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KATE VERNON.

A Tale.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1854.

KATE VERNON.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.
THE BALL.

The autumn of 18—was as uncomfortable and *triste* a season as I have ever known; commerce and crops alike looked down—respectable prophets of Tory tendencies shook their heads with redoubled vigor and gloomy but intense satisfaction at the near approach of that total ruin they had so often foretold; and the unfortunate devils of starving mechanics, unable to solve the problem of depression, were raising shindies by way of relieving their minds. Under these circumstances, it pleased the Horse Guards, in the plenitude of their power and inhumanity, to banish Her Majesty's —— Regiment of Light Dragoons to an infernal region of smoke and "sansculottism" situated in the west of England, and known to mortals as the wealthy and busy town of Carrington.

Here then were we hurried at the very beginning of grouse shooting, from first-rate quarters in North Britain.

Terrible was the change which came o'er all our spirits; every thing was against us; I do not believe I ever saw such rain. Byron talks about "nature's tear drops,"—she gave us a shower bath! The effect of all this may be imagined. I am certain it was that fatal quarter confirmed our Major in the deep rooted love for "Kingston's old port," which finally cut him off at 65, while pretty little Mrs. Pemberton, the paymaster's wife, no longer guided in the way she should go, by fashion and the aristocracy, fell from the right path into a meeting house, and eloped with the preacher! But our rulers care little for our morals.

Au commencement, the rich manufacturers were very civil, and gave us some most enormous dinners. Their daughters, pretty girls enough, we found tolerable, as women must always be, even under the most distressing circumstances; but we had nothing to talk of to them. It was so confounding to try conversation with girls who had not a single subject in common with you; who looked on sporting as loss of time, and to whom all one's allusions, illustrations, and even good stories were an unknown tongue. Their brothers were "very awful," as Sammy Spectre says; and, when we asked the fellows to mess, they got so brutally drunk, and talked such stupid slang, we were thoroughly disgusted; so when the first terror of burnt mills and broken windows was passed, and the respectable cotton spinners, taking time to breathe, collected their scattered faculties, and remembered their dislike to the military, we were most ready to dispense with their society, and our communications were soon almost totally cut off.

Such was our position towards the beginning of September, when one morning, as I was forgetting my misfortunes in Alison's Account of the Vendean War, which in all probability I should have never read but for our unlucky change of quarters, Tom Ashley broke into my room, exclaiming, "Keep your books for a *dernier ressort* my dear fellow! Come along and get your tickets."

"For what," said I peevishly, for I am capable of acknowledging an author's magic sometimes.

"No humbug! You do not mean to say you have not read the placards announcing the Festival in the New Music Hall? Grisi, Mario, and all the rest of them. A grand mass in G, and something still grander in Z?"

"No! I know nothing about it."

"Well, know it now! There are to be three days' hard work. Sacred and scientific in the morning; profane and light in the evening; to wind up with a fancy and full dress ball on Thursday."

"Well, it is something to do, so I am *à vos ordres, mon cher*," said I, taking my hat.

We found the town full of fresh looking country faces, and, after some delay and crowding, secured our tickets. The oratorio was very like all other oratorios; the concert like all other concerts. There were airs in both that made one think some other world must exist besides this one of duns and devilry, and art and army agents. But a glance at the singers, one thought of their characters was quite enough to dispel any heavenly illusions. I have since tasted the exquisite enjoyment of hearing the lovely tones and words "I know that my Redeemer liveth," thrill from pure lips, and then I knew what music meant; but at the time of which I write I felt that any better feeling roused in me was false, both in cause and effect.

All our fellows liked music, or were used to it; but I think they were glad enough to kick their heels at the ball. I found myself there about eleven o'clock, listening to a very inspiriting quadrille, and gazing at the pretty little plebs and their snobbish partners, wondering if they really could be satisfied to waste their sweetness on such specimens of humanity (for there is a natural refinement about women); and the brutes were so pre-occupied with self, so divested of that profound attention I always thought every woman expected, otherwise there was little to distinguish the gathering from a ball at Lady Y—— s or Lady L—— s; the lights, music, and refreshments, were first rate, the dresses handsome, many in good taste; the thing wanting was the spirit of easy enjoyment which only people sufficiently well bred to be natural dare venture on. Occupied in these philosophic reflections, I stood among a group of my brother officers, who were mingling their critiques of the morning's concert with strictures on the mob round us, when my eye was caught by a pair of fair graceful shoulders to the right in front of me; there was something indescribable in the proud deer-like carriage of the head, with its simple classic knot of chestnut brown hair, which made me almost involuntarily exclaim "That is a gentlewoman whoever she is;" and nervously anxious to see if a *nez retroussé* or *un nez noble* adorned the countenance which was hidden from me, I edged my way into a commanding but unremarkable position. It was neither, but one that harmonised well with her broad smooth forehead and short tremulous upper lip; the general expression of the face was a sort of proud yet gentle sadness, perhaps thoughtfulness is the best word. Above middle height, her easy rounded figure moved slightly and apparently unconsciously to the music, while her dress (and this I always consider a

most important characteristic) was very gauzy and white, and perfectly without ornament except, indeed, a bouquet of brilliant flowers which seemed to fasten the folds over the bosom. How little does this miserable description convey the impression of grace and harmony this fair girl's countenance and figure stamped upon my mind! but I know were I to write for ever I should still be dissatisfied.

There was a *fierté* so thorough bred and yet so soft in her air, that I could have imagined her at home in the most splendid court, and what rendered this perhaps more striking, was the remarkable contrast presented by her companions.

She was leaning one arm on the back of a seat occupied by a little thin woman like a respectable housekeeper, with a fierce contrivance of lace and flowers on her head; beside her, and also behind the chair, was a plump comfortable looking man, past middle age, whose round rosy face was adorned with two little restless laughing twinkling black eyes; a large bunch of seals to a black ribbon appeared below his waistcoat in bygone style, held up in a sort of relief by the goodly protuberance below. As I glanced at these details, this last individual said something to his beautiful companion with a sort of gravity over all his face except the eyes; she bent her head gently to hear, and then her lips parted with such a smile, that I wondered I could have thought her countenance expressed pride, thought, anything, but happy merriment: such a smile must come from the heart.

"And where it most sparkled, no glance could discover
In eyes, lip, or cheek, for she brightened all over."

That finished me, "I must know her, I must dance with her," I exclaimed.

"Yes, but how," said Burton, who had been watching me, "I was trying to find out who she is before you came in, and no one knows them."

"How very odd," said Ashley.

"She is so strangely unlike the people with her, and all the others," said I.

"Ah! Egerton has received a death blow."

"Command yourself my dear fellow."

"She must be Cinderella under the chaperonage of the cook and butler."

"I am determined," said I, "to know her, and *selon les régles*; for that is no young lady to treat with scant ceremony."

So saying, I took Burton's arm and moved off to try and catch one of the Stewards; we succeeded, but the savage would do nothing; "didn't like" and "could not say." So we left him; and Burton was laughingly pouring forth consolations, when I exclaimed, "I have it! I will pretend to recognise her as some acquaintance;—profound deference—many apologies &c. Eh? get up a little conversation, it requires nerve, but you know I am half Irish!"

"It requires great tact and impudence; I wish you well thro' it," said Burton gravely.

This little conversation took place near a pillar, of which there was a row, two and two, across both ends of the room, dividing it into three compartments; the centre and largest of which formed the ball room. On re-entering it we missed the group of which we were in search, and for a moment I thought that my inexorable ill-luck had sent them home; but no! I soon discovered the unmistakeable profile close to the very pillar at the other side of which we had held our consultation. "Done! by all that's unfortunate," I exclaimed. "No, no," said Burton, "it is impossible they could have overheard us, besides, they may have only just got there."

"Well, *coute qui coute*, I will venture."

"And I will watch."

The next moment I was bowing profoundly with all the grace I could muster. "I fear I am too presumptuous in hoping that you do not quite forget me."

She gazed on me at first with such a puzzled but full and steady glance from her dark clear grey eyes, that I felt ashamed of myself; then again sparkling all over with a smile and look of recognition, she held out her hand, saying quietly—"I am very stupid not to know you at once, but the moustache alters you, and it is a long time since I saw you; how is your brother?"

I was electrified—the most cutting declaration that my flimsy artifice was seen thro', could not have perplexed me more. A momentary glance showed me Burton, standing transfixed, with mouth and eyes wide open; then rallying my scattered ideas I hastened to avail myself of this happy mistake, and answered that my brother was quite well, and would be delighted to hear I had met her. She bowed. But I had a brother, could she really know him? Her next words solved the problem: "How did he like your leaving the regiment? It was so pleasant to be always together," murmuring something of submission to necessity. I begged her to join the quadrille then forming, to which, after some slight hesitation, she assented, saying to her friends, "Shall I find you here?" "Yes," said "he of the seals," as G. P. R. James would call him, "I am glad you are going to dance;" the little woman gave her a smile and a nod, and we joined the quadrille. Longing to draw her from her reminiscences which kept me in a frightful state of mind lest I should make a false step, not daring to start almost any topic lest it should betray me, I feel convinced I presented an illustration of the acme of boobyism. At length I ventured to remark that I was surprised not to have seen her at any of the oratorios; this was true at all events. "We only came over for yesterday's performances," she said, "and arriving very early we got up near

the orchestra. How superb that double chorus was. I should like to have heard it in some huge dim cathedral; the theatric decorations of that concert room seemed to jar upon the eye."

"Yes! I quite agree with you; I am certain had I heard it under those circumstances I should have been ready to shave my head, tie a cord round my waist, and join the Franciscans *sur l'instant*!"

I felt more at ease—"If I can avoid my brother and the old regiment I am tolerably safe." I thought—"if I could get the smallest glimpse of who I am I should go ahead famously."

A few more sentences, broken by the movements of the dance, when my partner, returning to me, again threw me off my centre, by suddenly raising her eyes to mine with a sort of demure merriment sparkling in them, saying, "You have not enquired for any of your old friends! But, military memories are proverbially short, and yours is no exception I fear." Passing over the dangerous commencement of this speech, I launched into a glowing defence of military memories in general, and my own in particular, and wound up by entreating her to give me the fullest intelligence of all my old friends. She shook her head, "Ah! those generalities speak but badly of the kindliness of recollection I like." Good Heavens! I was getting deeper in the mire; the rich soft tones that could not be uttered by any one not possessed both of heart and intellect, seemed to sink into mine! So, hastily stammering that she did me great injustice, I reiterated my request for all the news she could impart. "I suppose you know all about the—"

"I cannot remember the numbers of regiments," said she, looking to me for the word.

"Oh! of course," said I hastily, "a copious correspondence places me pretty well *au fond*."

"Yes! but my cousin, I know you will be glad to hear though you have not the grace to ask, is still abroad, and, I hear, as beautiful as ever, and refusing all that princes and peers can offer to induce her again to try the lottery of marriage."

"Ah! the loved are not always soon forgotten," said I, trying to chime in with the tone of subdued feeling which seemed to pervade all my fair companion said. She looked at me with an air of disapprobation and replied gravely, "Notwithstanding their great disparity of years, my cousin did truly and deeply feel her husband's loss." I had better take care! could I but draw her off from her confounded cousin! At that moment she dropped her fan; I looked at it for a moment before restoring it to her; it was antique, with gold sticks, and of great value, the only part of her toilet that bespoke wealth. "You remember that fan and Lady Desmond's grand ball?" said she smiling. "Indeed I do," I exclaimed, enraptured to have learned at one *coup* that Dublin was the scene of our acquaintance and that Lady Desmond was a mutual friend. Here, however, the quadrille ended, and accepting my arm, my unknown belle turned her steps and mine, *malgré moi*, in the direction of the oft mentioned pillars, near which we had left her chaperons; but those deserving individuals had, with praiseworthy carelessness, disappeared, and my companion after looking round in vain, said, in a somewhat anxious tone, "they are certainly not here, I shall never find them again." I suggested the probability of nature requiring support, and that the refreshment room would be the most likely place in which to recover her lost guardians.

Assenting to this, and to my proposal of an ice, we were soon moving *en masse* with the other dancers towards the tea rooms, and now, freed *pro. tem.* from the incubus of cousins and brothers, whom my partner appeared to forget in her keen appreciation of the many ridiculous points in the mob around her, I felt my spirits rise to concert pitch, the embargo on my tongue removed, and, fancying myself most agreeable, the passage to the refreshment table seemed to me to be performed with miraculous rapidity.—Here, after a short inspection, we discovered the missing individuals, and hastening towards them with speed I thought rather ungracious, this puzzling, but fascinating girl, with an inclination of the head and a smile in which much suppressed mirth seemed struggling, dropped my arm and took her station beside her incongruous companions. But I was not to be so easily sent adrift; I had not served a twelve or thirteen years' apprenticeship to ball rooms to be thus dismissed if I choose to stay; so with a deferential bow, "I shall bring your ice here," said I; and rapidly securing one, I had the satisfaction of hearing her say, as I approached with it, as if in continuation of something, "knew him slightly in Dublin, a long time ago;" which, in some measure, placed me *au dessous des cartes*; for if only a slight acquaintance, I could not be expected to have very many subjects or reminiscences in common with her; so resolutely determined to stand my ground, have another dance, learn who she really was, and, if possible, lay the foundation of a future acquaintance, I took up a position beside the beautiful incognita, and ventured to discuss Ireland in a guarded and general manner, observing, with perfect truth, that two of the pleasantest years of my life had been spent there. I could perceive a decided increase of cordiality in Miss—— (what would I not have given to know the name) as I pronounced this eulogy on her native country—for I had soon guessed, by the indescribable spirit of frankness, arch, yet tempered with a certain dignity in its gay *abandon*, which pervaded her manner, that she was Irish—and just as she had turned laughingly to answer some playful charge against its characteristics, spoken apparently through a medium of mashed potatoes in his throat, by the man with the seals, Burton touched my arm, "Egerton, don't keep all your luck to yourself, introduce me."

"Hold your tongue—for Heaven's sake, my dear fellow," I exclaimed in a rapid aside—"don't breathe my name: at this moment I have not the most remote idea who I am, and am constantly on the verge of an unpardonable scrape; be silent and begone, I will tell you all afterwards." Silenced and amazed, poor Burton retired, and my unknown friend, turning to me as I stood elate at having conquered difficulties, again showed me my uncertain footing by observing—"But you used to cherish the most heretical opinions on these points, and offend me not a little by their open avowal." What an ill-bred savage she must identify me with! "Raw boys are always odious and irrational; you should not have deigned to listen to me," said I in despair.

"Oh! you were by no means a raw boy, you looked quite as old as you do now; besides, it is not half a century since we met," she replied, with another distracting look; and then—with a merry burst of apparently irrepressible laughter, in which, though I could not account for it, her friends and myself joined—it was so infectious, added—"You must forgive me, but really your reminiscences seem to be in such inextricable confusion, I cannot help laughing." In an agony lest all should be discovered—with the respectable couple before-mentioned for umpires, I urged in defence "that my memory was like the background of a picture from which one figure alone stood out clear and well defined." Then, observing that she was beating time to the sound of a most delicious waltz just begun, "Am I too unreasonable to ask for a waltz as well as a quadrille," I said. She half shook her head, then, smiling to her companions, observed—"It is so long since I had a waltz I cannot resist it; shall I keep you too late, *Caro Maestro*?" "No, no," said the lady with the cap, "we will go and watch you." In a few moments I was whirling my fair incognita round to the inspiring strains of the Elfin Waltz, then new and unhacknied.

What a delicious waltz that was! My partner seemed endowed with the very spirit of the dance: her light pliant form seemed to respond to every tone of the music, and not an unpractised *valseur* myself, I felt that I was, at all events, no encumbrance to her movements. I have never heard that waltz since—whether ground on the most deplorable of barrel organs, or blown in uncertain blasts from the watery instruments of a temperance band—without seeing, as in a magic mirror, the whole scene conjured up before my eyes: the intense enjoyment of my partner, which beamed so eloquently from her soft grey eyes, and spoke volumes of the nature it expressed: the childlike simplicity with which, when at length wearied, she stopped and said, turning to me—"You dance very well! How I have enjoyed that waltz!"

Many a stray sixpence those reminiscences have cost me! "But," she continued, "it must be late, and I cannot keep my friends any longer, let us find them as soon as possible." This was soon done, and, to my infinite chagrin, my partner declared herself quite ready to depart, pronouncing a glowing eulogium on my dancing. "You must have taken lessons since I had the pleasure of meeting you, for formerly—" There she stopped, for the philanthropic little cavalier she had called *caro maestro* interrupted her, wrapped a shawl round her, begging she would hold it to her mouth and keep that feature closed during her passage to the carriage, and led the way with his, I supposed, wife, leaving me still in possession of the little hand which had rested on my shoulder during the waltz. Now, or never, I thought.

"I fear I have induced you to prolong that waltz beyond your strength," for I felt her arm still trembling with the exertion, "you must allow me to assure myself to-morrow that you have felt no ill effects?"

"We are not staying here," she said with some hesitation; "we only came in for the festival and leave to-morrow."

Here we reached the passage, and *il caro maestro* proceeding to discover their carriage, I felt myself, of course, bound to divide my attentions with the lady of the cap, and, not choosing to prosecute my enquiries within range of her ears, I remained some time in a state of internal frying till he returned, and I was again *tête-à-tête* for a moment with their charge.

"But do you not reside in the neighbourhood?" We were close at the door. Smiling with her eyes, she shook her head, pointed to the shawl which she held to her mouth in obedience to the injunction she had received, and remained silent; I was distracted. "Forgive me," I exclaimed, "and pray speak; I must see you again."

"Come, my dear," cried my tormentor, "you'll catch cold, make haste!"

Her foot was on the step;—she was in, her guardian opposite her;—the glass drawn up. "Move on," said the policeman. One glance, as she bowed full of arch drollery, and I was left on the door step repeating, over and over, "No. 756—756," while my brain was in a whirl of excitement, my beautiful vision gone, and my only clue to discover her the number of a cab!

CHAPTER II.
THE SEARCH.

With a confused sensation of annoyance and ill temper, I opened my eyes at the *reveillé* next morning, and for some moments experienced that most painful puzzle of which few in this troublesome world of ours are quite ignorant, and which is one of the accompaniments of a great grief, videlicet, a perfect certainty that you are in the middle of something disagreeable, but what you are not sufficiently wide awake to discover. The process of shaving, at all times a reflective one, soon cleared up to me the mystery, and placed in full array the pros. and cons. of my chance of ever meeting my beautiful "incognita" again. Even my decidedly sanguine disposition was compelled to acknowledge that the "pros." were few indeed. Still, as I am not without a certain degree of resolution, especially when the matter to be decided on touches my fancy or my affections, I determined pretty firmly not to relinquish the effort to discover and renew my acquaintance with the belle of last night.

I had hardly commenced an attack upon my eggs and broiled ham, when Burton walked in, brimful of curiosity, as I had anticipated, and to avoid the bore of being questioned, I at once opened my budget, and told him the whole history down to my present resolution; the more

readily as he was a sufficiently high-minded gentleman-like fellow to talk to about a woman you respected; no blab, and a great chum of mine into the bargain.

I regret to say he laughed most unsympathisingly at my dilemma, and acknowledged that he had spent the greater part of the evening watching my proceedings, and speculating as to alternate expressions of triumph and defeat which swept across my countenance.

"I never heard of a more curious *rencontre*, the fair unknown must have had a very slight acquaintance with your prototype; and then your unequalled luck sending you to the right quarter for discovering the scene of the original acquaintance, and being sufficiently *au fait* at its habits and inhabitants, she could never have dreamt of having mistaken you. But how do you think of setting about her recovery?"

"Ah! there's the rub. An advertisement in the *Carrington Chronicle*—'If the young lady with the antique fan, &c., who danced the Elfin Waltz with an officer of H.M.'s —— Light Dragoons, at the ball last night, will send her address to the Cavalry Barracks, she will hear of something to her advantage,' would hardly do, eh? Besides, the admiration, however respectful, of a younger son, a landless Captain would not, I fear, come under the denomination of an advantage."

"And suppose you discover her, perhaps enshrined in some lordly old manor house, surrounded with all the prestige of position, what will you say for yourself as an excuse, for your bold attempt to see her again?"

"If I met her in one of her native mud cabins the difficulty, if it existed at all, would exist all the same for me; I feel that she is in herself equal to a ring fence of nobility. But," I continued, walking up and down the room with folded arms, the approved method of showing that stern determination, "*that* I can easily manage; I suffered too much, and felt my natural powers whatever they are, under too great a cloud from my false position last night, ever to submit myself to the same again. No, I shall boldly say that I had called to relieve my conscience by apologising for the audacity with which I had encouraged her mistake last night, but that I really had not sufficient strength of mind to deny myself the pleasure of dancing and conversing with her, and that in reward of my present endeavour to do right, I hoped she would not deny me the honour of her acquaintance; surely, the very effort to see her will be in my favour."

"Granted; *et puis*," said Burton coolly.

"For God's sake, my dear fellow, don't ask me to begin thinking of consequences *now*, for the first time in my life!"

"It strikes me, Egerton, that you are decidedly done for!"

"Not exactly. Yet I confess I would attempt and brave a good deal to hear the low tones of my nameless belle's rather remarkable voice once more. There was so much feeling in them. I am sure she sings. I fear the wish to see her is scarcely reciprocated, for I had at times a dread sensation from the bright laugh in her eye that somehow or other she was selling me. Probably she confounded me with some fool she had known formerly; flattering association! Yet, I am not without what are generally considered elements of success in the eyes of the fair sex! *Imprimis*, one dark brown curly *pow*, as our friends in the north say, two eyes ditto in tint, six feet high, and an air *distingué*. Eh! Burton, what do you say?"

"That you're an insufferable coxcomb, but the inventory is tolerably correct."

"Don't imagine that I consider the items of much value. None but inexperienced boys think that mere good looks are a passport to the heart of any woman that's worth having. We love beauty exclusively; but there is not a woman with an ounce of truth in herself that will not be instinctively attracted to a manly straightforward fellow, be he ever so plain; and, if he show her devotion, give him her whole heart as readily as if he was Apollo and Adonis all in one!"

"Hum," said Burton, "perhaps so; but to business. How do you intend to proceed?"

"First, to discover cab 756, and, from its interesting charioteer, learn at what hotel the objects of my search put up; there they will know their names."

"Suppose they were at a private house with friends."

"Pshaw! Suppose they had lodgings in the moon! Did I not tell you the young lady expressly said they were perfect strangers?"

"That might be *façon*."

"Burton! Another objection and you may look out for squalls! It is my only plan, so be silent."

"When do you set out upon the search?"

"This morning, while the memory of Jehu may be fresh; the moment parade is over."

"Shall we hunt in couples?"

"No, my dear fellow; in such a pursuit you would founder at the first fence."

"I confess my heart and soul are not in the business, so I might be an obstacle; besides—but there's the trumpet; adieu! May success attend you, and the spirit of a thousand detectives inspire you."

Parade over, I hastened to doff my uniform, and with a delightful sensation of excitement, which I never imagined I could experience in the depressed atmosphere of Carrington, I sallied forth on my quest, with a spirit of perseverance, which, if there be any truth in ancient proverbs, augured well for the accomplishment of my object. As usual in that horrid locality, the weather was

"dimmed dimp and disagreeable," as Mantilini says, and not more than three or four cabs on the first stands I passed; none of these sported the magic figures; while the innumerable ones which were in motion, seemed by some perverse and unaccustomed freak to drive with such unprecedented rapidity, that though keen of sight, I could not distinguish their numbers. After perambulating the town in all its intricacies, visiting every cab stand extant, within its compass, standing numerous charges from the vehicles themselves, and a terrific amount of slang, with the steadiness of the 42nd at Waterloo, I found myself towards five o'clock much in the same position as at starting. What! if my beautiful unknown should really have vanished from my sight for ever; and No. 756, a modernised edition of Cinderella's magic coach, be disenchanted into its original form of a vegetable marrow, the nearest approach, I believe, we have to a pumpkin! And Burton too!—he must be put down! Here a very dissipated looking cab crawled slowly by, drawn by a groggy horse, his bones showing in sharp angles through the oil cloth thrown over his back with a mockery of care, and driven by a small man with a face like a crumpled crab apple, and a hat in a galloping consumption. 755, "Come," I thought, "that's within one of my number; 755 ought to know something about 756." I elevated my cane. "Here you are, sir," the door was opened. "Stop," said I, "you look intelligent," for an immense amount of knowingness twinkled or rather floated in his watery red eyes, "and will perhaps assist me in a search I am making. Can you tell me where I shall find cab number 756? I have been looking on the cab stands all day, and about the streets and cannot see it any where; every other number almost have I seen, but 756 is invisible."

"756," said Jehu reflectively, and gazing sharply at me, "knows no such number, no such cab; cos why, sir, 756 was done for four months ago, and has he was unfort'nate, no one liked to take the cab—so its hoff the stans!"

Good Heavens! then was it a phantom conveyance? In deep disappointment I stepped in, saying "to the cavalry barracks." Instead of clapping the door with the usual jerk, the crumpled driver stood there, his face going through a perfect series of expressive wrinklings; at last, with an effort and a knock of his forefinger against the brim of his decaying hat, "P'raps you're a hofficer, a sojer officer, sir?"

"Yes," said I, rather surprised, "my regiment is quartered here."

"Ho! very good, sir! I thought as you were a detective hofficer, sir; no offence, sir?"

"Certainly not," said I, highly flattered at the mistake, "but why?"

"Cos, sir, you wanted so hard to get 756? I thinks he 'as summat against him, only you asked questions too straight forrard like; I know nothink about 756, we don't know much of each other, 'less we're on the same stan'; only of course, if you was a detective, I wouldn't peach."

"I assure you," said I, "I only wanted some information from 756, for which I would have rewarded him, and if you will help me—"

"I know, sir! Why you see if you've been a looking for him all day and asked on all the stans—"

"I did," said I.

"And could hear nothink, he'll not be on the drive, a good many numbers b'long to the 'otels, sir."

A glorious idea by Jove! of course they were at an Hotel! "You shall drive me round to them all," said I, "till we find him."

"And if that won't do," said my inimitable mentor, "You can summons him, the police will soon get him."

He slammed the door with a triumphant wink that beggars description, and off we went at a wonderful pace.

Many were the hostelries we visited, but in vain, Red, Blue, and White Lions, Hen and Chickens, Boars, Bears, Bulls, and even Nag's Heads; the entire animal creation, ignored the existence of "756."

"Least ways, sir," said my invaluable assistant, between whom and myself, a great degree of confidence had sprung up, as he prepared for the fiftieth time to mount the box. "Least ways, sir, we've done our best; you've been to all the 'otels as is good enough to keep cabs 'cept two, the 'Cat and Garters,' that's a poor 'un, and the 'Hangel' that's nearly as good as the 'Adelphi.'"

"To the Angel first then."

Arrived there, I went into the bar, and in the politest manner, asked its presiding goddess, if "756" was enrolled amongst the cabs of the establishment. "Can't say, sir; here, 'Enry,"—the waiter came forward—"756—sir! yes sir!" said the man unmovedly, little imagining the delight with which I heard his reply. I looked at my watch, seven o'clock, "let me have dinner in a private room," said I, and after fully satisfying my most admirable Jehu, I returned to the charge within.

"This way, sir," said the waiter, with a waive of the hand—I followed.

"Light a fire, it is very damp."

"Yes, sir."

In a few moments, a rosy cheeked chambermaid came in with a coal box and et ceteras, for a fire. This was what I wanted,—I drew a chair near, and after some observations on the weather, passed on to the probable numbers putting up at the house for last night's ball. "Lots of pretty girls from the country," I concluded.

"Yes, sir, we are still very full, though a good many left this morning."

"Indeed! I danced with a young lady last night, who was staying here, but I cannot remember her name, I want very much to find it out,—do you think if I were to describe her to you, you could tell me?"

"P'raps I might, sir; though often we don't know the names of the people who stop here occasionally."

"Well, this young lady was tall, and very fair, with brown hair, and a very pleasant smile."

"I scarcely think I know any particular young lady like that, sir; there's Miss Jones, and Miss Mary Peters, and Miss Majoribanks, Squire Majoribanks' daughter, all just like that, sir."

Confound it, my description would have suited three-fifths of the young ladies of great Britain.

"Yes, yes, but the lady I mean was with an old fattish man, black eyes, and thick voice, and a little elderly woman, who—"

"Oh, I think I know, sir: she had a little brown mole on her cheek, near the chin. A beautiful young lady!"

"Exactly," I exclaimed in delight.

"They were only here two nights, and I don't know the name at all; they were quite strangers."

How intensely annoying! "But is there no one in the house has an idea?"

"Well, I can't say, sir; you see we have been so busy; if it is any one it will be Bill, one of the cabmen, sir, he took them somewhere this morning; and I think they come from A——, but I'm not sure."

Here she began to gather her sticks and coals, and the waiter entered to lay the cloth.

"Is Bill in?" said I—"If so, send him up without fail immediately after dinner." "He is out just now, sir." "Well, the moment he comes in, whether I have finished dinner or not."

"Yes, sir," said both in chorus, and excited.

I had dined, and was languidly examining the interior of a tart, when the waiter entered again, announcing that "Bill was there, if I wanted him." "Show him in, by all means:" and Bill made his appearance, hat in hand, and stroking down his hair.

"Oh, good evening: your name is Bill, I understand, and I fancy you can tell me something I want to find out:—You drove a party from this hotel somewhere this morning, and I want to know their names: there was a little old lady, and a tall young one, with a short fat man, twinkling black eyes, eh! do you remember them?"

"Yes, I think I does," said Bill, slowly, as if confused by my rapid description, "fat short gen'lman, spoke thickish, I remember; called my horse a rough sketch—not filled up."

"Precisely; that's him, I am sure: what was the name?"

"Can't say, sir; I tuck 'em to the railway station: they was a-goin' to A——."

"How do you know?" "Why, as I was a-putting of the luggage into a truck at the station, a porter turns one of 'em up, and says—this is for A——, not Manchester: and puts it all into another truck; and then I just see a name beginning with a W, and that was all, as I'd to come back direct, for there's been a sight of work this week."

"Then none of you can tell me the name of that gentleman?"

"No, sir, they was quite strangers."

"Sorry to have troubled you; there—."

"No trouble sir, thank you sir."

Well, thought I, this is small success; still, it is better than nothing, and is a beginning. I'll keep up my courage, and take an early train to A—— to-morrow; I have often heard it is worth seeing, so first for my bill, and then for Burton.

The first was soon settled, and a short drive placed me in the barracks, where, not a little wearied with the day's tramp, I speedily luxuriated in dressing-gown and slippers, and detailed to Burton the wonderful perseverance and sagacity with which I had hunted up the track. "At all events, old fellow, I've got the *locale*; the opening is decidedly propitious, and to-morrow I start for A——; you shall hear the result on my return; for, as I am on duty, I must, I suppose, be back the same night. I can't ask you to take it again after to-day, but Sedley, or some one will." "Well," said Burton, "you deserve success, but what will you do when you get to A——? Go to every house and describe your incognita?—or ask for a list of the inhabitants, and hunt up every name that begins with W? Certainly the Commander-in-Chief has a great deal to answer for in exposing H.M.'s officers to the dangers of such a quarter, where the dearth of all natural occupations and amusements drives them to Fouché-ism. I would offer to go with you, but that I promised Sedley to go over to ——, just to have a look at M's mare, for after all he has entered Diana for the Cup, and I rather have a fancy to back her.

"Oh never mind! you know, old boy, in a hunt of this kind, I think that safety or success does not consist in numbers; I'll take my sketch book, though I've almost forgotten how to hold a pencil since we came to this infer—, but I hear a row on the stairs; oblige me, my dear Burton, by not mentioning my search nor its object to any of our fellows, if you've not done so already; they are

accustomed to my occasional artistic fits, when I cut you all, and"—

"I'm dumb," said Burton, "only don't have one in reality, for you grow too philosophic to be companionable."

As he spoke the door opened, and half a dozen noisy subs burst in to carry us off to Sedley's room, where devilled kidneys and Roman punch finished the evening.

CHAPTER III.
THE RENCONTRE.

THE quaint old cathedral town of A—— is some twenty-five miles from Carrington, and often an excursion-point to the inhabitants of the latter, as an excellent hotel rendered them tolerably secure of a good dinner. I had often threatened a sketching visit to it, which bad weather, and a strict routine of duty, in consequence of the expected disturbances, had hitherto prevented my fulfilling. It was, therefore, with no common alacrity I started on my expedition, armed with a large sketch book, which bid defiance to the suspicion of my brother officers. The weather though gloomy was no longer wet, and a walk of about half a mile brought me from the railway to the walls of the old city. Rough, red, and weather beaten, they, at the first glance, showed many a point equally available to a draughtsman or an enemy. Once considered almost impregnable, they are now chiefly valued as a dry and pleasant promenade for the citizens. I am no great antiquarian, but I believe those splendid old Romans, who have supplied all Europe with interesting relics, are accountable for the original foundation of A——. Various princes and potentates have added their endeavours, and at present it is, perhaps, the most picturesque old town in England.

At each step I took, some delicious carved gable or galleried front, overhung the street, mingled with modernised shops, it is true; yet as a whole, charming to my eye, of late accustomed only to the unmitigated squareness of modern brick and modern iron, accompanied, as they are at Carrington, by all the abominations of *soi disant* civilisation without one of its beauties.

Over all rose with a grave paternal air the Abbey towers, which seemed to infect the atmosphere of the place with a calm ecclesiastical repose well suited to its aspect; these general views I took in while pursuing my way towards the principal hotel, where I intended to put up more as an excuse for pushing my enquiries than for any other reason. During my way thither, diverted by the various sketchable points I constantly passed, the immense difficulties of my search did not so strikingly present themselves, till, entering the hotel I called for the landlord and the *carté*, and endeavoured to describe the man with the seals as a most agreeable individual whose acquaintance I wished to renew, but could only remember the first letter of his name; mine host was impenetrable, he knew many who answered to my description; but none I was likely to have met: there was Wilkins, the first butcher in the city; Wiggins, the tobacconist; Dr. Worthington, a highly respectable chemist; Mr. White, the methodist parson? No, no, it could be none of these. What! my beautiful incognita under the chaperonage of a butcher, a tobacconist, or a chemist. The landlord was departing, when a sudden spasm of memory seemed to seize him, "Could it be Winter? There was a very pleasant gentleman of that name lived in the Abbey garden; he painted pictures, grand pictures, and had a nice farm in right of his wife?" "Was he a gentleman?" "Oh yes, he used often to dine at the Dean's, and sometimes with the Bishop. Mr. Winter was thought a deal of?"

"Perhaps Winter was the name; well I will try. Let me have dinner at six, and now for the Abbey."

I spent two or three hours very agreeably in exploring the aisles and passages and beautiful choir of this irregular but impressive old pile, feeling the deep effect which may be produced by the simple sense of weight and size. The Town Hall, quaint enough, a subterranean chapel, the remains of the castle and a Roman bath, made up the sum of sight seeing, and still I pondered on the chances of "Winter" turning out to be the veritable "man with the seals." I walked on the walls and saw Prince Rupert's and King Charles' towers, and finally asked my way to the Abbey garden; it was a good sized square, near the Cathedral, full of substantial houses, and walking round I saw the name of J. Winter on the hall door of one of them. Should I knock? No, for that beautiful girl was not their daughter; indeed she seemed to exercise more authority over them than they over her, and I should only land myself in a scrape, perhaps lose by precipitancy. "No, I will not knock, but like the sage captain in 'Ali Baba or the Forty Thieves,' I will mark the house, and next week being off duty, take up my abode, sketch book, and all in the old city for a few days; and 'the Devil's in the dice,' as poor O'Brien of the 88th used to say, if I do not make the plump little artist's acquaintance before they are over." Thus resolving, I again turned to the walls, which here approached a river sufficiently broad and winding for beauty, though not for grandeur. This was the only side at which the town appeared to overflow the limits of its walls; but here a straggling and inconsiderable suburb stretched for a short distance, and even one unusually large church, with a lofty detached tower, seemed to have burst bounds and sought the vicinity of the river, towards which the ground sloped rather abruptly, and was altogether lower than that within the walls, from which a flight of rude steps led to the road beneath. A few remarkably fine old trees, a broken rocky red bank, scarcely high enough to be dignified with the name of cliff, at the other side of the river, with undulating meadows, and a distant line of blue hills beyond, made up a scene of much unpretending beauty. I gazed at it long with quiet

pleasure, anticipating my *séjour* among its attractions, and trying to persuade myself I had much better give up the pursuit I had embarked in with such ardour. "One throw more," said I half aloud, "and if this Winter does not turn out to be my man of the seals, I'll give it up; though by all the saints that adorn that old gateway, it would be for the good of my soul to see those eyes and hear that voice again; but pshaw! I've been in love before and found it not insurmountable, and now I am not in love, only curious." And with this wise conclusion I ate my dinner and returned to Carrington, where I was met by Burton's rather anxious, "Well, what success?" "Why, not much, but I'am going over next week."—He smiled.

A few days after, I fulfilled my intention, and installed myself and a formidable array of sketching materials at the Royal; and about noon the following day sallied forth to revisit the walls where they command the view which had so much pleased me. Proceeding leisurely along the thinly peopled streets, my eye was caught by a figure in strong contrast to all that had hitherto passed me; it was that of an old gentleman, tall, erect, and still vigorous; the greatest symptom of his age being the perfect whiteness of the profuse hair which curled, or rather waved, under his hat; the old fashioned buff waistcoat, blue coat, and gilt buttons, together with his colored cravat and frilled shirt, had an air of perfect freshness, making a *tout ensemble* thorough-bred and remarkable. An expression of easy benevolence sat on his aquiline and aristocratic features, and his bright blue eyes had an eagle look, not unmingled with humour. While I gazed unobservedly, for he was at the opposite side of the street, the countenance grew strangely familiar to me, and in a moment a curtain seemed, as it were, raised from my memory, and scenes in which we had both been actors stood before me with all the startling vividness that sometimes invests circumstances which the rush of life jostle for a while into hidden nooks of memory, where they are preserved, as it were, by darkness, from loss of their pristine colors.

Some ten years before, a raw stripling, I joined my regiment, when quartered in a singularly remote and beautiful district in the west of Ireland, where still, though much diminished, some remnants of the old national custom of duelling remained, chiefly among the inferior gentry. At a large gathering of the magnates and smaller fry too, some anniversary dinner, it was my ill-fate to get into an absurd dispute, which a little manly self-command would have soon concluded, but which the impetuosity and inexperience of boyhood rapidly fanned into a promising quarrel; my antagonist, a man sufficiently qualified by birth to associate with gentlemen, had not as yet by character quite forfeited the claim, so that affairs soon wore an unpleasant aspect. With heightened complexion and quickening pulse, stung by his insolent assumption of superior experience, I was imperiously reiterating some not very amiable opinion; when a gentleman of striking appearance begged, with polished courtesy, to know the subject in dispute, a mere trifle, the folly of which struck me as I explained it; then in few words, and with the consummate tact of a man of feeling, as well as of the world, backed by a tone of kindly authority his dignified appearance fully warranted, he stilled our dispute without one scratch to the *amour propre* of either party. Presenting himself as Colonel D'Arcy Vernon, he begged to have the pleasure of knowing me, adding, with a few laughing words on my impetuosity, "There is something in your spirit I can well sympathise with, and I hope you will do me the favour to accompany your brother officers, Captain Dashwood and Mr. Hauton, whom I expect next week for a little shooting at Dungar." I readily accepted; and often, while the regiment remained in that part of the world, enjoyed the hospitality of Dungar, and the real pleasure of Colonel Vernon's society. Of a high family, which formerly possessed an immense territory, now sadly dwindled, he had only just retired from the command of the County Militia, having never held higher rank than that of Captain in the Army. When I last saw him, though no longer keeping hounds, his house was a model of all that was most agreeable and luxurious, notwithstanding unpleasant remarks as to the incumbrances of his estates, rife almost at his own table.

To return from this long digression. Colonel Vernon had always held an indisputable place in my memory, not only for the kindness and pleasure I had received from him, but as a model of chivalrous courtesy. With the utmost amazement I now recognised him, and determined to renew an acquaintance; crossing the street with this intention, just as I reached him, a passing workman jostled him rudely and shook his gold headed cane from his grasp; seizing this opportunity for accosting him, I stooped for the cane and restored it to him. Raising his hat, and bowing with *sauve* grace, he said, "Sir, you are very good, I am extremely obliged to you."

I bowed, smiled, and still standing in front of him, said, "I fear sir you have forgotten my name as well as my face, nevertheless, Fred. Egerton, of the—— Dragoons, is most happy to see Colonel Vernon looking as well as he did ten years ago."

"Egerton, God bless my soul! so it is. My dear boy, I am truly glad to see you. I remember you perfectly, and 'gad, it takes ten years from my life to see you again."

And we were shaking hands with a forty-horse power of cordiality; then turning with me he took my arm.

"But what lucky wind has blown you here, Egerton?"

"Why, we are quartered at Carrington, and I am here on a sketching expedition; imagine my surprise and pleasure at recognising you in about the last place in the world I should have anticipated such a rencontre; but tell me, how goes the world at beautiful Dungar?"

I felt a sudden pressure on my arm, "Ah! my dear Egerton, I really do not know; poor Dungar has not been mine for several years; in short, I am living very quietly here; and having led the usual life of an Irish proprietor, short and sweet, I am now atoning for it; though God forgive the word, I am very happy, and you must come and dine with me in my crib, small as it is, for by gad I am very glad to see you, though till you spoke I did not recognise you, you have grown so dark and, I

fancy, taller."

"And your little granddaughter? Was there not one with you in Ireland, a pretty fair-haired child, who was always in mischief?" "Yes, yes," said he with a pleasant sparkle of the eye, "I'll introduce you to her." Talking copiously of past times and people, sometimes laughing at some droll reminiscence, sometimes glancing off from topics I could see made my companion wince, he directed my steps towards an old gateway, passing through which we pursued a narrow lane, between two rows of ancient red stone houses, opening on a road which I recognized, by a flight of steps descending from the city wall and the large old church in front, to be the same I had observed on my first visit. A low wall surrounded the church yard, in which were few graves, a great deal of grass, and several venerable yew trees; altogether a good sized enclosure. We entered it through a wrought-iron gate, of curiously ancient workmanship, standing between two large yew trees, and wide open; opposite to which a low deep arch of vast thickness showed the church door within. A square and lofty tower rose beside the church, independently, from the ground, at the western extremity where we entered; and the edifice itself, ponderous looking and most picturesquely irregular, stretched out for a considerable distance.

Following my companion by the path along the side of the church, and listening to and answering his observations, my eye took in, without an effort, these details, and reaching the east end, I perceived that much of this portion of the building was in ruins, although the exterior walls were still in tolerable preservation; several branches of trees waved over them, and here was a small but perfect round arch, surmounted by some old Gothic inscription I had not time to decipher, and filled up by a green wicket clenched with nails, which my kind old friend pushed open, and, shaking me by the hand, welcomed me to his new but diminutive territory with true Irish warmth, and yet with a tinge of melancholy. I could only return his pressure in silence, as I stood enchanted with the beauty of the spot into which I was ushered.

This end of the building had, as I have said, fallen into decay, and the present east window was some fifty yards within the old one, and peeped out through the feathery foliage of a splendid ash and several acacias, which grew almost against it, while the rugged red wall was covered with ivy and other creepers. The little enclosure formed by the ruined walls was divided in two by a row of three low ornamented arches, somewhat broken, and beyond these rose clear against the sky the lace-like tracery of the old window, much of which remained, together with the remnant of a round tower.

At the side where we entered, a magnificent spreading elm filled the inner enclosure with grace and shade, and both were carpeted with the greenest, softest grass; a few red and white roses mixed with evergreens adorning the larger of the two enclosures, and a straight neatly gravelled walk led to a door opposite, half glass, the entrance to a red stone cottage forming one side of the quadrangle; a time-worn Madonna and Child and a quaint-looking and rather plump Saint, saying his prayers, stood sentry right and left of this humble portal, advancing to which the Colonel rung the bell, observing, "You admire this? Kate will be enchanted; it was the Vicar's residence, but the present man is too great for so small a place, and lets me rent it This is not a common church, but managed I do not quite know how. They call it St. Augustine's Priory, and this cottage is known as the Priory House."

As the door opened, "Walk in; is Miss Kate at home, Nelly?"

This question was addressed to the servant, a fat dignified old lady in black, with an apron and cap of irreproachable whiteness; there was a volume of character in her rather wide mouth, slightly drawn at the corners, and the decided *nez retroussé* bespoke a somewhat sharp temper.

"No, sir, she tuck a roll of music, and Cormac went with her; I dare say she'll be in soon."

"Well, we'll wait for her," said Vernon, "but by the bye, Nelly, don't you remember this gentleman at all? he used to be often at Dungar."

"Why, now," she returned with a keen glance; "I *dis*remember; sure there was thousands of them, all with hair on their faces, just like his honour; but at all ivints ye're heartily welcome, sir, for its seldom I see a gentleman, barring the masther." Bowing and thanking her for the compliment, I followed Colonel Vernon across a little square arched hall, its only light derived from the glass door, to one opposite, leading into a pretty modern room, to which a bow window, occupying one entire side, gave light and space; it looked into a small pleasure ground where towered an ancient and gigantic oak, beyond which the bank sloped steeply to the river, winding blue and peaceful at its foot. The room was redolent of heliotrope and mignionette, and gay with brilliant dahlias, fuchsias, and, though late in the season, roses; a pianoforte, some worked chairs, and a print of John Anderson my Joe, then not quite so common as now, over the mantle-piece, were the only articles in the room at all removed from the simplest and commonest style of furniture. Yet a spirit of grace and refinement pervaded all its arrangements, and breathed, I know not what of purity and peace, into its atmosphere. All this time I was expressing my admiration of his domicile to my friend, the Colonel, who was evidently delighted by my encomiums. "Yes," he said, "quiet and snug, this and the dining room were additions by a wealthy rector some thirty years ago, but the little hall was formerly an entrance into a large confessional or penitentiary, and so was the outer gate leading to it; Kate can tell the whole story; I know it very imperfectly. By the way, what has become of that curious fellow with the stutter, that used always to forget the most essential part of every story?"

And we again plunged into reminiscences; half an hour must have elapsed, and I was just meditating some enquiries as to the existence in A——, of a party such as I had met at Carrington, when something scratched at the door; the handle turned, it opened, and in walked,

in shawl and bonnet, but in unmistakeable *propriâ personâ*, my beautiful incognita, my nameless partner, the object of my search! followed by a huge majestic looking dog, shaggy and stern. I had risen as the door opened, and now stood transfixed, while the lady started, and blushed to the eyes.

"Kate, my love," said her grandfather, "let me present Captain Egerton, an old acquaintance of mine."

"And of mine too, grandpapa," she replied, with a smile indescribably arch, and recovering herself completely, "I had the pleasure of meeting Captain Egerton last week at Carrington, and it appears we had known each other long ago."

"Oh! was this the gentleman; how extraordinary," and he laughed most heartily.

Recovering my self-possession, I said, "I have been most anxious to apologise for encouraging your mistake the other evening, and came to A—— in the vague hope of discovering you for that purpose; but since Colonel Vernon is, I see, acquainted with the affair, he will, I am certain, admit the temptation was irresistible."

"Faith I do, boy! but there was no mistake at all."

"How?" I asked, again plunged in bewilderment.

"Speak for yourself, Miss Kate," said the old gentleman.

"Indeed, Captain Egerton," began Kate with a bright blush and merry laugh, "I scarce know how to excuse my escapade; first you must know it was rather a sudden thought of my kind chaperons to go to the ball, and, knowing no one, we merely meant to look at the proceedings and return. We were standing near a pillar, and I was thinking how I would like to dance, when my attention was attracted by some one exclaiming, rather loudly, 'I have it; I'll pretend to recognise an acquaintance;—profound deference; get up a little conversation, eh?' I could not help smiling at the scheme, and, wishing to witness its *dénouement*, you may imagine my surprise, when a few minutes after you addressed me. I knew your voice; and, as you spoke, it glanced across my mind that it would be pleasant to dance, and better still to punish you with your own device by pretending to remember you. I was fully satisfied, for though a little nervous at first, I soon gathered confidence from your frequent confusion. How I wish, dear grandpapa, you could have heard our conversation; I do not think I ever was more amused; but, Captain Egerton, you certainly played your part with infinite tact, and sometimes, grandpapa, whenever he grew too much at his ease, I used to throw him into confusion by some question or allusion that utterly puzzled him." Then turning to me, "You must promise to forgive, and not think me very wild, but the temptation to retaliate was irresistible!"

"Forgive you, oh! Miss Vernon; what an uncalled for request; it is I that should pray for forgiveness for my presumption; I deserved a great deal more severity, and while I must compliment you for your inimitable acting, thank you for your forbearance and the delightful hour I passed in your society."

"Oh! I had the game in my own hands; it was you who played your part well."

"We are, then, quite reconciled I hope," said I.

"Perfectly," she replied, "but how did grandpapa find you out?"

Vernon explained; "I spoke warmly of the happy days I spent with him in Ireland."

"Dear Dungar!" said Miss Vernon softly, with her eyes bent down; she sat silent for a few moments, then, looking up with something that glistened like a tear, she looked at me steadily, and said, "Then I do remember Captain Egerton; he let me win the race on my pony Midge."

"The same," said Colonel Vernon. "Indeed, I am very glad to see you at the Priory," she continued, in her peculiarly frank manner, so cordial and so well bred; "and you are staying here for a few days?"

"Yes," replied the Colonel, "and will dine with us to-day, will you not Egerton?"

I accepted most readily, scarcely believing that my oft reviled luck was about to make me so ample a return for past disagreeables as to place me at once on a footing of intimacy with the much-admired incognita, now incognita no more!

CHAPTER IV.
THE DINNER.

The old Colonel continued for some time to engross the largest share of the conversation, pouring forth innumerable questions about the various members of our corps; of whom he appeared to have a remarkably clear recollection, interspersing his reminiscences with many a well told anecdote, while I answered his questions, and his granddaughter sat quite still, apparently lost in thought; her bonnet and shawl thrown carelessly off, one little hand twisting the ear of the solemn old dog, who sat upright beside her. The deep blush which had sprung to her cheek on her first perceiving me, had left a warm tinge behind, and although I did my best to bestow that profound attention on her respected progenitor, which is so essential a sign of good breeding, I could not prevent my eyes from constantly turning to assure myself that the graceful

figure so unconsciously attracting them was real, not a pleasing dream of fancy.

Suddenly Colonel Vernon ended something he was saying, I do not know what, with "you were too young to remember all this, Kate, but I think you said just now you remembered Captain Egerton."

"No grandpapa," with a clear calm look in my face, "not the slightest recollection of Captain Egerton; I only remember a very merry and young gentleman, whom, a long time ago, I used to think not too old for a playfellow at dear Dungar; but I should never in the least recognise him; and I had quite forgotten the name till you mentioned it."

"Well, really Miss Vernon, my memory is a little better than yours; Colonel Vernon will bear me witness, that one of my first enquiries, this morning, was for yourself."

"Quite true," said the old gentleman; "but I must own, Kate, 'twas evidently prompted by a most confused recollection."

"*N'importe*," said Kate, rising, with one of her bright smiles, "the least little bit of recollection, ever so tangled, is precious in my eyes; and grandpapa, as poor dear Mrs. Winter has scarcely got over her horror of my conduct the other night, let me calm her nerves by introducing Captain Egerton to her as a real orthodox acquaintance; I shall ask my little chaperon and her *caro sposo* to tea, shall I?"

She tied on her bonnet and threw her shawl around her without waiting for an answer; "come, Cormac; *au revoir*, Captain Egerton," and departed, followed by her canine squire.

"Yes," said Colonel Vernon, "they are really a very kind pair of oddities, and Kate has formed the warmest friendship for both. Winter is a painter of some talent, and a gentleman in the true meaning of the word, if not exactly in the conventional acceptation of it; and I am glad to secure such companionship for my dear child, who has but little to amuse her."

Poor Vernon seemed quite to cling to me, and insisted on walking me round the walls to the cathedral, the castle, &c., scarcely leaving me time to dress, as the dinner hour approached. I confess it was with a feeling of delightful excitement I performed my rapid toilet. It seemed to me that fortune, having satisfied her conscience by her recent frowns, was now yielding to her natural inclination to "favour the brave;" and ready, in the present sunny tone of my mind, to accept anything as a happy omen, I looked forward to long bright days, in what I was pleased to consider a prophetic mood.

I soon found myself coasting the Old Priory, and pausing for a few moments again, to admire the beautiful and singular little pleasure ground; looked about for the bell, as there was no knocker, when the door was opened by the watchful Nelly, who had espied my approach from some private loop-hole. She received me with a curtsey, the depth of which was calculated to impress my mind more with a sense of her own dignified position than any peculiar respect for myself; under its influence and her guidance, I crossed the little gloomy hall in a subdued manner, repressing a strong inclination to laugh as she opened the door, announcing in audible tones, *selon la regle*, "The Honourable Mr. Egerton." Colonel Vernon was standing by the window opening on the garden, and through it I could perceive his granddaughter gathering flowers or some such things. She bowed and smiled as she perceived me, and a moment after, stepping into the room, stood waiting until her grandfather had finished his account of our morning rambles, and arranged some half-blown damask roses in her dress, which by the way was gathered under a band that marked out her round and pliant figure to perfection, instead of terminating in an acute angle, as is the general fashion, why I cannot imagine; a more unnatural finale could scarcely be invented, although it must be a more daring spirit than mine that would venture to fix any limit to the creative genius of millinery; I suppose it is my taste for drawing that has made me so keen an observer of woman's dress, nor have I ever found my conclusions thereon false.

Miss Vernon, too, had the good taste to wear a great deal of soft lace, which set off her round white throat, making it look fairer still; and yet I have known some women turn from lace to linen, but these usually presided at Dorcas committees.

"Yes," said Miss Vernon, as her grandfather paused, "You must be tired. Do you know Captain Egerton; you seem to have infused new life into grandpapa, he has not walked so much for months, and yet he is quite fresh. I hope nurse will let us have dinner soon."

"How did that very dignified person find out I was chronicled in *Debrett*?" I asked. "I was amused and surprised at hearing myself so solemnly announced."

"Nelly seemed troubled in her mind with some indistinct recollections of you, and asked me if your brother was not a great lord, but I could not resolve her doubts, so——"

"Yes," broke in the Colonel, "she made the same enquiry of me, and I told her, her surmises were correct to the best of my belief; she piques herself on her knowledge of rank and precedence."

"What a relief it must be to her to think there is at last some good to counterbalance the crying evil of poor Mr. and Mrs Winter's degrading society: people like nurse are such strange mixtures —she would respect a gentleman in rags if he had a high-sounding name, and excuse his unpardonable extravagance—while she utterly despises a man of talent and respectability, because he earns money instead of wasting it!"

"Not a word against my sheet anchor, Nelly," exclaimed the Colonel.

"Oh!" said his granddaughter, "I am her warmest admirer, and—"

Here Nurse appeared in *propriâ personâ*, and announced dinner. "Give Kate your arm, Egerton: I

wish I had a fair lady to escort myself."

"Did you communicate your fears for my brother's health, when your nurse enquired for him?" I asked, as we crossed the hall to the dining room.

"*De grâce*," said Miss Vernon, "let that rest; we have little to reproach each other with. We both behaved very badly."

"At least, I had temptation to plead in excuse, but your motive was sheer mischief!"

"And you call that no temptation, do you?"

The dining room looked on a different view of the river and fields, and gave a peep of a wood on the opposite bank, which I had not yet seen. Its furniture bespoke the absence of wealth; the only approach to ornament was a gracefully shaped basket filled with bright flowers, which did duty as an epergne; while the well-polished plate, bright glass, and snowy table linen, were admirable substitutes for more costly addenda; and equally refreshing was the simple dinner of trout from the river, Welch mutton, and fresh fruit, to my palate, wearied with the hacknied *entrées* of our regimental chef.

Nurse performed the part of butler with much *empressement*, and occasionally, in reply to any question from her master, joined with much ease and self-possession in the conversation.

There was something deliciously new to me in the whole entertainment. My experience of dinners had been confined to the *olla podrida* of the mess table, and the equally long full dress affairs at which I had assisted, both in town and country, with an occasional scramble at an hotel or restaurant; but here there were grace and order that did not convey the idea of employing a host of attendants, and consuming a small fortune in its production; in short, it appeared to possess the charm of home, which nothing costly or studied ever conveys.

"You have a different view here," I observed, looking up from my plate to the prospect before me, "and I fancy it will afford some sketchable points."

"Then you sketch; how pleasant!" said Miss Vernon.

"It was a search for the picturesque brought him here," replied the Colonel.

"For the beautiful and picturesque, Colonel," I added.

"Well, well, they are generally united."

"Certainly, in this case," said I.

"I am glad I asked the Winters this evening."

"My dear master will give you a *carte du pays*; he has great genius, though I tell him he is too fond of bread and cheese subjects," observed Miss Vernon.

"Bread and cheese subjects?" I asked.

"He made an admirable picture of two boys eating bread and cheese, and is rather fond of that style of subjects, which I call, after his first attempt," she replied.

"I prefer bread and cheese to Gods and Goddesses myself, but Kate has nurse on her side. The jelly;—thank you. Nurse, how do you like Mr. Winter's pictures; you've seen them?" said the Colonel.

"'Deed then I have, sir; it's the scum of the earth he paints; a gentleman painther should be above such raff! Sure little Billy McKeogh, in Killeash, would never put a brush to anything ondher Jupither or Vanius, with crowns on their heads; and whin me uncle wanted a Coach and Horses for a sign, me bould Billy sis, sis he, I don't like thim low subjects, sis he, an he only a bit of a boy. Was the fish right, sir?" This conclusion was *sotto voce* and addressed with a confidential bend to her master's ear, but reached mine also. Miss Vernon, however, replied aloud and without a shadow of embarrassment at this domestic query.

"The fish was very nice, dear nurse."

"It was a *chef d'œuvre*, Colonel," I exclaimed; "we must try to win nurse over to us; Brougière, our *chef*, can do nothing like it."

"A few lessons from Mrs. O'Toole," suggested nurse, modestly.

"Ah yes, Mrs. O'Toole would be invaluable."

"See that, now," said nurse, with a triumphant look, as she retired.

"That's a great character," I remarked.

"And a good one; I do love nurse!" returned Miss Vernon.

"She is thoroughly Irish; an Englishman seldom appreciates such a character," said her grandfather.

"But I may do so, I am half Irish; my mother was a De Burgh," I exclaimed eagerly.

"Indeed!" said Miss Vernon.

"Oh, I remember something of that," observed Colonel Vernon.

"Besides, Miss Vernon, did I not serve an apprenticeship to all that is pleasantest in Irish life at Dungar," I continued.

"Bravo!" cried the Colonel.

"We admit you are half a compatriot," said Miss Vernon.

"It is curious, Kate's distinct remembrance of you when you used to play so good naturedly with her at Dungar, and her total unconsciousness of your identity at the ball."

"It is too provoking," I returned, "to think my stratagem was in fact unnecessary. Could I have discovered your name I am certain Dungar would have immediately presented itself to my memory. Miss Vernon looks like an Irish woman, and—"

"It is well you have so clearly made out your perfect familiarity with Irish life. The English ideal of an Irish woman, generally presents a broad face, wide mouth, and torn petticoat," said she, laughing.

I had sufficient tact not to reply, save by a look, which I was glad to perceive possessed sufficient eloquence to call up the *soupçon* of a blush into the speaker's cheek.

"Believe me, I tried hard for some legitimate introduction before I ventured on my bold attempt."

"Yes," said the Colonel, laughing, "you were, I remember, *remarkable* for your timidity."

"You certainly did look a little amazed when I pretended to recognize you," remarked Miss Vernon, "but only for a moment. There was a Mr. Harcourt I used to meet at Lady Desmond's, a very fine gentleman; something like you, with whom for the sake of consistency I chose to identify you. You see, grandpapa, I could not have danced but for some such *ruse*, and when I proposed merely looking on, I did not calculate how the sounds and sights of a ball-room would rouse the old leaven within me."

"My good star was in the ascendant; but for your admirable treatment of my audacity I should have been still ignorant that I had old friends within reach."

"You would have stumbled on me in some of your sketching expeditions," observed the Colonel.

I exclaimed hastily "Yes, but—" and stopping my imprudent revelations, rose to open the door for Miss Vernon, who left us, saying she had outstaid the proper interval for ladies. We soon followed her, and stood gazing at a fine harvest moon, which was gradually silvering the rocks and the river, as daylight disappeared, until the arrival of Miss Vernon's guests speedily broke in upon our pleasant reminiscent chat, and I was formally introduced.

Mrs. Winter looked rather puzzled. "I thought, my dear, it was all a mistake, your dancing with this gentleman?"

"Well, Mrs. Winter, the whole affair is now in such an entanglement of mistakes that I advise you not to attempt unravelling it; rest content with the assurance that Captain Egerton is a *bonâ fide* old acquaintance, fully recognised by grandpapa and myself."

"I am sure I never meant I doubted it," said Kate's ex-chaperon, with a little twittering embarrassed laugh, "but"—

"I am going to make tea, and you had better make your peace with Captain Egerton, whom you evidently doubt," returned Miss Vernon.

I seated myself beside Mrs. Winter and drew her into conversation, by praising the old town and its *locale*, with very genuine warmth; it was her native place, and my appreciation of it seemed to open her heart. We then in some imperceptible manner glided into natural history, and I was listening with every appearance of thrilling interest, to a circumstantial account of the habits and customs of a pug dog, called Fan, when Miss Vernon approached with a cup of tea, whereupon my informant rose, saying she would go to the tea table, around which we all now assembled.

"Captain Egerton is a brother of the brush, Mr. Winter," said Miss Vernon.

"Indeed!" he replied, with a sharp keen glance, "what's your style, sir?"

"Oh, I merely sketch; sometimes in water colours, but generally in chalks. Very rude attempts, I assure you."

"It's a glorious gift, any portion of power to transfer living nature to dead canvass or paper. Miss Vernon tells me that she would give worlds to be a painter, and yet she will not even try to draw."

"I *do* try," she exclaimed, "I feel my eyesight failing fast in the effort; but you cannot force nature, and she did not intend me for a proficient in your noble art."

"Pooh, pooh," cried Winter, "don't tell me that with your eye for the beautiful, for colors, for grace (look at the arrangement of those flowers, Captain Egerton), that you have no genius for painting; you have been shamefully neglected, and all your talents forced into another species of harmony, more fashionable but infinitely inferior."

And he puffed, wiped his forehead, and swallowed his cup of tea at a gulp.

"Mr. Winter, I will not allow you to misrepresent yourself," said Miss Vernon, "you love music in your very soul; do not pretend to think it inferior for the sake of argument!"

"It *is* inferior; painting appertains more to the intellect than music," rejoined Winter stoutly.

"We know that angels sing in Heaven, but we never heard of their sketching," replied Miss Vernon.

Mr. Winter, the Colonel, and I, laughed heartily at Miss Vernon's novel argument, and Winter, recovered from the momentary shock with a hasty "Pooh, pooh, Heaven indeed! Look at the lives of eminent painters, and then look at the lives of musicians."

"I would rather not," said his antagonist.

"Yes, it is strange," I observed, "but painters seem to be a less dissipated set of fellows than musicians; yet surely there is something of Heaven in music, and"—

"Captain Egerton," cried Miss Vernon, holding up a menacing finger, "are you taking that renegade's part?"

"Far from it, Miss Vernon; no art can surpass music in my estimation; but as to the lives of its professors, there is, alas! no mistake."

"I was a member of the Beefsteak Club in Dublin," said the Colonel; "we used to begin our evenings with the most divine duets and trios, glees and choruses, &c.; but towards the end, earth assumed the ascendant, and so great was its attraction, that by far the greater number of us were generally floored before the finale."

"But," said Winter, with a slightly contemptuous look, "I do not speak of mere performers, I mean composers, creators, men of genius!"

"*They* surely were men of good report, at least," began Miss Vernon.

"Miss Kate, if you please," said Nurse, looking in, "little Mr. Gilpin wants to spake to you."

"Oh, show him in, Nurse; say Grandpapa particularly wishes to speak to him."

The Colonel rose, and advanced a step or two towards the door, through which entered a little man, deformed and slightly lame, with the pale angular face usual in deformed persons, a pair of deep set vivid dark eyes, and a certain mild sad expression, which conveyed itself to you at once —though it could not be said to strike you—and saved him from the appearance of utter ugliness. He came forward with an uncertain timid manner, holding a broad dusky-looking book. The Colonel shook his hand with an air of extreme cordiality and high-bred respect, exclaiming, "We had almost given you up." Miss Vernon, who had also risen, now greeted him. "Did you not get my message, Mr. Gilpin? I called at your house to-day to beg you would join us this evening."

"No," said a remarkably rich soft voice, "none was given to me. I came here to show you a treasure I lately discovered in an old chest in the Chapter house," and he handed her the book.

Miss Vernon opened it with looks and exclamations of delight, and Winter joined the group.

I was left seated with his wife, the only member of the party who had not risen to greet the new comer. I turned an enquiring glance towards her, to which she answered, in a low tone, "Mr. Gilpin, the Organist of the Priory Church; he is an excellent musician, and a great favorite with the Colonel and Miss Vernon."

Here Miss Vernon interrupting her examination of the book and laying it on the piano, said, "But I am forgetting to offer you any tea, Mr. Gilpin,"—and placing a chair beside her own, returned to the tea table; while Colonel Vernon, with a wave of the hand towards me, exclaimed, "There is the reason we particularly wished you to join us this evening, my dear sir; in order to make our old and new friends acquainted. Let me introduce Captain Egerton to you, Mr. Gilpin; Captain Egerton, an old Dungar friend of ours, whom I picked up very curiously this morning."

Mr. Gilpin returned my salute, and looking at me somewhat keenly, drank his tea; continuing to converse in a low tone with Miss Vernon, who turned on him, from time to time, such beaming looks of kindliness, that it required all my consciousness of his great personal disadvantages, and grey hair to boot, to prevent the "green-eyed monster" from taking possession of me.

The Colonel devoted himself to Mrs. Winter; sometimes joining in Miss Vernon's conversation, while Mr. Winter, turning to me with much civility, placed himself at my service, so far as directing me to the antiquities and scenery, best worth viewing went; "further would be useless, for every eye sees its own beauty and its own sketch!"

Fully assenting to this, we glided into pleasant conversation on the respective merits of ancient and modern painters, till, at last, Miss Vernon rang the bell, to dismiss the tea apparatus, and order lights; "although it is almost sacrilege to shut out that lovely moon," she added, smiling.

"No," said Winter, "a soliloquy or a *tête à tête* is best by moon-light; but for a social party, large or small, it is too bold and pure a light; we'd find our spirits flag under its influence."

"Then let us shut it out speedily," said the Colonel, drawing the curtains and opening the piano; "I suppose, Egerton, we may include you among the lovers of music?"

Assenting to this readily, I moved to where Miss Vernon was again inspecting the dusky book. "May I see the treasure you have found?"

"Oh yes, you see it is an old book of chants, how curious the square-headed notes are! I suppose they are genuine Gregorian; have you tried any of them yet, Mr. Gilpin?"

"Almost all; some are very rude, but many of them are beautiful; I long to try their effect with several voices; and with your assistance, as you say you will be so good, I hope soon to have the children in training."

"If you think I am capable."

"Kate," said her grandfather, "Winter has brought his violin; give us that German duet I like so much."

After a little tuning, they began, and kept most perfectly together; I have seldom heard a more charming performance. Both evidently understood, not only the music, but each other's feeling of

it, while Miss Vernon's round white fingers seemed to make a living, feeling creature of the inanimate instrument.

"Well, that is well done; you improve," I heard the Organist say, in tones of great satisfaction, while we were more noisily applauding; and Kate looked up in his face with such complete reliance on his judgment, and delight in his approbation, that I felt a strange thrill of vexation to think how dubious it was that such would ever be called forth by me.

Mr. Gilpin, now taking Miss Vernon's place at the piano, poured forth a beautiful "*sinfonia*," I think they call it; and Miss Vernon accepting the seat I vacated for her, sat listening and abstracted, her full eyes gazing on some imaginary object, unconscious of all around her; a slight tremor sometimes passing over her curved upper lip.

Rousing herself with an almost imperceptible sigh, she turned her eyes full on me, interrupting abruptly the long gaze in which I had indulged, "How beautiful! what a story that music seems to tell." At this moment the music, slow and of touching sadness, had glided by a succession of sweeping chords into a bolder and more martial strain.

"You have a great deal of imagination, Miss Vernon."

"That is a polite way of saying you are a visionary."

"No, no, there is nothing visionary about you, but I respect imagination."

"Then you are a rare specimen of your sex, Captain Egerton."

"Yes, we have less imagination, but then our life is much more practical."

"Has yours been a very practical life?"

"Mine! do not ask me to look at it."

She laughed low but merrily.

"This has been a delightful evening to me; I have to thank you for a peep into a new world, Miss Vernon."

"Oh, you like it because it is new; you would soon tire of our quiet world, and I do not see why I am to be thanked for it, grandpapa"—

"What was it brought me to A——? solely my wish to see and apologise to you."

"Captain Egerton, you cannot suppose I will credit such a *conte*; besides, it is not necessary; you see how welcome an old Dungar friend is; why seek to render assurance doubly sure, by trying to persuade me you came here in search of a person to whose address neither you nor any one had the slightest clue?"

"Doubt my word if you will, Miss Vernon, I can only say that not many hours after you left the Angel Hotel, I there discovered traces, certainly faint enough, which were the cause of my visit here."

At the name of "The Angel," Miss Vernon started, colored slightly, and then with a smile said,

"Well, I can say nothing more. What a pity such energies as yours should be lost in H.M. Light Dragoons."

"Then you have no very high opinion of my profession?"

"Far otherwise, it is necessary, and what is necessary—"

"Kate, my dear, give us that serenade I like so much," said her grandfather.

Many a year is past since first those rich soft tones swelled on my ear, as Miss Vernon sang the following words, but they come back as vividly to my memory as if they had been heard but an hour ago!

"Sleep, Oh, beloved! while with Angel guard
I watch o'er thy soft repose;
May the silent sense of my sleepless love
Tinge thy dreams as thine eye lids close!
Sleep, Oh, beloved one! sleep.

"Breathe o'er her hushed and slumbering soul,
Spirit of truth and peace!
Whisper of Heaven, and love, and faith,
Bid doubt and dread to cease.
Sleep, Oh, sleep!

"Then wake with dewy rosy lips,
And eyes of deep calm bliss,
To greet the heart that yearns for thee,
With morning's loving kiss!
Sleep, oh, beloved! sleep."

The music was peculiar, and the last note of each verse sustained, and dying away with an expression of unutterable tenderness, made an indelible impression on me. "What a heart that girl must have," was my only clear idea, as I stood silent with folded arms, utterly unable to say a word of the exquisite pleasure she had afforded me.

"After that," said Winter, at the end of a chorus of applause, "not another word or note. Good

night, Colonel; you Nightingale, *la vostra bocca sana qual che tocca!*"

I joined the others in making my adieus; heard something about Mr. Winter calling on me the next day, and walked to my hotel, through the moonlit streets in a state of trance, lulled by the music and indescribable effect of the whole evening, into a delicious calm, which raised me *pro tem.* far above all sublunary interests.

CHAPTER V.
SKETCHERS AND SKETCHES.

How well I remember the philosophic contempt for wealth with which I awoke the following morning! Here, I thought, is grace, refinement, and good breeding, in unpretending guise, the very simplicity that surrounds them seems to give additional force to their effect—nothing appears out of place, no London bred cook or butler ever turned out a more delicious or better served repast, than Vernon's dinner yesterday. What is the magic of all this? Winter is a curious specimen of humanity, yet he filled up his niche in the little party as no one else could; nor can I fancy him out of his element in any society. What an extraordinary contrast between Kate and that little deformed organist! Unfortunate creature, and yet he appears perfectly happy! With what *empressement* the old Colonel and his sweet granddaughter welcome him. And Kate herself, there is so much happiness in the calm repose of her countenance, and her brilliant smile; one would imagine her to be of fortune's favourites, the most favoured, yet what a life of complete retirement she must lead. She said she had not worn an evening dress for two years, till at that lucky ball. Is her society made up of a brace and a half of oddities and a big dog? I wonder how my sister Mary or Lady Georgina Lorton, or fifty others of my acquaintance, would stand such a life. They talk of a couple of months at the family seat, as if it was a life-long banishment on some desolate island. Yes, it must be a terrible life for her, cut off from all the *bienséances* of society—but where could I have spent so pleasant an evening? Where else have been so little bored by hacknied conversation? Thus I wandered through the vast field of speculation, opened up to my imagination by my yesterday's adventure. I could not bring myself to compassionate Vernon for his evident change of fortune, such a companionship and such a cottage must be well worth Dungar with all its beauties. Though, to be sure, he would have had Kate there; her manner, too, so unlike that of most women I had met. It never appeared to challenge admiration or to expect *les petits soins*; all was frank, cordial, kindly, real, yet monstrously unflattering to one's *amour propre*; though at times there was a tinge of coquetry in her way of evading, or turning into ridicule any attempt at a compliment. She certainly is charming, and I must make the best of my time while I am here; I suppose I must return to-morrow, so—

"Mr. Winter"—said the waiter.

"Good morning, Captain Egerton," said that worthy personage, apparently through a thicker stratum of mashed potatoes than ever, "I thought I'd catch you before you started on any explorations."

"You are very good; I am particularly fortunate in securing such a cicerone."

"I am very happy to be of any use to you; sketching, I fancy, is not a common taste among men of your profession?"

"I have encountered a good many draughtsmen among my brothers in arms, and it is always a useful accomplishment for military men, but I do not think it is a common taste in my profession."

"No, the learned professions have no room for beauty in their crowded life, and the idleness of yours is generally too strenuous for—but I am blunt."

"You say but the truth, Mr. Winter; yet we are not on the whole as black as we are painted. Who is? This old town seems rich in antiquities."

"Yes, there is nothing in England like it, and, as Miss Vernon says, its solemn rugged towers and churches give the idea of a calm but stern old age after a stormy impetuous youth."

"How agreeable Colonel Vernon is; I was very glad to meet him again."

"Yes, he is a perfect specimen of a style fast disappearing. I always wish to see him at the head of some noble establishment, because I am a fool—much better for him as it is."

This was uttered with great impatience of manner, and I listened to it with no small amazement.

"Better?" I echoed.

"Yes, sir," reiterated Winter sharply, "it takes a severer bit to break a high mettled steed into useful paces than your half breeds require! But do you feel inclined for a stroll this morning?"

I replied in the affirmative, and we sallied forth together.

I walked on silently, revolving my companion's last sentence, and voting it terribly harsh, yet not liking to draw him into any discussion of it, as I felt instinctively that we viewed life through different media.

He led the way through a narrow gloomy street, overhung by the upper stories of the houses, and garnished with a species of gallery, to which these projections served as a roof.

"There," said he, pausing, "is the old residence of the Bishops of ——, and a very curious building it is."

I looked with great interest at the heavy carved gables, adorned with royal and episcopal arms, and divided into compartments containing carved representations of Adam and Eve, a tree and a serpent, all of equal dimensions, Cain and Abel, Balaam and his Ass, Abraham, in trunk hose, about to sacrifice Isaac on a small reading desk, with various other specimens of carving. The wooden pillars supporting the fabric over the gallery I have mentioned were carved and twisted into the most grotesque and awsome shapes, which only some tortured spirit could have imagined!

"This alone is worth a visit," said I, after a long and curious gaze. "What may be the age of this building?"

"That is not easy to say. The initials on that centre scutcheon, 'J. R.,' you see, would lead us to suppose it was not older than the beginning of the seventeenth century, but it has always appeared to me that these letters and the coat of arms they surmount are of a more modern date than the other ornaments on the building or the building itself; but though I have searched some old chronicles I cannot satisfy myself on the subject."

"At all events it shall be No. 1 of my sketches. Have you no favourite theory as to its date?" I asked.

"No, I always endeavour to curb imagination."

"And you an artist!" said I.

"Yes," he replied, "in my studio imagination is a welcome guest, but even there she must submit to the bridle. She may create materials for a subject, but should never be allowed to tamper with those already in existence?"

"I do not like your view on this point; surely imagination is the source of much exquisite and innocent pleasure?"

"I see," said Winter, "you will side with my fair antagonist, Miss Vernon; she talks whole volumes of the prettiest fantasies on this subject, and never has patience to hear my solemn assurance that imagination, though a grand and glorious gift, requires strong coercion. But then we never agree, although we are fast friends."

"My dear Sir," I exclaimed, with some warmth, "you and I may require to rein up ours occasionally, but I do not suppose Miss Vernon's imagination ever presents any but the holiest images."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Winter, "ha! ha! Kate is a more than commonly good girl, but she's not an angel;—I would not love her half so well if she was! And, take my advice, do not tell her your opinion of her, or in spite of her having nearly as brilliant a fancy as your own, she'll make you laugh at yourself!" I had too much *savoir faire* not to receive this sally with a smiling acknowledgment of its wisdom, although it grated on my feelings; and in my heart I experienced a sensation approximating to a lively hatred to my intelligent cicerone, who continued—"I have made several sketches of this old house, but I find that carved front does not tell well in a picture; large proportions, plenty of light and shade, are what we want for effect."

From this point a neighbouring flight of steps conducted us to the walls, from which we gazed on many a lovely picture; Winter expatiating on their peculiar beauties as a connoisseur dwells on the excellences of some oft-studied *chef d'œuvre* of art.

"As for the legends," said he, "in which every inch of this ground is rich, you must get Miss Vernon to tell them to you; I would make a sad *olla podrida* of them were I to try; but she is perfect in it, and, with Gilpin's assistance, has acquired some large additions lately."

"That Mr. Gilpin seems an oddity," I observed.

"Yes, poor fellow! and yet if his form was as straight as his heart, you would find few as beautiful. It would be impossible to tell all the good he does, and that with the miserable stipend of an Organist. *Carambo!* he might put our pampered priests to the blush, if such a thing were possible."

"He seems to be a great favourite with the Colonel and Miss Vernon," said I.

"Yes," returned Winter, "there is no one ranks so high in Miss Vernon's estimation. What between his music and misfortunes, he has got the *entrée* of her heart completely. His father was a clergyman of a respectable north country race, blessed, of course, with small means and a large family. I fancy poor Gilpin's must have been a sorry lot among a number of rough Northumberland lads; his deformity shut him out from arms, church, bar, and every profession; so he draws an indifferent existence from the art he so much loves. An invalid sister lived here with him. It seems their better-to-do brothers remembered to forget their unaspiring relatives, and the quiet neglected organist and his sister were all in all to each other, until about a year after the Vernons settled here, when, after a long and steady decline, she died in the same gentle unobtrusive manner she had lived, and poor Gilpin has been a lonely man since."

"It is impossible," continued Winter, striking his stick against the ground and speaking more thickly, which I began to perceive he usually did when excited, "it is impossible to describe Kate Vernon's thoughtful delicate kindness to the poor forlorn creature; faith, sir, it makes me ready to admit she is an angel when I think of it."

I mentally retracted my previous conclusions touching the speaker.

"Humph, ha!" said Mr. Winter, wiping his forehead, "I wonder what induced me to prose away about an unfortunate hump-backed organist to a moustached man of fashion; I am a great fool!"

"Mr. Winter," said I, gravely, "you must think moustaches and fashion terrible petrifiers of the heart, if you imagine such a tale as you have just sketched could excite no interest or sympathy in mine; believe me, there are few so thoroughly good for nothing, and I trust I am not in the minority."

"*Cospetto*" exclaimed the impetuous little man, "I don't think you are; and, Captain Egerton, do not set me down as a gruff uncourteous dog. You see what I am when I let out; am I not right to keep both bit and bridle on my imagination? Now I must leave you, as I have some business to attend—rather an unusual thing for me. I'll trot you out to-morrow, or any time you like, but I think I have put you on the best track for the present."

"Thanks to your judicious guidance; yes, I have enjoyed the ramble I assure you."

"Well," resumed he, "in disavowal of fashion and petrifaction, will you drink tea with Mrs. Winter and myself at half-past six this evening. I'll make the Vernons come. I have lived so much on the Continent that I cannot get into the absurdity of fashionable English dinner hours, but take mine when my stomach cries cupboard, which is generally at two o'clock."

"I shall be most happy," said I.

"Well, good morning, be diligent; by the way look in early, shew me the result of your labours, and take a peep at my studio."

"A thousand thanks, yes."

It was still early, too early I thought for a visit to the Priory House, so arming myself with sketch book and pencil, I returned to an old tumble down carriers' inn, which had struck my eye while rambling with Winter, and commenced transferring it to paper; while my mind was filled with another picture, that drawn by Winter, of the lonely deformed organist and the angelic kindness of Kate Vernon.

"What a fate!" I exclaimed aloud; but with the sounds of my own voice, came the recollection of the peculiarly peaceful expression of his face! There was no misery of look, none of that restlessness which the perpetual mortification of such a life might well be expected to produce. "No, he is happy! happier perhaps than I am, with youth and health and this straight strong frame, and my rightful place among the nobles of the land; and wealth—*halte la!* have I wealth? Yes, compared with him, but by no means sufficient to marry. Then I never dreamt of marrying. No! I have every thing, and this poor fellow nothing, and yet, would he change with me? By Jove, I'd take the long odds he has not a dunning tailor; that's an item in my 'haves,' and his 'has nots,' I forgot to enumerate; but its must now be time to call on Kate.

"To greet the heart that yearns for thee."

I cannot get that air out of my head."

The sun, which had all the morning been obscured by heavy clouds, shone out with the brilliancy and warmth of June rather than September. As I entered the little garden before Colonel Vernon's cottage I paused a moment in the vain endeavour to decipher the inscription over the gateway; a B, a C, and a very faint D were all I could make out.

"The masther's out, but Miss Kate's within, Sir," was Nurse's reply to my queries.

"And I hope you are quite well yourself, Mrs. O'Toole," said I, in a state of beatitude.

"Indeed, an' I am, sir, glory be to God," and she opened the door, saying familiarly, "here's the Captin, Miss Kate."

Miss Vernon was seated at a writing table in the window, copying out of the large dusky book the organist had given her. The window was open, and the light breeze gently stirred the white muslin curtains, and brought a thousand delicious odours from the garden and fields; while beyond it river and rocks, and swelling upland and woods, and the distant spire of a village church, lay bathed in a flood of glowing golden light, which seemed to endue every object with beauty by the sole agency of colour.

Kate rose to receive me with her sparkling smile, dispelling the gentle gravity which always characterised her countenance when in repose, and made it so strangely different according as her mood changed.

"Then you have missed grandpapa," said she, giving me her hand, "I told him I thought you would be out from what I heard you say to Mr. Winter last night."

A quick impulse of vanity suggested—"could she have remained at home in expectation of my advent?" but a glance at her bonnet and shawl, as if just thrown off, and the slight disorder in the rich masses of her hair, completed my conviction that she had but just come in.

"How sorry I am to have missed Colonel Vernon," said I, hypocritically; "I have been all the morning rambling about with your friend Mr. Winter, and have to thank you for introducing me to so admirable a guide."

"I knew you would like him; but sit down, I am sure grandpapa will return soon. I see he did not intend to go farther than your Hotel, or he would have taken Cormac."

And she pointed to the grave old hound, who lay stretched in the sunshine before the window and had partly risen on my appearance.

I drew a chair opposite Miss Vernon, who resumed her occupation.

"I am writing out the parts of some chants separately," said she, "not a very absorbing employment; Mr. Gilpin wishes his choir to get them up, and I volunteered my services."

"Rather troublesome," said I, absently.

"Oh no," said she, "I have nothing particular to do just now, and it is so dull to be idle."

"I fancy A——, delightful as it is in our antiquarian or picturesque point of view, must be rather too tranquil a sojourn for so accomplished a valseuse as yourself."

"I should have quite as little society anywhere else, and not half so many real *agrémens*; I never find it dull."

"How does the Colonel amuse himself?"

"Ah!" cried Miss Vernon with great earnestness, "I often think of that; it is such a change for him; such a total break-up of all his accustomed ways. I am often at my wits end to amuse him, yet he bears it wonderfully; how do you think him looking?"

"Wonderfully well! never better, but in this sweet place with you he cannot be unhappy."

"God forbid he should—a little sad sometimes."

She was silent for a few moments, and then resumed her pen. I cannot describe how charming this visit was to me. Miss Vernon's little white hand wrote on busily all the time, while sometimes glancing up at me, but generally looking at her work. I felt none of the *gêne* of a formal *tête à tête*, where the visitor and visited sit both upright, compelled to stare at each other; but leaning back in my chair, I talked and gazed at my ease.

"I can hardly believe the evidence of my senses that I am in calm conversation with the *incognita* who so puzzled me," I resumed after a pause.

"Yes, it is very curious, but still more so that the discovery of our mutual acquaintance with Lady Desmond led to no *dénouement*," said my companion.

"I knew her no further than meeting her frequently in society in Dublin, where I was about four years ago, with a cousin of mine, who was on the staff."

"She is a second cousin of grandpapa's, and I was a good deal with her just before we came here: not long, I fancy, after you had known her; and knowing how general her parties and invitations were, I really at one time imagined I might have met you at some of them: I little thought what a much older acquaintance I was dancing with."

"She is a handsome woman," I observed, "and, I fancy, not unlike Colonel Vernon."

"How brilliant and how kind she is," she exclaimed, "I often wonder the hurried life she leads gives her space to breathe! I doubt if she has time to be happy."

"Happy! Miss Vernon: do you think happiness is to be found in the stagnation that some dignify with the name of tranquillity? My least distinct idea of happiness is the hopeful exertion of every faculty—mental and physical—in search of what we never find; but inaction is misery."

"There is some truth in what you say," replied she, "but all my ideas of happiness here and hereafter, are concentrated in the word 'peace!'"—and she paused, and gazed out into the sunshine with such an expression of calm,—of harmony, if I may so term it—that I felt tempted to ask her what spell had stilled her heart into such deep repose.

"Did you make any sketches this morning?" she asked, rousing herself from her thoughts.

"One or two rough outlines; but I think I could make a very good picture from this spot," said I, rising to look through the window.

"Then," said Miss Vernon eagerly, "pray, pray do, Captain Egerton, and give it to me; it will be an inexpressible pleasure to me to have some memento of this quiet, happy spot, when I am, perhaps, far away."

"I will set about it to-morrow; but have you any notion of leaving A——?" I asked.

"Oh no,—I only spoke from a presentiment I often feel, that we will not always rest calmly in this quiet nook; the waters of life will rise some day, and sweep us out again into the noise and tumult of the world!"

Here the old dog, disturbed by my movement, slowly raised himself, and entering by the window, laid his large stern head, with a sort of sigh, on his mistress's arm.

"Ah, Cormac, good old friend," said she, putting her arm caressingly round him, "no tumult, however rough, shall separate us; you and I, and grandpapa, and nurse, a goodly company, *n'est ce pas?*"—

"Captain Egerton," said she, rallying and laughing, "don't quiz my presentiments, but sketch me this scene."

"With the greatest pleasure; and now I remember, I have some old drawings of Dungar somewhere: I'll look out for them, and bring them over here the next time I come."

"Oh thanks, a thousand hearty thanks: they will be treasures to me, indeed, and to grandpapa! When will you come again?"

"I can hardly hope for a repetition of my delightful visit for ten days or a fortnight: but on the first

possibility of leave I will return."

"Do you know I took a long walk with nurse this morning; we had some business in that wood I showed you from the dining room, and I saw so many beautiful pictures *en route*; I must show you the walk. I do not think Mr. Winter knows it very well, we cross a delightful ferry to get to it, and—"

The door opened and the Colonel entered.

"Ah! Egerton, I have just been to your hotel, they told me you had gone out only a few minutes before, and I thought it likely you would make your way over here; I met Winter, Kate, and he dragged me off to pass sentence on a pony he wants to buy, which he described as a quiet, gentle animal Mrs. Winter might herself drive; but I saw at a glance that the creature was blind of one eye, at least, and I strongly suspect he is broken winded; however, I rather fancy Winter has set his heart on the purchase, for the pony has a shaggy picturesque appearance, and would look charmingly in a sketch, with a few autumnal trees. Oh! I feel a little fagged;—and have you done much in the way of sketching, this morning, Egerton?"

"No, indeed, Colonel, I do not feel sufficiently at home here yet; I have not got my eye familiarised to the style of the place; I intend to make great progress to-morrow. I cannot tell you how charmed I am with this old town, it is so utterly dissimilar to Carrington, and its abominations."

"Ah!" said the Colonel, "the tone of society is not very thorough-bred there, I suppose; but are you quite just in judging the worthy citizens, by a standard they were never intended either by nature or art to reach?"

"That is a question I have never asked myself, and probably never shall."

"Good breeding," continued Colonel Vernon, "must be innate often; there's Winter, you see, he has evidently risen from the ranks, yet one feels at ease in his society, and free from all chance of his rubbing you up the wrong way, as *parvenus* are apt to do."

"Winter belongs to a class distinct from, and superior to class distinctions."

"We are allies, from this moment, Captain Egerton," said Miss Vernon.

"By the way, Kate, Mrs. Winter wants you to drink tea with her this evening; I have promised for you and myself," observed her grandfather.

"Of course, I like to drink tea at the abbey gardens; everything is so pleasant and friendly; are you to be of our party, Captain Egerton?"

"I am happy to say, yes."

"Then you had better join our early dinner, for Winter piques himself on keeping continental hours, and I believe his tea is considerably earlier than a London *dejeunér*" said the Colonel.

"Many thanks, my dear sir, but I have already eaten a substantial luncheon, and intend acquitting myself with credit at Mrs. Winter's tea table."

"Oh!" said Miss Vernon, laughing, "some prophetic vision must have warned you, that she is famous for hot cakes."

"New style of life this, eh! Egerton?"

"I enjoy it extremely, and you Colonel. I cannot fancy any thing more opposite to your life in Ireland."

"True, true," he replied, "yet I am very happy. Then, at my age, a placid routine, unexciting, and calm, is naturally congenial; I sometimes wish for a little more fellow-feeling on particular points than Winter or even Gilpin can offer me. Kate is generally a great sympathiser, but I confess, my dear Egerton, that a little chat with you on old times and topics does me infinite good."

"Captain Egerton says he will come back soon again, grandpapa, and bring me some sketches he has of dear Dungar."

"A treasure trove, Kate! But must you leave us so immediately?"

"I regret to say my leave expires to-morrow evening; I must return to Carrington, but will take the last train, half-past eight I think; and now I will say good-bye until this evening, Colonel. I want to get a few more outlines into my portfolio before Mrs. Winter's hot cakes are ready. *Au revoir*, Miss Vernon."

The Colonel and Cormac accompanied me to the door, which Nurse opened with a gracious smile. "Not a step further, Colonel Vernon, you are fatigued; Mrs. O'Toole, I commend the Colonel to your care, adieu." And as I walked away I heard confused and glowing eulogiums pronounced by Mrs. O'Toole on some person or persons unknown, in which she seemed to dwell particularly on the facility of distinguishing between "The rale ould ancient stock, and ye'r musherooms," terms of approbation my vanity somehow or other appropriated, though the connection was by no means clear.

With military punctuality I was raising the well burnished brass knocker which adorned Winter's door as the cathedral clock chimed six. A trim little damsel answered the summons, and informed me with a rather frightened air, that "Missis was in." She ushered me up stairs to a large, handsomely furnished room, where sat Mrs. Winter in the identical cap she had worn at the ball. I could have sworn to it in any court in the kingdom.

She received me with the slight nervousness of manner I had before observed, but we had hardly exchanged salutations when Winter appeared, and carried me off to his studio. "While there was any light," he said, "it was well worth a visit." Studies of trees in every season, architectural drawings of great beauty, rugged old men and women, rosy chubby children, some few strong deep subjects—a mine of pictorial wealth; and the grand characteristic of each and all was truth; nothing seemed beneath his pencil, nor a single object misplaced on his canvas. I felt that a glance at his studio revealed the man more than the most elaborate description of his character could have done. I began to understand his views of imagination.

Mr. Winter had just pronounced it becoming too dark to judge fairly his productions, when the little maid entered and informed him that tea and the company were waiting; we returned to the drawing room, where we found the Colonel and Miss Vernon, Gilpin, and a tall dried up looking woman in a yellow turban, assembled round a large table, which groaned, or ought to have groaned, under piles of delicately brown hot cakes, multitudes of little round pats of butter, each adorned with a cowslip in bas relief, and a massive tea equipage. There was a cheerful buzz of conversation, with a pleasant accompaniment of hissing from a portly tea urn that sent forth volumes of steam.

The gentlemen rose to greet us, and Winter, passing to the turbanned lady, expressed his pleasure at seeing her, adding—

"I do not think you know Miss Cox, Captain Egerton? The Honourable Captain Egerton; Miss Araminta Cox."

Somewhat to my surprise the lady gave herself the trouble of rising to make me a profound curtsey. I secured a seat between Mrs. Winter and Kate, and joined in the general conversation, which took a very merry turn on our appearance, in consequence of Winter having discovered that Kate and Gilpin had been wofully taken in about some old stone inscribed with Saxon or Runic characters, they had raved of for a week, and which turned out to be frightfully modern. Kate, however, retaliated by quizzing him on his intended purchase of a pony, more fit for a picture than a phaeton; and clapped her hands in triumph, when Winter disclosed the fact that, contrary to the Colonel's warning, he had absolutely completed the purchase. Much laughter and ingenuity were called forth by these rival charges, but we all found the gravity and earnestness with which Winter repelled Kate's attacks upon his new steed irresistible.

"At all events, Mr. Winter, it is not half so disgraceful to be cheated by an almost obliterated inscription on a stone, as to be taken in by a horse-dealer. We deceived ourselves, but you have not even that consolation; you fell a victim to the devices of a groom," concluded Kate, pushing her chair from the tea-table, and rising.

"*Per di Bacco!*" exclaimed Winter thickly, and with the greatest energy, "the Colonel is mistaken; I tested the eyes; I tied a handkerchief over the best looking of the two and led him up and down, and he walked, sir, without the slightest hesitation! Tell me he is minus an eye after that!"

We received this conclusive evidence with a roar of laughter that disturbed the murmured conference Mrs. Winter and Miss Cox had maintained during our argument, fragments of which had reached my ears occasionally, indicating strong disapprobation of some unhappy individuals.

"Do you play whist, Captain Egerton?" enquired our hostess, as the trim damsel was removing the goodly array which had suffered considerably under our united efforts.

"Hardly ever, Mrs. Winter; and when I do I get so rowed by my partners that I am glad to abandon the attempt altogether."

"We generally make up a whist table; the Colonel and Mr. Winter like a rubber."

"Do you play, Miss Vernon?"

"Yes, with a degree of science seldom equalled; therefore I rarely honour Mrs. Winter's whist table."

"We'll have that trio first, Miss Vernon," rejoined Mr. Winter. "Gilpin get the flute ready."

During the little bustle of bringing flute and violin into tune with the piano, I approached the performers.

"How did you like the hot cakes?" asked Kate.

"I think I gave ocular demonstration of my opinion," I replied, laughing.

"What are you going to play?"

"*Prendi l'anell' ti dono.*"

"I thought that was a duet?"

"So it is; the flute and violin take first and second, the piano is a mere accompaniment; you will be pleased with it."

"How droll Winter is! His experiment on the pony was truly original."

"Yes, and his habit of pointing his discourse with foreign exclamations; he acquired the habit abroad, and complains he cannot do without expletives to express his feelings, but that English oaths are too blasphemous, while all the people in A—— are firmly convinced that his strange outbursts are far too bad to be translated."

"Now then, Miss Vernon," said Mr. Winter, "if you have finished that conference with Captain Egerton—"

"*Maestro mio*, I am ready."

Winter gave a flourish of his bow and stamped his foot; Miss Vernon played a brilliant prelude, and they began.

I sat in a pleasant dreamy state, listening to the music, and indistinctly observing there was something wanting in Mr. Winter's handsome drawing room that Kate Vernon's had; as if neatness was there kept in her proper position of handmaid to the Graces; but here she appeared to have risen up against her mistresses, and driven them out of doors with a duster! I was disturbed from this placid state of mind by the nodding of Miss Araminta Cox's yellow turban most distractingly out of tune; and finding it insupportable I was about to change my position, when the performance came to a conclusion.

The whist party now arranged themselves, leaving the piano to Kate, Gilpin, and myself; and after a little desultory conversation Miss Vernon acceded to our request for a song.

"The Serenade," I petitioned.

"You will be tired of that; I will give you a newer song." And she sung us a little sparkling Neapolitan air full of expression and piquancy. Winter had brought it from Italy, she said, and then we talked of his studio, and his whims, and then we glanced at national characteristics, and a hundred pleasant general topics. I felt surprised at the current of deep thought that flowed through all the organist said; there was much originality, too, in his observations; altogether our talk insensibly assumed a grave tone, yet it was interesting, for we were not making conversation. The conviction that my companions viewed life differently from myself somewhat inclined me to silence. They seemed to possess in themselves some source of internal satisfaction, of constant interest, unaccountable to me, and utterly dissimilar to the alternations of feverish excitement and profound ennui in which my days and those of almost all my companions were passed.

Meanwhile the whist party progressed, with an occasional outburst from, and overhauling of the tricks by, Winter, and divers complimentary remarks from the Colonel to the ladies; finally a tray of sandwiches and wine and water ended the entertainment.

"What is the name of the white pony, Mr. Winter?" said Kate.

"Whatever you like."

"Spatter the Dew," suggested the Colonel.

"That is quite poetical, grandpapa."

"My father had a horse called Toby," said Miss Araminta Cox in a mincing voice.

"Cyclops, they say, had only one eye," I observed.

"I tell you he has the use of two," said Winter hastily.

"That is not quite clear, and Cyclops is a fine sounding name," said Kate, "I vote for Cyclops, and I shall drink his health in a glass of your gooseberry wine, Mr. Winter."

"Cyclops, be it then," sighed Winter resignedly. "Captain Egerton, you must drink Miss Vernon's toast, but not in her beverage; here's some port wine I'll answer for, I bought it myself in Oporto." We all drank success to Cyclops, and bidding our kind host and hostess good night, strolled home by moonlight. Ah! a delicious walk. Gilpin took the Colonel's arm, and Kate accepted mine. The glorious moon, not yet risen to her highest altitude, threw out the lacelike tracery of the cathedral towers into strong relief—silvering the walls here and there, leaving large masses of deep shadow, while the old gateways and arches looked like openings into an abyss of darkness. A few light clouds floated in the deep blue sky. We walked on for some moments in silence.

"The last time your hand rested on my arm, Miss Vernon, I little thought I should so soon discover what you would not reveal."

"How?"

"Do you not remember how perversely you kept silence when I wanted to find out your abode?"

"Oh, yes," with a laugh, "I was so afraid you would have found out my trick, that I took care to obey poor Mrs. Winter's commands. How strangely it all turned out!"

Not much more passed between us until we passed the old church yard, where the organist left us.

"Scarcely late enough for ghosts," said the Colonel, with a smile, "but Kate would rather like to meet one."

"Not I," said Miss Vernon; "anything troubled, as ghosts always are, would be terribly out of place this calm heavenly night; though to be sure we have a black monk who walks up and down our garden from sunset till cock crow."

"There is something strangely attractive in the romantic antiquity of your domicile. I fancy it must exercise some influence on one's spirits," said I, smiling.

"Indeed, Captain Egerton, I often tell grandpapa that I am sure we are influenced by locality as well as everything else."

We paused at the wicket gate.

"I was endeavouring to make out that inscription this morning, Colonel," said I.

"You can almost read it now, the moon shines so full upon it," observed Kate. "If you knew the text you would have made it out at once. See, at this side there is the *Beati mundo corde* quite plain, and round here can you not trace *Deum videbunt*?"

"Ah, yes; of course, now you point it out."

"This is the proper light to read it by," said Miss Vernon, thoughtfully, "and do you know I sometimes like to think the entrance to our house is, as it were, sanctified by that beautiful sentence—'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God!'"

"Ah, enthusiast!" said her grandfather, laughing and shaking his head, "Dragoons do not quite comprehend such fancies."

I could see the soft colour mount into her cheek as if she had betrayed herself.

"Do you believe him, Miss Vernon?" I asked eagerly.

"I do not know; good night."

"Good night, Egerton, you dine with us to-morrow; you can take the train to Carrington afterwards, you know."

"Thank you, Colonel, with pleasure; good night."

The wicket closed on them, and I remained for some minutes in the full, clear, calm light, gazing at the half-defaced letters, and recalling the tones of Miss Vernon's expressive and musical voice, as she pronounced the (as I thought) appropriate words which formed the inscription. And then I strolled on slowly to my hotel, thinking more seriously than is usual to me, and finally fell asleep and dreamt I was riding across the sea to Dungar on Winter's white pony, which did not strike me as anything uncommon.

CHAPTER VI.
REACTION.

Another day of calm and deep enjoyment.

I took my way to the Priory House at a very early hour, in order to make the sketch I had promised Miss Vernon. She was reading to her grandfather when I arrived, and welcomed me joyously, entering with eager interest into my preparations for drawing, and the various questions which arose as to the objects to be taken in, &c., in a way, too, which showed some knowledge of the art; and hour after hour slipped by as I sat before the window, sometimes laying down my pencil to talk with the Colonel, sometimes caressing his fine old dog, who appeared to have established a species of guard over me; while Kate, constantly watchful of my progress, flitted backwards and forwards between me and the open window, often pointing with her rosy forefinger to some shading she wished deepened, or some light brought into stronger relief; branching off from discussions on the effects of distance, &c., into all sorts of irrelevant subjects, then blaming herself for interrupting me, and exhorting me to renewed diligence; and all this so naturally, so earnestly, showing openly her pleasure at having me to talk to, but without one shadow of that indescribable consciousness by which so many women seem to say to themselves, "Now I know he is going to make love to me." No, strongly as I felt tempted to do so, there was a frankness and repose in Miss Vernon's manner I would not for worlds have disturbed by even a whisper of the profound admiration she inspired.

Something of the high principled and unselfish tone pervading the society into which I had fallen, appeared to influence me with more of thought for future consequences than was my usual habit; besides, there is nothing so blighting to sentimentalism as the friendly cordiality I have described; nevertheless, though I do not believe I was ever before so long in the society of a beautiful girl without getting up some degree of flirtation, the morning flew rapidly and delightfully away.

The Colonel had letters to write, and his granddaughter's visits to my impromptu studio, if fewer, were more confidential. She told me of the long visits she had paid to Lady Desmond, both in London and Dublin, and of the delightful singing lessons she had taken in the former place, adding that she owed her first and last peep at the great and gay world to her cousin. It appeared that Lady Desmond had been displeased with her for returning to Dungar, and had not written to her for a long time. "But you know," said Kate, "grandpapa was about to leave Dungar then, and I could not let him do so alone, nor go away without a last look at my old happy home." All this was told in a low tone, as if she did not wish the Colonel to overhear it, and in a confidential manner inexpressibly delightful to me. She had knelt down to caress Cormac, and after remaining for some seconds rolling up his long ear thoughtfully, looked up suddenly in my face and added, "I did not intend to bore you with such a long prose about my difficulties with Georgina; the reason I mentioned the subject at all was because I heard you tell grandpapa you had a sister at Naples. Lady Desmond was there, I heard, about a month ago, and I wish you would ask your sister, when you write, if she knows anything of her; I cannot bear to lose sight of her so completely." I promised very readily to do as she desired, though I warned her it might be months before I would get any reply, as my sister was but a careless correspondent.

"Thanks, and I will not interrupt you any more."

"You do not interrupt me in the least, I assure you; but if you are determined to go, perhaps you will sing. I see Colonel Vernon shutting his writing desk."

"With pleasure; would you like an Irish melody?"

"Beyond every thing."

And the next minute her rich voice was pouring forth in a full tide of sweetness, "Has sorrow thy young days shaded?"

I soon dropped my pencil, and even after the last notes had died away, remained listening for their renewal; then collecting my drawing materials, I rose, and promising Miss Vernon to finish the sketch from memory, I invited the Colonel to accompany me on a visit of ceremony to Mrs. Winter; it was succeeded by another peep at the studio, a walk with the Colonel, and then came the pleasant friendly dinner, the frank cheerful interchange of thought, the after-dinner cup of coffee and stroll in the pleasure ground to look at the moon reflected in the river; while Miss Vernon, courteously anxious to give me what she prized herself, gathered a bouquet of her choicest autumnal flowers, "to make me forget that horrid Carrington, at least in my own room," she said; her grandfather laughing at the idea of her expecting I should care for such things.

How delightfully homelike it all was.

Finally she sang me the serenade that had so enchanted me, and before the last notes were well hushed, Nurse announced the cab I had ordered to convey me to the railway.

I rose reluctantly, the Colonel, Nurse, and Cormac, and even Kate, coming out in the fresh night air, all perfumed with the clematis and heliotropes that adorned the front of the cottage, to see me off.

"Good bye, Captain Egerton," said Kate,— "be sure to come back soon, and do not forget the drawings; have you got your flowers?"

"It would be a bold man that would attempt to take them from me, Miss Vernon; good night!"

"A thousand thanks, Colonel, for my very pleasant visit to A——."

"God bless you, take care of yourself," he replied.

"A' then the saints go wid ye!" said Nurse.

"Good bye, Mrs. O'Toole; I'll never taste an eatable trout, until I return."

"Good night once more;" and I threw myself into the cab, with a feeling of extraordinary regret, and affection for the old Colonel; for Mrs. O'Toole, aye, even for Cormac; but for Kate—*Caramba*, as Winter would say.

A short hour of hissing and clattering, and I was back again amongst the bustling, crowded, glaring, gas exhaling streets of Carrington; amidst the confusion of noisy omnibuses and uncouth cries, of drunken mechanics, and wretched beggar women with their imps of children!

It was after ten o'clock before I entered the mess room to report my return, (having first placed my precious flowers in safety). I found the apartment redolent of the savoury odours of dinner and cigars, and occupied by a larger party than usual; all of whom were in loud and eager debate on the respective merits of the favourites for the approaching Doncaster meeting. As soon as they perceived me through the cloudy atmosphere, I was greeted with a perfect hurricane of queries, exclamations, and offers of fifty and a hundred to one, against divers and sundry horses, colts, and fillies.

"Where, in the name of mystery, have you been skulking?"

"Hullo! Egerton, you're the very man I wanted; give me the long odds against M——'s mare; you're sure to win, and it will just square my book."

"I say, Fred, I've backed 'Tearaway,' would you have me hedge off?"

"What has become of you; you have missed such a spread at the Mayor's, and such speeches as would have driven Murray to suicide."

"A hundred to five you don't name the winner."

"Ha! Egerton, just come back?"

"Keep cool, my dear fellows, and give me some claret."

I sat down, endeavouring in vain to enter clearly into the several subjects they were so eagerly discussing, and perfectly bewildered by the strong contrast the whole scene presented to my life for the last few days. Then followed long weary debates on the coming event, interspersed with anecdotes of the villainy of certain trainers and the intense knowingness of the jockies. Finally, I began to take some interest in the details; the result partly of habit, and partly of an effort to do so, lest any appearance of pre-occupation might set my brother officers on the scent to discover its course. I was successful—for Sedley exclaimed, "I never saw Egerton return from one of his philosophic expeditions with his wits so much about him."

"By the way, you've been over to that tumble down old place A——; is it worth seeing?" said another.

"Yes, to a lover of the picturesque and antique, but it has nothing else to attract."

"Ah! that will do; I do not care for the picturesque."

"Were you successful in your search?" asked Burton imprudently.

"For what?" called out half a dozen.

"For the picturesque, of course," he replied. I breathed again.

"Yes, particularly successful." He smiled, and shrinking from the thought of my companions getting the slightest clue to his real meaning, especially in their present mood, I rose and bid them all good-night, having endured their Babel for more than two hours.

"And you will not sport even a pony on the Leger?"

"No, not a sixpence, I was bitten too severely at Ascot last spring."

"Never say die, you're not going to knock under to your luck that way?"

"I am, though, and I wish I could persuade you to do the same, Vavasour," said I, laughing, and laying my hand on the shoulder of an aristocratic looking stripling who had joined about six months before, and who coloured to the eyes at the idea of advice on prudence.

"Egerton is about to abjure the pomps and vanities of this wicked world," said one.

"He has been *en retrait* with Grab'em-all, the field preacher," said another.

I laughed. "Perhaps it was as pleasant as yours with Levi Solomons, and Co., last March," said I.

He reddened, but laughing good humouredly, shook his hand at me.

"Go your own way, old fellow."

"It has always been my habit, and I intend to continue it," said I coolly, and made my exit.

Refusing Burton's offer of a visit to my room, on the plea of fatigue, I threw myself in an arm chair I called my study, as I generally sat in it when disposed for thought, and tried to arrange my entangled ideas into something like order; the attempt, however, was not very successful.

Sundry rough calculations as to my chances of clearing off certain debts, and my probable amount of income; a perfect conviction that Kate Vernon was the loveliest girl, and her grandfather the most perfect old gentleman I had ever met; a vivid recollection of my past visit, and an indistinct intention of doing or saying something remarkably distinguished on my next; a vague haunting wish for some truer and more real interest than my life had ever hitherto known; such were a few of the elements in my reverie, and round them all floated a dim consciousness of Mrs. Winter's cap, and Miss Araminta Cox's yellow turban. I felt the strength of old habits returning in the levity which mingled even with my better aspirations; and fell asleep, feeling I had got a glimpse of happiness such as Nature had endowed me with capabilities of enjoying, but between which and myself circumstances had fixed a great gulf.

Of course I told Burton all my proceedings, and to do him justice he really seemed to take an interest in them, but he laughed a little at the Arcadian style of early tea and hot cakes. Burton, though still a "sub," was my senior in age by at least a couple of years; he had not been in the Regiment long, and knew nothing of the Vernons; indeed, the only officers still among us who had experienced the hospitality of Dungar, were Dashwood, now our Colonel, Hauton, and myself. I felt I ought to mention having met our old and popular acquaintance, yet I did not quite like doing so. Our Colonel was a fine, high-minded, gentleman-like fellow, who never forgot a kindness or remembered a spite. I would rather have wished him to know Vernon was within reach; but Hauton, I always disliked him, he was a cold-hearted *roué*, and I would almost rather have been accessory to the introduction of Satan to our first mother, than let Hauton get the *entrée* of Kate Vernon's refined and tranquil home. At the thought, a vision of it and the inscription over its entrance rose up before me. However, as it would have a strange effect if Colonel Dashwood was by any chance to meet Vernon and find I had concealed my rencontre with him, I determined to mention it, but in a casual way, hinting at the same time his change of fortune, which I knew would prevent Hauton from taking any vivid interest in his former hospitable entertainer.

It was not easy to get a quiet half hour in the Barracks, especially at the present exciting period—the approaching Doncaster meeting; so in order to enjoy an uninterrupted conference, Burton and I mounted our horses, and took the least frightful of the roads round Carrington. I endeavoured to convey to my companion some idea of the impression stamped on my mind by the few days I had spent at A——; its peace and simplicity, it's freedom from monotony and ennui! but it would not do; Burton was, as I think I have said, a kind-hearted, high minded fellow, but singularly free from imagination. I fancy he had met a few harder rubs in his contact with the world than I had; not that he ever talked of his own circumstances, but it was evident he was not rich.

"All this is very fine," said he, at the end of my elaborate description, "and you might like the novelty of the thing for a week or so; but take my word for it, at the end of a fortnight, you would be drawing comparisons between your philosophic society of painters and musicians, and that of your discarded Regiment, anything but favourable to the former."

"No, I do not believe it! I have for a long time felt a weariness and distaste for the life I am leading, without a notion or a hope of anything better; I do not know why, except that at thirty one begins to tire of the eternal sameness of the mess table, country quarters, slow promotion, and no very particular occupation. Up to five and twenty, military life may have its charms, but then it begins to lose its *soi disant* attractions. I suppose it was the dearth of variety, and the vain hope of getting up something like excitement, that induced me to make a fool of myself by

plunging into various extravagances of late; they will cost me dear enough; I wish they had put me to a desk instead of buying me a commission. It's too bad to think that at my age I am no further on in the world than I was at eighteen, and unfit for anything except leading a charge or riding a steeple chase; and the brute that gave us a great dinner the other day, and bored Sedley about his 'Ock,' what was his name? 'Mogg?' ay Mogg! How old do you think the savage?"

"Fifty-five, perhaps."

"Not more than twenty-five years my senior, and began life, as an errand boy! I should like to know what and where I shall be at fifty-five; a wretched old half-pay; speculating how long I can make a ten-and-sixpenny hat last; with a bed-room in Leicester Square, and my address at the Senior United Service Club; and mine was a boyhood of *bon bons*, bowing tutors, and Shetland ponies."

"Why, Egerton, you are quite eloquent! I think your excursion to A—— has only served to open your eyes to the miseries you were before unconscious of; I'd prefer happy ignorance; I conclude the English of all this is, that Miss Vernon's angelic voice and beautiful eyes incline you to matrimony, while common sense warns you off, eh?"

"Pshaw! nonsense! I am not going to declare Miss Vernon is essential to my existence; I dare say I shall have to scramble through life without such companionship; but I do not hesitate to say, I would be a happier man if I thought I had a chance of it; ay, and a better one," I added, after a pause. "I might have some pretension to think of matrimony but for my own confounded folly in incumbering my younger son's portion, as I have done;" and I stuck the spurs into my unfortunate horse's sides, who resented the injustice, by a series of wild plunges, and gave me some trouble to reduce him to order.

After walking our horses on for a few paces in silence, Burton said gravely, "I see this is more serious than I at first thought, but whatever your feelings may be, for God's sake, do not rush into any imprudent marriage; it is the most fatal mistake any man ever made; there's not one in a thousand who has the stuff in him to stand its accompaniments unflinchingly; a hundred to one but the consciousness of having dragged himself and the woman he loved into such a scrape, sours his temper and makes him a brute to his wife and a tyrant to his children. I have seen such examples, that I do believe the best proof of affection a poor man can give, is to fly at the first fire from Cupid's battery; and my advice to you is to avoid A—— and its attractions. Do not go on looking and insinuating a thousand things you can never accomplish; but which, in spite of all we say of their inconstancy, live in a girl's memory for many a day after we have forgotten all about it."

"By Jove! I must be a more conceited fellow than any in England, if I could for a moment imagine that Miss Vernon would waste a thought on me when I was out of her sight; I wish you could just hear her easy unembarrassed way of begging me to be sure to return; it was the coolest address I ever received from a young lady; her heart and mind seem too well filled to be easily accessible; yet—but I dare not try; you speak truly, Burton, about imprudent marriages; still, I think, it would be worth a struggle to get my affairs into training. I would not ask any woman to marry into poverty, but one might be satisfied with competence and"—

"Just the way all men argue when they want to do a foolish act; what would be competence to a man of your habits?"

"Nevertheless, I'll think about it, and look up Egerton; he ought to have bowels of compassion for his brother as well as for every benighted blackamoor under the sun; and his expenses are, I believe, limited to subscribing to all kinds of Evangelical Missions."

"Do you mean then seriously to contemplate——?"

"Burton! pray do not look so dismal; I tell you it's a long look out; I do not know what I shall do."

"You'll go over to A—— in spite of my warning?"

"Oh, I must; I promised Miss Vernon; believe me, I am the only one likely to suffer from my imprudence; and then I will return no more till I have seen Egerton; or—in short, let us just cross the country here, the corn seems all cut, and it will break in the horses for the hunting."

In accordance with my determination, I seized the first interval in a rather professional conversation between Colonel Dashwood and a retired General he had invited to dinner, to tell him of my accidental meeting with his old acquaintance; sinking the fact, however, of his having a grand-daughter.

"What, old D'Arcy Vernon, of Dungar," he exclaimed; "how curious! and so he is living there, is he? I am sorry to hear it, he must have left Dungar then *in toto*?"

"Or Dungar left him," sneered Hauton. "It was *en route*, if I am not much mistaken, when we were there."

"The first day I can, I'll go over to A——, and bring back the old Colonel with me," said our good natured Commander. "I owe him a vast amount of hospitality, and shall be too glad to show him I have not forgotten it; poor fellow! at his age; he must be more than seventy-five!"

"He looks remarkably well," I said, "just the same as ever."

"The Irish have such happy temperaments," said Dashwood, turning to the General.

"Yes, they are like the Niggers in many respects," said Hauton; "the more you beat them the better they be."

I restrained my inclination to shy a decanter at his head with great difficulty.

The ten succeeding days went over wonderfully well; I found the promised drawings of Dungar for Kate, and worked up the sketch I had taken of the Priory, to the very best of my abilities. I took long rides with Burton, and often without him, not finding him so congenial as I wished. I wrote a long letter to my sister, and made all proper enquiries for Lady Desmond, without, however, explaining the cause of my curiosity. It was so long since I had seen Mary; I did not know how her heart had stood the wear and tear of four years' dissipation. How fond we were of each other, as children!

Finally, I wrote to Colonel Vernon, telling him about Dashwood and all the gossip I could think would amuse him; sending a message to Kate as to the drawings, and promising to be over with them in the course of the following week.

Altogether, I was much too busy to look into my own affairs, but promised myself to overhaul them completely on my return from A——. I secured a week's leave, and determined to throw care to the dogs, and enjoy myself thoroughly. I started before almost any one, except Burton (whose habits were quiet and regular), was visible. He joined me as I stood on the steps, while my servant was placing my carpet bag and portfolio in the cab which was to convey me to the Railway.

"So you're going, are you?"

"Whatever skies above,
Here's a heart for any fate!"

Said I, laughing, and too much elated at the week's freedom and enjoyment before me to be damped by his lugubrious tone. We shook hands, and I left him whistling with a reflective air.

I little thought where we would meet again.

CHAPTER VII.
MAN PROPOSES, GOD DISPOSES.

Though I loitered about at the Hotel as much as possible, I found I had made the usual mistake of impatient people; wasted as much time by too rapid as by too slow a movement; and it still wanted some minutes to twelve o'clock when I took the now familiar path to the Priory, smiling to myself at the natural home-like feeling with which I looked forward to seeing them all again. It is extraordinary what rapid strides to intimacy sympathy enables one to make! All was profoundly still in the churchyard as I opened the wicket and bent my head to enter the low arch. All looked as neat and well kept as ever.

Nurse answered my ring, in bonnet and cloak, and welcomed me with a joyous "Ah! Captin jew'l, is it yerself that's in it?"

Her loud exclamations brought Miss Vernon to the drawing-room door. She paused for a moment; and, then advancing, seconded nurse's greeting very warmly.

"We did not expect you quite so soon; and grandpapa has gone with Mr. Winter to look at a farm of his a little way out of the town; I hope Cyclops will not upset them," she added, laughing. "I am so glad you are come."

"And I have been counting the hours till I escaped from Carrington to the ecclesiastical repose of your retreat," said I, following her into the the drawing room, as usual redolent of flowers.

"You are the most tranquilly disposed Dragoon I ever met," she returned; "but I see you have got your portfolio."

"Yes, I have brought you the sketches you wished for."

"Oh, thank you, Captain Egerton, it is so good of you; you do not know what pleasure you give me; let me look at them."

"Here is a view of the house from the east."

"Oh yes, yes, how like! that was my school room window, and the flower garden down here. Nurse must see this; come here, Nurse."

Mrs. O'Toole came at the call.

"Did you ever see any place like that?" asked her young mistress.

"Musha, then it makes me heart sore to look at it there, an' the rale place so far away," said Nurse, crossing herself. "Och! God be with ould times! The blessin' of Heaven rest on ye, Dungar! Many's the bright day I seen in ye! Och! Miss Kate, avourneen, look at the little garden gate, where we used to go listen to Paddy Doolan's fairy tales, an' the crather so dirty I darn't let him up into the house; an' the Captin dhrew it himself!"

Here Mrs. O'Toole ceased her comments, perceiving from her young lady's silence, and glistening eyes, that her memory was even more vividly awakened.

"There is the old church yard where the people were so fond of burying their relatives; with a peep at the round tower," said I, substituting a less "home" scene, to assist her in recovering herself. "Do you recognise this view? the cliffs near the shore, and the broad Atlantic, with the

Cruakmore hills in the distance?"

"Oh yes, yes! and this one; look, Nurse, the dingle, and Andy the fisherman."

"The Lord save us, is'nt the very moral of Andy; the ould thief, to have a right honourable drawing him."

"Very rude sketches, Miss Vernon; I was then even a greater tyro than now."

"They are worth whole galleries of Raphaels and Titians to me," said she with a sigh.

My sketch of the view from the window was much admired; Miss Vernon pronounced it excellent, quite worthy of Mr. Winter's approval. After a few more remarks, I observed that I would not detain her, as I perceived she was in walking costume.

"We were going across the river," she replied, "on an errand I should like to accomplish; what are you going to do? Grandpapa and Mr. Winter both away, you had better come with us."

To this frank invitation I replied, "Most willingly, wherever you choose to lead me."

A message being left with Mrs. O'Toole's sub, for Colonel Vernon, informing him of my arrival, in case his return should precede ours, and Nurse having crammed some additional articles into a basket already overflowing, Miss Vernon stepped through the open window, calling Cormac, who soon made his appearance, noticing me in a grave and dignified manner. Mrs. O'Toole and I followed our fair conductress down the sloping pleasure ground, now gay with many coloured dahlias; at the bottom of which a small door led into a road by the river side. Nurse produced a ponderous key, and carefully locked it after us. We turned to the left, and I walked between Mrs. O'Toole and her nursling, who looked charmingly in her cotton morning dress and her cottage straw bonnet, with its white ribbon; her luxuriant brown hair doing away with all necessity for the curious floral exhibitions ladies usually display under theirs.

"Nothing new or strange has occurred here since you went," said Miss Vernon, in a quiet, confidential tone; "grandpapa has been very well, and quite looked forward to seeing you again. Mr. Winter has been very busy driving Cyclops hither and thither, and twice got into a ditch; and Miss Araminta Cox and Mrs. Winter agree in saying you are not at all the sort of person they expected a Cavalry officer to be."

"Errah! what do the likes of thim know about Cavalry officers?" exclaimed nurse, *en parenthèse*.

"What did they expect?" said I, laughing, "something very terrific, in the raw head and bloody bones style, I suppose?"

"I told them I had always found Dragoons very harmless, inoffensive people," replied Miss Vernon, an arch glance displacing the pensive depth of expression her eyes had assumed when gazing at the sketches of her old home.

"Indeed!" said I, with some pique, "well meaning creatures, useful about a house."

Miss Vernon laughed, "I see you would prefer being dreaded by Miss Araminta Cox, so I'll not take your part any more."

We had by this time reached a sort of rude pier, shaded by a few old thorn trees, limes, and horse chesnuts; an irregular rugged red stone wall, which, sometimes retiring, sometimes advancing, followed the course of the road, formed a very suitable back ground; and just here an arch of heavy stone work sheltered a clear and deep well; beside the little landing place lay a large flat-bottomed boat, and at its bow sat a huge, rough, grizzled boatman, in a hairy cap and horn spectacles, (looking coeval with the Priory Tower, which was visible above the trees), intently reading a well thumbed book.

"Elijah!" called out Mrs. O'Toole. I started at the scriptural appellation. "Elijah! The onfortunate ould sinner is making his sowl; he's as deaf as a stone. Elijah Bush, I say!"

"Ho, Cormac," said Miss Vernon.

The old man looked up, as the hound stepped on the gunnel and shook the boat; and raising his cap, came forward, apologising respectfully for his pre-occupation.

"It bai'nt so often I get a sight of the Ward," said he, in a broad Cumberland accent, "but I'm main glad to see you."

Miss Vernon replied courteously.

"Elijah, honey, is there e'er a throut to be got to day," said Nurse.

"Not as I knows on, Marm; I did see Davy Jones passing on here, sure enough, with the rods; but he hadn't took nothink then."

"A'then, just look out for him like a good Christian, and tell him if he's caught even the ghost of one, to have it up at the house, mind, now."

"Ay sure," said Elijah.

"Ah! what'll I do at all at all," said Mrs. O'Toole to Miss Vernon, in accents of great concern, "if I can't get a throut for the Captin?"

"I dare say he will kindly endeavour to dine without one," she replied.

"Then I am to have the pleasure of dining with you," said I.

"Of course," said Kate, opening her eyes, "where else would you dine?"

I handed her into the boat, and after carefully assisting Mrs. O'Toole, who accepted my *petits soins* with a "Musha, but I'm well attinded," took my seat beside her.

A few vigorous strokes from Elijah's oars brought us across, and we were standing at the foot of the broken rocky bank visible from the windows of the cottage.

"Is there much custom at your ferry now?" asked Miss Vernon as we paid him.

"Not much to speak of, but I gets my crust; and at all events the Lord will provide," he said, raising his cap.

"Holy Vargin, listen to that now!" said Mrs. O'Toole with much fervour, "you're a mighty religious man entirely, Elijah; faith, Father Macdermott could'nt hould a candle to you, tho' he laid the Divil at Innishogue."

"Good bye," said her young lady, "we will be back in about an hour, Elijah."

Climbing the steep bank, we stood for a few moments at the top to look at the cottage, peeping prettily out from between the ivy-grown old church and the spreading oak I have before described; then following the path across the meadow where they were cutting the after grass, we fell into marching order, Mrs. O'Toole at one side of Kate, and I at the other, Cormac walking soberly between us.

It was a regular autumnal day—clear, calm, and grey, with a slight crispness in the air, an *avant courier* of frost. The wood through which the path soon led us, brilliant with all the variegated tints peculiar to the season, and fragrant with the odour of the gums exuding from the fir trees and young larches, seemed of tolerable extent, and now and then a pheasant would rise suddenly, with a whirr through the air, almost from our feet. A few withered leaves already strewed the ground, and nature appeared in her fullest beauty, though it was evident she was on the turning point. Occasionally we caught a glimpse of the river, and frequently heard it fretting against the rocks, which here and there opposed its progress.

Miss Vernon often paused to draw my attention to any picture, as she termed it, that struck her fancy; sometimes it was a long glade almost over-arched with leafy boughs, still retaining in their sheltered position the freshness of early summer, with a line of blue country beyond; sometimes it was a single tree of peculiar beauty, now a few old moss-grown trunks forgotten by the woodcutter, now a peep at a cottage chimney, with blue curling smoke at the other side of the river; every thing, from the rich green grass, and the endless variety of wild creepers, to the dry exhilarating atmosphere, seemed to be a source of joyous, grateful pleasure to her happy nature, gifted, as it appeared to be, with so deep a power of enjoyment. I found something contagious in her airy gaiety, and the extraordinarily keen sense of nature's beauty with which she was endowed, and asked her why it was she did not pursue drawing more steadily.

"I do not know," she replied; "it does not seem to come so naturally to me as music, though no one revels in scenery more delightedly than I do. Are you not obliged to me for this walk?"

"Indeed I am, I shall not soon forget it."

"What strange mixtures we are," said Miss Vernon; "I felt so sad after looking at those drawings of Dungar; and now it seems to me as if the mere sense of existence is happiness enough. Ah, there is a great deal that is delightful in this life of ours, let poets and popular preachers say of it what they will."

"It's only hearts like yours, avourneen, that draw the sunshine round them," said Mrs. O'Toole.

"True, Miss Vernon," I observed; "but what long intervals of much that is unpleasant—what bitter mortifications!"

"Yes," she replied; "but there is no life so sad that it has not something sweet also."

"When the curse of poverty falls on you, and holds you back from the accomplishment of all your soul most longs for," I said.

"Ah, that would be terrible indeed," said she, a little startled at my vehemence; "but do you know poverty is not so dreadful."

"Och! then, God help you Miss Kate, what do you know about poverty? sure givin' up a fine house an' horses, an' carriages, an' grandeur, is bad enough; but for poverty, wait till the crathers ye love call to ye for bread, an' ye havn't the screed of a pitaty to give them—that's poverty. Isn't that dreadful? The blessed Saver shield ye from it, darlint, any how."

"And to think that your own folly had placed you in such," I observed, not minding nurse.

"Then I am quite sure," said Miss Vernon, "that a steadfast resignation to what you brought on yourself, an unmurmuring struggle to retrieve, would work its own cure; there is so much strength in perfect submission!"

"Ay, for woman."

"And for man too; how can your boldness and wisdom guard against the future any more than our dependence? we can only use the present to the best of our abilities, and leave the rest to God."

I remained silently pondering over her words, while she turned to Nurse.—"Dear Nurse, I forgot, indeed, what real poverty was as I spoke; many a one is sinking in such a struggle as you describe, I fear; still there's rest before them."

"Thrue for ye, the Heavens be their bed! Amen."

"How did we come to scare ourselves with such gloomy thoughts, Captain Egerton? Let us enjoy this lovely day, and leave the sorrows we cannot remove in better hands. There is the keeper's cottage; will you sit here until we have spoken to his daughter? we will not be long."

A young woman, supporting a sickly-looking child, appeared in the porch; a tolerably long conference ensued. Nurse opened the basket, the contents of which were received with great pleasure, and the pale boy tried to climb into Kate's arms; she sat down and spoke to him with a smile, to which he responded, as if glad to be with her. Cormac sat gravely by me, making some advances towards greater intimacy in a dignified way.

I see the whole picture before me even now; the keeper's pretty cottage, with the rich back ground of autumnal trees, the rustic porch, Nurse and the girl emptying the basket, and Miss Vernon, her shawl falling off one shoulder, bending over the child, who looked up at her with a sort of half wondering, half pleased expression.

At length the visit was over, Kate put down the child; and followed for a few steps by its curtseying attendant, rejoined me; Cormac rose as if his responsibility was at an end, and we turned towards home.

Dismissing all the gloomy forebodings Miss Vernon's words had conjured up, I determined to do away with any evil impression my observations might have created, and our walk back was a "right *merrie*" one. Mrs. O'Toole, throwing in from time to time her shrewd caustic remarks, and Kate's sweet joyous laugh, rousing the echoes from their slumbers; many a half forgotten incident of our former acquaintance was recalled, and Nurse's reminiscences of our exploits, when I used occasionally to join her nursling in a game of romps, called up many a smile on my side, and a few blushes on that of Miss Vernon.

We could perceive the Colonel on the look out for us, when we reached the top of the bank. Mrs. O'Toole having satisfied herself that David Jones had taken more than the ghost of a throut, hurried forward to exercise her skill on the fruit of his labours, leaving the garden gate open for our more tardy approach. The Colonel received me with his accustomed polished kindness; Nurse surpassed herself in the exquisite dressing of the trout; Gilpin dropped in to tea, joined in praising my sketches, sang a duet with Kate, and played some beautiful airs, while the Colonel was beating me in three consecutive games of chess. The three succeeding days winged themselves away with wonderful rapidity; I sketched and argued with Winter; prescribed for his wife's pug dog, who was affected with the snuffles; and lounged in and out of the Priory, as if I was one of its rightful inmates. What pleasant mornings they were! sometimes reading aloud to the Colonel and his granddaughter; sometimes assisting the latter in the garden; occasionally learning the second in a duet, and getting a scolding for inattention; while Miss Vernon pursued her usual avocations of work or writing, or obeyed Nurse's summons to disentangle accounts, or consult about dinner, in the same easy unembarrassed manner, I have before endeavoured to describe; always real, always earnest, her every occupation seemed graceful and suitable; and the calm continuance of her usual routine, completely removed the uncomfortable idea of being in the way, which more ceremonious attention would have conveyed.

How dangerous all this! how thoroughly I felt my heart imbued with the sweet homelike influence of this every day companionship, yet I was astonishingly prudent, not altogether in consequence of Burton's admonitions; I dreaded to break the repose of our intercourse, and more than all, the frankness and friendliness of Miss Vernon's manner, opposed a stronger barrier to the least approach to "love making," than the stiffest prudery that ever was inculcated in a first-rate establishment for young ladies. Once, and only once, when some expression of the irrepressible tenderness and admiration I felt growing on me, escaped my lips almost unconsciously, Miss Vernon blushed and started, as if some sudden revelation had flashed across her mind, and, for a moment looked grave, almost displeased, but the next instant, apparently dismissing whatever thought had disturbed her, she was her own unembarrassed self again.

The Saturday after my return to A—— was Miss Vernon's birthday, and Winter surprised her with an admirably painted and life-like likeness of her grandfather.

The delight of Kate, the exclamations of Nurse, the enjoyment of Winter, may be imagined; the whole party, including Gilpin, assisted at its formal induction in the place of honour over the mantel-piece, *vice* John Anderson transferred to a position at the end of the room, Kate professing a great regard for the print; I distinguished myself on the occasion by my skilful picture-hanging, Mrs. O'Toole holding the ladder, on which I mounted to perform the service.

We had a very merry party at dinner, and drank Miss Vernon's health, and everybody's health.

I proposed Mrs. O'Toole's in an eloquent oration, to which she (having been called in to honour the toast of the evening) replied, "Success to ye Captin, musha, but ye'r a grate spaker entirely. Here's your health, Miss Kate, and blessins on ye, me darlin; more power to the masther, and long may he reign over us, I pray God."

Before we separated Winter proposed a sketching expedition to a ruin of much beauty and some interest, about eight miles from A——, and Miss Vernon suggested a pic nic to include the party there assembled. "We can hire Edward's phaeton, and Mr. Winter is independent of livery stables; Cyclops will no doubt leave us far behind, but we will endeavour to come in for the fragments of the feast."

"If you promise to behave yourself," replied he, "I'll give you a seat in my buggy."

"Suppose, my dear," said Mrs. Winter, "we were to take tea at the farm, on our return; it is about half way?"

"Thank you, my dear, an excellent idea."

"A delightful suggestion, Mrs. Winter," said Miss Vernon.

"Then the programme is," said Winter, "an early drive over to Mowbray Castle, a good morning's work there; dinner at two o'clock and tea at five, and syllabubs at the farm."

"An admirable plan," observed the Colonel.

"There is nothing I like better than a real impromptu pic nic," I observed.

"And, Mrs. Winter, the gentlemen must not be too *exigeants*," said Miss Vernon, "but be content with what our larders afford; there will be no time for preparation."

"Content!" cried I.

"Oh! we all know you would rather prefer a few herbs with water from the neighbouring spring," said Miss Vernon archly.

A few more words as to the hour of starting and place of rendezvous, which was to be at the Priory, as it was on the road to the Ruins, and we exchanged good nights.

What a contrast Sunday at A—— presented to almost every other Sunday I had ever spent. The grey old church, with its exquisitely carved screen and pulpit, black polished oak, its heavy massive pillars, and quaint scanty congregation. How distinguished the Colonel and Miss Vernon looked amongst them! Gilpin's almost inspired strains on the organ, contrasted rather forcibly with the drowsiness of the service, doled out by a little mummy in spectacles, evidently minus several teeth, essential to a clear enunciation. We all sat in Winter's pew, and Miss Araminta Cox was there in a yellow bonnet, the turban, I suppose, done up in a different shape.

After church we had an early dinner, luncheon rather, then a stroll along the river, where we found Elijah Bush preaching to a mob of boys and girls; it seemed curious, too, not having any dinner at the regular hour.

The old church looked dim and solemn at evening service, its only lights were those partially illuminating the little mummy in his task of deciphering his own hieroglyphics. Then came a social cup of coffee, a parting injunction to be punctual, and we separated for the night.

Monday rose clear and bright, a warm sun and cool bracing air. I reached the Priory in good time for their early breakfast, and found Colonel Vernon and his granddaughter in high spirits, the latter looking lovely, her colour heightened by the clear morning air, and her whole countenance beaming with a joyous expression, the reflection of her pure happy heart.

Soon after ten o'clock the unwonted sound of carriages in the churchyard announced the arrival of the rest of the party, and we all assembled at the entrance gate to arrange the order of proceeding.

Cyclops already showed symptoms of improved feeding, but was as rough and shaggy as ever, as he stood whisking his tail at the flies, and occasionally giving a short cough.

The other phaeton was drawn by a tall bony brown horse, that looked as if he had seen better days, and could boast a little blood.

The Colonel politely invited Mrs. Winter to accompany him, and Kate most provokingly took her place with Mr. Winter, when some discussion arose in consequence of Winter's protesting he must take his boy to look after Cyclops; this left us minus a seat, but I obviated the difficulty by offering to drive the brown horse, leaving the original Jehu behind, and sharing the driving seat with Gilpin. Kate rewarded me with a bright smile as I handed her into Winter's phaeton.

"A dashing turn-out, Egerton," said the Colonel; "what would your friend, Colonel Dashwood, say to it?"

"That I'm in great luck to be included in so pleasant a party on any terms. I wish I could persuade you you would be safer on the driving seat with me, Miss Vernon."

She shook her head.

"Do not let Cyclops go, Tom, till I have got the reins settled," said Winter, who had armed himself with a pair of green goggles to keep off the dust.

"Arrah! there, ye'r the awkerdest crather I ever seen," exclaimed Nurse, as the rejected Jehu was endeavouring to arrange a large basket of provisions in the Colonel's phaeton, "d'ye want to have the Captin's knees in his mouth, ye omadhaun, can't ye put it in this away?"

"I don't think it will fix, no ways."

"Now then, are we to start or not," said Winter. "Here! put that basket in my buggy; we are lighter than you. Tom, a piece of cord, give it to Mrs. O'Toole; you needn't let Cyclops off yet."

Cyclops coughed approvingly.

"A'there! look at me bould Shyclops, cockin' his tail; Miss Kate, honey, have ye ye'r strong boots on?"

"All right, Mr. Winter," cried I.

"Let him go, Tom."

"God speed yez."

I held in my steed, who, notwithstanding his low condition, was still eager; and after a few

energetic lashes, which only entangled the whip in the traces, Winter led the way, as he wished, and after traversing some very narrow crooked streets and lanes, apparently paved with a view to dislocate all travellers, we emerged upon a fine broad road, where I took the liberty of making the brown horse keep neck and neck with Cyclops. Winter's was certainly a curious turn out, with a huge basket tied on the back seat, leaving a narrow ledge for Tom to perch on; Winter himself in a broad brimm'd straw hat, the expression of his features completely changed (by the total eclipse of his eyes under green goggles) into one of preternatural gravity and pre-occupation, sitting bolt upright, and considerably in the middle of the carriage, leaving small space for Miss Vernon, and terribly embarrassed with the reins.

Our own was not much better; the cane work doing duty for panels broken in several places, and the brown horse leaning against the collar, and pulling with all his might. How Burton would have laughed at the whole concern; yet never did I enjoy a pic nic so much.

The road leading through a fine rich, though rather flat country, its chief ornament an abundance of splendid timber, at one place crossed a marshy common, where, the Organist informed me, the Royalists had been routed, in the civil wars. Many a sally from Kate, upholding the superiority of their steed to ours, enlivened our journey, while Winter's attention was a good deal engrossed by a tendency of the reins to get under Cyclops' tail.

Our progress was not rapid, but at length we reached our destination. Mowbray Castle stands close to the modern house of the Earl of——; they were generally absentees, and kindly permitted the vulgar public to enjoy the beauties they did not value; a civil gate keeper admitted us into an unpretending avenue, and shouted a warning after us, that one side of the ruins was unsafe, but which no one seemed to heed. Winter said that was a matter of course hint, given to every visitor, and that he would undertake to guide us.

We entered a quadrangular court yard, bare and blazing with sunshine, where we left the carriages, and I secured Miss Vernon as my companion, while Winter gave some directions to Tom, as to the arrangements of dinner, all agreeing to leave the selection of our banqueting hall to him.

"Push open this gate for me, Captain Egerton," said Kate, after a vain attempt to move a pair of heavy wooden doors to the left. I obeyed, and we stepped at once from the glare of the paved court yard into the cool shade of grand old trees, feathering to the ground, with gleams of sunshine breaking through upon the rich soft mossy turf beneath. A broad straight gravelled walk led up a steep hill before us, under a perfect arch of luxuriant foliage, the modern house lying a little distance to the left.

Here we were joined by Winter, who had discarded the green specs, his hat in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. Reaching the hill, and emerging from the shade of the trees, we found ourselves upon the edge of what was formerly the moat of the Castle, now a gravel walk, with steeply sloping grassy sides, studded with evergreens and flowering shrubs. Beyond, the ruins rose majestic in their decay, and crowning the sudden hill we had partially ascended, a narrow stone arch, allowing of one passenger only at a time, was here thrown over the moat; the ivy and other creepers hanging from it in graceful streamers and festoons. It had no parapet or rail. Kate walked over it fearlessly and at once, but Mrs. Winter hesitated, and accepted my hand to lead her across. A good deal of climbing ensued up and down dilapidated spiral staircases, and among yawning chasms, leading to torture chambers and *oubliettes* as Miss Vernon suggested. Some of the views from the elevated position on which we stood, over the rich flat country with its winding river, and the distant towers of A—— were fine; but I agreed with Kate in preferring the opposite side of the Castle, where the hill was more precipitous, and you looked down into a sea of foliage, with an undulating ferny deer park beyond, and a background of blue mountains in the distance. Winter was already arranging his drawing materials in front of a round tower, with an arched door half hidden by a graceful ash tree.

After looking at his preparations, "I should like a sketch of the Castle as we first came upon it, a little to the right, to take in that pretty bridge; what subject are you going to select, Captain Egerton?" asked Kate.

"If you will show me the spot you speak of, I will endeavour to carry out your idea."

"That is delightful! follow me."

I saw in a moment she had selected an admirable point of view, and I was soon hard at work, Miss Vernon bending over my drawing, offering suggestions as I proceeded, now leaning back against the *débris* of an old tower, cutting my pencils and telling me legends of the Castle; now wandering away with Gilpin to inspect Winter's sketch, and returning with a report of his progress to stimulate my energies, while Mrs. Winter and the Colonel seated themselves on a rustic bench, occupying an elevated position in what was once the Keep, from which the rival sketchers were both visible, and the latter producing a newspaper from his pocket, sometimes holding his glasses to his eyes, sometimes tapping them on the paper, seemed to read aloud for his companion's amusement. A couple of hours glided pleasantly away, and Kate was congratulating me on my faithful delineation of the ruins, when we perceived Winter join his wife and the Colonel. He waved his straw hat, and making a speaking trumpet of a roll of paper, shouted "Dinner!" very audibly.

"In a minute," said Miss Vernon, forgetting he could not hear her, "just finish that bit of shading, Captain Egerton; Mr. Gilpin and I will put up all your things."

"Are you coming?" shouted Winter once more.

I put my portfolio under my arm, shouldered my camp stool, and we soon joined the impatient and hungry artist, who led the way to a well-chosen site for dinner. A bastion to the east of the Castle, commanding a totally different view both north and south, which the remains of a grey watch tower at one angle served to divide into two distinct pictures. Close under it our banquet was spread; some moss-grown stones and our camp stools supplying us with seats; gaily and laughingly we attacked the viands. Winter presided, eating and talking with great energy, seated on a high stone, which compelled him to keep his feet on tiptoe to prevent his well-filled plate from gliding off his knees; kneeling down every now and then to dive into the interior of a partridge pie, his own contribution to the feast.

"I must trouble you again, Winter," said the Colonel; "no paste thank you, but Teniers himself never gave a better interior."

"I made it myself, Colonel," said Mrs. Winter, triumphantly.

"My dear Madam, fair hands make fair work."

"*Bel parlare poco costa*," ejaculated Winter.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to say such things in an unknown tongue," said Miss Vernon.

"What was it, my dear?" enquired his wife; "indeed, John, those wicked words are very sinful."

"Ha, ha, Miss Vernon, you are a mischievous little witch! Ah, Sue, you've an old reprobate of a husband."

"Let us fill a bumper to the memory of those glorious old Normans, who left us so charming a banqueting hall," said I.

"You do not express yourself properly; let us 'drain a cup' is more appropriate," interrupted Miss Vernon.

"A set of unmitigated robbers without a spark of humanity," said the Artist.

"You must admit they were often splendidly generous," interposed Miss Vernon.

"Ay, by fits and starts."

"As much as could be expected from ignorant uncivilised warriors," said I; "they were rude and cruel enough, so were all nations at the time; while few possessed their generosity, energy, and abstemiousness; they were a race of gentlemen!"

"Yes, abstemiousness has always continued to be a characteristic of their gentlemanlike descendants," sneered Winter.

"Quite as much as of the all imbibing Saxons. I like the Normans," replied Kate.

"Was it not here, Miss Vernon, that Geraldine Mowbray mounted guard with her waiting woman, to give the Warders time for repose?" enquired Gilpin.

"Yes, it was during an insurrection of the Saxon serfs, and was not unlike the Lady Evelyn Berenger's watch in 'The Betrothed.' She had a brave heart."

"It is wonderful what heroic acts women were capable of in those days," observed the Colonel.

"It was the peculiar position they were placed in called forth faculties which still exist, ready to spring into action whenever there is a call for self devotion," said I.

"Which are exercised every day, and a thousand times more painfully, in silent unregarded sacrifices," observed the Organist.

"And a thousand times more gloriously," said Miss Vernon. "It was, I am sure, comparatively easy to act heroically, when the tone of every thing round you was heroic; applauded and worshipped by noble and gallant knights; celebrated by minstrels through all the world of chivalry. I have not much courage to boast of, but I think I could mount guard on an emergency, and under those circumstances. Ah! dare I say I have that loftier courage that would enable me to bear up under trials, the depth of which, my own heart alone knew!"

She stopped suddenly, blushing, as if ashamed of her own enthusiasm.

"My dear Kate, what makes you think such dreadful things?" whined Mrs. Winter.

"Why, Miss Vernon, you are in a moralising vein," cried her mate.

"I have no doubt, Kate, you would lead a forlorn hope gallantly," said her grandfather.

"Take me as your Lieutenant, Miss Vernon, and trust me I'll support my chief."

"When the occasion comes, you'll find strength," said Gilpin.

"*Basta! in nome di Dio*, leave off moralising, and give us a song." The Organist and Kate sang a duet, and even Winter joined in a catch; their notes floated sweetly on the air, and woke up the echoes of the deserted castle. Tom gathered up the fragments of the feast, and Mr. Winter hinted it was time for us to start for the farm.

We all accordingly rose, and Gilpin, who was a little of a botanist, climbed to get some wild plant that caught his eye, a little way up the remnant of a watchtower I have already mentioned. "I wonder," said Kate, "if this is the dangerous part of the ruins; I think that wall looks tottering;" and she remained standing beside me, watching the Organist. As she spoke, I fancied I heard something fall among the thick leafy boughs at the other side; then one of the stones by which

Gilpin had ascended rolled slowly away. "*Christo benedetto!*" shouted Winter, "down, down all of you, it will fall." They rushed rapidly away; Kate paused for an instant to say, "poor Mr. Gilpin, help him, he is lame." I immediately flew to assist his descent, and almost lifted him to the ground; he turned quickly to the right, down a broken flight of steps, and I was following him, when there was a crash, a blinding dust, a scream of dismay from the lookers on; I felt a heavy blow, a sense of acute pain, and then all was darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.
CONVALESCENCE.

I will not dwell on the wearisome details of a sick room; my escape from death was almost miraculous, still the injuries I received were dangerous, and my recovery retarded by the fever consequent on my slow and painful transit from the scene of the accident to Winter's house, where he insisted on establishing me, on the plea that he was partly the cause of my sufferings. Here all that kindness and skill could accomplish, was done to alleviate them; poor Gilpin watching over me with the affection of a brother, and the tenderness of woman. Mrs. O'Toole, too, seemed a fixture by my bedside, and when in the delirium of fever, no voice had so much influence over me, I was told, as the rich tones of her mellifluous brogue.

Burton and Colonel Dashwood came over from Carrington, on receiving despatches announcing the accident, and the former finding me in such good hands, gave up his intention of remaining with me. Notwithstanding all the care and watchfulness expended on me, October was well nigh past before the spectacled, shovel-hatted Galen of A—— pronounced a visit to the drawing room feasible; and my utter exhaustion, when the transit from my room was effected, proved the correctness of his judgment.

There I lay stretched on the sofa, strength and energy alike vanished, finding a sufficient exercise for all my faculties, in watching the twinkling of Mrs. Winter's knitting needles, and enjoying a delicious languor, partly the result of weakness, partly of freedom from pain. Where was the resolution with which I was to disentangle my affairs, rouse my brother to a sense of duty, and try my chance of winning Kate Vernon? Buried in the ruins of the "Lady's Tower," as it was called, while I was utterly unable to move without assistance, and indebted to Mrs. Winter's unceasing attention for the conveyance of every spoonful of jelly that reached my lips, yet in spite of all, I was almost glad to be thus compelled to postpone for the present my intentions.

It was so delightful to feel that no exertion could be expected from me, and that I was chained within the magic circle of Kate Vernon's influence, without the possibility of Burton or any one else caviling at the cause. Yet such is the miserable vanity of our petty nature, I rather delayed seeing her, even after the doctor had declared visitors admissible. The Colonel had from the first seen me almost daily, and now no morning passed, without a visit from him to tell me the news—what the troops in India were about; what the *Times* said of the Ministry, and of the enquiries made for me by Colonel Dashwood and my brother officers; in short, I was an occupation to him, and always welcomed his appearance with a warmth too genuine not to touch his benevolent heart.

Winter had received one or two notes of inquiry from my brother, finally a formal letter of thanks for his attention to me, and Egerton appeared to relapse into his usual forgetfulness of my existence.

My days generally passed in a sort of routine order, each person of our little society giving me a portion of their time in turn. The Colonel in the morning, when Winter was out and his wife in the subterranean regions, devoted to gastronomy; then Gilpin used to look in between the intervals of his music lessons; after this came a dreary pause, before Mrs. Winter was sufficiently at liberty to take up her strangely soothing work, and Winter still in his studio.

I was unequal to the effort of perusing a book, and longed for some one to read to me, so I generally lay "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy" from one to two o'clock, and curious enough, as my strength slowly returned, the bitter predominated; my mind seemed to gather force enough to feel the weight of responsibilities, from which the weakness it shared with its closely linked associate, the body, had freed it for a while. Is it not thus that spirits and forms of slighter make, and less comprehensive faculties manage to cast away sorrows and sicknesses that would shatter more robust and powerful frames.

Woe to him whose deep and sensitive feelings are not linked with a nature strong enough to direct and support them. And for those from whose light-hearted buoyancy, care and regret seem to glance away as if from polished armour; why should we dare to sneer at their apparent frivolity? shall not nature which has furnished every living thing with its own peculiar weapon, provide the spirit with a fitting defence against the deadly foes that beset it. *Maraviglia*, as Winter would say, what profound reflections for a Captain of Light Dragoons!

The interval I have described was dragging its dreary length slowly over one determined wet day, dark and misty, the clouds having apparently come down to earth in a fit of hysterics; the trees in the Abbey garden visible from my sofa had a thoroughly drenched saturated look as if nothing could ever dry them; once or twice the tramp tramp of a pair of heavy hob-nailed shoes echoed through the square, and the wearer trudged by in glistening oilskin cap, a sack thrown over his shoulders, and a shivering dripping dog at his heels; but beyond this no living creature showed

out of shelter. It was too much, I fancied, even for the most aquatically inclined duck. I felt the want of companionship deplorably. What could Winter mean by pretending business with the Dean this morning? If he was at home I would have some one to speak to, it is too dark to paint.

There was a low knock at the door, and Mrs. O'Toole's broad pleasant face appeared, beaming on me over a tray which she carried.

"Ah, Nurse," I exclaimed, "how delighted I am to see you here—shake hands." I got quite affectionate at the idea of a pleasant chat with Mrs. O'Toole.

"Och, jewel, now be asy! don't be strivin' to sit up; sure I'll settle the pillas for ye, before y'd say thrap stick, if you'd have patience. There now, take a sup of it, I made ye a nice drop of jelly meeself; sure little Mrs. Winter's a good soul, but I don't like them English ways of puttin' lard an' suet into their paste instead of the best ov good buther; faith, ses I to meeself, may be it's glue they'll be puttin' in the jelly, so I made ye a drop; an' Mrs. Winter ses, mighty good humoured, 'Walk up, Mrs. O'Toole, in coorse nothin' plaises the Captin so much as what you make.' Dear knows it's the t'underin' wet day; an' how are ye, agrah?"

I may observe *en passant* that Mrs. O'Toole had treated me more like a pet child than a respected "Right Honourable" since my illness, and rather ruled me with a rod of iron.

I replied to her kind enquiries, and asked for Miss Vernon.

"Is it Miss Kate? she's singin' like a lark. Ses she, 'Nurse, be sure you ask Captin Egerton when I may go see him; I'm sure,' ses she, 'he's angry with me for making him go back to help Mr. Gilpin,' ses she, 'or he'd let me go see him as well as every one else,' ses she."

"Did she though? I am most happy she made me instrumental in saving Mr. Gilpin's life, and of course I'll be too glad to see her the next time she calls on Mrs. Winter; but Nurse, don't I look confoundedly wretched?"

"Musha is it that ye'r thinkin' of? ye needn't bother ye'r head about it, honey. If ye were like ould Dan Kelly (an' he'd a broken nose an' a cast in his two eyes), Miss Kate, 'ud think the sun shone in ye'r face afther ye'r goin back to help the crather of an organist, an every one else runin' away. She ses"—

"Oh! it was a natural instinct to help him."

"Faith, it 'ud come more natural to many a one to save himself. I'll never forget the night ye come home all bruised an' bloody, widout as much life in ye as 'ud stand a pooff, Gilpin houldin' yer head, Winter cursin' (God forgive him) like a throoper in Greek or Latin; the ould masther, as studdy as a rock, sending off right an' left for everything, an' Miss Kate as white as a sheet, an' thrimblin' from head to fut, not spakin' a word, an' keepin' quiet as a lamb, just not to disturb any one. Musha, but we'd the ruction!"

"I can never forget the great kindness you all showed me; I must have been a great trouble to you when I was delirious; do you remember what I raved about?"

"Oh! you was rampagin mad; it was ordtherin' the army one minit, an' followin' the hounds the next, an' shoutin' murther to save Miss Kate, for whatever ye began with, it iver an' always ended with her; may be ye have a sisther called Kate."

"No, it was your Miss Kate that always seemed to me in some deadly danger, and I could not rescue her; your voice used invariably to break the spell; but did any one else hear me except you?"

"I couldn't take upon me to say, but Mr. Gilpin an' meeself was wid ye most times."

"Hum! and Miss Vernon, you did not mention my delusions to her?"

"In course I did."

"And what did she say?"

Mrs. O'Toole just thought for a moment, and then looking up in my face, said, "Is it Miss Kate? Ses she—'isn't it odd, dear Nurse, how people rave about those they never think of when sane,' ses she; sane or sinsible was the word, but I *dis* remember which."

Not much tenderness or recognition of my feelings there, I thought! "*Tant mieux*, you may put away the cup, Nurse, it was so good I quite enjoyed it: and tell me, did you see Colonel Dashwood when he was over here?"

"Is it the 'Curnel? To be sure I did, he was twizte over at the Priory, an' a fine grand lookin' gentleman he is; he wanted the masther to go back with him, but, ses he, 'No, Dashwood, I'm too old for a mess table, an' I would have no pleasure widout poor Egerton, at all evints,' ses he; an' then Miss Kate ups, an' ses she, 'If you take grandpapa, 'Curnel, you must take me too, for we are —' Musha, I forget the word."

"Inseparable," I suggested.

"Somethin' like it, anyhow; and then the 'Curnel bowed mighty grand, an' ses he—'Arrah, then, it's the whole rigmint 'ull be wantin' 'Curnel Vernon, if I mintion them conditions,' ses he."

I laughed to a degree that alarmed Nurse, at the idea of our dashing thorough-bred colonel prefacing his speech with "arrah, thin."

"I'll lave ye intirely if ye be shakin' yerself that way, when ye havn't the stringth in ye to laugh out."

"Oh Nurse, dear Nurse, do not go, tell me something more."

"I havn't a ha'poth more to tell ye, an its time for me to be going. The blessin' of Christ be wid ye, ye'r lookin' ten stone bether, Glory be to God."

The next day in consequence of Nurse's report, Miss Vernon came with her grandfather. I almost expected her, yet her advent made me feel strangely nervous; it seemed strange to me too, being unable to rise, that she should come over, and place her hand in mine, when I could not stir to receive her; she sat down near me and began talking in a gentle subdued tone, as if half afraid of disturbing me.

"You look much better than I expected, Captain Egerton; what a wonderful recovery! But why would you not let me come here before?"

"I was afraid my ghastly looks would frighten you."

"You look all eyes now."

In a whisper, "I am."

"I do not think you look so well to day, Egerton, you have a feverish excited air, and your voice is decidedly weaker," observed the Colonel.

"Perhaps we ought not to stay," said Miss Vernon.

"I beg you will not leave me," I gasped.

After a little more conversation a message from Mr. Winter called the Colonel out of the room, and Kate and I were *tête-à-tête*.

"Nurse gave rather a melancholy account of you yesterday," said Miss Vernon, "she said you were all alone and '*dissolute*' by yourself. Have you no books?"

"I do not feel up to reading, but if I had any one to read out to me—Gilpin has not time."

"I would be delighted, I will come here and read to you and Mrs. Winter every day."

"You are most kind."

The excitement of her visit was too much for me, and I felt a faintness stealing over me. Miss Vernon observing the deadly pallor of my face, with an expression of alarm, felt my pulse. "Let me call some one," she said. I feebly grasped her hand, dreading that an interview so delightful to me should be curtailed.

"It is nothing—air, air!" I articulated with much difficulty. Still leaving her hand in mine, she stretched the other to a screen, and fanned me silently for a few moments; then perceiving the returning colour, "Are you better now?" she said softly, with such an expression of tenderness in her dark eyes, I could have thrown myself at her feet.

"If you will let go my hand I will get you a little of that bottle; I see 'restorative' on it" she added, without a shade of embarrassment, evidently considering my desire to retain it some sickly fancy. I reluctantly relinquished my hold and turning to the table she gave me the medicine and then arranged my pillows in such a home-like manner.

From that interview, the sort of unsettled but ardent admiration I had before entertained for her, seemed to deepen into something purer, higher, more devoted, and unselfish, than I had ever felt before. I looked forward to the possibility of calling her my wife; not with the rash eagerness to possess a new toy, or to give life a new charm, but with a deep rooted conviction that with her at my side, come weal or woe, I would have love and truth and strength there always and unchangeably.

From this time she came over constantly after my host's early dinner, and read aloud, while Mrs. Winter pursued her occupation of knitting; and I lay on my sofa all eye and ear. Winter and the Colonel often joined our party, but the former was too fond of raising questions in opposition to the opinions of whatever author we were perusing.

Miss Vernon generally chose the books she was to read, and I could not help thinking she had some design in her selection; they were generally thoughtful, high toned works, not coming under the denomination of religious literature; but yet setting forth in a strong, though unobtrusive manner, the necessity of faith; the healing power of resignation.

I hinted one day that I could see she intended to convert me; she disclaimed such an intention very eagerly, concluding, "why should I pretend to do so; I am sure you are as good as I am! I consulted Mr. Gilpin about the books, and took what he advised, and I like them too, for I feel they do me good; but I will bring you a novel to-morrow." She did so, and chose Zanoni, excluding Winter from the lecture. I did thoroughly enjoy it.

Miss Vernon seemed to identify herself with its noble thoughts, its wild imaginings, its grand philosophy, and high-souled spirit of self-sacrifice! Her musical voice varying with every sentiment it expressed, and often laying down the book to discuss its character with an interest and affection that invested them with life-like reality: I had glanced over the work before, and put it down with an acknowledgment, certainly, of the author's great genius, but with an idea that it was beyond the scope of my imagination to enjoy. Kate's readings and remarks on it revealed me to myself, and showed me I had aspirations and capabilities for better things: yet it was merely the outpouring of her own heart, and she would have raised her darkly fringed eyelids in astonishment had any one told her she was making a silent revolution in mine.

Poor Mrs. Winter used to listen to our animated debates on Viola and Glyndon, &c., in perfect

amazement, and when appealed to by Kate for an opinion, replied with a smile, "Indeed, my dear, I don't know; it's a very curious book, and quite impossible to believe any man could see and know everything the way that Mr. Zanoni did."

Longfellow's poems, then attracting notice for the first time in England, were great favourites with Miss Vernon, and here she and Winter perfectly agreed, for a wonder. These were hours of intense happiness: the exterior world all forgotten, I lived in a fairy-like dream, with just sufficient of earth around me to prove it real; my strength was now rapidly returning, and I began to feel this delicious breathing space from life's ruder joys and ruder cares had lasted long enough. Once or twice I had caught Winter watching Kate and myself as we sat apart rather from the others—she pouring forth her opinions on some favourite author with all her accustomed enthusiasm—I wrapped in contemplation of her, and thinking but little of the subject which engrossed her thoughts.

Winter, I repeat, would sometimes glance uneasily at us as we sat thus, but I always observed serenity return to his countenance, as his eye rested on Miss Vernon.

It soon grew into a habit, that the Vernons and Gilpin should come in every evening; Kate and the Organist taking it by turns to cut into the rubber or talk with me, as I showed a decided disinclination for the society of Miss Araminta Cox, who usually made up the whist table; we had a good deal of music too, my favourite songs were all duly remembered, and all my whims so kindly attended to, I almost regretted that soon no excuse would remain for prolonging my sojourn amongst them. The first day I ventured to walk out, Burton came over from Carrington with a packet of letters, arrived during my illness; there were some pleasant reminders from my solicitors that Messrs. Levi and Co.'s bill would soon be due, and that they kindly offered to renew on exorbitant terms. One or two missives of the same nature; an epistle from Egerton, congratulating me on my escape from the infernal regions, which he seemed clearly of opinion would have been my destination, had not Nature or the Doctor been too strong for Grim Death, and concluding with an exhortation to read the 25th chapter of St. Matthew. "He is worse than ever," was my reflection, as I finished the perusal, "what a Herculean labour I have before me, in the attempt to soften the heart of such a thoroughgoing Evangelical. They always manage to convince themselves that it is for the good of their souls that their pockets should be hermetically sealed against the wants of their brothers. But I must get out of Messrs. Levi's clutches at any cost."

Lastly, a long rambling but affectionate letter from my sister, telling me more of English gossip, than I could imagine the *dolce far niente* of Neapolitan life had left her energy enough to collect.

"I feel rather distressed, dear Fred," she said, after giving me an amusing sketch of the society about her, "at the profoundly moral tone of your letter, and fear you must be in debt, (not far out there) for you never were very serious about any love affair; tell me what is the matter? You know we are rich, and Harry always liked you. I have been so bored about some absurd speech of Egerton's at Exeter Hall; they tell me, (for I never read such things) he said, 'the ministry had delivered the nation, bound hand and foot to Beelzebub, where they sent an Ambassador to Antichrist (meaning the Pope);' do find out if this is true, for the people here have discovered he is my brother, and the women always cross themselves when I enter a room, which is so absurd, and disagreeable: the men only laugh. I am much better, and we think of returning to England next spring. I wish you would get leave of absence and run over to us, for the winter. It is too dreadful to think of your being condemned to remain at that horrible place; would it not be better to live altogether at A——, if you must be near your Regiment. Talking of you the other night to Count Alphonso Di Montibello, he said there was a famous painter, a great ally of his, who used to study here, now living at A——; do you know any thing of him?

"Now, dear Fred, good bye, write soon again to me; ever your affectionate sister,

"Mary F. Wentworth."

"P.S.—Harry desires his remembrances; I had almost forgotten Lady Desmond; of course I know her, every one does; she is a most charming person, and creates a perfect *furore* here; such taste, and certainly the most ladylike Irishwoman I ever met; she has refused a perfect army of Counts and Marquises. *Cela va sans dire*; but if report speaks true, that nice creature Sir Charles Seyton shared the same fate. They say Adolphus Somerset, one of our *attachés*, got sick leave, after offering his little diplomatic self for her acceptance, and receiving one fixed look from her dark eyes! I have a theory of my own that Lady Desmond, calm, proud, and cold as she seems, has a *tendresse* for a certain *blasé* peer, at present among our most prominent notorieties; he piques himself on his cynicism, and is rather in the Satanic style; very ridiculous I think! They tell me dreadful stories of him. Lady Desmond talks of travelling with us as far as Florence next spring; if you have any *engouement* for her, get rid of it, I would advise you, for she had some trouble to recall your memory to hers, and seemed quite astonished when I told her you had made any enquiries about her. Adieu once more."

How thoroughly characteristic her letter is of the life she leads, kindly and polished, but trifling and self-absorbed! I must ask Winter about this Count Alphonso di——, what is it?

"And is your business so urgent that you cannot put it off till you are stronger?" said the old Colonel to me about a week after the receipt of the above, when I announced my intention of starting for Allerton, my brother's place in Hampshire.

"It is indeed," I replied, so gloomily, that my kind old friend asked, "Nothing disagreeable I hope?"

"Nothing very pleasant," said I, forcing a laugh; "I will tell you all when I come back; do not look so gravely at me, Miss Vernon."

"Did I? I was not aware of it; but are you not very rash to travel so soon?"

"No, I would get a fever if I remained."

CHAPTER IX.
STRUGGLES.

Allerton Court has been in our family since the days of the Tudors. How the careless scapegrace Egertons kept it so long I cannot imagine; chiefly, I believe, by the sacrifice of larger and more valuable estates elsewhere. Its present possessor, my half brother, was a very different person from his predecessors. My father succeeded to an impoverished title at an early age, and soon after attaining his majority, married a wealthy city heiress, who, finding herself uneasy and misplaced in fashionable life, imagined she was disgusted with the world and its frivolities, and gave herself up for the remainder of her "sojourn here below" to quacks, spiritual, and medical. Poor woman! I believe she sincerely wished to do right, and with this view brought up her son under an amount of religious pressure that reduced him to the adamantine condition I have before hinted at. No doubt the various patent pills and powders she was in the habit of administering to him, had their share in producing the curious dormant state of his physical and mental powers. Altogether, Egerton was a problem I never dreamt of solving, and now that he had suddenly acquired interest in my eyes, I blushed at the thought of asking his brotherly assistance to settle my affairs into marriageable shape, almost as deeply as at the idea of begging from a stranger.

My father remained unmarried for nearly two years after the death of his first wife, and their son must have been nineteen when the bright eyes and graceful manners of Lady Mary De Burgh captivated the disconsolate widower, still young and handsome enough to please the fancy and interest the heart of a girl, only some few months older than his heir. I have but slight recollection of my mother. I was the youngest, and she did not survive my birth more than three years; both my sister and myself were extremely like her, and adored by my father, who never could, even in his childhood, caress so rigidly orthodox a young gentleman as his eldest son. Egerton was a thing apart, and belonged to his country and the peerage; but we were the darlings of his heart; spoiled children, reared in luxury and indulgence. How well I remember the bitter and passionate grief with which I received the intelligence of his death, and the choking sobs that interrupted my reproaches to Egerton, for not sending for me in time to let me hear his voice once more, feeling that every unconscious game of cricket in which I had joined while he lay struggling between life and death was an unnatural piece of levity, unpardonable!

All this passed over soon, and my life was happy enough, but Mary used often to look sad, and was very glad to marry Wentworth, though he was a good deal older than herself. The large fortune my father's first wife brought him was, of course, settled on her children, so Mary and I had but the slender portions usually allotted to the younger Egertons, but mine was doubled by her husband's refusal to accept hers.

This is more than I meant to have stated about myself, but it was necessary to show my position.

A cold raw damp November day, with occasional dashes of heavy rain, the leafless trees bending before the sudden gusts of wind that accompanied them; and every object ten yards off shrouded in a dark fog that seemed to blend heaven and earth in one equable gloom. I shivered as I drew up the windows of the cab into which I had thrown myself at the railway station, near Allerton, observing how strongly the conveyance appeared to partake of the general humidity. The avenue seemed interminable; and when at length my humble vehicle drew up before the portico, I received the pleasing intelligence, "my Lord is not at home, Captain Egerton, but will you please to walk in?"

"Why, yes! I intend stopping here for the night; and, Barnard, get me some mulled port, will you, lots of spice, and hot as the Devil."

"Yes, sir," said the Butler, with a slight shudder at the profanity. By the time I had roused the slumbering fire into a blaze, the house steward, an old retainer, entered with the wine, and respectfully congratulated me on my recovery; a few mutual enquiries followed, during which I could not help smiling to myself at the formal tone I felt compelled to adopt towards the grave old man who had known my boyhood; nothing would be too familiar with Mrs. O'Toole, but the stern Saxon nature demands a degree of reserve in their superiors, and would resent any freedom as something derogatory to both. The coldness between English masters and servants is quite as much the fault of the latter as the former, and so it must be while the Anglo-Saxon race exists; anything demonstrative is terribly out of place with them. *Il ne faut jamais faire agir un homme dans un sens different de son caractère.*

"My Lord takes the chair at a meeting of the Society for converting the Jews at—— to-day, sir, but he will return to dinner," said my informant, as he made his parting bow and retired.

"Heaven send my worthy brother may follow up the object of the meeting by converting Messrs. Levi and Co. from creditors into non-claimants, as well as all the other errors of their ways," was my mental ejaculation as I betook myself to the *Record* and its advertisements for pious footmen,

and not sober, but serious cooks, as an escape from my own thoughts.

Egerton returned to dinner, bringing with him two sleek white neckcloth'd straight-haired gentlemen; "the deputation," he informed me, from the "Parent Society."

My brother received me very graciously, and remarking that I still looked indifferent after my illness, regretted I was not in time to attend the meeting to hear the reverend "somebody" hold forth. "Captain Egerton," said he, during one of the pauses in our repast, noticing, perhaps, something of carnal impatience in the glances of the Reverend J. E. Black towards the door, for the appearance of the next *entrée*, "Captain Egerton has been, and is quartered at Carrington; did you not reside there, or in its neighbourhood?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied the son of the "Parent Society;" "I had for some time a wide field of labour at A——."

This individual was a tall man, inclined to *embonpoint*, with heavy features, a large hooked nose, a thick sensual under lip, and a tuft of straight coarse hair at each side of his face.

"At A——," said I, glad to exchange a word with any one about a place so endeared to me; "I was there two days ago. Did you know a Mr. Winter, of Abbey Gardens? I am indebted to the kindness and care of him and his wife for my existence."

"Under Providence," he suggested, in a mild sugary voice, which, with a perpetual placid smile, characterised the revd. gentleman; his manner, too, was extremely courteous, almost well-bred, though one could not help perceiving a something lurking below, like the odour of cigars, when you endeavour to overpower it with *mille fleurs* or *eau de miel*.

"Of course, of course," said I.

"I was not personally acquainted with him," he observed, "but from his repute I fear he is not a Christian."

"Well, at least he is a good Samaritan," I replied.

"My brother is a military man, you know, my dear sir," observed Lord Egerton, and he sighed.

"Come, Egerton," said I, "although we may not be as good as we ought, we are not so bad after all."

"Indeed, my Lord, there is a little more light in the army than formerly," said his revd. friend, "when I was a soldier their state of darkness was awful!"

"Pray, sir, may I ask you how you managed to grope your way out of it," I enquired.

Thoughtless as I then was, I felt shocked at the profane familiarity with sacred things evinced by his reply, nor will I record it. I noticed merely his hint of having been a soldier, and made a few languid enquiries as to his Regiment, &c. But Egerton and the other clerico soon plunged into discussion of things and people incomprehensible and unknown to me; their occasional awkward attempts to change or rather descend to topics more congenial to their unregenerate companion, conveying the pleasant notion that they looked upon me as a hawk in a dove cot, a wolf among lambs, but that they would endeavour to let me see they were not too proud of their superiority. Mr. Black indeed frequently turned to me, endeavouring to suit his conversation to my depraved taste, by repeating wretched anecdotes of various London notorieties. By the way, I generally observe your *parvenu* always appears to think a familiarity with steward and housekeeper's room *on dits* the most certain proof he can adduce of his own fitness for good society. I took a most unconquerable dislike to this blessed babe of the Parent Society, especially when I heard him descanting to Egerton as we sipped our coffee, on the sinfulness of dancing and the necessity of faith unadorned by works; nor was I the least surprised on hearing afterwards from Winter, that he fully carried out his principles in his practice, by leaving every thing to his faith, and dispensing with those more commonplace duties less privileged individuals consider binding; his poor wife, neglected and abused, sought safety in separation; and his sons, ground down by tyranny and injustice, being left to the unassisted care of that Providence with whose dispensation he was too pious to let parental anxieties interfere. But I am giving too much time to a man who annoyed me through a whole evening; there are not many like him I should hope. His companion, although tiresome, seemed a simple, straightforward person.

Never shall I forget that wretched evening: oppressed by the anticipation of the unpleasant conference before me, and feeling the difficulty of my task with Egerton more strongly, as every moment showed me the spirit of self-satisfied devoteeism with which my brother and his allies seemed to shut out the non-elect from all sympathy or affection.

There was a great deal of babble about the "Missionary cause," and advanced Christian and Evangelical views, and many more of the technical terms which made up their stock-in-trade; while my thoughts flew back to the real prayer I had heard poor Gilpin pour out when I lay, to all appearance, insensible, and hovering between life and death.

I felt disgusted to observe that sleek, shiny Black trying to catch Egerton with a dun (religious) hackle, while he baited a small hook with a red one (of what he would call fashionable small talk) for me: of the two, I preferred the latter, for although far from what I ought to be, nothing is so revolting to my taste as the attempt to force solemn subjects into the trivialities of commonplace conversation.

The longest and dreariest evening, and digression too, must come to an end: I pleaded the excuse of recent illness, and made my retreat, intimating to Egerton my wish for a private interview in the morning, to which he very readily assented.

I sat musing over my fire until my candle was nearly burnt out, contrasting in my mind the dreary trio I had just left with the pleasant, warmhearted, unaffected little circle, amongst whom I had so lately mingled, a favoured and indulged member—"These people live, and are happy: they lead no useless unemployed existence either; but if Egerton's is the road to Heaven, *Dieu m'en preserve*. Oh, what a strange perversity of fate to make me the younger brother. Egerton would have made such an admirable curate, and married the best dowered of his congregation; he looks upon the 'accessories' of his position as so many hindrances to his advance in holiness, while I!—How well my poor mother's diamond tiara would look on Kate Vernon's rich brown hair!"

I never thought I should feel so like a poltroon as I did when the library door closed on Egerton and myself. Never in the course of our lives had I asked or received a favour from him: not that any unkind feeling existed between us, but we had always been blanks to each other; and now to ask this frigid, pharisaical being, who so evidently thought there was a great gulf fixed between himself and the great mass of his fellow-creatures, to help me out of a scrape I ought never to have got into—to sympathise with my passionate admiration of a penniless girl!

"You wished to speak to me, Frederic?"

I may observe, Egerton was the only one I was ever intimate with who troubled himself to give me more than one syllable to my name.

"Yes, I have a great deal to accuse myself of, Egerton, but, in short, I am in a scrape, and I want you to do a brotherly act, and help me out of it."

This bold plunge seemed to startle my companion not a little, and he moved rather restlessly on his seat as he replied, "Indeed! if in my power to assist you, I trust I shall not be deficient in the performance of my duty, but remember, I cannot countenance the godless waste of means entrusted"—

"God knows I do not want to continue any useless expenditure," said I, "it is with the wish to become free from debt, to live 'cleanly and like a gentleman,' that I come to bore you with my affairs!"

"Every one smarting under the effects of their folly is ready to abjure it, but when the sting is removed, you can hardly answer for yourself," said his Lordship.

"No, but really I have not a single dissipated or extravagant taste; the more unpardonable, you will say, my getting ahead of my income; granted, yet you, living here in unbroken quiet, can hardly judge the force that habit acquires, when your only companions are a set of men whose occupation is spending, whose excitement is prodigality. It was the want of some better and deeper interest that threw me into expensive follies which I now regret; but, Egerton, I have some more certain guarantee to give for my permanent reformation than a mere desire to get rid of difficulties. I—there is a Miss—that is, I want to marry and settle."

"That alters the face of affairs; I shall be happy to do anything I can to forward this favourable arrangement; have you proposed in form? or ascertained the amount of the lady's fortune?"

I replied, laughing, "Yes and no, I have not proposed, and her fortune is like my own—a blank."

"Really, Frederic, there are no limits to the imprudence into which the impetuosity of a worldly and unchastened spirit hurry those lost to the knowledge of better things. I do not see how your marriage, with a penniless girl is to better your position in any point of view, temporal or spiritual."

"There is such a thing as awakening to better and purer affections," I replied, "more settled convictions or"—

"It is our duty to curb our affections, which are all depraved and sinful," interrupted Lord Egerton, "but to return to the point we started from; what is the scrape, as you term it? substituting, no doubt, a delusive jest to disguise the real colour of the transaction."

"Why really nothing more dreadful than is done every day;" and I told him of my bets and horses; of raising the wind through the means of his *protegées*, the Jews; of their renewal of bills at enormous interest, and the whole blood-sucking system; that my great object was to get free from their fangs, to cut the army, marry, and settle down somewhere as something, I did not know exactly what, but I had an idea of farming: this last was a happy stroke, I thought, for if Egerton really wants to make a good boy of me, now is his time; let him offer me one of his Devonshire farms, for I know that he purchased property there some years ago. He sat playing with his seals and chain, and looking confoundedly sour, longer than I could wait with any degree of patience; at last he said, in a discontented tone, "I suppose you want me to join you in raising money on your 'younger son's portion?' but even if I were to consent to so great an inconvenience, it will not, I should think, forward your matrimonial scheme, which you'll excuse me for designating as peculiarly absurd under the circumstances."

"You may call it what you like," I replied, "though I am not aware I asked your opinion about it; of course if I must give it up, I must; for I would not drag any girl into an abyss of poverty; but it will be a blow more severe than you think."

"I am no judge, and you can of course decide as you think fit, but I must say I see no reason why I should be suddenly called on to inconvenience myself to pay for the extravagance, and gratify the caprice of my half brother!"

"You have given your opinion on my conduct quite often enough; I did not come here merely to bow before your animadversions, nor am I aware you have any right to call me to account; the

question is this: I have a certain charge on your estates, which will more than cover my debts, and I want you to decide whether you will aid me in getting it into my own hands or leave me to incur the expenses and difficulty of raising it indirectly. Come, Egerton, you cannot be such a cold hearted fellow, and a son of my poor father's. Pitch calculations to the Devil who invented them, and hold out a hand to help me on *terra firma*!"

"Well, Frederic, I am not cold hearted, but my principles are opposed to yielding to impulses which, prompted by our fallen nature, must always be evil; you certainly have a right to a sum of £10,000, the interest of which I have hitherto paid you, and could as certainly put difficulties in the way of your getting possession of it. I do not intend, however, to do so, my observations were merely to show that it was not such an easy matter for me to give you £10,000 at a moment's warning; I will, however, write to Harris about it at once; let me see, you say your debt to these Jews is between six and seven thousand, and your smaller debts something under two thousand; well, that will leave you, say, fifteen hundred to begin afresh with. I am endeavouring to serve you at my own inconvenience, I repeat. That property I purchased in Devonshire cost me more than it is worth, and situated as Providence has seen fit to place me, at the head of a strong Evangelical movement, it is my lot to contribute largely towards the spread of the gospel, and Heaven forbid that I should permit the extravagance of a young wordling to curtail my means of advancing the missionary cause; therefore remember, Frederic, that this is the last time I can yield to the weakness of my disposition and furnish you with the means of clearing yourself from debt; you are old enough to judge for yourself, and if you choose to commit the folly of marrying on £1,500 or £2,000, and a commission in one of the most expensive regiments in the service our besotted rulers ever embodied, you must bear the consequences; I have told you my final decision."

"It is just what I might have expected; but, I say, Egerton, though I am perfectly aware I have no claims on you, do you mean to say you will not give me a helping hand to settle, and lead 'a new life,' as you call it. I have been brought up in luxury and expensive habits; I am incapacitated by education and association from pushing my own fortune, and now, when these seeds have brought forth their fruit, I am to be cut adrift on a raft of £1,500; I would not ask you to injure or cramp yourself in the slightest degree, but is there nothing to which you can assist me, if you look about you in a brotherly spirit?"

"Really, Captain Egerton, I am at a loss to imagine what more you can expect from me; unless you wish me to resign Allerton into your own hands. I am ready to place your fortune in your own hands at once, and now you seem to think I have not done enough. Am I to supply you with the means of gratifying your whims out of my own pocket, at the expense of far higher claims?"

"Enough! enough!" cried I, "by Heavens I would rather accept a settlement in the parochial workhouse than from you, or any one, that would give it reluctantly. I do not know how you interpret the Bible, Egerton, but I remember a verse in it, that used to strike my fancy, when the plate was being handed round after a charity sermon; something about compassionating a needy brother, and the concluding question, 'how dwelleth the love of God in him?' I suppose your universal brotherhood with believers leaves but a scanty remnant for the one nature provided you with; however, you say truly, I have no right to expect you will inconvenience yourself for me; pray forget that I ever lowered myself so much as to hint at such a proceeding. I shall content myself with what I am rigidly entitled to, and equally free from debt and obligation, try to find in India a wider field for ambition, or as you would term it, of 'usefulness;' let us see which of us will reap most honours."

"I am well accustomed to bear the sneers a Christian must meet in his conflict with the world; I endeavour to act up to my principles, and I hope you may see the error of your ways before it is too late."

"Oh! pious martyr! I wish it was my lot to encounter persecutions on the same terms, though, by Jove, I am not sure whether in my darkened intellect, I might not consider 'Smithfield,' almost counterbalanced by a couple of hours' exhortation from some Rev. Holdforth. Don't look shocked, Egerton; but you and your dogmas have sent me three steps lower down, at least, since I came here. Religion! you conspire against its prevalence. But I need not excruciate you any longer;—any commands for town? I intend taking that particular road to ruin this evening."

"I never use strong language," said his Lordship, "it is opposed to all my principles, but I confess, Frederic, you have infinitely disgusted me: I wish you a safe journey, and, as I have promised to show the Rev. Mr. Black my model schools, the fame of which, he says, reached him even at A ——, I shall now bid you good morning." He bowed formally.

"Egerton, good bye: and not for all the wealth and influence you possess, nor even for the privilege of clerical toad-eaters, would I change with you!"

So it was all up with me in a few minutes; all my plans for getting inside the shell of my brother's heart vain—or rather, there was nothing inside to get at. Good bye to peace and love, but I will have action: where were my wits that I did not go to India long ago, instead of loitering away the best years of my life in aimless frivolity? Oh! the irremediable past.

In the bitterness of self-reproach I forgot Egerton; why should I be angry with him? he acted according to the dictates of his cold nature. Quietness was torment, and a couple of hours after the above conversation I was steaming to London, *en route* to my agent, breathless to be doing something—anything.

CHAPTER X.
ADIEU.

London at the close of November! Can the force of human imagination conceive anything half so gloomy and dispiriting? And certainly the dreary weeks I spent there at this period have ever ranked first in my remembrance of wretchedness: the damp, drizzling, foggy condition of animate and inanimate nature—the deserted streets haunted by long strings of decrepid placard bearers whose rheumatic forms seemed bowed under the huge capitals setting forth Mons. Jullien's concerts *d'hiver*, &c. My days were pretty equally divided between my lawyer and army agent, varied by a good deal of letter writing, and a solitary dinner at the desolate Club. Towards the middle of this purgatorial period, the regiment I was soon to call mine no more got the route for Canterbury; and Burton, like a trump as he was, came up to town to hear a fuller account of my troubles than a letter could give, and to see the most he could of me before I started to the land of military promise. He was a true-hearted fellow, and the sincere, unpretending interest with which he entered into my plans—I will not say hopes, for God knows I felt little then—did me more real good, and drew me more out of myself than the most elaborate efforts at consolation could have effected. Finally, when just about to leave me one night after a long talk over my affairs, and half out of the room, he observed, "You know, old fellow, I have always been prudent, and if a few hundred pounds would be of any use to you, I would be glad of a little higher interest—they only pay two and a half at present—and the whole thing might lie over until you get some prize money in India, when I will be down on you inexorably for the compound interest, principal, and all. Now do not stir, I know my way down; we will talk it over to-morrow."

He was away before I could say a word.

"Come," thought I, as I turned to the fire, "it is worth while to bear the crosses of this world of ours, when it contains even one such fellow as that to leaven the whole lump."

Yet not even to Burton could I bear to talk of the bitter struggle it cost me to part with Kate Vernon as little more than a common acquaintance. It was weakness in me to think of it, and (I am glad I can record so much good of myself) it was a source of sincere rejoicing to me when I reflected that Miss Vernon, at all events, could not suffer from the painful regret I felt gnawing my troubled spirit.

I wrote to Colonel Vernon from London, telling him shortly of the reasons which rendered my exchange into a Regiment in India indispensable, opening my mind to him as to a father, concluding by begging him to let me spend my last few days in England under his roof, as I wished to keep the visit to be a parting impression of home. To Winter I also wrote, less fully, and lastly to Gilpin. This little primitive group, scarce five months known to me, had wound itself into my sympathies, and now, with the exception of Burton, from them alone, of all the variety of my acquaintance, was it hard to part.

"I was beginning to feel puzzled at your long silence," wrote the Colonel, in reply. "You have fully explained, and if the assurance of an old soldier's perfect approbation has any value in your eyes, accept mine; you will be truly welcome here whenever you can come; give us a day's notice, and if you have no objection to a diminutive crib, and a haunted chamber, Mrs. O'Toole says we can keep you altogether under our roof. Kate desires her kind remembrances; she was delighted with your letter, which I hope I was not indiscreet in letting her see, &c." The kindly tone of this letter soothed me, and made me long to be once more among the quiet circle with whom my previous life had so little fitted me to sympathise; I hurried my preparations, and stirred up my agent so effectually, that early in December the *Gazette* announced "Captain the Hon. Boscawen Egerton from the —— Light Dragoons, to be Captain in the —— Lancers, *vice* John Thomas Robinson Brown, who exchanges."

The Regiment had not been long in India, and was stationed in the North Western Provinces, where I could have the best chance of seeing a little service.

A few final interviews with the military tailor; a parting visit to, and dinner from my old corps, who really seemed sorry to lose me; my heavy baggage dismissed to Southampton, to await the sailing of the ship in which I was to go out, and I was free to give my last week in England to A ——, and its attractions.

I had reserved a curious old picture, the painter unknown, which had been praised by judges; and a Louis Quatorze snuff-box with an exquisite miniature of La Valliere in enamel, from the general disposal of my miscellaneous effects; they were destined for Winter and the Colonel. Tupper's "Proverbial Philosophy," I thought would not be unacceptable to Kate; together with all the prettiest new music I could collect, and several oratorios in Moyen age binding, for Gilpin; and Mrs. O'Toole! could she be forgotten? No! I ransacked Regent Street, for the brightest of scarlet shawls; while mindful of the occupation I had so often watched Mrs. Winter engaged in, Howel and James furnished a handsome buhl knitting case, with a Turquoise button, for her acceptance.

My preparations finished, though not without a certain aching of the heart, I took my way for the last time, to the old city of A——; yet pleasure predominated over pain, as I thought of a whole week with Kate Vernon. I had despatched a line to say I would be with them to dinner on the following day, and the speed of an express train did not suffice for the impatience with which I longed to be once more surrounded with the familiar faces now so endeared to me. I felt jealous of every moment curtailed from the short space of happiness I had so looked forward to; and I believe the driver of the cab that conveyed me from the railway to the Priory thought me insane, so reiterated were my injunctions to drive faster, faster! It was near six o'clock when I drove up

to the well-known arched gate; a sharp clear evening; the breath of the panting horse showing like light smoke in the transparent air; I sprang out, while the cabman was stamping his feet, after ringing, and pushing the gate open with the familiarity of an old friend, nearly rushed into the arms of Mrs. O'Toole, who was advancing to open it.

I could see the Colonel's venerable figure in the hall, which was lighted by a pretty antique lamp, and behind him the drawing-room door stood open, showing the curtains snugly drawn, and a ruddy glow pervading the atmosphere of the room, which bespoke a noble fire somewhere.

"Musha, but ye'r welcome, Captin; an' are ye shut of the sickness entirely? There's the Masther longing to spake to ye; never mind the portmanty; give me a hoult of that carpet bag."

"Welcome, a thousand welcomes, my dear Egerton," cried Colonel Vernon, "you are in excellent time, yet we were beginning to watch for you."

We shook hands with intense cordiality, and mine was scarcely released, when something cold and damp was thrust into it; it was the fine old hound seconding his master's greeting.

"From the moment I started to the present, I have ceaselessly abused railways, stokers, engine-drivers, and all, for not going the pace more rapidly. I really thought I should never be with you soon enough; it seems such an age since we met, and I have done so much in the interim," said I. As I followed him into the drawing-room, there stood Kate in a distracting demi-toilette of white muslin, with some scarlet ribbons admirably disposed, and lighted up by the blaze of a noble fire that looked "Welcome," like every thing else.

"Ah! how glad I am to see you are come; I thought you would go away without paying us your promised visit, it was so long delayed." And once more I held her fair soft hand; once more I gazed into her clear truthful eyes that looked up to mine with so much gladness through their long sweeping lashes.

"Go, without paying my promised visit, Miss Vernon!" was my only reply, but I suppose the tone in which it was spoken, expressed how impossible such an omission was to me, for she said with a smile, as she drew away her hand, "I suppose, then, you would not have liked to leave us, *sans adieu*; but grandpapa, Captain Egerton has barely time to make his toilet, it is just six o'clock."

The Colonel, with old fashioned *empressement*, lighted me to my chamber, a little dark-panelled cell with some rude remnants of carving here and there, and one small window sunk deep in the wall. A cheerful fire blazed in what had once been a wide chimney, but which was now walled up into reasonable dimensions.

"This is the oldest part of the house," said my host; "we used it as a sort of lumber room till Kate and Nurse decided on trying to make it habitable for you; we none of us liked the idea of despatching you every night to an hotel, at this time of the year particularly; have you every thing you want?"

I thought the Priory Cottage never looked so delightfully homelike as in its winter aspect; and the pleasant candle-light dinner, to the agreeability of which Mrs. O'Toole added largely, joining in the conversation with greater ease than ever, pressing any particularly well cooked dish, as earnestly on me as if I too had been her nursling. Cormac sat gravely by Kate, accepting the bits she occasionally offered him with dignified condescension.

"On Sundays and a few great occasions, such as the present," she said with a smile, "Cormac was admitted to the dining room, but the drawing room was forbidden ground to him, he knew it quite well."

We soon adjourned to the drawing room, and as I stood on the hearth rug sipping my tea, and looking at Kate and her grandfather, sitting at opposite sides of the table, both so distinguished in their looks and manners, yet both so unlike the common herd of mere well bred people, I kept down the bitter sighs that oppressed my heart as the thought, "You must leave them and for ever," seemed to burn and fix itself indelibly on my brain.

After some enquiries about the Winters and Gilpin, who, I was sorry to hear, had not been so well, Miss Vernon observed I still looked pale and thin.

"You certainly suffered for your generous effort to save our poor friend," she added; "I can never forget your rushing back under the tottering ruins, and that awful crash!" She shuddered.

"Yes, indeed, Egerton, you look a little haggard; don't you feel strong?" enquired the Colonel.

"Why you see, Colonel, I have been a good deal cut up about all this business, and to say the truth I do not like leaving England."

"That must be because you are still suffering from the debility of indisposition," said Miss Vernon, "or such a lover of excitement as you are would be enchanted at the idea of India, and its tiger hunts, and cave temples, with a possibility of shooting or being shot."

"So I would four or five months ago; now I am paying dearly for extravagance."

"Do not be so severe on yourself; few young men can quite resist temptation," said the Colonel, kindly.

"I wonder what is the pleasure of betting; it seems very absurd," said Miss Vernon.

"How could you know anything about it?" enquired her grandfather.

"Ah thin, it's the Divil's own divirsion," observed Mrs. O'Toole, who was removing the tea things.

Our conversation on my affairs continued in the same friendly and confidential tone for some

time; then the Colonel dozed, and I, approaching nearer to Kate's work table, described my evening at Allerton with the deputation from the "Parent Society." She laughed a good deal at my sketch of the Rev. Mr. Black, and said she thought she remembered him at A——. Then she told me how Mr. Winter had painted a *chef d'œuvre*—"The Little Landing Place," with its trees, Elijah Bush in his hairy cap, Cyclops and Cormac; and that Mrs. Winter and Miss Araminta Cox had had a quarrel, but that she had happily reconciled them; and lastly, with much earnestness in her manner, and tenderness in her tones, she spoke of Gilpin's failing health and loneliness.

"I cannot tell you, Captain Egerton, how very fond he appears to be of you, more so, even, than gratitude can account for, as if you had many sympathies in common; yet you are as unlike in character as in appearance. I am glad he likes you," she concluded, simply.

All this gossip of her little world was told in a subdued tone, not to disturb her grandfather, and so added to the sort of confidence apparently existing between us.

What an extraordinary *mélange* of feelings I experienced! I was within sight of paradise, as it were—I could almost grasp it, but an invisible though iron barrier held me back, so I talked on, quietly wondering at my own self-command; and sometimes, when restoring the scissors or a skein of worsted I had unconsciously abstracted from her basket, my hand would touch hers; once, on one of these occasions, she looked up and said—"How very cold you are, do stir the fire and warm yourself." I do not know what I should have said or done, had not the Colonel at that moment awoke up, shocked at his want of politeness. Then Kate went to the piano and sang song after song in her rich, soft, thrilling notes, and depth of expression, until I felt in a sort of painful ecstasy, which must in some way have been traceable on my countenance, for the Colonel suddenly stopped his granddaughter, observing how fagged I looked:

"You must go to your bed, Egerton, and don't hurry in the morning."

"Yes," said Kate, looking at me kindly, as she rang for candles, "you look quite knocked up, I'm afraid I have kept you too long from your rest."

"Maybe he ought to have wather for his feet, he looks like a ghost," said Mrs. O'Toole, in an audible aside to her young lady.

"Perhaps it might refresh you," said the latter.

"Oh! I am as strong as a giant now," said I, "thanks to your good care, Mrs. O'Toole; and if I look like a ghost it will fit me the better for the society in which you know I am to pass the night."

"Holy Mary! Captin agrah, don't spake that away of the dead!"

"Good night," said Kate.

"From the weird and woeful power
Of midnight's awful hour;
May the Holy Cross preserve thee,
At thy need may Heaven serve thee!"

"After your benediction, Miss Vernon, I am equal to any ghostly encounter! good night."

My first waking thought was the delightful certainty of meeting Kate at breakfast, and my second, that one day of my sojourn had already flown. With what terrible rapidity these precious last days made themselves wings and fled away into the past! I cannot dwell upon the memory of them.

I examined with great delight and loud eulogiums, the really admirable picture on which Winter was now engaged, and acknowledged that Cyclops was a first-rate subject.

"I have another here, not quite finished either," said he, "which you may perhaps think equally interesting," and he turned round a water-colour drawing. I started as it met my sight; it was Kate Vernon, sitting as was her custom, at the open window of the cottage, her cheek resting on her left hand, showing the graceful contour of her throat, and her right playing as she was wont to do, when lost in thought, with Cormac's ear; while the old hound sat gazing at her as though he would fain ask what vision engrossed her fancy. It was a most lovely picture; the lovelier for its admirable likeness to the original. How well I knew that pensive and abstracted air; the large eyes gazing dreamily into some imaginary world; the delicate, but rosy lips slightly apart; you almost expected to hear them breathe the gentle sigh with which she used to rouse herself from her reverie, and turn to tell you its subject, so truthfully and naturally. "Oh! Winter," I exclaimed, "can love or money induce you to let me take the faintest sketch of this most exquisite picture?"

He looked sharply at me, "No! no! most noble Captain, it was a labour of love, and I'll not have my beautiful pupil's lofty brow, decking the wall of a barrack room. Keep the portrait in your own heart; it may prove a talisman, but I fear the colours will fade as fast as one of Turner's most glowing pictures."

I hardly heard him as I stood; my eyes fixed on the face I was so soon to lose, as if I would stamp its lineaments indelibly on my memory; he went on—"What business would you have with Miss Vernon's likeness?"

"True, true, oh! hard of heart; yet with me it would be a sacred thing. No, do not put it away yet. Oh! skill in portrait painting is the only talent really worth cultivating. I wish to Heaven I had it! Winter, in the whole category of human ills, is there one can surpass the wretchedness of saying good bye?"

"Yes, regret, when too late, that you did not say it. *Capitano mio, è meglio sdrucciolar' co' piedi che colla lingua.*"

The kind little artist was enchanted with the picture I brought him. It was a monk kneeling before an altar, on which the candles were burning, and the light and shade were skilfully disposed; he shook my hand repeatedly, and plunged into a learned disquisition as to the probable master by whom it was painted: he immediately invited the whole party at the Priory to dine with him, in order to discuss fully the important question of placing my gift, which he designated by the name of the giver rather incongruously.

I waited to give Kate "Proverbial Philosophy" till I could find her alone; and returning one morning from a visit to Gilpin, I found the Colonel had disappeared on some behest, and Miss Vernon in solitary possession of the drawing-room; she was working something in a frame, but the open piano proved she had been engaged in her favourite pursuit.

I threw myself into the Colonel's chair, and answered her enquiries for Gilpin; then, after a pause, stood up, and leaning against the mantel piece, said, "Miss Vernon, I met with a book in London I thought would suit you; 'Proverbial Philosophy,' have you seen it? I thought you would like it."

She stretched out her hand to receive the volume.

"Is it for me? Oh thank you! I have so much wished to have it; I shall read it with pleasure, I am sure, and give many a grateful thought to the donor."

"That is more than I would presume to expect, and I suspect the pains or pleasures of memory will fall to my share."

"No, it is those who stay at home who remember best; new scenes bring new thoughts; but I wish, Captain Egerton, we could see you start with better spirits on your travels."

"Higher spirits! how can you suppose I do not grudge every moment that brings the hour of separation nearer?"

She looked up at me as I stood leaning moodily against the mantel-piece.

"But all men must some time or other go forth amongst strangers, and few seem to regret it as you do."

"Not when they leave behind all they covet on earth—not when they must go in silence and say good bye, with a calm face and a breaking heart?"

"Oh!" cried Miss Vernon, clasping her hands, "that is terrible! God comfort such a sorrow! but at your age there is always hope; you will return, and what are a few years to a true heart?"

"I may return too late and"—

The door opened, and most opportunely the Colonel came in, for Kate was beginning to look at me with a certain startled expression, as if the truth was dawning on her, when accident, not my own self-command, saved me from breaking through the line of conduct I had myself laid down.

The next day was Christmas Day, and I knelt once more beside Kate Vernon in the old church, and heard her rich sweet notes as she joined in responses, or breathed the "Amen." And I felt the quiet absorbed attention with which she joined in the service communicate something of its earnestness to myself.

Mrs. O'Toole came in after we returned from church to show herself in her scarlet shawl.

"It's a grand colour entirely," said she, "as warm as your own heart, Captin jewil, an' it's the hard word to say good bye to ye; sorra one of me, but the salt tears is in me eyes when I think iv it."

Gilpin and the Winters dined with us that day; we had a pleasant cheerful dinner; I was determined to enjoy myself if possible, but it would not do, I was but seeming after all. I felt each passing moment was deepening the lines of my character; no wonder that the strongest exertion of my self command only sufficed to silence any expression that might damp my companions' mirth, but could not enable me to add my quota to the general stock; my only consolation was to look at Kate's smooth calm brow, and thank Heaven I had never attempted to raise any feeling in her breast, that could have resulted in the aching sadness which oppressed my own; she might have loved me, for hers was too loving a nature to be insensible of affection, and a true and earnest heart is always worth any woman's acceptance; and as I met her ready, unconcealed, and sympathising glance, that often and openly sought mine, I breathed a silent ejaculation, "God preserve her from sorrow and suffering!"

We had a good deal of music, much of it sacred, and appropriate to the day; but before we separated Kate sang the "Land of the Stranger;" it is little more than recitative, but the expression with which she sang it, and her full clear honied notes!—oh how impossible to write down, in so many measured words, the strong tide of mingled emotions and passionate wishes which swept across my soul as I listened to that voice!

But I will not dwell any longer on these last sweet painful days. Now, even now, writing in all the sobered calm of older years, I find my pen hurrying on in the vain effort to depict what language cannot convey.

Winter invited us to spend my last evening with him; I would have preferred far to have spent it uninterruptedly at the Priory, but it was not so! At the little supper, which as usual closed the entertainment, our good host proposed my health as follows:—

"I know you'll agree that the toast I'm about to give is one we can all drink with unalloyed satisfaction. I give you the health of one who has passed through the fire of fashion and frivolity, and yet kept a corner of his heart for truth and reality, and preserved enough of good taste to

turn from a clique, of which I may fairly say, *O t' ha ingannato, o ingannar ti vuole*, to the more tangible world of action; one to whom we owe the existence of a valued friend (*Carramba!* Gilpin, it would have been all over with you but for him); in a word I give you, 'Fred Egerton.'"

The toast was most enthusiastically received, even Miss Vernon clapped her hands approvingly; I made an appropriate acknowledgment, and soon after, *apropos* to my new Regiment, Kate turned to me and said, "By the bye I always forgot to tell you, Nurse has a son in the 26th Lancers; pray do not forget to give Denis O'Toole opportunities of distinguishing himself. I have written a letter for her to him, which I will give you to-morrow."

And the parting moment came fast, too fast.

"Well, good bye, my dear Egerton," said the Colonel, grasping my hand in both of his, which shook a little, "in all human probability I shall never see you more; take an old man's blessing with you."

"I can never forget the happy days I have spent with you, my dear sir; I will write from Bombay—if I have time, from Alexandria. Do not let me quite escape your memory!"

I took Kate's hand, I ventured to hold it in both of mine—I could utter no word, but gazed long and silently into her sweet, calm eyes: she looked pale, but seemed perfectly composed.

"God bless you, Captain Egerton, and make you happy," she said, in a somewhat unsteady voice.

I turned and left the room without a word!

"Christ shield ye from harm, captin jewil," sobbed Mrs. O'Toole, "don't be down-hearted entirely, sure there's many a prayer goes wid ye, an' the coldest hour is the hour before daydawn. Holy Mary keep ye, an' don't forget the letther for me poor boy."

"Nurse, dear Nurse, good-bye, I'll take care of your son."

And my last glimpse of the Priory gate showed me Mrs. O'Toole with her apron to her eyes, and Cormac looking uneasily after me.

Another day, and I stood at the stern of the steamer which was rapidly cleaving the smooth waters, straining my eyes after the quickly vanishing land, my arms folded tightly on my chest, as if to press down the bitterness that swelled my heart into the stern stillness of manful endurance: all the events of the last four months, even to their minutiæ, stood clear before me; and as the distant outline of the land I was leaving—probably for ever—faded from my sight, and I felt the keen pang that in leaving it I left my all, which has rent many a heart, Kate Vernon's words flashed back upon my memory—"I am quite sure that a stedfast resignation to what you have brought upon yourself; an unmurmuring struggle to retrieve, will work its own cure;" and I slowly turned to go below, feeling how great was the change wrought in me since life presented no deeper ill than an unlucky change of quarters.

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Transcriber Notes:

The author "Mrs. Alexander" is a pseudonym for Annie French Hector (confirmed by information in the British Library).

Minor punctuation and printer errors were repaired.

Dashes representing missing unit numbers (for Light Dragoons and Lancers) have been preserved as em-dash length ("--").

Consistently, em-dashes were placed outside " marks at end of lines in the original; this has been retained.

Spelling & hyphenation have been retained as they appear in the original publication, including any inconsistencies.

Other changes/corrections include:

p. 57 "standing betweeen two large yew trees" replaced with "standing between two large yew trees"

p.123 "but we had hardly exchanged salutions" replaced with "but we had hardly exchanged salutations"

In the ad for Mabel, by Emma Warburton, corrected capitalization of second sentence, original version: "It will do more--It will give lessons"

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