprano voice dazzled and astonished by its uncommon brilliancy, Sir Patrick alleged that it cracked every glass in the room, and that her taste had been cultivated till she had literally none of her own,—Bellini's cadences, Rubini's shake, and Anybody's graces, all acquired from every teacher except nature, to whom nothing had been trusted.

The rich full-toned melody of Marion's *contralto* voice, often became instinct with the simple suggestions of her own feeling, while her music had that only one charm which never can be taught,—expression. There was a depth of sensibility in her eye and voice, which riveted the attention and awakened the sympathy of every heart, while it always appeared that, if display had been her object, she could have done much more than she attempted. No bird on a tree ever warbled its wild notes with more perfect simplicity and real delight. The rippling of a brook over its pebbly bed, or the sighing of the breeze amidst the summer foliage, was not more entirely natural, and while Sir Patrick sometimes protested that "every note was a tear," she yet reached even his feelings, so that not a whisper could be heard from him till the last cadence had melted away on his ear. Marion having seldom yet had any audience except her school-companions, remained almost unconscious of her own singular gift; but this day she sang with deep enthusiasm, and the last thrilling tones of her voice had died inaudibly away, when she looked round and saw young Lord Wigton standing near the door beside Agnes, in an attitude of intense and speechless admiration, with all his faculties, if he had any, apparently suspended,—his lips apart,—his eyes beaming with delight,—and his whole expression full of wonder and ecstasy; while Sir Patrick was lounging on a sofa near, exhibiting a smiling, frolicsome expression in his eye, full of fun and mischief.

"This is hardly fair," exclaimed Marion, laughingly starting up with a brilliant blush of astonishment; "you know, Lord Wigton, stealing into a dwelling house is punishable by law."

"Whatever be the penalty, I am sufficiently rewarded," answered he, with a shy diffident look. "My flute will be happy any day to make you an apology."

Those who love music, and those only, can estimate its power over the feelings, and for several minutes afterwards Lord Wigton remained silent, then, suddenly awakening as if from a dream, he uttered some incoherent exclamations of rapture, and in tones of unaffected animation entreated Marion to sing the same air once again; while she, amused and surprised at his extraordinary *empressement*, prepared to comply.

"My song is not worth asking for twice, and still less worth refusing, therefore you shall have it in my very best style!" said Marion, playing the prelude, for she had none of that giggling affected shyness assumed by most girls during their first winter. "This note is pitched so high, you should go up stairs to hear it!"

"How strange that one so gay as you, should have a voice of such melting sadness!" exclaimed Lord Wigton. "It awakens fifty thousand thoughts and feelings I never knew before! I shall become an improvisatore, when listening to melody 'so rare and enchanting!'"

"You must have heard it through the key-hole!" said Marion, laughing. "I had no idea that my trash could reach any ears but my own."

"It did more, for it reached my heart! Your voice is the very essence of nightingales. I shall follow you to Harrowgate, for the chance of hearing that air once again."

"Perhaps, then, it has some peculiar interest," said Marion, surprised at the warmth of his enthusiasm. "The chief delight of music certainly is, the associations it brings out, the remembrances of bye-gone hours it recalls, and the million of little phantoms it creates of past or future times."

"Marion! your voice is by no means equal to that song, and your style is very amateur-ish indeed," interrupted Agnes, bitterly. "I do not wish to boast," added she, laughing, to conceal her irritation; "but Grisi never ventured to sing that air after hearing me, and Delvini said his fortune would be made, if he could engage me for his Prima Donna. I only mention this among friends. Keep it secret, for I hate to cause jealousy and mortification! Few people understand music like my old master Delvini, who said that my god-mother must certainly have possessed the wand of a fairy, and gifted me with music."

"Ah! Delvini is the man who plays a whole concerto upon one note of the piano, or something wonderful of that kind," observed Lord Wigton, looking impatiently for Marion to begin. "I hate the helter-skelter school in music! people scampering through their songs with a thousand miraculous flourishes, which set one's teeth on edge."

"Such performers," answered Marion, "give me no more pleasure than to see Van Amburgh thrust his head into the lion's mouth, which is very surprising, and what I could not do myself, but it excites no sympathy, and raises no emotion better than wonder."

"Your voice is like some fairy spirit that would lead me to the world's end," said Lord Wigton, with an air of eager expectation. "And now, Miss Dunbar, I am all ears."

"So I think, and very long ears too," muttered Agnes to herself, angry beyond all bounds at the young Peer's attention to Marion, when hitherto she had been the principal, or rather the only object of interest to him whenever they were in the same room. Agnes, without an assiduous lover, ready to put on her shawl, clasp her bracelets, and carry her boa, was like a ship without a compass, not knowing which way to turn, and though nothing could make up for the want of those graceful flatteries, amusing quarrels, and ambitious hopes, to which she was accustomed with Captain De Crespigny, yet should he disappoint her, Lord Wigton had been recently promoted to the character of a *pis aller* in the list of her admirers, as she was heard to remark, that "it is better to have a donkey that carries you, than a horse that throws you." Though usually the object of her unbounded ridicule, yet the young Peer had recently become of so much importance to her, that it was indeed an unpardonable affront when he spared one moment's attention to Marion, while at the same time she considered his taste on the occasion, quite as questionable as that of the bird which preferred a barley-corn to a diamond.

Next morning, to the increased indignation of Agnes, Lord Wigton's servant left at the door of St. John's Lodge, two splendid bouquets, both equally rare and beautiful; but when they were presented, Agnes looked angrily at Marion's, and plucked her own to pieces, saying, "That absurd little man! it is worth while to hear him talk of being in love, he makes the subject so thoroughly ridiculous! I like all my lovers till I tire of them, and his Lordship's reign was over last Tuesday. He has the stiffness of the poker without its occasional heat, and no more individuality of character than a leaf upon a tree. I wonder where we could have him measured for a cap-and-bells. He has so little vivacity, that he now wears the fool's cap without the bells. He did so weary me! I think Lord Wigton must be the man Rochefoucalt had in his eye when he said that many people would never have known how to fall in love, if they had not first heard it talked about! His sentimental speeches are so thoroughly ridiculous, they often remind me of Liston's meditation in the farce, 'There stands my Mary's cottage! and she must either be in it, or out of it!'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

If happiness will not come of itself, most very sagacious people set forth in search of that enjoyment which none are willing to do without, though many plans are generally tried, before the right one be discovered. Agnes now declared that she was "ridiculously happy," while plunged in a whirl of preparations for Harrowgate, trying on every bonnet at every milliner's, and discussing the tone and coloring of silks or satins, with as much care and science as an amateur in paintings would devote to the study of a Titian or a Vandyke, while her spirits were restored to their highest pitch, by a letter she had accidentally seen from Captain De Crespigny, expressing the greatest delight in the prospect of seeing Sir Patrick and "his charming sister" once more, and mentioning that he was about soon to arrive at the Granby, in attendance on his uncle, who had already preceded him there. Agnes at once restored herself now, to the pleasing certainty of Captain De Crespigny's sincerity, and every ribbon she chose, or every costume she ordered, had an immediate reference to his taste. "*La toilette est une belle invention*;" but Marion's dress, without causing half the trouble and *fracas* occasioned by that of Agnes, seemed invariably to fit better than any other person's, and the colors she wore were always in the most perfect harmony.

Agnes never became wearied of the pleasurable bustle in which she was now engaged, till at length, when the imperial was packed, and the last box with extreme difficulty closed, she declared herself to be quite in love with life, and sprang into Sir Arthur's carriage, radiant in all the joy of a thousand anticipated triumphs. It might have been a study for any artist wishing to sketch a frontispiece for "The Pleasures of Hope," to see Agnes indulging all her own impossible expectations and ineffable wishes; but unlike the Goddess of Hope, she required no anchor whatever to rest on. Her drafts on the bank of futurity were unlimited by a single consideration of reason or probability, and like the Chinese plant that lives without requiring any nourishment from the earth, she existed upon a diet of airy nothings, and in a pleasing delirium of unreal fancies, wherein Captain De Crespigny generally acted the principal part. In the mind of Agnes—or rather in the empty space where a mind is supposed to be—she hung up a splendid picture-gallery, grouped and painted according to her own taste, displaying shadows as vivid as realities; and ignorant apparently that ever "hope told a flattering tale," she seemed scarcely to have a past or present period in her existence, the whole being formed into one bright futurity, glittering with splendid impossibilities.

If those who waste and enervate their intellects by building castles in the air, could be supposed able to create scenes in reality, as easily and rapidly as they do in imagination, it would, perhaps, be the most vivid conception man could form of omnipotent power. Agnes' *chateaux en Espagne* were in a most florid style of architecture, but scarcely lasted long enough to become finished edifices, as the phantoms came dashing through her mind in ceaseless variety, all apparently fragments, or slight sketches of future greatness, but without a probable access except the fool's ladder of hope. Her own visions were all, certainly, to be realised, and those of every other person disappointed, for the mortifications of even her intimate friends enhanced the pleasure of anticipated success; and while her plans were like the portraits of Queen Elizabeth, without a single shade, or like temples of spun sugar, all sweetness without solidity, the crowning joy of all was, to be envied, even more than to be admired.

While Agnes thus piled hope upon hope, her wishes were dedicated to very solid possessions. In childhood her world had been a world of *bon bons* and rattles, and now the kaleidoscope of her imagination was filled with an ever-changing galaxy of jewels, titles, equipages, toys, gold, bijouterie, and coronets, among which the Marquisate of Doncaster owed some of its prominence to the distinguished place it claimed in the herald's office. Conscious that she had been born with a peculiar genius for fine ladyism, Agnes considered the world as a large easy chair, wherein she might lounge away life in a perpetual gala, enjoying all the luxuries, and amused with all the trivialities of life. Having an idea that her undoubted birth-right was distinction and happiness, she considered it an undeserved injury to be deprived of a single delight on which her heart was set. Carelessly despising the duties or affections of life, she coveted only its diversions, and her favorite consolation, amidst its actual annoyances, was frequently to

> Blow sportive bladders in the beaming sun,
> And call them worlds.

Sir Arthur had always been one of the few old people who would ever allow himself to be considered well and happy, but he cultivated a placid, cheerful good-humor, which enabled him now to prepare with apparent equanimity for exploring his way through the unknown seas of Harrowgate society, though he entered the carriage to be conveyed there with very little more inward satisfaction than he would have felt on stepping into a cart which was conveying him to Newgate, being fully persuaded that no fish had ever been as much out of water in the world before, as he was about to feel himself.

Impatience only lengthens the hours which it seems desirable to accelerate, and time appeared to have become entirely motionless; while Agnes peevishly thought, during her journey, that the minutes passed like drops of lead, and that every day had some additional hours, till that day of days should at last arrive which was to rise the curtain and display Harrowgate to her view, though she almost ceased to repine at any present inconveniences while bewildered and lost in gay hopes for the future.

Sir Arthur good-humoredly whispered to Marion, as they drove along through Yorkshire, that with such a mute as Agnes beside him, he felt almost afraid of the bow-string, and that she was the mere *tableau* of a travelling companion, who seemed, like Lady Macbeth, to be literally walking and talking in her sleep. While Marion and her uncle beguiled their long journey with agreeable discussions and lively remarks, Agnes, perfectly absent during most of the way, and out of humor during the rest of it, uttered a thousand consequential complaints about the cold, the heat, the sun, the dust, the air, or the closeness, while Sir Arthur smilingly remarked, that Agnes' life seemed to be a sea of troubles, but hope served as a cork jacket to support her through them all.

Like the fairy who turned a gloomy grove into a crystal palace, Agnes had now, in her private mind, metamorphosed the Admiral's old green chariot into a glittering saloon at Harrowgate, filled by a crowd of admirers, each gifted with almost superhuman merit and distinction, who were to fall prostrate at her feet, making proposals which sometimes she gracefully accepted, and sometimes as gracefully declined. Nothing was real around Agnes at present; but as the picture of a friend supplies the want of the original, so the imaginary attentions of Captain De Crespigny and other victims, consoled her for their being absent, and her life became a lively comedy, where the curtain never fell, and she was herself always the principal figure on the stage.

Neither Alnwick Castle nor Harewood House attracted a moment's attention from Agnes, who cared no more for the magnificent landscapes they passed, than did the post-horses that drew the carriage; and when the party stopped at Caterick Bridge to dine, she had just put on the family diamonds of the Duke of Kinross, who waited to conduct her to the altar. It was a favorite speculation with Agnes, that she was to become acquainted in the public room at Harrowgate, with some handsome *incognito*, the sort of perfect Adonis whom alone it would be possible to marry; and after dancing, flirting, dining, and supping with him, he was to turn out the Duke of Somebody, who should make her a long-sighed-for declaration of undying attachment, while Barons, Earls, Viscounts, and above all, Captain De Crespigny, should be plunged into the depths of despair by her accepting him.

Agnes' lovers were never estimated according to the qualities of their head or heart, but according to the trivialities of their dress and appearance. Like the Grecian artist, in love with an image of his own forming, the description of her intended lovers, with which she occasionally favored Marion, resembled a lecture on comparative anatomy, so emphatic was she on the necessity of his being neither too tall, nor too short, too dark, nor too fair; while she would evidently have considered a bad temper less objectionable than a bad complexion, and was ready to tolerate a man who was dissipated, rather than one who was awkward.

In the estimation of Agnes, "good society" was composed entirely of lords and ladies, while her fancy very seldom strayed out of the peerage; though she did sometimes take the trouble to fancy herself admired by some distinguished commoner of more than ordinary celebrity, merely for the pleasure of rejecting him, and swelling her right honorable triumph, when she exchanged her wreath of roses for a coronet. Those who had been proverbially inconstant to other ladies, would now become unchangeably devoted to her; and if she heard of any individual more than commonly fatal to the peace of other ladies, her fertile mind suggested scenes of romance and rapture, where the injuries of others would be more than revenged by the distracting suspense in which she meant to hold her intended victim.

While the world thus ran upon castors in the imagination of Agnes, no novel could be nearly so interesting as her own rose-colored dreams, because in none could she be herself the heroine; but when reading the most romantic romances, they served occasionally to suggest new scenes of emotion and pleasure, which could be adapted with variations to her own case, while all she saw in books flitted like a gay phantasmagoria from her mind, except what could be in any way applied to herself. The business of life, in short, was, she thought, to make every man living in love with her, and to get through existence like a party of pleasure, crowding into it the greatest possible variety of amusements, and ending the whole with orange flowers, Brussels lace, wedding-cake, and favors.

None of the sacred duties or home affections ever entered into Agnes' calculations. She lived merely for the triumphs of society; while Marion existed for

the happiness of home, seeking only the redeeming points of life, and absorbed in a prevailing desire to deserve and to obtain the attachment of those who were by nature nearest and dearest to herself. As the proverb says, "A long road or a bad inn teach us to know our companions;" but all that a generous person can do for others, and all that a selfish person fancies he could do, Marion did, with unobtrusive attention, for Sir Arthur and Agnes during the journey; while her sister sarcastically remarked, that even if Dash wagged his tail to her, she seemed grateful for his regard.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was on a pleasant evening towards the end of August, that Sir Arthur's chariot stopped at the Granby Hotel, which looked to the travellers more like an entire street than a single house; and Marion thought that accommodation might be prepared in it for all the invalids in Great Britain. Her ears were instantly deafened by a noisy clamor of bells, while the carriage was surrounded by a cluster of shabby waiters, in second-hand looking clothes, dishevelled hair, soiled cotton stockings, and dusty shoes, who were vociferous in their protestations that the house was already more than full, and that a hundred and fifty guests dined every day at the ordinary. In the mean time, however, they hurriedly dismounted Sir Arthur's baggage from the chariot, and at length ushered him into a sitting room, with a promise of finding sleeping apartments for the whole party, up three pair of stairs, in a lodging across the common, a tall old building spotted over like a plum pudding with windows, where they must be ready to abdicate on a moment's notice, if necessary, the whole house having been bespoke some weeks before, for Miss Howard Smytheson, the heiress, and suite.

No place is so little changed by lapse of time as Harrowgate, during the last two centuries which have elapsed since first its unpalatable waters were tasted. There the same three great hotels flourish supreme, as in the days of Smollet, holding their crowded ordinaries, and distinguished by their former designations, as the House of Lords, the House of Commons, and the House of Drs. There, during three months of every successive year, an equal crowd assembles in search of health for their disordered bodies, and excitement for their stagnant minds, while time and money are frantically squandered, as if both were dealt out in unlimited portions among all who thus emulously seek with wearied eagerness for frivolous amusements, idle flutter, and all those relaxations of an unsatisfied existence, which soon became intolerable to those who can amuse themselves, but necessary to those who cannot.

The very same rooms and furniture, the very same tables, knives, glasses, and spoons, and the same hours of eating and drinking, which were used during the time of old Humphrey Bramble, are still in existence, while every thing remains as much unaltered as the blue firmament above, except the company. Year after year has, at Harrowgate, even more, perhaps, than elsewhere, testified the ceaseless mutability of human affairs, where, amidst light laughter, mirth and music, the young have become married, the old have died, and, as days roll on in that little world of eager excitement, the names of all are soon alike forgotten. At Harrowgate the visitors seem scarcely more permanently interested in each other than in actors on the stage, or in characters represented by a novelist. Any lounger who appears in the public saloons a second year, becomes completely naturalized in the house; after a third season, it is ten to one he may be considered a bore; and during the fourth or fifth, he is completely superannuated. In these gay rooms, how much of human life and feeling have existed! how many of its joys and sorrows been experienced! and how many of its deepest interests have arisen, amidst the gay dance, the ringing laugh, the lively coquetry, the frantic dissipation, and the vows of endless attachment! With many a past generation, the fever of frivolity is over, and the dust of death now shrouds every remembrance in oblivion: but a new race yet successively arises, to exist, like their predecessors, in an atmosphere of music, dancing, flirting, riding, driving, feasting, and gayety,

"Smiling as if earth contain'd no tomb."

"I cannot but think, when arriving at any new place," observed Marion, "what solitary desolation must frequently be experienced by those 'citizens of the world,' who are for ever on the wing, from country to country, throughout the habitable and uninhabitable globe! We who live only for social companionship, would feel perfectly lost in arriving at a perpetual succession of places, where not one human being depends upon us for comfort or enjoyment—where not a single genuine tear would be shed by any living individual, if we dropped down dead at their feet!"

"You are right, Marion," replied Sir Arthur. "Once when taken dangerously ill abroad, I was surrounded by those only to whom my very language was unknown, my features strange, my name unheard of, and my whole feelings indifferent. It was dreary and desolate indeed! A new place may divert us for a time, but we do not live to enjoy mere scenery or mere amusement. To find real happiness we must look within the circle of home feelings, home duties, and home enjoyments."

When the very aristocratic and distinguished-looking Sir Arthur Dunbar first appeared in the public room at the Granby, leading in his two radiantly beautiful nieces, the babbling murmur of conversation became suddenly hushed, while a general whisper of surprise and admiration circulated round the tea-table. Many an eager inquiry was rapidly promulgated who they could possibly be, and from whence they came; while Lord Wigton, to produce some amusement, secretly announced that it was the Duke of Lincolnshire and his two eldest unmarried daughters.

The better half of pleasure was its novelty to Marion, whose half-shy, half-amused looks, as she entered among a score or two of perfect strangers, found a pleasing contrast to the criticising, examining, fastidious air with which Agnes, in the full swell of magnificence, glanced her brilliant, haughty eyes round the tables, and muttered contemptuously to Sir Arthur, that the living furniture in the room seemed little better than a zoological garden—a human menagerie of tigers, bears, and monkeys, varied by a large proportion of red inflamed strawberry-colored faces belonging to the water-drinkers. By no means satisfied with the commencement of her Harrowgate existence, Agnes established on the spot a little whispering gallery of satirical discontent, while she ridiculed to Marion those of the company who were unlucky enough first to attract her notice and her disapprobation.

Though the room appeared abundantly peopled with *dramatis personæ* of many kinds and degrees, yet, instead of seeing, as she had rather too sanguinely anticipated, a society of distinguished-looking personages, as select as if they had been introduced at a drawing-room in St. James' Palace, the saloon was encumbered with groups of people as ridiculous as any that Agnes ever remembered to have seen at a country theatre. Old *beaux* of half a century's duration,—two or three remarkably conceited, overdressed officers in full-fledged mustachios,—crowds of busy, bustling, managing-looking mothers,—four or five over-dressed Irish fortune-hunters,—a knot of agricultural, kill-your-own-mutton country gentlemen,—one or two widows of not very doubtful age, but *rouged* to excess,—a few Oxonian professors, who were F.R.S. and the whole alphabet besides,—a multitude of whist-playing clergymen, reverened only on their visiting cards, who bore no symptom of their profession except a white neckcloth,—many old people to be made young, and young people to be made younger,—besides nearly an acre of very un-Almacks-like young ladies, showily attired in pink, blue, or yellow, like a bed of tulips, all in very gay spirits, or pretending to be so, who seemed to lead a life of perpetual smiles and good-humor, as if all the troubles of existence were unknown or a mere laughing matter to them.

Sir Arthur was not long in having a delighted recognition with an old, wooden-legged messmate, Captain Ogilvie, who introduced to Marion his "three head of daughters," pretty animated girls; and Agnes hastily seated herself at the tea-table, disappointed beyond measure in the first chapter of her adventures, and half determined already to set about hating the whole party. Though deceived only by her own too vivid anticipations, she felt in some way or other imposed upon, in being unexpectedly introduced to such very third-rate society, and for several minutes she maintained a petulant silence, so very unlike her usual volubility, that she began, before long, to wish for some one with whom to enjoy a laugh at the whole circle of whimsical-looking oddities.

Close beside the seat on which Agnes had accidentally placed herself, she very soon observed an old gentleman considerably past the meridian of life, who nevertheless dressed with very obvious pretensions to youth, wearing a fashionable, well-contrived wig, a perfectly startling set of teeth, and a gouty black velvet shoe. His figure was well built, and he had altogether a look of individual eccentricity peculiar to himself, with an air of supercilious haughtiness, which testified that, like Agnes, he thought himself too good for his company.

"Who can he be?" thought she, finding his eye fixed upon herself with a fastidious look of connoisseurship, such as that with which he might have examined some doubtful copy of a Vandyke or Titian, while an expression of complacent approbation gradually stole into his features. "Probably some eminent artist! He may perhaps ask leave to do my picture for the exhibition!"

Having reached this conclusion, she was almost startled to hear herself addressed by her unknown neighbor, in a consequential, rather patronising voice, and with an air of unembarrassed distinction, while he evidently watched her countenance with the same look of criticism as before, so that she felt certain if there had been a flaw in her teeth, or a single hair disarranged on her head, it could not have escaped his notice. So fastidious a personage seemed almost worth the trouble of pleasing, and Agnes, after replying rather graciously to his first few remarks, became exceedingly surprised to discover that there was a tone of well bred command in his dry, cynical manner, united with the most perfect polish, which both awed and surprised her. His assumption of superiority and importance seemed almost unconscious, but he evidently entertained not the fraction of a doubt that his conversation was a singular honor and an agreeable acquisition to any one on whom he condescended to bestow the slightest attention.

"I have lived here lately at the rate of twenty new acquaintances a day, and am happy this evening in adding another to my usual allowance. One must enter into the humors of a place like Harrowgate, and do at Rome as Rome does," said he, in a somewhat haughty, supercilious tone. "This is the only spot in all the earth where English people attempt the ease and sociability of foreign manners, and we must acknowledge it fits rather awkwardly. Nevertheless, being in my own neighborhood, I make a point every year of lending my countenance for a short time to this house."

Agnes gave an undervaluing glance at her companion, and privately thought his thin, dry countenance, with every vein like whip cord, might well have been dispensed with, but though he appeared to be unpardonably ugly, she prudently sipped her tea in silence, looking somewhat askance at the little consequential gentleman beside her; while he took the opportunity of examining her profile with his keen, observant eye, after which, having apparently satisfied himself that she was worth the honor of being spoken to, he continued, in a hard, croaking voice, like a door grating on its rusty hinges:

"The company here is nearly of the same calibre as you might probably encounter in a Margate hoy, or in a second-class train on the Birmingham railroad."

"Or at Bartholomew fair," added Agnes, determined not to be outdone. "I feel as if we were dining for once at the second table. There should be doorkeepers at Harrowgate to keep out the *canaille*! I wonder Captain De Crespigny misinformed my brother so much about the society here; but he would have said anything to make us come."

"No one would ever dream, in his wildest moments, of visiting Harrowgate for society. Mere knife-grinders from Sheffield, and country curates," replied her fastidious companion, in a short, abrupt tone. "Are you acquainted with Louis De Crespigny?"

"Yes; everybody who is anybody knows him, and those who do not often pretend they do," replied Agnes, indignant at the easy, almost contemptuous manner in which her companion named one whom she considered as her own peculiar property. "Not to know him would argue ourselves unknown."

"I certainly am unknown," said her companion, with a strange little conscious laugh, which seemed to Agnes quite unaccountable. "Has De Crespigny so universal an acquaintance? People must be more at a loss for society than I had supposed!"

"You know," replied Agnes, in an unanswerable tone, "he is the future Marquis of Doncaster."

"Is he?" answered the old gentleman, with another short, dry laugh, and a proving shrug of polite non-conviction. "So much the better for him. You are quite sure of that?"

"Perfectly certain! His uncle is a rich old quiz, who never thought anybody good enough to marry till now, when nobody would accept of him. The old peer could not get a girl to marry him now if he sent the bellman round to advertise for one. Captain De Crespigny's succession is as undoubted as anything can be which depends on the life of a whimsical, superannuated uncle, these many years past in the last stage of infirmity. He has the wrinkles ironed out of his face every morning with a smoothing iron, and I am told his very bones rattle whenever he moves!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the stranger, in a hard, withering tone, and with a cool sneer on his lip. "How very singular!"

"Poor, dear old man! he was handsome once, and never can forget that; but it is a century since he lost any looks he ever had, and I am told he is quite preternaturally old, withered, and whimsical. Quite ingeniously ugly! *laid a faire peur!* I should be afraid to go near him, in case his ugliness might be reflected upon me; but I hear he fancies himself quite captivating still. Patrick tells me that the old Marquis invested so large a sum of money lately in a new set of teeth, that his nephew is quite uneasy lest he should be robbed and murdered for the gold they are set in. He scratches his wig sometimes to look as if it were his own hair; and he had an ossification of the leg last year, in consequence of a disappointment in love!"

"Very remarkable!"

"Yes!" added Agnes, encouraged by the attention she had evidently excited, and happy to vent all her long accumulated antipathy. "The oldest man who ever lived certainly died at last, but I believe nobody ever before existed so long in this world without doing one atom of good either to himself or others. He keeps a Roman Catholic Abbe to think for him; and once his wig turned grey in a single night with distress of mind when they had a quarrel. The Marquis is so afraid of apoplexy, that when he walks out the Abbe Mordaunt always carries a lancet to bleed him instantly, in case he has a fit."

"How very considerate! You have all this authentic intelligence on the best authority of course?" asked the stranger with a submissive bow. "De Crespigny's entire! I understand the nephew has not inherited his uncle's antipathy to marrying! If this very whimsical old relative could be safely packed into his grave,—let me assure you he is even more whimsical than has been represented, though not quite so infirm,—I suppose Captain De Crespigny would very soon dispose of himself and his coronet."

"Certainly!" replied Agnes, unable to repress a conscious smile and heightened color. "In that case we should all probably see before long a Marchioness of Doncaster!"

"I might not, perhaps, live to be introduced," answered the old gentleman demurely. "And I could lay a bet that, as long as I exist, we shall never have Captain De Crespigny in the peerage. If you happen, however, to know any young lady at all impatient to become Marchioness of Doncaster, let her consult me, and I could, perhaps, suggest a shorter cut to that situation, than by waiting for Louis De Crespigny."

"How!" exclaimed Agnes, with a bewildered look. "Quite impossible!"

"Unless by accepting the present Marquis, who ought, by your description, to go very cheap, old, whimsical, and infirm as he is!" replied the stranger, with a sly smile, and a graceful bow. "The report you have heard of Lord Doncaster is such, that I feel almost tempted to forswear my own name!"

Agnes never in her life approached more nearly to a genuine fainting fit, than on hearing these words, and to have been swallowed up in an earthquake would have been quite a relief. She felt now like Abon Hassan, when he made the vizier bite his finger to ascertain if he were really awake, while, with a look of vacant wonder, she became aware that the middle-aged, nearly good-looking, and very elegant man beside her, was actually the old, worn-out, almost dead, and all but buried uncle, whose demise Captain De Crespigny had led her daily or hourly to expect for the last two years. If his ghost had appeared, she would not have been half so much astonished, while he seemed evidently more amused than he chose to acknowledge, at having created such a sensation, which he was by no means inclined to diminish, while silently admiring the beautiful fluctuations of expression in Agnes' resplendent eyes, fixed on himself with almost incredulous amazement. At length he rose to take leave, with a smiling, supercilious bow, and beckoned in an authoritative manner to a clerical-looking gentleman at some distance, to follow him, who spoke in a voice of almost feminine softness, though Agnes thought the expression of his countenance peculiarly sinister and forbidding.

"That, then, must be the Abbe Mordaunt!" exclaimed Agnes, almost aloud, while she gazed at his stern, sallow countenance, his shaggy eyebrows, low forehead, and artful-looking smile. "He might act the villain in any melo-drama! I would rather not stand between that man and any earthly object he may set his heart on! He is the most Jesuitical-looking Jesuit I ever beheld!"

Though Agnes' first recontre with the Marquis of Doncaster had been so calamitous, and her first prejudice against his shadow, the Abbe, had seemed most inveterate, she yet spent much of her time for the next few days in their society, and was delighted to engross the attention and the evident admiration of the two most distinguished-looking personages at the ordinary, while, without scruple, she flattered the Marquis most flagrantly, by laughing to excess at her own very mistaken ideas of him previous to their meeting, and hinting that this had rendered her subsequent surprise the more agreeable. Lord Doncaster in return amused himself with talking to her in a style suited to the female society in which most of his own time had hitherto been spent, though it should not certainly have suited any young girl educated like Agnes, who stretched her complaisance, however, to the utmost for a nobleman, and the uncle of her intended, Captain De Crespigny.

Marion's refined and delicate feelings shrunk at once from the libertine freedom of look and manner which she could not but observe in the old Marquis' tone to ladies, and though he repeatedly tried to engage her in the flippant and almost dissolute conversation which, in a low lover-like tone, he addressed to her sister, and made an ostentatious display of his admiration for both, Marion, disgusted and shocked at what seemed so utterly unsuitable to his years, gently but decidedly evaded all intercourse, being of opinion that the coquetry which was dishonorable in the nephew, became ridiculous and contemptible in the uncle, therefore she behaved to him with distant politeness, and a degree of gravity by no means natural to her in general. Marion devoted herself almost exclusively to Sir Arthur, leading him about in his walks, and enlivening his conversation with old Captain Ogilvy, while she could not but frequently compare the age and respectability of her venerable uncle, with the almost equal age and very opposite character of the Roman Catholic Marquis, whose thin skeleton figure, hollow ghost-like laugh and old stories, as broad as they were long, formed as unsuitable a contrast to his juvenile dress and manners, as his withered aspect did, to the fresh and fragrant flowers he constantly wore in his button-hole, and of which he lavished a splendid profusion on Agnes.

Marion observed with increasing surprise and regret, that the lively *persiflage* of her sister with the Marquis, was varied very frequently by long and apparently grave discussions, with the Abbe Mordaunt, and at the end of a week, she became startled to observe that Agnes wore round her neck a black ribbon, from which hung conspicuously suspended a large gold crucifix of very beautiful workmanship. On many former occasions, Marion had found reason to dread the bitter vengeance of Agnes' tongue, but at no loss to guess the source from whence this unusual ornament had been derived,

she inwardly resolved not to let it pass unnoticed, but warmly to remonstrate with her sister on the growing influence of the Abbe, which seemed surprising and unaccountable, while an undefined feeling of alarm respecting the rapidly increasing intimacy of Agnes with Lord Doncaster, caused her to long impatiently for the arrival of Sir Patrick, as she felt unwilling to distress her uncle on the subject of Agnes' extraordinary conduct, trusting that the whole affair was a mere girlish whim—a piece of missyish coquetry to please Lord Doncaster, who in the mean time laughingly boasted that never before had he made a proselyte so young and beautiful.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Patrick," exclaimed Agnes, hurrying into Sir Arthur's sitting-room the morning after her brother's arrival at the Granby, while a brilliant color lighted up her cheek, and her eyes sparkled with animation, "Lord Wigton is coming in a few minutes to hear me sing that new song of Bellini's, therefore pray tell the waiters we are not at home to any living mortal, and do hold this music till I give a last touch to my ringlets."

Agnes impatiently held out a large roll of paper, but almost screamed with astonishment on looking up, to perceive that she had addressed Captain De Crespigny, evidently that moment arrived from a long journey.

"Good morning, Miss Dunbar. We are well met!" said he, with rather satirical emphasis. "I am in a very cut-throat humor to-day, and shall certainly put an end to little Lord Wigton!"

"You have nearly put an end to me," replied Agnes, unable to steady her voice; "but I am rather glad to see you! Perhaps you may be allowed to remain here, though that tiresome man does so teaze me about singing."

"Wigton told me he was coming to see, or rather to hear Marion!" said Sir Patrick, emerging from a distant window.

"To hear me!" exclaimed Marion, with unfeigned surprise and perplexity, while thunder and lightning both lowered on the forehead of her sister. "That must be a mistake! I heard nothing of any appointment, and have not had a minute's conversation with Lord Wigton since we arrived at Harrowgate. He heard me only once by accident, and probably never will again."

"Unless by design!" whispered Agnes, angrily. "Marion, you have certainly some underhand way of getting on with people, which baffles my comprehension!"

Marion turned away, and silently resumed her place beside Sir Arthur, who had been amusing himself by standing at the window, while she told him what carriages came round to the door, what parties of pleasure were setting out or returning, and what travelling equipages appeared in sight, of which seldom fewer than ten or twelve arrived in a day; and by ascertaining the coat-of-arms or coronets emblazoned on the panels, she sometimes formed a tolerable accurate guess who might probably be their occupants. After talking together with great vivacity for some time, Sir Arthur suddenly felt the arm of Marion on which he was leaning, give an almost convulsive start, while she seemed with difficulty to suppress a half-uttered exclamation of delighted astonishment. She now leaned eagerly out of the window, to examine a travelling chariot which had driven up to the door, from whence a lady, apparently in the utmost extreme of weakness, was carefully supported out by a gentleman, and before another moment could elapse, Marion had rushed down stairs, and was clasped in the arms of Clara Granville.

"Did you get my letter?" exclaimed her friend, in feeble and agitated accents, while, after the first rapturous greetings, they had retired alone into a sitting-room. "No! is that possible? How could the post have been so long delayed? But perhaps it may be as well, for there was grief as much as joy in it."

Marion observed now with alarm, that the appearance of Clara, always interesting, had become almost painfully so. The summer bloom had entirely vanished from her face, and not only had her form shrunk, but there was a deep and settled sadness in the expression of her eye, when she added,

"The doctors have ordered me to go by easy stages abroad, but they recommended me first to try a few weeks here. The sight of you will do me more good than any medicine, and I had little difficulty—very little indeed, Marion—in persuading Richard to take the Granby on our way to the south of France, where we are to go health-hunting and scenery-hunting during the approaching winter; but you must see now, as I do, and as everybody does, except my dear brother himself, that I am hastening fast to that country where the sun always shines, and the flowers never fade."

A start of indescribable emotion now shot through the heart of Marion, for in the pallid, emaciated countenance of Clara, she already read a sentence of death, and she gazed upon her friend with a growing conviction, which filled her heart with anguish, that soon, very soon they must be separated for ever! but Miss Granville, observing her emotion, affectionately added, "Few have more reason to value their lives than myself, Marion, and mine I shall do all in my power to preserve. We ought to be perfectly and cheerfully satisfied with every event as it comes, and while I have such a brother as Richard, my existence is precious to me. I know, however, that at all events another will reward him for his kindness to me, and one whom he values even more than his sister has happily learned to appreciate him as I do! Indeed, how could it be otherwise? My home will soon be an eternal world, and if I might have a choice, the sooner, perhaps, the better. It grieves me to take my brother now from his duties, without a single hope of my own restoration. I know that, for I feel it here! Change of air and scene can do no permanent good, and I wish we had been allowed to remain stationary, as it matters little where I die, compared with the importance to many of where Richard lives."

Marion's voice, the faithful index to her feelings, trembled with emotion when she replied; but a moment afterwards, a smile of pleasure lighted up her dark speaking eyes, when Mr. Granville hastened into the room, with a look of animated happiness on again meeting Marion, and his whole countenance had that look of deep sensibility which becomes externally visible, when the whole mind and heart have been awakened to those affections which end with life, and only then. To cover their confusion, and conceal her own feelings, Clara assumed a tone of unwonted vivacity, saying, with an affectation of extreme gravity, "Allow me to introduce my brother,—Miss Dunbar, Mr. Granville! I can recommend both as desirable acquaintances, and hope you may find each other out by degrees! My duty is done, and now it is your own fault if you are not speedily friends!"

Marion became every day more conscious that no one can appreciate the real joys and the real sorrows of human life but those who live for its friendships and attachments, while she would have thought wealth or rank, without affection, like a body without a soul; but Agnes cared comparatively little by whose means she obtained her title, equipages, and diamonds, provided they were likely to excite envy and admiration. In her estimation, the coarsest materials of happiness were the most to be coveted, and the marriage contract, instead of being anticipated in the light in which it would have appeared to Marion, as giving her the privilege of devoting a life-time to the happiness of the person she loved best on earth, was merely contemplated as entitling her to an expensive *trousseau*, a large establishment, and a set of family jewels. In the mind of Agnes, Captain De Crespigny seemed only an appendage to his future rank and future expectations, while she rehearsed over her own coming greatness with exulting anticipations; but Mr. Granville might have lost all that mortal man can lose, even life itself, and still retained the same place as at first in Marion's affection. The depth of her feelings was tempered, however, by the supremacy of yet higher and holier duties and hopes, those of sound and enlightened devotion, in which it was her greatest happiness to think that she had at length secured "a guide, philosopher, and friend."

No man knew the world more thoroughly, or had viewed it on both sides with more careful scrutiny than Captain De Crespigny, who often boasted that he saw the working of people's minds as if their heads were like a glass bee-hive, and yet he was completely perplexed, on arriving at Harrowgate, to account for the extraordinary intimacy which had sprung up so suddenly between the beautiful Agnes and his whimsical old—, but certainly not venerable relative, Lord Doncaster. It seemed to him at first a laughable jest, but before long he became struck by the increased coldness of his uncle's manner, which was, if possible, more cynical and repulsive than ever, since the time when Agnes had inadvertently irritated the vanity of Lord Doncaster by her incautious jests during their first interview.

Curiosity now induced Captain De Crespigny, in some degree, to resume that intimacy with Agnes, which he came intending entirely to discontinue; for he had meant that his attentions should be solely and exclusively devoted to the captivation of her still more fascinating sister, whom he was intent upon adding to the list of his conquests; but Marion continued to receive Captain De Crespigny with careless civility, resolved apparently to forget all that had hitherto been unpleasant or pleasant between them, while every moment she could spare from attending to her uncle was dedicated to the Granvilles. Clara never left her private sitting-room, partly from bodily weakness, but chiefly to avoid meeting Sir Patrick, whom she had not expected to find at Harrowgate,—and his name never passed her lips except once, when in answer to a remark of Marion's, she said, "I shun another meeting with your brother, not from indifference,—very far from that. If I were only more safe from the attachments and delusions of this world, it would be unnecessary to avoid him as I do; but I am consoled for my own sorrows, Marion, by thinking of my brother's happiness, and by believing that you will hereafter value and experience together the affection of reason and principle, with a sufficient tinge of romance to give it some flavor."

"In that case," replied Marion, frankly, while a bright color glowed on her cheek, "I should think myself gifted with the largest share of happiness that the world can offer, and much more than the whole world could bestow, if unaccompanied by the hope of that felicity we are promised beyond it."

"And which I shall share with you at last, though the joy of this world I cannot remain to see and to partake of, with those who have all my affection and all my prayers," replied Clara, solemnly, while her lips trembled with a smile such as floats sometimes on the countenance of a Christian at last, "when

all the mortal dies."

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was late one fine evening toward the end of August, when, though the rooms at the Granby had been brilliantly lighted, several windows were open to admit the soft radiance of moonlight, and the whole miscellaneous party of ladies and gentlemen resident at the great hotel had assembled, full of gay excitement, in the public saloon, where the buzz and laughter of merry voices might be heard on every side. Various agreeable excursions had taken place throughout the morning. Pic-nics had flourished at Studley, Ripon, Bolton Abbey, and Harewood House, while even Plumpton rocks, very little higher than the cut for a railway, had not been without admirers who called them sublime, and the petrifying well at Knaresborough had petrified many with admiration.

A day of amusement seemed likely now to end, as such days too commonly do, in weariness and ennui. Several very old gentlemen sat down to cards,—those who still made any attempts at being juvenile, flirted with the more elderly misses, and Agnes, seated between Lord Doncaster and the Abbe, seemed industriously exerting herself to fascinate them both, while, though generally careful of her smiles, she now lavished them on each side with apparently heedless profusion.

The scarcity of *beaux*, so often remarked and lamented in most societies, could hardly be a legitimate cause of complaint on this occasion, but, as Sir Patrick remarked to Marion, "in every family there is but one eldest son, while there are at least three-and-twenty daughters, each educated and prepared to take her place at the head of a brilliant establishment; therefore, seeing in this room sixty-five young ladies, every one of whom expects to marry on at least £2000 a-year, it would require £130,000 per annum to satisfy them and their expectant mammas!"

Lord Wigton's fortune alone might have been sufficient, if divided into suitable portions, for at least ten such happy couples; but his whole heart seemed bent on bestowing it, with himself, on Marion, who found that she was pursued with assiduity so persevering, not only by him, but also by Captain De Crespigny, who had now openly abandoned Agnes for her, that, annoyed and perplexed how to act, rather than become repulsive and forbidding, which was always repulsive to her nature, she silently retreated with Sir Arthur to the quiet domestic fireside of the Granvilles, where she enjoyed the peaceful reality of happiness, instead of that noisy and glittering imitation of it which she had so gladly forsaken.

In the public saloon, Mrs. O'Donoghoe, a superannuated *jeune femme* of about thirty, more or less, in a dress as bright and red as a blacksmith's forge, hammered on a decayed piano-forte a sort of tune, which might be an Irish jig or a Scotch strathspey, while several mournful-looking gentlemen had been persuaded to dance with three or four very affected, over-dressed partners, giggling young ladies, most of whom were on the shady side of five-and-twenty, dressed in stiff muslin frocks *a l'enfant*, bare shoulders, rouge, and very pink stockings.

Mrs. O'Donoghoe's marriage, ten years before, had been a true Harrowgate match—a mutual take-in—the lady being a reputed heiress, without a shilling, and the gentleman endowed with an imaginary estate, which turned out to be situated in the moon. Since her widowhood, she had affected extreme youth, excessive wealth, and extraordinary vivacity, being of opinion that liveliness is the most universally popular of all qualities in the gay world, and that those who are not gifted by nature with light and joyous spirits, should assume them, though, if the exact degree of any person's happiness were distinctly marked by a thermometer on their foreheads, the reality might seldom coincide with the external appearance, and the pre-eminence would seldom be awarded to those who are blazing the brightest in a crowd. The most malevolent persons could scarcely wish their worst enemy to lead that life of anxiety, mortification, and misery, the inevitable doom of ladies who will not consent with a good grace to grow old—who desire to seem what they are not, and never can be again—who, instead of cheerfully advancing to meet advancing years, attempt to *rajeunir leur beaute passee*, and who, vainly endeavoring to stem the tide of time, catch at every straw which affords a hope of impeding their career into oblivion. If it be indeed true, as all who have experienced it acknowledge, that a worldly career, decked with all the glare and glitter of success, is yet a weariness to the spirit, what must such a life be to those for whom it does not even assume the tinsel of deceit.

Mrs. O'Donoghoe had appeared during nine successive seasons at Harrowgate, where she shone like a moving rainbow, dressing of course younger as she became older, and being considered now quite a part and parcel of the Granby establishment. Though it had been remarked that she always appeared about the same day as Lord Doncaster, yet her usual place of habitation and means of existence were perfectly unknown; but as, on her arrival, she generally entered the public room about the same hour as the post bag, it became shrewdly conjectured that she might perhaps condescend to travel per mail, while, nevertheless, she boasted long and loudly of her enormous jointure.

Sir Patrick alleged, that on a former occasion, when the house was crowded, Mrs. O'Donoghoe ordered a bed to be made up for her on the billiard table, and that now she had bespoken one, after the dancing was over, in the orchestra, while she gladly dispensed with a sitting-room, as the deficiency formed an adequate pretext for constantly frequenting the public room, which she greatly preferred, alleging at the same time, in the most emphatic terms, that saving six shillings a-day for the hire of a parlor was not of the slightest consequence to her, money being "no object," as poor Mr. O'Donoghoe had left her more than she could ever hope to spend.

Mrs. O'Donoghoe's name appeared regularly in the weekly printed list of company at Harrowgate, and she was certainly by no means a dead letter in the brilliant circle. She sang a little, played a little, and talked a great deal, while no topic of conversation ever came amiss to her. The gay widow floundered through anything or everything, making a thousand blunders, and adapting herself to each individual who conversed with her in succession, being ready and anxious for the admiration of all. She seemed willing to compensate for the want of silver in her purse, by having plenty on her tongue, and apparently thought, if she thought at all, that conversation resembled a game at whist, where each individual should implicitly follow his partner's lead.

In every carriage going to races, balls, pigeon matches, or steeple chases, Mrs. O'Donoghoe generally manœuvred to get herself a place, either inside or outside, she seemed by no means particular which; and whenever the master of the ceremonies became perplexed at balls, by an application for a partner from some heavy elderly gentleman in yellow gloves, who desired to risk his tendon of Achilles by dancing, he was sure to be rapturously welcomed by Mrs. O'Donoghoe. She had been always hitherto the favorite flirt of Lord Doncaster; and her bold bravura manner amused Captain De Crespigny, who called her "Fountain's Abbey," on account of her being so picturesque a ruin on so very large a scale. Though not quite so "wither'd, auld, and droll," as he and some refractory officers had alleged, when entreated by the master of the ceremonies to dance with her, yet Mrs. O'Donoghoe's best friends allowed she was thirty—her enemies protested she was forty—and the truth lay, as usual, between both extremes. Forced almost to acknowledge at last that she had arrived on the debatable ground between youth and that uninteresting period, middle age, too old for dancing, too young for cards, and not quite beyond the excitement of love-hunting, she still eagerly hoped to forget, in a brilliant establishment, the blighted hopes of former years. No unmarried man was too elderly or too juvenile for Mrs. O'Donoghoe to try her well-practised fascinations on; and whether they were majors or minor, Lord Wigton, Captain De Crespigny, Sir Patrick, or the Marquis, she yet continued to hope for their admiration. Still she retained a firm conviction that every gentleman arrived at Harrowgate with the full intention of marrying within a month or two—that happy couples, at the end of every season, were to be paired off like pairs of gloves or shoes—and that every gentleman among her numerous assortment of intimate acquaintances, would at last make his own selection; but the most sanguine hope of her sanguine mind was, that the attentions shown to her during many a successive season by Lord Doncaster, which had gone so far as even to excite some scandal, might at last ripen into an offer of his coronet; in which very ardent expectation she had recently suspended her dancing propensities, and diligently exercised on the Marquis her talents for listening, when his society could be had, or in his absence, she even tolerated his shadow, the Abbe.

"Mrs. O'Donoghoe," exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, throwing himself into a seat beside the piano during the interval of a quadrille, "only look at your old superannuated admirer and Miss Dunbar. People laugh at the susceptibility of seventeen, but that is nothing to the susceptibility of seventy. Your ears have generally been the best of listeners to Lord Doncaster's prosing, but you are fairly outdone to-night. How all you young ladies must be tormented by that old fellow's button-holding propensities."

"Quite the contrary! His conversation, though not always perfectly correct, is, it must be confessed, very amusing. Men in general are a queer set, but I like Lord Doncaster's old-fashioned compliments—quite of the *vieille cour*—one might fancy he had lived some centuries ago!"

"I heartily wish he had! I could back old Doncaster against the world, for being the dullest proser in the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, with the Colonies besides. He will die talking, for he talks everybody else to death! The Abbe, too, has no more mind than a sparrow. His conversation should be filtered every evening to purify it from bad taste of every kind. He picks up half a dozen stories every morning at the ordinary, and retails them to any wearied victim who can be forced to listen at night; when these are done so is he—his barrel organ has run down—and you may know when the Abbe has come to an end, by observing the hurry he is in to be off."

"You are an habitual hater, Captain De Crespigny, and have put on your black cap to condemn us all this evening; but I will not have our good Abbe

hissed off the stage in this way."

"Good! Look out that word, Mrs. O'Donoghoe, in the dictionary to-morrow, for you cannot know its real meaning!"

"Your criticisms on his conversation are like a shower of sleet this cold night, but I assure you the Abbe started a perfected new story yesterday, and I have sometimes heard him say very good things!"

"Then you have the advantage of everybody else, for I have known him since the time of William the Conqueror, and who ever heard of his saying or doing a single good thing? He cannot even understand one. The whole pattern of his conversation is egotism in all its branches, and you must positively permit me to enjoy my detestation of the Abbe in peace."

"I allow that he is in bad taste occasionally," whispered Mrs. O'Donoghoe, confidentially. "The Abbe can say very shocking things without causing one to feel shocked. If he has any hypocrisy, it is in trying to appear worse than he is."

"Could any one be worse? That seems to me impossible. No human being would think of calling me strict, but of all the odious, revolting sights I know, none can go beyond an irreligious clergy-man. The Abbe always looks to me like a person who had something very heavy upon his conscience—a guilty, suspicious expression of countenance. I have occasionally wondered, Mrs. O'Donoghoe, to see you out-laugh him at some of his own abortive attempts to be witty; but you can do many things that no other person can, and that is one of them."

"Captain De Crespigny, we must now and then laugh at other people's jokes besides our own!"

"I never laugh! I am the gravest man in Europe. I do sometimes give a bewitching smile, but never more."

"Did you ever try an ineffable look?"

"Perhaps I may some evening, when anxious to cut out old Doncaster! Miss Dunbar must find her two hours' conversation with him a serious grievance; but what would a life-time be! The ideas which proceed from the inside of my uncle's wig are certainly not of the most original and amusing. Fancy him day after day *toujours* Doncaster! Dunbar says he would dismiss the best servant he ever had, if the fellow so much as admitted him to a morning visit. If I had an ill-will at you, Mrs. O'Donoghoe, which is luckily not the case, I should certainly wish you were married to my uncle! Ladies and gentlemen may laugh; but I can assure them it would be no laughing matter!"

"Well, say what you will; but I may perhaps think my rose-colored satin has done its duty if I have an offer from the Marquis of Doncaster, old as he is!"

"Ah, Mrs. O'Donoghoe! If you had worn that red satin when we were first acquainted, there is no saying what might have happened. Another day of it now, and I should be perfectly done for! With a train, you would be fit to appear at St. James's! You alone, in the whole world, never alter! You must have been born a century old, and become younger every day!"

Though Mr. Granville and Marion, with the good-humored connivance of Sir Arthur, now spent many delightful hours in rational and animated intercourse, their happiness became gradually clouded with anxiety respecting the lovely but fragile Clara, who evidently drooped and faded. Her mind was stronger than her body; while resigned and gentle, she never caused a moment's distress to others that could be avoided, though the bright eye, and brighter cheek, which might have been mistaken for the glow of health, were but too evidently caused by fever; and her brother's heart occasionally misgave him, on observing that a vivid flush, and a deadly paleness, chased each other on her countenance when she spoke. There was a nervous tremor in her manner, and a deep sensibility in her smile, which saddened the eye that looked on that form of almost ethereal delicacy, while she tried, but tried in vain, to conquer the wasting sorrow with which she thought the vices and follies of Sir Patrick had forever divided them.

Several transient rencontres with the young Baronet, accidental on her part, but preconcerted on his, had renewed the conflict of her feelings, and unable to sustain the nearly frantic reproaches of one whom she loved only too well, Clara became now almost entirely a prisoner in her own apartments. It was the power of principle over feeling which caused her to reject, with gentle sorrow, the expression of attachment once so precious, and the fascination of Sir Patrick's manner to her was such, that his very errors she could not utterly hate, though day after day, she schooled her heart afresh with the remembrance how unjustifiably her own best hopes of lasting peace would be endangered by trusting her affections to the keeping of one who had betrayed others, and who would have but too baneful an influence over her own mind were they united, as he could so little sympathize in the emotions, occupations, and duties of the Christian life. While she might have said, like the poet, "I but know that I love thee whatever thou art," Clara felt that if her life were to be the sacrifice, he must be rejected; therefore, day after day, with pious resignation and fortitude, she endured the slow but agonizing martyrdom of extinguishing from her memory one whom she had so deeply loved. Sir Patrick contrived to testify by a thousand indescribable assiduities, only too gratifying to her nature, how constantly she was the object of his solicitude. Every morning Clara's sitting room was adorned with flowers from an unknown hand, which she felt and knew must be sent by Sir Patrick, though it was an attention he had never shown to any other; and the rarest fruit was frequently produced at her solitary dinner, though the waiter neither could nor would give any clear account of whence it came, while not a day passed that Clara did not see Sir Patrick's graceful figure lounging beneath her windows, conversing in an animated tone, with everybody except herself, or throwing himself on horseback, and galloping almost madly out of sight.

Every evening Mr. Granville urged upon his sister the importance of her being speedily conveyed to the continent; but every morning Clara postponed their preparations, feeling too much enfeebled for the journey, and unwilling to lose the delightful fascination of Marion's society, who sat beside her couch all day, and every day, making hours seem like moments while they conversed together. Clara knew nothing of ennui, and never had occasion to kill time, for she valued it as time ought to be valued, at an inestimable price. She had no weariness to dissipate, as every hour was occupied in improving her own mind and heart, while she exerted herself for the happiness of others, and never laid her head on the pillow at night without an anxious examination whether she had done all in her power for the real advantage of herself and others. It was the opinion of Mr. Granville, frequently expressed, that the very essence of earthly happiness is found in exertion,—that "while a right discharge of religious duty is in itself the greatest of all exertions, even the trifles or the essentials of life must all be gained by making existence one great struggle against nature. Study, integrity, good-humor, benevolence, early rising, and moderation are all exertions that must be made upon principle,—a principle of Christian obedience; and, as difficulty is the condition of success, our frame is strengthened by exertion, our skill by practice, our reasoning powers by opposition, and he who wrestles most will wrestle best."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Little of what is really going on in society can be traced on its gay, sparkling surface, where, amidst laughter, music, jesting, and smiles, a deep current may be flowing on of anger, envy, mortification, and disappointment. Agnes had lately allowed herself to suspect that her preference for Captain De Crespigny was by no means mutual; and though it still lingered in her mind, out-living all that coldness and caprice which had superseded the persevering ardor with which he once endeavored to engross her attention, the indignation of her feelings drove her now to seek relief in any counter-irritation, and especially in cultivating, beside Lord Doncaster, the society where he was most depreciated, and where she heard many a story of him from the Abbe, which filled her with angry misgivings.

Captain De Crespigny now perceived, with almost bewildered astonishment, that the beautiful Agnes remained stationary the whole evening with Lord Doncaster, wishing, he conjectured, to propitiate the uncle as a preliminary to securing the nephew, and that she actually made him a secondary object in society, while it was evident the Marquis observed and enjoyed this very visible alteration. It became particularly conspicuous at last, when Captain De Crespigny having spoken, one evening, a few words to Agnes, strolled away in momentary pique at the careless inattention of her reply, after which the vacant chair, beside her and Lord Doncaster, was immediately occupied by the Abbe, who talked down both his companions, while a long discussion ensued, of evidently deepening interest, during which the eyes of all three were frequently directed towards Captain De Crespigny. Those of Agnes now assumed an almost unnatural brightness, and her cheek became dyed with a hectic flush of excitement. Then, for the first time, he perceived the gold crucifix which she held carelessly in her hand, while the Abbe spoke with an air of artful and subdued earnestness, and Lord Doncaster, looking like winter beside spring, watched, with evident admiration, the changes of color and expression which flitted like an aurora borealis on her beautiful features. It occurred to Captain De Crespigny, that his uncle, believing, perhaps, in some degree, the report of his marriage to Agnes, and being an enthusiastic admirer of beauty, might wish the Abbe first to convert the young lady to his own faith, before bestowing him upon her, and as the idea flitted through his mind, he smiled inwardly to think how they would all be disappointed. Still the ceaseless conversation continued, and Captain De Crespigny, apprehending it might never come to any particular end, resolved, for his own amusement, *coute qui coute*, to break up the *coterie*.

"Miss Dunbar," said he, advancing, and in a matter-of-course way offering his arm, "allow me the pleasure of this quadrille with you!"

Agnes seemed almost to awaken from a dream at these words, but, after a moment's evident perplexity, during which she assumed an air of dignified indecision, Lord Doncaster having turned away to converse with Mrs. O'Donoghoe, she slowly rose, and silently took her place in the dance.

Captain De Crespigny had hitherto been to Agnes like the sun to the dial, causing the lights and shadows of joy or anxiety to flit over her countenance according to his own pleasure, but now he became piqued and astonished to perceive that he could not even command her most transient attention, and with a satirical glance at her absent countenance, he emphatically exclaimed,

"A delightful party this!"

"Yes, delightful!" echoed Agnes, mechanically.

"And delightful music too!" added he, observing with increased surprise the total absence of her thoughts.

"Delightful, indeed!" repeated Agnes, in an almost dreaming tone.

"And what a delightful partner I have secured!" added Captain De Crespigny, with some asperity of tone, while gazing more and more curiously into her countenance. "I am so well pleased, that really it was fortunate I did not shoot or drown myself yesterday! We are excelling ourselves to-night, Miss Dunbar! I never saw you so agreeable, so particularly facetious! Your spirits are perfectly turbulent!"

"That is the more surprising, as I have done nothing this evening but yawn and be yawned at," replied Agnes, resuming her gay, bantering tone. "I have been plastered to the wall like Warren's Japan blacking, looking as grave as an old gate-post, while you were generally so far off, that I borrowed a good telescope at last, to try whether it might be possible to see you!"

"I could not approach within a mile, you were so barricaded with Abbes and Marquises, but you of course occupied all my thoughts. Shall I ever forget my vexation on beholding my fossil specimen of an uncle depositing his bones in the very seat I intended for myself. He is really becoming a formidable rival!"

"Very true!" replied Agnes, forcing a laugh. "Lord Doncaster is so agreeable, that I am all but captivated, and if this were leap year I might, perhaps, use the lady's privilege and propose!"

"Take care, or I shall tell him so!"

"Pray do! It will save time, and he has but little to spare!"

"I am very certain, if the old boy were ninety years younger, he would make you an offer! But certainly marriage is a juvenile indiscretion, only for young people like us!"

"Lord Doncaster says, he is any age I like, and pledges himself always to continue so!" replied Agnes, laughing, though she became agitated to the very tips of her fingers, while, trying not to seem embarrassed, she hastily drew her gloves on and off, adjusted her necklace, and betrayed, by other nervous manœuvres, that her mind was not quite at ease under the observant eye of Captain De Crespigny, who looked at her with satirical surprise, and at last exclaimed, in accents of wonder, "May my bridle be too long, and my stirrup too short, Miss Dunbar, if I ever dreamed of jesting with you in earnest, about the old veteran amateur in flirtations, my uncle! That is rather beyond a joke,—and as for the Abbe, you ought to put him down in your private list of detestables, being a bad and dangerous man for young ladies to form an intimacy with. Let me be your father confessor to-night, Miss Dunbar, and tell me when, under his auspices, you mean to take the veil!"

Seeing Agnes become more and more embarrassed, Captain De Crespigny's politeness now induced him to change the subject, though still unable to conjecture any probable cause for her confusion; therefore assuming his usual tone of careless conceit, he added, "Mrs. O'Donoghoe tells me there are two singularly handsome officers in the room to-night; but I cannot see the second. We can be at no loss for No. 1. There is a strange-looking mortal opposite in black! He skips about in the quadrille like an industrious flea! Does it not seem like a frightful dream, that we are expected to find steps for such music as this? What would Monsieur D'Egville say, if he saw me, his favorite pupil, blundering through the figure to such discord?"

"He would still be proud of his scholar! I mistook you for Duvernay last night when you danced with Mrs. O'Donoghoe at the Crown ball. Her dancing-master must have been St. Vitus! She was as light as——"

"As a cork flying from a bottle of champagne! You seem perplexed for once to find a simile!"

"And you are not particularly happy in yours! I have been puzzling my head for the last two seconds who that gold man is opposite in uniform. He looks like a clever caricature of an officer on leave!"

"That is Charleville of ours! Mrs. O'Donoghoe considers him the first of men! almost superhuman! because, as she said to me yesterday, 'he is quite the thing! drives a tandem—rides races in a bonnet and habit—can back his horse down the steepest hill in Low Harrowgate—writes occasionally in the Sporting Magazine—and smokes more cigars in a day than the whole regiment in a week!'"

"There is an officer of that description in every regiment, who is generally called 'Jack' or 'Tom.' I detest these hunting, racing, smoking, and betting men; but you may introduce him to me when the quadrille is over."

"That is a ceremony I never perform, and never undergo! It is too solemn an affair for me to engage in! I never mean, as long as I live, to be introduced to any one—never!"

"Then if your present list of friends is to last for life, I hope it musters pretty strong?"

"Pardon me! We are not so particular at an ordinary as in an opera-box! There are ways and means of becoming acquainted without my making people conceited, by asking to be introduced! I tread on a lady's gown in passing, look shocked, beg her pardon, receive the very sweetest of smiles, enter into

conversation, and am intimate in a moment!"

"Very easy and convenient! I never could imagine till now why officers had all become so awkward at parties lately, in tearing my dress with their spurs!"

"Believe me, nobody is ever introduced to anybody now, and ladies have become equally ingenious with myself in picking up acquaintances. At Almacks last season, Lady Sarah Wyvell, having the good fortune to be next me in a quadrille, though we were not acquainted, asked, with a modest diffident air, if I could possibly tell her the hour. I politely took the trouble of answering her, and mentioned, that the key of my watch had been for some time mislaid, and therefore it was not wound up; but next evening, when we met at the Russian Ambassador's fete, would you believe it, she walked up to me, and, with a fascinating smile, begged my acceptance of a watch-key, beautifully set in turquoises!"

"Which fitted exactly, of course!" added Agnes, laughing. "I like a round unvarnished tale, and admire a ready invention, especially when the story is perfectly credible, and betrays no personal conceit whatever. The world certainly grows more ridiculous every day!"

"You never said a truer thing! It is a good plan in conversation always to say what nobody can contradict! Never certainly was there a more ludicrous medley of people shuffled together, than here at this moment! Nothing but old Doncaster's whim could have brought me to such a snobbery and tag-raggery! Harrowgate is like death itself for levelling all distinctions! You may glance down the dinner-table, containing a hundred and thirty odd-looking guests, and each individual has the same quiet, little, unpretending bottle of sherry placed at his elbow, and labelled with his name. Even the great millionaire, Mr. Crawford, who might, if he chose, drink liquid gold, fares no better, though he has brought home the sort of nabob fortune people used to make long ago. The art is lost now!"

"You might find it, I dare say, in some of the Useful Knowledge books."

"Yes! but I manage still better, by spending a fortune without possessing one, which does quite as well, and gives me less trouble. The hat is his who wears it, and the world is his who enjoys it."

"What a pity that very good people like the Crawfords are so often atrociously disagreeable," observed Agnes, listlessly. "We must allow, that in this world rogues are the majority; and as their good opinion is the most easily gained, and the most easily kept, I wonder less every day that some men are satisfied to secure that, and live upon it."

"I wish I had either!" said Sir Patrick, laughing.

"The whole tribe of Crawfords are, in my opinion, seriously unpleasant, with their airs of condescending stiffness and ineffable superiority," said Agnes, "never vouchsafing to appear, except at dinner, and huddling out of sight the instant we rise. Those who desire to be exclusive should take private lodgings, and not spoil a place like this by any purseproud finery! They almost live with Marion and the Granvilles; but I abhor that whole set!"

"So I do!" exclaimed Sir Patrick. "I hate their very parrot! He sits in a golden cage at the window, looking over his nose at one in the most exclusive manner imaginable. Old Crawford was a shop-boy in some green-grocer's once, I believe; therefore, it really amused me yesterday to hear him in the loud authoritative tone of a connoisseur, finding fault with the sherry. I never pronounce upon any wine till I have drunk a few dozen of it; but it is credibly reported, that the Crawfords at home indulge in nothing but Cape Madeira and water. We, who have been brought up upon claret, conform to custom with a better grace. I should never think of putting the cellars here out of fashion, by saying what I really think of them; but *entre nous*, the whole contents are perfect poison. Of the two, I would rather drink the Harrowgate waters, because they have at least the one merit of being wholesome."

"Lord Doncaster seems to find the sherry drinkable," said Agnes dryly; "and, as you say, 'he has cracked a bottle or two in his time.'"

"Very true! a really aristocratic man is so accustomed to everything of the best, that he tolerates or enjoys the inconveniences of an inn or a steamboat as an amusing variety," said Mrs. O'Donoghoe. "Besides which, Miss Dunbar, between you and me and the post, Lord Doncaster is old, and somewhat *passee*. You and he made quite a *tableau* together this evening; but take my word for it, Lord Doncaster is no chicken!"

"I need not take anybody's word for that! I have my eyes in my head like others!" replied Agnes, rather sharply, and glancing towards a distant corner of the room where Lord Doncaster was seated, with his eye at the moment fixed on herself. "We may all see that he is not the youngest man in the world; but he is certainly one of the most agreeable!"

"Well! old or young," continued Mrs. O'Donoghoe, resuming her habitual smile, "Lord Doncaster is my very particular friend, and if I meet him ten times in a day, he shakes me by the hand as cordially the last time as the first."

"Tiresome old bore!" replied Sir Patrick; "I would put my hand in my pocket the second time, and tell him, once a-day must do!"

"Instead of putting it into an empty pocket, Sir Patrick, offer it to one of the two Miss Crawfords," said Mrs. O'Donoghoe, rolling her eyes affectedly round, like the wire-drawn eyes of a wax doll. "The old nabob is so rich, that it took five India ships to carry home his fortune, and he has settled his whole countless rupees on the young ladies. What do you say, gentlemen?—one each? That tall may-pole, the eldest, who looks as if she could eat her own shoulders off, will be a great catch."

"She has proposed to me twenty times," replied Captain De Crespigny, "but I am not to be had! It would be necessary for me to hang all her relations, they are so vulgar! The second looks as fat and round as from yesterday till next year; but if she were less like a turbot standing on end, more like the person I admire most in the world, and several years younger, possibly I might propose."

"If you thought she would have you," replied Mrs. O'Donoghoe, laughing, "you would propose without minding the years. If a girl had eighteen pence, you would propose instantly, for fear she might spend a shilling of it!"

"I am told Miss Crawford was born in diamond ear-rings," said Agnes. "She looks as if it had rained precious stones on her ever since,—as if she had been pelted at the Carnival with diamonds instead of sugar-plums! The price of blonde and feathers is raised in every town where the Miss Crawfords arrive!——"

"The Miss Crawfords must not be ridiculed," interrupted Captain De Crespigny, looking very magnanimous, "at least by any one except myself! They are my preserve! They both dress in the last extreme of jewellery to please me; and I am pleased. If I have a weakness in the world, it is for dress; and, in my opinion, ladies ought all to shine like glow-worms every night. Look at this indefinite article of a man approaching! Tall, and covered with orders, he looks like a house insured! Who can he be?"

"Never distress yourself about who people are," said Agnes. "Somebody's son, I believe,—and somebody's nephew or cousin, with estates in all the disturbed districts of Ireland."

"Very accurate and satisfactory! Watering-place imaginations are apt to be a little inventive; like Cuvier, who described the whole history and formation of any animal from seeing merely a single tooth! With that bottle-green coat and all that light hair on the roof his head, he looks like a bottle of porter newly drawn, and foaming at the top. It makes me thirsty to see him."

"I excel particularly in biography," added Agnes, laughing. "That tigerish-looking man you are inquiring about, with all the little stars and bits of ribbon, had a whole regiment of horses killed under him at Waterloo! He saw sixteen colonels of cavalry lose their heads that day in battle, and he received fifteen mortal wounds himself, before he left the field!"

"Agnes, your stories would be as difficult to bolt as the American oyster, which it took three men to swallow whole! You remind me of the man who contrived to place a fly's eye so that he could see through it, and he found that it multiplied everything, till a single officer appeared like a whole army. I never saw a man ride as that stranger did this morning! His horse is a mere spider, and he jumped up and down in the saddle like a cup and ball?" said Sir Patrick, laughing; "but the climax of all his atrocities was, five minutes ago, when Marion re-entered the room, I heard him request that the master of the ceremonies would introduce him to one of my sisters! I am at a loss to guess which, but here he comes, drawing on a splendid pair of gloves!"

"Pray do not let me be the victim!" said Agnes, shrinking back with a contemptuous toss of the head. "I have no turn for teaching a bear to dance! and I will not be made ridiculous by having such a partner! The ugliest man I ever saw for nothing! Is he a human being?"

"For my part, I do not feel that being ridiculous or otherwise depends on any one but myself," said Marion good-humoredly; "and if it will make a man, all ribbons and orders of merit, happy, to perform a quadrille, I have not the least objection to be his partner, especially when he wears such very clean

gloves!"

"Miss Dunbar!" said the master of the ceremonies, approaching Marion in his most pompous manner, "allow me to introduce the Duke of Kinross!"

Marion accepted his Grace's offered arm, looking by no means so much petrified at the unexpected rank of her partner as Agnes did, who started, and colored with evident vexation, at having even in thought rejected the greatest man in Harrowgate, the hero of all her castles in the air, and one who was considered as eminent for ability as for rank.

"Well, Agnes!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, in a bantering tone, "for the first time in a long life you have made a blunder. You who never, even at chess, would play a pawn, if you could move a knight or a bishop, to have actually rejected a ducal coronet. I thought that in general you could draw out people's whole histories and characters like an opera-glass, and see through them in a minute. You generally know everybody's peculiarities and everybody's value, who everybody is, and what everybody does, with notes and annotations of your own, all original and authentic,—who have elder brothers to impoverish them, and rich uncles to give them hopes,—in short, their whole biography better than they know it themselves!"

"To be sure! I am an inestimable cicerone, 'honest, civil, obliging, and thoroughly to be depended on!' Where other people have only two eyes, I have three, and I make it my duty to ascertain who brings a footman or an abigail, what carriages people travel in, what stay they intend to make here, whether they hire a sitting-room, or lounge, like Mrs. O'Donoghoe, in the public saloon! I do believe the well-informed visitors at Harrowgate know exactly how much silver we carry in our purses every day, and what our washing-bills amount to!"

"Not much in some cases!" said Captain De Crespigny, fixing his satirical, mischievous glance on a shabby-genteel stranger who seemed to be lurking near and watching the lively party with an evil eye. "Look at this dark figure leaning against the door in a sort of Italian bandit attitude, trying to look romantic with his arms stuck on like crooked pins, his neckcloth perfectly strangling him, and his scarlet waistcoat like a robin-red-breast!"

"Is there a man in a waistcoat!! where?" asked Agnes eagerly. "Another Duke, I suppose. He seems like the picture of a robber in some sixpenny story book. But how he stares at you, Captain De Crespigny! I declare that look would pin me to the wall!"

"It is rather odd! Surely I have seen that man somewhere before! He must have dressed my hair at Brighton, or measured me for a coat at Dodd's. He is probably now the sort of £200 a-year man who wears a gold chain and vagabondizes about perpetually from one watering place to another! He seems by his look inclined to pick a quarrel with me; and, if he does so, I feel pretty certain he ought already to be sent among the velvets below stairs, which he certainly shall be without much ceremony. What can the fellow mean by looking such daggers at me in particular?"

"One addition is expected to the Crawford party to-night, which will puzzle you all!" said Mrs. O'Donoghoe. "That enchanting suite of rooms next the garden has been bespoken during the last three weeks, by some person whose name is quite unguessable! The landlady says that Mr. Crawford has made her solemnly promise never to divulge it! Now! there is something worth knowing!—a dark unfathomable mystery in a place like this, is perfectly inestimable!"

"I undertake to solve it in twenty-four hours!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, with animation. "When there is a real undeniable secret to be ferreted out, I am wider awake than most people! I can do everything but what is impossible! If I fail, then, as the lawyer once pathetically exclaimed, 'may my head forget the wig that covers it!' What will you bet that I succeed? Here is my betting-book to register our agreement; I never stir without it!"

"I have no turn for betting my head off my shoulders; but you shall have the Pigot diamond for your trouble!" replied Mrs. O'Donoghoe. "I have been busy about it for three weeks in vain, going about investigating, with my glass at my eye, like Paul Pry, but the maids pretend to know nothing, and the landlady looks bursting with mysterious importance whenever she speaks of her coming guests!"

"Then I am twice a man when there is anything to be found out!" continued Sir Patrick. "If I had lived in the days of the Iron mask, that affair would have been probed to the bottom, and laid open. I have quite a genius for unravelling mysteries!"

"If so, I allow you three days for scrutinizing the expected *incognito*, after which, do you promise and engage to furnish me with their numbers, names, professions, ages, fortunes——"

"And expectations! certainly! Also to disclose why they came here, and when they go away. Mrs. O'Donoghoe, I delight in difficulties, and glory in conquering them! I abhor everything easy! Even if you were easily pleased, I should have less pleasure in fascinating you."

At this moment, a plain travelling carriage suddenly swept round the road leading towards the Granby, while in the clear moonlight it could only be discerned that two footmen sat behind, and two lady's maids were mounted on the dickey; but before the rush of gentlemen towards the lobby, which usually takes place on such occasions, could be successfully achieved, the chariot stopped at a garden-gate beyond the usual entrance, while in the dusky obscurity the most penetrating eye could not discover who or what alighted. A torrent of waiters streamed along the passages, a noisy outcry was heard summoning the landlady, every bell in the house seemed ringing simultaneously, and Captain De Crespigny was surprised to observe the dark, stern-looking stranger standing near the door, as if he belonged to the party, and yet did not wish to be seen.

A procession of four wax candles, and a tea tray proceeding afterwards towards the newly occupied sitting-room, was all that the most enterprising observers could discover; and as there were but three cups, and Mr. Crawford was known to have joined the party, it became very plausibly conjectured by Sir Patrick that there were but two new arrivals.

The supper-bell had been rung that evening about ten minutes, and a numerous bevy of gentlemen collected round it, varied by a scanty sprinkling of ladies. The table was covered with wine glasses and crystal decanters enough to fill a glass shop, with not a drop of anything visible to drink, except cold spring water; each gentleman had half a pigeon on his plate, and each lady a glass of jelly before her. The uproar of waiters, plates, and tongues, and glasses had subsided, and the conversation was at so low an ebb, that there seemed every probability of the whole party being found asleep in their chairs next morning, when suddenly their attention was roused by the door being hurriedly opened by the *soi-disant* gentleman entering, who had already excited the notice of Captain De Crespigny.

Besides the eager curiosity felt in every small community, to see every one recently added to their number, this was a gentleman whom few of the company had seen before, and such a gentleman as is seldom seen anywhere. His dark hair hung in wild profusion over his head. There was an extraordinary wildness, almost amounting to ferocity, in his eyes, which had the restless glare of a wild beast's, as he quickly glanced round the table, while his pale haggard features, and the strong compression of his upper lip, gave him an air of irritable melancholy, along with a look of flustered, anxious suspicion quite unaccountable. He seemed annoyed at having attracted any observation, while, if Banquo's ghost had appeared, the apparition could scarcely have awakened more attention, as the party had little to do, and nothing else to think of.

"One would fancy a kangaroo had come in to supper!" muttered he, angrily, glancing round with a look of scorching hatred at Captain De Crespigny, and drawing his chair near Mrs. O'Donoghoe, who was almost the only lady still remaining. He then cut himself a supply of cold veal, that might have dined a couple of grouse-shooters, with ham in proportion, not at all carved on the Vauxhall pattern, and glancing at all the observant eyes around the table, he added, endeavoring to look in a more amiable mood, while a most unpleasing attempt at a smile for a moment disturbed his features; "I see, gentlemen, you are somewhat amazed at my powers of mastication! I am not Dando; but let me tell you I could finish all we see, and pick the bones of that turkey besides. What man in his senses would profess to be hungry, and sit down to half a pigeon! You seem to be quite a Temperance Society here! Fifteen jugs of water in regimental order round the table! The waiters must have bottled off the Thames!"

A suppressed whisper ran round the table, circulating many wondering conjectures who the stranger could possibly be, for there appeared a vehemence in his tone, and an irritability in his eye most repulsive and peculiar.

"That man looks as if he had stepped forth ready made, from one of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances," exclaimed Mrs. O'Donoghoe, in an apprehensive tone, as she strolled away from the table. "Who can he be?"

"One of the swell mob! I remember his picking my pocket in Bond Street, last spring," replied Captain De Crespigny, confidentially. "Did you not observe his bunch of skeleton keys."

"You are quite mistaken," interposed Sir Patrick. "He is one of the garden-room party. I saw him waiting for them in the passage; people of prodigious fortune I assure you! Their names are—no matter what! but they have estates in—I don't know how many counties!"

"He has rather an aristocratic look!" added Mrs. O'Donoghoe. "The sort of arbitrary air, as if he were accustomed to command a regiment!"

"More like an unengaged actor from one of the minor theatres, or a travelling dancing master. They are very well got up sometimes, and he is exactly

according to the last 'gentleman's fashions for the month,'" said Captain De Crespigny. "But certainly in some shape or other, a strolling gentleman-beggar; probably, like the dustman's dog, he answers to any name."

"Perhaps," added Sir Patrick, laughing, "one of those innumerable lecturers on astronomy, who are constantly tormenting me with prospectuses. If any man whatever is in distress, he puts on a decent coat, and announces a popular course of lectures, in which he makes the comets ten times hotter than ever, and the stars as many millions of miles distant as he pleases, shows plenty of diagrams, talks big about Sir Isaac Newton, gives a dissertation on the political economy of the moon; tells a few anecdotes, hazards a few conjectures, doubts what everybody believes, or believes what everybody doubts, and his bread is baked. I mean to try the plan myself some day!"

"Depend upon it, he is a peer of the realm," added Mrs. O'Donoghoe, more imperatively than before. "I heard that Lord Wakefield was expected to-day. His sister, Lady Jane, whom I saw once at a Spitalfields ball, was thin, with dark hair, exactly in that style."

"I have no doubt he is an Earl one day, and a Duke the next, as it happens to suit his fancy; and if you look well at him, Mrs. O'Donoghoe, he has a coronet tattooed on his forehead," whispered Captain De Crespigny. "That is the very last new fashion for peers."

"Coronets are falling into great disuse now; so I am glad they are to be displayed any where," replied Agnes. "Lady Towercliffe's eldest son, Lord St. Abbe, used to have one embroidered on his pinafore; but the coronet on Lord Doncaster's chariot now is almost invisible, and not larger than you would use for the seal of a note."

"I know whose taste ought to be paramount in ordering the next carriage bearing the Doncaster arms," whispered Captain De Crespigny, throwing a world of arch expression into his countenance. "How exceedingly well our shield would look quartered with the lion rampant, and the eight roses of the Dunbars!"

Agnes did not, as she would have done formerly, on hearing so broad an insinuation, look down and blush, or attempt to blush; but she fixed a long and searching look on Captain De Crespigny, during which her large lustrous eyes betrayed an inward struggle between the interest with which she would once have gathered up every expression of her voice, and the lurking angry suspicion she now felt of his sincerity; but her confidence was in some degree restored, when, keeping up a lively dialogue till the last moment, he assumed his most becoming looks, and escorted her to the door.

"Pray, Miss Dunbar," said he gravely, "will you give me a very serious answer to a very serious question?"

"Perhaps I may," replied Agnes, looking rather startled.

"Then, whether do you think ladies or gentlemen are the greatest humbugs?"

"Gentlemen, certainly; for they often pretend to feel what they do not, but ladies conceal what they do."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Marion and Sir Arthur were engaged next morning to meet the Granvilles at breakfast in the private parlor of Mrs. Crawford, and they had advanced considerably in the consumption of their muffin and first cup of tea, when a very plainly dressed young lady glided into the room with a timid, agitated step, and giving a slight nod to the party, silently seated herself beside Marion, who, in compassion to her apparent shyness, averted her eyes. She seemed recently recovered from an illness, being thin and emaciated to excess, while it appeared as if her hair had been entirely shaved off, as she wore a cap fitting close to her face, and neither curl nor braid to vary the almost spectral whiteness of her whole aspect. Marion ventured a second glance at the interesting invalid, and observed a smile quivering about her mouth, which she seemed vainly endeavoring to suppress, and a sly glance towards herself, which enlightened her in a moment, for, with an exclamation of joy, she sprang from her seat and was instantly embraced, with laughing delight, by her old friend Caroline, whom she had lately learned to know as Miss Howard, the heiress of countless thousands,—not the more, nor the less dear to her on that account, but still the beloved companion of all her early frolics and school enjoyments.

"I wished to try your powers of recognition, and Sir Arthur's," said Caroline, with tears of laughing and almost hysterical joy. "I am changed—greatly changed, so that my best friends could scarcely recognise me, and if my enemies were also deceived it would be well. Dear Marion! I am still pursued and persecuted by that wretched madman, the terror of our school days, the horror of all my subsequent life! My aunt finds her nerves so shattered with the whole affair, that our kind friends here have undertaken me for a week or two, and it is thought that, amidst the crowd collected at Harrowgate, I may be in comparative safety. My life has been rendered almost a burden to me in the country, where not a corner of the earth seemed safe from that wretched creature's intrusions, and it is thought that he must bribe some of our servants to betray all my plans; yet, among them all, I scarcely know whom to suspect or whom to trust! Remember, dear Marion, that here I am to be treated as some humble cousin of Mr. Crawford's, and on no account let your brother, or a living soul in the house, suspect that you ever saw me before. Agnes also must keep my secret, and Mrs. O'Donoghoe, who has heard nothing of my real history, agrees to be my *chaperon*."

"Then you should adopt her name, for Patrick always calls the widow, 'Mrs. I-don't-know-who.'"

The most agreeable conversations are those of which there is generally least to be repeated, and that which followed round the cheerful breakfast-table at Mr. Crawford's, was carried tranquilly on, in a pleasing animated tone, on subjects of immediate interest as well as of permanent importance, showing, in the most prepossessing colors, characters, and feelings, inspired by the finest impulses which adorn the heart and mind of a Christian. Amidst the enlightened discussions and unreserved vivacity of a conversation, displaying the ease and fascination of high life, without its flippancy, frivolity, and pretension, those who have lived to discover that what is called the gay world, is sometimes but a dull world after all, might there have learned for what important purposes the power of speech and the power of thought have been given, if rightly used and enjoyed. There was the joyous relaxation of happy hearts and well-ordered minds, without the effervescence of empty affectation, or the flash of bewildering excitement, which Marion had lately been accustomed to find among those who seemed little better employed than Domitian of old, in catching flies, and who prefer living upon exaggerated trifles, to enjoying that calm, rational and intellectual intercourse which is registered in the heart for ever.

With feelings of deep and animated pleasure, Marion gathered from Mr. Granville a rich harvest of sound opinions, amiable sentiments, and original ideas, while, with the free-masonry of real attachment, many a sentence, which seemed addressed by him to the whole company, attained its full meaning only in her heart. Richard was very seldom, as Agnes expressed it, "tuned up to nonsense pitch." He wasted none of his hours on the mere flummeries of conversation, but the frequent sparkling of his wit shone the brighter for its occasional gravity; and never had Marion seen him in a more buoyant and happy frame than now, when developing the thoughts and affections of a mind and heart cultivated to the highest tone of refinement, fortified by the strongest principles of religion, and imbued with a supreme regard for all that is noble, generous, or graceful in the conduct and characters.

To Sir Arthur, the social circle imparted feelings of inestimable happiness. He had long considered human life as having nothing left for him now, but the one great opportunity to prepare for eternity, not to be trifled away in its smallest details; and he had remarked to Marion the evening before, after spending an hour in the public saloon, "I tire more of that Vanity Fair in the next room, than I would of breaking stones on the road! I should become an idiot before long, if I lived the sort of butterfly-life they do here, in a whirl of exhausting and frivolous amusement."

The respectful deference paid by Mr. Granville to his age, his infirmities, and his high character, was in itself most gratifying to Sir Arthur; but more than all, he now saw his beloved Marion, surrounded by those who loved and valued her, the happiest of the happy. Inspired by the desire of pleasing, and unchecked by any fear of being misunderstood or misrepresented, there was now a spirit and originality in her expressions, and a native eloquence in what she said, enlivened and assisted by a sunlight brilliancy sparkling in her eyes, and beaming in her whole countenance, which was beautiful to behold, while her partial and affectionate uncle thought there was poetry in her look, and music in every tone of her voice.

Their discussions diverged after a time to the scenery and remarkable places around Harrowgate, while Mr. Granville, deeply read in antiquity, described with picturesque and most felicitous effect, all that seemed best worth visiting in the neighborhood, enlivening his animated sketches with many amusing remarks and original anecdotes, and giving to everything he treated upon, some new and unexpected interest, while Mr. Crawford varied the subject by an entertaining comparison of what he had seen and known abroad, particularly as connected with the Roman Catholics of Italy and France.

The convent which existed near Harrowgate having come under consideration, Mr. Crawford described at great length what he had seen there during a visit which he had paid to it many years before, and recounted several almost traditionary anecdotes of former times, in which the names of Lord Doncaster and the Abbe Mordaunt, became almost insensibly blended, very much to their discredit, while Marion reflected with wonder and regret that such men were frequently now the chosen attendants of her own young and beautiful sister. There was degradation even in their looks, and still more in their conversation; but she hoped, trusted, and believed that the Abbe's influence would be terminated when Agnes discovered that his attentions were not really likely to influence those of Captain De Crespigny.

Mr. Crawford mentioned with peculiar and melancholy interest the very beautiful niece of the Abbe Mordaunt, whom it was evident that he had intimately known, and very greatly admired, while he awakened the keenest interest in Marion and Miss Howard, by alluding to an abortive attempt he had made at Beaujolie Castle, to take a last leave of Miss Mordaunt, after she had been beguiled into forsaking the faith of her fathers, and was supposed to be on the point of retiring within the walls of a convent.

Marion could not but smile at the description given by Mr. Crawford, of his first and last visit to Lord Doncaster, when he had called at Beaujolie Castle sixteen years before, at which time the aged peer, though leading a life of retirement, made it by no means a life of solitude, as the vices of his early years enslaved him then as they enslaved him still, and the libertine of fifty years then, was a libertine now, when tottering on the brink of death. It became evident that the proprietor of Beaujolie Castle, though a great lord, was by no means in any respect a great man, being penurious in everything except the indulgence of his own vices and superstition.

"It makes me shiver yet," said Mr. Crawford, "to remember the large cold hall, paved with a curious mosaic of black and white marble, and the chilling, uninhabited room into which I was first ushered. Your uncle, Lord Doncaster, Miss Howard, never at that time associated with any living individual of his own rank in life. Those who do not cultivate good society, are always in bad; and it was supposed that he had strong reasons against admitting any one to his residence. The drawing-room was like a lantern with windows on every side, the floor so polished that it might have taken fire from the perpetual friction, and a scanty Turkish carpet served but to cover half the slippery floor."

"I always wish, in such a room, to be rough-shod," said Sir Arthur, "or to wear skates."

"You will remember, Miss Howard, that no foot was ever allowed by your uncle to tread on its icy surface," continued Mr. Crawford, smiling. "But pathways of green baize were laid along the floor in every possible direction, where it could be supposed that any reasonable person might desire to walk. A broad line stretched from the door to the fire-place, and tributary streams of baize branched off towards the sofa in one direction, and the writing-table in another, while directly leading towards an invisible door in the book-case, was a still narrower stripe, which it required some skill to keep upon rigidly."

"Were no sign-posts raised to point out the proper direction for travellers?" asked Marion. "Nor threats of prosecution held up in case of a trespass?"

"No! but I certainly did commit one unawares, for while examining the invisible door, it accidentally flew open, when a lady whom I could not distinctly

see, hastily concealed herself, and beside her stood, without exception, the most beautiful boy I ever beheld, bright and radiant like a cherub. When I called him forward, he laughingly disappeared, and no sooner did I leave that room, than the door was hastily locked inside."

"It sounds like the prettiest romance imaginable!" exclaimed Marion, eagerly. "In that old house, and among so many ancient portraits, what could be more picturesque?"

"A poor relation of Lord Doncaster was at this time the talk of all Yorkshire for her beauty," added Mr. Crawford. "Young De Crespigny, then almost a boy, had come home, I remember hearing, and admired her only too much; but whether she married, or what became of her, perhaps you will tell me, Miss Howard, as I never heard?"

"Then you are not informed of all that has occurred in the world during your natural life, though you seem very nearly so!" replied Caroline. "Whenever I hear a story told, I like to put a hat on its head, a stick in its hand, and to send it travelling rapidly round the world; but the mystery relating to Mary Anstruther was, like that of poor Miss Mordaunt, and of others in the same house, carefully hushed up, and my uncle's family soon after moved to Scotland. Louis De Crespigny was, even then, I am told, formed to gain and to keep the heart of any girl, with a perfect consciousness of his own powers, and very little scruple in using them!"

"He still has a very deep sense of his own supernatural merits," observed Marion, "and finds many admirers to agree with him, though I think his uncle must have been still handsomer once. The features of both are very peculiar!"

"I often think," said Caroline, coloring and hesitating, "that Sir Arthur's young friend, Henry De Lancey, looks as if the whole family of Doncaster had been distilled into one. He has the hair dark as midnight, for which my uncle was so celebrated; that remarkable drooping eyelid, too, as if his eye-lashes were too heavy to be lifted with ease, and the magnificent outline of his profile."

"You are right," exclaimed Sir Arthur, in a deep, low, musing tone. "The madman, Howard or Anstruther, who acted so long as my clerk, and still persecutes you, once hinted something of the kind, in an unguarded moment. I have been ever since on the watch to strengthen the clue, but in vain. If I could but live to see that mystery solved!"

"You shall!" said Caroline playfully. "What should hinder you? I must make it my business now, to ferret out more respecting the story of that Miss Mordaunt, which has faded into oblivion, like the thousand other wonders of the past.

> Of course, she lived until she died; but where,
> Or when, I never heard; nor you nor I need care."

"But I do care," said Sir Arthur, earnestly. "It seems to me, as if there were here some scattered links of the chain by which we might discover Henry's origin. Truth has been too long already at the bottom of a well; but we must invent some diving-bell to bring her up! It would give me satisfaction, whatever his connexions are, to identify them!"

"May he live to wonder at his own good fortune!" said Caroline, gaily. "People must exist twenty years in the world, as I have done, before they can find out what a strange place it is, and what extraordinary changes occur here sometimes."

Pleasure has a time-piece of its own, which certainly does not adhere to the ordinary measure, for hours and minutes most perversely run on, always fastest when it would be most agreeable that their course should be delayed. Marion seemed to awaken from a dream of enjoyment, when Sir Arthur struck his repeater at last, and found he had remained till nearly the hour of luncheon; but, before the party dispersed, they agreed to meet often with closed doors, in the same sociable way; and, exchanging a thousand pleasing plans and anticipations of coming enjoyment together during the following few weeks, they then separated.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

High Harrowgate, where the more aristocratic strangers and invalids annually resort, is nearly two miles distant from the mineral well, and from Low Harrowgate, which is infested by the more inveterate class of water drinkers. Placed far from the offensive odour of the medicated spring, on an elevated common, which still remains bare in all the uncultivated barrenness of nature, the broad green expanse is surrounded on every side by a wreath of miscellaneous buildings of every size and shape, cottages, shops, lodgings, houses, villas, and hotels, all marshalled in a row, and, like guests at the ordinary, mingled without order or distinction; while, elevated above all, and conspicuous for its whitewashed front and innumerable windows, stood the extensive building in which Sir Arthur had his sleeping apartments. Its aspect was extremely ancient, with a venerable stone roof peculiar to old times, and testifying to its great antiquity; while the more modern slates, or even thatch, on the surrounding dwellings, indicated a recent construction.

At High Harrowgate, a crowd of large consequential-looking hotels may be observed on every side, all unusually extensive in their accommodation, and apparently of nearly equal calibre; but visitors, after residing there some time, become aware that to those who prescribe gaiety, as well as more salubrious air and water for themselves, there are but three hotels in Harrowgate. Invalids may be ill anywhere, and personages who wish to be exceedingly exclusive retreat into private lodgings; but for anything that can be dignified with the name of society at an ordinary, the Granby, the Crown, and the Dragon, have by mutual agreement, established a singular monopoly, giving balls every alternate night, to which the guests in each house are reciprocally invited; the ladies and gentlemen of the Granby and Crown requesting the honor of being patronized at a ball on the following night; and each hotel provides a carriage for the transportation of its own party, in case any of the distinguished guests should happen by chance not to have brought their private carriages. Meantime, it is rather arbitrarily taken for granted, that there are neither ladies nor gentlemen at Gascognes, Queen's, the White Swan, or the Black; but residents at these houses are allowed to appear on sufferance, though not as invited guests; being merely "winked at."

At a Harrowgate dinner the travellers take precedence more according to the length of their bills than by any other criterion, those who have resided a month in the hotel going before those who have resided only a week, and the visitors of a week being far in advance of all who arrived the day before. A Peer of the realm must sit below his tailor, if he arrived at the house after him, and no dispute about places can arise, as each individual's name is accurately ascertained in the morning, and a plate turned upside down on the table opposite where he is intended to sit, with his name distinctly written in ink on the china. A label is also attached to each bottle of wine, exhibiting, not the name of the wine, but the name of its owner, and half an hour before dinner, all the gossiping world at each inn, may be observed slowly pacing round the table, and carefully reading the name, style, and title of those with whom they are about to dine, illustrating their remarks by exchanging biographical anecdotes and remembrances connected with each successive person, as he comes under discussion. Thus, though many arrive at Harrowgate strangers whose "names were never heard," yet, after passing through the ordeal of this gossiping committee, stories and circumstances are gradually discovered or invented, by which each individual is in some degree identified.

Between High and Low Harrowgate, besides a broad, circuitous high-road, two pleasant rural paths lead through the fields, on which a gaily-dressed crowd may be seen from peep of day in the morning, hurrying along in rapid succession to the well, with looks of anticipated disgust in the prospect of that strange compound of horrors which they are about to swallow, only comparable to the washings of an old gun-barrel. As Sir Arthur remarked, these waters seemed to have been invented for the especial affliction of elderly gentlemen, processions of whom might be observed drinking tuns of water, in order that complexions evidently much the worse of wear might in the process of renovation, be mended, cleaned, dyed, and repaired, till they looked as good as new; and though the Admiral complained that, to his uncomfortable feelings, it always seemed as if he had swallowed the tumbler itself, yet he valiantly persevered in daily drinking bumpers to his own health, saying that what was good for so many others, would be good for his complaint, if he had one, though, except old age and blindness, he was conscious of none.

In consequence of Sir Patrick's bet with Mrs. O'Donoghoe, he was on the alert at an early hour before breakfast the next morning, to ascertain who the incognitos were in the garden room. For nearly an hour he sauntered on the common within sight of the Granby, exchanging gay observations with those who passed, listening with a satirical smile to Lord Wigton, who was practising to desperation some of Rossini's airs at an open window, and watching with astonishment the repulsive stranger of the preceding evening, who, closely buttoned up in a military surtout, with his hat slouched over his face, was rapidly pacing up and down, with ceaseless perseverance, close to the garden room, with his eye fixed upon the windows and doors, making apparently so accurate a survey of those private apartments, that had it been by night instead of by day, he might almost have been arrested on suspicion of intending to attempt a burglarious entrance.

Not a mouse seemed stirring within these rooms, the blinds were all drawn down, and the doors all closed, but still the stranger paced rapidly up and down, casting many impatient, irritable glances upwards on the silent walls, yet keeping himself so concealed that no one, looking suddenly out, could have perceived him lurking there. Sir Patrick now, for the first time, suspected that he did not belong to the party within, and became more and more interested in observing his various eccentric movements, which betrayed a high state of excitement, till at length, finding himself watched, with the quickness of lightning he suddenly vanished round a projecting corner of the building, though a few moments afterwards Sir Patrick perceived that he was concealed in a thicket of trees not far off, where he could still keep his eye fastened on the windows with unswerving steadiness.

Parties, meantime, hurried onwards to Low Harrowgate to do duty at the well, while some of the loungers had already returned, being full charged with their quantum of water, and all very loudly expressing their astonishment that Sir Patrick had not yet set forth to hear the military band, which was reported to be playing "beautifully! enchantingly! or detestably!" according to the humor of those who spoke.

The crowd was on this day so excessive, that the old well had been completely exhausted, and alarming apprehensions were entertained by the invalids, of a scarcity for the later visitors, but still Sir Patrick stirred not! Though not usually endowed with excessive interest in any affairs but his own, the movements of the mysterious stranger, and his look of feverish anxiety, engrossed almost the whole of Sir Patrick's thoughts, though, to avoid any appearance of espionage, he kept up a lively dialogue with Mrs. O'Donoghoe and Captain De Crespigny.

Marion in the mean time had been exceedingly amused by the scene which usually takes place at the well, where every face seemed as if laboring under the nausea of sea-sickness, and she stood for some time with Sir Arthur and Mr. Granville, laughingly studying physiognomy, as parties arrived in rapid succession, threw off a tumbler of smoking horrors, and instantly departed, while a row of shabbily-dressed women, standing behind a stone counter, hurriedly filled the glasses, and handed them over in a long wooden ladle, to the expectant invalids, one by one, who were waiting patiently or impatiently for their turn. Each of the great hotels had an emissary appointed here, whose business it was to attend on their respective guests with the proper allowance of water, and it seemed as if these old women knew by a sort of instinct those who belonged to their own house; but an angry contest having taken place respecting one gentleman, who was obliged to wait with resignation or without it, till the belligerent parties had decided whose privilege it was to kill or cure him, Marion's attention was more peculiarly attracted to the spot, where one of the women who assisted in serving out the general beverage had been hitherto screened from her notice. Her face was excessively muffled up, but in the little that remained visible, traces of beauty still remained, though her features were so attuned to suffering, that Marion with wonder and pity contemplated so pale and ghastly a form. At length a dim idea stole into her mind, that surely she had seen that face before, but while the floating remembrance yet continued to flicker indistinctly through her mind, the wretched-looking woman, with a startled glance, had vanished.

"Patrick!" whispered Marion, turning to take her brother's arm, "do patronize me for one minute! Did you observe that melancholy-looking woman at the well? I never saw so blighted a countenance! What can the sorrows be that stamped such a look of ghastly woe upon these beautiful features?"

Marion looked up for a reply, and started to find that she had inadvertently taken the arm of Captain De Crespigny, whose usual vivacity and presence of mind seemed at this moment to have entirely forsaken him. His eyes were straining after the receding figure of the stranger, with an air of eager astonishment and alarm, while his countenance had become white as death. In a moment, however, he recovered himself, when Marion, with an exclamation of surprise, had drawn away her hand, making a hurried apology for her mistake.

"Did you not recognise her?" asked he, in accents of almost tremulous agitation. "It could be no one else! Surely that must have been—Dixon?"

"It was!" exclaimed Marion, breathlessly. "How has she come here? what can she want? where is Agnes?"

"This must be inquired into!" muttered Captain De Crespigny, almost inaudibly; and then resuming his usual careless vivacity of tone and manner, he entreated Marion to let him benefit by the fortunate resemblance of his dress to Sir Patrick's, and still continue to escort her. "I envy Dunbar for the privilege whenever he enjoys it, for you shun me like a rattle-snake," added he, in his most insinuating tone; "yet I would not for worlds be your brother."

"It is but a troublesome office," replied Marion, looking anxiously round for Sir Arthur, who had walked on a few minutes before, leaning on Mr. Granville, and most impatiently did she long for their return, being always on the alert to shun Captain De Crespigny without appearing to do so. Though, like all other persons, amused and enlivened by his whimsical and diverting style of conversation, which had more even in the manner than in the words, and though with any friend of her brother's it pained her courteous nature to be otherwise than frank and good humored, yet she made a principle of unobtrusively evading his assiduities, not only because his conduct to Agnes had been and still continued unpardonably dishonorable, but she felt indignant to think that he was disposed to beguile his leisure by also captivating and deluding herself. It was obvious that whenever she entered the room, he became silent and embarrassed with every one else, and took the first opportunity of devoting himself exclusively to her. Not giving one shadow of belief to all his professions, when Marion was obliged to listen, she did so with unconcealed indignation on finding the same insinuations of attachment made to herself which had been repeated to her formerly with triumphant credulity by Agnes. Marion thoroughly despised his double dealing and ungenerous trifling, while feeling nothing for him on that score but contempt, she could almost have rejoiced that he wasted his efforts to be irresistible on one who, being so fully aware of his character, could incur no danger from the fascinations which had been fatal to the peace of many. Safe in the consciousness of a hallowed attachment to Mr. Granville, and convinced that Captain De Crespigny was incapable of a single genuine feeling, she could scarcely have considered it necessary even to be repulsive in her manner; but it seemed due to Agnes as much as possible to avoid him, knowing that her sister had not yet been able entirely to divest herself of a lingering belief that the professions which were false to all others were sincere to herself.

For the first time in his whole acquaintance with lady-kind, Captain De Crespigny felt doubtful and diffident of his own fascinations, and for the first time also he felt himself really and undeniably in love, as the transparent single-hearted excellence of Marion's character seemed, when compared with the hackneyed and artificial mind of her sister, and all other girls, like the difference between a pure mountain breeze and a London fog. The attachment he so often affected had now become genuine, and the feelings he formerly invented for amusement, and expressed with the utmost fluency, were now so real, that they could scarcely be spoken at all; for language seemed to fail him when he addressed Marion, and every day, as it increased his attachment, diminished his hope. She had no vulgar love of admiration; and Captain De Crespigny was mortified to perceive, that while the color mounted to her cheek at the slightest evidence of affection from her uncle or brother, all his own hints of a preference, all his fascinating attentions and irresistible speeches, were listened to with the same smiling good humor as if they had been devoted to a third person. Marion always made some ready reply, without a *soupcon* of embarrassment, and seemed to take compliments, reproaches, love, or despair, all as matters of course, which must inevitably be listened to with the same indulgent consideration she would have bestowed on Lord Doncaster's lamentations respecting his last attack of the gout. She did not even pay him the compliment to drop a single stitch in her knitting from agitation or from interest when he spoke to her; but all his words passed away like arrows flitting through the air, which leave not a trace behind.

Captain De Crespigny became, this morning, more than usually assiduous while they stood beside the well, referring to Marion's opinion on every subject, quoting what he remembered her formerly to have said, rejoicing in everything that seemed to give her pleasure, regretting the most trifling annoyance that fell in her way, approving of all her sentiments, and talking in raptures of old Sir Arthur, while eyes, smiles, voice, and manner, all indicated the feelings he wished to convey; but Marion merely congratulated herself, that having seen the cards already, she knew the game he was playing.

"Miss Dunbar!" said Captain De Crespigny, rushing eagerly forward to pick up a flower which the wind had blown out of her bouquet, "may I keep this rose?"

"Certainly! any gentleman may take a flower; but I never give one. There are twenty better in the garden."

"I would give all the twenty for this one. This is more precious than anything except the hand that gives it. Indeed this is the only rose in the world I care for!"

"The white moss-rose is more fragrant, and not so common," answered Marion, indifferently. "That was beautiful an hour since, though rather the worse of wear now."

"I am so unalterable in my preferences, that even though withered and decayed, still it would be precious to me, as connected with recollections which I shall cherish till the world's end, and till the end of time! Flowers speak a language which words cannot express; and even if mine were to fade in an hour, let me enjoy it while I may. This rose does not hoard all its sweetness, as you do!"

"Captain De Crespigny, if your conversation has a fault in the world, it is too plain, matter-of-fact, and unadorned," said Marion, with a careless laugh. "You have wasted a whole summer of lilies and roses upon me during the last five minutes, and I ought to answer you with a perfect conservatory in return; but it sounds dreadfully like the double-distilled essence of the Minerva press. I thought this very flourishing style of compliment had been worn out now, and given over, as old clothes are, to the race of abigails and valets. But here comes my sister; and, to speak in your own fashion, remember '*je ne suis pus la rose, mais j'ai vecu avec elle*.'"

To Marion's astonishment, Agnes merely strolled past, with her eyes earnestly fixed upon nothing, and did not interrupt her conversation with Lord Doncaster and the Abbe Mordaunt, by whom she was escorted, except to give a smiling nod to Captain De Crespigny, who seemed exceedingly surprised at her indifferent "how-d'e-do" manner, and excessively piqued at the carelessness she either felt or feigned, saying, in a tone of satirical wonder:

"The Abbe seems to have every probability of gaining a proselyte! He has been very successful among the lower orders lately, though; I believe, my uncle's ale and roast beef ought to receive great part of the credit; but I cannot be sufficiently astonished at our new convert!"

"I must discuss this subject with my sister!" replied Marion, pleased to observe Captain De Crespigny so much interested in Agnes. "It is wrong to have delayed so long asking an explanation; but I could almost more easily die for those I love, than distress them. My uncle would care too much on the subject, and Patrick too little; therefore it must devolve upon me to speak. We are to have a long drive, soon. Let me consider! this is Tuesday—to-morrow will be Wednesday——"

"How clever of you to find that out! You would certainly have discovered the longitude!"

"No doubt of that! I have discovered a great deal in my time; but in the meanwhile I shall talk this over fully with Agnes to-morrow."

"Do not speak of to-morrow, when to-day is the happiest, perhaps, in my life! I wish there were no to-morrows! Such an hour as this appears to me like an aloe, which can blossom only once in my existence."

"You entertain very moderate expectations of life, therefore I think we may confidently rely on your being agreeably surprised by many days as pleasant."

"Then they must be passed in the same society; but Miss Dunbar, it always seems as if you would rather say 'Good bye' to me than 'How d'ye do!' You treat me with the most barbarous injustice! Your heart never teaches you to understand mine! Is it that you hate or despise me? You are so amiable to others, so charming, so everything that I could admire, yet to me your smiles are as cold and chilling as a moon-beam on snow. Be severe, satirical, anything but half absent and altogether indifferent, while you listen to me only with the ear and not at all with the heart. I shall positively be obliged at last to give you up."

"I wish you would! We might be the best of friends as well as cousins, if you would only talk to me in an everyday manner, without rehearsing over those absurd Romeo-and-Juliet speeches."

"Let us, then, be friends now, and more than friends in time to come."

"Never! O never! Patrick has led you to disbelieve my engagement to another; but at all events, Captain De Crespigny, if we lived in separate planets we could not be more entirely divided; and even in jest, I cannot allow any one to talk as you do, though I know it is merely an unconquerable habit you have of saying the same thing to every young lady, indiscriminately."

"What a shocking aspersion! you seem to think me incapable of a single respectable feeling, but believe me, since first we met I have scarcely known whether there be another girl in the world but yourself! Every moment I can be with you adds something to the value of my existence."

"Your civilities are all so complete a burlesque that I need never forget they are in jest!" replied Marion, looking considerably bored, and hurrying onwards, while Captain De Crespigny buried himself in melancholy silence, and assumed a most perfect attitude of graceful despair. Finding the pause rather awkward, she added, in an every day, commonplace tone: "Are you going to hear Grisi to-night? I am told that large sums are given for places on the heads of those who have already secured seats!"

"If I go to Grisi's concert, the temptation is—not to hear him—that you know very well—too well! I have but one object in going anywhere, and that is—to meet you. *Esperer aupres de vous vaut mieux que jouir avec tout autre.* I must quarrel with that little shake of the head. It is a libel on my sincerity! Miss Dunbar, your face is a perfect printing press, and publishes all you think! I wish you possessed the magic ring which enabled people to know exactly what was thought of them! You are in my debt several months of devoted attachment! Little do you guess how often and how deeply your slightest words are pondered, remembered, repeated, and dwelt upon in my solitary hours, nor how constantly I wish that the man in the moon, who employs his leisure in knitting people together with invisible cords, would, for my especial happiness, give us a few stitches."

"It must be his fault that we have been kept so very long together this morning. Where can my uncle be?" said Marion, impatiently. "You are aware already, Captain De Crespigny, that I must receive all my brother's friends with civility. In that respect his authority shall be obeyed, as it is of no use quarreling with the wind, but if you consider me indifferent, that is what I am and ought to be, therefore think me so always."

"That very indifference is distracting! Let me acknowledge, Miss Dunbar, that I may have deceived others, but you I never even wished to deceive; others I have flattered, but no one can flatter you, because nothing can be said equal to what I think. I wish new words could be invented to express the ardor of my sentiments! When we are together, the present moment is everything! I have neither past nor future, neither hopes nor fears, but what are connected with you," said Captain De Crespigny, with hurried impetuosity, while a rush of mingled feeling swept across his features. "I forget everything else when you are present, and neither know nor care where I go in your absence. I love you as I never loved before and never can again. The world, in short, has only two divisions, in my estimation—where you are, and where you are not. Despise my attachment if you will, but at least believe in it."

"You grieve me to the very heart," said Marion, in a low, tremulous voice, for there was an irresistible air of truth in Captain De Crespigny's manner which startled and shocked her. "I never for a single moment could imagine you serious about anything! Life and even its most sacred affections seem all in your estimation a mere jest, to be thought of and forgotten with a smile. I trust it is so now! I would not for worlds believe you in earnest! You seem really to have parted with your senses!"

"Or rather I found them from the moment I learned to appreciate you! Did you never hear, Miss Dunbar, that in this world two individuals are always created suitable to each other, who must both be miserable unless they become one, and you exactly fill up the beau ideal which has haunted me from the hour I left Eton."

"Why? De Crespigny!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, coming forward, "with that melo-dramatic air, you seem to be rehearsing a last speech and confession."

"Or rather my first speech and confession," replied he, with a conscious laugh. "And Miss Dunbar, I must entreat you not to believe——"

What Captain De Crespigny entreated her not to believe Marion did not wait to hear, as they had at last reached the Granby, and she rushed up to her own room, while he, as much astonished at his reception as a gentleman could well be, strolled slowly away singing to himself with angry asperity,

"If she love me, this believe,
I will die ere she shall grieve;
If she slight me when I woo,
I can scorn and let her go."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Marion had frequently sketched in her own mind a faint outline of what she should say to Agnes on the subject of her unaccountable intimacy with Lord Doncaster, who seemed to delight in making a parade of her preference for his society, especially in the presence of his nephew; but when Marion found herself at length alone one day with her sister, she felt her heart sink with apprehension, yet, being resolved to conquer nature, and do her duty, if possible, she approached the table where Agnes was seated. A large, foreign-looking book, with gold clasps, lay conspicuously before her, which Marion discovered at once to be a missal, bound in antique boards of beautifully inlaid wood, with massy gilt ornaments, and illuminated by designs in the style of Albert Durer.

To hide her confusion, and begin the subject with advantage, Marion placed her hand on the shoulder of Agnes for some moments, and leaned forward, examining those splendid paintings, the singular beauty of which she admired, while expressing considerable amazement at the strange, distorted designs on the border, where animals with five heads and their faces all nose, were varied with fish mounted on legs, and birds exhibiting human countenances.

"These eccentric creatures resemble the figures in some horrible dream!" observed Marion; "but they are not a greater distortion from the truth of nature, than the Popish superstitions which they illustrate are from the truth of revelation. Nothing seems left in either, of the perfect symmetry with which all things come from a Divine Creator."

"I am no controversialist," said Agnes, indifferently. "I take matters as I find them."

"That is not the safest of all plans, unless you are very careful from whom your ideas are received. I have heard that there are writers in the Roman Catholic Church, such as Massillon, Pascal, and Fenelon, who were nearly as pure in Christian doctrine as ourselves, resting their hope on no merits except those of our Divine Saviour; but I should think, for instance, that no Protestant could gain anything from associating with such a man as the Abbe Mordaunt, who would disgrace any church. Dear Agnes, allow me for this once the privilege of a sister; not merely to love you with my whole heart, as I always do, but also to prove my affection by saying for your sake what is most painful to me, and may probably be annoying to you. It is with the greatest anxiety and surprise that I have lately been watching you——"

"Watching me!" exclaimed Agnes, starting round with angry asperity, and fixing her flashing eyes on Marion. "What right have you—or what right has any living being to watch me?"

"The right of affection and kindness," replied Marion, with emotion, while a large tear glittered in her deep blue eyes. "We are motherless girls, Agnes, and therefore we owe each other the greater solicitude. There are many eyes upon you, less friendly, I fear, than those of a sister. If others were not placing a sinister construction on all they see, I might not perhaps have ventured to begin the subject; but as it is, I have no choice except to discuss it with either Patrick or yourself. Our kind uncle must not be agitated, on any consideration; otherwise I have sometimes thought of asking him to take us at once away from this place."

"And pray, what has your mean 'watching' of my conduct,—your police investigation, discovered, which might render so desperate a measure necessary?" asked Agnes, with a flickering color in her cheek, and in a bitter tone of suppressed anger. "Wisdom will die with you, Marion! I ought to be duly sensible of my good fortune, in having such a sister! Perhaps you intend obligingly to favor me with a few hints for the regulation of my conduct,—to honor me with a little of that valuable advice which I have not been sufficiently alert in asking."

"Agnes! I know myself to be in a most unsuitable position, when criticising anything in your conduct; but if I had died, and returned from another world with permission to speak, I could not be more entirely free from any personal motive. If I give pain to you, I give greater pain to myself; but every one combines in saying, that this old Roman Catholic peer, and his Abbe, are most profligate men; that they scarcely deserve to be well received by ladies of character; that the very glance of their eye is contamination, and that you alone, of all the ladies in this house, are singled out to be, not distinguished, but insulted by their attentions. Surely, Agnes, it is time for me to speak. Our reputation is all we have on earth—more precious to any woman than the wealth of the world, and more precious, if possible, to us, than to others, because we have no other dependence. Patrick is every day on the brink of ruin, and must leave us before long. Our uncle—but I cannot speak of that—when he is gone, we shall be alone indeed."

"When that day comes, I shall be as sorry as yourself; but there is nothing to fear at present. Captain De Crespigny says, all old uncles or aunts who wish to be lamented by their young nieces, should die in the midst of a gay season, to interrupt the parties and balls; but good, worthy Sir Arthur is more considerate than to incommode any one. When we do lose the Admiral, however, be under no apprehension of my remaining alone! I have made up my great mind upon that subject, and you will see that circumstances do not always continue the same."

"Nor people either, Agnes! I have long feared that you trust too implicitly in the constancy of Captain De Crespigny."

"Trust! Do you suppose that I any longer trust him!" exclaimed Agnes—her color rising, and her large eyes glittering with a strange expression of indignant contempt. "No, Marion! He has been represented to me now, as he is, a heartless, vain, unfeeling coquette. All men are monsters, but he is the worst! I can be revenged, however! Even he, cold and indifferent as he is, shall repent! I shall blight his hopes, as he has blighted mine. I shall cross his views, humble and disappoint him. To inflict on him all that he has so wantonly and cruelly inflicted on me; to destroy his insolent triumph, and bring down the pride of his success, I would—yes, Marion, I would, and I shall sacrifice the happiness of my whole life!"

"Dear Agnes! do not say so! Do not even think so for a moment! What can you mean! Revenge would be a wretched satisfaction, at best! If he has treated you ill——"

"If he has!" interrupted Agnes, with startling vehemence. "Marion! the Abbe thinks he could never have married me, even had he wished it. That Captain De Crespigny became entangled, from the time he was a boy, in one of those horrid Scotch affairs, half a marriage, or a whole one, just as he pleases, and Lord Doncaster told me one day in confidence——"

"In confidence, Agnes! What confidence should ever exist between you and such a man as Lord Doncaster? an old *roue*! You ought to despise and avoid him!"

"I am apt to think you are quite mistaken," replied Agnes, with a sudden assumption of haughtiness, while she shot an angry glance at Marion. "The last Lord Doncaster but ten, may have been a *roue*, or what you please, but I know nothing, and will hear nothing against the present."

"That is the very point on which I must speak!" answered Marion, hurriedly, her features working with agitation, while the blood rushed back to her heart. "In a case like this, where love or marriage are completely out of the question, our friends are all astonished that you, Agnes, who make no secret of liking admiration, should waste so much time in deep conversation with that really disreputable old Peer. Believe me, it gives rise to much animadversion, and even calumny, especially when connected with that new ornament you wear; and I begin seriously to fear you may be persuaded into taking the veil."

"Only a bridal veil," replied Agnes, arranging her ringlets. "I am not quite so mad as you think. I certainly have adopted this badge! At Rome I shall do as Rome does. Now, Marion, as young Rapid says in the comedy, 'I shall take it a personal favor if you will not faint;' but the Romish faith suits me best, and I consider it religion in full dress, instead of religion in deshabille. I admire the almost theatrical magnificence of its ritual; the splendid processions, the consecrated dresses, the superb music, the dazzling lights, the clouds of burning incense, the romantic convents, and the magnificent cathedrals."

Marion looked aghast with consternation and sorrow, while she listened in silence; but at length, in a tone of subdued and mournful indignation, she replied, "Is this, then, possible! that without one serious thought, you would forsake our holy faith, for a mere external mockery of religion! a solemn pantomime? Attracted by rosaries, crucifixes, tinkling bells, and empty symbols, you would forget the lessons of our childhood, the church in which we worshipped with our father, the Bible which he taught us to revere. Surely, Agnes, you will consult a clergyman of our own persuasion, before taking rashly the most important step which a mortal can possibly contemplate,—which our parents would rather you had never been born, than that you took."

"Excuse me, for interrupting your sermon. It is against all rule, but it may save you a great deal of trouble," said Agnes, arranging her rings, and re-tying her bouquet; "my sole intention is to be of a similar religion to the man I marry."

"Do *you* still expect," said Marion, with a look of surprise, "to be Mrs. De Crespigny?"

"Or Marchioness of Doncaster!"

"Yes, in due course of time, when Captain De Crespigny succeeds!"

"He never shall succeed," replied Agnes, setting her teeth, and speaking with stern determination, while her face became rigid as stone. "Captain De Crespigny has deceived me, cheated me of my youth, hopes, and happiness. I have been fooled, trifled with, basely ill-treated. My heart is seared against any real attachment to another; but I shall be amply revenged on him. I shall destroy his happiness, as he has destroyed mine. Without his long-expected wealth and title, he will find that the butterfly is but a grub.—I mean to marry his uncle!——"

A dead silence followed these words. Marion made no exclamation, and did not even look at Agnes, but buried her face in her hands, with a feeling of unutterable shame and consternation. The very idea had never before occurred to her imagination, that her young and blooming sister could contemplate so degrading a sacrifice; but when, at length, she looked up, there was something in the proud, stern expression of that beautiful countenance, which forced upon her the unwelcome and extraordinary conviction that all had been said in earnest.

"Agnes!" cried she, gasping with astonishment; "that dissipated, horrid, dreadful man! Impossible! The miserable wreck of an ill-spent life! A superannuated *roue*. Are you in jest? or are you mad?"

"Mad! or at least delirious! Marion, we have lived long together, and yet you do not know me! I am not one to sit tamely down, as you would do, and wash my heart away with tears! My sorrows are not to be closeted in silent desolation, but I must act. If hope and happiness are crushed for ever, he who turned my feelings to stone shall suffer for it! He shall no longer wind me on, and wind me off, according to his own caprice! It is like death itself to love in secret, but worse than death when it is known, and he does know all! He knows, believes, and rejoices to believe, that I have waited, suffered, hoped, and feared for him, and for him only; but I am not one to die of scorned love. Now every spark of my regard for him is crushed out. His vanity shall not have another moment's triumph over me," said Agnes, her eyes becoming frightfully brilliant. "My heart feels as if it were buried in a snow-drift, and nothing warms it but the hope of vengeance."

"Agnes! who in her senses would think of being consigned to misery and contempt both here and hereafter, merely to punish one who ought to be despised! If Captain De Crespigny be vain, foolish, and unprincipled, is that a sufficient reason for you to become degraded, and, I must say, infamous!" said Marion, in a tone of undisguised disgust, though her voice made no more impression than the gentle wave on the hard and unbending cliff. "Such a step as this would separate you for ever from those you have most reason to love."

"I am one of the Positive Club, Marion, who never change their minds about anything! and my resolution is unalterable. ''Tis best repenting in a coach and six.'"

"Think, Agnes, not of the short triumph over Captain De Crespigny, but of the long years that must follow,—of the living death you must endure, linked to vice, decrepitude, and immorality, lowered in your own eyes, and contemptible in those of others."

"Mistaken as usual, Marion! a life of mediocrity would be a life of misery to me, and few people think the worse of any young lady for becoming a Marchioness. Lord Doncaster can give me every thing except happiness, and I must find the best substitute for that in my power. A blight is on my heart! my pride has been mortally wounded; but I cannot undertake a cold, insipid, colorless existence, devoid of motive and of hope. It would be ennui drowned in wretchedness, if I return jilted, mortified, and disappointed, to our uncle's dog-hole of a villa at Portobello?"

A red spot burned on Marion's cheek, and indignant tears, occupying the place of words, glittered on her eye-lashes, while her thoughts reverted to their generous, kind-hearted, and high-spirited uncle, whose affection was so undervalued by Agnes, and whose better feelings were about to be so outraged by the announcement of a preposterous and really disgraceful project.

Agnes now assumed the dignity of a peeress in expectancy, looking cold, resolute, and haughty, till at length Marion, overcome with emotion, threw her arms round the neck of her sister, and burst into tears, saying, in accents of incoherent affection,—

"Agnes,—dear Agnes! take pity upon yourself. Lay open your heart to a kind Providence,—pray for peace, but do not barter yourself for revenge. Do not become utterly lost, as well as unhappy! For my sake, for everybody's sake, let us go home as we came! Life is only precious for the eternal hopes and the domestic affections it bestows. Would you rashly throw away both, bringing on a lifetime of unpitied remorse?"

Marion looked up with anxious solicitude, but scarcely had she ceased to speak before Agnes glided out of the room, leaving behind her the splendid missal adorned with Lord Doncaster's arms in gold upon the white parchment binding. Beside it lay the envelope of a letter, with a marquis' coronet on the seal, and underneath was engraved, to her astonishment, the exact date of Agnes' birthday. Marion started when she saw this absurd piece of gallantry, and covered her face with her hands, as if she never could show it again.

> She did not know how hate could burn,
> In hearts once changed from soft to stern;
> Nor all the false and fatal zeal,
> The convert of revenge can feel.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Though the leaders of fashion have decided that it looks greedy and gormandizing to be punctually ready for dinner, yet, at the Granby Hotel, no sooner does the clock strike five than the bell rings, and the instantaneous rush of company which then takes place towards the dining-room can only be compared to a congregation hurrying out of church, or a flock of chickens in a poultry-yard assembling to be fed. Doors fly open,—guests are seen precipitating themselves headlong down stairs,—elderly matrons advance, leaning on their gouty, red-faced husbands,—troops of marriageable daughters follow,—and solitary gentlemen are visible, strolling forward in all the unencumbered independence of having no one to care for but themselves. The noise-meter then rises to a deafening pitch, when, to the din of a hundred tongues, is added the jingling of glasses, plates, knives, and forks, while the long serpent-like procession winds slowly into the room, and gradually subsides into places.

Amidst the moving mass of strangely mingled personages, Captain De Crespigny had offered his arm to Marion, which she did not seem to observe, but led forward Sir Arthur, while all eyes were turned upon Agnes, who walked beside Lord Doncaster, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, yet affecting to look superbly dignified.

Sir Patrick, in the mean time, always on the *qui vive* for variety and adventure, entreated Mrs. O'Donoghoe's permission to sit between her and the young lady under charge, who attracted his especial notice because she so obviously suffered from that apprehension of being conspicuous, common to strangers on their first appearance at a public table, and was dressed with a degree of plainness which amounted almost to eccentricity.

"I lose no time in making new acquaintances here," whispered he aside to Mrs. O'Donoghoe, with a glance at her timid companion, who had become a perfect aurora of blushes as she seated herself at the table. "Our short visits at Harrowgate scarcely leave me five minutes to spare for each new face."

"Then I hope you do most of the conversation yourself, for I suspect the young lady, who was placed under my *chaperonage* by Mr. Crawford, is not so much accustomed to live upon airy nothings, and to run up *impromptu* intimacies as you are."

"The sooner she begins then, the better. I have a thousand things to say to her!"

"Perhaps she may not have time for above five hundred of them. You must talk to her like a dialogue book, supplying both the questions and the answers; for, as far as my experience goes, she seems to be shockingly silent and nervous. Are you generally reckoned amusing?"

"Everybody agrees in considering me so, and many people think me quite the reverse, but I can be either the one or the other, on a moment's notice."

"Indeed! a little of both, and a great deal to spare! I imagine it all depends on which way the wind blows!"

"Exactly! I am sentimental in a westerly breeze,—cutting and sarcastic in an east wind,—noisy and boisterous in a northern blast,—and during 'a southerly wind and a cloudy day,' the genius of nonsense takes possession of me so completely, that I have bestowed on myself the privilege of saying whatever I think."

"How shocking! I do not particularly fancy you in any of these moods!"

"Adagio! do not condemn me yet! choose your own subject, concerts, sermons, pic-nics, dress, Harrowgate water, or the last new novel, nothing comes amiss to me! I mean soon to publish a weekly programme of the five or six subjects to which all conversation at the Granby is usually limited; a complete set of the questions invariably asked by all the visitors every day, with a sketch of the most appropriate answers. For my own part, all my replies are given by rote, and it puts me out entirely, if the inquiry whether I have been at Ripley, comes before the question how I like the waters, or who was the last arrival, which is, *a propos*, the only subject on which I am not very well informed."

Sir Patrick saying these words, gave a sly glance towards his left hand, where the young *incognita* sat, without apparently listening to what passed, and as she seemed at the moment to be looking another way, Mrs. O'Donoghoe archly turned round the label on her bottle of wine, so that the young baronet could read that it bore, according to custom, the name of its proprietor 'Miss Smythe.'

Nothing could be a more complete balk to curiosity than such a name. Sir Patrick had already known seven Mrs. Smythes. His washerwoman was Mrs. Smith,—his sister's governess had been a Miss Smith,—two Captains in his own regiment had gloried in the name of Smyth,—and his old Colonel's widow was Mrs. Smith. There was no individuality in the name, but a whisper had reached him in the morning that a Miss Smith, the authoress of several popular romances, was expected at Harrowgate, and a horrible apprehension crossed his mind that, young as she looked, this might actually be the culprit, his surmises respecting which he could not but whisper to the laughing widow, adding, with a look of comical consternation—

"Only think how my portrait will look in her next book! There is no escape, unless I faint away immediately and am carried out! We must remain together now as long as I stay at Harrowgate, for no change of place is allowed. Even if you and I quarrel, there is no remedy! It is like connubial felicity, we are settled here permanently, for better or for worse."

"It might certainly be worse! I am tolerably resigned to my fate, for I sat till lately among the dullest set of hum-drum bores who ever ate a potato; but you are so clever, I always become clever in your company."

"That is a novelty, I suppose?"

"Why, for that matter, my mind is like a piano-forte, which requires to be skilfully played upon," replied the widow, gayly. "I have often been offered large annuities by people, merely to live in their houses and entertain them, but lately I was in danger of falling into a state of sensible, every-day dullness."

"Impossible!"

"You may doubt it—anybody would—but actually, yesterday, talking to Lord Wigton, I was threatened with a fit of prosing! a thing I never was subject to, and I never heard it had been in our family! Whether do you dislike most, a professed wit, or a professed proser, Sir Patrick?"

"My favorite society is any old lady of seventy, who has met with great misfortunes!"

"Well, I am not much upon that pattern, certainly, but fifty years hence, we might make an appointment, perhaps, to meet here again."

"How many succession of visitors will before then have flourished in this house, and vanished. Even after the interval of one season, a visitor's return is like coming back from the grave. Nothing is remembered of either yourself or your cotemporaries. Guests, waiters, landlords, and even boots, have all disappeared."

"Very affecting, indeed," said Mrs. O'Donoghoe; "but half the dinner has disappeared during that long moral discourse of yours, Sir Patrick. Among the transitory things in this house, pray enumerate, another time, the *entre-mets* and vegetables."

"Pardon me—these dishes re-appear only too often. I have known some of those pies intimately for several days. In our regiment, we called such revivals 'old clothes,' and it really is too bad treating ninety deserving people so ill."

"I should like to live upon the diet of a chameleon! Eating is a vulgar necessity which the mind despises," observed Mrs. O'Donoghoe, helping herself to a *pate*; "but some of the company here seem *ne pour la digestion*, talking love and sentiment over a haunch of venison. Mr. Crawford tells me that an Indian dinner party lasts twelve hours, and people who sit down as thin as skeletons, rise from table quite corpulent."

"It certainly does require the aid of refined conversation to keep up our self-respect in a scene of such gormandizing. For my own part, I live upon anti-pastry principles, and am also a no-vegetable man; but I wish haunches of venison had never been invented! I made fifteen mortal enemies by the last I carved in this house, because no one thought I had given him the best slice," observed Sir Patrick. "I wish all men like old Doncaster, who eat more good things in a day than they say in a year, would dine alone."

"But I think," said Mr. Crawford, "that the habit of meeting at meals is one of our most excellent social customs! If each individual in a family were merely to snatch a morsel when hungry, there would be no re-union, and often no intimacy among members even of the same household. I like frequently to trace the usefulness of old established customs, which have been sanctioned by successive generations, because the advantages are always

so much greater than they at first appear, that it has now become quite a sufficient reason for me to respect any custom, when I find that it is an old one."

"I take the liberty of thinking quite the reverse!" said Sir Patrick. "Change is the very essence of enjoyment! change of habits, change of company, and change of air, are all equally necessary, and I never have a guinea in the world without instantly getting it changed. That custom will make a scarcity of silver at the bank, when I marry the heiress, Miss Howard."

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Crawford, his very wig standing on end with surprise, while the young lady next him colored to the very tip of her fingers.

"I beg your pardon," said Sir Patrick, turning to her with one of his most winning smiles. "I thought you gave symptoms of speaking."

A torrent of blushes being her only reply, he began to doubt whether she had the faculty of speech at all, and having decided at last that the young lady was either a statue or an idiot, he turned to his more accessible neighbor, muttering in an under tone, "Mute as a fish! An exhausted receiver! I never saw such a genius for shyness! Her very cap-strings are blushing! But about Miss Howard, my friend De Crespigny, who was born and educated for the very purpose of marrying his cousin, wishes me to take her off his hands, and if I could have sold myself, which I cannot, she might have done. I am told she is very romantic, so he and I agreed once to get up an amicable duel for her, and after that I was to waylay the mad cousin who persecutes her, and horse-whip him!"

"Nothing like spirited beginning," said Mr. Crawford, in agonies of risibility, while the young lady on Sir Patrick's other side, after an evident struggle, during which the ever-deepening color in her cheek became perfectly scarlet, at length burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, so full of fun and glee, that the young baronet instinctively joined her, though amazed and perplexed beyond measure by the oddity of her manner, and by her unspeakable silence. "Your love," added Mr. Crawford, "is to be more in the heroic than in the pastoral style."

"Never was there a Captain of Huzzars so preternaturally in love at first sight, as I should have been. De Crespigny tells me she is first cousin to Crœsus! has land in every country, gold in every bank, the mines of Golconda for a part of her portion, carries a million of money in each pocket, and changes horses three times in driving across her own estate! I should think myself rich to be five minutes in her company."

"I see you are half in joke, and wholly in earnest," said Mrs. O'Donoghoe. "But some gentlemen certainly do speculate in matrimony, exactly as they would in the public stocks. So my poor husband used to say before he left me so handsomely provided for. As for Miss Howard's hundred lovers, they will have but one idea amongst them—money! money! money!"

"Love for an heiress certainly has the most solid of all foundations. How much better to be married for your fortune than for your dancing or singing—your pedigree or connections! There can be no mistake in pounds, shillings, and pence! De Crespigny tells me she is said to be not only very rich, but very plain, therefore as people generally marry their opposites, we shall suit exactly."

The timid young lady had now fallen into a perfect paroxysm of blushes, and an extraordinary twitching about her mouth betrayed the last extreme of nervousness, though whether her agitation were not of a risible nature, Sir Patrick felt somewhat perplexed to decide, especially as she was seized with a fit of coughing which appeared almost like laughter, while she hastily drank up the water in her finger-glass, threw salt over her pudding, and committed a dozen of absurdities, which caused the young Baronet to ask himself whether she were in possession of her fifty senses. A moment afterwards, Sir Patrick felt his arm convulsively grasped by the young lady, as if for protection, while a half-suppressed scream burst from her lips, and she clung to him with an aspect of breathless terror, her lips parted, her cheeks livid, and her eyes almost startling from her head, as she gazed anxiously after the receding figure of a man who was hastily leaving the room.

Sir Patrick, when thus unexpectedly appealed to, started from his seat to offer assistance, though at a loss how to act, when, seeing Miss Smythe's countenance become of a ghastly paleness, he rapidly poured out a tumbler of water, and held it to her lips, proposing, at the same time, to support her out of the room.

"No, no! I am better here!" replied she, in trembling accents.

"I—I need society! I am so nervous! It must have been some dreadful mistake! Excuse me, I would rather remain!"

Mr. Crawford, in the mean time, had rushed hastily out of the room; and, having now returned, he made a signal, as if desirous to escort her also; but to this implied proposal the young lady only answered by an almost imperceptible shake of the head, while she fixed her eyes on her plate, resolved, apparently, to remain stationary. To the great surprise of Sir Patrick, two tall footmen, in plain livery, now placed themselves behind her chair; and, having afterwards closely followed her when the ladies retired to tea, they were observed lounging about in the lobby during the rest of that evening.

"What could be the meaning of such a scene?" asked Mrs. O'Donoghoe, in an undertone of extreme curiosity. "Can you conceive, Sir Patrick, why the young lady started in that extraordinary way?"

"Yes!" whispered he confidentially. "I can explain, but do not mention this. It was because—she couldn't help it! There is a sublime mystery of some kind at work here! I cannot dive into it! Suppose she were to turn out Miss Howard Smytheson *incog.*!"

"Oh no! that is impossible! Her aunt was coming with her, who is one of my most intimate friends!"

Never had anybody so many most intimate friends, as Mrs. O'Donoghoe. Every person she met for half-an-hour, had the honor to be so designated, and if a gentleman were distinguished by the appellation, it was generally followed by a very plain insinuation that she had refused him. Of late, however, Mrs. O'Donoghoe had been more cautious in such assertions, having been discredited in one of her many forgeries on the bank of truth, by its being proved, that she boasted of a proposal from Mr. Crawford three weeks after it became known that he was already engaged to his second wife. Such accidents happen, however, in the best-regulated families!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It is absolutely indispensable that every visitor at Harrowgate shall go through a course, not merely of its waters, but of all the castles, ruins, rocks, lakes, gardens, and houses in the neighborhood, and especially that, *bon gre, mal gre*, he shall spend one entire day in rhapsodizing among the splendid fragments of Fountain Abbey. The leading question asked of every visitor at the Granby, at least nine times a day is, whether he has seen the Abbey, followed by exclamations of dismay and astonishment, if he have not. A shower of inquiries then follows, how soon he intends to go there, after which no one forgets the exact day and hour named, while every good-natured friend fills up occasional gaps in the conversation by hoping he may be favored with a fine morning for his excursion.

No stranger, unmarried and marriageable, at the Granby, has any right or title to the squandering of his own time, as the whole race of chaperons have assumed the privilege of knowing how he spends it, as well as of dictating the various ways in which he should and must dispose of himself; and, accordingly, Sir Patrick and Captain De Crespigny found themselves one day ensnared into a *soi-disant* party of pleasure to Studley, from which they had no more chance of escape than a brace of partridges at a *battu*.

As Madame De Stael remarks, "English weather does better to rail at, than if it were finer; and if Britain had a settled climate and a despotic government, there would be an end of all conversation." After a long succession of good-for-nothing days, during which the rain seemed to pour from a thousand water-spouts, till the world was in a perfect dropsy, and it was feared the sun must have met with an accident, as he seemed unable to appear, he at last, contrary to custom, when a pic-nic is in the case, blazed out with unprecedented splendor, and became quite a spendthrift of his rays. September had evidently borrowed a day from June for the occasion; and yet Sir Patrick, who would much rather have encountered any danger than the smallest discomfort, staid an hour in bed to consider whether there was anything that might happen in the whole course of that day, sufficiently agreeable to reward him for the effort of rising. Except a fox-chase, however, nothing could have done so; and he secretly detested the very thoughts of walking five mortal miles, and spending five mortal hours in "doing the rural" among the dismal cloisters of a roofless ruin, or bush-ranging through damp shrubberies, with a committee of enraptured young ladies.

His fellow-sufferer, Captain De Crespigny, stood yawning and humming a tune beside him, waiting for the carriage, and expressing a hope, that though he had almost fallen out of acquaintance with nature, and wished pic-nics had never been invented, yet perhaps, with the assistance of sandwiches, champagne, chicken pies, porter, music, and young ladies, the expedition might be endurable, when the noise of wheels grinding along the gravel, attracted their attention, and Mr. Crawford's carriage passed on its way to Studley, with the two tall footmen of the evening before, mounted behind. A moment afterwards, Sir Patrick perceived the excited looking stranger, whom he had already remarked, leading his horse out of the stable, with a degree of haste and impatience quite unaccountable, while the animal seemed resolute to postpone the evil hour of being mounted, though his master lashed and swore at him with an extreme of cruel violence, which raised Sir Patrick's utmost indignation. He was rather strangely attired for so sultry a morning, being equipped in a large, rough greatcoat, a thick neckcloth, a riding whip, and a broad brimmed, melo-dramatic looking hat. Having at length mastered his refractory charger, he rode straight up to Sir Patrick, with a contracted brow, saying, in tones of high irritation, while riveting his fierce eyes on the young baronet with an expression that strongly betokened insanity:

"You are disposed to be observant this morning! We shall certainly know each other again! In which direction did Mr. Crawford's carriage drive off?"

"I observe only for my own amusement!" replied Sir Patrick, haughtily turning away, and humming a tune.

"Allow me to remind you that those who whistle before breakfast, may weep before night," said the stranger, with a malignant scowl, drawing back his lips, and breathing through his clenched teeth, as he glanced at Captain De Crespigny, and galloped rapidly away, followed at a more moderate pace by the two gentlemen.

"I am in the humor to knock every body down!" said Sir Patrick; "and there was an admirable opportunity lost! I dislike the looks of that man! He is evidently cracked! Depend upon it, his skull will never ring again! Do you observe, De Crespigny, he has nearly overtaken the carriage, and pulls up now, apparently anxious not to be seen by the servants. In days of yore, we might have been certain he was a highwayman, going to rob that barouche; but such things are done in a pocket-picking, pettifogging way now, without an atom of spirit or adventure. Why, my good friend, what a very particularly brown study you are in! What is the matter?"

"Nothing! nothing! I am solving an enigma! I must get another look of this man! Dunbar, years have passed since that voice rang in my ears, but it must be Ernest Anstruther's! Though shrill from excitement, and every fibre of his body seems dilated with madness, it can be no other, and we must have him seized this day. I actually shivered before the fierce glare of his eye; but let us forget it. I cannot speak upon the subject at present, for it involves all the deepest interests of my life. Now, then, for Fountain Abbey! I feel in the humor that I could strike the air for breathing in my face. It would be dangerous for any body to ask me how I do!"

"I wish all gaunt skeletons of deceased houses were buried out of sight! The very idea of those damp, mouldy walls would give me the rheumatism. Had we not better return?" said Sir Patrick, looking anxiously at his companion.

"No!" replied Captain De Crespigny, who seemed resolute to conquer his agitation, or to conceal it. "I say like Luther, 'if it rained madmen, let us go on!'"

"Then, my good fellow, you deserve to be put in a straight waistcoat yourself!"

"Well, if you will buy and pay for one, I have not the slightest objection to wear it."

"If we could get up a good old-fashioned belief in ghosts, for this occasion, and go to Fountain Abbey some other day by moonlight, there would be some sense in it," persisted Sir Patrick; but seeing that his friend was not to be dissuaded, he changed the subject, adding: "Our existence now is detestably matter-of-fact. I should like to have lived in the days of giants, fairies, witchcraft, and the philosopher's stone!"

"You would have required the last, Dunbar, certainly. For an excursion, commend me to Harwood House. It is like a fashionable residence in Park Lane. Such Brussels carpets, rosewood sofas, and damask curtains, that I felt quite at home; but here we have a bad road; and worse dinner. A refrectory with no refreshments, and a kitchen fire, where a whole herd of oxen might be roasted whole, and not so much as a beefsteak to be had. Visitors may not even take, like the horses, a nose-bag with provisions."

"We might at least air the ruins with a segar. Well, here are the ladies; and now that I have brought you here, and you have brought me, let us make the best of it. We must honor the old Abbey with a glance, though I am sure, before we are done, I shall be walked off my legs."

"I knew a gentleman, once," said Agnes, "who walked till nothing was left of him but his hat."

"It seems as if all the birds and butterflies in Britain had an appointment here to-day," said Marion. "How their twittering and mad spirits enliven me. That thrush is a perfect Orpheus! Few can ever sing like these simple, self-taught musicians."

"Anybody can. Grisi, Pasta, you, or I, could," replied Captain De Crespigny. "It is pleasant, however, to be received with so lively a serenade. These little creatures are happy without being able to say why or wherefore; and how often we ourselves are miserable, though unable to tell the cause, or perhaps, Miss Dunbar, to excite the pity we deserve."

"There is evidently a much greater proportion of happiness than of misery in the animal world, as they do not make unnecessary annoyances for themselves or others," said Marion, wishing to talk on indifferent topics, as she observed her brother watching, to see how she received his friend. "What bird in all the world would you like best to be?"

"A canary, or a piping bullfinch, because you would keep me in a cage, and treat me kindly. I should wish to borrow the language of any living creature that pleases you! I am born to succeed in everything but in gaining your approbation, which I would rather never have been born than live without. I could willingly go step by step round the world, to find out the secret of pleasing you; and I am falling rapidly into a Byron-like, misanthropic melancholy, because of your cruel indifference. How I wish emotions were communicated like electricity, without the slow, vulgar use of language, for I always feel so much more than I can express, especially in your society."

"Why do you not take to writing verses; for you know poets all work themselves up into fictitious emotions, which they pour out upon paper, without troubling any one individual more than another, to believe or disbelieve them. Your poems might be lithographed for private circulation, and one of each sent to Agnes and me, to the five Miss Ogilvies, and to all Lady Towercliffe's daughters. You would require eight eyes, like a spider, to look after so many!"

"But," replied he, in his most sentimental tone, "there is a want of which one might die in the midst of plenty. If all ladies were like you, one might be surrounded by a hundred, and yet die of a broken heart!"

"Any one may break his own heart, if he pleases, but he has no right to break other people's," replied Marion, jestingly; "and there are some who have no more scruple, I am told, in doing so, than in breaking stones on the road."

"Perhaps the hearts are as hard as the stones, if we may take yours as a specimen; but you really are becoming severe! Take care you do not hurt my feelings!"

"Your feelings!" exclaimed Marion, with a gay, half-reproachful laugh, as she caught the eye of Agnes. "I thought you only played upon the feelings of others, because you really had none of your own."

Near the gate leading into the superb grounds of Studley, no less than two-and-thirty carriages were assembled, from the low elderly gig and graceful pony carriage, to the aristocratic barouche and four, not to mention tax-carts, phaetons, curricles, and coronetted chariots, filled with joyous groups and laughing faces. The landscape around seemed as if colored in the rich, deep tints of some ancient painter pre-eminent in his art, so bright, so distinct, and so immoveable in its rare and singular beauty, serene and lovely, like a mind at peace. The pencil of Poussin or of Watteau could scarcely have done justice to such a scene. The air was literally raining sunshine, and a light cloud here and there sailed across the blue sky from the foreground to the distant horizon, while the rich canopy of massy trees over head, tinted with the many-colored hues of autumn, and the carpet of velvet turf beneath, were enlivened by a thousand birds, hopping sportively from bough to bough, like feathered arrows, and by the gay insect world fluttering in rapid career from flower to flower, humming aloud their ceaseless sounds of joyful activity.

Every walk was sprinkled over with gaily-dressed loungers, sunning themselves in the bright atmosphere, and no flower in the field looked more fresh, more natural, or more lovely than Marion, whose beauty had never appeared more attractive than now, amidst all the sumptuous magnificence of nature, which seemed on the present occasion to be adorned in her full dress regalia.

"This is a very tolerable imitation of a fine day!" said Captain De Crespigny, shading his eyes to gaze around, and looking as if the landscape were made on purpose for him. "I see determined admiration in your countenance, Miss Dunbar, but I mean to out-ecstacy you altogether in my expressions of rapture! Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains."

"Charming!" said Marion, absently, and looking round for Sir Arthur. "I am glad you are pleased."

"To be sure! you are pleased, I am pleased, everybody is pleased! This was called a party of pleasure, and nothing could be a party of pleasure to me, unless you were included; but now all the world is here! at least those who are all the world to me, and I expect a day of perfect happiness."

"That is as much certainly as any reasonable person can reckon upon, and I believe it is more likely to be enjoyed in the simple rural pleasures of the country than anywhere! Some persons whom we might almost envy, think it pleasure enough for a whole day to find a tom-tit's nest, containing, for a wonder, five eggs instead of four, or follow the flight of a king-fisher during six whole hours, at full speed, in a morning, to see where he feeds, and can talk for half a day about some new combination of colors in pansy or chrysanthemum."

"And yet they would be reckoned silly and vulgar, to speak half as long about a new combination of color in a ribbon, which is in my estimation quite as interesting! If all those who detest the country, had courage to confess it, as I do, how the shades of rural life would be deserted, and volumes of rural poetry cast into the fire! I am not one to 'hang a thought on ev'ry thorn,' and indeed my thoughts have thorns enough already!"

"There is too much still water at Studley, and the grounds are altogether too artificial for my taste," said Marion. "Those little ponds, like globes for gold-fish, are dull and uninteresting."

"They resemble china bowls, and should be filled with iced punch!" observed Sir Patrick. "Anything so like the basin of the Serpentine reminds me of old women committing suicide! This is not a good sporting country, so crowded with laurels, temples, statues, cascades, and that sort of trash! I wish we had all staid at home, and looked over Turner's views of Studley, for they are beautifully done!"

"Yes!" said Agnes, yawning, "I like the works of art better than nature, pictures, statues, books, or pianofortes; and" added she, with a withering look at Captain De Crespigny, "I like human nature least of all."

"What has set you off Childe-Haroldizing this morning, Agnes?" asked Sir Patrick, with angry surprise. "Strike me poetical, but I like Marion's style of admiring, exclaiming, and wondering the best, for it is not either overdone or underdone!"

"You shall have a most intelligent guide, Sir, immediately," said the superintendent of the lodge, civilly touching his hat to Sir Patrick.

"Let him be deaf and dumb, if you have any compassion for me. It is trouble enough to come here, without listening to an endless rigmarole about ancient abbots, clustered pillars, and stone coffins. The fellow will not abate a single tomb or tree! I could invent a story quite as good as his, and equally true! 'built nobody knows when, and destroyed nobody knows how.'"

"I like to hear all, and believe all," said Marion; "but you remind me, Patrick, of the French lady, who said she wished to be taught everything in two words. Now let us summon up any little poetry that may be lurking in our composition, to admire those noble, pillar-like elms, with branches so thickly clustered that the wind can scarcely elbow its way through the leaves. Those shadows are magnificent, flickering across the road."

"Give me an old post-horse instead of an old tree, and I shall call up much finer associations!" said Sir Patrick. "My sole idea of enjoying the country is connected with hunting, shooting, and fishing; but as to living for ruins, flowers, green trees, fat cows, rocky mountains, and all that sort of trash, excuse me. They do for poets and painters, professionally, to rave about, but I care no more to look at that prodigiously aged tree before me, than at old Lord Doncaster, tottering behind us with Agnes."

"That tree, Sir, is a Spanish chesnut, 112 feet high, and 22 feet in girth," said the guide, in his usual business-like tone. "It has seen a hundred summers."

"Then it has certainly not lived in this country!" replied Sir Patrick, affecting to shiver. "There's a thing they call summer in England, made up of east wind and fog, with a half-extinguished sun, trees trying to put a good face on the matter, a few leaves and flowers born apparently in a consumption, and one or two misguided birds mistaking the imitation for a reality, while chirping their notes all out of tune."

"This oak, Sir, is 500 years old," continued the guide, pertinaciously bent on executing his task; "it contains 300 feet of solid timber."

"And how many leaves are there on it? You never heard! Do you pretend to be a guide, and not know that? The timber will cut up for a tolerable sum, which will suit the next heir."

"Have you the barbarity, even in imagination, to prostrate that kingly tree! look at its gigantic shadow on the grass!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donoghoe. "I really had, even upon our very short acquaintance, conceived a better opinion of you."

"Then be not rash in altering it! I am all you ever thought me, and more! At the same time I cannot but think, in looking at this immense, overgrown prodigy among trees, how fortunate it is that they stop growing at last, or one such monster might at last overshadow the whole world. Now, it is a hundred years at least since the ground beneath that tree has been enlivened by a single sunbeam! Spare me all the exclamations of delight I see impending! Ladies are taught a taste for the picturesque as part of their full-dress manners, but the truth is, that you care no more for scenery than for a painted sign-post."

"I have no eye to spare for the landscape," said Captain De Crespigny, glancing towards Marion. "Therefore pray let us, like 'Puff in the Critic, omit all about gilding the Eastern hemisphere; or about the setting sun pillowing his chin upon an orient wave.' Nothing gives me so mournful an estimate of people's general happiness, as to join what they call a party of pleasure! Such rising before daylight, such climbing of inaccessible hills, such scrambling on slippery rocks, and such eating of trash, which no one in an ordinary rational state of mind would ever dream of tasting! In short, it begins with the total sacrifice of all comfort, bonnets and dresses in jeopardy, as well as every limb of your body in danger, a great deal of forced vivacity, a number of

old, worn-out jests, a seat upon the damp grass, and returning home after sunset in a fog! If these are people's pleasures, what must their miseries be?"

"Certainly the most toilsome of all vocations is that of an idle man," said Marion. "I often think, when observing the extraordinary plans of life on which people set out in search of happiness, that if during one day in every year, we were all obliged to exchange the modes of life we voluntarily adopt, it would produce universal misery. If Mr. Granville were obliged to play sixteen hits at backgammon every forenoon instead of Lord Doncaster; if Patrick had to visit and condole with the sick all morning; if you had to blow the flute five hours a day for Lord Wigton; if he had to hunt eight hours in your place; and if I must lounge all morning in the public room, like Mrs. O'Donoghoe, how wretched each individual would be!"

"Very true," replied Captain De Crespigny. "The various species of men are as different from each other, and as little calculated to associate, as the various species of animals. Sportsmen have a natural antipathy to literary men, politicians to jockeys, and infidels to Christians. Life is to each of these a perfectly different affair. Their feelings, desires, habits, occupations, and pleasures, are entirely opposite, their conversation quite unsuitable, and they all hate each other."

While Sir Patrick, with ceaseless vivacity, teazed the guide by asking a thousand unanswerable questions, the replies to which should have occupied several hours, he amused himself with making premeditated blunders and lively questions, enough to bewilder the brain of their matter-of-fact conductor, who hurried forward with a velocity of body disproportioned to the slowness of his understanding, pointing to an arbor elevated high upon the ridge of a hill, from whence he intimated that the finest view was to be obtained. With a rueful grimace, Sir Patrick prepared to make a forced march in that direction, measuring the height with his eye, and protesting that the fellow certainly had an ill-will at him, for imposing such a task, when he was falling to pieces already with fatigue.

Marion, in the mean time, looked as happy as she felt; having now achieved two very great pleasures, as, in the first place, Captain De Crespigny had been called away by his uncle, and, in the second, he was succeeded by Sir Arthur leaning on the arm of Mr. Granville. The smile of confidence and interest with which Marion now listened and talked, when contrasted with the constrained attention she had bestowed on Captain De Crespigny, was like the difference between the glowing warmth of a summer morning and the icy brightness of winter. While loitering along their beautiful path, picking up here and there a wild flower, or pausing to enjoy the verdant beauties of nature in her holiday garb, cold would have been the heart, and vacant the imagination, not crowded with thoughts and feelings of poetical interest, when, thus surrounded by memorials of many romantic incidents in the national history. To Mr. Granville, all the charms of the place and season seemed familiar. He pointed out to Marion a thousand beauties overlooked by ordinary eyes, while many a refined allusion to his own attachment arose spontaneously out of the subject, and was listened to by her with modest but heartfelt interest. They conversed with glowing delight and perfect communion of thought, on the various interesting subjects which abound in the rich stores of a cultivated mind. Throughout the remarks of Mr. Granville on music, science, and every elevating enjoyment of the human intellect, the poetry of literature, as well as the poetry of nature might be traced. Even the most indifferent subjects were no longer indifferent to Richard and Marion when thus viewed with mutual interest, and when affording a deeper insight into each other's heart and mind; while the gorgeous scenery around inspired them with feelings of enjoyment beyond any that could be attained in gaudy festivity and artificial amusement.

"This place is quite a morsel of Arcadia!" exclaimed Marion, while her eyes were beaming with delight. "I could fancy it some undiscovered country of our own, with not a living being in it but ourselves."

"Excuse me there," said Sir Arthur, smiling. "I shall by no means vote for having my world made so small and select! I am the most sociable of created beings, having fully convinced myself that nothing renders people more utterly selfish than solitude; all your strollings alone in forests and reclining beside rivers, what do they lead to? a prodigious opinion of ourselves, and an extreme indifference or contempt for others!"

"Most undeniably true," replied Mr. Granville. "If we had no happiness to seek but our own, I should not have far to search for mine; yet, as a matter of duty, I am for association and for cultivating the kinder feeling produced by mingling with others. Man could not be happy alone, even in Paradise, and the sternest misanthropes can do nothing worse against society than to become solitary hermits."

"The injury is inflicted on themselves also, as Providence has ordained for wise purposes that, bad as men are, they should love one another," observed Sir Arthur. "My Marion here brings the joys of spring to cheer the winter of my life, and I give her in return the gathered experience of many a long year; while, with you both beside me, the withering leaves of autumn look almost green and almost gay."

"Yet this is certainly the most melancholy of all seasons," replied Mr. Granville. "It has been called the time of fulfilment, when hope is realized,—but it can be an emblem only of Christian hope realized in death. Every hue and every sound reminds me of decay. The howling winds, the fleeting clouds, and the rustling leaves all speak of change and mortality; but permanent hopes and feelings belong only to our religion, which become the charm of existence when they arise, and which neither time nor death can alter. Our earthly affections when founded on such ennobling prospects, entitle us to believe that we shall advance, hand in hand with those we love, along the journey of life, and even at the end, be only separated for a very short period, to be reunited in a world of which even hours so bright as these are but a faint representation. When a Christian dies, he dies into another world. He is then born into a scene more beautiful, more joyous, and more lasting than this."

"How surprising it seems, that so little real admiration is felt for the wonders of nature, though so much is pretended!" observed Marion. "If anything could vulgarize so glorious a scene, it would be that tawdry crowd of many-colored visitors, rending the air with exclamations of delight, which seem chiefly addressed to the crows and jackdaws."

"We should have a band of fairies here, to give suitable music," added Sir Arthur; "and you ought to rob the poets of a few verses to celebrate the shades of Studley. I observe, Marion, that though in actual conversation, a single line of poetry sounds pedantic, yet young ladies in all novels have the whole British poets by heart, and spout entire pages by the yard measure, for every emergency, taken from Cowper, Milton, Byron and Co."

An interesting discussion now ensued, respecting the effect produced on the mind by sacred poetry, which diverged to the subject of sacred music, when Mr. Granville spoke with enthusiasm of the exalting, touching, and saddening influence of Handel's choruses, and of the affecting thoughts they occasionally create. In every remark referring to the heart or imagination, he expressed himself with a depth and fervor, felt and appreciated by the fresh young mind of Marion, who now experienced, under the happiest auspices, how much the mental faculties are enlivened by studying nature. Amidst surrounding peace, the soul exercises its brightest powers of thought, undivided by the shifting scenes of human life, with its thousand fluctuating objects and cares; while the fancy, liberated and unoccupied, is thrown back upon itself, and discovers once more the visions of other days, the stores of memory, experience, and hope.

From the point of view to which their guide now left the party, all the finest characteristics of Fountain Abbey became visible, and Marion found Miss Smythe finishing a masterly sketch of the landscape, which she blushingly yielded up for examination, while Sir Patrick confessed that he had been standing in his most picturesque attitude during five minutes, in hopes of obtaining a place in the foreground. Nothing could be more strikingly beautiful than her spirited representation of the large eastern window, like a light triumphal arch, the patches of ivy clinging round those mouldering walls, and the high, stately tower, nearly transparent with its many windows, all yet in perfect preservation.

"What a fatigue!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, throwing himself in a graceful attitude full-length on the sloping turf. "This day is like the famous Peter Schlemihl, without a shadow!"

"Well done art and nature both!" added Captain De Crespigny; "we have not existed in vain after seeing that matchless view! I shall give bail to live contented and happy during the rest of my life, if you will only endow me with all I see, and let it be shared with the person in this company whom I like best, though perhaps she might tire of me."

Agnes bit her scarlet lip with scorn at words which would once have thrilled to her very heart, but she turned away with an insufferably haughty air on perceiving that her *ci-devant* admirer had turned his most irresistible looks towards Marion, who was earnestly talking in an undertone to Miss Smythe, while a look of anxious alarm had become depicted on the countenances of both.

"Such moments as these are like the colors of a rainbow, very bright and very fleeting," observed Sir Arthur. "If I had a place magnificent as this, even with the power of choosing my own society, yet, as Dr. Johnson says, 'such possessions make men unwilling to die!'"

"Allow me to differ, then, from Dr. Johnson," replied Mr. Granville. "It is not our possessions, but our affections that could ever make me grieve to forsake this bright green earth. I would rather be loved by one than envied by thousands. I can imagine no happiness that does not spring from the heart, and the most splendid mansion that ever adorned the earth, would be a desert without the smile of those who loved me to welcome my entrance there."

"Who that knows the worth of friendship would not say the same," added Marion, in a deep, low tone. "My wishes never grasp at great possessions, as

their very vastness appears disproportioned to our nature and powers. The most superb houses are those most generally deserted by their owners, but I scarcely ever see a retired and peaceful cottage without whispering to myself, 'There I could be happy.'"

"Take my word for it, the whole thing would be odious in a week," said Captain De Crespigny. "I have been a great observer of life from the windows of the New Club, and my serious opinion is, that poetry is all written to mislead our unsuspecting youth into an effervescence of empty enthusiasm about rural felicity on an income of nothing per annum; but I drew the cork out of that bottle long ago, and found it all froth. Once upon a time I was betrayed into living a month at one of those little bird's nests, a gaudy, stuccoed gimcrack, all plaster and green paint, surrounded with roses, hollyhocks, and the flaring trash people call flowers. There were within the walls, three noisy dogs, four ditto children, a roasting-jack and a mangle, all screeching at once! It was distracting! No! no! I hate money myself, but that cured me of ever making a mere bread-and-butter match."

"Yet I could live on the bread without the butter, for any one I really liked, or even the butter without the bread," said Mr. Granville, smiling. "Money is only the raw material of enjoyment, which must be raised into a fabric of solid strength, and embellished with taste, to suit my wishes and hopes. The hook and eye will never be of gold that attaches me, and nothing has ever been so difficult to my comprehension as that any one can possibly form the nearest ties of life upon a mere calculation of profit and loss!"

"Well," exclaimed Sir Patrick, who always assumed an air of bravado before Mr. Granville, to conceal his real feelings, "I am above all the follies of inferior mortals, but I do say, that to me, the most interesting object in nature is a young lady of large, independent fortune, ready to throw herself away on the first man who asks her!"

At this moment, Miss Smythe's sketch-book fell to the ground, while, with a sudden exclamation of affright, she started up, but instantly endeavored to recover herself, and when Sir Patrick had gathered up her pencils, she received them back with blush of double-dyed carnation, as if she could never unblush again, and making an apology for having been startled by the sudden apparition of a hare, she silently resumed her occupation, and Sir Patrick continued to rattle on at his full pitch of nonsense, as if nothing had occurred.

"I wonder Lady Sarah Marchmont did not wait another season for me! I was hastening rapidly to my last shilling, and might possibly have been driven, by stress of weather, to propose, if she had not accepted the Duke of Middlesex, in despair; yet had she possessed a thousand pounds for every shilling, I am not certain that the most golden of her gold could have gilded her.——"

"My dear fellow!" interrupted Captain De Crespigny, in his most sagacious tone, "*L'amour fait beaucoup, mais l'argent fait tout*; it is easy to say 'fortune,' but where will you ever find one weigh in the scale against Lady Sarah?"

"Easily, any day! As the Spaniards say, 'a man of straw is worth a woman of gold.' Last season, in London, all the heiresses were dying for me."

"Except three who never saw you."

"And at balls, when a chaperon asked any young lady who she would prefer for a partner, the invariable answer was, in the sweetest voice imaginable, 'Sir Patrick Dunbar!'"

"Or the Duke of Tunbridge, and he never dances!"

"Indeed, next season I have serious thoughts of lending; myself out to parties, at so much an hour. It is all nonsense about fortune being blind! The goddess has one eye left, which has been fixed upon me during the last five years, if I would only accept her favors."

"Well, Dunbar! We all know that you are like the elephant in an Irish menagerie, who was the greatest elephant in the world except himself. But be warned in time! They say every man has one opportunity given him of succeeding in life, and if he lose that, he never has a second! Positively, old fellow, now is your time! Do not think me malicious, but even I, your best friend, must allow that you are growing fat."

"Yes!" observed Agnes, in the same rallying tone. "Pat is scarcely such a 'look-and-die' person as he was. I remember him younger, once!"

"Very true! I am getting quite uneasy about you," added Captain De Crespigny, in an admonitory voice. "A young lady's reign lasts from seventeen till twenty, and our best days are over at forty! Dunbar, shall I give you a line of recommendation to Miss Howard?"

"A million of thanks; but as you never succeeded in recommending yourself, De Crespigny, I shall be better, in case of extremity, standing on my own merits."

"Then you will stand as precariously as my old uncle Doncaster, toiling up the bank there, whose legs look so thin, that I often wonder he has courage to venture upon them at all. He is most unfit to come up hill, when actually going down the hill of life so very fast, that he might as well be setting his worldly affairs in order."

"Worldly affairs! He has no other affairs, I suppose," replied Agnes, with a supercilious smile on her haughty lip. "And I think Lord Doncaster will be able to manage his own affairs for many years to come! He intends to live as long as Great Britain is an island. Nobody is old, till he feels old!"

Captain De Crespigny looked at Agnes with a penetrating air of astonishment, which gradually changed to an expression of satirical indifference, while he added, "This is an odd world, Miss Dunbar!"

"So it is! When did that idea first occur to you? It seems so very new!" replied Agnes, in a tone of biting satire. "Patrick has often told me that the De Crespignys are reckoned a sagacious family; and perhaps, after so bright a remark, you may turn out by no means the sort of every-day person people expected."

"Probably not! I shall, perhaps, be like Cimon, awakened from stupidity by the charms of a second Iphigenia," said Captain De Crespigny, with an air as if he had surpassed himself; but the smile with which Agnes listened to this characteristic reply was cold and transient as a gleam of sunshine on a frozen lake; yet while her features remained immoveable as those of a beautiful statue, a strange, unnatural fire sparkled in her splendid eyes, and with a look of withering indignation she turned haughtily away to address Lord Doncaster; while Captain De Crespigny, humming the last opera tune, and switching with his cane the heads off all the flowers along his path, quickened his pace, and resumed his not very welcome assiduities to Marion, who felt insufferably annoyed at being obliged always to hear the same nonsense talked, and to play her part in what she considered a mere hack flirtation on the part of Captain De Crespigny; while she greatly wondered that he had not long since tired of always, in her company, drawing up an empty bucket.

Sir Patrick was preparing to follow, when he observed the young sketcher hastily adding a last touch to her beautiful drawing; and before she could assemble all her scattered implements and materials, which he had assisted her to do, the whole joyous party had nearly vanished out of sight; while the young Baronet's eyes flashed with amazement, on giving a clandestine glance into the sketch-book, to find there an extremely clever caricature of Captain De Crespigny, as he stood a few minutes before, endeavoring to divide his attentions among the whole group of ladies. On examining another leaf, he found, to his yet greater surprise, a beautiful likeness of Clara Granville; and turning instantly to his young companion, with sudden emotion, he entreated permission to have it copied. While he was yet speaking, the young lady, with crimsoned cheeks, though a lurking smile played about her mouth, continued hastily to follow the guide, tracing his footsteps with an accuracy worthy of a Mohican, impatient, evidently, to overtake their companions, as she hastily threaded her way through the forest glades, and beneath the arching branches of many a lofty tree, towards a dark, gloomy-looking plantation, to which their guide seemed now impatiently hurrying them. He was dressed in a smock frock, and had become singularly silent, his replies being all so short and so grudgingly given, that Sir Patrick had angrily yielded up the point, determined to give the man nothing, and not to ask him another question, when suddenly his arm was tremblingly grasped by the young lady beside him; while in a low, strange, unearthly whisper, and with a look of mortal terror, she said, "I do not like this! What can it mean? Has he escaped from confinement? Are you sure that man is our guide?"

"I scarcely looked, but of course he is! It can be no one else!" replied Sir Patrick, in a soothing tone; for he thought she must certainly be deranged. "There he waits for us! We shall overtake our friends immediately."

"Look at this tree!—pretend to be admiring the landscape!" continued the young lady, in a deep, concentrated voice; "but tell me,—can we make our escape unobserved by that man? My life, probably, depends upon your answer!"

Sir Patrick now became confirmed in his opinion respecting the insanity of his young companion, and fixing his eyes on her countenance, he perceived with amazement that every tinge of color had been drained from her cheek—that her lip quivered with fright, and that terror spoke in her eyes, and trembled in every limb; while her words poured out with a rushing vehemence of tone and manner which startled and alarmed him.

"I caught a momentary glance of his countenance! Where could I ever see these eyes and be mistaken? There is madness yet in their expression. He has

sworn to destroy me. The whole purpose of his being is revenge!"

"Revenge on you—impossible! Who could be so unmanly—so—–"

"You forget that my cousin is insane—that he thinks I drove him into madness—that he pursued me day and night till we shut him up! Can nothing be done?"

"Miss Howard! I might have guessed this! Can it be? When I am here, you need apprehend nothing! He dare not harm you."

"Oh! how little you know him! In his present state, he has the strength of ten men," replied she, with wild and hurried glances. "Once I saw him struggle in their grasp. Why must I forever remember that scene? His cries, his imprecations; but see, he returns! Let us appear still to advance, but concert some plan for my escape, or believe me, my moments are numbered."

The tone of intense agony in which these words were uttered, filled Sir Patrick with pity, while knowing the fearful and mysterious power communicated by madness, even to the feeblest frame, he felt a well-grounded apprehension for the terrified girl's safety, on observing the strong, muscular figure of the maniac; therefore, after walking on some steps, he whispered to her, almost inaudibly:

"The guide seldom looks back. Let me ask him a question, and immediately afterwards drop down the side of this hill, and conceal yourself. I shall continue to follow him, that the sound of your footsteps may not be missed. Whatever the danger is, be firm, and you will certainly escape. Guide!" continued he, elevating his voice in an authoritative tone, yet, even at this crisis, unable to resist a joke; "tell me the exact age of this tree, and how many stones it took to build the Abbey?"

The man threw back some inaudible reply, in a surly, dogged voice, and quickened his pace towards a dark group of fir trees, while again the almost fainting girl gave an agitated glance at Sir Patrick, who silently pointed towards the turf edging along the gravel-walk, making her a sign to take flight upon it as noiselessly as possible, while he proceeded forward himself with no fairy tread, making the sound of his footsteps as loud as if there had still been two behind.

After the terrified girl had hastily slid down a steep bank and disappeared amidst a mass of evergreens, Sir Patrick was beginning to contemplate the expediency of adopting a similar plan, seeing that in conflict with a madman he could gain neither honor or advantage, and might be seriously injured, when the maniac suddenly burst into a thrilling, fearful laugh, and, snatching a pistol from his breast, turned fiercely round, when Sir Patrick instantly recognised, as he had begun to expect, the countenance of that excited stranger, whom Captain De Crespigny had in the morning named to him as Ernest Anstruther.

Astonishment and unimaginable fury glittered in the madman's wild and haggard countenance, when he missed the object of his pursuit, and he looked for the moment like a wild beast at bay, till, springing upon Sir Patrick with a cry of hideous rage, he seized hold of his arm with a delirious grasp, and clenched his fist, shouting in accents of frenzied rage, while the white foam was on his lips:

"Where! where is she? Tell me, or you shall die! Have I tracked her through earth and air, through sky and ocean, to be disappointed now? With sleepless care have I dodged her steps! Demons drove me on! Fiends and serpents have beset me! Coals of fire are on my brain! Cold hands are on my heart! All is horror! Every human soul shall shudder for the deeds I do! A brand of shame shall be on my head! The dogs shall howl when I pass! Even now, the sun never shines on me! Show me, then, where she is, or I will tear you limb from limb."

Sir Patrick stood firm as a rock before this whirlwind of passion, though filled with horrible amazement, as he beheld the burning glare of the madman's eye, and heard the sharp, shrill, shrieking voice in which he spoke; but if he appeared terrible in his fierce excitement, he seemed more terrible still, when a moment afterwards, with a cold, livid look, as if turned into stone, he added:

"She shall be mine, or she shall never be given to another. I would not spare her for ten thousand lives. If she refuse me, her lips shall be closed forever and ever. I shall destroy and be destroyed. My love or my vengeance must be gratified; and mark my words. You are the friend of Louis De Crespigny. I would it had been himself, and one of us should never have left this spot alive. There is a dark and dreary account to be settled between him and me. My first warning shall be my last," added he, in a hollow whisper, while a look of dangerous meaning gleamed in his eye. "He deserves death at my hands. He wrenched my sister from her home, trampled on her affections, and is born in all things to injure and supplant me! He must die!" added the maniac, with a strange glare in his eye-balls. "It is, perhaps, for his sake that I am rejected! Wild voices are whispering in my ear! Unnameable horrors beset me! Fierce phantoms are hissing and shouting behind me!"

The unfortunate being uttered these words with preternatural fury, while his countenance wore an expression of deadly malignity. He then paused, ground his teeth, and with the frightful levity of a maniac, uttering a howling, fiendish laugh, and rushing away, disappeared into the thickest part of the forest, leaving Sir Patrick horror-struck at the awful spectacle of a shattered intellect, the fragments of which were of so deadly a nature; while, at the same time, amidst a torrent of other thoughts and feelings, chiefly directed to secure the safety of Captain De Crespigny, he could not but smile at his present discovery, that the plainly dressed, shy, reserved, but rather satirical young lady, whom he had been of late patronising and bringing forward, was no other than the superbly endowed heiress, Miss Howard Smytheson, respecting whom he had so often rallied himself.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Sir Patrick gave instant information to the civil authorities at Harrowgate, respecting the dangerous madman now in the neighborhood; and when every particular of his adventure had reached Agnes, she felt an undefined sensation of disappointment that the end had not been of a more exciting nature. Never happy unless her mind were in a complete foam of excitement, she lived for sensation, and would have bought it at any price, being heard often to complain, that now nothing ever happened. Every day she considered as a chapter in her own life, into which she wished as many incidents crowded as possible, caring little whether joy or sorrow prevailed among those around, if the weary vacuum in her thoughts were but filled up. A few elopements or murders made a newspaper extremely acceptable; while even public riots she would have allowed to a certain pitch, provided she could pull the check-string as soon as they became at all inconvenient or alarming to herself; while she often remarked, in a querulous tone, that a revolution had been a thing threatened and talked of all her life, without ever seeming any nearer. The world, in short, if arranged to suit her taste, would have been one shifting scene of accidents and offences, fires, overturns, explosions, narrow escapes, marriages, births, deaths, mournful catastrophes, and astonishing vicissitudes.

On the evening after the pic-nic at Studley, Sir Arthur having gone early to bed, at his lodgings near the Granby, Marion accompanied her sister and Mrs. O'Donoghoe, to fulfil a dinner engagement at the Crown Hotel; and on their way home, the lively widow rallied Agnes on her prospect of walking at the next coronation, saying, that Lord Doncaster had evidently laid down twenty years of his life, lately; and that she had once seen the Doncaster diamonds, then considered the finest family jewels in Britain, which Queen Charlotte herself was supposed to have coveted, and the box containing which required two footmen to carry it.

"The tiara would shine like glow-worms in your dark hair, and the bandeau round your waist would be exquisite! I have heard it remarked, that people in this perverse world will not be happy; that those who have every wish gratified, and not a want upon earth, invent a grievance for themselves, and live upon it; but I wonder where the Marchioness of Doncaster could find one. You might drive away care in that beautiful pony carriage, kill time with your grand pianoforte, and read your own happiness in the envy of every one around. Even your sister seems scarcely so happy at your good fortune as might have been expected!"

"There is no earthly blessing I do not with my whole heart desire for Agnes," replied Marion warmly, when thus appealed to. "But if she has any plans such as you speak of, let no one ask me what I think, as it is quite enough that she should herself know my utter abhorrence of them."

Tears of indignant sorrow sprang into Marion's eyes, and she gazed earnestly out of the window, trying to conceal and to conquer her emotion, while Mrs. O'Donoghoe exclaimed, in a tone of satirical burlesque,

> "For of the choice, what heart can doubt,
> Of tents with love, or thrones without!"

As their carriage drove on, the night being clear and moon-lit, the wind sweeping over the earth with a rushing sound, and ten thousand stars twinkling in the blue vault above, Agnes remarked, in accents of surprise, that crowds of people were running eagerly on the road, with animated looks, and an appearance of most unusual excitement. Soon after she heard a rumbling noise behind, as of some heavy vehicle hurtling and thundering along the road; and the next moment a fire-engine passed at full speed, amidst the cheers and vociferations of a dense multitude, who assisted and followed its progress, with looks of mingled curiosity, delight, and apprehension.

Marion hastily thrust her head far out of the carriage, and perceived that a lurid glare burned on the sky, evidently reflected from High Harrowgate, while bright spiral flames shot upwards into the flaming arch above, and burning flakes of fire descended in showers of terrifying brilliancy. Every now and then a fresh burst of dazzling light blazed to the very heavens, while Marion watched the flickering flames with intense and solemn interest; but Agnes, after the first surprise was over, sank lazily back into the carriage, saying, with a look of peevish disappointment,

"It is only a fire somewhere! Fires are so common now, that they excite scarcely any sensation! One might fancy, Marion, that you had a valuable uninsured house at High Harrowgate!"

"It looks, even at this distance, very awful!" replied Marion. "The hills are like molten fire, while the broad red reflection on those massy clouds makes the very heavens seem on fire! What gleams of fiery light! What sheets of flame! It is fearfully grand! We should pray, Agnes, that no lives may be lost!"

"Fires are never fatal now! Years ago, they were said to be sometimes really frightful; but now any one I ever saw might be extinguished with a tea-cup. I never so much as read the accounts in one of the newspapers. We shall of course be asked to subscribe for the sufferers," added Agnes, in a tone of contemptuous pity, "poor creatures!"

"What a strange look of terrified enjoyment is depicted on the countenances of all who hurry past," exclaimed Marion. "It is curious, that probably some of those people who are ready to risk their lives in extinguishing the flames, would yet feel quite disappointed and ill-treated on arriving, to find that there was actually no conflagration. There are no limits to the love of excitement. When people have made up their great minds to a catastrophe, they feel really cheated if it does not occur; and I often think, that old people especially wish their few remaining days to be crowded with events, like the last pages in a novel."

The noise and the mob had greatly increased: loud shouts, hoarse yells, and clamorous cries of fire resounded on every side, with the heavy trampling of a hundred feet, when suddenly Sir Arthur's coachman whipped the horses violently, and proceeded forward with unprecedented rapidity, till Marion fancied the horses must have taken fright at the ignited sparks, which were now borne along in the air, and that maddened with terror, they were actually running off.

Agnes, now really in a state of excitement, thrust her head again out of the window, believing that the coachman must be drunk, and that a catastrophe, though not exactly what she would have selected, might actually occur, and Marion continued anxiously gazing around, till gradually a horrid sensation of doubt and fear gathered upon her mind, as she looked in the direction from which the light came. The curtain of night was withdrawn—the surrounding scene seemed one mighty furnace—and the roaring noise of the flames was now distinctly audible. At a turn of the road the whole became distinctly visible; and Marion, suddenly uttering a wild cry of horror and amazement, covered her face with her hands, and sank back, almost fainting, in the carriage; for she had at once become aware that the fire must be among the houses where Sir Arthur lodged. The garden around them was one vivid blaze of burning light—the stems of the trees were visible in dark relief, on a drapery of fire—while a brilliant pillar of flame, like a gigantic serpent, twirled its enormous coils upwards into the very sky. Forked flames appeared bursting from every window, and sweeping over the whole house, which was one great reservoir of fire, while a black volume of smoke rolled far away to the distant horizon.

"Is there no mistake?" exclaimed Marion, wringing her hands with terror, and bending her head almost to her knees in unendurable grief. "Is there no hope? Tell John to drive on faster—faster! O let me out—let me fly to the house! This is dreadful! fearful! Shall we never reach the spot! Listen to their cries! Let me out! let me out!"

"Dear Marion! there are crowds giving assistance! He must have escaped," said Agnes, in trembling accents. "I feel certain he has escaped. He has surely heard the noise, and called for help!"

A dense mass of persons round the crashing house, wild with agitation, and vehement in their attitudes and gestures, prevented the carriage from advancing farther; but Marion instantly opened the door, sprang out, and with an impetuosity which nothing could resist, rushed onwards. She was not one whose faculties could be prostrated by terror or danger; for it was then that her quick judgment and generous spirit became most active; and while crowds were standing around, in vacant, helpless wonder, she reached the spot where a tottering ladder had been placed against the walls, and where the engines were playing upon the blazing roofs, while flames spouted forth in every direction, and a confused din of cries and vociferous oaths became audible on every side.

Timid and easily frightened on slight occasion, all emotion now appeared to be dead within the breast of Marion, who paused, while, with bloodless cheek, and a face as rigid as death, she seemed turned into stone; yet every word whispered around fell with frightful distinctness on her ear.

"The last house that caught fire is uninhabited, I believe?" asked a stranger, calmly. "I am informed that the whole conflagration was raised by a madman—a perfect Guy Fawkes, who afterwards escaped. There are crowds of servants belonging to the heiress Miss Howard, and he had some scheme

of carrying her off; but most mercifully she and her attendants were all saved."

"Very fortunate indeed, as the stair-case is now falling in," added another, while crash followed crash in frightful succession. "Some one talked of a blind gentleman being there, but that is probably a picturesque addition, to give the story interest, for that tall house seems really empty."

At this moment, a low murmur of grief and horror arose among the crowd, followed by a death-like silence. In a part of the building high above what had yet been consumed by the flames, though already undermined, the shutters of a window were slowly opened, the sash hastily thrown open, and the venerable figure of Sir Arthur appeared there, his grey hair streaming in the wind, and his head stretched forward in the act of listening. He raised his hand to his forehead, as if bewildered, and seemed evidently calling for help; but his feeble voice was lost amid the war of elements, the crackling and blazing of all around, and the loud crash of falling timber.

No one had a hope of his being rescued, and the most selfishly indifferent looked on with breathless dismay, while Agnes threw herself on the grass in an agony of horror and despair; but Marion rapidly grasped her hand with convulsive energy, saying, in a low deep whisper, "I shall save him, or die with him."

Using the speed of thought she flew forward, while every voice was raised in loud shouts to stop her; and several persons, as soon as they became aware of Marion's rash intentions, followed vehemently in pursuit, determined to force her back; but eluding their grasp, she wrapped her large cloak around her, and ascended the crackling beams of the staircase, beneath a shower of glowing sparks, while blazing flames were running round the cornices and ceiling, with a sound like incessant thunder.

The smoke nearly blinded her—the smell of burning wood became suffocating—and the heat was nearly unbearable. Long wreaths of fire and smoke soon shut Marion out from the view of those who followed, and none could pursue with their eyes the fearful progress of her enterprise, while she hurried onwards, having one only thought in her heart, that Sir Arthur, blind and alone, was calling for help, and might yet perhaps be saved. A wooden gallery, leading from the stair to Sir Arthur's room, though fringed with an intense and devouring flame, which had almost entirely burned it away, showed yet a plank remaining close to the wall, charred and blackened, while shrivelling and crackling in the devouring element. Over this Marion quickly but cautiously glided; and opening the Admiral's door, she tried to compose her voice, saying in a clear, distinct tone—

"I am here, uncle Arthur! come away quickly! give me your hand!"

"What is the matter, Marion? What is all this?" replied he, turning round with a quivering lip, and in a tone of piercing agitation. "The blessings of your blind and helpless uncle be upon you! I am so agitated and confused! Where is the fire? Every body had forgotten me but you!"

"Uncle Arthur!" answered Marion, hurrying with him towards the door, where they were almost suffocated by a dense cloud of dust and smoke; "you were always brave and determined. All our courage is necessary now. Be firm and we may escape. You are now at the door. This wooden gallery is nearly burned away. It could not sustain us both, and no earthly power shall persuade me to go first. You can only impede me by speaking of it. Lose not a moment, then, for that will but increase our danger. Cling close to the wall; feel it all the way. I shall call out when you are safely over. Then remember the fifty steps we always counted to the first landing-place. After that, turn to the right, and you are safe. May the Almighty protect and guide you!"

"But Marion! my dear child! you are coming this way too?"

"Yes! or perhaps some other!" said she, assuming a tone of indifference, while she despondingly gazed at the rapidly consuming beam, and the thick smoke, which arose like mist before her sight.

"Go on, dear uncle, and pray for yourself and me."

Marion led Sir Arthur to the very brink of the yawning gulf, and cautiously placed him on the tottering gallery, deaf to his entreaties that she would seek her own safely first, and imploring him not to render her enterprise unavailing by delay. Flames were leaping upwards in the dark abyss beneath, dust and mortar fell in clouds on every side, while the heat and noise of the flashing light became more and more terrific; but still she spoke calmly to him, in tones of confidence and encouragement, giving directions while he remained in sight, and anxiously watching, as he slowly and cautiously groped his way. All Sir Arthur's firmness of look and voice had now returned, as he questioned or thanked her, when suddenly a deafening crash took place over head, an impending fragment of the roof was precipitated with a roaring convulsion upon the spot where a moment before the Admiral had stood, and nothing now remained beneath the eye of Marion but a hideous gulf of smoke and ruins, one bewildering medley of crackling beams and falling floors, a mighty mass of horror, which it made her giddy to behold.

Marion ceased now to speak, fearful that her voice might induce Sir Arthur, if yet alive, to return; and nearly hopeless of his having escaped, she now felt that no duty was so imperative, as, if possible, to seek her own safely. Yet what resource remained? Her heart beat hurriedly, stopped and beat again, while a choking sensation arose in her throat, when for the first time she fully contemplated her own instant danger. The noise was like that of a mighty wind, while the flames swept the very heavens, with a sound more appalling than the loudest thunder, and she hurried almost breathlessly back to Sir Arthur's apartment, which had not yet been attacked by the devouring element.

The heat was even there so intense, that she hastened to a window for air, and a shuddering groan burst from the surrounding multitude when they beheld her; but no succor was near, while the door became instantly blockaded by shivered beams and smouldering ruins, which had fallen at the entrance, setting it on fire, and she saw around long aisles of flame, and deep caverns filled with surges of fire and smoke.

Marion felt now that death impended in its most terrifying form. It was no new thing with her to prepare for the certain approach of dissolution; yet often as she had tried to realize the idea of that mighty change, never did it appear before with the appalling distinctness, which now filled her spirit with unutterable awe, while standing as it were between earth and heaven, all beneath full of boundless terror, but all above promising peace, and full of hope.

No effort of her own could avail. Marion looked at the long line of tall houses on her left, untouched by the flames. She glanced at the crowd below, all anxiously gazing upwards, in death-like stillness, and at the garden, which seemed paved with faces; but while the consuming flames pursued their desolating track, not a hope of rescue appeared. A storm of burning ashes fell on every side, and all around was a whirlwind of fire and smoke.

Marion's figure became conspicuously seen at the window, every pane of which was already so heated by the blazing conflagration behind, that she leaned against the shutters, and gazed towards heaven, as if already lost to all connection with the world around.

"Martyrs have willingly died in a scene like this," thought she. "Let me also testify the faith in which I die."

Marion clasped her hands, while now her spirit rose superior to danger, and, seeing the hundreds gazing at her in silent, horror-struck sympathy, she calmly pointed upwards, that all might remember the comfort derived from a hope full of immortality.

The heat had become so intense, that Marion, choked almost to suffocation, leaned farther than ever out of the window, trying to catch one breath of air, when to her astonishment she now perceived the figure of a man descending from the window of a house far to the left, and having planted his foot on a narrow ledge of stone, which ran along all the buildings as an architectural ornament, he pressed his hands firmly against the wall, to preserve his balance, and, with a degree of skill and intrepidity scarcely to be credited, rapidly traversed that shelf towards the place where she stood, carrying one end of a rope in his hand, the other extremity of which had been already fixed to the window from which he came out.

"Marion! dear Marion!" cried the voice of Richard Granville, which even at this awful moment thrilled to her heart with deep emotion, "we must live or die together. Trust yourself to me! Here is a firm footing. Try it! At the worst you cannot be in greater danger than now."

While yet speaking, he had securely fixed the rope to the window-frame, thus forming a temporary balustrade, and after carefully assisting her out, he slowly led Marion with one hand on the rope, and her face to the wall, safely towards a house as yet untouched by the fire.

A low, whispering murmur of intense interest arose among the spectators, when they saw hopes of her being preserved, but not a voice was raised till they perceived her safe, when a deafening cheer burst from the spectators, which rang through every ear like a trumpet. Again and again it resounded, louder and louder still, but Marion heard it not, for no sooner was she out of danger, than, with a cry of thankfulness, she rushed into the expanded arms of Sir Arthur, and fainted.

When Marion recovered to consciousness, her first evidence of returning life, was the deep blush with which she extended her hand to Mr. Granville. Tears now streamed from the blinded eyes of Sir Arthur, while he spoke to her with every term of affectionate endearment, saying, in a voice that yet quivered with emotion—

"My child! my dear Marion! I thank God that your life, young and full of hope, has not been sacrificed to keep my grey hairs a few hours longer from the grave. Would that I were able to thank you as you deserve."

"Never thank me for anything, dear uncle Arthur. I owe you more than my existence, for I owe you, under Providence, all the happy days I have ever known in it, and long, long, may I be able to show you my grateful affection."

"My very dear girl, aged as I am, and shattered now by this night's alarms, I have little more hold of life than of the gale that blows along the ocean, but existence would yet be precious to me, if I could only live to see my Marion as happy as she merits."

"Already I am!" replied Marion, affectionately embracing her uncle, while a torrent of joyous, agitated tears rushed into her eyes. "I am too happy, dear uncle Arthur! You are saved, we are restored to all we love, and my life is doubly precious to me, preserved by the generous courage of—of——"

"Of one whose first earthly wish is to render it happy," said Mr. Granville, warmly. "I trust that for many long years we shall testify together our gratitude to God for the mercies of this night."

A smile and a tear struggled hard for the mastery in Marion's downcast countenance, while Richard continued to speak with confidence and hope of the happy future, trusting that their engagement, though unavoidably postponed, could not be long delayed, and that if Clara recovered in a more favorable climate, to which she must set out the next evening, he might speedily return, to resume his duties and occupations, with new motives of hope, while Sir Arthur expressed, in brief and powerful language, his fervent wish that nothing might interfere with a prospect which secured the happiness of his beloved Marion.

"Yet," observed Sir Arthur, next morning, when Mr. Granville called to take leave, "I dislike long engagements, and never would recommend one. If you both remain constant, it is unnecessary, and if either of you change, it would be little worth to obtain from a sense of honor what should only spring from affection."

"There is nothing to fear on that score," replied Mr. Granville, exchanging a smile with Marion. "We are most apt in general to doubt where we have most at stake, but I have lately become almost presumptuously confident. I would not wish, Sir Arthur, that Marion should feel engaged one hour after she ceased to love me more than she could love any other, or if there were any man on earth who could value her more, and make her happier. One thing I ask of you, dear Marion, and only one," added he, his eyes flashing with animation—"That till we meet again, nothing shall make you doubt my unalterable affection; and in asking this, I ask only what I intend in return towards you, that our mutual confidence may be for ever unbroken, from the first hour we met."

"To trust you once is to trust you for ever," answered she, in a low, scarcely audible voice. "All my happiness in life depends on one, who, I am certain, never will change."

"Then, as surely as day follows night, I hope our present parting shall be followed by a happy re-union; and months will seem like hours, till I return to claim you as my own, till I once more hear your voice, and till this hand is again clasped in mine."

Marion listened with a quivering smile on her lip, while a tear trembled in her eye. For a moment, the blood forsook her cheek, and returned again in rushing torrents over her whole countenance, while the eloquence of the heart was in her eyes, though she attempted not to reply; and Mr. Granville continued, in accents of the deepest tenderness,—

"It grieves me more and more every day to think of leaving you, but my duty to Clara must not be postponed any longer. Her strength is gradually diminishing, and though she does not idly or selfishly indulge her feelings, yet here, above all places, she seems least likely to forget a sorrow, which is, I trust, not incurable. We, who are Christians, know that there is some good purpose in her affliction, and that the lightest straw which casts its balance into our lot, is ordained by the infinite power, and the infinite goodness of One who cannot err."

"Yes," replied Marion. "In going through life, I feel myself reading a book by the best of all authors. Many of the incidents, as we advance, surprise and disappoint us; but, knowing that the whole is on a plan which could not be improved, we feel certain that all shall turn out right and best in the end."

"It is a conviction such as you describe, Marion, which allays the torturing and almost feverish anxiety I should otherwise suffer respecting those around whom my warmest affections are kindled," observed Mr. Granville. "Religion is indeed the best of all anodynes for pain of every kind; otherwise, who can tell how greatly I should have suffered in our sorrowful uncertainty respecting Clara's recovery, and in leaving you, my Marion, to whom I am now bound by every tie that can unite heart to heart. I will not,—I cannot say, farewell; but let us live in hope of better days to come."

Mr. Granville at length took leave; and, as he hurried for the last time across the common, Marion leaned against the window, and followed him with her eyes till he vanished out of sight; while Sir Arthur's countenance shewed that his kind heart was full of anxiety and sorrow; for he had seen many vicissitudes in human life and human attachment, therefore he trembled for the possibility of sorrow hereafter, to one whom he loved with all the unbounded warmth of his nature.

Marion closed her eyes that night with the pleasing conviction, that the world contained not a happier being than herself. She felt conscious how much Mr. Granville had elevated her mind by his conversation, what a treasure of interesting thoughts and pleasing hopes he had left her; and, while following him in imagination through every mile of his journey, and sadly counting the many days that must intervene till they could meet again, she resolutely turned her mind towards all the pursuits and occupations calculated to render her worthy of Richard Granville, when he returned to claim her as the partner and companion of his future existence.

"Discerning mortal! do thou serve the will
Of time's Eternal Master, and that peace
Which the world wants, shall be to thee confirm'd."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Captain De Crespigny had heard, with frantic alarm, of the fearful danger from which Marion was so wonderfully delivered; and then, for the first time, he discovered the whole depth and reality of his love. The gracefulness of every thought which she expressed, and the bright beauty of that look with which it was accompanied, had made an indelible impression on his heart, so that now, when he saw her so unexpectedly snatched from the jaws of death, no words could do justice to his emotion. He hurried that very evening to ascertain the reality of her escape, and to say what he could on the occasion; while the tremulousness of his voice, and the quivering of his lip, gave a degree of depth and reality to his few incoherent sentences, which all his well-turned speeches in former times had failed to convey. Marion thanked him warmly for his friendly sympathy, and spoke to him with all the intimacy of relationship and old acquaintance; but when she turned to Mr. Granville, Captain De Crespigny then observed the flutter of her voice, the deep tone of tenderness, and the look full of confidence and full of interest, with which she spoke to him, and to him only; while there was a degree of tact and delicacy in her manner of testifying the wide disparity of her feelings, which left him nothing of which to complain. Careless of the dry and sarcastic air with which Agnes watched his mortification, Captain De Crespigny did not even take the trouble to conceal it; but soon after strode out of the room, and walked with hurried and agitated steps up and down in the garden, whistling, but not from want of thought. When thus alone and unobserved, a thousand angry and indignant feelings made him writhe with mental suffering, to think that he, who had been so deeply, so fatally loved by others, who had never sued in vain, and never truly had loved before, should endure now the agonies of unrequited affection, should be slighted, avoided, and forgotten, for a man he hated, as he had always hated Richard Granville.

"He cannot love her as I do!" thought Captain De Crespigny, vehemently clenching his hands, and throwing himself on a seat. "What does he know of that magical feeling! a passionless being from boyhood, master of all his own feelings and impulses, incapable of the wild, ungovernable ardor, which carries me forward, in the face of all obstacles, to win her! He has indeed acted manfully on this occasion, but shall the accident of his success destroy my hopes of happiness! No! it must not,—shall not be! Dunbar will never consent to their marriage, and he must prevent his sister from thus throwing herself away. She shall yet be mine! The only girl who was ever insensible to my preference! I cannot live without her, and if there be means in the wide world to thwart Richard Granville, I must find them!"

Sir Patrick received next day, with gratified surprise, the explicit declaration of his friend's unbounded, and, at length, undisguised, attachment for Marion, which he had already, in some degree, suspected, though so much accustomed to Captain De Crespigny's being in jest, that he could scarcely believe now that he was in earnest, while listening to the vehement expressions of his attachment, and promising, nevertheless, to enlist himself in the cause, with all the zeal and all the interest he could command.

"As her guardian, I have a perfect right to postpone this most absurd engagement, and Sir Arthur deserves to be *spiflicated*, for ever having encouraged such a mere penny-wedding affair for that girl, who does not know her own value. Agnes tells me my uncle has allowed them to correspond; but this he had no right to do without my consent, and therefore I shall take most effectual means to intercept every letter, either to or from her, till she is of age, after which my reign ends, though, I hope, long before that, yours shall have begun."

Sir Patrick took an early opportunity of expressing to Marion, in no measured terms, his utter abhorrence of poor marriages in general, of poor curates especially, and of Richard Granville in particular; while she, with downcast eyes, blushed, and re-blushed, deeper, and deeper still; though, unwilling to irritate him more than could be helped, she listened in silence, till at length, encouraged by meeting with no reply, he added, in a tone of high exhilaration—

"But we need not talk of that now! The thing does not bear speaking of! You shall hear news to-day that must positively drive all this nonsense out of your head. The best 'catch' in Britain has actually lost his heart to a tolerably pretty, and not very disagreeable young lady, by name Marion Dunbar! A better fellow does not exist on earth than De Crespigny; and he will render you the happiest of women. I never saw any man so anxious to make himself liked by any girl as he is!"

Marion felt now that she must no longer be silent, and blushing her brightest red she replied, in a low, deep, earnest voice, "Hear me, dear Patrick, and I shall not annoy you by saying one word in favor of my indissoluble engagement, that being a subject on which, I fear, we shall never agree; but without reference to a previous attachment, had it not even existed, my feelings towards Captain De Crespigny would have been the same. I never could confide my affection and happiness to one who has found his amusement hitherto in betraying all who trusted him, and who feeds his vanity by causing misery to those who are as deserving as myself. It would have been more merciful to destroy life, than to destroy the happiness of life, as he has done, for many, and for our own sister, I fear, among the number."

"Pshaw, Marion! Do not stand in your own light like a thief in the candle!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, impatiently. "De Crespigny is worth a hundred thousand Richard Granvilles!"

"One is all I care for!" replied Marion, timidly. "But, Patrick, as you have begun the comparison, let me say, that to have once known Mr. Granville is a talisman against every other attachment. There is no pleasure in life worth a thought, without mutual confidence, such as, I trust, we have established between us for ever, and such as I never could have felt with Captain De Crespigny. My taste has been tuned to a higher pitch than to be satisfied with such a transient and capricious attachment as he could ever offer to any one—mere tinsel and filigree, compared to the strong and lasting sentiment on which I may now rely."

"Marion! there is not a man living who deserves a more grateful return for his preference than De Crespigny; and I still hope the time may come when you shall see his value, and more than return his attachment, or it will inflict a very great disappointment, which I should be annoyed beyond measure to occasion him!"

"Patrick! how could your friend, with his heart splintered into atoms, ever presume to expect a whole one in return? He often reminds me of that German lady, whose picture is drawn encouraging three lovers at once. She is giving her hand to the first, stealing a glance at the second, and treading on the toe of the third, while each believes himself the favorite. Captain De Crespigny will take the disappointment, if it be one, to the next ball, and dance it off in a single quadrille. His love is like wax, ready for all impressions, and he has weathered so many flirtations already, that you need never be uneasy about him now. I venture to say what I think, Patrick, to convince you how vain all future importunity on the subject would be; and I cannot but observe, that if there be any blame on this occasion, it is yours, for obliging me so often, most unwillingly, to meet Captain De Crespigny. Let us hope, however, that you have been misled into over-estimating his intentions and feelings. Caroline Smythe sometimes takes off your friend to the very life; and I wish you could see how cleverly she carries on a furious flirtation with two ladies at once. There really seemed danger, one day, that uncle Arthur would die, like the famous Mr. Hope, of suppressed laughter! I wish all ladies could view the case in as ridiculous a light as Caroline does; but Patrick, it is very different in respect to Agnes. Her whole thoughts are embittered by Captain De Crespigny's unpardonable coquetry—her whole feelings lacerated; and I fear she may, in a paroxysm of angry disappointment, consign herself to long years of misery—I may even say, of degradation. You know all I mean, Patrick, and you ought, if possible, to soothe her, to advise and persuade her into a better line of conduct. As for myself, Patrick,—lastly, and to conclude," added Marion, a wandering blush resting its warm tint again on her cheek, "I can say, like Cardinal Wolsey, but with more satisfaction, 'Farewell to all my greatness!' Richard is not affluent—probably he never may be so; but I am no spendthrift. I would rather have love than money; and whatever befall us, it is happiness enough for the rest of my life to know that he thinks me deserving of his attachment. We love, and we understand each other perfectly."

Marion rushed through what she had to say with agitated rapidity, and on reaching the conclusion she bent down her head, and leaned it on her folded arms, while Sir Patrick hastily left the room, uttering a few emphatic exclamations, which were lost in the thundering report with which he closed the drawing-room door, till it quivered upon the hinges.

"Very absurd and unaccountable!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, interrupting himself next day, during a paroxysm of angry whistling, which he had carried on for some time, standing with his back to the fire, in that attitude peculiar to Englishmen, and in which he was said to be the only man who ever looked graceful. "Most extraordinary."

"What?" asked Agnes, with a start of eager curiosity. "What is there which astonishes you so much?"

"That I am the only one of our family who cannot endure to eat roast mutton!" replied he, evidently resolved to balk her inquisitiveness. "This is a teazing and tormenting world, Agnes, where we cannot order everything as we like."

"But what has ruffled the surface of your humor to-day, Pat?" asked Agnes, indifferently. "You seldom treat me to a stage soliloquy!"

"Then, if you must have it, all I can say is this! Here are my two best friends on earth, Wigton and De Crespigny, with a thousand mental, personal, titled, and landed recommendations, each making his proposal, and I cannot give either of them the slightest hopes!"

"Patrick, you must be mad! If they wait long enough, I may perhaps marry both, but at all events I have no intention to refuse either!" replied Agnes, in her most conceited tone. "Are you in jest or in earnest?"

"Why, both! That strange girl, Marion, has given them each a good, round, decided negative. I did not think she had it in her nature to be so positive."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Agnes, with angry vehemence, while her eyes seemed literally striking fire. "This is some ill-natured jest of yours; but Marion understands Captain De Crespigny too well to fall into any such absurd mistake. She knows he is secretly attached to me, though, indeed, that has been no secret for ages past, and Marion never hinted to me that he had an idea of proposing to her."

"No! Marion is exactly the sort of person never to mention what might hurt the feelings of another, especially as you would probably not have believed her; but I had yesterday a point-blank, *bona fide*, serious, and even solemn proposal to make her from De Crespigny, which I had to decline with all the usual regret, surprise, gratitude, offers of friendship, and so forth. It is a great inconvenience, Agnes, that both your strings should break in this way at once; but Marion is a perfect loadstone for attracting the attentions, the hearts, and the good opinions of all mankind. I have seen both these affairs coming on for some time, and it is really awkward and irritating to be placed in such a predicament with all my friends," continued Sir Patrick, in the tone of an ill-used man, thinking only of his own grievances, while Agnes, feeling herself extinguished at a blow, gazed in his face with a look of pallid amazement. "If Granville could only be sunk to the bottom of the sea," added Sir Patrick, impatiently, "I would not beckon with my finger to bring him up again!"

When a separation is inevitable, those who depart have generally the advantage, in seeing a variety of interesting novelties, to force their attention, and occupy it; but while the thoughts of Mr. Granville reverted continually to Harrowgate, Marion's became now more than ever engrossed with Sir Arthur, whose nerves had been greatly shattered by his recent adventure, and who ardently longed, as soon as his health was in any degree re-established, to be again in the quiet sanctuary of his own home.

Amidst scenes where she was hourly reminded of the happy past, Marion delivered herself up to the pleasing consciousness of Richard's unalterable attachment. Though circumstances had now separated, and might keep them apart for months, she felt a steady assurance that their mutual attachment could never be shaken by either time or distance. In the solitude of her own heart, Marion hoarded up many cherished remembrances of what he had said, and how he had said it, while the most transient of Mr. Granville's remarks seemed indelibly imprinted on her recollection. She read the books he liked, practised the music he admired, traced out all his favorite walks, and lived with him as the continual companion of her thoughts.

Marion's was an unclouded sunshine of hope, as she confided so entirely in her absent lover, that she would quite as soon have distrusted her own heart as his; yet day after day, and week after week passed on, without a line ever reaching her from either Clara or Richard, and little did she dream, while suffering from the melancholy monotony of their long-continued silence, that letter after letter, written from heart to heart, with ardent affection and entire confidence, had been consigned to a premature end by the order and contrivance of Sir Patrick; but nevertheless, with all the ardor of a young and sanguine mind, she daily expected a satisfactory explanation, and still looked back upon the past with unembittered feelings.

Marion's was not a weak, wavering, suspicious, or fanciful nature, but high and generous in all things, she had not lightly confided her happiness to one on whom she could not implicitly rely. She knew his attachment to be one of principle as well as of inclination, and though uneasy lest Mr. Granville might be ill, she entertained no jealous apprehension that he had become changed, but perseveringly trusted, believed, and hoped the best. Many a time had Marion's heart throbbed, and her color risen with a tumult of hope, as she watched the return of Martin from the post-office, and the flutter of expectation faded sadly away in mournful disappointment, when she found that another day and night, at the very least, must be added to her long and weary disappointment; for no "hope deferr'd" makes the heart more sick, than vainly watching for a letter, in which the happiness of a life-time is involved.

"Out of sight out of mind!" said Agnes, sarcastically, one day, when she observed the look of surprise and anxiety with which Marion was leaving the room, alter seeing hoards of letters brought into the room from every quarter but the right one. "Marion! as Shakspeare says, 'No word from Goodman Dull yet?' That is just like men in general!"

"It may be like men in general, Agnes, but it is not like Richard," replied Marion, coloring and smiling. "On him I have the most consummate reliance. We can both depend on our perfect knowledge of each other, and I shall not break the long chain of our mutual faith by a single doubt. I have given him my confidence, and that was all I had to bestow."

"Well! as some sensible poet remarks, and I quite agree with him," said Agnes, with a peevish, discontented sigh—

"The maid that loves,
Goes out to sea upon a shattered plank,
And puts her trust in miracles for safety."

"No, Agnes! Those who have loved lightly may change as lightly, but I should little deserve the inestimable happiness of having known Mr. Granville so entirely, did I not always believe him above the suspicion of caprice. We have read each other's mind and heart, we have been willing to trust each other in life and till death; therefore now, unless Richard were to tell me with his own lips that he had changed, I would not believe it,—and scarcely even then! This alone is affection that deserves the name, not to torment him with distrust, nor to take up the first cause of offence, but with unenquiring confidence to judge him as I would myself be judged. It would add a pang to the sorrow of separation if we believed ourselves at the mercy of every idle suspicion; but I know his heart to be as incapable of deceit or dishonor as my own."

In the mean time, Mr. Granville had continued to write from abroad with unceasing assiduity, believing that some unexpected obstacle must have occurred to prevent Marion from answering his letters, but never suspecting that she did not receive one of the many he had written. In his candid and elevated mind, there was no room for jealousy or suspicion, and conscious that the transparent nature of Marion's nature admitted of no concealments, he rejected every angry or impatient thought. The more he saw of other society, the more dear she became to his memory now, while his attachment was of that deep and lasting kind over which the accidents of life have no influence.

"Miss Dunbar," said Captain De Crespigny, one evening, placing himself on a sofa beside Marion, while Sir Patrick, to whom he had been speaking very earnestly some minutes before, anxiously watched her countenance from a distance: "I wish you were now seated in one of Merlin's chairs, from which no one can rise till a story be finished. I have something to say, so important to myself, and let me hope also to you, that I expect to be heard to the end."

"Of course, if you wish it," replied Marion, in a faltering, agitated voice. "But, Captain De Crespigny, allow me to remark how unlikely it is that any subject can very deeply interest us both. I trust and hope we fully understand each other."

"It is time, indeed, that we should," replied he with emotion.

"And if I dare say all I wish, it would still be less than I feel. Dunbar assures me you are still at liberty to consult only your own inclinations, and let me hope I am not entirely the dupe of my own vanity, in believing that I might yet conquer your indifference. Since the hour when we first met, I had eyes for no one but yourself. Even when we could not converse I have watched you with ceaseless interest, and am forever thinking of you in absence, counting the hours of my existence only by those passed in your society. Why, then, do you so obviously avoid me? Why am I for ever made the companion of Miss Smythe or Miss Anybody-else? You know and see that my whole object in life is, to remain beside yourself. Every look, word, and action tells you as plainly as language can speak, that I love you to distraction, that my attachment has not been hastily formed, to be as hastily laid aside, and now my only apprehension is, that by too openly disclosing my feelings the confession may separate us for ever, yet it can no longer be delayed, for I must know at once now, whether I am to be happy or miserable for life?"

"Patrick has done very wrong," faltered Marion, while tears sprang into her eyes, "I told him long ago to let you know all. It is most unfortunate that your preference should be given to one of the very few who never can return it. You ask for a heart which is not mine to give. My engagement to Mr. Granville cannot be soon fulfilled, but while we both live, we shall live only for each other."

"That, Dunbar assures me, can never take place," replied Captain De Crespigny, while a dark red flush passed over his countenance; "and till it does, I cannot cease to hope. Nothing is more annoying, I know, than the perseverance of an unrequited attachment, but I must cling to the faint and haggard

hope which remains. A mere taper is extinguished by being blown upon, but a fire burns only the brighter. The greatest felicity of life would not be good enough for you, nor so much as I wish you, provided only we share it together; but with another, I cannot wish you happiness. No! the words would choke me. May you never find any till you find it with me. If you can ever feel one relenting thought in my favor,—if, dissatisfied with another, you think with even momentary regret of me, then, were I at the extremity of the earth, let me but know it, and you shall find that I have been true as the dial to the sun, even though not brightened by its light."

Captain De Crespigny continued with vehemence of tone and manner which nothing could interrupt, while Marion's countenance became more and more expressive of grief and confusion.

"If I have been to others the reckless, inconstant, and unprincipled being you think, all who ever suffered a pang on my account are now revenged. I never really loved any one but you! All else was fancy—vanity—any thing but love. Were others like you, there could be no changeableness or caprice, but never have I seen before, and never shall I see again, so much to attract affection and to secure constancy. Hereafter a solitary recollection of the hours spent with you will be my only remaining happiness. Happiness!! there is no such word for me, now! You, who delight in making all others happy, would condemn me to misery! The thought of my defeated hopes will forever ring upon my heart. The remembrance, that when I asked that of you, which I never asked before, you coldly and indifferently rejected me."

"Not indifferently, but with heartfelt gratitude for your disinterested preference," answered Marion, in a low, agitated voice. "If already married to another, I could not be more decided in saying, that you must never renew the subject again, for I owe it to you, as much as to myself and Richard, to say that my answer is final,—that we never can be more to each other than friends, but that I sincerely hope the time may come, when we shall meet as we did formerly, without emotion, but with kind and cousinly regard."

"Never! oh never! The very thought shows you have never loved as I do! I could not be in the same room with you,—no! not in the same kingdom. You may pity, if you cannot love me," replied Captain De Crespigny, with a deep gasp of acute disappointment; and seizing his hat, he rushed out of the house, nearly suffocated by contending emotions; but as he ran, rather than walked, towards his lodgings, the first and foremost of his thoughts was, under all circumstances, and at all hazards, to persevere with unalterable pertinacity, and only with his dying breath, to resign the hope of success.

CHAPTER XL.

Life is indeed a complicated and mysterious drama, in which Agnes felt more and more dissatisfied with the part she had to play. Harrowgate had been the threatre of many interesting scenes to her; but now Lord Doncaster had departed with a vaguely-expressed hope of her visiting him at Kilmarnock Abbey; and when Sir Arthur felt sufficiently recovered to begin his long-desired progress towards home, she slowly and sadly prepared to accompany him.

Before they reached Portobello, winter had already covered the earth in a shroud of snow and of ice; the birds no longer carolled gladly on the boughs; the rustling leaves had ceased to fall; the naked trees hung their dejected branches, in bare and stern desolation, and the blood-red sun glittered on the cold and barren fields. "Winter's dumb." All life and joyfulness had departed from the face of nature, which looked, as Agnes remarked, like a wedding-cake without the ornaments; and amidst weeks of dreary discontent, she compared the death-like contrast of nature now, from what it had been, to her own sadly altered feelings. She appeared constantly now to be in a state of restless, almost feverish excitement, always, evidently, expecting some event which never happened, while she became daily more depressed and irritable.

Marion, in the mean time, during many a long and dreary evening, resolutely buried beneath a smiling aspect, her own anxiety respecting Mr. Granville's unaccountable silence, and devoted herself as entirely to Sir Arthur's comfort, as if there had not existed another being upon the earth; yet still, every knock at the door made her heart palpitate with hope, and every note brought into the room, caused her a new pang of disappointment and surprise.

If a grain of hope or joy were to be found in any circumstances, Marion's was a mind to sift out and enjoy it; and her buoyant spirit now shielded her from a too sensitive apprehensiveness, while she repelled the withering fears that might have forced themselves on a heart less candid and trusting. Her whole spirit rebelled against a vagrant thought of Richard Granville's inconstancy or indifference; though in Sir Patrick's letters from the continent, there was much that might have insinuated distrust into her thoughts; but Marion clung to the unswerving belief of her lover's infallible truth. She knew that the stamp of Christian excellence was on his whole character, engrained in his very being, and only to decay with life itself; therefore her opinion was not at the mercy of any idle representations; but the blast which might have uprooted a superficial attachment, only deepened the root of her own, which nothing could undermine.

Mr. Granville, in the mean time, having long ceased to hope for any answer to his letters, became more and more impatient for the time when he might seek a personal interview with Marion, of whose constancy not a doubt ever crossed his imagination; while day after day he watched with saddening apprehension over the declining health of his sister, whose failing strength required all the affectionate attentions he lavished on her, especially when, after a few weeks, Sir Patrick also arrived at Florence, and Clara shrunk with blighting, heart-broken grief, from every engagement that might endanger her meeting him. She mournfully acknowledged, that having at first esteemed as well as loved him, she was still unable to conquer her misplaced affection; and that while nothing could induce her to unite her fate to Sir Patrick's, or to place her happiness in his care, still the painful consciousness that he was unworthy and dishonored, weighed the more deeply upon her spirit, and crushed her whole heart with anguish.

The constancy with which Sir Patrick tried to regain her affection was deeply touching to Clara's young mind; and in vain she tried to blot out his name with her tears. Still, Mr. Granville, with inextinguishable hope, continued to believe that the germ of life must be stronger than it seemed; but day after day she faded and drooped. Change of air had done less than nothing for Clara's feeble frame and wasted strength; while she spoke often, with a smile of affectionate interest, respecting her brother's future life, though he observed with emotion, that her own name was never included, and that only when talking of a world hereafter, did she speak now of their being together.

"We must die to be perfectly happy," observed Clara, one day, in a tone of calm and elevated peace. "My sun has set in the morning, Richard; and it might have seemed hard thus early to leave such a world, so beautiful, so fragrant, so joyous, and embellished by such affection as yours; but we know that sin has destroyed this whole magnificent creation; that misery, decay, and death, are hid beneath all. It is the glorious discovery of Christianity that we are immortal; that we are created, not for time, but for eternity! So long as my spirit continues to lodge in this most fragile of human bodies, I must have sorrow and suffering to prepare me for throwing off the homely garb of an earthly nature, and assuming the glorious garments of heaven."

Mr. Granville covered his face with his hands, unable for some moments to reply, while Clara continued, in a tone of solemn sadness and fervent emotion—

"The near approach of death fills my heart with strange and wonderful thoughts! When, like the lightning from the cloud, my soul departs from the body, O then, Richard, how I shall learn to know the value of our immortal salvation! It bewilders me now to think, that I myself shall survive that glorious sun, the solid earth, and all the wonders around us; that I shall see and understand all the miracles of creation; that I shall know and love all the wisest and best of human beings who ever existed on the earth; and that I shall then be wiser than the wisest, as well as happier than the happiest of mortals. Richard! that is marvellous! and were it not for leaving you, I could rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory."

Mr. Granville clasped Clara's emaciated hand in his own, and would have spoken, but his voice failed; and after an ineffectual effort, fearful of agitating his sister, he turned away and was silent; but she saw his unutterable grief, and continued,

"You could have borne this better if it had been yourself, Richard; but I leave you in the hands, not only of an atoning Saviour, but also of a sympathising friend, who will send you comfort according to your utmost need; and, my dear brother, let us now remember, that as the infidel La Harpe said, there is one text in Scripture sufficient either to live or to die on, 'God so loved the world, as to give his only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

Mr. Granville solemnly bent his head in token of acquiescence, and closed his eyes, but large tears, notwithstanding every effort, coursed each other down his face, and he avoided looking round, while Clara in tremulous accents continued—

"Before long I shall live only in your memory, and well do I know the place you will give me there; but remember, dear Richard, when my mortal frame is dissolved, that you will have another relative then awaiting you in heaven, and that I shall yet be in as active a state of consciousness there as here. When we are separated, you must still sometimes revive old times, by reading with Marion the books I have loved—by listening to the music I have delighted in—by walking in my accustomed haunts at home—by rearing my favorite flowers—and most of all, console yourself, my dear brother, by reflecting, that when you and Marion are both worshiping God together on earth, I shall also be adoring Him in heaven:—

> 'Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
> Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
> How grows in Paradise our store.'"

The wintry year rolled on till Christmas eve, when Agnes, with a discontented yawn, loudly wished that she had been born in the planet Jupiter, where there was no winter at all. That night she announced after tea to Sir Arthur, that she was about to leave home for several weeks next day, being engaged to spend some time with her friend, Mrs. O'Donoghoe. A considerable air of trepidation appeared in her voice and manner when she spoke; and Marion, having recently observed that her sister's thoughts were continually pre-occupied, felt startled and amazed at the look of agitated determination with which she intimated her approaching departure, after which she hurried towards the door, anxious apparently to avoid all discussion; but Sir Arthur, in a tone of mild authority, called her back, and drawing in his breath between his compressed lips with evident vexation, he assumed an air of grave but ironical humor.

"May I take the liberty of inquiring, Agnes, whether you have fully investigated all the stories we heard at Harrowgate respecting Mrs. O'Donoghoe's former connection with Lord Doncaster, and what she actually is, before I consent, on very short notice, to entrust her with my niece."

"Oh! she is everything on earth most delightful! You need not have a minute's anxiety about me, uncle Arthur! I can take excellent care of myself. Nobody knows my own value better than I do!"

"Convince me of that, Agnes, if possible; but you are aware that my whole heart abhors your recent very unaccountable intimacy with that contemptible old *roue*, who shall be nameless," replied Sir Arthur, with strong, deliberate emphasis. "Any continuance of that exceedingly familiar intercourse would be utterly improper; and as for a young girl of your appearance setting out on a wild ramble with any Irish adventuress recommended by Lord

Doncaster, let me hear of her having some very different introduction, or I cannot allow you to go."

"My dear uncle! I would dig my own grave and bury myself, if anything prevented me! As for your permission," exclaimed Agnes, her whole face illuminated with angry eagerness, "I shall certainly be most happy to have it; but if people strain the cord too tight, it sometimes snaps altogether. I have made myself a positive promise never to decline a good offer, and go I must. Mrs. O'Donoghoe is to take me in her own carriage, free, gratis, and for nothing. Only think how very kind!"

"My dear Agnes," replied Sir Arthur, while his brow darkened with mournful anxiety, "I cannot wonder if you tire of the dull, monotonous house I have to offer you. A perfect mausoleum indeed! It is a premature old age for girls like you and Marion to be, evening after evening, the companions of a solitary old man. Often, of late, have I considered in vain how it could be remedied. Yet, my dear girl, there might be a solitude far worse, if you lose the respect of others, and the peace of mind you may enjoy with me. Hearing what I have lately done of Mrs. O'Donoghoe, and knowing all I do of Lord Doncaster and the Abbe Mordaunt, I must lay my positive prohibition on your accompanying them now. You may think me a whimsical old man; but, Agnes, you cannot long be troubled with my care. Loaded as I am with the weight of years and infirmities, my life is like a spark on the ocean. Its fleeting joys and troubled thoughts are drawing rapidly to a close; but if these were the last words I am ever to speak, you must not go unprotected into such society."

The Admiral walked with slow and musing steps up and down the room, his fine countenance flushed with agitation, and his eyes shaded by his long white hair, exhibiting an expression of mournful solicitude. Marion's heart swelled with agitation, while inwardly moralizing on the officiousness of Irish widows, and Agnes bit her beautiful lip with a look of resolute determination, flashing glances of angry surprise at her uncle, and pouting her beautiful lip, though the reverence which Sir Arthur never failed to inspire kept her silent.

"Tell me, Agnes," continued he, stopping at length before her, with a look of benignant kindness, "is there anything within the compass of my powers that could be done to make up for this disappointment? We who are old must not forget that there are pleasures for the young which they naturally wish to enjoy. If there be any place you wish particularly to see——"

"It is not places, but people, that I care for!" interrupted Agnes, peevishly. "With respect to this excursion, it is impossible for me to get off. I shall go deranged if you interfere with it! The party is made on purpose for me, the horses are bespoken, my things all sent to Mrs. O'Donoghoe's, and nothing left for me but to bid you good-bye!"

"This is little short of an elopement, Agnes!" replied Sir Arthur, with a mild but resolute countenance, while there was a tone of strong resentment in his voice. "What good object can there be in a scheme so clandestinely begun! But I have no legal authority to detain you, if affection and kindness are insufficient!—One thing only let me say, painful as it is to my feelings," added the Admiral, while his whole frame shook with emotion, and he walked several times across the room. "In the name of your father, Agnes, I forbid you to leave my roof with the party you speak of; and if, in defiance of all propriety, you do go, then—I would have said, never return here again; but no!—I cannot say that to my brother's child. No!—till my home is in the grave, you may share it with me. Come back when you will, Agnes, and if I am alive, you shall be welcomed."

Marion caught the hand of Sir Arthur in her own, and kissed it with ardent affection, while she felt a tightening in her throat, and a mist before her eyes, till tears fell fast and thick, like rain, upon her cheek; but Agnes, with whom kindness, in its most impressive form, could excite no generous impulse, rose in silence, and hurried out of the room.

That night, after Marion had been asleep for several hours, she suddenly started up in bed, with that bewildered feeling of perplexity experienced by those who are unexpectedly aroused at an unusual hour. It was four o'clock in the morning, and a pale, cold, livid moon-beam streamed faintly into the room, giving a chilled and spectral aspect to all around. A death-like stillness reigned beside her, and unable to account for having been so suddenly disturbed, she was about once more to consign herself to repose, when she heard the noise, repeated which she had begun to fancy must have been only a dream. She listened in trembling astonishment, for it seemed as if in her uncle's room over-head, some persons were trampling up and down the room, drawers opening and shutting, heavy weights falling on the floor, and a sound sometimes reached her, as if several carpenters were at work.

Finding there was no mistake, Marion sprung out of bed, threw on her dressing-gown, rushed up stairs, and having hastily thrown open the door, she stood there transfixed for a moment with amazement and fear. Through the glimmering dawn of light, she saw that Sir Arthur was up, and completely dressed, while he appeared to be hurriedly groping about the room, as if packing up for a journey. He seemed unconscious of Marion's entrance, who stood for several minutes watching him in speechless perplexity and consternation, while her very blood forgot to flow, when she saw the stony look of his eyes. His countenance was of an ashy paleness, his long grey hair matted over his forehead, his expression sad beyond mortality, and when she took his hand in her own, it felt cold and damp. His eyes wandered over her face for a moment, without any apparent recognition, and then giving a smile of utter vacancy, he resumed his occupation with restless eagerness.

"Uncle Arthur! dear uncle Arthur! what are you doing?" exclaimed Marion, throwing her arms round him, while her limbs were faint, and trembled with fear. "Speak, dear uncle! Speak to your own Marion! Why do you not speak?"

A deep silence ensued. Sir Arthur evidently did not hear her. His cold, livid lips moved as if he would have spoken, but not a sound became audible, and with the same vacant smile as before, he turned away. The terror-stricken Marion now felt utterly appalled. A death-like sickness came over her, horror and darkness seemed gathering over her mind, and apprehensive lest her senses might entirely fail, she hastily and vehemently rang the bell, calling loudly for assistance.

Marion's was an intellect of that high tone which rises to meet a great emergency, and though nearly paralyzed by grief and terror, when she first saw the fearful, ghastly smile, with which her uncle gazed around him, she now endeavored, by gentle persuasion, to make him lie down in his bed, and tried, by speaking in accents of tenderness, to recall his recollection, while impatiently longing for Martin to appear; and during the few minutes that elapsed till he entered, it seemed as if time itself had ceased to move.

The doctor was at length summoned, and having pronounced the Admiral's illness to be caused by an oppression of the brain, threatening apoplexy, he attempted to bleed his patient, though almost without success; for Marion observed, while she held him in her arms, that the blood scarcely flowed, till after some time he uttered a fearful, convulsive cry, which rang through the room, and fell back in a violent spasm, the immediate precursor of apoplexy.

Awe-struck and paralyzed with grief, Marion clung to her uncle, and remained by his side, watching with deep and solemn affection every turn of his features; while her cheek assumed the hue of death, her tearless eyes were motionless, her quivering lips compressed, and she remained as silent and immoveable as if the mortal shaft had reached herself. Without shedding a tear or breathing a sigh, she bent over the distorted countenance of Sir Arthur, and assisted in cutting off the long white locks of his hair, which she had often loved to look upon, but which were now strewed all unheeded on the bed, and again seating herself by his side, she riveted his hand in her own, becoming white and motionless as an image of marble.

Notice had been sent to Agnes' room of the afflicting event which had taken place, and Marion expected every instant that her sister would appear; but time passed on, and she came not, being one who systematically avoided any scenes of distress, therefore she satisfied herself with sending frequent messages of inquiry to the door. At length, after some hours, Sir Arthur appeared to have recovered his recollection; for he looked at Marion with a feeble smile of deep affection, and laid his hand on her head as if to bless her; but words were denied him; he struggled in vain to speak; and she who had not yet found the solace of a tear, now bursting into an irresistible agony of weeping, sobbed aloud. After gazing long and tenderly in her face, Sir Arthur's eye-lids at length closed with fatigue, and still clasping her hand in his, he fell into a peaceful, quiet slumber of many hours' duration.

Those who have most leisure to contemplate death, generally think least about it, and no one had ever meditated less on the subject than Agnes. She occasionally remarked, when the infirmities of the old and the indigent were forced upon her notice, that they might hope soon to be released, and that to them it must, of course, be a happy escape. The busy and active, she thought, had scarcely time to die; and, for herself, she considered death as a very unpleasant subject, which fifty years hence must be attended to, when the joys and the dreams of her present life had vanished; but it seemed to her most preposterous now, to lower her spirits by melancholy reflections on what could not certainly be avoided, and would come only too soon in the end. In short, her whole plan of life was, "To-day to sparkle, and to-morrow die."

Marion had stolen away to complete her midnight toilette, before she settled for the day beside Sir Arthur's pillow, when she was amazed near the door to meet Agnes, hurrying past in travelling costume, and anxious, apparently, to avoid being seen, though, when an interview became inevitable, she tried to carry it off with careless audacity, being evidently in a perfect delirium of high spirits, which she vainly tried to conceal.

"Well, Marion! I am quite relieved to hear from Martin that there is not the slightest danger! The doctors also say that everything has taken a favorable turn, though, as for their opinion, I have despised all physicians from Esculapius down to the magnesia-and-rhubarb doctors of the present day. They all tell us the same thing of an invalid, 'If he does not die, he will certainly recover!'"

Marion listened with a look of grave and melancholy surprise; while Agnes, trying not to seem aware of it, and evidently anxious to avoid any reply, fixed her eyes on the door, as if impatient to proceed, and continued, in rapid accents of assumed bravado—

"You are looking really ill, Marion, and must have got a dreadful fright! It would have killed me altogether! But make your mind easy, for these attacks are, I am told, very common. The Duke of Middlesex had ten or twelve, and people live often for years after the first, which is a great comfort."

"They do sometimes, but not always," replied Marion, with mournful gravity. "My dear Agnes, do not be too sanguine. This is a very serious attack. You may hope, but I cannot; for it seems to me that our uncle is laid on a bed from which he will never rise again."

"Oh! you are nervous, after being so frightfully alarmed this morning. It must have been very shocking," said Agnes, shaking her well-arranged ringlets, and attempting to get up a melancholy look; but in her mind there never was any of that gentle, feminine apprehensiveness for others, which is so amiable and so endearing. "I feel quite confident that in a few days he will recover; but for the present, Marion, you see everything through a darkened glass. I have no fears whatever," added she, in a tone of superior wisdom. "Old people always remind me of a creaking door, forever complaining, but never any worse! It is lucky for those who have nerves to endure it all. I have none; therefore being of no earthly use here, I should be quite in the way. Indeed, a single week of moping at home, with fright and anxiety, would lay me up also."

"You are not going, Agnes? Impossible! Listen to me for five minutes."

"I am not equal to the exertion! What can I do? It is out of the question to break off my engagement now! I am really between the horns of a dilemma, and must be tossed upon one or other of them. Both Mrs. O'Donoghoe and Lord Doncaster have set their hearts upon having me; and, as the schoolboys say in their speeches, 'It must be so! Agnes, thou reason'st well!'"

"If we are sisters, hear me," replied Marion, in accents of breathless indignation. "Agnes! you cannot, you must not think of going."

"But, as the lover says in the Critic, 'I can, I must, I will, I ought, I do!' Marion, you do not know the importance I attach to my excursion, which will last only a few days. As for this absurd affair of Sir Arthur's, you think every breeze a hurricane; but it is well over now, and, since he is ordered quietness, he will miss me the less, or perhaps not at all, if you never mention my absence. Certainly my forte is not in a sick-room, and yours is. My chief fault, as an attendant on sick people, is, that I am good for nothing. As for danger, Marion, I do not see any."

"Or, rather, you will not see any. Agnes, I would not for ten thousand worlds leave him now. Our best—almost our only friend, and probably dying," exclaimed Marion, while hot, scalding tears rushed in torrents from her eyes. "The question now is not, whether Sir Arthur will be restored as he was to us? but only, how many days or hours he can be kept from the grave. Every passing moment is a knell of death to my heart, when I think how few more we shall see before he is gone forever. If you consider nothing but mere appearances, Agnes, you ought to stay."

"As for appearances," replied she, clasping her bracelet, "I am of opinion with the Abbe Mordaunt on that point, as on most others, that those who study appearances have seldom any realities to boast of."

"Such sentiments might be expected from such a man, but I should not certainly have supposed you would act upon them, especially now. Believe me, Agnes, your own heart will reproach you forever after. The danger is immediate and very great," said Marion, while her tears fell drop by drop on the ground. "My uncle is hovering over the very brink of the grave, therefore, for my sake, and for his sake, do not leave us."

"But for my own sake I must! You have a teazing, exaggerated way of stating things; but pray, remember now, Marion, the maxim Madame D'Ambert taught us at school, '*Pour porter legerement la vie, il faut glisser sur bien des choses!*' I always prefer hopes to fears, and hate that desolate, dreary look of yours, this morning. You wish to rule and direct everybody, but I will not be governed or trampled on," said Agnes, in an angry imperious tone. "I did not suppose as much could be said on any subject in the world as you have said upon this. One would think, from your way of talking, that Sir Arthur was nobody's uncle but yours; or that I did not know how to act for myself! Well! I hope, for my own especial happiness, very soon to be independent of those who never have appreciated me."

"At all events, we have loved you, Agnes."

"Yes! of course. Ah! here is the carriage! Good bye, then! Sir Arthur will never miss me while you remain; but write often, though where in the wide world to direct your letters is more than I remember; but, Marion, we see in the Times newspaper every day, advertisements entreating persons who have left their homes to return, that all their wishes may be granted, therefore, when you and Sir Arthur want me back, pray insert something of that kind. Good bye!"

With heightened color, and eyes fixed on the ground, Marion received the hand of Agnes, and gave her one parting look of expostulation, hoping to the last that nature and feeling might yet make themselves heard; but when Agnes had sprung into Mrs. O'Donoghoe's carriage, and kissed her hand with a parting smile, every trace of agitation vanished from the face of Marion, but a band of iron seemed around her head and her heart, as she slowly turned away, disgusted and astonished at her sister's heartless levity, and in the privacy of her own room, she sank upon her knees and offered up solemn, fervent prayers for the many to whom she was attached, but, above all, for her much-loved uncle.

CHAPTER XLI.

With all the acute susceptibilities of youth, Marion now experienced, for the first time, what it was to watch over an almost hopeless illness, and, with a shuddering sensation of unutterable woe, she tried to obtain that comfort from above, which nothing on earth could supply. Days passed slowly on, the longest and most melancholy she had ever known, while most of her hours were spent in prayer, but all around was gloom. Nothing could be more oppressive to her than the subdued whisper and stealthy step of Sir Arthur's attendants, his vacant seat, his darkened room, the mute and solemn looks of his physician, and, above all, the inward anguish with which, hour after hour, she sat with his hand in hers, watching the fluctuations of his feeble pulse, observing with awe and grief the pale ensigns of death gathering over his features, and feeling as if every labored breath he drew gave him but a momentary reprieve from the grave, while she could not bear to contemplate the probability of burying with her beloved uncle, all the dear and tender ties that bound them to each other.

With no one to console her, and nothing on earth to screen her from the desolating blast of grief, the whole fabric of her worldly happiness seemed crumbling to dust. Her heart was like an exhausted receiver, and her spirit sank, yet no inducement could have withdrawn her for an hour from that scene of solemn, deep, and awful melancholy. Throughout the long, dreary hours of night, each of which seemed an eternity of anxious care, Marion felt too deeply impressed with the solemnity around for the indulgence of any violent emotion. Nothing is so silent as intense feeling! Stunned and stupified by the sudden affliction, a wild chaos of sorrow, fear, and amazement rushed through her young mind, filling her with agony, which tears could not relieve; but now was the time for that supernatural aid given by Divine grace to the humble, believing Christian. In silent, speechless prayer, Marion found her first and only relief; then she felt that her heart was read, and her sorrows pitied, by One who has shared every human grief, carried every human sorrow, and to whom the suffering sinner never applies in vain.

One morning, the grey light of dawn stole through a crevice of the shutters, while, in her lonely silence, Marion felt as if the whole world were in a trance, and not a sound was heard, but the slow ticking of the clock, reminding her that time and death are forever advancing. She sat watching every minute change of that beloved countenance shattered by sickness, and evidently sinking in decay, when Sir Arthur unexpectedly opened his eyes, which once more beamed with intelligence, as he fixed them with a look of touching mournfulness on Marion, and called her by name. That voice, which had so long been dear to her, now sounded strange and unnatural, being palsied by weakness, while the glassiness of the grave was in his eye; but Marion, forcibly subduing all appearance of emotion, stooped down, and, with a momentary gleam of hope, kissed his pale forehead.

"Marion! we have loved each other well," said he feebly, extending his hand to her. "For your sake I would stay, old and weary as I am, but the far better will of God is otherwise. Before that clock strikes again, I shall be in a better world."

Marion covered her face with her hands and attempted not to speak, for she saw that the sure hand of time, and the heavier hand of sorrow, had indeed done their work. It was but too evident that Sir Arthur would never see another night, for he was about to awaken in the mighty dawn of eternity, where no darkness ever would follow. The frail, old, worn-out tenement of his body, so full of infirmities, was now to enter its rest; his head, whitened with age and suffering, had been anointed with peace, and, having partaken with cheerful thankfulness of the banquet of life, he was evidently willing to make way, that others might fill his place; not disgusted or dissatisfied with existence, but thankful that he had tasted better joys than those of earth, and desiring to enjoy them at last in never-ending perfection. A mysterious conviction is generally given to the dying, when their disease becomes mortal, but though nature shrank at first from the solemn change, religion supported the powerful mind of Sir Arthur, who added, in a tone of commanding calmness, while a beam of ineffable peace overspread his countenance,

"You are now my sole earthly care—as you are my only earthly comfort. It breaks my heart to leave my Marion worse than alone, while Patrick and Agnes remorsely pursue their own pleasure, careless how you are trampled down in their wild career."

"Dear uncle!" whispered Marion, wishing to soothe him, "you consigned me to the care of Richard Granville, and year after year, while we live, you shall be remembered by us both with the affection and gratitude of children to a parent."

"I did hope, my dear girl, that I should have lived to understand his conduct, and even now, while standing in the gloomy porch of death, it would cheer me to see him and dear Henry again. If Granville be the man I believe him, he will come immediately to see you now, and all will be satisfactorily explained—if not, the world is worse than I thought."

"If Richard is alive, he will come, dear uncle—but oh! what a meeting it would be, without you!"

"Take comfort, dear Marion. Think of me often, but let it be with consolation. My long life seems but a span! May yours be blessed with every affection of this world—with every hope for eternity—and may your death-bed be attended by one as dear and affectionate as mine is. May your eyes be closed in the same undoubting faith, and may I be permitted to meet you on the very threshold of heaven, and in the august presence of Him, whom 'not having seen, we love, and in whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'"

With a face livid as death, Marion choked back her sobs and restrained her tears, while she listened to every faltering word Sir Arthur said, as if her life depended on hearing him. When he became silent from exhaustion, she attempted to whisper a few broken expressions of grief and affection in his ear. Unable, however, to think or speak under the weight of her sorrow, she might have been mistaken for a corpse, but for the look of living agony in her eye, while struggling with a sorrow which tears or lamentations could not have expressed, and could not have relieved.

At length Sir Arthur's breathing became uncertain—his majestic chest heaved convulsively—a damp, cold dew broke out on his forehead—the heart which had beat with every kind and noble emotion, could beat no more—and, giving a last glance of fond affection at Marion, a grey, ashy hue stole over his features, and his countenance assumed that strange, peculiar aspect which is seen in death, and in death only. Marion saw it, and long afterwards that look was forever before her sight. Nothing in all the earth is so unutterly sublime as death. Strange and solemn was the mysterious horror, the inexplicable wonder, with which Marion, for the first time, witnessed the soul forsaking its earthly tabernacle. Day after day, when she returned to watch beside all that now remained of her earliest and kindest friend, while her heart seemed scorched and seared with grief, she gazed on the mortal form in ruins before her—its light extinguished—its tenant departed—its whole nature in a moment transformed—and, forgetting sometimes for a moment her own grief, her loneliness, her deep and fearful bereavements, she thought but of that purified spirit now emancipated into the regions of eternal glory, and almost longed for the period when she also might become as indifferent to things of time as the inanimate corpse beside her. Often, however, she tried, with an eye of faith, to look beyond the portals of the tomb, remembering that death is to a Christian, like the setting of the sun, for while lost to human sight, he still exists and shines with unfading glory and everlasting brightness.

When Sir Arthur's remains were placed in the coffin, Marion felt as if the last link were severed between them. His better part had, indeed, already departed, but the cold image before her was still associated with all she had ever known of happiness or affection, yet, in the strong agony of her grief, when all seemed a gloomy chaos of solitary desolation, she felt consoled by reflecting that her own devoted care had assisted in smoothing his passage to the grave; and she could not but think how great must be the joys of another world, when such affliction as her's was not worthy to be compared with them. A wide horizon of sorrow seemed before her, long days of loneliness and longer nights of grief; while, though young in years, she already felt old in affliction, for a blight and a mildew were upon her spirit. Marion's sanguine mind and ardent feelings had nothing near her on which to rest, the whole energy of her being, for the time, seemed crushed and withered; the future appeared to stretch before her mind in a long vista of moving shadows, and the memory of past happiness, like gold in the hand of a drowning man, sank her only the deeper in grief. Her beloved uncle seemed still to be everywhere—yet she saw him not. In all the earth there was not a thought which did not pierce her, or a worldly hope which did not now bring an icy chilliness to her heart—for a dark cloud had fallen between her and all those whose affection once adorned her existence.

It was now that Marion, like a tempest-tossed vessel, surrounded by darkness and fear, turned for direction and help to that steady and benignant light burning at a distance, which alone could direct her into a haven of rest. Her sorrow became gradually illuminated by hope and peace. She clung to every shattered wreck of happiness which remained, and sinking on her knees, she felt that no one could ever be completely alone, or completely miserable, who rightly used the privilege of speaking her wishes in prayer to that great and holy Being, who is the father and the friend of all his earth-born children. Marion had long believed that the happiest life is that most conformed to the will of God—that grief arises from not believing whatever is appointed to be really best; and now she found in the Bible that comfort which is nowhere else to be gained. The deepest emotions of this world remain unseen and unknown to all around; for the strength of character which gives power to feel, gives power also to hide, and there is a modesty in real sensibility, which admits not of display; but Marion, cut off now from all the tenderest sympathies of life, became the more zealous and diligent in preparing for that hour when "mourned and mourner lie together in repose."

Oh! if belov'd ones from their hallow'd sphere,
May witness warm affection's faithful tear,
At this deep hour, they hear the mourner's sigh,
And waft a blessing from their homes on high.

CHAPTER XLII.

At Florence, Clara Granville lingered and recovered, and lingered again, sleeping little, eating nothing, and patiently trying every remedy, though she herself was without hope of recovery, till at length, decorated in all the radiant coloring and bright beauty of consumption, she sank slowly but surely, evidently hastening to the grave, though still Mr. Granville, with the tenacity of affection, continued to hope, and still he told himself that she might, perhaps, yet be spared. Day after day he sat beside her couch, reading, conversing, and praying with her, while his brotherly attachment seemed to grow only the more engrossing and considerate the longer she needed his care; but it became evident to all around, that his cares and hopes on her account were drawing to a close, and that his sorrow must soon be without hope in a present world, though full of hope in a world to come.

Letters now reached Mr. Granville, announcing that his long-pending law-suit had been at length finally decided in his favor, giving him an income more than equal to his utmost desires; but letters far more deeply interesting to his feelings still were missing. Often and anxiously had he watched for a single line from Marion, yet so well had Sir Patrick arranged the measures which, as her guardian, he persuaded himself it might be allowable to take, in order to intercept her correspondence, that not a single letter ever escaped the vigilance of his emissaries; and Mr. Granville, though he still cherished, as his best earthly treasure, the belief of Marion's attachment, felt so painfully perplexed respecting her, and so grieved for Clara, that the almost unexpected change in his circumstances appeared scarcely worth a thought, while a dense curtain of sorrow seemed gathered around his spirits.

If the vital spark of his own existence had been about to expire, Richard could scarcely have felt more deeply than now, beside the dying bed of his young and lovely sister, who took his hand in her own one day, while a fixed expression of tenderness and grief appeared in her speaking eyes, and there was a melting softness in her voice, when she said:

"My only reluctance to die, is, dear Richard, because I must leave you! This is sorrow; but our sorrow shall hereafter be turned into joy. When patience has had her perfect work, you, like myself, have a sure and certain hope of a better world, and, unlike me, you have a hope also for this life, which contains the best blessing left to man upon earth. Yes, Richard, you will soon have a loved and trusted companion, suited in every respect to yourself; and with her, I trust, you may enjoy a long course of usefulness and of joy, after I am no more."

Mr. Granville kissed his sister's forehead with deep and solemn affection, while his cheek became pale and his lip quivered; but his heart was too full to reply, and Clara proceeded:

"We have saved ourselves much unnecessary anxiety by placing a firm and well-founded confidence in dear Marion. Let that remain unshaken, Richard, till you meet," said Clara, fixing her large, mournful eyes on him; and slowly closing them as she faintly added, "Tell Marion I died without a doubt of her constancy and truth. And now, there is but one wish remaining to me in life, Richard—only one——"

Clara hesitated, the hectic color deepened on her transparent cheek, her lip trembled, and she became silent, while Richard took her hand in his own, and listened with affectionate anxiety for what was to follow; but it came not. With a look of desolate grief Clara turned away her head and was silent, while Mr. Granville, using every term of affectionate endearment, entreated her not to let him suppose there was a wish of her heart unspoken, or a desire which he could grant unfulfilled. After a short struggle, during which he was alarmed by the greatness of her emotion, she seemed at length to have entirely conquered her feelings, and said in a perfectly calm, unimpassioned voice—

"A letter was conveyed to me last night—I know not how it came—from Sir Patrick. He has been some time in Florence; he sends every morning to inquire for me! I am told he even watches daily till the doctors come out, and asks how I am!"

"True, dear Clara, and I feel for him deeply."

"Richard!" added she, raising herself up with sudden energy, and clasping his arm, while her large, bright eyes became fixed on his, "I wish to see Sir Patrick once again! to have a last conversation with him on this side of the eternal world. There is a sacred power in the words of a dying friend, and I would summon the whole faculties of my being, to bid him a last and solemn farewell. He has always listened to me. If I have any influence, let me use it now. Think what a blessed consciousness I yet might carry to the grave, if our unhappy attachment were no longer a source of misery to both, but of real and eternal advantage. Let me make a final effort of life and of affection, to leave in his heart a thought of immortality. Such a hope might almost hold back my spirit from the gates of death! Dear Richard, I shall rise for half an hour to-morrow, and then let me see him!"

"It would destroy you, Clara! you are quite unfit for the effort; but give me a message. Say what you please; and, painful as it must be, I shall see Sir Patrick, personally. We can sympathise with each other now, as we never did before, and I shall deliver your very words. You are unfit now, Clara, for any agitation."

"Dear Richard! you never yet denied me anything! Do not now refuse my last—my very last request. Whatever be the faults of Sir Patrick, his attachment was disinterested and generous. I cannot die in peace without saying that I am grateful—without, at least, endeavoring to convince him, for his happiness now, as well as hereafter, how true it is, that 'he sins against this life who slights the next.'"

"It might be a work of usefulness and mercy," replied Mr. Granville, in a musing tone; "and if there be a pleasure in life you can yet enjoy, dear Clara, I am not the person who could withhold it."

"That I know. In this world which has so long been my home, Richard, I have never lived a moment without being the happier for your affection, and it will be so for ever. I am now counting the last grains of my sand-glass as they fall, and ready to go alone through the portals of the tomb. Every sorrow is about to be eternally forgotten, every blessing to be eternally enjoyed. Most of my feelings and affections are already transferred to another and a better world; while I ought, as a dying Christian, to be like an eagle soaring to the sky, and seeing nothing but the sun, yet, Richard, the hope of serving one whom I loved only too well still lingers round my heart, and will not be repulsed. Say then, Richard, that we may meet;—tell him that, standing on the very brink of eternity, I feel as if, even in another world, it would increase my felicity to know, if permitted to look back on earthly scenes, that I had not left him without hope or consolation."

"I do not believe, Clara, that the invisible world is very distant; but only that it is hid by the grossness of our mortal bodies; and I do believe, my dear sister, that we may both, perhaps, yet see the influence of your prayers and of your last words upon one whom I most sincerely pity," said Mr. Granville, observing the mild, full, melancholy eyes of his sister fixed upon him, while gradually, as he spoke, her countenance became irradiated with peace. "The ways of Providence are indeed wonderful! If Dunbar be willing to forget all that has ever been amiss between us both, I have forgotten it long ago. If he choose it, we shall become friends, till Marion makes us brothers."

"Oh that I could live to see that day, and then close my eyes in peace; but it must not be! In a few hours I shall have shed my last tear, endured my last sorrow, and conquered my last enemy. Who would not be willing, then, to change time for eternity, the sufferings of earth for the joys of heaven, misery for happiness, and a dying life for immortality!"

A lovelier morning never had smiled on the glad earth, than that on which Clara Granville received the visit of Sir Patrick alone. On a couch near the window, into which the sun poured a flood of light and warmth, propped up by cushions, Clara, with an unearthly brightness glittering in her eye, and burning on her cheek, looked more like a celestial spirit than a creature of earthly mould; but what passed between them, during the long interview which ensued, no one could tell. Clara's features, when it was about to close, betrayed no agitation, but continued almost motionless for some time, while the tone of her voice became slow and languid. Gradually her words appeared fainter; her voice grew nearly inaudible; the color which had tinged her cheek died away; and a death-like paleness succeeded. Not a groan was heaved, nor a feature disturbed; but scarcely had Sir Patrick time hastily to summon Mr. Granville, and to support her in his arms, before her countenance became rigid as marble, and her ethereal spirit had mysteriously fled from its mortal dwelling.

Loveliest of lovely things are they,
On earth, that soonest pass away;
The rose, that lives its little hour,
Is prized beyond the sculptured flower.

Ev'n love, long tried, and cherish'd long,
Becomes more tender and more strong,

At thought of that insatiate grave,
From which its yearnings cannot save.

Sir Patrick's grief and horror now became almost delirious, and he was tortured by a feeling of unutterable agony; yet still he seemed resolute to doubt the fatal truth, to hope against hope, to believe that by a miracle Clara might at length awaken from her seeming repose; but her hand grew cold within his own, and the glassy fixedness of her eye carried death to his heart. He felt and knew that all was over, yet he could not allow himself to credit the solemn event; till, at length, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud in all the anguish of a sorrow without hope or resignation.

Mr. Granville, forgetful, apparently, of his own grief, tried now to impart consolation from that rich fund of sublime peace and everlasting hope which belongs, at such an hour, to the Christian; for, though his own feelings were lacerated and torn with a sorrow that seemed as sudden as if he had never till now expected it, still there was a balm for his wounded spirit, which soothed the first anguish of his sufferings, and would at last, he knew, bring him daily more abundant consolation. No affliction seems to come so directly from the hand of God as the death of those who have been so truly loved; and in contemplating the wide gulf which now divided him from Clara, the manly spirit of Mr. Granville was overpowered with grief. This seemed a moment too awful for vehement sorrow. He had watched the last struggle of existence in one with whom every thought and emotion were hitherto shared, and now, while her beloved and well-known features remained the same, all intercourse and all sympathy between them had at once been closed; and, in the hours of solemn contemplation which followed, Richard felt more than ever a desire to learn what is seen and felt when the gloomy curtain of life is withdrawn, and the glories of eternity are first revealed; but, checking the speculations of a vain curiosity, he opened the pages of holy inspiration, there to find an inexhaustible fund of sublime and elevating comfort, convinced that, to have his affliction sanctified, was even better than to have it removed.

The sympathy established between Sir Patrick and Mr. Granville now brought them daily together, when the young Baronet learned, in such society, to venerate and admire that holy faith, which as yet he could neither feel nor comprehend; and every hour he became more conscious of its happy effects on the mind and heart of Richard Granville, who seemed always ready to forget every selfish thought, when the glory of God or the good of others claimed his most arduous and zealous devotion; and even his grief for Clara, deep and agonizing as it was, found a vent in the most implicit attention to all her wishes, and especially to her injunctions respecting the restoration of his friendly intercourse with Sir Patrick.

The darts of anguish fix not where the seat
Of suff'ring hath been thoroughly fortified
By acquiescence in the will supreme,
For time and for eternity.

CHAPTER XLIII.

There is said to be a stage in sorrow, after which an addition can be borne with apathy; but this the heart of Marion seemed never likely to reach. It is a natural source of comfort, however, in mourning over the loss of those we love, to find that they are appreciated and lamented by others; and many kind letters of condolence on the death of Sir Arthur reached the young mourner, from old companions and young acquaintances. Some were written with overdone and inflated expressions of sorrow, as if the writer had lost a parent of her own; and if the occasion had been less heartbreaking to herself, Marion might almost have smiled at their tone of exaggerated grief. Others wrote studied compositions, so beautifully got up, and with such skilfully turned periods, that the writer must have felt certain of Marion's "Life and Correspondence" being hereafter collected and published; while others concluded with "Yours, in haste," as an evident apology for neither head nor heart being much enlisted on the occasion; but all were received with grateful interest, being more or less a proof of kind intentions, very soothing to the feelings of a solitary girl.

Each letter, as it came, caused her a palpitation of hope, followed by a pang of disappointment; for every morning she arose with a confident hope that now Richard Granville must certainly write, and every evening closed in with an added weight of discouragement and sorrow; for now indeed the roses of life seemed all to have faded, and the thorns only to remain.

As Shakspeare observes, "every one can master a grief but he that has it;" and among the many well-meaning but commonplace acquaintances who came to gossip over the sorrows of Marion, and to ascertain exactly how much Sir Arthur had left, there was not one to whom she could unveil her feelings. Each of her well-intentioned visitors said a few words in praise of Sir Arthur, enough to convince Marion that no one but herself could appreciate the hundredth part of his inestimable worth—a sentence or two then followed of pious reflection, obviously spoken with restraint, and picked up by rote from some volume of religious meditations, and the whole was generally concluded in a masterly manner, by repeating a few texts of Scripture, strung together from a concordance.

There is a solemn dignity in real grief, beside which all commonplace or trifling consolations fall powerless and cold; but strangers in return for their contributions of sympathy and comfort, evidently expected from Marion an ostentatious display of affection, and were often not a little disappointed, at the pale, still, concentrated calmness of the lonely girl, who, subdued beneath the weight of her recent sorrow, received visitors only when she felt able to do so with composure, speaking to them with gentle, melancholy kindness, and evidently endeavoring to derive all the comfort she could from their society; yet often in the solitude which followed, did she feel inclined to agree with an author, who remarks, that "*la pitie n'est pas le plus due a celui qui pleure dans la solitude*."

Marion seemed to live in a dream, yet she gazed on the daylight and the people moving about on their errands of pleasure or business, till she felt that the whole was a sad reality. The common, every day routine of life seemed strange and unnatural, amidst the agony of her first sorrow, when the tomb had so recently closed over her earliest friend. She felt as if nature herself should have suspended her ordinary course, and as if the melancholy awe so impressed upon her own heart should extend to everything animate or inanimate around—as if the very sun itself should scarcely rise and shine as heretofore; and nothing appeared to Marion so strange, as that sameness visible in the outward world, contrasted with the mighty revolution in all her own inward feelings. Marion tried to take a lesson in cheerful resignation, from thinking sometimes of the many created by the same Almighty Father, and yet suffering far more than she had ever done; and her eye fell one day on a blind beggar, seated near her window, shivering with cold, emaciated with hunger, solitary and deserted, shut out from the light of day, friendless, homeless, and desolate, with none to sympathize in his sorrows, or to cheer him by their affection. "Yet," thought Marion, "that miserable being finds an object to live for, and would not perhaps willingly die! God gives something to all his creatures; and who makes me to differ from the most wretched. But bodily wants are not the real sorrows of life! O no! The mind, when relieved from such abject cares, has more leisure to grieve over withered hopes and blighted affections; yet all trials, if rightly received, are but blessings in disguise. It is well if, by tasting such sorrows as mine—and they are many—I am taught to avoid the far greater and more permanent evils of futurity. In this world, we are suspended over the abyss of eternity, by a thread which grows more feeble every hour; and all events should be welcome which are ordained by infinite wisdom, to prepare me for that hour when my place on earth shall be vacant, and my place in eternity—in a ceaseless eternity, shall be filled."

Time has wings, even when they move most heavily, and as day after day passed slowly onwards, Marion felt more and more astonished to hear nothing of Agnes, who had written but once, a very few days after her departure from home, in gay and almost triumphant spirits, boasting of the excessive attention she met with from all the party, of the splendor in which they travelled, of the admiration she had herself excited, and of several magnificent presents she had received from Lord Doncaster. In a postscript to this letter, she expressed a careless, patronizing hope, that poor, dear Sir Arthur was now convalescent; and as for anything but a recovery, she seemed no more to doubt it than if death had been altogether abolished. To Marion's surprise, when looking at the signature of Agnes, a broad line had been drawn through the name of Dunbar, and the whole was surrounded by a fantastic wreath of flourishes, exactly imitating the very peculiar way in which Lord Doncaster was accustomed usually to encircle his own autograph; and much she marvelled what this uncommon device was intended to indicate, though she secretly dreaded to hear the interpretation of it, which her fears had at first suggested.

As the mind and heart become more matured in this world, they too often become, from sad experience, more apprehensive of evil, and more suspicious of earthly friendships; but it was otherwise with Marion in respect to Richard Granville; though a dark curtain had fallen suddenly between them, all intercourse was most unaccountably suspended, and the very thought of his attachment, once a pleasure without alloy, was now accompanied by a heavy, leaden depression and anxiety. She told herself a thousand times over that all would hereafter be explained, and yet her heart seemed turning to stone, while day after day dawned and closed without a line to give her comfort or to reassure her heart.

In this state of wearing suspense a visiting card was brought to Marion one morning of Captain De Crespigny's, accompanied by a letter which he had brought from Sir Patrick, strongly urging on her, in almost arbitrary terms, his earnest desire that she should reconsider her decision against her friend, and no longer wasting her affections on a penniless curate, who had proved himself undeserving of her,—bestow them where they would be so much better appreciated, and where they would exalt her to so distinguished a situation. Marion was astonished to think how Sir Patrick could know that she had any cause of dissatisfaction against Mr. Granville, whom she had never even named of late; but resolute if possible to avoid meeting Captain De Crespigny, she was denied again and again when he called, though to her surprise he persevered in almost daily inquiring for her, and numbered his visiting cards conspicuously on the corner till they amounted at last to more than a dozen.

Marion was sitting alone one evening, beside her solitary hearth, and to a spectator she would have seemed of more than earthly beauty, though the cold tear stood unheeded on her cheek, while her memory had become haunted by the ghost of departed happiness. She thought of her deceased uncle in his silent grave, yet it seemed as if still she could trace his step and hear his voice by her side. All was still as death, her soul seemed wandering in a mysterious existence, amidst the solitary and deserted world, and hope itself grew dim within her breast. The flood-gates of memory were now unclosed, pouring into her heart and spirit a ceaseless stream of old recollections, old scenes, and recent sorrows; while the bright mirror of joy which had once shone in radiant splendor before her eyes seemed now broken to shivers. No one seemed destined hereafter to know the deep mine of thoughts and affections which lay unspoken in her breast. She felt as if the summer might shine in its brightness, the spring might be gay with the blossoms of hope, but that her spring and summer would return in this world no more, yet she believed and knew that it was better to witness the death of every dear affection, and the burial of every promising expectation, if, when thus blighted and withered upon earth, they became rooted and strengthened for eternity.

> "What empty shadows glimmer nigh!
> They once were Friendship, Truth, and Love!
> Oh! die to thought, to mem'ry die,
> Since lifeless to my heart ye prove!"

Martin had brought in the tea-tray, and Marion scarcely noticed his entrance or departure while mournfully gazing on the dim embers expiring in the grate, when her attention became suddenly attracted by hearing a carriage draw up close to the door, and her pale cheek grew paler, when a moment afterwards her sister hurried into the room, and with a strange, wild, hysterical smile, clasped her arms around Marion, and locked her in a long embrace. Marion thought no grief too great for the loss they had both sustained, and yet she became startled to perceive that Agnes was actually shivering with agitation; that her eyes were blood-shot, her hair dishevelled, her whole form shrunk and altered, while her lips quivered for a moment as if she would have spoken but could not articulate; and a look of unutterable anguish swept across her pallid countenance. At length, burying her face on Marion's shoulder, she exclaimed, in a voice of thrilling agony,

"I knew you would welcome me! I knew it, Marion! Cold and heartless as I have been, you will not reproach me. You deserve a better sister."

"I could love none other so well," replied Marion, alarmed and shocked at the unexpected excess of Agnes' grief. "We are all the world to each other now, Agnes!"

"Yes! yes! Who ever dreamed it could come to this! You alone will pity me, Marion! Here at least I shall find a refuge till I find one in the grave! Do not look so alarmed, Marion! If I had brought disgrace to this house, I never would have entered it again; but I have been duped, made miserable, and, worse than all, ridiculous! The whole world will laugh, and well they may; but in the living death I have brought upon myself, still one friend remains who will never reproach me for my folly. Dear kind Sir Arthur, too, if he had lived! Alas! Marion, I know his value now; but I know it too late! To obtain his forgiveness, I could follow him to the very grave."

Marion gasped for breath, and tried to suppress her emotion, that she might compose the mind of Agnes, whose voice had become hollow, her eyes were brightened by fever, and there was a frantic energy in her tone and manner so tearfully agitating, that Marion entreated her to postpone all farther discussion till she was better able to bear it; but Agnes continued to pour forth her words like a gushing torrent.

"I shall be better when all is told! Hear me out now, Marion! Believe me it is better! You remember Dixon!—that wretched woman who attempted once to destroy me. She stole into my room at Mrs. O'Donoghoe's some weeks ago. Imagine my horror and affright when she entered! Dixon related to me her own history—seduced, ruined, and forsaken by Captain De Crespigny. She fancied at first that he had deserted her for me; but she has since discovered, as I have done, Marion, that he is attached only to you!"

"It matters little, Agnes, who Captain De Crespigny fancies for a passing hour, provided it be one whose happiness cannot be injured by his caprice."

"Dixon added," continued Agnes, with a gasping sob of angry emotion, "that Lord Doncaster had been equally deceived into believing that his nephew liked me—that I was the only obstacle to his marrying the heiress, Miss Howard; and his whole attentions at Harrowgate were paid to expose my self-interestedness,—he had carried it on as a farce to amuse an idle hour. The plot had amused him; and, after a time, he became flattered by the consciousness that a girl, young, beautiful, and admired, as I was, could be induced to accept him; but Mrs. O'Donoghoe is now actually his mistress! Spare me, Marion, the recapitulation of all that passed: it is too humbling, too dreadful. She told me that Captain De Crespigny, the only man I ever loved, had spoken of me to his uncle—as—as I deserved, with scorn, derision, and censure! She repeated the whole scene, and I then saw myself as I am in the sight of others—seared in heart, degraded, contemptible, wretched! and oh! how ungrateful to those who were, indeed, my friends!"

Marion saw that Agnes, when she spoke, gazed at the portrait of Sir Arthur; and tears sprang into the eyes of both, as they looked upon that silent memorial of past worth and affection.

"My reputation must be irreparably injured in the world's eye by such association!" continued Agnes, rapidly. "All is agony and horror! While Dixon yet spoke, I hated myself and everything around. Shame and mortification overpowered me! All became shadowy, confused, and wavering in my thoughts. That night I was seized with fever and delirium. A sick-nurse was placed to attend on me; and I am thankful to find that Mrs. O'Donoghoe, with her party, instantly left the house. I am ashamed to think what folly my ravings must have disclosed! The worst horror of fever is, that it betrays all to others! I hovered on the very brink of the grave! Oh! that I had been as fully prepared to enter another world as I was to leave this! How happy are those whose trials and mortifications are buried in the silent grave, and whose pulse is no longer like mine—the knell of a living death! Life is, indeed, an awful gift, with its deceitful hopes and consuming sorrows!"

"Yes, if we will not be satisfied with the happiness provided for us by God himself; if we will persist in laying out a plan of life for ourselves, and in being wretched when the infinite wisdom of our Creator sees fit to alter it. Even now, Agnes, you may, if you choose, have peace and cheerfulness. How much better it is, to lose all your lovers, than to marry a bad husband! Let us live for each other; let us improve our minds; let us console the many who are worse off than ourselves; let us encourage one another in all the difficulties of life; and, whatever is wanting to us now, we can look the more thankfully forward to those regions of eternal joy, for which our sorrows here are all sent on purpose to prepare us. Dear Agnes, for my sake you must not despond."

"I ought not, Marion, while you are my sister! I hate the world and every thing in it, but who would not love you," replied Agnes, in a voice of dark and stormy grief, while no tear was on her cheek. "My heart seems dry as summer dust! My body is a dreary sepulchre to my mind, all dark, cold, and desolate. There is nothing in life worth living for!"

Though little of Agnes' depression was really caused by Sir Arthur's death, yet her grief became now as deep as crape and bombazine could make it. She had not the generosity to struggle against her mortified feelings, or to spare those of Marion, but from day to day her wayward mind seemed to cherish the chagrin which inch by inch consumed her. No gentle self-renunciation appeared in her sorrow, but she seemed to fancy that in all the world there was no tear except of her shedding,—no sigh but of her breathing,—and she forgot to observe how Marion had banished all her own anxieties and cares while listening to the egotism of grief in another, thus bearing the whole burden of both. Agnes gradually delivered herself up to a state of peevish, listless, apathetic despondency. If she attempted to read, her eyes looked only on a wilderness of words without meaning; she had no taste for work, not a correspondent in the world, and never had cared for a newspaper; therefore unable to fix her attention on any employment, she proceeded with sullen, mechanical indifference, through the ordinary routine of life, without energy and without interest.

Agnes' mind was like a crushed butterfly, disfigured and valueless; all its buoyant hopes and fantastic flights for ever at an end. She knew not that sunshine of the heart, often divinely given amidst the darkest hours of life, when inward peace, amidst external sorrow, might be compared to a cheerful, quiet room, while a torrent and tempest are raging unheeded around. Agnes mistakenly believed that the only possible aggravation to her melancholy would arise, if her thoughts were turned to religion, since hitherto she had seen in it nothing but the gloomy terrors of futurity. She never had cultivated any taste for reading that infallible balm to the depressed, and least of all would she have thought of appealing to the Holy Scriptures for relief from the cankering irritation of her proud but broken spirit, and nothing had ever annoyed her more, than when Marion, one day, from the fulness of her own heart, observed with soothing gentleness, that they should be too grateful for the blessings bestowed, to repine for those which were withheld, especially as affliction was generally the surest way to amend the heart.

"Yes! but in mending you may break it," replied Agnes, discontentedly. "My existence here is a living death, with nothing to care for, nothing to hope for, nothing to do, meditating continually on my feelings, hating life, and yet dreading death."

"But," replied Marion, laying her hand on the Bible, "here, Agnes, I find enough to care for, enough to hope for, and more than enough to do. No mortal being has all his wishes granted, and why should we expect to be an exception? The world and its affections have deprived us of peace, and this is the only guiding-star which can lead us to find it again. If we were to study a portion of this volume together every day——"

"Marion! I am surely melancholy enough already, without becoming methodistical!" interrupted Agnes, impatiently. "I wept when I was born; and every day since shews me I had cause to do so! If I ever do get up my spirits again, I may perhaps read the Bible more carefully, but, not while I feel so low and depressed."

"You remind me, Agnes, of Lady Towercliffe saying last year, that she felt much too ill to see a doctor, but would send for one if she became better. We find ourselves lonely and benighted now; but here is a bright path of glory pointed out, and strength offered us to pursue it."

"Well, Marion! if you must soar to the clouds, pray leave me to grovel on the earth!" replied Agnes, peevishly. "You are so fond of reading now, that, like Petrarch, your head will be pillowed on a book when you die; but can you not talk of something more cheerful to me? Those mournful subjects are fit only for a deathbed, or a tract. When people talk to me of religion, I always feel like the felons at Newgate in the condemned pew, with their coffins gaping at their elbow! What makes you always talk so dismally about resignation now, Marion?"

"My own sorrows and your's, Agnes. We both need comfort, and neither of us can find any, except in religion. 'God gives what bankrupt nature never can.' The effect of time would be only to benumb our hearts; but faith could restore them to cheerfulness."

"You might as well plant flowers on a tomb-stone, as attempt to enliven me, Marion! It is a hopeless endeavor! No! the wing of hope is broken within me for ever and ever. It is the misfortune of having too much feeling! Life seems to me a cold and bitter blast, with all its events, like snow-flakes, driving in my face. I have been brought into it without my consent, and shall be torn from it against my will, while

> Dream after dream ensues;
> And still I dream that I shall still succeed,
> And still am disappointed."

"Yet, Agnes, there is not probably a single living being with whom you would change places!"

"Yes! hundreds! thousands!"

"Indeed! Would you take the looks, habits, tastes, age, health, and conversation, of any other person who could be named, instead of your own?"

"No! not exactly! Probably no person living would agree to such an exchange, and least of all one who has in some respects such ample reason to be satisfied," replied Agnes, with a complacent glance at the mirror, which was not, however, so satisfactory as in former days; for her eye had lost much of its lustre, the bloom had faded from her cheek, and her very features looked crushed and contracted by the gnawing effect of mortification. "I should like to have the fortune of Caroline Howard, the rank of Charlotte Malcolm——"

"But Agnes! you are not entitled to expect such a pic-nic of happiness, 'made of ev'ry creature's best.' No; the more we look into life, the more we shall see how equally distributed are its enjoyments—satiety to the rich, contentment to the poor, and compensation of one kind or other to all, for their various privations; but one only gift of God makes life a blessing or a curse, according as it is given or withheld; and it is only in proportion as we have the gifts of Divine grace showered upon us, that we can measure our own happiness, or that of any other mortal being."

Agnes's ill-humor was growing rapidly into misanthropy, and her sorrow seemed never likely to be of that kind which "forgets to weep, and learns to pray;" but Marion's more happily gifted mind clung to every natural source of enjoyment which offered itself, being resolute, even when she was not happy, for the sake of Agnes, to appear so. Marion's sorrows taught her to feel tenfold for others; but the sympathies of Agnes were concentrated entirely on herself.

There is not merely piety, but good humor also, in being happy; and much ill-humor is invariably associated with that grief which refuses to be consoled. Agnes had strewed her own path with thorns, and would not be comforted; her heart had now the frozen coldness of an ice-bound stream, on which the breeze might play, or the sun might shine, while it still continued cold and cheerless as before; but Marion, resisting all the selfish supineness of sorrow, found out many around to whom her time could be made useful. With no schemes of worldly ambition, she felt that there must be, in every heart, some object to live for; and in her solitary walks, the very trees and flowers became her companions, while the brightness of nature's coloring, the hum of bees, the chirping of birds, the ripple of a pebbly stream, or the daisy she picked on the grass, reminded her that there are simple pleasures she was born to enjoy, and of which she had formerly been deprived during the long years when her best feelings had been heartlessly wasted in the tumult of education at Mrs. Penfold's. On first beholding any sign of human life and enjoyment, it seemed to Marion strange and unnatural. The joyous laugh of children at play in the fields grated harshly on her ear; but before long, she pleased herself with listening to the milk-girls gaily singing as they passed along the road, and was ready to feel for that most desolate of all beings, the blind fiddler, playing his melancholy tune on a rainy night. Religion was to Marion now like the sun behind a fog. She knew that it would before long warm, cheer, and revive her; yet for a time it seemed shorn of its brighter beams, and, in the words of a Christian poet, she was ready to say,

> "Give what Thou can'st, without Thee I am poor,
> And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

The emotion which Agnes felt on first returning home, had been only like the last quiver of molten lead before it becomes cold and hard for ever. She now grew daily more peevish and discontented, and, far from affording any relief to Marion only aggravated her distress; for if there were any subject more disagreeable than another to be harped upon, she fastened on it with ceaseless irritability, continually prophesying evil, and recollecting injuries. She took the most teazing view of all subjects, attributed the worst motives to everybody's conduct, and spoke with incessant and bitter invectives against all those by whom she thought herself ill-treated. Far from forgiving injuries, she seemed never, even for a moment, to forget them, while the effect of her tedious vituperation was like that of a file upon velvet, to the gentle Marion, who tried often to give a more Christian, as well as a more cheerful turn, to their *tete-a-tete* conversation.

It was singular that Agnes still evidently found a mysterious pleasure in exercising to the utmost her powers of torturing; and in nothing did she so deeply wound the feelings of Marion, as by constantly comparing the conduct of Richard Granville to that of Captain De Crespigny, speaking coldly of both, as being selfish, hypocritical, and deceitful. Marion's whole heart shrank from allowing any resemblance, while once or twice she spoke warmly and eloquently in defence of her absent lover; but finding that this only lifted the veil which concealed her own inmost feelings, and exposed them to one who made no generous use of her confidence, she at length passively allowed Agnes to follow the bent of her humor, and kept their discussions as much as possible on indifferent topics, taking always as cheerful and contented a view as she could of life.

"You know, Agnes," observed Marion one day, in answer to some peevish lamentations of her sister's, "we might as well attempt to carry the ocean in an oyster-shell, as to satisfy our immortal souls with anything in this life. Christians must not let their imaginations run wild after every fancy, but put on the strait-waistcoat of reason and religion, to curb their inclinations. We should not only expect, but desire the correction which is necessary, as much for us as for others. You cannot expect all our years to be summers!"

"No!" replied Agnes, discontentedly; "but they need not all be winters! You seem to think we are like the Indian savages, who must carry a weight on their heads to make them upright."

"Yes, Agnes, I do!" added Marion, gently. "It often occurs to my mind what a character mine must naturally have been, which has required so much discipline to correct it; for every sorrow or anxiety I feel is absolutely necessary for my good, I know, or it would not be sent. Though the blossoms of hope lie withered at our feet, however, let us reap the fruit hereafter, and who could wish to be fed with the promises of spring, rather than with the fulfilment of autumn?"

CHAPTER XLIV.

During the deepest midnight, the unseen light is still incessantly approaching, though man remains insensible of its progress till the glorious dawn of morning; and thus the march of coming events hurries daily on unnoticed and unknown. Never before had it appeared, to the impatient mind of Agnes, that the sands of her hour-glass fell so slowly and silently. In her heart there was scarcely sufficient depth of soil for grief to strike a very permanent root, as her superficial feelings were calculated only to produce a mushroom crop of petty discontents and selfish grievances. Sharp and acute as the pang of her disappointed vanity had been, it seemed destined not to be very lasting, as Marion, on returning one day from a long walk, almost smiled to find Lady Towercliffe seated in their small parlour, and diligently pouring a torrent of lively gossip into the ears of Agnes, who felt little disposed at first to become interested in all the ill-assorted marriages people might choose to make, or to care who had died, or were likely to be born: but gradually her mind had been opened to the consideration of whether Miss Brown were a suitable match for Mr. Grey—whether £500 a year might possibly be enough to maintain Captain Jackson of the 10th and Lady Maria Meredith, whose individual expenditure on dress amounted to £400 per annum each, and whether it would be best for Lieutenant Stanley and Miss Maynard to marry and settle in Australia, or to continue single and remain at home.

Agnes had no possible chance of seeing the parties, or of influencing their decision. She would probably never hear more of them, nor had she been previously aware of their existence, yet the magic of Lady Towercliffe's eloquence gradually led her on to argue the merits of each case, as if she had been the arbiter of their fate, till at length, being insensibly roused from her stupor of melancholy indulgence, the visit was concluded by Agnes joyfully consenting to dine at Lady Towercliffe's next day, to meet a party of friends.

After having feared that her sister never would smile again, Marion now, with glad surprise, heard Agnes once more actually laugh, and she could not but wonder that Lady Towercliffe, by putting her through a course of gossip, and administering to a "mind diseased" a strong mixture of love affairs, quarrels, sicknesses, and bankruptcies, had acted on the spirits of Agnes as a counter-irritation, so that, in the contemplation of other people's miseries, she attained a spurious resignation beneath her own. As sorrow is the rust of the soul, everything that traverses the surface, has a tendency to scour it away, and the scattered links of Agnes' happiness seemed brightening now again, as if they might at last be reunited into as glittering a chain as before, while her cheek resumed its wonted hue and her tongue its wonted volubility. After the first great affliction of life, it is said that the sufferer never is again the same, "that the heart can know no second spring;" but now there seemed every probability that, though the drooping pinions of her ambition had been lowered, Agnes might soon put a patch on her worn-out spirits, and be only too much restored to her former self. When the carriage next day arrived, which was to convey her to Lady Towercliffe's, Marion, ever ready to enjoy any happiness reflected from the eyes of others, bid her good night with a sensation of real pleasure at this unexpected revival.

There are strange coincidences in every day life, and the small dinner party at Lady Towercliffe's accidentally contained the two last persons on earth who would have wished to meet. When Lord Towercliffe received Agnes with friendly cordiality at the door, he had not yet relinquished her hand before he suddenly felt his own grasped with a convulsive start, and when he hastily looked up, the countenance of his newly arrived guest had grown pale as that of a spectre, her eyes were closed, and he felt her hand become as cold and heavy as lead. Too well-bred to notice her strange emotion, which there was an evident effort to conceal, he naturally ascribed it to the remembrance of recent family affliction, when now, for the first time, entering society again, and he silently led Agnes to a seat beside Lady Charlotte Malcolm and Miss Howard Smytheson.

Agnes did not once look round the room, but she heard the low, deep tones of a voice with which she had too long been familiar, though now it must for ever be to her the voice of a stranger. Captain De Crespigny had been, some time previously, dividing his fascinations between the only two young ladies in the room, and he continued still, with the same light laugh as before, to exhibit his rare gift of conversational humor and vivacity, after giving a slight bow to Agnes, which she did not even see. A mist was before her sight—a ringing in her ears—her very heart seemed benumbed—and her only desire being to avoid notice, while her parched lips refused to articulate, she silently fixed her large eyes on Lady Caroline Malcolm, assuming an aspect of attention, and inwardly thankful that there was something in the room at which she could look, while circumstances had thus so painfully and so very unexpectedly "awoke the nerve where agony was born."

The world, usually one great "School for Scandal," had not yet circulated the story of Captain De Crespigny's inconstancy, and Agnes' disappointment; therefore, dreading above all things the contemptuous pity bestowed on a case like hers, she now exerted herself, from the fear of ridicule more than even of censure. The strongest emotions of existence are concealed in the great drama of life; and though Agnes felt herself grow blind when dinner was announced, yet she afterwards retained a confused recollection of having walked down stairs, leaning on the arm of an officer whom she had never seen before, discussing the hue of a ribbon, or the probability of a war, while her whole heart, mind, and spirit, were torn with contending emotions.

Strange is the ignorance in which people may live respecting the real thoughts and feelings of those with whom they are at the moment in actual contact! Agnes possessed an energy and pride of spirit which supported her now, while with flushed cheeks, and eyes brightened by agitation, her volubility became like a delirium. What she said to the stranger might be sense or nonsense, she neither cared nor knew, while her own laugh sounded unnatural in her ears; but still her companion listened and smiled, looking even more admiration than he felt, and while Agnes rattled on with apparent recklessness, he was inwardly conjecturing whether this could possibly be the beautiful Miss Dunbar who had endeavord to "entrap" his brother officer De Crespigny, artfully attempting what she had not been artful enough to achieve.

When the endless dinner was ended at last, and the ladies rose to withdraw, Agnes could willingly have fled from the house for solitude; but Lady Towercliffe, to beguile the interval, importunately begged for music, and persecuted her to sing. It was weeks since Agnes had attempted a note, but, anxious to avoid notice, she tried to remember the songs best known to her. Each as it rose to memory, seemed filled with remembrances in which she dared not indulge. Who but the unhappy can tell the power of music in recalling vanished years and vanished joys! One song Captain De Crespigny had formerly accompanied, another he had admired, a third he had copied out for her. All their sentiments of love and constancy he had with ready flattery applied to herself, and each had been played or sung only for him.

Hopes and feelings now for ever extinct, crowded into her memory; a cold, curdling anguish gathered round her heart; the notes died away inaudibly, and Agnes at length, leaning her forehead on the music-desk, burst into an irresistible flood of tears, while her eyes rested at these words,—

> "Long hours have passed on
> Since that name was too dear;
> Now its music is gone,
> It is death to my ear!"

"Poor thing!" whispered Lady Towercliffe, "Her uncle's death makes a sad change in their circumstances, and she lives too much alone now. People rave about the pleasures of solitude, but I never could find them out! They are excellent for poetry, but, like the Arabian apple, they turn to ashes when tried. I never could keep up the shuttle-cock with only one battle-dore."

"Nor I! particularly in conversation," said Captain De Crespigny, entering. "There is old Crawford below stairs, with single-handed diligence, stringing off his whole book of anecdotes; I left him at No. 5, so he has three yet to come, before the gentlemen escape! The last he told was perfectly stupendiferous! That man's mind is like an old chest, but there is an end to all agreeable conversation, when people begin drawing for it on their memories! I am so wearied now, that I shall give any one £5 who can amuse me for half an hour!"

The solitude at Seabeach Cottage was not destined to remain much longer uninterrupted, as the very evening subsequent to Lady Towercliffe's party, after Agnes had retired in feverish dejection to spend some time in her own room, Marion was startled by a loud impatient peal at the bell, and the next moment her hand was eagerly clasped in that of Henry De Lancey, whose countenance, in returning thus to his altered home, was pale and haggard with strong emotion. Marion started up, giving an exclamation of sudden joy at his unexpected appearance, while a momentary smile flashed on her countenance, like a gleam of sunshine on the dark face of a wintry cloud; but his eye sadly wandered towards the portrait of Sir Arthur, with a long lingering look of deep affection, and, covering his face with his hands, he threw himself on a sofa, remaining for some time buried in silence while his whole frame shook with emotion, one burst of grief following another.

It was long, very long before Henry could listen to the mournful detail of all Sir Arthur had said and suffered in his short and fatal illness; but the feelings of Marion were soothed thus to meet at last with one who thought and felt like herself. Grief that disperses itself in words and tears is speedily over; but theirs was of that calm, concentrated nature which consumes the heart, though Marion assured Henry that nothing had yet done her so much good, as this happy, but most unexpected meeting.

"Did you suppose, Marion, that I could remain absent at a time like this! Impossible! I no sooner heard all, than I applied for leave. It is sad, indeed, to find so changed a home. I cannot speak of that! He was too good for this world, and is gone to a better! I can only weep to look around me here, where his affectionate smile can welcome me no more."

"Yes!" faltered Marion. "But memory, like a miracle, restores him to me every day! I seem to behold his face, to hear his voice, to know his thoughts. That calm and cheerful portrait appears to tell me sometimes how gladly he is done with all the weary business and heart-sinking trials of this vain, perplexing world."

"When such friends part, 'tis the survivor dies," observed Henry, mournfully. "But it has been hinted to me, Marion, that the man I esteem the most in this world has trifled with your affections! I cannot believe it! I was long in his confidence, and if there be truth in man, he loves you with an attachment which nothing can alter. Half the miseries in life proceed from a want of explanation. No! there is some mystery we cannot solve. A thousand mistakes may occur in the absence of friends; but for his sake, as much as your's, and for my own sake, most of all, I shall outstrip the swiftest courier, and return with his entire justification. But there is another business also to be discussed," added Henry, with a sudden change of tone and countenance, while his face glowed with a look of strong excitement, and he bit his lip till the very blood seemed ready to spring out. "Your sister, Marion! Agnes has been made the sport of an unprincipled, heartless, coxcomb. His conduct embittered the last days of my benefactor and friend! He must and shall be made to repent it!"

"Henry! what do you mean?" interrupted Marion, startled and alarmed by his evident irritation. "Do not make me regret having entrusted you with all our girlish fancies and follies! Such things happen every day!"

"No, Marion! Had the insult been only to Sir Patrick, he considers the happiness of others, and even his own honor, as trifles compared with immediate convenience. His sister's peace of mind might be destroyed without his having the wish, or me the right to interfere, but, in respect to Agnes, as the niece of Sir Arthur, it is not so. I know how her heart was gained, and has been crushed. It is said that ten years of ordinary suffering would not have made such ravages as are already visible in the countenance of Agnes, and she must not be so treated with impunity. But a day of retribution may come upon him, yet!"

"Dear Henry!" interrupted Marion, anxiously, "Do not add to what we have already suffered, by imprudence on your part. I little thought that any circumstance could ever make me otherwise than happy to meet you, but your impetuosity now really alarms me!"

"It does no such thing! at least it should not," said Henry, assuming for a moment his old vivacity of manner, but it would not do. A tone of cheerfulness in that house, now jarred painfully on his ear, and again fixing his eyes on the portrait of Sir Arthur, he added, in a low, deep tone of intense feeling: "No, Marion!—in this room, consecrated to kindness and affection,—on this seat, so long occupied by the most generous of benefactors, and before that Holy Bible in which be instructed us both, I promise to speak, act, and think, as he would have dictated. My situation now is most perplexing! De Crespigny has acted the part of a brother towards me since I joined his regiment. He has courted my friendship and intimacy to a degree for which I can scarcely account, but for which I felt most grateful, till within these few days, when a strange and most perplexing communication has been made to me."

An air of deep and anxious thought gathered over the countenance of Henry; he covered his face with his hands, and Marion listened in silence, when he continued in a rapid, agitated voice.

"The unhappy madman, Howard, wrote me lately a long, incoherent letter, in which he accused De Crespigny of having instigated him twelve years ago, to that dreadful deed which made me motherless; adding, that the very peculiar weapon then found on the bed, had been furnished by him; and I have ascertained since from Martin, that De Crespigny, when a boy, had precisely such a knife given to him. I am told that he has been making many secret inquiries lately, respecting the papers found in my mother's bureau; and he frankly mentioned the subject once to me himself, saying, I little knew the deep interest he still had in investigating that affair. He is a man I cannot, and do not suspect of a dishonorable thought in his transactions with gentlemen; but though entirely acquitting him on that point, Marion, I am determined to speak my whole mind to De Crespigny this night. He is now at Mrs. Smytheson's, in the next house, and we are going to town together, when his ears shall ring with my opinion of his conduct to Agnes!"

"Then, dear Henry, be prudent! It would not benefit us, if you and Captain De Crespigny were to get into an Irish rage, and shoot each other. Love once extinguished can never be forced back, and we cannot bring repentance to those who are destitute of feeling; therefore, for our sakes, be silent."

Young De Lancey strode a few hasty turns up and down the room, in agitated silence, and seemed preparing to depart, when the door was slowly opened, and Agnes glided into the room, while Henry started, looking doubtfully at first, as if he scarcely recognised her; and then advancing, he received Agnes with an expression of warm-hearted kindness, which brought the hectic color for a moment to her cheek.

When Henry glanced at the expression of settled melancholy on the beautiful features of Agnes, a gleam of indignant emotion flashed across his countenance, but it was succeeded by an effort to appear cheerful; and by "smiles that might as well be tears," when he extended his hand, saying, with all the vivacity he could assume,

"Here I am, quite unexpectedly, Agnes! like snow in summer, or a burst of sunshine at midnight! A little surprise will do you and Marion good! It acts like an electric shock! I remember the time, Agnes, when you never gave me above three fingers to shake, and now your whole hand is presented, therefore I may feel really welcome."

"Yes, Henry!" replied Marion, seeing her sister unable yet to speak; "we shall now endeavor to get up our spirits!"

"That may be easy for those who have any spirits to get up!" added Agnes, in a tone of peevish melancholy. "But if Marion chooses to look through a Claude-Loraine glass, and declare that the whole earth and sky are *couleur de rose*, must I wipe my eyes with my elbow, and say the same? All I can do is, if possible, to forget myself to stone. You were always a light-hearted being, Henry! Would it make you serious to be told of one like me whose heart is turned to ashes! The world is a Castle of Desolation now, with not a tie that binds me to the earth—not one!" added she bitterly, while her eyes were purposely averted from the reproachful kindness of Marion's expression.

"Agnes," interrupted Henry, in his kindest manner, "you wasted much good advice on me formerly, but now it is my turn. As an old French lady once judiciously remarked, '*Il n'y a pas de plus grande folie, que d'etre malheureux*.' For Marion's sake and your own, do not treasure up grief as if it were gold! When one plan of happiness fails, we should always change horses, and drive on with another! It is a fatal mistake to throw up the game of life, if our favorite hope fails! Try pleasure now, on some new pattern! We should look on both sides of existence, and keep hold of it with the best handle!"

"I will! I will!" exclaimed Agnes, flinging back the long entangled ringlets from her pallid face, and forcing a wild, haggard smile into her distorted features. "Does that please you, Henry? Do I look sufficiently happy? Why are you so disconcerted? Let us all be cheerful again! Shall I sing to you, or how shall we be merriest?"

"Surely, Agnes, as we cannot mend the past, or direct the future, you might make some of the present. Remember the old proverb, 'There is a silver lining to every cloud,'" continued Henry, assuming a tone of animation. "You might find a thousand occupations which become an excellent substitute for what people call happiness. Try geology, or book-making, or worsted work! But, Agnes," added he, more seriously, "above all, take the strong staff of religion, rather than the feeble reed of earthly hope, which has pierced you, as it will pierce all who trust in it. Why are we placed on earth? Not to contrive a plan of life for ourselves, but to learn from above what is the real meaning of happiness—its surest source—its brightest fountain! Behind the machinery of all human events, God is at work for our real good, and every misfortune may be transformed into a blessing, if we receive it as a Fatherly correction, and take the good it is intended to do us."

With absent, listless indifference, Agnes took leave of Henry when he was about to depart; but Marion's eye glistened with emotion, as she wished him good-night, entreating that he would return soon and often.

"Trust me for that, Marion! It can never become a mere duty to visit here," replied Henry, hastily dashing away a tear. "This room is my home, more than any other on earth. Every chair and every table is endeared to me, and how much more the living inhabitants. Even that old geranium, all run to wood, and covered with dust, is consecrated by a thousand old recollections. Adieu!"

CHAPTER XLV.

After Henry left the room, Agnes, having inveighed with more than her usual bitterness against all persons, good or bad, and all events, past, present, or to come, retired to bed, leaving Marion to muse with saddened feelings on the untoward turn which her sister's mind was likely to take for the future, which rendered her every day a more uncongenial companion, as now Agnes had come to the final conclusion that she was herself the victim of unmerited and unmitigated misfortune.

About ten o'clock, Marion lighted her candle to retire, and was slowly leaving the room, when she became startled by suddenly hearing, immediately below her window, in the street, a noise of scuffling and shouting, mingled with vehement cries for help, and dreadful oaths, till at length a wild and horrid shriek arose, which thrilled to her very heart. Having hastily summoned Martin, who hurried to the door, she paused some moments in an agony of alarm, and then rushing to the window, threw it open, and gazed out, being so close to the combatants that she could almost have touched them. Two men were engaged, apparently, in desperate conflict, while Marion's eyes became fixed on them with the fascination of fear. She could not scream—she could not move: she seemed to have lost all power of motion, while watching the whole scene with harrowing interest, yet with the vague indistinctness of a dream. It seemed as if some frightful night-mare were upon her, and as if she were chained to the spot, yet there was a frightful reality in all that followed. It was a fierce and deadly struggle, carried on with the energetic strength of despair. Again and again, in a hoarse, deep voice, the fearful cry arose on the night air, of "Murder!" mingled with agonizing cries for help. Marion clung to the window for support, and shivered from head to foot; while she still heard the loud trampling of feet, the fierce tones of defiance, threatening, groans of suppressed anguish, and then a loud, delirious shriek of agony, followed by a sharp, gasping cry, when one of the combatants fell suddenly to the ground, as if a hundred daggers had pierced him.

Windows were now thrown open on every side, the watchman's rattle became audible, there was a tread of many feet, the sound of many voices, and all seemed to promise speedy aid, when, amidst the death-like silence beside her window, Marion heard a strange, unearthly laugh, which sounded more appalling in a such a scene than all she had yet beheld. A mysterious dread fell over her heart, her eyes swam, her brain reeled, a faint sickness came upon her, she made a feeble attempt to support herself against the window, and, with a convulsive sigh, sank almost insensible on a seat. When Marion recovered, a low, murmuring sound of many voices became audible. Martin hastily opened the door, and a crowd of strange faces appeared, pale and full of horror; while several men almost staggered beneath the weight of a shutter, on which lay a motionless figure, partly concealed by a cloak, with a bloody napkin over the face; while the stillness, the stiff and rigid look of that immovable form, could indicate nothing but death.

There was that in the voices of those who entered which caused Marion's nerves to creep with apprehension. A low murmur stole through the crowd, while, shivering with apprehension, she silently gazed on the stone-like, lifeless image before her. The hair was damp and matted with gore, the hands were clenched in agony, the dress soiled with clay and blood; but the tall figure retained a look of solemn dignity; and Marion felt a cold thrill shoot through her heart, while her eyes became riveted on that ghastly object.

Though unable to speak, or to ask a single question, her mind was intensely conscious of all that passed; while many surmises were whispered around respecting the cause and origin of this fearful catastrophe, and much impatience was expressed for the proper authorities to arrive and take cognizance of the circumstances. Marion, at length, feeling herself alone among so great a concourse of strangers, had slowly turned to leave the room, when her ear was caught by hearing the name of De Lancey, and, turning hastily round, she started to find Lord Wigton close beside her, in earnest conference with an officer, who remarked, in low, ominous accents, "I am perfectly well aware that several discussions took place between them lately, respecting the circumstances of his childhood, though I understood them to be of a friendly nature; but this very evening, at Mrs. Smytheson's, some very high words, passed relating to a young lady." A faint chill came over Marion as she heard these words, and turning, with a bewildered look, to the speaker, she asked, in a low, deep voice, if he knew anything of Henry De Lancey.

"Yes! only too much, if all be as we suspect," replied the stranger sternly. "I always liked De Lancey; but if he had any hand in this business, great as the provocation may have been, he would be more like an Italian assassin than a British officer. He was heard once to declare the greatest abhorrence to duelling; but these canting sort of speeches never come to any good. At Mrs. Smytheson's, not two hours ago, he seemed very violently irritated against my unfortunate friend who lies murdered there."

Marion's countenance became pale and terror-stricken; she looked irresolutely round, and then, with faltering steps, approached a table on which the corpse had been laid. She could not speak, and her hand trembled convulsively; but she grasped a napkin which shrouded the features of the deceased. Slowly and fearfully she raised it, gave one shrinking glance, and, with a broken shriek of astonishment, beheld, stained with blood, and rigid as marble, the well-known features of Captain De Crespigny.

Marion's heart stood still, a cold shiver ran through her frame, and, tottering back, with a gasp of pallid horror, she sank upon a seat, where her blanched cheek and quivering lip revealed the agony of her amazement and horror. Conscious at once that this must be the work of Ernest Anstruther, still the world seemed to rock beneath her feet, with the vibration of crime and misery; while, covering her face with her hands, she tried to shut out the very thought of all she had beheld.

Martin had sent an express instantly to Lord Doncaster; and, meanwhile, the dreadful tale flew far and wide; while the universal appetite for horror seemed on this occasion more than satiated. A young, handsome, and talented officer, thus brought down, by some mysterious agency, to the dust of death! It was appalling; and throughout the whole neighborhood, a spirit of eager, burning, impatient curiosity, became general.

A summons at length arrived, for all present to proceed instantly to Kilmarnock Abbey, that depositions might be taken before Lord Doncaster and the nearest magistrates, while Marion as a witness was obliged immediately to appear there, that her testimony might assist with that of others in clearing up the tragical mystery. The unwarrantable suspicions which had been expressed respecting Henry, formed a strong additional motive to Marion for consenting to accompany the melancholy cavalcade, as she was anxious at once publicly to acquit him, knowing that, as the proverb says, "if a lie has no feet on which to stand, it has always wings with which to fly round the world."

Marion hastened into a carriage which had been sent, that she might follow the body to Kilmarnock Abbey, where she was ushered before long within the house. It was a solemn scene! That large, old hall hung with antique armour, spears, horns, cross-bows, and portraits of many a long-forgotten ancestor. The gothic stained window, magnificent in its proportions, the ancient grained roof, the black oaken panels, the cumbrous, carved woodwork, the marble floor, and the faded tapestry, all dimly illuminated by the glimmering of a single lamp hastily lighted for the occasion. An uncertain, mysterious gleam was cast on the nearest objects, while the more distant recesses were thrown into gloomy shadow, and the tumultuous agitation of those around contrasted strangely with the locked and riveted limbs of that motionless figure to which all eyes were directed, the rigid stillness and stern composure of that countenance now invested with all the majesty of death, from which Marion turned with shuddering sympathy and amazement, while the multitude of servants and spectators continued in a state of wild excitement, uttering on every side subdued exclamations of horror.

At length Lord Doncaster himself slowly entered, with several gentlemen, some of whom looked deeply concerned, while others were evidently no more affected than if they had come to see the fifth act of a well-performed tragedy. Among the first to appear was Henry De Lancey, to whom Marion had instantly sent an express, and, totally unconscious of exciting more than ordinary notice, he advanced to Lord Doncaster with an expression of heartfelt sorrow, wishing to volunteer his services in unraveling the appalling and mysterious events of the night. While some eyes were turned on Henry with eager and intense scrutiny, an anxious investigation was commenced, though without success, for no clue could be obtained which threw any light upon this treacherous and unaccountable murder.

Not a whisper was heard, while Henry at once related all which had passed that night between himself and Captain De Crespigny, during the angry dialogue which had been overheard between them; but as delicacy to Agnes prevented him from being perfectly explicit respecting the cause of their dissension, several questions were asked, which he felt obliged to decline answering, though a cloud of suspicion gradually gathered over the countenances of several spectators, when he acknowledged having been in company with the deceased a very few minutes before the catastrophe, and that they had separated in anger.

All that could be ascertained for certain was, that Captain De Crespigny had passed the evening at Mrs. Smytheson's—that he seemed in unusual spirits, which is always remembered to have been the case with those who suffer some sudden calamity—that he had spoken of plans involving many years of life and health—that he had mentioned to Lord Wigton differences having arisen lately between him and Henry De Lancey—and that some one had been observed lurking near the door, when he took leave at night of his cousin, Miss Howard, to whom he said in his usual tone of characteristic gallantry, "I shall count the minutes till we meet to-morrow."

Little did he then, in the bright glow of youth, health, and spirits, foresee what that to-morrow should produce!

No farther information could be elicited except the evidence of Marion, who described, in faltering accents, the deadly conflict she had witnessed; but, being unable to see the assassin, she could afford no assistance in identifying him; though she declared in the strongest terms, that in height and form he bore no resemblance to any one she had ever seen before, unless it were the madman, Ernest Anstruther. To have explicitly denied that it was Henry, would have seemed like a tacit acknowledgment that such a thing might have been conjectured; and Marion abhorred the very thought of his name being at all implicated in a catastrophe so revolting.

Some time elapsed before it occurred to the imagination of Henry, that the eye of suspicion could for a moment rest upon him; and when the idea flashed into his mind, it seemed so perfectly preposterous, as to be scarcely worth a thought; but he now perceived with indignant astonishment, that there were those among the spectators who cast on him dark glances of doubt and suspicion; therefore feeling that to be accused, even in momentary thought, of a deed from which his very soul would have shrunk, was intolerable, he advanced without a moment's hesitation towards the table before which Lord Doncaster was seated; and, placing his hand upon that of the corpse beside him, he spoke in a firm and decided tone, though evidently with deep emotion, while the spectators crushed forward to hear him, and the dead silence around gave a solemn distinctness to his words, uttered, as they were, in a low, impressive tone.

"I perceive—with what degree of astonishment no words can describe—that I—the last man on earth who would seek the life of another, even in open and honorable conflict—that I, who had for my benefactor and instructor the most upright and excellent of men—am now, by a strange combination of circumstances, likely to become suspected of a dastardly and treacherous assassination! I disdain to make any paltry asseverations of innocence! yet, let me not blame any man for what he thinks! This is a time of sudden and mysterious alarm! The calamitous event is as little to be accounted for, as it is deeply to be deplored. Already I have buried in oblivion every cause of irritation which had recently arisen between us. Nothing personal to myself had caused our alienation. The deceased acted on many occasions towards me formerly with the kindest consideration, which I am as ready now to remember, as I am also to forget all that ever was painful or unsatisfactory between us."

Henry bent his head to Lord Doncaster with an air of resolute but melancholy composure, and stood back while several other persons gave their evidence, and Marion observed with surprise, that, instead of being occupied in attending to their depositions, young De Lancey gazed with a look of wondering perplexity all around the large, old-fashioned hall, while, with an expression of absent astonishment, his eye wandered over the gigantic chimney-piece of quaint device, the rusty armour and trophies of the chase, the old historical furniture, the tapestried chairs, the statues, and the richly sculptured ceiling. At length he glanced towards Lord Doncaster, who had been for some time keenly observing him, but whose looks were now hastily averted, while apparently occupied in arranging some papers, and it was evident that the aged peer's hand shook with agitation. Much might, of course, be attributed to the fearful event of the night, and yet Marion felt that this emotion did not originate from the same cause, for the Marquis cast frequently a furtive glance at Henry, though avoiding observation, and his excitement obviously increased.

Young De Lancey seemed evidently struggling with some painful, agitating perplexity! Again he perused the room with a scrutinizing gaze, and again his eye became fastened on the aged features of Lord Doncaster with a steady, earnest examination; while still the expression of doubt and wonder on his countenance became more obvious, as if he were attempting to stir up some recollections which would not come at his bidding. Turning at length to Marion, he whispered in a low, almost dreaming tone, "It is long,—very long since I have been here! When did I see this apartment last?"

"You, Henry! never! My uncle ceased to visit Lord Doncaster ages ago! Indeed, they rather disliked each other than otherwise! We never were in this old hall before!"

"And yet, Marion," replied Henry, in a tone of increasing decision, while his eye still wandered round with a look of intense curiosity, "I could swear that every object in this room is familiar to my memory. That oak roof blackened with age; those time-stained walls; those strange old portraits and their massy frames! I seem to look back through a dark mist, and to remember scenes and circumstances which occurred in this apartment long ages ago!"

"Yes, Henry! every person living is subject to these unaccountable delusions! It has often been mentioned as extraordinary, that, when any very agitated scenes occur, people are apt to feel that sort of dreaming fancy you describe, as if the whole had been acted over in their sight before."

"No, Marion, it is not so! The whole is a distinct reality! A hundred recollections arise like phantoms, and struggle in my memory. Yes! I have stood upon this floor in former years! I have gazed upon every object you see there! This was once my home! There, in that large old chair, I have sat on my mother's knee, and the aged countenance of Lord Doncaster himself is indelibly imprinted on my recollection."

"Impossible!"

"True, Marion! most true! A thousand remembrances pour in like a flood upon me! This room has often appeared before my eyes in a dream! it is connected with my earliest years! Look at the farthest corner of this hall,—behind that damask curtain stands a secret door, and it leads to a room where I could swear that some hours of my life were formerly passed, when or why I cannot even guess. Marion, the house is crowded at present, and we shall not be remarked, let us verify my recollection, by gradually approaching the concealed door, and then you will be convinced that memory has not deceived me."

When Henry, by a slow and difficult progress, had piloted Marion through the dense mass of persons who filled the hall, they reached at length the spot he had indicated, where, lifting the tapestry, he at once opened a door, so nearly resembling the paneling as scarcely to be discernible, and they entered a small, low room, which seemed to Marion no larger than a four-post bed, so dusty, dark, and neglected-looking, that it had evidently not been occupied for years. Long cobwebs hung like banners from the roof,—it was almost destitute of furniture—and they found a picture placed on the floor, its face towards the wall, representing a lady, young and dazzlingly beautiful, and a boy beside her, playing with a large Newfoundland dog.

Henry silently strode across the room, and, as if perfectly familiar with its arrangements, he threw open a small cupboard, into which had been thrown the broken fragments of several childish playthings. He paused and gave an agitated look towards Marion. His countenance had become pale, and wore the same expression as at first, of almost agonizing perplexity, while he was evidently groping through the darkest recesses of his memory for that which still eluded his grasp. Leaning his head on his hand, with eyes fixed on the portrait before him, Henry remained long in this agitating reverie, his countenance flushed by the inward tumult, while hunting through his recollection for a more defined shadow of that which flickered in his brain, and Marion silently observed him. She did not speak, she scarcely even breathed, for now it seemed to her as if some mystery were there too deep for her to fathom, connected probably with Henry's early history, and a secret hope glimmered on her mind that possibly the time had come at last when a clue might be obtained to the mystery of Henry's birth and misfortunes.

The child, whose portrait they had here discovered, bore an obvious resemblance to Henry De Lancey, as she first remembered him. The very dress was similar, and all around brought to mind what Henry had once described of his early home. It seemed to Marion as if this were the very crisis of his existence, and she waited in silent hope, expecting that the moment might come, when he would again speak to tell her his thoughts; but a deep oppression seemed gathering over his spirit, he riveted his hands over his face, as if anxious thus to shut out the world, and every thing in it, from his shrinking memory, and there was a silence around like death itself.

CHAPTER XLVI.

While Henry continued thus entranced with perplexity, Marion's attention was gradually attracted by a noise at her side, and, looking suddenly round, she was startled to behold crouching in the remotest corner of the room, the figure of a human being, which filled her with horror and dismay, so haggard, so emaciated, so unlike anything she had ever looked upon before, that scarcely could she suppress a shriek of dismay. It was a face of woe and wretchedness, once seen never to be forgotten, and she had formerly seen it. The sunken temples, the hollow eyes, the lurid glare of insanity in the eye, and the clusters of hair, black as death, blown by the night-wind in large damp masses on his forehead, all brought the wretched Howard instantaneously to her mind; and, grasping Henry's arm, with an exclamation of terror, she attempted to hurry with him out of the room. Scarcely, however, had she made a step towards the door, when the madman darted forward, and closed it, then wheeling round, he said, in a low, husky voice, while his strength seemed so subdued, that the grasp of an infant might have mastered him,—

"You have discovered me, and there is no escape! Be it so! 'Welcome death,' as the rat said, when the trap fell down. Here the tragedy began, and here let it end!"

He paused for several minutes, and gradually his face assumed a look of ungovernable anguish, while he added, in a dreary, desolate tone, unlike any human voice,—

"I could weep for my own ruin,—for my sister's,—but the time is past. Never shall I shed another tear! Our sin be on the Abbe Mordaunt's head! The withering curse of a dying man be on his head! The misery of eternal ruin be on his head, as it is on mine! For his own purposes he nurtured every wild passion in our young blood. He taught me the mad ambition that was my ruin,—promised me impunity here and hereafter, if I assisted in his schemes; and now, after being his tool, I am, like a useless tool, cast aside! But could he silence my outraged conscience? No! The gibbet is forever hovering before my sight, and the curse of heaven is borne to my soul in every blast!"

"Yet you are still in this world of hope, where none can be finally condemned," said Henry, solemnly. "Till the grave closes over your head, mercy and pardon may yet be asked, and may yet be granted! Ernest Anstruther, from the hour of my mother's death until now, you have most barbarously injured me, but mortal man must not keep up immortal anger. I only obey our beneficent Creator in saying, that if you repent, I heartily forgive you. Your life is probably forfeited to the outraged laws of man, but may your soul find mercy in its utmost need."

"I have been your deadliest foe, De Lancey, and haunted your steps with my hatred from childhood; but it is done," continued Anstruther, with a look of bleak and barren agony. "I will not live to be caged in prison, a spectacle of scorn and infamy, to die a death of shame. How different from what I once hoped! There shall be no to-morrow for me in this world! A fire is at my heart, which can only be quenched by death! It is better not to be, than to be miserable! I shall give my body to the beasts of the field, or the birds in the air. I shall find a bed where no dreams shall haunt me, and a sleep from which there is no awakening! A wolf may lose his teeth, but you cannot change his nature! As a madman I have lived, and as a madman I shall die! We must sleep in the bed we prepare for ourselves! Before that sun shall have traveled another hour, you, Henry De Lancey, shall be raised to honor, and I shall have died, covered with infamy and disgrace. I never stir now, without the fatal means of release."

Marion shivered from head to foot, at the ghastly sound of Anstruther's voice, but paralyzed with terror, she dared not stir, for already a loaded pistol was in his hand. A fearful ghastly smile distorted his countenance,—the smile of a maniac,—a smile such as may be seen on the lips of a corpse, and an expression gleamed in his eye, which it curdled her blood to look upon, and might have struck terror into the strongest mind; but Henry, in a calm, deliberate voice, replied,—

"There is no such dreamless sleep, Anstruther, as you describe! Even Satan himself believes in futurity! Whatever be your sorrow, and worse than sorrow, your sin, do not madly hasten to that world where there is no peace and no pardon. Take pity upon yourself."

"Mine has been a desperate life, and it shall have a desperate end," replied Ernest, with a sullen, deadly smile on his bloodless lips; but trying to assume a tone of reckless indifference, he added, "I never was one to choke upon the tail! I have gazed at the moon, and fallen in the gutter, but, De Lancey, for the sake of that good old man, Sir Arthur, who was your benefactor and mine, I will not die without doing you justice. The wax of secrecy may now be broken, and here are papers clearly and indisputably to prove that you are the legitimate son of Lord Doncaster. They purify your mother's character from every aspersion, and testify without doubt your title to be Lord Dunraven."

Had an apparition arisen through the floor, or had a cannon gone off at Henry's ear, he could scarcely have been more startled and astonished, while, with an exclamation of joy and rapture, Marion rushed up to him, saying, in accents of tremulous joy, while he stood bewildered with surprise, and then grasping the packet in his hand, staggered to a seat, "It is then as uncle Arthur once almost believed! Oh, Henry, what joy! If he had but lived to hear it! Can this be possible!"

After a few moments given to emotion and wonder, while Henry seemed almost as if his spirit had taken wing from the body, Marion having in some degree recovered herself, looked round, and observed with surprise that they were alone! The madman, taking advantage of Henry's agitation, had rushed wildly from the house, to be seen and heard of no more. Henry rose, intending instantly to give an alarm, and to follow in pursuit of Anstruther; but scarcely had he stirred a step, before he and Marion were startled by hearing, in the adjoining room, a shriek so shrill and appalling, so heart-broken and delirious, that in an agony of alarm, they hurried forward to the hall. A confused murmur, a buzz of suppressed astonishment had arisen among the assembled crowd, in which were many countenances expressing strong fear, others wearing only an air of gaping curiosity, many with their hands clasped in amazement, and others expanding them in terror, but all listening with looks of motionless attention, while every eye was turned towards the table on which the murdered body had been laid, and a deep silence ensued, of hushed expectation, as if the stage were about to exhibit a tragedy of exciting interest.

Henry glanced rapidly around, and saw standing beside the corpse a tall female, whose aspect filled all present with surprise. Her worn and haggard countenance seemed cold and rigid as the figure on a tomb-stone, and her cheek had become overspread with a damp and leaden paleness; while in speechless horror, which seemed as if it amounted almost to insanity, she pointed her long, ghastly finger towards the body. A hundred eyes were now bent on hers, and her bewildered glance swept for a moment round the assembled crowd, with a look of unutterable wretchedness, till at length her eye fell on Lord Doncaster. On him she now fixed an unshrinking gaze, while she spoke in a low, hoarse whisper, which sounded with terrifying distinctness through the large old hall, and fell upon every ear with a solemnity and awfulness like the knell of death.

"I knew all, but could not hinder it! No! I would have died to prevent this! There was death in my brother's eye when he left me! I pursued him, but it was too late! Day by day, step by step, we have sunk into deeper crime and misery! Who would think that I had ever been young, innocent, and happy? The barrier was first thrown down by him who lies here! Hour by hour the deepening shadows grew darker! Long, long have these eyes been drenched with the tears of a broken heart! My wretched brother swore that every pang I suffered should be avenged! I would have pardoned, I would have forgotten all, if I might but have saved my brother, and sheltered *him* from death. I have warned, I have wept, implored! I have prayed on my very knees; but in vain! All is now over! Every law of God and man has been violated! None in all this assembly can see as I do the horror of our guilt—none can hate it more! The past maddens me, and the future—oh! what is there in the future for me!"

With a shuddering groan, Mary Anstruther sunk back on a chair, and she trembled like a leaf in the blast of autumn, while a mortal silence ensued. Lord Doncaster with brows knit, and lips firmly compressed, seemed resolute to conceal the emotions evidently struggling and boiling within his breast; and the by-standers, in dismay, had all shrunk back from the unhappy woman; but Henry now, with an irresistible impulse of pity, approached, and spoke a few soothing words to her, when she suddenly looked up, and seeing the expression of unfeigned commiseration with which he gazed at her, burning tears forced themselves into her eyes, and, with a look of piercing woe, she added in a low, husky, choking voice—

"I have asked pity, and all are not pitiless! I am used to misery—that cannot draw tears from me now, but kindness does,—your kindness especially. My heart was dumb and frozen! I never thought to weep again. Many is the long day since I have been pitied! Many is the long day since I have deserved it! Yes!" added she, grasping Henry's arm with almost iron force, while she spoke in a voice so strange and deep, it thrilled to every heart. "The time is come for me to tell all and die. The secret of your life was begun with bloodshed, and here in bloodshed it has ended. The thought that your mother died by my brother's hand has, from that fatal hour, gnawed like a fiery serpent at my heart. My soul is shaken to the very dust; but while I have breath to speak, let me confess how we slandered your mother—how we caused her to be driven as an outcast from this house—how we deceived your father, and cheated you, Henry De Lancey, of your birthright."

At this moment Lord Doncaster, who had seemed almost paralyzed with agitation, and as if the springs of life were drying up within him, suddenly rose, and waving back the Abbe Mordaunt and others who were crowding around him, he placed himself opposite the wretched woman, and fixed a look of searching examination on her death-struck countenance, while he seemed afraid to trust his own voice, lest it should betray the tumult of his feelings; but after a momentary struggle, he passed his hand across his eyes, and said in a low tone of doubt and uncertainty,—

"It seems like a resurrection from the dead! It cannot be! Is Mary Anstruther yet in being?"

"I have dreamed of such a man once," replied she, casting a desolate look around. "My heart was not then bursting, as it is now, because none can help me."

Henry's eye became fastened with a look of settled intensity on the countenance of Lord Doncaster, who walked a few agitated steps about the room, and then added, in a voice of stern astonishment:

"You speak of a deception! Let me know all? What of Laura Mordaunt?"

"Not of Laura Mordaunt, my Lord, but your lawful wife! The story of your previous marriage, invented by the Abbe, was a hideous lie. Had she been told the reason why you spurned her from the house, she could have disproved it. We told her only that your affections had been changed. She was too proud to complain; yet she did at last write a letter, which never reached you. She there made a solemn appeal to your justice and compassion, claiming for her son the affection and the station to which he is entitled. She became persuaded, by the Abbe's contrivance, that her marriage had been illegal. All—all was foul and horrid falsehood. We each had our various interests to serve! the Abbe to embezzle his niece's fortune—Ernest to keep his place near the succession—and I——"

Mary Anstruther's almost unearthly voice, which sounded unlike the voice of a human being, now entirely failed; her teeth chattered, she shivered from head to foot, and her eyes became fixed on the stiffened corpse by her side, while Lord Doncaster, with a scarcely audible groan of bitter regret, locked his hands over his heart, as if to still its palpitations, and listened, in agitated silence, for more. At length the wretched woman continued, while her voice became faint, and her very blood seemed to freeze at the sound of her own words.

"The slow progress of a breaking heart was not rapid enough for Ernest's hatred. He believed she was the cause of our ruin, and he murdered her! I would die a thousand deaths now to restore Laura Mordaunt—to undo all that I have done! Oh! that memory itself would fail! I am haunted and tortured by those over-living remembrances!"

Lord Doncaster looked as if a flash of lightning had blinded him, while, after gazing for a moment in almost vacant astonishment at Mary Anstruther, he put his hand to his head, and, with a suppressed groan, leaned against the table for support. A feather might have thrown him down, but he was evidently trying to collect his senses, and murmured hurriedly to himself in broken accents, "No! no! Impossible! It is all proved! She was guilty! Who can doubt it?"

"My Lord! it was a cruel, horrid, slanderous falsehood!" cried Mary, in a tone of solemn earnestness. "Night and the grave seem already closed over my wretched head. Take, then, the assurance of a dying creature, that Lord Mordaunt was innocent. Let me do one good action on the earth, before I perish for ever! She deserved a better fate! Let her young son enjoy the titles and honors of his ancestors. Letters will be produced after my death, proving his right. I desire all here to witness the last words I shall speak before my lips are sealed by death in everlasting silence, that there stands Henry, Lord Dunraven, the lawful son of Lord Doncaster! And now my destiny is accomplished! Already I seem separated from the living, though not yet united to the dead! Let my end come quickly, as it comes surely."

Henry's very heart trembled with agitation, and it seemed as if his veins ran lightning, while he fixed a long and agitated look on Lord Doncaster, whose countenance became convulsed with agitation, his brain seemed contracted by a spasm, the thread of life appeared suddenly to snap, a thick mist obscured his sight, and before his newly found son could rush forward to his support, he had fallen to the ground as if shot.

The room was immediately cleared of strangers, and the Abbe Mordaunt fled without delay to the continent, where he soon after buried himself in the monastery of La Trappe.

During several succeeding days, all that mortal man could do was done to restore Lord Doncaster, while Henry watched over his recently-discovered parent with incessant attention, and hoped, but hoped in vain, that Lord Doncaster might live to recognise and bless him; but the varied and vehement emotions of the last few hours had been too much for his aged frame. He continued during some time insensible, and, at length, after a short but severe struggle, expired.

Henry was acknowledged, however, before long, and recognised by the world, as not a doubt could remain on any mind of his identity and his claims, after those papers had been read bequeathed to him by the Anstruthers, and before the wretched Mary had quitted the earthly scene of her misfortunes and crimes, she was consoled by the forgiveness and the prayers of young De Lancey, now Marquis of Doncaster.

The whole unfathomable abyss of Henry's feelings and affections was now irradiated with hope, and he felt himself almost overwhelmed by the torrent of happiness about to pour upon him, when, hiding his face with his hands, tears of indescribable—of almost insufferable joy gushed from his eyes. The change seemed sudden as spring, bursting forth amidst the arid deserts of Siberia, after the snow has been melted away in the night, and the barren ground is, as by magic, clothed with blossoms, and warmed with sunshine. It appeared as if a word might yet break the charm—as if he might awaken and find the whole a dream of enchantment, but the crowning of all his earthly joy, was, when he at length claimed, in the open face of day, that true, constant, and disinterested affection of Caroline Smythe, which had so long been to him like a spring of water in the desert to a lonely traveller, cheering and refreshing his heart in the long pilgrimage of life.

> Oh, doubly sweet is sunshine after rain,
> Rest after toil, port after stormy seas.

The language of happy love, interesting above all else to the parties themselves, is uninteresting to others, but who ever had a brighter lot than Caroline and Henry, while they looked far into the future, anticipating together a long life of mutual confidence, cheered by "the soul's calm sunshine, and the heart's best joy."

"I begin now to fancy nobody in the world happy but myself!" exclaimed Henry, gaily. "I am almost ashamed to be so much better off than I deserve! but, as Lady Townly says, Caroline, 'We must squeeze as little as possible of the lemon into our matrimonial sherbet!'"

"Must I actually give up the delightful romance of loving you as a friendless adventurer, Henry? What would Lydia Languish have said to such a droll, every-day, common-place reality? I do not absolutely hate you," said Caroline, with a conscious laugh, and a slight relapse into her usual capricious vivacity, "but we must have one little quarrel yet! There is a circumstance respecting me, which has hitherto, for very good reasons, been kept secret, and now, it must, most unfortunately, come out!"

"What can that be?" asked Henry, smilingly watching the variations of Caroline's countenance. "I am quite as ready for a quarrel as you are; therefore tell me the worst at once!"

"It is an objection against me which I heard you once say would, in any case, be insuperable!" added Caroline, archly. "When all is told, you will certainly change your mind!"

"Then I shall be much changed, indeed! What magical spell do you intend to use?"

"Henry! you made a rash vow once, in my hearing, never to marry an heiress," said Caroline, trying to speak in a tone of gravity, and looking away. "Would you not abhor and avoid the heiress of Howard Abbey, including all the broad acres of Beaujolie Manor?"

Henry looked at Caroline in silent perplexity; but the blush, the frolicsome laugh, and the air of arch caprice with which she spoke, all at once enlightened his mind, and, seizing her hand with the most lover-like *empressement*, he gaily exclaimed, "Well, Caroline! since it must be so, I forgive you for being an heiress; but in no one whom I liked less could I have endured this! I love you in spite of it! I do, indeed! You merited already more than I ever can offer; but, Caroline, we love each other truly; and, for better, as well as for worse, I shall love you forever!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

Events come in clusters; and the very same day on which Henry was publicly recognised as Marquis of Doncaster, Marion received a letter from Sir Patrick, announcing his intention immediately to return home. He alluded, with a degree of feeling which surprised and deeply affected her, to the death of Sir Arthur, and spoke of happy days yet to come, when he hoped she might, at length, be united to "the man whom, above all others on earth, he esteemed the most, and liked the best." In reading these words, Marion felt a pang of melancholy sympathy for her brother, believing, of course, that they alluded to his friend Captain De Crespigny; and deeply did she deplore the grief he was about to suffer, when first he should hear of that appalling event which had filled every heart with grief and consternation.

It was on a gloomy evening in the month of February, when the sun, having all day failed to disperse a thick fog, had sunk into darkness, that Marion, expecting her brother's return, used all the little ingenuity of affection to render his reception cheerful. The fire blazed brightly; the tea urn was on the table, and she herself had taken more than usual pains with her dress, besides having decked her face with unwonted smiles for the occasion.

When Sir Patrick at last arrived, there was a tone of unusual kindness in his manner to both Agnes and Marion, who were surprised by the genuine warmth with which he expressed his happiness on seeing them again, and at the subdued melancholy in his voice. The fatal news of Captain De Crespigny's death had reached him on the road, and there appeared a profound solemnity in his manner when he alluded to it, more affecting than the loudest expressions of grief; but it was a subject on which he seemed incapable of speaking; while Marion scarcely thought a human countenance could have expressed so much anguish. While Agnes preserved an almost statue-like silence, Marion took her brother's hand in her own, and endeavored, by every affectionate endearment, to testify her sympathy, till at length he clasped her in his arms, saying, in accents almost choked with agitation, "Your sisterly kindness, Marion, has survived all my neglect and misconduct. Let me thank you for that; but could it survive if I were to tell you of a cruel and heartless treachery?"

"It can survive anything—everything," whispered Marion, earnestly. "Say nothing that distresses you, Patrick! Never think of it again!"

"I must not only think of it for ever, Marion, but show my regret by telling you all," replied he, in a tone of deep, concentrated feeling. "But not now, Marion; not yet! I could not bear to do so in the full tide of our happiness at meeting. You deserve to be loved as you are loved by one who is every way worthy of you."

The color rushed over Marion's countenance, and vanished as rapidly again; but her eyes, which had been fixed on those of Sir Patrick with sparkling affection, now fell sadly to the ground, while she made no reply, evidently trying to avoid her brother's notice, who seemed bent on reading her thoughts.

"Marion," said he, gravely, "to what do you attribute Richard Granville's strange and unjustifiable silence?"

"It is strange, Patrick; but I could pledge my life it is not unjustifiable," replied Marion, in tremulous accents. "When I gave him my heart, it was with a perfect conviction that he is incapable of deceit or dishonor, and I believe him so still. I trust him as I would be trusted myself. In this world or in another we shall understand each other again."

Marion's features kindled as she spoke; bright and beautiful tears gathered in her eyes; her manner became more energetic; her whole heart seemed on her lips, and the deep melody of her voice was eloquence itself, as she advocated the cause of her absent lover.

"But surely, Marion," said Agnes, turning round, as she was about to leave the room, "there are pen, ink, and paper to be found on the Continent, if he pleased to use them."

"Yes," added Sir Patrick; "and if Granville ever returns, Marion, you will of course receive him coldly, give yourself all the airs of injured merit, and, in short, treat him from the very first as a flagrant criminal."

"Not at all, Patrick!" replied Marion, surprised at the lurking smile she traced on her brother's countenance. "I place no dependance on my own attractions, or I might indeed despair; but my reliance rests on the consistency and generosity of Richard himself, in which I cannot be mistaken. The features of his character, like the features of his countenance, are unalterable; and I could not believe in his identity, if he were deficient in honor and truth. Even at the worst, Patrick," added Marion, while her glittering, wet eye-lashes drooped on her glowing cheek, "where we love it is a pleasure to forgive; but my confidence as yet is unshaken."

"Then, Marion, you deserve to be happy—happier than I ever was, or ever shall be; and never, believe me, had any one a brighter lot in prospect. Those tears have no business there! They will soon, I hope, be strangers to your eyes!"

There was a look of joyous emotion in the countenance of Sir Patrick as he spoke, which made the heart of Marion leap to her very lips with agitation, while in broken and hurried accents he continued,

"I did intend to give you a long and painful explanation of my conduct—to tell you of my recent dangerous illness abroad, during which I was attended by the most inestimable of friends; to describe how the slow progress of my recovery left me leisure for the counsels and conversation of the best of men; to say how the death of De Crespigny has overawed and afflicted me, taking the gloss from my whole future existence on earth; and to tell you that the loss of Clara Granville, and the last scene we had together, have put a climax to the entire change of all my thoughts and feelings in life. I am returned, Marion, now, to do justice wherever it is due; by years of careful restriction to discharge the uttermost farthing of my debts, and to make two persons happy who deserve it."

A bright, quick flush passed across Marion's cheek, and a bewildering hope darted into her mind, when Sir Patrick smilingly added, with a thrilling tremor still in his voice,

"A stranger is waiting for me below, who can explain all better than myself. May he come up? I am too much agitated to be distinct!"

Scarcely had her brother left the room, before Marion heard a light, springing step on the stairs. The door was flung open; and if joy ever killed, it would have been now, when Marion, with almost incredulous astonishment, again beheld Richard Granville; his features lighted up by the smile of former days; his eyes radiant with joy, and his countenance almost convulsed with agitation, while, giving an exclamation of rapturous delight, he presented himself before her.

If Marion's life had depended on her speaking a word, she could not for some moments have uttered it; but there is a silent eloquence in deep emotion, more powerful than language; and, giddy with excessive astonishment, tears and smiles seemed to struggle for the mastery in her countenance, like the summer light and shade upon an aspen tree.

All was mutual confidence, and mutual affection now, while Richard Granville rapidly, and almost incoherently, conveyed to Marion's heart the surpassing felicity of his own, telling her how the long hours of his absence had each and all of them been counted over with unimaginable impatience; that, she had never been a moment absent from his thoughts, and that, having seized the first instant to hasten to his happiness, he had now returned to claim his promised bride, and in the sight of heaven and earth, to dedicate to her all his earthly affections—to make her his own forever.

With a deep sob of gratified emotion, Marion listened; her feelings were strained to the uttermost; but she frankly received all his joyful protestations of unchanged and unchangeable attachment, and attempted not to conceal her own, saying, in low, tremulous accents, as soon as she could command her voice to speak,—

"I think the more of myself for being loved by you. It will take a life-time to testify how deeply I value your affection."

"My happiness would be nothing if it could be expressed in words," continued Richard, in accents of the deepest tenderness. "But let future years, my Marion, speak for me. It is said that no man would willingly consent to live his life exactly over again; but we shall be so happy in each other, that nothing would make us hesitate except the hope of a still better life to come."

"And now," said Sir Patrick, entering, with some degree of his old vivacity restored, "your sails are full set, with a brisk breeze, for the haven of happiness! May you both obtain everything you have been disappointed of in former years, and find nothing left to wish for in the future."

"That would be misery, rather than happiness," replied Mr. Granville, smiling. "No, Dunbar, for myself, and for my Marion, my still dearer self, I trust that we shall contentedly see the stream of events flow on, in sunshine or shadow, without a wish to change them. We shall be one on earth, one in heaven, and one throughout eternity, confiding in each other with entire and unalterable affection; while every action of our lives and every thought of our hearts shall be consecrated by implicit obedience to that Beneficent Being who has bestowed on us so much."

Our mutual bond of faith and truth
No time can disengage;
Those blessings of our early youth
Shall cheer our latest age.

Those ills that wait on all below
Shall ne'er be felt by me;
Or gently felt, and only so,
As being shar'd with thee.

COWPER.

THE END.

Transcriber's Note:

Minor typographical errors have been corrected without note. Irregularities and inconsistencies in the text have been retained as printed.

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