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A LIFE FOR A LIFE

By Dinah Maria Craik

The Author Of "John Halifax, Gentleman," "A Woman's Thoughts About Women," &c., &c.

In Three Volumes. Vol. I.

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1859

"*When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*"

"*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*"

TO

MARGARET AND MART.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

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CHAPTER I. HER STORY.

Yes, I hate soldiers.

I can't help writing it—it relieves my mind. All morning have we been driving about that horrid region into which our beautiful, desolate moor has been transmogrified; round and round, up and down, in at the south camp and out at the north camp; directed hither and thither by muddle-headed privates; stared at by puppyish young officers; choked with chimney-smoke; jolted over roads laid with ashes—or no roads at all—and pestered everywhere with the sight of lounging, lazy, red groups,—that color is becoming to me a perfect eye-sore! What a treat it is to get home and lock myself—in my own room—the tiniest and safest nook in all Rockmount—and spurt out my wrath in the blackest of ink with the boldest of pens. Bless you! (query, who can I be blessing, for nobody will ever read this), what does it matter? And after all, I repeat, it relieves my mind.

I do hate soldiers. I always did, from my youth up, till the war in the East startled everybody like a thunder-clap. What a time it was—this time two years ago! How the actual romance of each day, as set down in the newspapers, made my old romances read like mere balderdash: how the present, in its infinite piteousness, its tangible horror, and the awfulness of what they called its “glory” cast the tame past altogether into shade! Who read history then, or novels, or poetry? Who read anything but that fearful “Times?”

And now it is all gone by we have peace again; and this 20th of September, 1856, I begin with my birthday a new journal—(capital one, too, with a first-rate lock and key, saved out of my summer bonnet, which I didn't buy). Nor need I spoil the day—as once—by crying over those who, two years since,

> “Went up
> Red Alma's heights to glory.”

Conscience, tender over dead heroes, feels not the smallest compunction in writing the angry initiatory line, when she thinks of that odious camp which has been established near us, for the education of the military mind, and the hardening of the military body. Whence red-coats swarm out over the pretty neighbourhood like lady-birds over the hop-gardens,—harmless, it is true, yet for ever flying in one's face in the most unpleasant manner, making inroads through one's parlour windows, and crawling over one's tea-table. Wretched red insects! except that the act would be murder, I often wish I could put half-a-dozen of them, swords, epaulets, moustaches, and all, under the heel of my shoe.

Perhaps this is obstinacy, or the love of contradiction. No wonder. Do I hear of anything, but soldiers from morning till night? At visits or dinner parties can I speak to a soul—and 'tisn't much I do speak to anybody—but that *she*—I use the pronoun advisedly—is sure to bring in with her second sentence something about “the camp?”

I'm sick of the camp. Would that my sisters were! For Lisabel, young and handsome, there is some excuse, but Penelope—she ought to know better.

Papa is determined to go with us to the Grantons' ball to-night. I wish there were no necessity for it; and have suggested as strongly as I could that we should stay at home. But what of that? Nobody minds me. Nobody ever did that I ever remember. So poor papa is to be dragged out from his cosy arm-chair, jogged and tumbled across these wintry moors, and stuck up solemn in a corner of the drawing-room—being kept carefully out of the card-room because he happens to be a clergyman. And all the while he will wear his politest and most immovable of smiles, just as if he liked it. Oh, why cannot people say what they mean and do as they wish! Why must they hold themselves tied and bound with horrible chains of etiquette even at the age of seventy! Why cannot he say, “Girls”—no, of course he would say “young ladies”—“I had far rather stay at home—go you and enjoy yourselves;” or better still, “go, two of you—but I want Dora.”

No, he never will say that. He never did want any of us much; me less than any. I am neither eldest nor youngest, neither Miss Johnston nor Miss Lisabel—only Miss Dora—Theodora—“the gift of God,” as my little bit of Greek taught me. A gift—what for, and to whom? I declare, since I was a baby, since I was a little

solitary ugly child, wondering if ever I had a mother like other children, since even I have been a woman grown, I never have been able to find out.

Well, I suppose it is no use to try to alter things. Papa will go his own way, and the girls theirs. They think the grand climax of existence is “society;” he thinks the same—at least for young women, properly introduced, escorted and protected there. So, as the three Misses Johnston—sweet fluttering doves!—have no other chaperon, or protector, he makes a martyr of himself on the shrine of paternal duty, *alias* respectability, and goes.

The girls here called me down to admire them. Yes, they looked extremely well:—Lisabel, majestic, slow and fair; I doubt if anything in this world would disturb the equanimity of her sleepy blue eyes and soft-tempered mouth—a large, mild, beautiful animal, like a white Brahmin cow. Very much admired is our Lisabel, and no wonder. That white barége will kill half the officers in the camp. She was going to put on her pink one, but I suggested how ill pink would look against scarlet; and so, after a series of titters, Miss Lisa took my advice. She is evidently bent upon looking her best to-night.

Penelope, also; but I wish Penelope would not wear such airy dresses, and such a quantity of artificial flowers, while her curls are so thin, and her cheeks so sharp. She used to have very pretty hair, ten years ago. I remember being exceedingly shocked and fierce about a curl of hers that I saw stolen in the summer-house, by Francis Charteris, before we found out that they were engaged.

She rather expected him to-night, I fancy. Mrs. Granton was sure to have invited him with us; but, of course, he has not come. He never did come, in my recollection, when he said he would.

I ought to go and dress; but I can do it in ten minutes, and it is not worth while wasting more time. Those two girls—what a capital foil each makes to the other! little, dark, lively—not to say satirical: large, amiable, and fair. Papa ought to be proud of them;—I suppose he is.

Heigho! 'Tis a good thing to be good-looking. And next best, perhaps, is downright ugliness,—nice, interesting, attractive ugliness—such as I have seen in some women: nay, I have somewhere read that ugly women have often been loved best.

But to be just ordinary; of ordinary height, ordinary figure, and, oh me! let me lift up my head from the desk to the looking-glass, and take a good stare at an undeniably ordinary face. 'Tis not pleasant. Well; I am as I was made; let me not undervalue myself, if only out of reverence for Him who made me.

Surely—Captain Treherne's voice below: Does that young man expect to be taken to the ball in our fly? Truly he is making himself one of the family, already. There is papa calling us. What will papa say?

Why, he said nothing; and Lisabel, as she swept slowly down the staircase with a little silver lamp in her right hand, likewise said nothing; but she looked——

“Everybody is lovely to somebody,” says the proverb. Query, if somebody I could name should live to the age of Methuselah, will *she* ever be lovely to anybody?

What nonsense! Bravo! thou wert in the right of it, jolly miller of Dee!

> “I care for nobody, no, not I;
> And nobody cares for me.”

So, let me lock up my desk, and dress for the ball.

Really, not a bad ball; even now—when looked at in the light of next day's quiet—with the leaves stirring lazily in the fir-tree by my window, and the broad sunshine brightening the moorlands far away.

Not a bad ball, even to me, who usually am stoically contemptuous of such senseless amusements. Doubtless, from the mean motive that I like dancing, and am rarely asked to dance; that I am just five-and-twenty, and get no more attention than if I were five-and-forty. Of course, I protest continually that I don't care a pin for this fact (mem. mean again). For I do care—at the very bottom of my heart, I do. Many a time have I leaned my head here—good old desk, you will tell no tales!—and cried, actually cried—with the pain of being neither pretty, agreeable, nor young.

Moralists say, it is in every woman's power to be, in measure, all three: that when she is not liked or admired—by some few at least—it is a sign that she is neither likeable nor admirable. Therefore, I suppose I am neither. Probably very disagreeable. Penelope often says so, in her sharp, and Lisabel in her lazy way. Lis would apply the same expression to a gnat on her wrist, or a dagger pointed at her heart. A “thoroughly amiable woman!” Now I never was—never shall be—an amiable woman.

To return to the ball—and really I would not mind returning to it and having it all over again, which is more than one can say of many hours in our lives, especially of those which roll on, rapidly as hours seem to roll, after five-and-twenty. It was exceedingly amusing. Large, well-lit rooms, filled with well-dressed people; we do not often make such a goodly show in our country entertainments; but then the Grantons know everybody, and invite everybody. Nobody could do that but dear old Mrs. Granton, and “my Colin,” who, if he has not three pennyworth of brains, has the kindest heart and the heaviest purse in the whole neighbourhood.

I am sure Mrs. Granton must have felt proud of her handsome suite of rooms, quite a perambulatory

parterre, boasting all the hues of the rainbow, subdued by the proper complement of inevitable black. By and by, as the evening advanced, dot after dot of the adored scarlet made its appearance round the doors, and circulating gradually round the room, completed the coloring of the scene.

They were most effective when viewed at a distance—these scarlet dots. Some of them were very young and very small: wore their short hair—regulation cut—exceedingly straight, and did not seem quite comfortable in their clothes.

“Militia, of course,” I overheard a lady observe, who apparently knew all about it. “None of our officers wear uniform when they can avoid it.”

But these young lads seemed uncommonly proud of theirs, and strutted and sidled about the door, very valorous and magnificent, until caught and dragged to their destiny—in the shape of some fair partner—when they immediately relapsed into shyness and awkwardness. Nay, I might add—stupidity; but were they not the hopeful defenders of their country, and did not their noble swords lie idle at this moment on that safest resting-place—Mrs. Granton's billiard-table?

I watched the scene out of my corner, in a state of dreamy amusement; mingled with a vague curiosity as to how long I should be left to sit solitary there, and whether it would be very dull, if “with gazing fed”—including a trifle of supper—I thus had to spend the entire evening.

Mrs. Granton came bustling up.

“My dear girl—are you not dancing?”

“Apparently not,” said I, laughing, and trying to catch her, and make room for her. Vain attempt! Mrs. Granton never will sit down while there is anything that she thinks can be done for anybody. In a moment she would have been buzzing all round the room like an amiable bee, in search of some unfortunate youth upon whom to inflict me as a partner—but not even my desire of dancing would allow me to sink so low as that.

For safety, I ran after, and attacked the good old lady on one of her weak points. Luckily she caught the bait, and we were soon safely landed on the great blanket, beef, and anti-beer distribution question, now shaking our parish to its very foundations. I am ashamed to say, though the rector's daughter, it is very little I know about our parish. And though at first I rather repented of my *ruse*, seeing that Mrs. Granton's deafness made both her remarks and my answers most unpleasantly public, gradually I became so interested in what she was telling me, that we must have kept on talking nearly twenty minutes, when some one called the old lady away.

“Sorry to leave you, Miss Dora, but I leave you in good company,” she said, nodding and smiling to some people behind the sofa, with whom she probably thought I was acquainted. But I was not, nor had the slightest ambition for that honour. Strangers at a ball have rarely anything to say worth saying or hearing. So I never turned my head, and let Mrs. Granton trot away.

My mind and eyes followed her with a half sigh; considering whether at sixty I shall have half the activity, or cheerfulness, or kindliness, of her dear old self.

No one broke in upon my meditations. Papa's white head was visible in a distant doorway; for the girls, they had long since vanished in the whirligig. I caught at times a glimpse of Penelope's rose-clouds of tarlatan, her pale, face, and ever-smiling white teeth, that contrast ill with her restless black eyes—it is always rather painful to me to watch my eldest sister at parties. And now and then Miss Lisabel came floating, moon-like, through the room, almost obscuring young slender Captain Treherne, who yet appeared quite content in his occultation. He also seemed to be of my opinion that scarlet and white were the best mixture of colours, for I did not see him make the slightest attempt to dance with any lady but Lisabel.

Several people, I noticed, looked at them and smiled. And one lady whispered something about “poor clergyman's daughter,” and “Sir William Treherne.”

I felt hot to my very temples. Oh, if we were all in Paradise, or a nunnery, or some place where there was neither thinking nor making of marriages!

I determined to catch Lisa when the waltz was done. She waltzes well, even gracefully, for a tall woman—but I wished, I wished—My wish was cut short by a collision which made me start up with an idea of rushing to the rescue; however, the next moment Treherne and she had recovered their balance and were spinning on again. Of course I sat down immediately.

But my looks must be terrible tell-tales; for some one behind me said, as plain as if in answer to my thoughts:—

“Pray be satisfied; the lady could not have been in the least hurt.”

I was surprised; for though the voice was polite, even kind, people do not, at least in our country society, address one another without an introduction. I answered civilly, of course, but it must have been with some stiffness of manner, for the gentleman said:—

“Pardon me; I concluded it was your sister who slipped, and that you were uneasy about her,” bowed, and immediately moved away.

I felt uncomfortable; uncertain whether to take any more notice of him or not; wondering who it was that had used the unwonted liberty of speaking to me—a stranger—and whether it would have been committing myself in any way to venture more than a bow or a “Thank you.”

At last common-sense settled the matter.

“Dora Johnston,” thought I, “do not be a simpleton. Do you consider yourself so much better than your fellow creatures that you hesitate at returning a civil answer to a civil remark—meant kindly, too—because you, forsooth, like the French gentleman who was entreated to save another gentleman from drowning—'should have been most happy, but have never been introduced.'—What, girl, is this your scorn of conventionality—your grand habit of thinking and judging for yourself—your noble independence of all the follies of society? Fie! fie!”

To punish myself for my cowardice, I determined to turn round and look at the gentleman.

The punishment was not severe. He had a good face, brown and dark: a thin, spare, wiry figure, an air

somewhat formal. His eyes were grave, yet not without a lurking spirit of humour, which seemed to have clearly penetrated, and been rather amused by, my foolish embarrassment and ridiculous indecision. This vexed me for the moment: then I smiled—we both smiled: and began to talk.

Of course, it would have been different had he been a young man; but he was not. I should think he was nearly forty.

At this moment Mrs. Granton came up, with her usual pleased look when she thinks other people are pleased with one another, and said in that friendly manner that makes everybody else feel friendly together also:—

“A partner, I see. That's right, Miss Dora. You shall have a quadrille in a minute, Doctor.”

Doctor! I felt relieved. He might have been worse—perhaps, from his beard, even a camp officer.

“Our friend takes things too much for granted,” he said, smiling. “I believe I must introduce myself. My name is Urquhart.”

“Doctor Urquhart?”

“Yes.”

Here the quadrille began to form, and I to button my gloves not discontentedly. He said:—“I fear I am assuming a right on false pretences, for I never danced, in my life. You do, I see. I must not detain you from another partner.” And, once again, my unknown friend, who seemed to have such extreme penetration into my motives and intentions, moved aside.

Of course I got no partner—I never do. When the doctor re-appeared, I was unfeignedly glad to see him. He took no notice whatever of my humiliating state of solitude, but sat down in one of the dancers' vacated places, and resumed the thread of our conversation, as if it had never been broken.

Often in a crowd, two people not much interested therein, fall upon subjects perfectly extraneous, which at once make them feel interested in these and in each other. Thus, it seems quite odd this morning to think of the multiplicity of heterogeneous topics which Dr. Urquhart discussed last night. I gained from him much various information. He must have been a great traveller, and observer too; and for me, I marvel now to recollect how freely I spoke my mind on many things which I usually keep to myself, partly from shyness, partly because nobody here at home cares one straw about them. Among others, came the universal theme,—the war.

I said, I thought the three much laughed-at Quakers, who went to advise peace to the Czar Nicholas, were much nearer the truth than many of their mockers. War seemed to me so utterly opposed to Christianity that I did not see how any Christian man could ever become a soldier.

At this, Doctor Urquhart leant his elbow on the arm of the sofa, and looked me steadily in the face.

“Do you mean that a Christian man is not to defend his own life or liberty, or that of others, under any circumstances?—or is he to wear a red coat peacefully while peace lasts, and at his first battle throw down his musket, shoulder his Testament, and walk away?”

These words, though of a freer tone than I was used to, were not spoken in any irreverence. They puzzled me. I felt as if I had been playing the oracle upon a subject whereon I had not the least grounds to form an opinion at all. Yet I would not yield.

“Dr. Urquhart, if you recollect, I said '*become* a soldier.' How, being already a soldier, a Christian man should act, I am not wise enough to judge. But I do think, other professions being open, for him to choose voluntarily the profession of arms, and to receive wages for taking away life, is at best a monstrous anomaly. Nay, however it may be glossed over and refined away, surely, in face of the plain command, '*Thou shall not kill*,' military glory seems little better than a picturesque form of murder.”

I spoke strongly—more strongly, perhaps, than a young woman, whose opinions are more instincts and emotions than matured principles, ought to speak. If so, Doctor Urquhart gave me a fitting rebuke by his total silence.

Nor did he, for some time, even so much as look at me, but bent his head down till I could only catch the fore-shortened profile of forehead, nose, and curly beard. Certainly, though a moustache is mean, puppyish, intolerable, and whiskers not much better, there is something fine and manly in a regular Oriental beard.

Doctor Urquhart spoke at last.

“So, as I overheard you say to Mrs. Granton, you 'hate soldiers.' 'Hate' is a strong word—for a Christian woman.”

My own weapons turned upon me.

“Yes, I hate soldiers because my principles, instincts, observations, confirm me in the justice of my dislike. In peace, they are idle, useless, extravagant, cumberers of the country—the mere butterflies of society. In war—you know what they are.”

“Do I?” with a slight smile.

I grew rather angry.

“In truth, had I ever had a spark of military ardour, it would have been quenched within the last year. I never see a thing—we'll not say a man—with a red coat on, who does not make himself thoroughly contempt—”

The word stuck in the middle. For lo! there passed slowly by, my sister Lisabel; leaning on the arm of Captain Treherne, looking as I never saw Lisabel look before. It suddenly rushed across me what might happen—perhaps had happened. Suppose, in thus passionately venting my prejudices, I should be tacitly condemning my—what an odd idea!—my brother-in-law? Pride, if no better feeling, caused me to hesitate.

Doctor Urquart said, quietly enough, “I should tell you—indeed I ought to have told you before—that I am myself in the army.”

I am sure I looked—as I felt—like a downright fool. This comes, I thought, of speaking one's mind, especially to strangers. Oh! should I ever learn to hold my tongue, or gabble pretty harmless nonsense as other girls?

Why should I have talked seriously to this man at all? I knew nothing of him, and had no business to be interested in him, or even to have listened to him—my sister would say,—until he had been “properly introduced;”—until I knew where he lived, and who were his father and mother, and what was his profession, and how much income he had a-year?

Still, I did feel interested, and could not help it. Something it seemed that I was bound to say; I wished it to be civil, if possible.

“But you are Doctor Urquhart. An army-surgeon is scarcely like a soldier: his business is to save life rather than to destroy it. Surely *you* never could have killed anybody?”

The moment I had put the question, I saw how childish and uncalled-for, in fact, how actually impertinent it was. Covered with confusion, I drew back, and looked another way. It was the greatest relief imaginable when just then Lisabel saw me, and came up with Captain Treherne, all smiles, to say, was it not the pleasantest party imaginable? and who had I been dancing with?

“Nobody.”

“Nay, I saw you myself, talking to some strange gentleman. Who was he? A rather odd-looking person, and —”

“Hush, please. It was a Doctor Urquhart.”

“Urquhart of ours?” cried young Treherne. “Why, he told me he should not come, or should not stay ten minutes if he came. Much too solid for this kind of thing—eh, you see? Yet a capital fellow. The best fellow in all the world. Where is he?”

But the “best fellow in all the world” had entirely disappeared.

I enjoyed the rest of the evening extremely,—that is, pretty well. Not altogether, now I come to think of it, for though I danced to my heart's content, Captain Treherne seeming eager to bring up his whole regiment, successively, for my patronage and Penelope's (N.B. *not* Lisabel's), whenever I caught a distant glimpse of Dr. Urquhart's brown beard, conscience stung me for my folly and want of tact. Dear me! What a thing it is that one can so seldom utter an honest opinion without offending somebody.

Was he really offended? He must have seen that I did not mean any harm; nor does he look like one of those touchy people who are always wincing as if they trod on the tails of imaginary adders. Yet he made no attempt to come and talk to me again; for which I was sorry; partly because I would have liked to make him some amends, and partly because he seemed the only man present worth talking to.

I do wonder more and more what my sisters can find in the young men they dance and chatter with. To me they are inane, conceited, absolutely unendurable. Yet there may be good in some of them. May? Nay, there *must* be good in every human being. Alas, me! Well might Dr. Urquhart say last night that there are no judgments so harsh as those of the erring, the inexperienced, and the young.

I ought to add, that when we were wearily waiting for our fly to draw up to the hall-door, Dr. Urquhart suddenly appeared. Papa had Penelope on his arm, Lisabel was whispering with Captain Treherne. Yes, depend upon it, that young man will be my brother-in-law. I stood by myself in the doorway, looking out on the pitch-dark night, when some one behind me said:—

“Pray stand within shelter. You young ladies are never half careful enough of your health. Allow me.”

And with a grave professional air, my medical friend wrapped me closely up in my shawl.

“A plaid, I see. That is sensible. There is nothing for warmth like a good plaid,” he said, with a smile, which, even had it not been for his name, and a slight strengthening and broadening of his English, scarcely amounting to an accent, would have pretty well showed what part of the kingdom Dr. Urquhart came from. I was going, in my bluntness, to put the direct question, but felt as if I had committed myself quite enough for one night.

Just then was shouted out “Mr. Johnson's,”—(oh dear, shall we never get the aristocratic 't' into our plebeian name!)—“carriage,” and I was hurried into the fly. Not by the Doctor, though; he stood like a bear on the doorstep, and never attempted to stir.

That's all.

CHAPTER II. HIS STORY.

Hospital Memoranda, Sept. 21st.

—Private William Carter, æt. 24; admitted a week to-day. Gastric fever—typhoid form—slight delirium—bad case. Asked me to write to his mother—did not say where. *Mem.* to enquire among his division if anything is known about his friends.

Corporal Thomas Hardman, æt. 50—Delirium tremens—mending. Knew him in the Crimea, when he was a perfectly sober fellow, with constitution of iron. “Trench work did it,” he says, “and last winter's idleness.” *Mem.* to send for him after his discharge from hospital, and see what can be done; also to see that decent body, his wife, after my rounds tomorrow.

M. U.—Max Urquhart.—Max Urquhart, M.D., M.R.C.S.

—Who keeps scribbling his name up and down this page like a silly school-boy, just for want of something to do.

Something to do! Never for these twenty years and more have I been so totally without occupation.

What a place this camp is! worse than ours in the Crimea, by far. To-day especially. Rain pouring, wind howling, mud ancle-deep; nothing on earth for me to be, to do, or to suffer, except—yes! there is something to suffer—Treherne's eternal flute.

Faith, I must be very hard up for occupation when I thus continue this journal of my cases into a personal diary of the worst patient I have to deal with—the most thankless, unsatisfactory, and unkindly. Physician, heal thyself! But how?

I shall tear out this page,—or stay, I'll keep it as a remarkable literary and psychological fact—and go on with my article on Gunshot Wounds.

In the which, two hours after, I find, I have written exactly ten lines.

These must be the sort of circumstances under which people commit journals. For some do—and heartily as I have always contemned the proceeding, as we are prone to contemn peculiarities and idiosyncrasies quite foreign to our own,—I begin to-day dimly to understand the state of mind in which such a thing might be possible.

“Diary of a Physician” shall I call it?—did not some one write a book with that title? I picked it up on ship-board—a story-book or some such thing—but I scarcely ever read what is called “light literature.” I have never had time. Besides, all fictions grow tame, compared to the realities of daily life, the horrible episodes of crime, the pitiful bits of hopeless misery that I meet with in my profession. Talk of romance!—

Was I ever romantic? Once perhaps. Or at least I might have been.

My profession, truly there is nothing like it for me. Therein I find incessant work, interest, hope. Daily do I thank heaven that I had courage to seize on it and go through with it, in order—according to the phrase I heard used last night—“to save life instead of destroying it.”

Poor little girl—she meant nothing—she had no idea what she was saying.

Is it that which makes me so unsettled today?

Perhaps it would be wiser never to go into society. A hospital-ward is far more natural to me than a ball-room. There, is work to be done, pain to be alleviated, evil of all kinds to be met and overcome—here, nothing but pleasure, nothing to do but to enjoy.

Yet some people can enjoy; and actually do so; I am sure that girl did. Several times during the evening she looked quite happy. I do not often see people looking happy.

Is suffering then our normal and natural state? Is to exist synonymous with to endure? Can this be the law of a beneficent Providence?—or are such results allowed—to happen in certain exceptional cases, utterly irremediable and irretrievable—like—

What am I writing?—What am I daring to write?

Physician, heal thyself. And surely that is one of a physician's first duties. A disease struck inwards—the merest tyro knows how fatal is treatment which results in that. It may be I have gone on the wrong track altogether,—at least since my return to England.

The present only is a man's possession: the past is gone out of his hand,—wholly, irrevocably. He may suffer from it, learn from it—in degree, perhaps, expiate it; but to brood over it is utter madness.

Now, I have had many cases of insanity—both physical and moral, so to speak; I call moral insanity that kind of disease which is super-induced on comparatively healthy minds by dwelling incessantly on one idea; the sort of disease which you find in women who have fallen into melancholy from love-disappointments; or in men for overweening ambition, hatred, or egotism—which latter, carried to a high pitch, invariably becomes a kind of insanity. All these forms of monomania, as distinguished from physical mania, disease of the structure of the brain, I have studied with considerable interest and corresponding success. My secret was simple enough; one which Nature herself often tries and rarely fails in—the law of substitution; the slow eradication of any fixed idea, by supplying others, under the influence of which the original idea is, at all events temporarily, laid to sleep.

Why cannot I try this plan? why not do for myself what I have so many times prescribed and done for others?

It was with some notion of the kind that I went to this ball—after getting up a vague sort of curiosity in Treherne's anonymous beauty, about whom he has so long been raving to me—boy-like. Ay, with all his folly, the lad is an honest lad. I should not like him to come to any harm.

The tall one must have been the lady, and the smaller, the plainer, though the pleasanter to my mind, was no doubt her sister. And of course her name too was *Johnson*.

What a name to startle a man so—to cause him to stand like a fool at that hall-door, with his heart dead still, and all his nerves quivering! To make him now, in the mere writing of it, pause and compel himself into common sense by rational argument—by meeting the thing, be it chimerical or not, face to face, as a man ought to do. Yet as cowardly, in as base a paroxysm of terror, as if likewise face to face, in my hut corner, stood—

Here I stopped. Shortly afterwards I was summoned to the hospital, where I have been ever since. William Carter is dead. He will not want his mother now. What a small matter life or death seems when one comes to

think of it. What an easy exchange!

Is it I who am writing thus, and on the same leaf which, closed up in haste when I was fetched to the hospital, I have just had such an anxious search for, that it might be instantly burnt. Yet, I find there is nothing in it that I need have feared—nothing that could, in any way, have signified to anybody, unless, perhaps, the writing of that one name.

Shall I never get over this absurd folly—this absolute monomania?—when there are hundreds of the same name to be met with every day—when, after all, it is not exactly *the* name!

Yet this is what it cost me. Let me write it down, that the confession in plain English of such utter insanity may in degree have the same effect as when I have sat down and desired a patient to recount to me, one by one, each and all of his delusions, in order that, in the mere telling of them, they might perhaps vanish.

I went away from that hall-door at once. Never asking—nor do I think for my life I could ask, the simple question that would have set all doubt at rest. I walked across country, up and down, along road or woodland, I hardly knew whither, for miles—following the moon-rise. She seemed to rise just as she did nineteen years ago—nineteen years, ten months, all but two days—my arithmetic is correct, no fear! She lifted herself like a ghost over those long level waves of moor, till she sat, blood-red, upon the horizon, with a stare which there was nothing to break, nothing to hide from—nothing between her and me, but the plain and the sky—just as it was that night.

What am I writing? Is the old horror coming back again. It cannot. It *must* be kept at bay..

A knock—ah, I see; it is the sergeant of poor Carter's company. I must return to daily work, and labour is life—to me.

CHAPTER III. HIS STORY.

Sept. 30th:—Not a case to set down to-day. This high moorland is your best sanatorium. My “occupation's gone.”

I have every satisfaction in that fact, or in the cause of it; which, cynics might say, a member of my profession would easily manage to prevent, were he a city physician instead of a regimental surgeon. Still, idleness is insupportable to me. I have tried going about among the few villages hard by, but their worst disease is one to which this said regimental surgeon, with nothing but his pay, can apply but small remedy—poverty.

To-day I have paced the long, straight lines of the camp; from the hospital to the bridge, and back again to the hospital—have tried to take a vivid interest in the loungers, the foot-ball players, and the wretched, awkward squad turned out in never-ending parade. With each hour of the quiet autumn afternoon have I watched the sentinel mount the little stockaded hillock, and startle the camp with the old familiar boom of the great Sebastopol bell. Then, I have shut my hut-door, taken to my books, and studied till my head warned me to stop.

The evening post—but only business letters. I rarely have any other. I have no one to write to me—no one to write to.

Sometimes I have been driven to wish I had; some one friend with whom it would be possible to talk in pen and ink, on other matters than business. Yet, *cui bono?* To no friend should I or could I let out my real self; the only thing in the letter that was truly and absolutely me would be the great grim signature: “Max Urquhart.”

Were it otherwise—were there any human being to whom I could lay open my whole heart, trust with my whole history;—but no, that were utterly impossible now.

No more of this.

No more, until the end. That end, which at once solves all difficulties, every year brings nearer. Nearly forty, and a doctor's life is usually shorter than most men's. I shall be an old man soon, even if there come none of those sudden chances against which I have of course provided.

The end. How and in what manner it is to be done, I am not yet clear. But it shall be done, before my death or after.

“Max Urquhart, M.D.”

I go on signing my name mechanically, with those two business-like letters after it, and thinking how odd it would be to sign it in any other fashion. How strange,—did any one care to look at my signature in any way except thus, with the two professional letters after it—a common-place signature of business. Equally strange, perhaps, that such a thought as this last should have entered my head, or that I should have taken the trouble, and yielded to the weakness of writing it down. It all springs from idleness—sheer idleness; the very same cause that makes Treherne, whom I have known do duty cheerily for twenty-four hours in the trenches, lounge, smoke, yawn, and play the flute. There—it has stopped. I heard the postman rapping at his hut-door—the young simpleton has got a letter.

Suppose, just to pass away the time, I, Max Urquhart, reduced to this lowest ebb of inanity by a paternal government, which has stranded my regiment here, high and dry, but as dreary as Noah on Ararat—were to enliven my solitude, drive away blue devils, by manufacturing for myself an imaginary correspondent? So be it.

To begin then at once in the received epistolary form:—

"My dear—"

My dear—what? "Sir?"—No—not for this once. I wanted a change. "Madam?"—that is formal. Shall I invent a name?

When I think of it, how strange it would feel to me to be writing "my dear" before any Christian name. Orphaned early, my only brother long dead, drifting about from land to land till I have almost forgotten my own, which has quite forgotten me—I had not considered it before, but really I do not believe there is a human being living, whom I have a right to call by his or her Christian name, or who would ever think of calling me by mine. "Max,"—I have not heard the sound of it for years.

Dear, a pleasant adjective—my, a pronoun of possession, implying that the being spoken of is one's very own,—one's sole, sacred, personal property, as with natural selfishness one would wish to hold the thing most precious. *My dear*;—a satisfactory total. I rather object to "dearest" as a word implying comparison, and therefore never to be used where comparison should not and could not exist. Witness, "dearest mother," or "dearest wife," as if a man had a plurality of mothers and wives, out of whom he chose the one he loved best. And, as a general rule, I dislike all ultra expressions of affection set down in ink. I once knew an honest gentleman—blessed with one of the tenderest hearts that ever man had, and which in all his life was only given to one woman; he, his wife told me, had never, even in their courtship days, written to her otherwise than as "My dear Anne,"—ending merely with "Yours faithfully," or "yours truly." Faithful—true—what could he write, or she desire more?

If my pen wanders to lovers and sweethearts, and moralises over simple sentences in this maundering way, blame not me, dear imaginary correspondent, to whom no name shall be given at all—but blame my friend,—as friends go in this world,—Captain Augustus Treherne. Because, happily, that young fellow's life was saved at Balaclava, does he intend to invest me with the responsibility of it, with all its scrapes and follies, now and for evermore? Is my clean, sober hut to be fumigated with tobacco and poisoned with brandy-and-water, that a lovesick youth may unburden himself of his sentimental tale? Heaven knows why I listen to it! Probably because telling me keeps the lad out of mischief; also because he is honest, though an ass, and I always had a greater leaning to fools than to knaves. But let me not pretend reasons which make me out more generous than I really am, for the fellow and his love-affair, bore me exceedingly sometimes, and would be quite unendurable anywhere but in this dull camp. I do it from a certain abstract pleasure which I have always taken in dissecting character, constituting myself an amateur demonstrator of spiritual anatomy.

An amusing study is, not only the swain, but the goddess. For I found her out, spelled her over satisfactorily, even in that one evening. Treherne little guessed it—he took care never to introduce me—he does not even mention her name, or suspect I know it. Vast precautions against nothing! Does he fear lest Mentor should put in a claim to his Eucharis? You know better, dear. Imaginary Correspondent.

Even were I among the list of "marrying men," this adorable she would never be my choice, would never attract me for an instant. Little as I know about women, I know enough to feel certain that there is a very small residuum of depth, feeling, or originality, in that large handsome physique of hers. Yet she looks good-natured, good-tempered; almost as much so as Treherne himself.

"Speak o' the de'il," there he comes. Far away down the lines I can catch his eternal "Donna é mobile,"—how I detest that song! No doubt he has been taking to the post his answer to one of those abominably-scented notes that he always drops out of his waistcoat by the merest accident, and glances round to see if I am looking—which I never am. What a young puppy it is! Yet it hangs after one kindly, like a puppy; after me too, who am not the pleasantest fellow in the world. And as it is but young, it *may* mend, if it falls into no worse company than the present.

I have known what it is to be without a friend when one is very inexperienced, reckless, and young.

Evening.

"To what base uses may we come at last."

It seems perfectly ridiculous to see the use this memorandum-book has come to. Cases forsooth! The few pages of them may as well be torn out, in favour of the new specimens of moral disease which I am driven to study. For instance:—

No. 1—Better omit that.

No. 2—Augustus Treherne, æt. 22, intermittent fever, verging upon yellow fever occasionally, as to-day. Pulse, very high, tongue, rather foul, especially in speaking of Mr. Colin Granton. Countenance, pale, inclining to livid. A very bad case altogether.

Patient enters, whistling like a steam-engine, as furious and as shrill, with a corresponding puff of smoke. I point to the obnoxious vapour.

"Beg pardon, Doctor, I always forget. What a tyrant you are!"

"Very likely; but there is one thing I never will allow; smoking in my hut. I did not, you know, even in the Crimea."

The lad sat down, sighing like a furnace.

"Heigho, Doctor, I wish I were you."

"Do you?"

"You always seem so uncommonly comfortable; never want a cigar or anything to quiet your nerves and keep you in good humour. You never get into a scrape of any sort; have neither a mother to lecture you, nor an old governor to bully you."

"Stop there."

"I will then; you need not take me up so sharp. He's a trump, after all. You know that, so I don't mind a word or two against him. Just read there."

He threw over one of Sir William's ultraprosy moral essays—which no doubt the worthy old gentleman flatters himself are, in another line, the very copy of Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son. I might have smiled at it had I been alone,—or laughed at it were I young enough to sympathise with the modern system of

transposing into “the Governor,” the ancient reverend name of “Father.”

“You see what an opinion he has of you. 'Pon my life, if I were not the meekest fellow imaginable, always ready to be led by a straw into Virtue's ways, I should have cut your acquaintance long ago. 'Invariably follow the advice of Dr. Urquhart,'—'I wish, my dear son, that your character more resembled that of your friend, Dr. Urquhart. I should be more concerned about your many follies, were you not in the same regiment as Dr. Urquhart. Dr. Urquhart is one of the wisest men I ever knew,' and so on, and so on. What say you?”

I said nothing; and I now write down this, as I shall write anything of the kind which enters into the plain relation of facts or conversations which daily occur. God knows how vain such words are to me at the best of times—mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbal—as the like must be to most men well acquainted with themselves. At some times, and under certain states of mind, they become to my ear the most refined and exquisite torture that my bitterest enemy could desire to inflict. There is no need, therefore, to apologise for them. Apologise to whom, indeed? Having resolved to write this, it were folly to make it an imperfect statement. A journal should be fresh, complete, and correct—the man's entire life, or nothing. Since, if he sets it down at all, it must necessarily be for his own sole benefit—it would be the most contemptible form of egotistic humbug to arrange and modify it as if it were meant for the eye of any other person.

Dear, unknown, imaginary eye—which never was and never will be—yet which I like to fancy shining somewhere in the clouds, out of Jupiter, Venus, or the Georgium Sidus, upon this solitary me—the foregoing sentence bears no reference to you.

“Treherne,” I said, “whatever good opinion your father is pleased to hold as to my wisdom, I certainly do not share in one juvenile folly—that, being a very well-meaning fellow on the whole, I take the greatest pains to make myself out a scamp.”

The youth coloured.

“That's me, of course.”

“Wear the cap if it feels comfortable. And now, will you have some tea?”

“Anything—I feel as thirsty as when you found me dragging myself to the brink of the Tchernaya. Hey, Doctor, it would have saved me a deal of bother if you had never found me at all. Except that it would vex the old governor to end the name and have the property all going to the dogs,—that is, to Cousin Charteris; who would not care how soon I was dead and buried.”

“*Were* dead and buried, if you please.”

“Confound it, to stop a man about his grammar when he is in my state of mind! Kept from his cigar, too! Doctor, you never were in love, or you never were a smoker.”

“How do you know?”

“Because you never could have given up the one or the other; a fellow can't; 'tis an impossibility.”

“Is it? I once smoked six cigars a day, for two years.”

“Eh, what? And you never let that out before? You are so close! Possibly, the other fact will peep out in time Mrs. Urquhart and half-a-dozen brats may be living in some out-of-the-way nook—Cornwall, or Jersey, or the centre of Salisbury Plain. Why, what?—nay, I beg your pardon, Doctor.”

What a horrible thing it is that by no physical effort, added to years of mental self-control, can I so harden my nerves that certain words, names, suggestions, shall not startle me—make me quiver as if under the knife. Doubtless, Treherne will henceforth retain—so far as his easy mind can retain anything—the idea that I have a wife and family hidden somewhere! Ludicrous idea, if it were not connected with other ideas from which, however, this one will serve to turn his mind.

To explain it away was of course impossible. I had only power to slip from the subject with a laugh, and bring him back to the tobacco question.

“Yes; I smoked six cigars a-day for at least two years.”

“And gave it up? Wonderful!”

“Not very, when a man has a will of his own, and a few strong reasons to back it.”

“Out with them—not that they will benefit me however—I'm quite incorrigible.”

“Doubtless. First, I was a poor medical student, and six cigars per diem cost fourteen shillings a-week,—thirty-one pounds, eight shillings, a-year. A good sum to give for an artificial want—enough to have fed and clothed a child.”

“You're weak on the point of brats, Urquhart. Do you remember the little Russ we picked up in the cellar at Sebastopol? I do believe you'd have adopted and brought it home with you if it had not died.”

Should I? But as Treherne said, it died.

“Secondly, thirty-one pounds, eight shillings per annum was a good deal to give for a purely selfish enjoyment, annoying to almost everybody except the smoker, and at the time of smoking—especially when to the said smoker it is sure to grow from a mere accidental enjoyment into an irresistible necessity—a habit to which he becomes the most utter slave. Now, a man is only half a man who allows himself to become the slave of any habit whatsoever.”

“Bravo, Doctor, all this should go into the *Lancet*.”

“No, for it does not touch the question on the medical side, but the general and practical one: namely, that to create an unnecessary luxury, which is a nuisance to every body else, and to himself of very doubtful benefit—is—excuse me—the very silliest thing a young man can do. A thing, which, from my own experience, I'll not aid and abet any young man in doing. There, lecture's over, and kettle boiled—unless you prefer tobacco and the open air.”

He did not: and we sat down—“four feet upon a fender”—as the proverb says.

“Heigho! but the proverb doesn't mean four feet in men's boots,” said Treherne, dolefully. “I wish I was dead and buried.” I suggested that the light moustache he curled so fondly, the elegant hair, and the aristocratic outline of phiz, would look exceedingly well—in a coffin.

"Faugh! how unpleasant you are."

And I myself repented the speech: for it ill becomes a man under any provocation to make a jest of Death. But, that this young fellow, so full of life, with every attraction that it can offer—health, wealth, kindred, friends—should sit croaking there, with such a used-up, lack-a-daisical air,—truly it irritated me.

"What's the matter—that you wish to rid the world of your valuable presence?—Has the young lady expressed a similar desire?"

"She?—Hang her! I won't think any more about her," said the lad sullenly. And then, out poured the grand despair, the unendurable climax of mortal woe. "She cantered through the north camp this afternoon, with Granton—Colin Granton, and upon Granton's own brown mare."

"Ha!—horrible vision! And you?—you

'Watched them go: one horse was blind;
The tails of both hung down behind.
Their shoes were on their feet.'"

"Doctor!"

I stopped—there seemed more reality in his feelings than I had been aware of; and it is scarcely right to make a mock of even the fire-and-smoke, dust-and-ashes passion of a boy.

"I beg your pardon; not knowing the affair had gone so far. Still, it isn't worth being dead and buried for."

"What business has she to go riding with that big clod-hopping lout? And what right has he to lend her his brown mare?" chafed Treherne, with a great deal more which I did not much attend to. At last, weary of playing Friar Lawrence to such a very uninteresting Romeo, I hinted, that if he disapproved of the young lady's behaviour, he ought to appeal to her own good sense, to her father, or somebody—or, since women understand one another best, get Lady Augusta Treherne to do it.

"My mother! She never even heard of her. Why, you speak as seriously as if I were actually intending to marry her!"

Here I could not help rousing myself a trifle.

"Excuse me—it never struck me that a gentleman could discuss a young lady among his acquaintance, make a public show of his admiration for her, interfere with her proceedings or her conduct towards any other gentleman, and *not* intend to marry her. Suppose we choose another subject of conversation."

Treherne grew hot to the ears, but he took the hint and spared me his sentimental maunderings.

We had afterwards some interesting conversation about a few cases of mine in the neighbourhood, not on the regular list of regimental patients which have lately been to me a curious study. If I were inclined to quit the army—I believe the branch of my profession which I should take up would be that of sanitary reform—the study of health rather than of disease, of prevention rather than cure. It often seems to me, that we of the healing art have began at the wrong end—that the energy we devote to the alleviation of irremediable disease would be better spent in the study and practise of means to preserve health.

Thus, I tried to explain to Treherne, who will have plenty of money and influence, and whom, therefore, it is worth while taking pains to inoculate with a few useful facts and ideas; that one-half of our mortality in the Crimea was owing, not to the accidents of war, but to the results of zymotic diseases, all of which might have been prevented by common sense and common knowledge of the laws of health, as the statistics of our sanitary commission have abundantly proved.

And, as I told him, it saddens me, almost as much as doing my duty on a battle-field, or at Scutari, or Renkioi, to take these amateur rounds in safe England, among what poets and politicians call the noble British peasantry, and see the frightful sacrifice of life—and worse than life—from causes perfectly remediable.

Take, for instance, these cases, as set down in my note-book.

Amos Fell, 40, or thereabouts, down with fever for ten days; wife and five sons; occupy one room of a cottage on the Moor, which holds two other families; says, would be glad to live in a better place, but cannot get it; landlord will not allow more cottages to be built. Would build himself a peat hut, but doubts if that would be permitted; so just goes on as well as he can.

Peck family, fever also, living at the filthiest end of the village; themselves about the dirtiest in it; with a stream rushing by fresh enough to wash and cleanse a whole town.

Widow Haynes, rheumatism, from field-work, and living in a damp room with earthen floor, half underground; decent woman, gets half-a-crown a-week from the parish, but will not be able to earn anything for months; and what is to become of all the children?

Treherne settled that question, and one or two more; poor fellow, his purse is as open as his heart just now; but among his other luxuries he may as well taste the luxury of giving.'Tis good for him; he will be Sir Augustus one of these days. Is his goddess aware of that fact, I wonder?

What! is cynicism growing to be one of my vices? and against a woman too? One of whom I absolutely know nothing, except watching her for a few moments at a ball.

She seems to be one of the usual sort of officers' belles in country quarters. Yet there may be something good in her. There was, I feel sure, in that large-eyed sister of hers. But let me not judge—I have never had any opportunity of understanding women.

This subject was not revived, till, the tobacco-hunger proving too strong for him, my friend Romeo began to fidget, and finally rose.

"I say, Doctor, you won't tell the governor—it would put him in an awful fume?"

"What do you mean?"

“Oh—about Miss ———— you know. I've been a great ass, I suppose, but when a girl is so civil to one—a fine girl, too—you saw her, did you not, dancing with me? Now isn't she an uncommonly fine girl?”

I assented.

“And that Granton should get her, confound him! a great logger-headed country clown.”

“Who is an honest man, and will make her a kind husband. Any other honest man who does not mean to offer himself as her husband, had much better avoid her acquaintance.”

Treherne coloured again; I saw he understood me, though he turned it off with a laugh.

“You're preaching matrimony, Doctor, surely. What an idea! to tie myself up at my age. I shan't do the ungentlemanly thing either. So good-night, old fellow.”

He lounged out, with that lazy, self-satisfied air which is misnamed aristocratic. Yet I have seen many a one of these conceited, effeminate-looking, drawing-room darlings, a curled and scented modern Alcibiades, fight —*like* Alcibiades; and die—as no Greek ever could die—like a Briton.

“Ungentlemanly,”—what a word it is with most men, especially in the military profession. Gentlemanly,—the root and apex of all honour. Ungentlemanly,—the lowest term of degradation. Such is our code of morals in the army; and, more or less, probably everywhere.

An officer I knew, who, for all I ever heard or noticed, was himself as true a gentleman as ever breathed; polished, kindly, manly, and brave, gave me once, in an argument on duelling, his definition of the word. “A *gentleman*—one who never does anything he is ashamed of, or that would compromise his honour.”

Worldly honour, this colonel must have meant, for he considered it would have been compromised by a man's refusing to accept a challenge. That “honour” surely was a little lower thing than virtue; a little less pure than the Christianity which all of us profess, and so few believe. Yet there was something at once touching and heroic about it, and in the way this man of the world upheld it. The best of our British chivalry—as chivalry goes—is made up of materials such as these.

But is there not a higher morality—a diviner honour? And if so, who is he that can find it?

CHAPTER IV. HER STORY.

'T is over—the weary dinner-party. I can lock myself in here, take off my dress, pull down my hair, clasp my two bare arms one on each shoulder—such a comfortable attitude!—and stare into the fire.

There is something peculiar about our fires. Most likely the quantity of fire-wood we use for this region gives them that curious aromatic smell. How, I love fir-trees of any sort in any season of the year! How I used to delight myself in our pine-woods, strolling in and out among the boles of the trees so straight, strong, and unchangeable—grave in summer, and green in winter! How I have stood listening to the wind in their tops, and looking for the fir-cones, wonderful treasures! which they had dropped on the soft dry mossy ground. What glorious fun it was to fill my pinafore—or in more dignified days my black silk apron—with fir-cones; to heap a surreptitious store of them in a corner of the school-room, and burn them, one by one, on the top of the fire. How they did blaze!

I think I should almost like to go hunting for fir-cones now. It would be a great deal more amusing than dinner-parties.

Why did we give this dinner, which cost so much time, trouble, and money, and was so very dull? At least I thought so. Why should we always be obliged to have a dinner-party when Francis is here? As if he could not exist a week at Rockmount without other people's company than ours! It used not to be so. When I was a child, I remember he never wanted to go anywhere, or have anybody coming here. After study was over (and papa did not keep him very close either), he cared for nothing except to saunter about with Penelope. What a nuisance those two used to be to us younger ones: always sending us out of the room on some pretence, or taking us long walks and losing us, and then—cruellest of all,—keeping us waiting indefinitely for dinner. Always making so much of one another, and taking no notice of us; having little squabbles with one another, and then snubbing us. The great bore of our lives was that love-affair of Francis and Penelope; and the only consolation we had, Lisabel and I, was to plan the wedding, she to settle the bridesmaids' dresses, and I thinking how grand it would be when all is over, and I took the head of the table, the warm place in the room, permanently, as Miss Johnston.

Poor Penelope! She is Miss Johnston still, and likely to be, for all that I can see. I should not wonder if, after all, it happened in ours as in many families, that the youngest is married first.

Lisabel vexed me much to-day; more than usual. People will surely begin to talk about her, not that I care a pin for any gossip, but it's wrong—wrong! A girl can't like two gentlemen so equally that she treats them exactly in the same manner—unless it chances to be the manner of benevolent indifference. But Lisabel's is not that. Every day I watch her, and say to myself, “She's surely fond of that young man.” Which always happens to be the young man nearest to her, whether Captain Treherne, or “my Colin,” as his mother calls him. What a lot of “beaux” our Lisa has had ever since she was fourteen, yet not one “lover”—that I ever heard of; as, of course, I should, together with her half-dozen very particular friends. No one can accuse Lis of being of a secretive disposition.

What, am I growing ill-natured, and to my own sister? a good tempered, harmless girl, who makes herself agreeable to everybody, and whom everybody likes a vast deal better than they do me.

Sometimes, sitting over this fire, with the fir-twigs crackling and the turpentine blazing—it may be an odd

taste, but I have a real pleasure in the smell of turpentine—I take myself into serious, sad consideration.

Theodora Johnston, aged twenty-five; medium looks, medium talents, medium temper; in every way the essence of mediocrity. This is what I have gradually discovered myself to be; I did not think so always.

Theodora Johnston, aged fifteen. What a different creature that was. I can bring it back now, with its long curls and its short frocks—by Penelope's orders, preserved as late as possible;—running wild over the moors, or hiding itself in the garden with a book,—or curling up in a corner of this attic, then unfurnished, with a pencil and the back of a letter, writing its silly poetry. Thinking, planning, dreaming, looking forward to such a wonderful, impossible life: quite satisfied with itself and all it was to do therein, since

> “The world was all before it where to choose:
> Reason its guard, and Providence its guide.”

And what has it done? Nothing. What is it now? The aforesaid Theodora Johnston, aged twenty-five.

Moralists tell us, self-examination is a great virtue, an indispensable duty. I don't believe it. Generally, it is utterly useless, hopeless, and unprofitable. Much of it springs from the very egotism it pretends to cure. There are not more conceited hypocrites on earth than many of your “miserable sinners.”

If I cannot think of something or somebody better than myself, I will just give up thinking altogether: will pass entirely to the uppermost of my two lives, which I have now made to tally so successfully that they seem of one material: like our girls' new cloaks, which everybody imagines sober grey, till a lifting of the arms shows the other side of the cloth to be scarlet.

That reminds me in what a blaze of scarlet Captain Treherne appeared at our modest dinner-table. He was engaged to a full-dress party at the Camp, he said, and must leave immediately after dinner,—which he didn't. Was his company much missed, I wonder? Two here could well have spared it—Colin Granton and Francis Charteris.

How odd that until to-night Captain Treherne should have had no notion that his cousin was engaged to our Penelope, or even visited at Rockmount. Odd too, that other people never told him. But it is such an old affair, and we were not likely to make the solemn communication ourselves; besides, we never knew much about the youth, except that he was one of Francis's fine relations. Yet to think that Francis all these years should never have even hinted to these said fine relations that he was engaged to our Penelope!

If I were Penelope—but I have no business to judge other people. I never was in love, they say.

To see the meeting between these two was quite dramatic, and as funny as a farce.

Francis sitting on the sofa by Penelope, talking to Mrs. Granton and her friend Miss Emery, and doing a little bit of lazy love-making between whiles. When enters, late and hurried, Captain Treherne. He walks straight up to papa, specially attentive; then bows to Lisabel, specially distant and unattentive; (I thought, though, at sight of her he grew as hot as if his regimental collar were choking him); then hastens to pay his respects to Miss Johnston, when lo! he beholds Mr. Francis Charteris.

“Charteris! what the—what a very unexpected pleasure!”

Francis shook hands in what we call his usual fascinating manner.

“Miss Johnston!”—in his surprise Captain Treherne had quite forgotten her—“I really beg your pardon. I had not the slightest idea you were acquainted with my cousin.” Nor did the young man seem particularly pleased with the discovery.

Penelope glanced sharply at Francis, and then said—how did she manage to say it so carelessly and composedly!—.

“Oh yes, we have known Mr. Charteris for a good many years. Can you find room for your cousin on the sofa, Francis?”

At the “Francis,” Captain Treherne stared, and made some remarks in an abstract and abstracted manner. At length, when he had placed himself right between Francis and Penelope, and was actually going to take Penelope down to dinner, a light seemed to break upon him. He laughed—gave way to his cousin—and condescended to bestow his scarlet elbow upon me; saying as we went across the hall:—

“I'm afraid I was near making a blunder there.—But who would have thought it?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“About those, there. I knew your sister was engaged to somebody—but Charteris! Who would have thought of Charteris going to be married. What a ridiculous idea.”

I said, that the fact had ceased to appear so to me, having been aware of it for the last ten years.

“Ten years! You don't say so!” And then his slow perception catching the extreme incivility of this great astonishment—my scarlet friend offered lame congratulations, fell to his dinner, and conversed no more.

Perhaps he forgot the matter altogether—for Lisabel sat opposite, beside Colin Granton; and what between love and hate my cavalier's attention was very much distracted. Truly, Lisabel and her unfortunate swains reminded me of a passage in “Thomson's Seasons,” describing two young bulls fighting in a meadow:—

> “While the fair heifer balmy-breathing near,
> Stands kindling up their rage.”

I blush to set it down. I blush almost to have such a thought, and concerning my own sister; yet it is so, and I have seen the like often and often. Surely it must be wrong; such sacred things as women's beauty and women's love were not made to set men mad at one another like brute beasts. Surely the woman could help it if she chose. Men may be jealous, and cross, and wretched; but they do not absolutely hate one another on a woman's account unless she has been in some degree to blame. While free, and shewing no preference, no

one can well fight about her, for all have an equal chance; when she has a preference, though she might not openly shew it towards its object, she certainly would never think of shewing it towards anybody else. At least, that is my theory.

However, I am taking the thing too seriously, and it is no affair of mine. I have given up interfering long ago. Lisabel must "gang her ain gate," as they say in Scotland. By the bye, Captain Treherne asked if we came from Scotland, or were of the celebrated clan Johnstone?

Time was, when in spite of the additional *t,* we all grumbled at our plebeian name, hoping earnestly to change it for something more aristocratic,—and oh, how proud we were of Charteris! How fine to put into the village post, letters addressed, "Francis Charteris, Esq.," and to speak of our brother-in-law elect as having "an office under Government!" We firmly believed that office under Government would end in the Premiership and a peerage.

It has not, though. Francis still says he cannot afford to marry; I was asking Penelope yesterday if she knew what papa and his first wife, not our own mamma, married upon? Much less income, I believe, than what Francis has now. But my sister said I did not understand: "The cases were widely different." Probably.

She is very fond of Francis. Last week, preparing for him, she looked quite a different woman; quite young and rosy again; and though it did not last, though after he was really come, she grew sharp and cross often,—to us, never to him, of course;—she much enjoys his being here. They do not make so much fuss over one another as they did ten years ago, which indeed would be ridiculous in lovers over thirty. Still, I should hardly like my lover, at any age, to sit reading a novel half the evening, and spend the other half in the sweet company of his cigar. Not that he need be always hankering after me, and "paying me attention." I should hate that. For what is the good of people being fond of one another, if they can't be content simply in one another's company, or, without it even, in one another's love? letting each go on their own several ways and do their several work, in the best manner they can. Good sooth! I should be the most convenient and least troublesome sweetheart that ever a young man was ever blessed with; for I am sure I should sit all evening quite happy—he at one end of the room, and I at the other, if only I knew he was happy, and caught now and then a look and a smile—provided the look and the smile were my own personal property, nobody else's.

What nonsense am I writing? And not a word about the dinner-party. Has it left so little impression on my mind?

No wonder! It was just the usual thing. Papa as host, grave, clerical, and slightly wearying of it all. Penelope hostess. Francis playing "friend of the family," as handsome and well-dressed as ever—what an exquisitely embroidered shirt-front, and what an aërial cambric kerehief! which must have taken him half an hour to tie! Lisabel—but I have told about her; and myself. Everybody else looking as everybody hereabouts always does look at dinner-parties—*ex uno disce omnes*—to muster a bit of the Latin for which, in old times, Francis used to call me "a juvenile prig."

Was there, in the whole evening, anything worth remembering? Yes, thanks to his fit of jealousy, I did get a little sensible conversation out of Captain Treherne. He looked so dull, so annoyed, that I felt sorry for the youth, and tried to make him talk; so, lighting on the first subject at hand, asked him if he had seen his friend, Doctor Urquhart, lately?

"Eh—who? I beg your pardon."

His eyes had wandered where Lisabel, with one of her white elbows on the table, sat coquetting with a bunch of grapes, listening with downcast eyes to "my Colin."

"Doctor Urquhart, whom I met at the Cedars last week. You said he was a friend of yours."

"So he is; the best I ever had," and it was refreshing to see how the young fellow brightened up. "He saved my life. But for him I should assuredly be lying with a cross over my head, inside that melancholy stone wall round the top of Cathcart's Hill."

"You mean the cemetery there.—What sort of a place is it?"

"Just as I said—the bare top of a hill, with a wall round it, and stones of various sorts, crosses, monuments, and so on. All our officers were buried there."

"And the men?"

"Oh, anywhere. It didn't matter."

It did not, I thought; but not exactly from Captain Treherne's point of view. However, he was scarcely the man with whom to have started an abstract argument. I might, had he been Doctor Urquhart.

"Was Doctor Urquhart in the Crimea the whole time?"

"To be sure. He went through all the campaign, from Varna to Sebastopol; at first unattached, and then was appointed to our regiment. Well for me that! What a three months I had after Inkerman! Shall I ever forget the day I first crawled out and sat on the benches in front of the hospital, on Balaklava Heights, looking down over the Black Sea?"

I had never seen him serious before. My heart inclined even to Captain Treherne.

"Was he ever hurt—Doctor Urquhart, I mean?"

"Once or twice, slightly, while looking after his wounded on the field. But he made no fuss about it, and always got well directly. You see, he is such an extremely temperate man in all things—such a quiet temper—has himself in such thorough control—that he has twice the chance of keeping in health that most men have—especially our fellows there, who, he declares, died quite as much of eating, drinking, and smoking, as they did of Russian bullets."

"Your friend must be a remarkable man."

"He's a—a brick! Excuse the word—in ladies' society I ought not to use it."

"If you ought to use it at all, you may do so in ladies' society."

The youth looked puzzled.

"Well, then, Miss Dora, he really is a downright *brick*—since you know what that means. Though an odd

sort of fellow too; a tough customer to deal with—never lets go the rein; holds one in as tight as if he were one's father. I say, Charteris, did you ever hear the governor speak of Doctor Urquhart, of ours?”

If Sir William had named such a person, Mr. Charteris had, unfortunately, quite forgotten it. Stay—he fancied he had heard the name at his club, but it was really impossible to remember all the names one knew, or the men.

“You wouldn't have forgotten that man in a hurry, Miss Dora, I assure you. He's worth a dozen of—— but I beg your pardon.”

If it was for the look which he cast upon his cousin, I was not implacable. Francis always annoys me when he assumes that languid manner. For some things, I prefer Captain Treherne's open silliness—nothing being in his head, nothing can come out of it—to the lazy superciliousness of Francis Charteris; who, we know, has a great deal more in him than he ever condescends to let out, at least for our benefit. I should like to see if he behaves any better at his aforesaid club, or at Lady This's and the Countess of That's, of whom I heard him speak to Miss Emery.

I was thinking thus;—vaguely contrasting his smooth, handsome face with that sharp one of Penelope's—how much faster she grows old than he does, though they are exactly of an age!—when the ladies rose.

Captain Treherne and Colin rushed to open the door—Francis did not take that trouble—and Lisabel, passing, smiled equally on both her adorers. Colin made some stupid compliment; and the other, silent, looked her full in the face. If any man so dared to look at me, I would like to grind him to powder.

Oh! I'm sick of love and lovers—or the mockery of them—sick to the core of my heart!

In the drawing-room I curled myself up in a corner beside Mrs. Granton, whom it is always pleasant to talk to. We revived the great blanket, beef, and anti-beer question, in which she said she had found an unexpected ally.

“One who argues, even more strongly than your father and I, my dear—as I was telling Mr. Johnston to-day at dinner, and wishing they were acquainted—argues *against* the beer.”

This was a question of whether or not our poor people should have beer with their Christmas dinner. Papa, who holds strong opinions against the use of intoxicating drinks, and never tastes them himself, being, every year, rather in ill odour on the subject. I asked who was this valuable ally?

“None of our neighbours, you may be sure. A gentleman from the camp—you may have met him at my house—a Doctor Urquhart.”

I could not help smiling, and said it was curious how I was perpetually hearing of Doctor Urquhart.

“Even in our quiet neighbourhood, such a man is sure to be talked about. Not in society perhaps—it was quite a marvel for Colin to get him to our ball, but because he does so many things while we humdrum folk are only thinking about them.”

I asked what sort of things? In his profession?

“Chiefly, but he makes professional business include so much. Imagine his coming to Colin as ground-landlord of Bourne hamlet, to beg him to see to the clearing of the village pool? or writing to the lord of the manor, saying that twenty new cottages built on the moor would do more moral good than the new county reformatory? He is one of the very few men who are not ashamed to say what they think—and makes people listen to it too—as they rarely do to those not long settled in the neighbourhood, and about whom they know little or nothing.”

I asked if nothing were known about Doctor Urquhart? Had he any relations? Was he married?

“Oh, no, surely not married. I never enquired, but took it for granted. However, probably my son knows. Shall I find out, and speak a good word for you, Miss Dora?”

“No, thank you,” said I, laughing. “You know I hate soldiers.”

'Tis Mrs. Granton's only fault—her annoying jests after this fashion. Otherwise, I would have liked to have asked a few more questions about Doctor Urquhart. I wonder if I shall ever meet him again? The regiments rarely stay long at the camp, so that it is not probable.

I went over to where my two sisters and Miss Emery were sitting over the fire. Miss Emery was talking very fast, and Penelope listening with a slightly scornful lip; she protests that ladies, middle-aged ladies particularly, are such very stupid company.

Lisabel wore her good-natured smile, always the same to everybody.

“I was quite pleased,” Miss Emery was saying, “to notice how cordially Captain Treherne and Mr. Charteris met: I always understood there was a sort of a—a coolness, in short. Very natural. As his nephew, and next heir, after the Captain, Sir William might have done more than he did for Mr. Charteris. So people said, at least. He has a splendid property, and only that one son. You have been to Treherne Court, Miss Johnston.”

Penelope abruptly answered, “No;” and Lisabel added amiably, that we seldom went from home—papa liked to have us at Rockmount all the year round.

I said wilfully, wickedly,—may be, lest Miss Emery's long tongue should carry back to London what was by implication not true—that we did not even know where Treherne Court was, and that we had only met Captain Treherne accidentally among the camp-officers who visited at the Cedars.

Lis pinched me: Penelope looked annoyed. Was it a highly virtuous act thus to have vexed both my sisters? Alack! I feel myself growing more unamiable every day. What will be the end of it?

“First come, first served,” must have been Lisabel's motto for the evening, since, Captain Treherne re-appearing, scarlet beat plain black clear out of the field. I was again obliged to follow, as Charity, pouring the oil and wine of my agreeable conversation into the wounds made by my sister's bright eyes, and receiving as gratitude such an amount of information on turnips, moor-lands, and the true art of sheep-feeding, as will make me look with respect and hesitation on every leg of mutton that comes to our table for the next six months.

"O, Colin, dear Colin, my Colin, my dear,
Who wont the wild mountains to trace without fear,
O, where are thy flocks that so swiftly rebound,
And fly o'er the heath without touching the ground."

A remarkable fact in natural history, which much impressed me in my childhood. What is the rest?

"Where the birch-tree hangs weeping o'er fountain so
clear,
At noon I shall meet him, my Colin, my dear."

What a shame to laugh at Mrs. Grant of Laggan's nice old song, at the pretty Highland tune which ere now I have hummed over the moor for miles. Since, when we were children, I myself was in love with Colin! a love which found vent in much petting of his mother, and in shy presents to himself of nuts and blackberries: until, stung by indifference, my affection

"Shrunk
Into itself, and was missing ever after."

Do we forget our childish loves? I think not. The objects change, of course, but the feeling, when it has been true and unselfish, keeps its character still, and is always pleasant to remember. It was very silly, no doubt, but I question if now I could love anybody in a fonder, humbler, faithfuller way than I adored that great, merry, good-natured schoolboy. And though I know he has not an ounce of brains, is the exact opposite of anybody I could fall in love with now—still, to this day, I look kindly on the round, rosy face of "Colin, my dear."

I wonder if he ever will marry our Lisa. As far as I notice, people do not often marry their childish companions; they much prefer strangers. Possibly, from mere novelty and variety, or else from the fact that as kin are sometimes "less than kind," so one's familiar associates are often the furthest from one's sympathies, interests, or heart.

With this highly moral and amiable sentiment—a fit conclusion for a social evening, I will lock my desk.

Lucky I did! What if Lisabel had found me writing at—one in the morning! How she would have teased me—even under the circumstances of last night, which seem to have affected her mighty little, considering.

I heard her at my door, from without, grumble at it being bolted. She came in and sat down by my fire. Quite a picture, in a blue flannel dressing-gown, with her light hair dropping down in two wavy streams, and her eyes as bright as if it were any hour rather than 1.30 a.m., as I showed her by my watch.

"Nonsense! I shall not go to bed yet. I want to talk a bit, Dora; you ought to feel flattered by my coming to tell you, first of anybody. Guess now,—what has happened?"

Nothing ill, certainly—for she held her head up, laughing a little, looking very handsome and pleased.

"You never will guess, for you never believed it would come to pass, but it has. Treherne proposed to me to-night."

The news quite took my breath away, and then I questioned its accuracy. "He has only been giving you a few more of his silly speeches, he means nothing. Why don't you put a stop to it all?"

Lisabel was not vexed—she never is—she only laughed.

"I tell you, Dora, it is perfectly true. You may believe or not,—I don't care—but he really did it."

"How, when, and where, pray?"

"In the conservatory; beside the biggest orange-tree; a few minutes before he left." I said, since she was so very matter-of-fact, perhaps, she would have no objection to tell me the precise words in which he "did it."

"Oh, dear, no; not the smallest objection. We were joking about a bit of orange-blossom Colin had given me, and Treherne wanted me to throw away; but I said 'No, I liked the scent, and meant to wear a wreath of natural orange-flowers when I was married.' Upon which he grew quite furious, and said it would drive him mad if I ever married any man but him. Then he got hold of my hand, and—the usual thing, you know." She blushed a little."

"It ended by my telling him he had better speak to papa, and he said he should, tomorrow. That's all."

"All!"

"Well?" said Lisabel, expectantly.

It certainly was a singular way in which to receive one's sister's announcement of her intended marriage; but, for worlds, I could not have spoken a syllable. I felt a weight on my chest—a sense of hot indignation which settled down into inconceivable melancholy.

Was this indeed all? A silly flirtation—a young lad's passion—a young girl's cool business-like reception of the same—the formal "speaking to papa," and the thing was over! Was *that* love?

"Haven't you a word to say, Dora? I had better have told Penelope. But she was tired, and scolded me out of her room. Besides she might not exactly like this, for some reasons. It's rather hard; such an important thing

to happen, and not a soul to congratulate one upon it."

I asked, why might Penelope dislike it?

"Can't you see? Captain Treherne roving about the world, and Captain Treherne married and settled at home, make a considerable difference to Francis's prospects. No, I don't mean anything mean or murderous—you need not look so shocked—it is merely my practical way of regarding things. But what harm? If I did not have Treherne, somebody else would, and it would be none the better for Francis and Penelope."

"You are very prudent and far-sighted: such an idea would never have entered my mind."

"I daresay not. Just give me that brush, will you, child?"

She proceeded methodically to damp her long hair, and plait it up in those countless tails which gave Miss Lisabel Johnston's locks such a beautiful wave. Passing the glass, she looked into it, smiled, sighed.

"Poor fellow. I do believe he is very fond of me."

"And you?"

"Oh, I like him—like him excessively. If I didn't, what should I marry him for?"

"What, indeed!"

"There is one objection papa may have; his being younger than I, I forget how much, but it is very little. How surprised papa will be when he gets the letter to-morrow."

"Does Sir William know?"

"Not yet; but that will be soon settled, he tells me. He can persuade his mother, and she, his father. Besides, they can have no possible objection to me."

She looked again in the mirror as she said this. Yes, that "me" was not a daughter-in-law likely to be objected to, even at Treherne Court.

"I hope it will not vex Penelope," she continued. "It may be all the better for her, since when I am married, I shall have so much influence. We may make the old gentleman do something handsome for Francis, and get a richer living for papa, if he will consent to leave Rockmount. And I'd find a nice husband for you, eh, Dora?"

"Thank you, I don't want one. I hate the very mention of the thing. I wish, instead of marrying, we could all be dead and buried." And, whether from weariness, or excitement, or a sudden, unutterable pang at seeing my sister, my playfellow, my handsome Lisa, sitting there, talking as she talked, and acting as she acted, I could bear up no longer. I burst out sobbing.

She was very much astonished, and somewhat touched, I suppose, for she cried too, a little, and we kissed one another several times, which we are not much in the habit of doing.—Till, suddenly, I recollected Treherne, the orange-tree, and "the usual thing." Her lips seemed to burn me.

"Oh, Lisa, I wish you wouldn't. I do wish you wouldn't."

"Wouldn't what? Don't you want me to be engaged and married, child?"

"Not in that way."

"In what way, then?"

I could not tell. I did not know.

"After the fashion of Francis and Penelope, perhaps? Falling in love like a couple of babies, before they knew their own minds, and then being tied together, and keeping the thing on in a stupid, meaningless, tiresome way, till she is growing into an elderly woman, and he—no, thank you, I have seen quite enough of early loves and long engagements. I always meant to have somebody whom I could marry at once, and be done with it."

There was a half-truth in what she said, though I could not then find the other half to fit into it, and prove that her satisfactory circle of reasoning was partly formed of absolute, untenable falsehood, for false I am sure it was. Though I cannot argue it, can hardly understand it, I *feel it*. There must be a truth somewhere. Love cannot be all a lie.

My sister and I talked a few minutes longer, and then she rose, and said she must go to bed.

"Will you not wish me happiness? 'Tis very unkind of you."

I told her outright that I did not think as she thought on these matters, but that she had made her choice, and I hoped it would be a happy one.

"I am sure of it. Now go to bed, and don't cry any more, there's a good girl, for there really is nothing to cry about. You shall have the very prettiest bridesmaid's dress I can afford, and Treherne Court will be such a nice house for you to visit at. Good night, Dora."

Strange, altogether strange!

And writing it all down this morning, I feel it stranger than ever, still.

CHAPTER V. HIS STORY.

I will set down, if only to get rid of them, a few incidents of this day.

Trivial they are—ludicrously so—to any one but me: yet they have left me sitting with my head in my hands, stupid and idle, starting, each hour, at the boom of the bell we took at Sebastopol—starting and shivering like a nervous child.

Strange! there, in the Crimea, in the midst of danger, hardship, and misery of all kinds I was at peace, even happy: happier than for many years. I seemed to have lived down, and nearly obliterated from thought, that one day, one hour, one moment,—which was but a moment. Can it, or ought it, to weigh against a whole existence? or, as some religionists would tell us, against an eternity? Yet, what is time, what is eternity? And, what is man, measuring himself, his atom of good or ill, either done or suffered, against God?

These are vain speculations, which I have gone over and over again, till every link in the chain of reasoning is painfully familiar. I had better give it up, and turn to ordinary things. Dear imaginary correspondent, shall I tell you the story of my day?

It began peacefully. I always rest on a Sunday, if I can. I believe, even had heaven not hallowed one day in the seven—Saturday or Sunday matters not; let Jews and Christians battle it out!—there would still be needful a day of rest; and that day would still be a blessed day. Instinct, old habit, and later conviction always incline me to “keep the sabbath:”—not, indeed, after the strict fashion of my forefathers, but as a happy, cheerful, holy time, a resting-place between week and week, in which to enjoy specially all righteous pleasures and earthly repose, and to look forward to that rest which, we are told, “remaineth for the people of God.” The people of God. No other people ever do rest, even in this world.

Treherne passed my hut soon after breakfast, and popped his head in, not over welcomely, I confess, for I was giving myself the rare treat of a bit of unprofessional reading. I had not seen him for two or three days,—not since we appointed to go together to the General's dinner, and he never appeared all the evening.

“I say, Doctor, will you go to church?”

Now, I do usually attend our airy military chapel—all doors and windows—open to every kind of air, except airs from heaven, of which, I am afraid, our chaplain does not bring with him a large quantity. He leaves us to fatten upon Hebrew roots, without throwing us a crumb of Christianity; prefers Moses and the prophets to the New Testament; no wonder, as some few doctrines there, “Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you.”

“He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword!”... would sound particularly odd in a military chapel, especially with his elucidation of them, for he is the very poorest preacher I ever heard. Yet a worthy man, a most sincere man: did a world of good out in the Crimera: used to spend hours daily in teaching our men to read and write, got personally acquainted with every fellow in the regiment, knew all their private histories, wrote their letters home sought them out in the battle-field and in the hospital, read to them and cheered them, comforted them, and closed their eyes. There was not an officer in the regiment more deservedly beloved than our chaplin. He is an admirable fellow— everywhere but in the pulpit.

Nevertheless I attend his chapel, as I have always been in the habit of attending some Christian worshi somewhere, because it is the simplest way of showing that I am not ashamed of my Master before men.

Therefore, I would not smile at Trehune's astonishing fit of piety, but simply assented: at which he evidently was disappointed.

You see, I'm turning resectable and going to church. I wonder such an exceedingly respectable and religious fellow as you, Urquhart, has not tried to make me go sooner.”

“If you go against your will, and because it's respectable, you had better stop away.”

“Thank you; but suppose I have my own reasons for going?”

He is not a deep fellow; there is no deceit in the lad. All his faults are uppermost, which makes them bearable.

“Come, out with it. Better make a clean breast to me. It will not be the first time.”

“Well, then—ahem!”—twisting his sash and looking down with most extraordinary modesty,—“the fact is, *she* wished it.”

“Who?”

“The lady you know of. In truth, I may as well tell you, for I want you to speak up for me to her father, and also to break it to my governor. I've taken your advice and been and gone and done for myself.”

“Married!” for his manner was so queer that I should not have wondered at even that catastrophe.

“Not quite, but next door to it. Popped and been accepted. Yes, since Friday, I have been an engaged man, Doctor.”

Behind his foolishness was some natural feeling, mixed with a rather comical awe of his own position.

For me, I was a good deal surprised; yet he might have come to a worse end. To a rich young fellow of twenty-one, the world is full of many more dangerous pitfalls than matrimony. So I expressed myself in the customary congratulations, adding that I concluded the lady was the one I had seen?

Treherne nodded.

“Sir William knows it?”

“Not yet. Didn't I tell you I wanted you to break it to him? Though he will consent, of course. Her father is quite respectable—a clergyman, you are aware; and she is such a handsome girl—would do credit to any man's taste. Also, she likes me—a trifle!”

And he pulled his moustache with a satisfied recognition of his great felicity.

I saw no reason to question it, such as it was. He was a well-looking fellow, likely to please women; and this one, though there was not much in her, appeared kindly and agreeable. The other sister, whom I talked with, was something more. They were, no doubt, a perfectly unobjectionable family; nor did I think that Sir William, who was anxious for his son to marry early, would refuse consent to any creditable choice. But, decidedly, He ought to be told at once—ought indeed to have been consulted beforehand. I said so.

“Can't help that. It happened unexpectedly. I had, when I entered rockmount, no more idea of such a thing than—than your cat, Doctor. Upon my soul 'tis the fact! Well, well, marriage is a man's fate. He can no more help himself in the matter than a stone can help rolling down a hill. All's over, and I'm glad of it. So, will you write, and tell my father?”

“Certainly not. Do it yourself, and you had better do it now. 'No time like the present,' always.”

I pushed towards him pens, ink, and paper; and returned to my book again; but it was not quite absorbing; and occasional glimpses of Treherne's troubled and puzzled face amused me, as well as made me thoughtful.

It was natural that having been in some slight way concerned in it, this matter, foreign as it was to the general tenor of my busy life, should interest me a little. Though I viewed it, not from the younger, but from the elder side. I myself never knew either father or mother; they died when I was a child; but I think, whether or not we possess it in youth, we rarely come to my time of life without having a strong instinctive feeling of the rights of parents—being worthy parents. Rights, of course modified in their extent by the higher claims of the Father of all, but second to none other; except, perhaps, those whieh He has Himself made superior—the rights of husband and wife.

I felt, when I came to consider it, exceedingly sorry that Treherne had made a proposal of marriage without consulting his father. But it was no concern of mine. Even his “taking my advice” was, he knew well, his own exaggeration of an abstract remark which I could not but make; otherwise, I had not meddled in his courting, which, in my opinion, no third party has a right to do.

So I washed my hands of the whole affair, except consenting to Treherne's earnest request that I would go with him, this morning, to the little village church of which the young lady's father was the clergyman, and be introduced.

“A tough old gentleman, too; as sharp as a needle, as hard as a rock,—walking into his study, yesterday morning, was no joke, I assure you.”

“But you said he had consented?”

“Ah, yes, all's right. That is, it will be when I hear from the governor.”

All this while, by a curious amatory eccentricity, he had never mentioned the lady's name. Nor had I asked, because I knew it. Also, because that surname, common as it is, is still extremely painful to me, either to utter or to hear.

We came late into church, and sat by the door. It was a pleasant September forenoon; there was sunshine within and sunshine outside, far away across the moors. I had never been to this village before; it seemed a pretty one, and the church old and picturesque. The congregation consisted almost entirely of poor people, except one family, which I concluded to be the clergyman's. He was in the reading-desk.

“That's her father,” whispered Treherne.

“Oh, indeed.” But I did not look at him for a minute or so; I could not. Such moments will come, despite of reasoning, belief, conviction, when I see a person bearing any name resembling *that* name.

At last I lifted my head to observe him.

A calm, hard, regular face; well-shaped features; high, narrow forehead, aquiline nose,—a totally different type from one which I so well remember that any accidental likeness thereto impresses me as startlingly and vividly as, I have heard, men of tenacious, fervent memory will have impressed on them, through life, as their favourite type of beauty, the countenance of their first love.

I could sit down now, at ease, and listen to this gentleman's reading of the prayers. His reading was what might have been expected from his face—classical, accurate, intelligent, gentlemanly. And the congregation listened with respect, as to a clever exposition of things quite beyond their comprehension. Except the gabble-gabble of the Sunday-school, and the clerk's loud “A-a-men!” the minister had the service entirely to himself.—A beautiful service—as I, though in heart a Presbyterian still, must avow. Especially, when heard as I have heard it—at sea, in hospital, at the camp. Not this camp, but ours in the Crimea, where, all through the prayers, guns kept booming, and shells kept flying, sometimes within a short distance of the chapel itself. I mind of one Sunday, little more than a year ago, for it must have been on the ninth of September, when I stopped on my way from Balaklava hospital, to hear service read in the open air, on a hill-side. It was a cloudy day, I remember; below, brown with long drought, stretched the Balaklava plains; opposite, grey and still, rose the high mountains on the other side of the Tchernaya; while, far away to the right, towards our camp, one could just trace the white tents of the Highland regiments; and to the left, hidden by the Col de Balaklava, a dull, perpetual rumble, and clouds of smoke hanging in the air, showed where, six miles off, was being enacted the fall of Sebastopol.

—Though at the time we did not know; we, this little congregation, mustered just outside a hospital tent, where I remember, not a stone's throw from where we, the living, knelt, lay a row of those straight, still, formless forms, the more awful because, from familiarity, they had ceased to be felt as such—-each sewn up in the blanket, its only coffin, waiting for burial—waiting also, we believe and hope, for the resurrection from the dead.

What a sermon our chaplain might have preached! what words I, or any man, could surely have found to say at such a time, on such a spot! Yet what we did hear, were the merest platitudes—so utterly trivial and out of place, that I do not now recall a single sentence. Strange, that people—good Christian men, as I knew that man to be—should go on droning out “words, words, words,” when bodies and souls perish in thousands round them; or splitting theological hairs to poor fellows, who, except in an oath, are ignorant even of the Divine Name,—or thundering anathemas at them for going down to the pit of perdition, without even so much as pointing out to them the bright but narrow way.

I was sitting thus, absorbed in the heavy thoughts that often come to me when thus quiet in church, hearing some man, who is supposed to be one of the church's teachers, delivering the message of the church's Great Head,—when looking up, I saw two eyes fixed on me.

It was one of the clergyman's three daughters; the youngest, probably, for her seat was in the most uncomfortable corner of the pew. —Apparently, the same I had talked with at Mrs. Granton's, though I was not sure,—ladies look so different in their bonnets. Her's was close, I noticed, and decently covering the head, not dropping off on her shoulders like those I see ladies wearing, which will assuredly multiply ophthalmic cases, with all sorts of head and face complaints, as the winter winds come on. Such exposure must be very painful, too, these blinding sunny days. How can women stand the torments they have to undergo in matters

of dress? If I had any woman-kind belonging to me—Pshaw! what an idle speculation.

Those two eyes, steadfastly inquiring, with a touch of compassion in them, startled me. Many a pair of eager eyes have I had to meet, but it was always their own fate, or that of some one dear to them, which they were anxious to learn: they never sought to know anything of me or mine. Now, these did.

I am nervously sensitive of even kindly scrutiny. Involuntarily, I moved so that one of the pillars came between me and those eyes. When we stood up to sing, she kept them steadily upon her hymn-book, nor did they wander again during church-time, either towards me or in any other direction.

The face being just opposite, in the line of the pulpit, I could not help seeing it during the whole of the discourse, which was, as I expected, classical, laboured, elegant, and interesting,—after the pattern of the preacher's countenance.

His daughter is not like him. In repose, her features are ordinary; nor did they for one moment recall to me the flashing, youthful face, full of action and energy, which had amused me that night at the Cedars. Some faces catch the reflection of the moment so vividly, that you never see them twice alike. Others, solidly and composedly handsome scarcely vary at all, and I think it is of these last that one would soonest weary. Irregular features have generally most character. The Venus di Medici would have made a very stupid fireside companion, nor would I venture to enter, for Oxford honours, a son who had the profile of the Apollo Belvidere.

Treherne is evidently of a different opinion. He sat beaming out admiration upon that large, fair, statuesque woman, who had turned so that her pure Greek profile was distinctly visible against the red cloth of' the high pew. She might have known what a pretty picture she was making. She will please Sir William, who admires beauty, and she seems refined enough, even for Lady Augusta Treherne. I thought to myself, the lad might have gone farther and fared worse. His marriage was sure to have been one of pure accident: he is not a young man either to have had the decision to choose, or the firmness to win and keep.

Service ended, he asked me what I thought of her; and I said much as I have written here. He appeared satisfied.

“You must stay and be introduced to the family: the father remains in church. I shall walk home with them. Ah, she sees us.”

The lad was all eagerness and excitement. He must be considerably in earnest.

“Now, Doctor, come, nay, pray do.”

For I hesitated.

Hesitation was too late, however: the introduction took place: Treherne hurried it over; though I listened acutely, I could not be certain of the name. It seemed to be, as I already believed, *Johnson*.

Treherne's beauty met him, all smiles, and he marched off by her side in a most determined manner, the eldest sister following and joining the pair, doubtless to the displeasure of one, or both. She, whom I did not remember seeing before, is a little sharp-speaking woman, pretty, but faded-looking, with very black eyes.

The other sister, left behind, fell in with me. We walked side by side through the churchyard, and into the road. As I held the wicket gate open for her to pass, she looked up, smiled, and said:—

“I suppose you do not remember me, Dr. Urquhart!”

I replied, “Yes I did:” that she was the young lady who “hated soldiers.”

She blushed extremely, glanced at Treherne, and said, not without dignity:—

“It would be a pity to remember all the foolish things I have uttered, especially on that evening.”

“I was not aware they were foolish; the impression left on me was that we had had a very pleasant conversation, which included far more sensible topics than are usually discussed at balls.”

“You do not often go to balls?”

“No.”

“Do you dislike them?”

“Not always.”

“Do you think they are wrong?”

I smiled at her cross-questioning, which had something fresh and unsophisticated about it, like the inquisitiveness of a child.

“Really, I have never very deeply considered the question; my going, or not going, is purely a matter of individual choice. I went to the Cedars that night because Mrs. Granton was so kind as to wish it, and I was only too happy to please her. I like her extremely, and owe her much.”

“She is a very good woman,” was the earnest answer. “And Colin has the kindest heart in the world.”

I assented, though amused at the superlatives in which very young people delight; but, in this case, not so far away from truth as ordinarily happens.

“You know Colin Granton;—have you seen him lately—yesterday I mean? Did Captain Treherne see him yesterday?”

The anxiety with which the question was put reminded me of something Treherne had mentioned, which implied his rivalry with Granton; perhaps this kind-hearted damsel thought there would be a single-handed combat on our parade-ground, between the accepted and rejected swains. I allayed her fears by observing, that to my certain knowledge, Mr. Granton had gone up to London on Saturday morning, and would not return till Tuesday. Then, our eyes meeting, we both looked conscious; but, of course, neither the young lady nor myself made any allusion to present circumstances.

I said, generally, that Granton was a fine young fellow, not over sentimental, nor likely to feel anything very deeply; but gifted with great good sense, sufficient to make an admirable country-squire, and one of the best landlords in the county, if only he could be brought to feel the importance of his position.

“How do you mean?”

"His responsibility, as a man of fortune, to make the most of his wealth."

"But how?—what is there for him to do?"

"Plenty, if he could only be got to do it."

"Could you not get him to do it?" with another look of the eager eyes.

"I?—I know so very little of the young man."

"But you have so much influence, I hear, over everybody. That is, Mrs. Granton says.—We have known the Grantons ever since I was a child."

From her blush, which seemed incessantly to come, sudden and sensitive as a child's, I imagined that time was not so very long ago: until she said something about "my youngest sister," which proved I had been mistaken in her age.

It was easier to talk to a young girl sitting forlorn by herself in a ball-room, than to a grown-up lady, walking in broad daylight, accompanied by two other ladies, who, though clergymen's daughters, are as stylish fashionables as ever irritated my sober vision. She did not, I must confess; she seemed to be the plain one of the family: unnoticed—one might almost guess, neglected. Nor was there any flightiness or coquettishness in her manner, which, though abrupt and original, was quiet even to demure ness.

Pursuing my hobby of anatomising character, I studied her a good deal during the pauses of conversation, of which there were not a few. Compared with Treherne, whom I heard in advance, laughing and talking with his usual light-heartedness, she must have found me uncommonly sombre and dull.

Yet it was pleasant to be strolling leisurely along, one's feet dropping softly down through rustling dead leaves into the dry, sandy mould which is peculiar to this neighbourhood: you may walk in it, ancle-deep, for miles, across moors and under pine-woods, without soiling a shoe. Pleasant to see the sunshine striking the boughs of the trees, and lying in broad, bright rifts on the ground here and there, wherever there was an opening in the dense green tops of those fine Scotch firs, the like of which I have never beheld out of my own country, nor there since I was quite a boy. Also, the absence of other forest trees, the high elevation, the wide spaces of moorland, and the sandy soil, give to the atmosphere here a rarity and freshness which exhilarates, mentally and bodily, in no small degree.

I thank God I have never lost my love of nature; never ceased to feel an almost boyish thrill of delight in the mere sunshine and fresh air.

For miles I could have walked on, thus luxuriating, without wishing to disturb my enjoyment by a word, but it was necessary to converse a little, so I made the valuable and original remark "that this neighbourhood would be very pretty in the spring."

My companion replied with a vivacity of indignation most unlike a grown young lady, and exceedingly like a child:—

"Pretty? It is beautiful! You never can have seen it, I am sure."

I said, "My regiment did not come home till May: I had spent this spring in the Crimea."

"Ah! the spring flowers there, I have heard, are remarkably beautiful, much more so than ours."

"Yes;" and as she seemed fond of flowers, I told her of the great abundance which in the peaceful spring that followed the war, we had noticed, carpeting with a mass of colour those dreary plains; the large Crimean snow-drops, the jonquils, and blue hyacinths, growing in myriads, about Balaklava and on the banks of the Tchernaya; while on every rocky dingle, and dipping into every tiny brook, hung bushes of the delicate yellow jasmine.

"How lovely! But I would not exchange England for it. You should see how the primroses grew all along that bank, and a little beyond, outside the wood, is a hedge side, which will be one mass of blue-bells."

"I shall look for them. I have often found blue-bells till the end of October."

"Nonsense!" What a laugh it was, with such a merry ring. "I beg your pardon, Doctor Urquhart, but, really, blue-bells in October! Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"I assure you I have found them myself, in sheltered places, both the larger and smaller species; the one that grows from a single stem, and that which produces two or three bells from the same stalk—the campanula—shall I give you its botanical name?"

"Oh, I know what you mean—*hare-bell*."

"Blue-bell; the real blue-bell of Scotland. What you call blue-bells are wild hyacinths." She shook her head with a pretty persistence. "No, no; I have always called them blue-bells, and I always shall. Many a scolding have I got about them when I used, on cold March days, to steal a basket and a kitchen knife, to dig them up before the buds were formed, so as to transplant them safely in time to flower in my garden. Many's the knife I broke over that vain quest. Do you know how difficult it is to get at the bulb of a bluebell?"

"Wild hyacinth, if you please."

"A blue-bell," she laughingly persisted. "I have sometimes picked out a fine one, growing in some easy soft mould, and undermined him, and worked round him, ten inches deep, fancying I had got to the root of him at last, when slip went the knife; and all was over. Many a time I have sat with the cut-off stalk in my hand, the long, white, slender stalk, ending in two delicate green leaves, with a tiny bud between—you know it; and actually cried, not only for vexation over lost labour, but because it seemed such a pity to have destroyed what one never could make alive again."

She said that, looking right into my face with her innocent eyes.

This girl, from her habit of speaking exactly as she thinks, and whether from her solitary country rearing, or her inate simplicity of character, thinking at once more naturally and originally than most women, will, doubtless, often say things like these.

An idea once or twice this morning had flitted across my mind, whether it would not be better for me to break through my hermit ways, and allow myself to pay occasional visits among happy households, or the occasional society of good and cultivated women; now it altogether vanished. It would be a thing impossible.

This young lady must have very quick perceptions, and an accurate memory of trivial things, for, scarcely had she uttered the last words, when all her face was dyed crimson and red, as if she thought she had hurt or offended me. I judged it best to answer her thoughts out plain.

“I agree with you that to kill wantonly even a flower is an evil deed. But you need not have minded saying that to me, even after our argument at the Cedars. I am not in your sense a soldier—a professed man-slayer, my vocation is rather the other way. Yet even for the former I could find arguments of defence.”

“You mean, there are higher things than mere life, and greater crimes than taking it away? So I have been thinking myself, lately. You set me thinking, for the which I am glad to own myself your debtor.”

I had not a word of answer to this acknowledgment, at once frank and dignified. She went on:—

“If I said foolish or rude things that night, you must remember how apt one is to judge from personal experience, and I have never seen any fair specimen of the army. Except,” and her manner prevented all questioning of what duty elevated into a truth,—“except, of course, Captain Treherne.”

He caught his name.

“Eh, good people. Saying nothing bad of me, I hope? Anyhow, I leave my character in the hands of my friend Urquhart. He rates me soundly to my face, which is the best proof of his not speaking ill of me behind my back.”

“So that is Doctor Urquhart's idea of friendship! bitter outside, and sweet at the core. What does he make of love, pray? All sweet and no bitter?”

“Or all bitter and no sweet.”

These speeches came from the two other sisters, the latter from the eldest; their flippancy needed no reply, and I gave none. The second sister was silent: which, I thought, shewed better taste, under the circumstances.

For a few minutes longer we sauntered on, leaving the wood and passing into the sunshine, which felt soft and warm as spring. Then there happened,—I have been slow in coming to it, one of those accidents,—trivial to all but me, which, whenever occurring, seem to dash the peaceful present out of my grasp, and, throw me back years—years, to the time when I had neither present nor future, but dragged on life, I scarcely know how, with every faculty tightly bound up in an inexorable, intolerable past.

She was carrying her prayer-book, or Bible I think it was, though English people oftener carry to church prayer-books than Bibles, and seem to reverence them quite as much, or more. I had noticed it, as being not one of those velvet things with gilt crosses that ladies delight in, but plain-bound, with slightly soiled edges, as if with continual use. Passing through a gate, she dropped it: I stooped to pick it up, and there, on the fly-leaf, I saw written:—

“Theodora Johnston.”—“*Johnston*.”

Let me consider what followed, for my memory is not clear.

I believe, I walked with her to her own door, that there was a gathering and talking, which ended in Treherne's entering with the ladies, promising to overtake me before I reached the camp. That the gate closed upon them, and I heard their lively voices inside the garden wall while I walked rapidly down the road and back into the fir-wood. That gaining its shadow and shelter I sat down on a felled tree, to collect myself.

Johnson her name is not, but *Johnston*. Spelt precisely the same as I remember noticing on his handkerchief, Johnston, without the final *e*.

Yet, granting that identity, it is still a not uncommon name; there are whole families, whole clans of Johnstons along the Scottish border, and plenty of English Johnstons and Johnstones likewise.

Am I fighting with shadows, and torturing myself in vain? God grant it!

Still, after this discovery, it is vitally necessary to learn more. I have sat up till midnight, waiting Treherne's return. He did not overtake me—I never expected he would—or desired it. I came back, when I did come back, another way. His hut, next to mine, is still silent.

So is the whole camp at this hour. Refreshing myself a few minutes since by standing bare-headed at my hut-door, I saw nothing but the stars overhead, and the long lines of lamps below; heard nothing but the sigh of the moorland wind, and the tramp of the sentries relieving guard.

I must wait a little longer; to sleep would be impossible till I have tried to find out as much as I can.

What if it should be *that*—the worst? which might inevitably produce—or leave me no reason longer to defer—the end?

Here it seemed as if with long pondering my faculties became torpid. I fell into a sort of dream; which, being broken by a face looking in at me through the window, a sickness of perfectly childish terror came over me. For an instant only—and then I had put away my writing-materials and unbolted the door.

Treherne came in, laughing violently. “Why, Doctor, did you take me for a ghost?”

“You might have been. You know what happened last week to those poor young fellows coming home from a dinner-party in a dogcart.”

“By George I do!” The thought of this accident, which had greatly shocked the whole camp, sobered him at once. “To be knocked over in action is one thing; but to die with one's head under a carriage-wheel—ugh!—Doctor, did ye really think something of the sort had befallen me? Thank you; I had no idea you cared so much for a harum-scarum fellow like me.”

He could not be left believing an untruth; so I said, my startled looks were not on his account; the fact was, I had been writing closely for some hours, and was nervous—rather.

The notion of my having “nerves,” afforded him considerable amusement. “But that is just what Dora persisted—good sort of creature, isn't she? the one you walked with from church. I told her you were as strong as iron and as hard as a rock, and she said she didn't believe it; that yours was one of the most sensitive faces she had ever seen.”

“I am very much obliged to Miss Theodora—I really was not aware of it myself.”

“Nor I either, faith! but women are so sharp-sighted. Ah, Doctor, you don't half know their ways.”

I concluded he had stayed at Rockmount; had he spent a pleasant day?

“Pleasant? ecstatic. Now, acknowledge—isn't she a glorious girl? Such a mouth—such an eye—such an arm! Altogether a magnificent creature. Don't you think so? Speak out, I shan't be jealous.”

I said, with truth, she was an extremely handsome young woman.

“Handsome? Divine. But she's as lofty as a queen—won't allow any nonsense—I didn't get a kiss the whole day. She will have it we are not even engaged till I hear from the governor; and I can't get a letter till Tuesday, at soonest. Doctor, it's maddening. If all is not settled in a week, and that angel mine within six more—as she says she will be, parents consenting—I do believe it will drive me mad.”

“Having her, or losing?”

“Either. She puts me nearly out of my senses.”

“Sit down then, and put yourself into them again. For a few minutes, at least.”

For I perceived the young fellow was warm with something besides love. He had been solacing himself with wine and cigars in the mess-room. Intemperance was not one of his failings, nor was he more than a little excited now; not by any means what men consider “overtaken,” or, to use the honester and uglier word, “drunk.” Yet, as he stood there, lolling against the door, with hot cheeks and watery eyes, talking and laughing louder than usual, and diffusing an atmosphere both nicotian and alcoholic, I thought it was as well on the whole that his divinity did not see her too human young adorer. I have often pitied women, mothers, wives, sisters. If they could see some of us men as we often see one another!

Treherne talked rapturously of the family at Rockmount—the father and the three young ladies.

I asked if there were no mother.

“No. Died, I believe, when my Lisabel was a baby. Lisabel; isn't it a pretty name? Lisabel Treherne, better still—beats Lisabel Johnston hollow.”

This seemed an opportunity for questions, which must be put; safer put them now, than when Treherne was in a soberer and more observant mood.

“Johnston is a Border name. Are they Scotch?”

“Not to my knowledge—I never inquired. Will, if you wish, doctor. You canny Scots always hang together, ha! ha!—but I say, did you ever see three nicer girls? Shouldn't you like one of them for yourself?”

I!

“Thank you—I am not a marrying man; but you will find them a pleasant family, apparently. Are there any more sisters?”

“No!—quite enough, too.”

“Nor brothers?”

“Not the ghost of one!”

“Perhaps,”—was it I, or some mocking imp speaking through my lips—“perhaps only the ghost of one. None now living, probably?”

“None at all that I ever heard of. So much the better; I shall have her more to myself. Heigho! it's an age till Tuesday.”

“You'd better go to your bed, and shorten the time, by ten hours.”

“So I will. Night, night, old fellow—as they teach little brats to say, on disappearing from dessert.'Pon my life, I see myself the venerated head of a household, and pillar of the state already. You'll be quite proud of my exceeding respectability.”

He put his head in again, two minutes after, with a nod and a wink.

“I say, think better of it. Try for Miss Dora—the second. Charteris one, me the other, and you the third. What a jolly lot of brothers-in-law. Do think better of it.”

“Hold your tongue, and go to your bed.”

It was not possible to go to mine, till I had arranged my thoughts.

What he stated must be correct. If otherwise, it is next to impossible that, in his position of intimacy, he should not have heard it. Families do not, I suppose, so easily forget one who is lost. There must have been only those three daughters.

I may lay me down in peace. Thou who seest not as man sees, wilt Thou make it peace, even for me?

CHAPTER VI. HER STORY.

"Gone to be married? gone to swear a peace?
Shall Lewis have Blanche, and Blanche these provinces?"

Which means, "shall Treherne have Lisa, and Lisa Treherne Court?"

Yes, it is to be: I suppose it must be. Though not literally "gone to be married," they are certainly "going."

For seven days the balance hung doubtful. I do not know exactly what turned the scale; sometimes a strong suspicion strikes me that it was Doctor Urquhart; but I have given up cogitating on the subject. Where one is utterly powerless—a mere iota in a house—when, whatever one might desire, one's opinion has not a straw's weight with anybody, what is the good of vexing one's self in vain!

I shall content myself with giving a straightforward, succinct account of the week; this week which, I cannot deny, has made a vital difference in our family. Though outwardly all went on as usual—our quiet, monotonous life, unbroken by a single "event,"—breakfast, dinner, tea, and sleep coming round in ordinary rotation; still the change is made. What a long time it seems since Sunday week.

That day, after the tumult of Saturday, when I fairly shut myself up to escape out of the way, of both suitors, the coming and the going one, —sure that neither of my sisters would particularly want me—that Sunday was not a happy one. The only pleasant bit in it was the walk home from church; when, Penelope mounting guard over the lovers, I thought it no more than right to be civil to Dr. Urquhart. In so doing, I resolutely smothered down my annoyance at their joining us, and at the young gentleman's taking so much upon himself already, forsooth: lest Captain Treherne's friend should discover that I was not in the most amiable mood possible with regard to this marriage. And in so valorously "putting myself into my pocket,"—the had self which had been uppermost all day—somehow it slipped away as my pin-cushions and pencil-cases are wont to do—slid down to the earth and vanished.

I enjoyed the walk. I like talking to Dr. Urquhart, for he seems honest. He makes one feel as if there were some solid good somewhere in the world, if only one could find it: instead of wandering among mere shams of it, pretences of heroism, simulations of virtue, selfish abortions of benevolence. It seems to me, at times, as if this present world were not unlike that place in Hades,—is it Dante's or Virgil's making?—where trees, beasts, ghosts, and all, are equally shadowy and unsubstantial. That Sunday morning, which happened to be a specially lovely one, was one of the few days lately, when things about me have seemed tangible and real. Including myself, who not seldom appear to myself as the biggest sham of all.

Dr. Urquhart left us at the gate: would not come in, though Penelope invited him. Indeed, he went away rather abruptly; I should say, rudely,—but that he is not the sort of man to be easily suspected of discourtesy. Captain Treherne declared his secession was not surprising, as he has a perfect horror of ladies' society. In which case, why did he not avoid mine? I am sure he need not have had it unless he chose: nor did he behave as if in a state of great martyrdom. Also, a lover of flowers is not likely to be a woman-hater, or a bad man, either: and those must be bad men who have an unqualified "horror" of women. I shall take the liberty, until further evidence, of doubting Captain Treherne—no novelty! The difficulty is to find any man in whom you can believe.

We spent Sunday afternoon chiefly in the garden, Lisabel and her lover strolling about together, as Penelope and Francis used to do. Penelope sat with me some time, on the terrace before the drawing-room windows; then bidding me stay where I was, and keep a look-out after those two, lest they should get too sentimental, she went indoors, and I saw her afterwards, through the parlour-window, writing—probably one of those long letters which Francis gets every Monday morning. What on earth can she find to say?

The lecture against sentimentalism was needless. Nothing of that in Lisabel. Her courtship will be of the most matter-of-fact kind. Every time they passed me, she was talking or laughing. Not a soft or serious look has there been on her face since Friday night; or, rather, Saturday morning, when my sobbing made her shed a few tears. She did not afterwards,—not even when she told what has occurred to papa and Penelope.

Penelope bore it well—if there was anything to bear, and perhaps there was—to her. It might be trying to have her youngest sister married first, and to a young man, but for whom Francis would himself long ago have been in a position to marry. He told us, on Saturday, the whole story: how, as a boy, he was meant for his uncle's heir, but late in life Sir William married. There was a coldness afterwards, till Mrs. Charteris died, when her brother got Francis this Government situation, from which we hoped so much, but which still continues, he says, "a mere pittance." It is certainly rather hard for Francis. He had a long talk with papa, before he left, ending, as usual, in nothing.

After he went away, Penelope did not appear till tea-time, and was "as cross as two sticks," to use a childish expression, all evening. If these are lover's visits, I heartily wish Francis would keep away.

She was not in much better humour on Sunday, especially when, coming hastily into the parlour with a message from Lisabel, I gave her a start—for she was sitting, not writing, but leaning over her desk, with her fingers pressed upon her eyes. It startled me, too, to see her; we have grown so used to this affair, and Penelope is so sharp-tempered, that we never seem to suspect her of feeling anything. I was foolish enough to apologise for interrupting, and to attempt to kiss her, which irritated her so that we had almost a quarrel. I left the room, put on my bonnet, and went off to evening-church—God forgive me! for no better purpose than to get rid of home.

I wonder, do sisters ever love one another? Not after our fashion, out of mere habit and long familiarity, also a certain pride, which, however we differ among ourselves, would make us, I believe, defend one another warmly against strangers—but out of voluntary sympathy and affection. Do families ever live in open-hearted union, feeling that blood is blood, closer than acquaintance, friendship, or any tie in the world, except marriage? That is, it ought to be. Perhaps it may so happen, once in a century, as true love does, or there would not be so much romancing about both.

Thus I meditated, as, rather sick and sorry at heart, I returned from church, tramping through the dark

lanes after papa, who marched ahead, crunching the sand and dead leaves in his usual solid, solitary way, now and then calling out to me:—

“Keep close behind me. What a pity you came to church to-night.”

It was foolish, but I think I could have cried.

At home, we found my sisters waiting tea. Captain Treherne was gone. They never mentioned to papa that he had been at Rock-mount to-day.

On Monday, he did not make his appearance. I asked Lisabel if she had expected him?

“What for? I don't wish the young man to be always tied to my apron-strings.”

“But he might naturally want to see you.”

“Let him want then. My dear little simpleton, it will do him good. The less he has me, the more he will value me.”

I observed that that was an odd doctrine with which to begin married life, but she laughed at me, and said the cases were altogether different.

Nevertheless, when Tuesday also passed, and no word from her adorer, Lisabel looked a little less easy. Not unhappy, our Lis was never seen unhappy since she was born, but just a little what we women call “fidgety;” a state of mind, the result of which generally affects other people rather than ourselves. In short, the mood for which, as children, we are whipped and sent to bed as “naughty;” as young women, petted, and pitied for “low spirits;” as elderly people, humoured on account of “nerves.”

On Wednesday morning when the post came, and brought no letter, Lisabel declared she would stay indoors no longer, but would go out for a drive.

“To the camp, as usual?” said Penelope.

Lisa laughed, and protested she should drive wherever she liked.

“Girls, will you come or not?”

Penelope declined, shortly. I said, I would go anywhere except to the camp, which I thought decidedly objectionable under the circumstances.

“Dora, don't be silly. But do just as you like. I can call at the Cedars for Miss Emery.”

“And Colin too, who will be exceedingly happy to go with you,” suggested Penelope.

But the sneer was wasted. Lisabel laughed again, smoothed her collar at the glass, and left the parlour, looking as contented as ever.

Ere she went out, radiant in her new hat and feathers, her blue cloth jacket, and her dainty little driving-gloves (won in a bet with Captain Treherne), she put her head in at my door, where I was working at German, and trying to forget all these follies and annoyances.

“You'll not go, then?”

I shook my head, and asked when she intended to be back?

“Probably at lunch: or I may stay dinner at the Cedars. Just as it happens. Good bye.”

“Lisabel,” I cried, catching her by the shoulders, “what are you going to do?”

“I told you. Oh, take care of my feather! I shall drive over to the Cedars.”

“Any further? To the Camp?”

“It depends entirely upon circumstances.”

“Suppose you should meet him?”

“Captain Treherne? I shall bow politely, and drive on.”

“And what if he comes here in your absence?”

“My compliments and regrets that unavoidable engagements deprived me of the pleasure of seeing him.”

“Lisabel, I don't believe you have a bit of heart in you.”

“Oh, yes, I have; quite as much as is convenient.”

Mine was full, and she saw it. She patted me on the shoulder good-naturedly.

“If there ever was a dear little dolt, its name is Theodora Johnston. Why, child, at the worst, what harm am I doing? Merely showing a young fellow, who, I must say, is behaving rather badly, that I am not breaking my heart about him, nor mean to do it.”

“But I thought you liked him?”

“So I do; but not in your sentimental sort of way. I am a practical person. I told him, exactly as papa told him, that if he came with his father's consent, I would be engaged to him at once, and marry him as soon as he liked. Otherwise, let him go! That's all. Don't fret, child, I am quite able to take care of myself.”

Truly, she was! But I thought, if I were a man, I certainly should not trouble myself to go crazy after a woman,—if men ever do such a thing.

Scarcely was my sister gone, than I had the opportunity of considering that latter possibility. I was called downstairs to Captain Treherne. Never did I see an unfortunate youth in such a state of mind.

What passed between us I cannot set down clearly; it was on his side so incoherent, on mine so awkward, and uncomfortable. I gathered that he had just had a letter from his father, refusing consent, or at least insisting on the delay of the marriage, which his friend Dr. Urquhart also advised. Exceedingly obliged to that gentleman for his polite interference in our family affairs, thought I.

The poor lover seemed so much in earnest that I pitied him. Missing Lisabel, he had asked to see me, in order to know where she was gone.

I told him, to the Cedars. He turned as white as a sheet.

“Serves me right, serves me right, for my confounded folly and cowardice. I never will take anybody's advice again. What did she think of my keeping away so long? Did she despise—hate me?”.

I said my sister had not confided to me any such opinion of him.

“She shall not meet Granton, that fool—that knave—that—— Could I overtake her before she reaches the Cedars?”

I informed him of a short cut across the moor, and he was out of the house in two minutes, before Penelope came into the drawing-room.

Penelope said I had done exceedingly wrong—that to send him after our Lisa, and allow her to be seen driving with him about the country, was the height of indecorum—that I had no sense of family dignity, or prudence, or propriety—was not a woman at all, but a mere sentimental hookworm.

I answered, I was glad of it, if to be a woman was to resemble the women I knew best.

A bitter, wicked speech, bitterly repented of when uttered. Penelope has a sharp tongue, though she does not know it; but when she rouses mine, I do know it, therefore am the more guilty. Many an unkind or sarcastic word that women drop, as carelessly as a minute seed, often fructifies into a whole garden-full of noisome weeds, sprung up,—they have forgotten how,—but the weeds are there. Yet still I cannot always command my tongue. Even, sometimes, when I do, the effort makes me think all the more angrily of Penelope.

It was not now in an angry, but a humbled spirit, that, when Penelope was gone to her district visiting—she does far more in the parish than either Lis or I—I went out alone, as usual, upon the moor.

My moorlands looked dreary; the heather is fading from purple to brown; the Autumn days are coming on fast. That afternoon they had that leaden uniformity which always weighs me down; I felt weary, hopeless—longed for some change in my dull life; wished I were a boy, a man—anything, so that I might be something—do something.

Thus thinking, so deeply that I noticed little, a person overtook, and passed me. It is so rare to meet anyone above the rank of a labourer hereabouts, that I looked round; and then saw it was Dr. Urquhart. He recognised me, apparently—mechanically I bowed, so did he, and went on.

This broke the chain of my thoughts—they wandered to my sister, Captain Treherne, and this Dr. Urquhart, with whom, now I came to think of it—I had not done so in the instant of his passing—I felt justly displeased. What right had he to meddle with my sister's affairs—to give his sage advice to his obedient young friend, who was foolish enough to ask it? Would I marry a man who went consulting his near, dear, and particular friends as to whether they were pleased to consider me a suitable wife for him? Never! Let him out of his own will love me, choose me, and win me, or leave me alone.

So, perhaps, the blame lay more at Mr. Treherne's door than his friend's—whom I could not call either a bad man or a designing man—his countenance forbade it. Surely I had been unjust to him.

He might have known this, and wished to give me a chance of penitence, for I shortly saw his figure reappearing over the slope of the road, returning towards me. Should I go back? But that would seem too pointed, and we should only exchange another formal bow.

I was mistaken. He stopped, bade me “Good morning,” made some remarks about the weather, and then abruptly told me that he had taken the liberty of turning back because he wanted to speak to me.

I thought, whatever will Penelope say! This escapade will be more “improper” than Lisabel's, though my friend is patriarchal in his age and preternatural in his gravity. But the mischievous spirit, together with a little uncomfortable surprise, went out of me when I looked at Dr. Urquhart. In spite of himself, his whole manner was so exceedingly nervous that I became quite myself, if only out of compassion.

“May I presume on our acquaintance enough to ask you a question—simple enough, but of great moment to me. Is Captain Treherne at your house?”

“No.”

“Has he been there to-day?”

“Yes.”

“I see, you think me extremely impertinent.”

“Not impertinent, but more inquisitive than I consider justifiable in a stranger. I really cannot engage to answer any more questions concerning my family or acquaintance.”

“Certainly not. I beg your pardon. I will wish you good morning.”

“Good morning.”

But he lingered.

“You are too candid yourself not to permit candour in me—may I, in excuse, state my reasons for thus interrupting you?”

I assented.

“You are aware that I know, and have known all along, the present relations of my friend Treherne with your family?”

“I had rather not discuss that subject, Doctor Urquhart.”

“No, but it will account for my asking questions about Captain Treherne. He left me this morning in a state of the greatest excitement. And at his age, with his temperament, there is no knowing to what a young man may not be driven.”

“At present, I believe, to nothing worse than the Cedars, with my sister as his charioteer.”

“You are satirical.”

“I am exceedingly obliged to you.”

Dr. Urquhart regarded me with a sort of benignant smile, as if I were a naughty child, whose naughtiness partly grieved, and partly amused him.

“If, in warrant of my age and my profession, you will allow me a few words of serious conversation with you, I, in my turn, shall be exceedingly obliged.”

"You are welcome."

"Even if I speak about your sister and Captain Treherne?"

There he roused me.

"Doctor Urquhart, I do not see that you have the slightest right to interfere about my sister and Captain Treherne. He may choose to make you his confidant—I shall not: and I think very meanly of any man who brings a third person, either as umpire or go-between, betwixt himself and the woman he professes to love." Doctor Urquhart looked at me again fixedly, with that curious, half-melancholy smile, before he spoke.

"At least, let me beg of you to believe one thing—I am not that go-between."

He was so very gentle with me in my wrath, that, perforce, I could not be angry. I turned homeward, and he turned with me; but I was determined not to give him another syllable. Nevertheless, he spoke.

"Since we have said thus much, may I be allowed one word more? This matter has begun to give me extreme uneasiness. It is doing Treherne much harm. He is an only son, the son of his father's old age: on him much hope rests. He is very young—I never knew him to be serious in anything before. He is serious in his attachment—I mean in his ardent desire to marry your sister."

"You think so? We are deeply indebted to him."

"My dear young lady, when we are talking on a matter so important, and which concerns you so nearly, it is a pity to reply in that tone."

To be reproved in this way by a man and a stranger! I was so astonished that it made me dumb. He continued:—

"You are aware that, for the present, Sir William's consent has been refused?"

"I am aware of it."

"And indignant, probably. Yet there are two sides to the subject. It is rather trying to an old man, when his son writes suddenly, and insists upon bringing home a daughter-in-law, however charming, in six weeks; natural, too, that the father should urge,—'Take time to consider, my dear boy.'"

"Very natural."

"Nay, should he go further, and wish some information respecting the lady who is to become one of his family—desire to know her family, in order to judge more of one on whom are to depend his son's happiness and his house and honour, you would not think him unjust or tyrannical?"

"Of course not. We," I said, with some pride, alas! more pride than truth, "we should exact the same."

"I know Sir William, well, and he trusts me. You will, perhaps, understand how this trust and the—the flexible character of his son, make me feel painfully responsible. Also, I know what youth is when thwarted. If that young fellow should go wrong, it would be to me—you cannot conceive how painful it would be to me."

His hands nervously working one over the other, the sorrowful expression of his eyes, indicated sufficient emotion to make me extremely grieved for this good-hearted man. I am sure he is good-hearted.

I said I could not, of course, feel the same interest that he did in Captain Treherne, but that I wished the young man well.

"Can you tell me one thing; is your sister really attached to him?"

This sudden question, which I had so many times asked of myself—ought I to reply to it? Could I? Only by a prevarication.

"Mr. Treherne is the best person from whom to obtain that information."

And I began to walk quicker, as a hint that this very odd conversation had lasted quite long enough.

"I shall not detain you two minutes," my companion said, hastily. "It is a strange confidence to put in you, and yet I feel I may. Sir William wrote to me privately today. On my answer to his enquiries his consent will mainly depend."

"What does he want to know? If we are respectable; if we have any money; if we have been decently educated, so that our connection shall not disgrace his family?"

"You are almost justified in being angry; but I said nothing of the kind. His questions only referred to the personal worth of the lady, and her personal attachment to his son."

"My poor Lisa! That she should have her character asked for like a housemaid! That she should be admitted into a grand family, condescendingly, on sufferance!"

"You quite mistake," said Doctor Urquhart, earnestly. "You are so angry, that you will not listen to what I say. Sir William is wealthy enough to be indifferent to money. Birth and position he might desire, and his son has already satisfied him upon yours; that your father is a clergyman, and that you come of an old English family."

"We do not; we come of nothing and nobody. My grandfather was a farmer; he wrote his name Johnson, plain, plebeian Johnson. We are, by right, no Johnstons at all."

The awful announcement had not the effect I anticipated. True, Doctor Urquhart started a little, and walked on silently for some minutes, but when he turned his face round it was quite beaming.

"If I did tell this to Sir William, he is too honourable a man not to value honour and honesty in any family, whether plebeian, as you call it, or not. Pardon me this long intrusion, with all my other offences. Will you shake hands?"

We did so—quite friendly, and parted.

I found Lisabel at home. By some chance, she had missed the Grantons, and Captain Treherne had missed her; I know not of which accident I was the most glad.

Frankly and plainly, as seemed to me best, I told her of my meeting Doctor Urquhart, and of all that had passed between us; saving only the fact of Sir William's letter to him, which, as he said it was "in confidence," I felt I was not justified in communicating even to my sister.,

She took everything very easily—laughed at Mr. Treherne's woes, called him "poor fellow," was sure all would come right in time, and went upstairs to dress for dinner.

On Thursday she got a letter from him which she gave me to read—very passionate, and full of nonsense. I wonder any man can write such rubbish, or any woman care to read it—still more to show it. It gave no information on facts—only implored her to see him; which, in a neat little note, also given for my perusal, Lisabel declined.

On Friday evening, just after the lamp was lit and we were all sitting round the tea-table, who should send in his card with a message begging a few minutes' conversation with Mr. Johnston, but Doctor Urquhart? "Max Urquhart, M.D."—as his card said. How odd he should be called "Max."

Papa, roused from his nap, desired the visitor to be shown in, and with some difficulty I made him understand that this was the gentleman Mrs. Granton had spoken of—also—as Penelope added ill-naturedly, "the particular friend of Captain Treherne."

This—for though he has said nothing, I am sure he has understood what has been going on—made papa stand up rather frigidly when Doctor Urquhart entered the parlour. He did so, hesitatingly, as if coming out of the dark night, the blaze of our lamp confused him. I noticed he put his hand to shade his eyes.

"Doctor Urquhart, I believe Mrs. Granton's friend, and Captain Treherne's?"

"The same."

"Will you be seated?"

He took a chair opposite; and he and papa scanned one another closely. I caught, in Dr. Urquhart's face, that peculiar uneasy expression about the mouth. What a comfort a beard must be to a nervous person!

A few commonplace remarks passed, and then our visitor asked if he might speak with papa alone. He was the bearer of a message—a letter in short—from Sir William Treherne, of Treherne Court.

Papa said, stiffly—he had not the honour of that gentleman's acquaintance.

"Sir William hopes, nevertheless, to have the honour of making yours."

Lisabel pinched me under the table; Penelope gazed steadily into the tea-pot; papa rose and walked solemnly into his study—Doctor Urquhart following.

It was—as Lisa cleverly expressed it—"all right." All parties concerned had given full consent to the marriage.

Captain Treherne came the day following to Rockmount, in a state of exuberant felicity, the overplus of which he vented in kissing Penelope and me, and requesting us to call him "Augustus." I am afraid I could willingly have dispensed with either ceremony.

Doctor Urquhart, we have not seen again—he was not at church yesterday. Papa intends to invite him to dinner shortly. He says he likes him very much.

CHAPTER VII. HIS STORY.

Hospital-work, rather heavy this week, with other things of lesser moment, have stopped this my correspondence with an airy nothing however, the blank will not be missed—nought concerning Max Urquhart would be missed by anybody.

Pardon, fond and faithful Nobody, for whose benefit I write, and for whose good opinion I am naturally anxious. I believe two or three people would miss me, my advice and conversation, in the hospital.

By the bye, Thomas Hardman, to my extreme satisfaction, seems really reforming. His wife told me he has not taken a drop too much since he came out of hospital. She says this illness was the saving of him, since, if he had been flogged, or discharged for drunkenness, he would have been a drunkard all his days. So far, so good.

I was writing about being missed, literally, by Nobody. And, truly, this seems fair enough; for is there anybody I should miss? Have I missed, or been relieved by the lost company of my young friend who has so long haunted my hut, but who, now, at an amazing expense in carriage-hire, horse-flesh, and shoe-leather, manages to spend every available minute at a much more lively abode, as Rockmount probably is, for he seems to find a charm in the very walls which enclose his jewel.

For my part, I prefer the casket to the gem. Rockmount must be a pleasant house to live in; I thought so the first night, when, by Sir William's earnest desire, I took upon myself the part of "father" to that wilful lad, and paid the preliminary visit to the lady's father, Mr. Johnston.

Johnson it is, properly, as I learnt from that impetuous young daughter of his, when, meeting her on the moor, the idea suddenly struck me to gain from her some knowledge that might guide my conduct in the very anxious position wherein I was placed. Johnson, only Johnson. Poor child! had she known the load she lifted off me by those few impetuous words, which accident only won; for Treherne's matter, had for once driven out of my mind all other thoughts, or doubts, or fears, which may now henceforward be completely set aside.

I must, of course, take no notice of her frank communication, but continue to call them "Johnston." Families which "come from nothing and nobody"—the foolish lassie! as if we did not all come alike from Father Adam; —are very tenacious on these points; which may have their Value—to families. Unto isolated individuals they seem ridiculous. To me, for instance, of what benefit is it to bear an ancient name, bequeathed by ancestors whom I owe nothing besides, and which I shall leave to no descendants. I, who have no abiding place on the

whole earth, and to whom, as I read in a review extract yesterday, “My home is any room where I can draw a bolt across the door.”

Speaking of home, I revert to my first glimpse of the interior of Rockmount, that rainy night, when, weary with my day and night journey, and struck more than ever with the empty dreariness of Treherne Court, and the restlessness of its poor gouty old master, able to enjoy so little out of all his splendours, I suddenly entered this snug little “home.” The fire, the tea-table, the neatly-dressed daughters, looking quite different from decked-out beauties, or hospital slatterns, which are the two phases in which I most often see the sex. Certainly, to one who has been much abroad, there is a great charm in the sweet looks of a thorough English woman by her own fireside.

This picture fixed itself on my mind, distinct as a photograph; for truly it was printed in light. The warm, bright parlour, with a delicate-tinted paper, a flowered carpet, and amber curtains, which I noticed because one of the daughters was in the act of drawing them, to screen the draught from her father's arm-chair. The old man—he must be seventy, nearly—standing on the hearth-rug, met me coldly enough, which was not surprising, prior to our conversation. The three ladies I have before named.

Of these, the future Mrs. Treherne is by far the handsomest; but I still prefer the countenance of my earliest acquaintance, Miss Theodora—a pretty name. Neither she nor her sisters gave me more than a formal bow; shaking hands is evidently not their custom with strangers. I should have thought of that, two days before.

Mr. Johnston took me into his study. It is an antique room, with dogs for the fire-place, and a settle on either side the hearth; many books or papers about, and a large, neatly-arranged library on shelves.

I noticed these things, because, as I say, my long absence from England caused them to attract me more than they might have done a person accustomed to English domestic life. That old man, gliding peacefully down-hill in the arms of his three daughters, was a sight pleasant enough. There must be many compensations in old age—in such an old age as this.

Mr. Johnston—I am learning to write the name without hesitation—is not a man of many words. His character appears to me of that type which I have generally found associated with those specially delicate and regular features; shrinking from anything painful or distasteful, putting it aside, forgetting it, if possible, but anyhow trying to get rid of it. Thus, when I had delivered Sir William Treherne's most cordial and gentlemanly letter, and explained his thorough consent to the marriage, the lady's father took it much more indifferently than I had expected.

He said, “that he had never interfered with his daughters' choice in such matters, nor should he now; he had no objection to see them settled; they would have no protector when he was gone.” And here he paused.

I answered, it was a very natural parental desire, and I trusted Captain Treherne would prove a good brother to the Misses Johnston, as well as a good son to himself.

“Yes—yes,” he said, hastily, and then asked me a few questions as to Treherne's prospects, temper, and moral character, which I was glad to be able to answer as I did. “Harum-scarum” as I call him—few young men of fortune can boast a more stainless life, and so I told Mr. Johnston. He seemed satisfied, and ended our interview by saying, “that he should be happy to see the young gentleman to-morrow.”

So I departed, declining his invitation to re-enter the drawing-room, for it seemed that, at the present crisis in their family history, there was an indelicacy in any strangers breaking in upon that happy circle. Otherwise, I would have liked well another peep at the pretty home-picture, which, in walking to the camp through a pelting rain, flitted before my eyes again and again.

Treherne was waiting in my hut. He looked up, fevered with anxiety.

“Where the devil have you been gone to, Doctor? Nobody has known anything about you for the last two days. And I wanted you to write to the governor, and—”

“I have seen the “governor,” as you will persist in calling the best of fathers—”

“Seen him!”

“And the Rockmount father too. Go in and win, my boy; the coast's all clear. Mind you ask me to the wedding.”

Truly there is a certain satisfaction in having had ar hand in making young folks happy. The sight does not happen often enough to afford my smiling even at the demonstrations of that poor lad on this memorable evening.

Since then, I have left him to his own devices, and followed mine, which have little to do with happy people. Once or twice, I have had business with Mr. Granton, who does not seem to suffer acutely at Miss Lisabel's marriage. He need not cause a care, even to that tender-hearted damsel, who besought me so pitifully to take him in hand.

And so, I trust the whole Rockmount family are happy, and fulfilling their destiny—in the which, little as I thought it, when I stood watching the solitary girl in the sofa corner, Max Urquhart has been made more an instrument than he ever dreamed of, or than they are likely ever to be aware.

The matter was beginning to fade out of my memory, as one of the many episodes which are always occurring to create passing interests in a doctor's life, when I received an invitation to dine at Rockmount.

I dislike accepting casual invitations. Primarily, on principle—the bread-and-salt doctrine of the East, which considers hospitality neither as a business nor an amusement, but as a sacred rite, entailing permanent responsibility to both host and guest. When I sit by a man's fireside, or (Treherne *loquitur*) “put my feet under his mahogany,” I feel bound not merely to give him back the same quantity and quality of meat and drink, but to regard myself as henceforth his friend and guest, under obligations closer and more binding than one would submit to from the world in general. It is, therefore, incumbent on me to be very choice in those with whom I put myself under such bonds and obligations.

My secondary reasons are so purely personal, that they will not bear enlarging upon. Most people of solitary life, and conscious of many peculiarities, take small pleasure in general society, otherwise to go out

into the world, to rub up one's intellect, enlarge one's social sympathies, enjoy the commingling of wit, learning, beauty, and even folly, would be a pleasant thing—like sitting to watch a pyrotechnic display, knowing all the while, that when it was ended one could come back to see one's heart in the perennial warmth of one's own fireside. If not,—better stay away:—for one is inclined to turn cynical, and perceive nothing but the smell of the gunpowder, the wrecks of the catherine-wheels, and the empty shells of the Roman-candles.

The Rockmount invitation was rather friendly than formal, and it came from an old man. The feeble handwriting, the all but illegible signature, weighed with me, in spite of myself. I had no definite reason to refuse his politeness, which is not likely to extend beyond an occasional dinner-party, of the sort given hereabouts periodically, to middle aged respectable neighbours—in which category may be supposed to come Max Urquhart, M.D. I accepted the courtesy and invitation.

Yet, let me confess to thee, compassionate unknown, the ridiculous hesitation with which I walked up to this friendly door, from which I should certainly have walked away again, but for my dislike to break any engagement, however trivial, or even a promise made only to myself. Let me own the morbid dread with which I contemplated four mortal hours to be spent in the society of a dozen friendly people, made doubly sociable by the influence of a good dinner, and the best of wines.

But the alarm was needless, as a little common sense, had I exercised it, would soon have proved.

In the drawing-room, lit with the warm duskiness of firelight, sat the three ladies. The eldest received me politely: the youngest apologetically.

“We are only ourselves, you see; we understand you dislike dinner-parties, so we invited nobody.”

“We never do give dinner-parties more than once or twice a-year.”

It was the second daughter who made that last remark. I thought whether it was for my sake or her own, that one young lady had taken the trouble to give me a false impression, and the other to remove it. And how very indifferent I was to both attempts! Surely, women hold trifles of more moment than we men can afford to do.

Curious enough to me was the thoroughly feminine atmosphere of the dainty little drawing-room, set out, not with costly splendours, like Treherne Court, but pretty home-made ornaments, and, above all, with plenty of flowers. My olfactories are acute; certain rooms always possess to me certain associated scents through which, at whatever distance of time I revisit them, the pristine impression survives; sometimes pleasant, sometimes horribly painful. That pretty parlour will, I fancy, always carry to me the scent of orange-flowers. It came through the door of a little greenhouse, from a tree there, the finest specimen I had yet seen in England, and I rose to examine it. There followed me the second daughter, Miss Theodora.

In the minute picture which I have been making of my evening at Rockmount, I ought not to omit this young girl, or young woman, for she appears both by turns; indeed, she has the most variable exterior of any person I ever met. I recall her successively; the first time of meeting, quite child-like in her looks and ways; the second, sedate and womanly, save in her little obstinacy about the blue-bells; the third, dignified, indignant, pertinaciously reserved; but this night I saw her in an entirely new character, neither childish nor woman-like, but altogether gentle and girlish—a thorough English girl.

Her dress, of some soft, dark colour, which fell in folds, and did not rustle or spread; her hair, which was twisted at the back, without any bows or laces, such as I see ladies wear, and brought down, smooth and soft over the forehead, formed a sufficient contrast to her sisters to make me notice her; besides, it was a style more according to my own taste. I hate to see a woman all flounces and filligigs, or with her hair torn up by the roots like a Chinese Mandarin. Hair, curved over the brow like a Saxon arch, under the doorway of which two modest intelligent eyes stand sentinel, vouching for the worth of' what is within—grant these, and the rest of the features may be anything you choose, if not absolutely ugly. The only peculiarity about hers was, a squareness of chin, and closeness of mouth, indicating more strength than sweetness of disposition, until the young lady smiled.

Writing this, I am smiling myself, to reflect how little people would give me credit for so much observation; but a liking to study character is, perhaps, of all others, the hobby most useful to a medical man.

I have left my object of remark all this while, standing by her orange-tree, and contemplating a large caterpillar slowly crawling over one of its leaves. I recommended her to get Treherne to smoke in her conservatory, which would remove the insects from her flowers.

“They are not mine, I rarely pay them the least attention.”

I thought she was fond of flowers.

“Yes, but wild flowers, not tame, like these of Penelope's. I only patronise those she throws away as being not 'good.' Can you imagine mother Nature making a 'bad' flower?”

I said, I concluded Miss Johnston was a scientific horticulturist.

“Indeed she is. I never knew a girl so learned about flowers, well-educated, genteel, greenhouse flowers, as our Penelope.”

“Our” Penelope. There must be a pleasure in these family possessive pronouns.

I had the honour of taking into dinner this lady, who is very sprightly, with nothing at all Odyssean about her. During a lack of conversation, for Treherne, of course, devoted himself to his ladye-love; and Mr. Johnston is the most silent of hosts, I ventured to remark that this was the first time I had ever met a lady with that old Greek name.

“Penelope!” cried Treherne. “'Pon my life I forget who was Penelope. Do tell us, Dora. That young lady knows everything, Doctor; a regular blue-stocking; at first she quite frightened me, I declare.”

Captain Treherne seems to be making himself uncommonly familiar with his future sisters-in-law. This one did not exactly relish it, to judge by her look. She has a will of her own, and a temper, too, “that young lady.” It is as well Treherne did not happen to set his affections upon her.

Poor youth! he never knows when to stop.

“Ha! I have it now, Miss Dora. Penelope was in the Odyssey—that book of engravings you were showing my cousin Charteris and me that Friday night. And how I laughed at what Charteris said—that he thought the good lady was very much over-rated, and Ulysses in the right of it to ride away again, when, coming back after ten years, he found her a prudish, psalm-singing, spinning old woman. Hollo!—have I put my foot into it, Lisabel?”

It seemed so, by the constrained silence of the whole party. Miss Johnston turned scarlet, and then white, but immediately said to me, laughing:—

“Mr. Charteris is an excellent classic; he was papa's pupil for some years. Have you ever met him?”

I had not, but I had often heard of him in certain circles of our camp society, as well as from Sir William Treherne. And I now suddenly recollected that, in talking over his son's marriage, the latter had expressed some surprise at the news Treherne had given, that this gay bachelor about town, whose society he had been always chary of cultivating for fear of harm to “the boy,” had been engaged for some time to a member of the Johnston family. This was, of course, Miss Johnston—Penelope.

I would have let the subject drop, but Miss Lisabel revived it.

“So you have heard a deal about Francis? No wonder!—-is he not a charming person?—and very much thought of in London society? Do tell us all you heard about him?” Treherne gave me a look.

“Oh! you'll never get anything out of the Doctor. He knows everybody, and everybody tells him everything, but there it ends. He is a perfect tomb—a sarcophagus of silence, as a fellow once called him.”

Miss Lisabel held up her hands, and vowed she was really afraid of me. Miss Johnston said, sharply, “She liked candid people: a sarcophagus of silence implied a 'body' inside.” At which all laughed, except the second sister, who said, with some warmth, “She thought there were few qualities more rare and valuable than the power of keeping a secret.”

“Of course, Dora thinks so. Doctor, my sister, there, is the most secretive little mouse that ever was born. Red-hot pincers could not force from her what she did not choose to tell, about herself or other people.”

I well believe that. One sometimes finds that combination of natural frankness, and exceeding reticence, when reticence is necessary.

The “mouse” had justified her name by being silent nearly all dinner-time, though it was not the silence of either sullenness or abstraction. But when she was afterwards accused of delighting in a secret, “running away with it, and hiding it in her hole, like a bit of cheese,” she looked up, and said, emphatically:—

“That is a mistake, Lisabel.”

“A fib, you mean. Augustus, do you know my sisters call me a dreadful story-teller,” smiling at him, as if she thought it the best joke in the world.

“I said, a mistake, and meant nothing more.”

“Do tell us, child, what you really meant, if it is possible to get it out of you,” observed the eldest sister; and the poor “mouse,” thus driven into a corner, looked round the table with those bright eyes of hers.

“Lisabel mistakes; I do not delight in secrets. I think people ought not to have any, but to be of one mind in a house.” (She studies her Bible, then, for the phrase came out as naturally as one quotes habitual phrases, scarcely conscious whence one has learned them). “Those who really care for one another, are much happier when they tell one another everything; there is nothing so dangerous as a secret. Better never have one, but, having it, if one ought to keep it at all, one ought to keep it to the death.”

She looked—quite accidentally, I do believe—but still she looked at me. Why is it, that this girl should be the instrument of giving me continual stabs of pain: yet there is a charm in them. They take away a little of the feeling of isolation—the contrast between the inside and outside of the sarcophagus. Many true words are spoken in jest! They dart, like a thread of light, even to “the body” within. Corruption has its laws. I marvel in what length of time might a sun-beam, penetrating there, find nothing worse than harmless dust?

But I will pass into ordinary life again. Common sense teaches a man in my circumstances that this is the best thing for him. What business has he to set himself up as a Simon Stylites on a solitary column of woe? as if misery constituted saintship? There is no arrogance like the hypocrisy of humility.

When Treherne had joined the ladies, Mr. Johnston and myself started some very interesting conversation, *à propos* of Mrs. Granton and her doings in the parish, when I found that he has the feeling, very rare among country gentlemen of his age and generation—an exceeding aversion for strong drinks. He discountenances Father Mathew and the pledge as popish, a crotchet not surprising in an old Tory, whose opinions, never wide, all run in one groove, as it were; but he advocates temperance, even to teetotalism.

I tried to draw the line of moderation, and argued that, because some men, determined on making beasts of themselves, required to be treated like beasts, by compulsion only; that was no reason why the remainder should not have free-will, man's glorious privilege, to prove their manhood by the choice of good or evil.

“Like Adam—and Adam fell.”

“Like a Greater than Adam; trusting in Whom, we need never fall.”

The old man did not reply, but he looked much excited. The subject seemed to rouse in him something beyond the mere disgust of an educated gentleman, at what offended his refined tastes. Had not certain other reasons made that solution improbable, I could have imagined it the shudder of one too familiar with the vice he now abhorred: that he spoke about drunkenness with the terrified fierceness of one who had himself been a drunkard.

As we sat talking across the table, philosophically, abstractedly, yet with a perceptible undertone of reserve,—I heard it in his voice; I felt it in my own,—or listening silently to the equinoctial gale, which rattled the window, made the candles flicker, almost caused the wine to shake in the untouched decanters—as I have heard table-rapping tales, of wine beginning to shake when there was “a spirit present,”—the thought struck me more than once—if either of us two men could lift the curtain from one another's past, what would be found there?

He proceeded to close our conversation, by saying:—

"You will understand now, Doctor Urquhart, and I wish to name it as a sort of apology for former close questioning, my extreme horror of drunkenness, and my satisfaction at finding that Mr. Treherne has no propensity in this direction."

I answered:—

"Certainly not; that, with all the temptations of a mess-table, to take much wine was, with him, a thing exceedingly rare."

"Rare! I thought you said he never drank at all?"

"I said he was no drunkard, nor at all in the habit of drinking."

"Habits grow, we know not how," cried the old man, irritably. "Does he take it every day?"

"I suppose so. Most military men do."

Mr. Johnston turned sharp upon me.

"I must have no modifications, Doctor Urquhart. Can you declare positively that you never saw Captain Treherne the worse for liquor?"

To answer this question directly was impossible. I tried to remove the impression I had unfortunately given, and which the old man had taken up so unexpectedly and fiercely, by enlarging on the brave manner in which Treherne had withstood many a lure to evil ways.

"You cannot deceive me, sir. I must have the truth."

I was on the point of telling him to seek it from Treherne himself, when, remembering the irritation of the old man, and the hotheaded imprudence of the young one, I thought it would be safer to bear the brunt myself.

I informed Mr. Johnston of the two only instances when I had seen Treherne not himself. Once after twenty-four hours in the trenches, when unlimited brandy could hardly keep life in our poor fellows, and again when Miss Lisabel herself must be his excuse.

"Lisabel? Do not name her. Sir, I would rather see a daughter of mine in her grave, than the wife of a drunkard."

"Which, allow me to assert, Captain Treherne is not, and is never likely to be."

Mr. Johnston shook his head incredulously. I became more and more convinced about the justness of my conjecture about his past life, which delicacy forbade me to enquire into, or to use as any argument against his harshness now. I began to feel seriously uneasy.

"Mr. Johnston," I said, "would you for this accidental error—"

I paused, seeing at the door a young lady's face, Miss Theodora's.

"Papa, tea is waiting."

"Let it wait then: shut the door. Well, sir?"

I repeated, would he, for one accidental error, condemn the young man entirely?

"He has condemned himself; he has taken the first step, and his downward course will be swift and sudden. There is no stopping it, sir," and he struck his hand on the table. "If I had a son, and he liked wine, as a child does, perhaps; a pretty little boy, sitting at table and drinking healths at birthdays, or a schoolboy, proud to do what he sees his father doing,—I would take his glass from him, and fill it with poison, deadly poison—that he might kill himself at once, rather than grow up to be his friends' and his own damnation—a *drunkard*."

I urged, after a minute's pause, that Treherne was neither a child nor a boy; that he had passed through the early perils of youth, and succumbed to none; that there was little fear he would ever become a drunkard.

"He may."

"Please God, he never shall! Even if he had yielded to temptation; if, even in your sense, and mine, Mr. Johnston, the young man had once been 'drunk,' should he for that be branded as a hopeless drunkard? I think not—I trust not."

And, strongly excited myself, I pleaded for the lad as if I had been pleading for my own life,—but in vain.

It was getting late, and I was in momentary dread of another summons to the drawing-room.

In cases like these there comes a time when, be our opponents younger or older, inferior or superior to ourselves, we feel we must assert what we believe to be right, "taking the upper hand," as it is called; that is, using the power which the few have in guiding the many. Call it influence, decision, will,—one who possesses that quality rarely gets through half a lifetime without discovering the fact, and what a weighty and solemn gift it is.

I said to Mr. Johnston, very respectfully, yet resolutely, that, in so serious a matter, of which I myself was the unhappy cause, I must request him, as a personal favour, to postpone his decision for to-night.

"And," I continued, "forgive my urging that, both as a father and a clergyman, you are bound to be careful how you decide. By one fatal word you may destroy your daughter's happiness for life."

I saw him start; I struck bolder.

"Also, as Captain Treherne's friend, let me remind you that he has a future, too. It is a dangerous thing for a young man's future when he is thwarted in his first love. What if he should go all wrong, and you had to answer to Sir William Treherne for the ruin of his only son?"

I was not prepared for the effect of my words.

"His only son—God forgive me! is he his only son?"

Mr. Johnston turned from me; his hands shook violently, his whole countenance changed. In it there was as much remorse and anguish as if he, in his youth, had been some old man's only and perhaps erring son.

I could pity him—if he were one of those who suffer to their life's end for the evil deeds of their youth. I abstained from any further remarks, and he made none. At last, as he expressed some wish to be left alone, I rose.

“Doctor,” he said, in a tremulous voice, “I will thank you not to name this conversation to my family. For the subject of it—we'll pass it over—this once.”

I thanked him, and earnestly begged forgiveness for any warmth I had shown in the argument.

“Oh yes, oh yes! Did I not say we would pass it over?”

He sank wearily back in his arm-chair, but I felt the point was gained.

In course of the evening, when Treherne and Miss Lisabel, in happy ignorance of all the peril their bliss had gone through, were making believe to play chess in the corner, and Miss Johnston was reading the newspaper to her father, I slipped away to the green-house, where I stood examining some orchids, and thinking how curious it was that I, a perfect stranger, should be so mixed up with the private affairs of this family.

“Doctor Urquhart.”

Soft as the whisper was, it made me start. I apologised for not having seen Miss Theodora enter, and began admiring the orchidaceous plants.

“Yes, very pretty. But I wanted to ask you, what were you and papa talking about?”

“Your father wished me not to mention it.”

“But I heard part of it, I could not help hearing,—and I guessed the rest. Tell me only one thing. Is Captain Treherne still to marry our Lisa?”

“I believe so. There was a difficulty, but Mr. Johnston said he would 'pass it over.'”

“Poor papa,” was all she replied. “Poor papa.”

I expressed my exceeding regret at what had happened.

“No, never mind, you could not help it; I understand exactly how it was. But the storm will blow over; papa is rather peculiar. Don't tell Captain Treherne.”

She stood meditative a good while, and then said:—

“I think you are right about Mr. Treherne, I begin to like him myself a little, that is—No, I will not make pretences. I did not like him at all until lately.”

I told her I knew that.

“How? Did I shew it? Do I shew what I feel?”

“Tolerably,” said I, smiling. “But you do like him now?”

“Yes.”

Another pause of consideration and then a second decisive “yes.”

“I like him,” she went on, “because he is good-natured, and sincere. Besides, he suits Lisabel, and people are so different, that it would be ridiculous to expect to choose one's sister's husband after the pattern of one's own. The two would probably not agree in any single particular.”

“Indeed,” said I, amused at her frankness. “For instance?”

“Well, for instance, Lisa likes talking, and I silence, or being talked to, and even that in moderation. Hark!”

We listened a minute to Treherne's hearty laugh and incessant chitter-chatter.

“Now, my sister enjoys that, she says it amuses her; I am sure it would drive me crazy in a week.”

I could sympathise a little in this sentiment.

“But,” with sudden seriousness, “I beg you to understand, Doctor Urquhart, that I am not speaking against Captain Treherne. As I told you, I like him; I am quite satisfied with him, as a brother-in-law. Only, he is not exactly the sort of person one would choose to spend a week with in the Eddystone Lighthouse.”

I asked if that was her test for all her friends? since so few could stand it.

She laughed.

“Possibly not. When one comes to reflect, there are very few whose company one can tolerate so well as one's own.”

“Which is itself not always agreeable.”

“No, but the less evil of the two. I don't believe there is a creature living whose society I could endure, without intermission, for a month, a week, or even two days. No. Emphatically no.”

She must then, though a member of a family, live a good deal alone—a fact I had already begun to suspect.

“Therefore, as I try to make Lisa feel—being the elder, I have a right to preach, you know—what an awful thing marriage must be, even viewed as mere companionship. Putting aside love, honour, obedience, and all that sort of thing, to undertake the burthen of any one person's constant presence and conversation for the term of one's natural life! the idea is frightful!”

“Very, if you do put aside love, honour, and all that sort of thing.'”

She looked up, as if she thought I was laughing at her.

“Am I talking very foolishly? I am afraid I do so sometimes.”

“Not at all,” I said, “it was pleasant to hear her talk.” Which unlucky remark of mine had the effect of wholly silencing her.

But, silent, it was something to watch her moving about the drawing-room, or sitting still over her work. I like to see a woman sewing; it gives her an air of peaceful homelikeness, the nearest approach to which, in us men, who are either always sullenly busy or lazily idle, is the ungainly lounge with our feet on the fender. Mr. Johnston must be happy in his daughters, particularly in this one. He can scarcely have regretted that he has had no sons.

It seems natural, seeing how much too well acquainted we are with our sex, its weaknesses and wickednesses, that most men long for, and make much of daughters. Certainly, to have in one's old age a bright girlish face to look at, a lively original girlish tongue to freshen one's mind with new ideas, must be a

pleasant thing. Whatever may have been the sorrows of his past life, Mr. Johnston is a fortunate man now.

With regard to Treherne, I had the satisfaction of perceiving that, as Miss Theodora had prophesied, the old man's anger had blown over. His manner indicated not merely forgiveness, but a degree of kindly interest in that lighthearted youth, who was brimming over with fun and contentment.

I had an opportunity of satisfying myself on this point, in another quarter, while waiting in the hall for Treherne's protracted adieu in the dining-room; when Miss Theodora, passing me, stopped, to interchange a word with me.

"Shall you tell your friend what occurred to-night?—with papa, I mean."

I replied, I was not sure—but perhaps I should. It might act as a warning.

"Do you think he needs a warning?"

"I do not. I believe Treherne is as likely to turn out a good man, especially with a good wife to help him, as any young fellow of my acquaintance; and I sincerely hope that you, as well as your father, will think no worse of him, for anything that is past. An old man has had time to forget, and a girl is never likely to understand, the exceeding temptations which every young man has to fight through,—more especially a young, man of fortune, and in the army."

"Ah, yes!" she sighed, "that is too true. Papa must have felt it. Papa wished this to be kept secret between himself and you?"

"I understood him so."

"Then keep it. Do not tell Mr. Treherne. And have no fear that I shall be too hard upon him. It would be sad indeed, for all of us, who do wrong every day, if every error of youth were to be regarded as unpardonable."

God bless her good heart, and the kindly hand she held out to me; which for the second time I dared to take in mine. Ay, even in *mine*.

CHAPTER VIII. HER STORY.

I do not feel inclined for sleep, and there is a large round moon looking in at my window. My foolish old moon, what a time it is since you and I had a quiet serious look at one another. What things you used to say to me, and what confidences I used to make in you—at this very window, leaning my elbow in this very spot. That was when I was a child, and fond of Colin—"Colin, my dear." How ridiculous it seems now, and what a laugh it would raise against me if anybody had known it. Yet what an innocent, simple, devoted child-love it was! I hardly think any after-love, supposing I should ever feel one, will be, in its way, more tender, or more true.

Moon, have you forgotten me? Am I becoming a middle-aged person; and is a new and younger generation growing up to have confidences with you as I used to have? Or is it I who have forsaken you? Most likely. You have done me a deal of harm—and good, too—in my time. Yet you seem friendly and mild to-night. I will forgive you, my poor old moon.

It has been a pleasant day. My head aches, a little, with the unusual excitement—query, of pleasure?—Is pleasantness so very rare, then?—No: I am weary with the exertion of having to make myself agreeable: for Penelope is full of housekeeping cares, and a few sad thoughts, too, may be, concerning the wedding; so that she takes little trouble to entertain visitors. And Lisabel is "in love," you know, moon.

You would not think it, though, except from the licence she takes to be lazy when Augustus is here, and up to the eyes in business when he is away. I never thought a wedding was such a "piece of work," as the old women say; such a time of incessant bustle, worry, and confusion. I only saw the "love" side of it, Lisabel avers, and laughs at me when I wonder at her for wearing herself out from morning till night in consultation over her trousseau, and how we shall possibly manage to accommodate the eight-and-forty particular friends who must be asked to the breakfast.

Happily, they are only the bride's friends. Sir William and Lady Augusta Treherne cannot come, and Augustus does not care a straw for asking anybody. He says he only wants his Lisa. His Lisa unfortunately requires a few trifles more to constitute her bridal happiness; a wreath, a veil, a breakfast, and six bridesmaids in Indian muslin. Rather cold, for autumn, but which she says she cannot give up on any account, since a wedding day comes but once, and she has been looking forward to her's ever since she was born.

A wedding-day! Probably there are few of us who have not speculated on it a little, as the day which, of all others, is the most decisive in a woman's life. I am not ashamed to confess having occasionally thought of mine. A foolish dream that comes and goes with one's teens; imagined paradise of utterly impossible joy, to be shared with some paragon of equally impossible perfection—I could sit and laugh at it now, if the laughter were not bitterer than tears..

There, after writing this, I went and pulled down my hair, and tied it under my chin to prevent cold—oh! most prudent five-and-twenty—leant my elbow on the window-sill, in the old attitude of fifteen, staring up at the moon and out across the firwoods for a long time. Returning, I have re-lit my candle, and taken once more to my desk, and I say again, O inquisitive moon, that this has been a pleasant day.

It was one of our quiet Rockmount Sundays, which Doctor Urquhart says he enjoys so much. Poor Lisabel's last Sunday but one.

She will be married to-morrow week. We had our indispensable lover to dinner, and Doctor Urquhart also. Papa told me to ask him as we were coming out of the church. In spite of the distance, he often attends our

church now—at which papa seems gratified.

I delivered the message, which was not received with as much warmth as I thought it ought to have been, considering that it came from an elderly gentleman, who does not often pay a younger man than himself the compliment of liking his society. I was turning away, saying I concluded he had some better engagement, when Doctor Urquhart replied quickly:—

“No, indeed. That were impossible.”

“Will you come then? Pray don't, if you dislike it.”

For I was vexed at a certain hesitation and uneasiness in his manner, which implied this; when I had been so glad to bring him the invitation and had taken the trouble to cross half the church-yard after him, in order to deliver it; which I certainly would not have done for a person whom everybody liked.

N.B. This may be one of the involuntary reasons for my liking Doctor Urquhart; that papa and I myself are the only two persons of our family who unite in that opinion. Lisabel makes fun of him; Penelope is scarcely civil to him; but that is because Francis, coming down last week for a day, took a violent aversion to him.

I heard the girls laughing within a stone's throw of where we stood.

“Pray please yourself, Doctor Urquhart; come, or not come; but I can't wait.”

He looked at me with an amused air;—yes, I certainly have the honour of amusing him, as a child or a kitten would—then said,—

“He would be happy to join us.”

I was ashamed of myself for being thus pettish with a person so much older and wiser than I, and who ought to be excused so heartily for any peculiarities he has; yet he vexed me. He does vex me very much, sometimes. I cannot understand why; it is quite a new feeling to be so irritated with anybody. Either it is his manner, whieh is rather variable, sometimes cheerful and friendly, and then again restless and cold; or an uncomfortable sensation of being under control, which I never yet had, even towards my own father. Once, when I was contesting something with him, Augustus noticed it, and said, laughing:—

“Oh, the Doctor makes everybody do what he likes: you'd better give in at once. I always do.”

But I cannot, and I will not.

To feel vexed with a person, to know they have the power of vexing you—that a chance word or look can touch you to the quick, make you feel all over in a state of irritation, as if all the world went wrong, and you were ready to do anything cross, or sullen, or childishly naughty—until another chance word or look happens to set you right again—this is an extremely uncomfortable state of things.

I must guard against it. I must not allow my temper to get way. Sensitive it is, I am aware, quick to feel sore, and to take offence; but I am not a thoroughly ill-tempered woman. Doctor Urquhart does not think so: he told me he did not. One day, when I had been very cross with him, he said “I had done him no harm; that I often did him good.”

Me—to do good to Doctor Urquhart! What an extraordinary thing!

I like to do people good—to do it my own self, too—a mean pleasure, perhaps, yet it is a pleasure, and I was pleased by this saying of Doctor Urquhart's. If I could but believe it! I do believe it sometimes. I know that I can make him smile, let him be ever so grave; that something in me and my ways interests and amuses him in an inglorious, kittenish fashion, as I said; yet, still, I draw him out of himself, I make him merry, I bring light into his face till one could hardly believe it was the same face that I first saw at 'the Cedars; and it is pleasant to me to think that, by some odd sympathy or other, I am pleasant to him, as I am to few—alas! to very few.

I know when people dislike me: know it keenly, painfully; I know, too, with a sort of stolid patience, when they are simply indifferent to me. Doubtless, in both cases, they have every reason; I blame nobody, not even myself, I only state a fact. But with such people I can no more be my natural self, than I can run about, bare-footed and bare-headed, in our north winds or moorland snows. But if a little sunshine comes, my heart warms to it, basks in it, dances under it, like the silliest young lamb that ever frisked in a cowslip-meadow, rejoicing in the May.

I am not, and never pretend to be, a humble person. I feel there is that in me which is worth something, but a return for which I have never yet received. Give me its fair equivalent, its full and honest price, and oh, if I could expend it every mite, how boundlessly rich I should grow!

This last sentence means nothing; nor do I quite understand it myself. Writing a journal is a safety-valve for much folly; yet I am by no means sure that I ought to have written the last page.

However, no more of this; let me tell the story of my day.

Walking from church, Doctor Urquhart told me that Augustus had asked him to be best-man at the wedding.

I said, I knew it, and wished he would consent.

“Why?”

Though the abrupt question surprised me, I answered, of course, the truth. That if the best-man were not himself, it would be one of the camp officers, and I hated—

“Soldiers?”

I told him, it was not kind to be always throwing in my teeth that unfortunate speech; that he ought not to teaze me so.

“Do I teaze you? I was not aware of it.”

“Very likely not; and I am a great simpleton for allowing myself to be teazed with such trifles. But Doctor Urquhart cannot expect me to be as wise as himself; he is a great deal older than I.”

“Tell me, then,” he continued, in that kind tone, which always makes me feel something like a little pet donkey I once had, which, if I called it across the field, would come and lay its head on my hand,—not that, donkey as I am, I incline to trouble Doctor Urquhart in that way.—“Tell me what it is you do hate?”

“I hate to have to entertain strangers.”

“Then you do not consider me a stranger?”

“No; a friend.”

I may say that; for short as our acquaintance dates, I have seen more of Doctor Urquhart, and seem to know him better than any man in the whole course of my life. He did not refuse the title I gave him, and I think he was gratified, though he said only:—

“You are very kind, and I thank you.”

Presently I recurred to the subject of discussion, and wished him to promise what Augustus, and Lisabel, and we all desired.

He paused a moment, then said, decisively:—

“I will come.”

“That is right. I know we can always depend upon Doctor Urquhart's promises.”

Was my gladness over-bold? Would he misconstrue it? No—he is too clear-sighted, too humble-minded, too wise. With him, I have always the feeling that I need take no trouble over what I do or say, except that it should be true and sincere. Whatever it is, he will judge it fairly. And if he did not, why should I care?

Yes, I should care. I like him—I like him very much. It would be a comfort to me to have him for a friend—one of my very own. In some degree, he treats me as such; today, for instance, he told me more about himself than he ever did to any one of us. It came out accidentally. I cannot endure a man who, at first acquaintance, indulges you with his autobiography in full. Such an one must be either a puppy or an idiot.

—Ah, there I am again, at my harsh judgments, which Doctor Urquhart has so often tacitly reproved. This good man, who has seen more of the world and its wickedness than I am ever likely to see, is yet the most charitable man I ever knew. To return.

Before we reached Rockmount, the sky had clouded over, and in an hour it was a thoroughly wet afternoon. Penelope went upstairs to write her Sunday letter, and Augustus and Lisabel gave broad hints that they wished the drawing-room all to themselves. Perforce, Doctor Urquhart and I had to entertain ourselves.

I took him into the greenhouse, where he lectured to me on the orchidacea and vegetation of the tropics generally,—to his own content, doubtless, and partially to mine. I like to hear his talking, so wise, yet so simple; a freshness almost boyish seems to linger in his nature still, and he has the thoroughly boyish peculiarity of taking pleasure in little things.

He spent half an hour in reviving a big brown bee which had grown torpid with cold, and there was in his eyes a kindness, as over a human creature, when he gave into my charge his “little patient,” whom I promised to befriend. (There he is, poor old fellow, fast asleep on a flower-pot, till the first bright morning I can turn him out.)

“I am afraid, though, he will soon get into trouble again, and not find so kind a friend,” said I, to Doctor Urquhart. “He will intoxicate himself in the nearest flower-cup, and seek repentance and restoration too late.”

“I hope not,” said the Doctor, sadly and gravely.

I said I was sorry for having made a jest upon his favourite doctrine of repentance and restoration of sinners, which he seemed always both to preach and to practice.

“Do I? Perhaps. Do you not think it's very much, needed in this world?”

I said, I had not lived long enough in the world to find out.

“I forgot how young you were.”

He had once, in his direct way, asked my age, and I had told him, much disposed likewise to return the question, but was afraid. Sometimes I feel quite at home with him, as if I could say anything to him, and then again he makes me, not actually afraid—thank goodness, I never was afraid of any man yet, and hope I never shall be—but shy and quiet. I suppose it is because he is so very good; because in his presence my little follies and wickednesses hide their heads. I cease perplexing myself about them, or about myself at all, and only think—not of him so much as of something higher and better than either him or me. Surely this cannot be wrong.

The bee question settled, we sat down, silent, listening to the rain pattering on the glass roof of the greenhouse. It was rather a dreary day. I began thinking of Lisabel's leaving more than was good for me; and, with that penetrative kindness which I have often noticed in him, Doctor Urquhart turned my sad thoughts away, by various information about Treherne Court, and the new relations of our Lisa—not many. I said, “happily, she would have neither brother or sister-in-law.”

“Happily! You cannot be in earnest?”

I half wished I had not been, and yet I could not but speak my mind—that brothers and sisters, in law or in blood, were often anything but a blessing.

“I must emphatically differ from you there. I think it is, with few exceptional cases, the greatest misfortune to be an only child. Few are so naturally good, or reared under such favourable circumstances, that such a position does not do them harm. A lonely childhood and youth may make a great man, a good man, but it rarely makes a happy man. Better all the tussles and troubles of family life, where the angles of character are rubbed off, and its inclinations to morbidness, sensitiveness, and egotism knocked down. I think it is a great wonder to see Treherne such a good fellow as he is, considering he has been an only child.”

“You speak as if you knew what that was yourself.”

“No, we were orphans, but I had one brother.”

This was the first time Doctor Urquhart had reverted to any of his relatives, or to his early life. My curiosity was strong. I risked a question: was this brother older or younger than he?

“Older.”

“And his name?”

“Dallas.”

“Dallas Urquhart—what a nice name.”

“It is common in the family. There was a Dallas Urquhart, younger brother to a Sir John Urquhart, who, in the religious troubles, seceded to Episcopacy. He was in love with a minister's sister—a Presbyterian. She died broken-hearted, and in despair at her reproaches, Dallas threw himself down a precipice, where his whitened bones were not found till many years after. Is not that a romantic history?”

I said romantic and painful histories were common enough; there had been some, even in our matter-of-fact family. But he was not so inquisitive as I; nor should I have told him further; we never speak on this subject if we can help it. Even the Grantons—our intimate friends ever since we came to live at Rockmount—have never been made acquainted with it. And Penelope said there was no need to tell Augustus, as it could not affect him, or any person now living, and, for the sake of the family, the sad story was better forgotten. I think so, too.

With a sigh, I could not help observing to Doctor Urquhart, that it must be a very happy thing to have a brother—a good brother.

“Yes. Mine was the best that any one ever had. He was a minister of the Kirk—that is, he would have been, but he died.”

“In Scotland?”

“No—at Pau, in the Pyrenees.”

“Were you with him?”

“I was not.”

This seemed a remembrance so acutely painful, that shortly afterwards I tried to change the subject, by asking a question or two about himself,—and especially what I had long wanted to find out—how he came by that eccentric Christian-name.

“Is it eccentric?—I really never knew or thought after whom I was called.”

I suggested, Max Piccolomini.

“Who was he, pray? My improfessional reading has been small. I am ashamed to say I never heard of Max Piccolomini.” Amused by this *naive* confession of ignorance, I offered jestingly to give him a course of polite literature, and begin with that grandest of German dramas, Schiller's Wallenstein.

“Not in German, if you please; I don't know a dozen words of the language.”

“Why, Doctor Urquhart, I must be a great deal cleverer than you.”

I had said this out of utter incredulity at the ludicrous idea; but, to my surprise, he took it seriously.

“You are right. I know I am a coarse, uneducated person; the life of an army-surgeon allows few opportunities of refinement, and, like many another boy, I threw away my chances when I had them.”

“At school?”

“College, rather.”

“Where did you go to college?”

“At St. Andrews.”

The interrogative mood being on me, I thought I would venture a question which had been often on my mind to ask—namely, what made him choose to be a doctor, which always seemed to me the most painful and arduous of professions.

He was so slow in answering, that I began to fear it was one of my too blunt queries, and apologized.

“I will tell you, if you desire it. My motive was not unlike one you once suggested—to save life instead of destroying it; also, because I wished to have my own life always in my hand. I cannot justly consider it mine. It is *owed.*”

To heaven, I conclude he meant, by the solemnity of his manner. Yet, are not all lives owed? And, if so, my early dream of perfect bliss, namely, for two people to spend their lives together in a sort of domestic Pitcairn's Island, cradled in a spiritual Pacific Ocean, with nothing to do but to love one another—must be a delusion, or worse. I am beginning to be glad I never found it. We are not the birds and butterflies, but the labourers of the earthly vineyard. To discover one's right work and do it, must be the grand secret of life.—With or without love, I wonder? With it—I should imagine. But Doctor Urquhart in his plan of existence, never seems to think of such an insignificant necessity.

Yet let me not speak lightly. I like him—I honor him. Had I been his dead brother, or a sister which he never had, I would have helped, rather than have hindered him in his self-sacrificing career. I would have scorned to put in my poor claim over him or his existence. It would have seemed like taking for daily uses the gold of the sanctuary.

And here pondering over all I have heard of him and seen in him: the self-denial, the heroism, the religious purity of his daily life—which has roused in even the light heart of Augustus Treherne an attachment approaching to positive devotion, that all the jesting of Lisabel is powerless to shake, I call to mind one incident of this day, which startled, shocked me: concerning which even now I can scarcely credit the evidence of my own ears.

We had all gathered round the fire waiting papa's return from the second service, Penelope, Lisabel, Augustus, Doctor Urquhart, I. The rain had cleared off, and there was only a soft drip, drip, on the glass of the greenhouse outside. We were very peaceful and comfortable: it felt almost like a family circle—which, indeed it was, with one exception. The new member of our family seemed to make himself considerably at his ease—sat beside his Lisa, and held her hand under cover of her apron—at which I thought I saw Doctor Urquhart smile. Why should he? The caress was quite natural.

Penelope was less restless than usual: owing may be to her long letter and the prospect of seeing Francis in

a week: he comes to the marriage, of course. Poor fellow, what a pity we cannot have two weddings instead of one!—it is rather hard for him to be only a wedding guest and Penelope only a bridesmaid. But I am ceasing to laugh at even Francis and Penelope.

I myself, in my own little low chair in its right angle on the hearth-rug, felt perfectly happy. Is it the contrast between it and the life of solitude of which I have only lately had any knowledge that makes my own home life so much sweeter than it used to be?

The gentlemen began talking together about the difference between this quiet scene and that of November last year: when, Sebastopol taken, the army was making up its mind to winter in idleness, as merrily as it could. And then Doctor Urquhart reverted to the former winter, the terrible time—until its miseries reached and touched the English heart at home. And yet, as Doctor Urquhart said, such misery seems often to evoke the noblest half of man's nature. Many an anecdote, proving this, he told about “his poor fellows,” as he called them; tales of heroism, patient endurance, unselfishness and generosity,—such as, in the mysterious agency of providence, are always developed by that great purifier as well as avenger, war.

Listening, my cheek burnt to think I had ever said I hated soldiers. It is a solemn question, too momentous for human wisdom to decide upon, and, probably, never meant to be decided in this world—the justice of carnage, the necessity of war. But thus far I am convinced—and intend, the first opportunity, to express my thanks to Doctor Urquhart for having taught me the lesson—that to set one's self in fierce aversion against any class as a class, is both foolish and wicked. We should “hate” nobody. The Christian warfare is never against sinners, but against sin.

Speaking of the statistics of mortality in the army, Doctor Urquhart surprised us by stating how small a percentage—bless me, I am beginning to talk like a blue-book—results from death in battle and from wounds. And strange as it may appear, the mortality in a? campaign, with all its fatal chances, is less than in barracks at home. He has long suspected this, from the accounts of the men, and having lately, from clear data, ascertained its accuracy, intends urging it at the Horse Guards, or failing there, in the public press,—that the causes may be inquired into and remedied. It will be at some personal risk: Government never likes being meddled with; but he seems the sort of man who, having once got an idea into his head, would pursue it to the death—and very right too. If I had been a man, I would have done exactly the same.

All this while, I have never told—that thing. It came out, as well as I can remember, thus:—.

Doctor Urquhart was saying that the average mortality of soldiers in barracks was higher than that of any corresponding class of workingmen. He attributes this to want of space? cleanliness, fresh air, and good food.

“Also, to another cause, which you always find flourishing under such circumstances—drink. It is in a barracks just as in the courts and alleys of a large city—wherever you find people huddled together in foul air, ill smells, and general wretchedness—they drink. They cannot help it, it seems a natural necessity.”

“There, we have the Doctor on his hobby. Gee-up, Doctor!” cried Augustus. I wonder his friend stands his nonsense so good-humouredly.

“You know it is true, though, Treherne,” and he went on speaking to me. “In the Crimea, the great curse of our army was drink. Drink killed more of us than the Russians did. You should have seen what I have seen—the officer maddening himself with champagne at the mess-table—the private stealing out to a rum-store to booze secretly over his grog. The thing was obliged to be winked at, it was so common.”

“In hospital, too,” observed Captain Treherne gradually listening. “Don't you remember telling me there was not a week passed that you had not cases of death solely from, drinking?”

“And, even then, I could not stop it, nor keep the liquor outside the wards. I have come in and found drunken orderlies carousing with drunken patients: nay, more than once I have taken the brandy-bottle from under a dead man's pillow.”

“Ay, I remember,” said Augustus, looking grave.

Lisabel, who never likes his attention diverted from her charming self, cried saucily:—

“All very fine talking, Doctor,—but you shall not make me a teetotaller, nor Augustus neither, I hope.”

“I have not the slightest intention of the kind, I assure you: nor does there seem any necessity. Though, for those who have not the power to resist intoxication, it is much safer never to touch stimulants.”

“Do you never touch them?”

“I have not done so for many years.”

“Because you are afraid? Well, I dare say you were no better once than your neighbours.”

“Lisabel!” I whispered, for I saw Doctor Urquhart wince under her rude words: but there is no stopping that girl's tongue.

“Now confess, Doctor, just for fun. Papa is not here, and we'll tell no tales out of school—were you ever in your life, to use your own ugly word, *drunk?*”

“Once.”

Writing this, I can hardly believe he said it, and yet he did, in a quiet, low voice, as if the confession were forced from him as a sort of voluntary expiation.

Doctor Urquhart *drunk!* What a frightful idea! Under what circumstances could it possibly have happened? One thing I would stake my life upon,—it never happened but that once.

I have been thinking, how horrible it must be to see anybody one cared for drunk: the honest eyes dull and meaningless; the wise lips jabbering foolishness; the whole face and figure, instead of being what one likes to look at, takes pleasure to see in the same room, even,—growing ugly, irrational, disgusting—more like a beast than a man.

Yet some women have to bear it, have to speak kindly to their husbands, hide their brutishness, and keep them from making worse fools of themselves than they can help. I have seen it done, not merely by working-men's wives, but lady-wives in drawing-rooms. I think, if I were married, and I saw my husband the least overcome by wine, not “drunk” may be, but just excited, silly, otherwise than his natural self, it would nearly

drive me wild. Less on my own account than his. To see him sink—not for a great crime, but a contemptible, cowardly bit of sensualism—from the height where my love had placed him; to have to take care of him, to pity him—ay, and I might pity him, but I think the full glory and passion of my love would die out, then and there, for ever.

Let me not think of this, but go on relating what occurred to-day.

Doctor Urquhart's abrupt confession, which seemed to surprise Augustus as much as anybody, threw an awkwardness over us all; we slipped out of the subject, and plunged into the never-ending theme—the wedding and its arrangements. Here I found out that Doctor Urquhart had, at first, refused, point-blank, his friend's request that he would be best-man, but, on my entreating him this morning, had changed his mind. I was glad, and expressed my gladness warmly. I would not like Doctor Urquhart to suppose we thought the worse of him for what he had confessed, or rather been forced into confessing. It was very wrong of Lisabel. But she really seemed sorry, and paid him special attention in consultations about what she thinks the important affairs of Monday week. I was almost cross at the exemplary patience with which he examined the orange-tree, and pronounced that the buds would open in time, he thought; that if not, he would try, as in duty bound, to procure some. He also heroically consented to his other duty, of returning thanks for “the bridesmaids,” for we are to have healths drunk, speeches made, and all the rest of it. Mercy on us! how will papa ever stand it!

These family events have always their painful side. I am sure papa will feel it. I only trust that no chance observations will strike home, and hurt him. This fear haunted me so much, that I took an opportunity of suggesting to Dr. Urquhart that all the speeches had better be as short as possible.

“Mine shall be, I promise. Were you afraid of it?” asked he, smiling; it was just before the horses were brought up, and we were all standing but in the moonlight—for shame, moon, leading us to catch cold just before our wedding, and very thoughtless of the Doctor to allow it, too. I could see by his smile that he was now quite himself again,—which was a relief.

“Oh, nonsense; I shall expect you to make the grandest speech that ever was heard. But, seriously, these sort of speeches are always trying, and will be so, especially to papa.”

“I understand. We must take care: you are a thoughtful little lady.”—He sometimes has called me “Little lady,” instead of “Miss Theodora.”—“Yes, your father will feel acutely this first break in the family.”

I said I did not mean that exactly, as it was not the case. And, for the first time, it struck me as sad, that one whom I never knew, whom I scarcely ever think of, should be lost from among us, so lost as not to be even named.

Doctor Urquhart asked me why I looked so grave? At first I said I had rather not tell him, and then I felt as if at that moment, standing quietly talking in the lovely night, after such a happy day, it were a comfort, almost a necessity, to tell him anything, everything.

“I was thinking of someone belonging to me whom nobody knows of, whom we never speak about. Hush, don't let them hear.”

“Who was it? But I beg your pardon, do not tell me unless you like.”

From his tone,—he thought, I know he thought—— Oh, what a ridiculous, impossible thing! Then I was determined to tell.

“It was one—who was Papa's favourite among us all.”

“A sister?”

“No, a brother.”

I had not time to say any more, for they were just starting, nor am I satisfied that I was right in saying so much. But the confidence is safe with him, and he will never refer to it; he will feel, as we do, that a subject so painful is best avoided, even among ourselves—on the whole I am glad he knows.

Coming indoors, the girls made me very angry by their jests, but the anger has somehow evaporated now. What does it matter? As I told Lisabel, friends do not grow on every hedge, though lovers may, and when one finds a good man one ought to value him, nor be ashamed of it either.

No, no, my sweet moon, setting so quickly behind that belt of firs, I *will* like him if I choose, as I like everything true and noble wherever I find it in this world.

Moon, it is a good world, a happy world, and grows happier the longer one lives in it. So I will just watch your silver ladyship—a nice “little lady” you are too, slipping away from it with that satisfied farewell smile, and then—I shall go to bed.

CHAPTER IX. HIS STORY.

It is a fortnight since I wrote a line here..

Last Sunday week I made a discovery—in truth, two discoveries—after which I lost myself, as it were, for many days.

It will be advisable not to see any more of that family. Not that I have any proof that they are *the* family—the name itself, Johnson, and their acknowledged plebeian origin, is sufficient evidence to the contrary. But, if they had been!

The mere supposition, coming, instinctively, that Sunday night, before reason argued it down—was enough

to cause me twelve such hours as would be purchased dearly with twelve years of life—even a life full of such happiness as, I then learnt, is possible for a man. But not for me.—Never for me!

This phase of the subject is, however, so exclusively my own, that even here I will pass it over. It will be conquered by-and-by—being discovered in time.

I went to the marriage—having promised. She said, Doctor Urquhart never breaks his promises. No. There is one promise—nay, vow—kept unflinchingly for twenty years, could it be broken now? It never could. Before it is too late—I will take steps to teach myself that it never shall.

I only joined the marriage-party during the ceremony. They excused me the breakfast, speeches, &c.—Treherne knew I was not well. Also, she said I looked “over-worked,”—and there was a kind of softness in her eye, the pity that all women have, and so readily show.

She looked the very picture of a white fairy, or a wood-nymph—or an angel, sliding down on a sunshiny cloud to a man asleep.—He wakes and it is all gone.

While the register was being signed—and they wished me to be one of the attesting witnesses—an idea came into my mind.

The family must have settled at Rockmount for many years. Probably, the grandfather, the farmer who wrote himself, plebeianly, “Johnson,” was buried here. Or—if he were dead, but whether it was so or not, I had no clue—here probably, would be registered the interment of that brother to whom allusion had been made as “papa's favourite,” but in such a manner, and with such evident distress, that to make further inquiry about him was impossible. Besides, I must have no more private talk with her—with the one of the Misses Johnston whom I know best.

This brother—I have calculated his possible age, compared with theirs. Even were he the eldest of them, he could not now be much above thirty—if alive. *That person* would now be at least fifty.

Still, at once and for ever to root up any such morbid, unutterable fancies, I thought it would be as well to turn over the register-books, as, without suspicion, it was this day easy to do. On my way home I stopped at the church—and, helped by the half-stupid sexton and bell-ringer, went over the village records of, he declared, the last twenty years, and more. In none of them was once named the family of Johnston.

No proof, therefore, of my cause of dread—not an atom, not a straw. All evidence hitherto going directly counter to a supposition—the horror of which would surpass all horrible coincidences that fate could work out for a man's punishment. Let me put it aside.

The other thing—God help me! I believe I shall also be able to put aside—being entirely my own affair—and I myself being the only sufferer.

Now Treherne is married and away, there will be no necessity to visit at Rockmount any more.

CHAPTER X. HER STORY.

What a change a marriage makes—what a blank it leaves in a house! Ours has been very dull since poor Lisa went away.

I know not why I call her “poor Lisa.” She seems the gayest of the gay, and the happiest of the happy; two characters which, by the way, are not always identical. Her letters from Paris are full of enjoyment. Augustus takes her everywhere, and introduces her to everybody. She was the “belle mariée” of a ball at the British Embassy, and has been presented to my old aversion, though he is really turning out a creditable individual in some things; “never too late to mend,” even for a Louis Napoleon. Of course, Lisabel now thinks him “the most charming man in the world,” except Augustus.

Strange, that she should take delight in such dissipations. She, not three weeks married. How very little she must have of her husband's society. Now, I should think the pleasantest way of spending a honeymoon would be to get out of everybody's way, and have a little peace and quiet, rambling about at liberty, and looking at pretty places together. But tastes differ; that is not Lisabel's fancy, nor was her's the sort of marriage likely to make such a honeymoon desirable. She used to say she should get tired of the angel Gabriel if she had him all to herself for four mortal weeks. Possibly; I remember once making a similar remark.

But surely that dread and weariness of two people, in being left to one another's sole society, must apply chiefly to cases of association for mere amusement or convenience; not to those who voluntarily bind their lives together, “for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part;” how solemn the words are! They thrilled me all through, on the morning of Lisabel's marriage.

I have never set down here anything about that day. I suppose it resembled most other wedding-days—came and went like a dream, and not a very happy dream either. There seemed a cloud over us all.

One of the reasons was, Francis did not come: at the last minute, he sent an apology; which was not behaving well, I thought. Nor did the excuse seem a valid one. But it might have been a painful day to him, and Francis is one of those sort of people—very pleasant, and not ill-meaning people either—who like to escape pain, if possible. Still, he might have considered that it was not likely to be the happiest of days to Penelope herself, nor made more so by his absence;—which she bore in perfect silence; and nobody, except Augustus, who observed, laughingly, that it was “just like cousin Charteris,” ventured any comment on the subject.

I do not join Mrs. Granton and our Lisa in their tirades against long engagements. I do not see why, when

people are really fond of one another, and cannot possibly be married, they should not live contentedly betrothed for an indefinite time: it is certainly better than living wholly apart, forlorn and hopeless, neither having towards the other any open right, or claim, or duty. But then every betrothal should resemble marriage itself, in its perfect confidence, patience, and unexacting tenderness. Also, it ought never to be made so public, or allowed to be so cruelly talked over, as this engagement of Penelope's.

Well, Francis did not appear, and everybody left earlier than we had expected. On the marriage evening, we were quite alone; and the day after, Rockmount was its dull self again, except the want of poor Lisa.

I still call her so—I cannot help it. We never discover the value of things till we have lost them. Out of every corner I miss our Lisa—her light laugh that used to seem heartless, yet was the merriest sound in the house; her tall, handsome figure sailing in and about the rooms; her imperturbable good-temper, which I often tried—her careless, untidy ways, that used for ever to aggravate Penelope—down to her very follies and flirtations, carried on to the last in spite of Augustus.

My poor Lisa! The putting away of her music from the piano, her books from the shelf, and her clothes from the drawers, cost me as sharp an agony as I ever had in my life. I was not half good enough to her when I had her,—if I had her again, how different it should be. Ah, that is what we always say, as the great shadow Time keeps advancing and advancing, yet we always let it slip by, and we cannot make it go back for a single hour.

Mrs. Granton and Colin came to tea to-night. Their company was a relief; our evenings are often very dull. We sit all three together, but no one has much sympathy with what the other is doing or thinking; as not seldom happens in families, we each live in a distinct world of our own, never intruded on, save when we collectively entertain visitors. Papa asked Doctor Urquhart to dinner twice, but received an apology both times, which rather offended him, and he says he shall not invite him again until he has called. He ought to call, for an old man likes attention, and is justified in exacting it.

To-night, while Mrs. Granton gossipped with papa and Penelope, Colin talked to me. He bears Lisabel's marriage far better than I expected, probably because he has got something to do. He told me a long story about a row of labourers' cottages, which Doctor Urquhart advised him to build at the corner of the moor, each with its bit of land, convertible into a potato-field or a garden. There Colin busies himself from morning till night, superintending, planning, building, draining, “working like a horse,” he protests, “and never enjoyed anything more in his life.” He says, he has seen a great deal of Doctor Urquhart lately, and had great assistance from him in the matter of these cottages.

Then can he be so exceedingly occupied as not to have an hour or two for a visit? Shame on me for the suspicion! The idea that Doctor Urquhart would, even in a polite excuse, state a thing which was not true!

Colin is much improved. He is beginning to suspect that Colin Granton, Esq., owner of a free estate, and twenty-seven years old, has got something to do besides lounge about, shoot rabbits, and play billiards. He opened up to my sympathy a long series of schemes about these cottages: how he meant to instigate industry, cleanliness, and, indeed, all the cardinal virtues, by means of cottagers' prizes for tidy houses, well-kept gardens, and the best brought-up and largest families. He will never be clever, poor Colin! but he may be a most useful character in the county, and he has the kindest heart in the world. By the way, he told me in his ultra-simple fashion, that somebody had informed him one of the Rockmount young ladies said so! I felt myself grow hot to the ears, which exceedingly astonished Colin.

Altogether, a not unpleasant evening. But oh, moon!—whom I saw making cross-panes on the carpet, when I came in—it was not like the evenings a month ago, when Lisabel was at home.

I think women, as well as men, require something to do. I wish I had it; it would do me as much good as it has done Colin. I am beginning to fear I lead a wretchedly idle life: all young ladies at home do, it seems, except perhaps the eldest sister, if she chances to be such a woman as our Penelope. Why cannot I help Penelope? Mrs. Granton took it for granted that I do; that I shall be the greatest comfort and assistance to Miss Johnston, now Miss Lisabel is gone.

I am not, the least in the world! which I would fain have explained, only mere friends can never understand the ins and outs of a family. If I offered to assist her in the house, how Penelope would stare! Or even in her schools and parish—but that I cannot do. Teaching is to me perfectly intolerable. The moment I have to face two dozen pairs of round eyes, every particle of sense takes flight, and I become the veriest of cowards, ready to sink through the floor. The same, too, in district visiting. What business have I, because I happen to be the clergyman's daughter, to go lifting the latch, and poking about poor people's houses, obliging them to drop me curtseys, and receive civilly my tracts and advice—which they neither read nor follow; and might be none the better for it if they did?

Yet this may be only my sophistries for not doing what I so heartily dislike. Others do it—and successfully: take by storm the poor folks' hearts, and, what is better, their confidence; never enter without a welcome, and depart without a blessing; as, for instance, Dr. Urquhart. Mrs. Granton was telling about his doings among the poor families down with fever and ague, near the camp, at Moor-edge.

Why cannot I do the same good? not so much, of course, but just a little? Why can not somebody show me how to do it?

No, I am not worthy. My quarter-century of-life has been of no more use to myself or any human creature than that fly's which my fire has stirred up to a little foolish buzzing in the window-curtain, before it drops and dies. I might drop down and die in the same manner, leaving no better memorial.

There—I hear Penelope in her room fidgetting about her drawers, and scolding the housemaid—she is always taking juvenile incompetent housemaids out of her village school, teaching and lecturing them for a twelvemonth, and then grumbling because they leave her. Yet, this is doing good: sometimes, they come back and thank her for having made capital servants of them; and very seldom, indeed, does such a case happen, as pretty, silly Lydia Cartwright's, who went up to London and never came back any more.

My dear sister Penelope, who, except in company, hardly has a civil word for anybody—Francis excepted:—Penelope, who has managed the establishment ever since she was a girl of sixteen; has kept the house comfortable, and maintained the credit of the family to the world without,—truly, with all your little tempers,

sneers, and crabbednesses, you are worth a dozen of your sister Theodora.

I wonder if Doctor Urquhart thinks so. He looked at her closely, more than once, when we were speaking about Francis. He and she would have many meeting points of interest, if they only knew it, and talked much together. She is not very sweet to him, but that would not matter; he only values people for what they are, and not for the manner in which they behave to himself. Perhaps, if they were better acquainted, Penelope might prove a better friend for him than the “little lady.”

“Little lady!” that is just such a name as one would give to an idle, useless butterfly-creature, of no value but as an amusement, a plaything of leisure-hours; in time of business or care to be altogether set aside and forgotten.

Does he think me that? If he does—why, let him.

A fine proof of how dull Rockmount is, and how little I have to write about when I go on scribbling such trivialities as these. If no better subjects can be found, I shall give up my journal. Meantime, I intend next week to begin a serious course of study, in history, Latin and German, for the latter, instead of desultory reading, I shall try written translations, probably from my favourite, Wallenstein.—To think that anybody should have been ignorant even of the name of Max Piccolomini! He always was my ideal of a hero,—faithful, trustful, brave, and infinitely loving; yet able to renounce love itself for the sake of conscience.—And then, once a-week I shall have a long letter to write to Lisabel—I who never had a regular correspondence in my life. It will be almost as good as Penelope's with Francis Char-teris.

At last, I hear Penelope dismiss her maiden, bolt the door, and settle for the night. When, for a wonder, she finds herself alone and quiet, with nothing to do, and nobody to lecture,—I wonder what Penelope thinks about? Is it Francis? Do people in their position always think about one another the last thing? Probably. When all the day's cares and pleasures are ended, and the rest of the world shut out, the heart would naturally turn to the only one in whom, next to Heaven, is its real rest, its best comfort, closer than either friend, or brother, or sister —less another person than half itself?

No sentiment! Go to bed, Theodora.

CHAPTER XI. HIS STORY.

I had almost given up writing here. Is it wise to begin again? Yet, to-day, in the silent hut, with the east wind howling outside almost as fiercely as it used to howl last winter over the steppes of the Caucasus, one must do something, if only to kill time.

Usually, I have little need for that resource; this barrack business engrosses every leisure hour.

The commander-in-chief has at length promised a commission of inquiry, if sufficient data can be supplied to him to warrant it. I have, therefore, been collecting evidence from every barrack in the United Kingdom,—and visiting personally all within a day or two days' leave from the camp. The most important were those of the metropolis.

It is needless here to recur to details of which my head has been full all the week; till a seventh day's rest and change of ideas becomes almost priceless. Unprofessional men cannot understand this; young Granton could not, when coming down from town with me last night, he was lamenting that he should not get at his cottage-building, which he keeps up in defiance of winter weather, till Monday morning.

Mr. Granton indulged me with much conversation about some friends of his, which inclines me to believe that “the kindest heart in the world” has not suffered an incurable blow, and is already proceeding to seek consolation elsewhere. It may be so. The young are pleasant to the young: the happy delight in the happy.

To return to my poor fellows; my country bumpkins and starving mechanics, caught by the thirteen pence a-day, and after all the expensive drilling that is to make them proper food for powder, herded together like beasts in a stall, till, except under strong coercion, the beast nature is apt to get uppermost—and no wonder. I must not think of rest till I have left no stone unturned for the furtherance of this scheme concerning my poor fellows.

And yet, the older one grows, the more keenly one feels how little power one individual man has for good—whatever he may have for evil. At least, this is the suggestion of a morbid spirit, after aiming at everything and doing almost nothing—which seemed the brief catalogue of my week's labour, last night.

People are so slow to join in any reformatory schemes. They will talk enough of the need for it,—but they will not act—it is too much trouble. Most men are engrossed in their own private concerns, business, amusements, or ambitions. It is incredible, the difficulty I had in hunting up some, who were the most active agents of good in the Crimea—and of these, how few could be convinced that there was anything needed to be done at home.

At the Horse Guards, where my face must be as familiar as that of the clock on the quadrangle to those gentlemanly young clerks—no attention was wanting, but that of furthering my business. However, the time was not altogether wasted, as in various talks with former companions, whom I there by chance waylaid, ideas were thrown out that may be brought to bear in different quarters. And, as always happens, from some of the very last quarters where anything was to be expected, the warmest interest and assistance came.

Likewise—and this forms the bright spot in a season not particularly pleasant—during my brief stay in London, the first for many years, more than one familiar face has come across me out of far back times, with a welcome and remembrance, the warmth and heartiness of which both surprised and cheered me.

Among those I met on Thursday, was an old colonel, under whom I went out on my first voyage as assistant-surgeon, twelve years ago. He stopped me in the Mall, addressing me by name; I had almost forgotten his, till his cordial greeting brought it to mind. Then we fell to upon many mutual questions and reminiscences.

He said that he should have known me anywhere, though I was altered a good deal in some respects.

“All for the better, though, my boy—beg pardon, Doctor—but you were such a slip of a lad, then. Thought we should have had to throw you overboard before the voyage was half over, but you cheated us all, you see, —and, 'pon my life, hard as you must have been at it since then, you look as if you had many years more of work in you yet.”

I told him I hoped so,—which I do, for some things, and then, in answer to his friendly questions, I entered into the business which had brought me to London.

The good colonel was brimful of interest.

He has a warm heart, plenty of money, thinks that money can do everything. I had the greatest difficulty in persuading him that his cheque-book would not avail me with the commander-in-chief, or the honourable British officers whom I hoped to stir up to some little sympathy with the men they commanded.

“But can't I help you at all?—can't my son, either?—you remember Tommy, who used to dance the sailor's hornpipe on the deck. Such a dandy young fellow;—got him a place under Government—capital berth, easy hours, eleven till four, and regular work—the whole *Times* to read through daily. Ha! ha! you understand, eh?”

I laughed too, for it was a pretty accurate description of what I had this week seen in Government offices; indeed, in public offices of all kinds, where the labour is so largely sub-divided as to be in the responsible hands of very few, and the work and the pay generally follow in an opposite ratio of progression. In the present instance, from what I remember of him, no doubt such a situation would exactly suit Master Tommy Turton.

His father and I strolled up and down the shiny half-dried pavement till the street-lamps were lighted, and the club-windows began to brighten and glow.

“You'll dine with me, of course—not at the United Service—it's my day with Tom at his club, the New Universal, capital club too. No apologies; we'll quarter ourselves upon Tommy, he will be delighted. He's extremely proud of his club; the young rogue costs me—it's impossible to say what Tom costs me per annum, over and above his pay. Yet he is a good lad, too—as lads go—holds up his head among all the young fellows of the club, and keeps the very best of company.”

So went on the worthy old father—with more, which I forget. I had been on my feet all day, and was what women call “tired,”—when they delight to wheel out arm-chairs and push warmed slippers under wet feet—at least, so I have seen done.

London club-life was new to me; nor was I aware that in this England, this “home,”—words, which abroad we learn to think synonymous and invest with an inexpressible charm,—so large a proportion of the middle classes assume by choice the sort of life which, on foreign service, we put up with of necessity; the easy selfish life into which a male community is prone to fall. The time-honoured United Service, I was acquainted with; but the New Universal was quite a dazzle of brilliant plate, a palace of upholstery. Tom had not come in, but his father showed me over his domains with considerable pride.

“Yes; this is how we live—he at his club and I at mine. We have two tidy bedrooms, somewhere or other, hard by,—and that's all. A very jolly life, I assure you, if one hasn't the gout or the blues; we have kept to it ever since the poor mother died, and Henrietta married. I sometimes tell Tom he ought to settle; but he says it would be slow, and he can't afford it. Hollo! here's the boy.”

Tom—a “boy” six feet high, good-looking and well-dressed, after the exact pattern of a few dozen more, whom we had met strolling arm-in-arm down Pall-Mall—greeted me with great civility, and said he remembered me perfectly—though my unfortunately quick ears detected him asking his father, aside, “where on earth he had picked up that old fogie?”

We dined well—and a good dinner is not a bad thing. As a man gets old, he may be allowed some cheer—in fact, he needs it. Whether, at twenty-four, he needs five courses and half-a-dozen kinds of wine is another question. But Master Tom was my host, so silence! Perhaps I am becoming, “an old fogie.”

After dinner, the colonel opened out warmly upon my business, which his son evidently considered a bore.

“He really did not understand the matter; it was not in his department of public business; the governor always thought they must know everything that was going on, when, in truth, they knew nothing at all. He should be most happy, but had not the least notion what it was in his power to do for Doctor Urquhart.”

Doctor Urquhart laboured to make the young gentleman understand that he really did not want him to do anything, to which Tom listened with that philosophical *laissez-faire*, kept just within the bounds of politeness, that we of an elder generation are prone to find fault with. At last, an idea struck him.

“Why, father, there's Charteris,—knows everything and everybody—would be just the man for you. There he is.”

And he pointed eagerly to a gentleman, who, six tables off, lounged over his wine and newspaper.

That morning, as I stood talking in an anteroom, at the Horse Guards, this gentleman had caught my notice, leaning over one of the clerks, and enlivening their dullness by making a caricature. Now my phiz was quite at their service, but it seemed scarcely fair for any but that king of caricature, “Punch,” to make free with the honest, weather-beaten features of the noble old veteran who was talking with me. So I just intervened—not involuntarily—between the caricaturist and my—shall I honour myself by calling him my friend? the good old warrior, might not deny it. For Mr. Char-teris, he apparently did not wish to own my acquaintance, nor had I any desire to resume his. We passed without recognition, as I would willingly have done now, had not Colonel Turton seized upon the name.

“Tom's right. Charteris is the very man. Has enormous influence, and capital connections, though, between you and me, Doctor, calls himself as poor as a church-mouse.”

“Five hundred a-year,” said Tom, grimly. “Wish I'd as much! Still, he's a nice fellow, and jolly good company. Here, waiter, take my compliments to Mr. Charteris, and will he do us the honour of joining us?”

Mr. Charteris came.

He appeared surprised at sight of me, but we both went through the ceremony of introduction without mentioning that it was not for the first time. And during the whole conversation, which lasted until the dinner-sounds ceased, and the long, bright, splendid dining-room was all but deserted, we neither of us once adverted to the little parlour where, for a brief five minutes, Mr. Charteris and myself had met some weeks before.

I had scarcely noticed him then; now I did. He bore out Tom's encomium and the colonel's. He is a highly intelligent, agreeable person, apparently educated to the utmost point of classical refinement. The sort of man who would please most women, and who, being intimate in a family of sisters, would with them involuntarily become their standard of all that is admirable in our sex.

In Mr. Charteris was much really to be admired: a grace bordering on what in one sex we call sweetness, in the other effeminacy. Talent, too, not original or remarkable, but indicating an evenly-cultivated, elegant mind. Rather narrow, it might be—all about him was small, neat, regular; nothing in the slightest degree eccentric, or diverging from the ordinary, being apparently possible to him; a pleasure-loving temperament, disinclined for active energy in any direction—this completed my impression of Mr. Francis Charteris.

Though he gave me no information,—indeed, he seemed like my young friend Tom to make a point of knowing as little and taking as slight interest as possible, in the state machinery of which he formed a part—he contributed very considerably to the enjoyment of the evening. It was he who suggested our adjournment to the theatre..

“Unless Doctor Urquhart objects. But I dare say we can find a house where the performance trenches on none of the ten commandments, about which, I am aware, he is rather particular.”

“Oh,” cried Tom, “'Thou shalt not steal,' from the French; and 'Thou shalt do no murder' on the Queen's English, are the only commandments indispensable on the stage. Come away, father.”

“You're a sad dog,” said the father, shaking his fist at him, with a delighted grin, which reminded me of hornpipe-days.

But the sad dog knew where to find the best bones to pick, and by no means dry, either. Now, though I am not a book-man, I love my Shakspere well enough not to like him acted—his grand old flesh and blood digged up and served out to this modern taste as a painted, powdered, dressed-up skeleton. But this night I saw him “in his habit as he lived,” presented “in very form and fashion of the time.” There was a good deal of show, certainly, it being a pageant play; but you felt show was natural; that just in such a way the bells must have rung, and the people shouted, for the living Bolingbroke. The acting, too, was natural; and to me, a plain man, accustomed to hold women sacred, and to believe that a woman's arms should be kept solely for the man who loves her, I own it was a satisfaction when the stage *Queen* clung to the stage *King Richard*, in that pitiful parting, where,—

> “Bad men, ye violate
> A twofold marriage—'twixt my crown and me,
> And then between me and my married wife,”

it was a satisfaction, I say, to know that it was her own husband the actress was kissing.

This play, which Tom and the colonel voted “slow,” gave me two hours of the keenest, most utterly oblivious, enjoyment; a desideratum not easily attainable.

Mr. Charteris considered it fine in its way; but, after all, there was nothing like the opera.

“Oh, Charteris is opera-mad,” said Tom. “Every subscription-night, there he is, wedged in the crowd at the horrid little passage leading out of the Haymarket—among a knot of his cronies, who don't mind making martyrs of themselves for a bit of tootle-te-tooing, a kick-up, and a twirl. Well, I'm not fond of music.”

“I am,” said Mr. Charteris, drily.

“And of looking at pretty women, too, eh, my dear fellow?”

“Certainly.”

And here he diverged to a passing criticism on the pretty women in the boxes round us: who were not few. I observed them, also—for I notice women's faces more than I was wont—but none were satisfactory, even to the eye. They all seemed over-conscious of themselves and their looks, except one small creature, in curls, and a red mantle—about the age of the poor wounded Russ, who might have been my own little adopted girl by this time, if she had not died.

I wish, sometimes, she had not died. My life would have been less lonely, could I have adopted that child.

There may be more beauty—I have heard there is, in the upper class of Englishwomen than in any race of women on the globe. But a step lower in rank, less smoothly cosmopolitan, more provincially and honestly Saxon; reserved, yet frank; simple, yet gay, would be the Englishwoman of one's heart. The man who dare open his eyes, fearlessly, to the beauties of such an one—seek her in a virtuous middle-class home, ask her of her proud father and mother; then win her and take her, joyfully, to sit by his happy hearth, wife—matron —*mother*—— I forget how that sentence was to have ended; however, it is of little consequence. It was caused partly by some reflection on this club-life, and another darker side of it, of which I caught some glimpses when I was in London.

We finished the evening at the theatre pleasantly. In the sort of atmosphere we were in, harmless enough, but glaring, unquiet, and unhome-like, I was scarcely surprised that Mr. Charteris did not once name the friends at whose house I first met him; indeed, he seemed to avoid the slightest approach to the subject. Only once, as we were pushing together, side by side, into the cool night air, he asked me, in a low hurried tone, if

I had been to Rock-mount lately? He had heard I was present at the marriage.

I believe I made some remark about his absence being much regretted that day.

“Yes—-yes. Shall you be there soon?”

The question was put with an anxiety, which my answer in the negative evidently relieved.

“Oh, then—I need send no message. I thought you were very intimate. A charming family—a very charming family.”

His eyes were wandering to some ladies of fashion who had recognised him—whom he put into their carriage with that polite assiduity which seems an instinct with him, and in the crowd we lost sight of Mr. Charteris.

Twice afterwards I saw him; once, driving in the park with two ladies in a coroneted carriage: and again walking in the dusk of the afternoon down Kensington-road. This time he started, gave me the slightest recognition possible, and walked on faster than ever. He need not have feared:—I had no wish or intention of resuming our acquaintance. The more I hear of him, the more increases my surprise—nay, even not unmixed with anxiety—at his position, in the family at Rockmount.

Here I was suddenly called out to a bad accident case, some miles across the country; whence I have only returned in time for bed.

It was impossible to do anything for the poor fellow; one of Granton's labourers, who knew me by sight. I could only wait till all was over, and the widow a little composed.

At her urgent request, I sent a note to Rockmount, hard by, begging Miss Johnston would let her know if there had been heard anything of Lydia—a daughter, once in service with the Johnstons, afterwards in London—now—as the poor old mother mournfully expressed it—“gone wrong.”

To my surprise, Miss Johnston answered the message in person, and a most painful conversation ensued. She is a good woman—no doubt of that: but she is, as Treherne once said of her father, “as sharp as a needle and as hard as a rock.”

It being already dark, of course I saw her safe back to her own gate. She informed me that the family were all quite well, which was the sole conversation that passed between us, except concerning the poor dead labourer, James Cartwright, and his family, of whom, save Lydia, she spoke compassionately, saying they had gone through much trouble.

Walking along by her side, and trying to find a cause for the exceeding bitterness and harshness of spirit she had evidenced, it struck me that this lady was herself not ignorant of trouble.

I left her at the gate under the bush of ivy. Through the bars I could see, right across the wet garden, the light streaming from the hall-door.

Now to bed, and to sleep, if this heart will allow: it has been rather unmanageable lately, necessitating careful watching, as will be the case till there is nothing here but an empty skull.

If only I could bring this barrack matter to a satisfactory start, from which good results might reasonably be expected, I would at once go abroad. Anywhere—it is all the same. A rumour is afloat that we may soon get the route for the East, or China; which I could be well content with, as my next move.

Far away—far away; with thousands of miles of tossing sea between me and this old England; far away out of all sight or Remembrance. So best.

Next time I call on Widow Cartwright shall be after dark, when, without the slightest chance of meeting any one, it will be easy to take a few steps further up the village. There is a cranny in one place in the wall, whence I know one can get a very good view of the parlour-window, where they never close the shutters till quite bedtime.

And, before our regiment leaves, it will be right I should call—to omit this would hardly be civil, after all the hospitality I have received. So I will call some wet day, when they are not likely to be out,—when, probably, the younger sister will be sitting at her books upstairs in the attic, which, she told me, she makes her study, and gets out of the way of visitors. Perhaps she will not take the trouble to come down. Not even for a shake of the hand and a good-bye—good-bye *for ever*.

O, mother—unknown mother—who must have surely loved my father; well enough, too, to leave all friends and follow him, a poor lieutenant of a marching regiment, up and down the world—if I had but died with you when you brought me into this same troublesome world, how much it would have saved!

CHAPTER XII. HER STORY.

Just finished my long letter to Lisabel, and lingered over the direction, “Mrs. Treherne, Treherne Court.”

How strange to think of our Lisa as mistress there. Which she is in fact, for Lady Treherne, a mild elderly lady, is wholly engrossed in tending Sir William, who is very infirm. The old people's rule seems merely nominal—it is Lisabel and Augustus who reign. Their domain is a perfect palace—and what a queen

Miss Lis must look therein! How well she will maintain her position, and enjoy it too! In her case, are no poetical sufferings from haughty parents, delighted to crush a poor daughter-in-law

> "With the burthen of an honour
> Unto which she was not born."

Already, they both like her and are proud of her—which is not surprising. I thought I had never seen a more beautiful creature than my sister Lisa, when, on her way to Treherne Court, she came home for a day.

Home? I forget, it is not her home now. How strange this must have been to her—if she thought about it. Possibly she did not; being never given to sentiment. And, though with us she was not the least altered, it was amusing to see how, to everybody else, she appeared quite the married lady; even with Mrs. Granton, who, happening to call that day, was delighted to see her, and seems not to cherish the smallest resentment in the matter of "my Colin." Very generous—for it is not the good old lady's first disappointment—she has been going a-wooing for her son ever since he was one-and-twenty, and has not found a daughter-in-law yet.

Colin, too, conducted himself with the utmost *sangfroid''* and when Augustus, who is beaming with benevolence to the whole human race, invited him to escort his mother, Penelope and me, on our first visit to Treherne Court, he accepted the invitation as if it were the pleasantest in the world. Truly, if women's hearts are as impressionable as wax, men's are as tough as gutta-percha. Talk of breaking them—faugh!

I hope it indicates no barbarity, on my part, if I confess that it would have raised my opinion of him, and his sex in general, to have seen Colin for a month or so, at least, wholesomely miserable.

Lisabel behaved uncommonly well with regard to him, and, indeed, in every way. She was as bright as a May morning, and full of the good qualities of her Augustus—whom she really likes very much after her fashion. She will doubtless be among the many wives who become extremely attached to their husbands, after marriage. To my benighted mind, it has always seemed advisable to have a slight preference before that ceremony.

She told me, with a shudder that was altogether natural and undisguised, how glad she was that they had been married at once, and that Augustus had sold out—for there is a chance of the regiment's being soon ordered on foreign service. I had not heard of this before. It was some surprise.

Lisabel was very affectionate to me the whole day, and, in going away, said she hoped I did not miss her much, and that I should get a good husband of my own soon; I did not know what a comfort it was.

"Somebody to belong to you—to care for you—to pet you—your own personal property in short—who can't get rid of you, even when you're old and ugly. Yes, I'm glad I married poor dear Augustus. And, child, I hope to see you married also.. A good little thing like you would make a capital wife to somebody. Why, simpleton, I declare she's crying!"

It must have been the over-excitement of this day; but I felt as if, had I not cried, my temples and throat would have burst with a choking pain, that lasted long after Lisabel was gone.

They did not altogether stay more than four hours. Augustus talked of riding over to the camp, to see his friend, Doctor Urquhart, whom he has heard nothing of since the wedding-day; but Lisabel persuaded him against it. Men's friendship with one another is worth little, apparently.

Penelope here said she could answer for Doctor Urquhart's being in the land of the living, as she had met him a week before at Cartwright's cottage, the day the poor old man was killed. Why did she not tell me of this? But then she has taken such a prejudice against him, and exults so over what she calls his "rude behaviour to the family."

It always seemed to me very foolish to be for ever defending those whose character is itself a sufficient defence. If a false word is spoken of a friend, one must of course deny it, disprove it. But to be incessantly battling with personal prejudice or animosity, I would scorn it! Ay, as utterly as I would scorn defending myself under similar attacks. I think, in every lesser affection that is worth the name—the same truth holds good—which I remember being struck with in a play, the only play I ever saw acted. The heroine is told by her sister—

> "Katherine,
> You love this man—defend him."

She answers:—=.

> "You have said,
> I love him. That's my defence. I'll not
> Assert, in words, the truth on which I've cast
> The stake of life. I love him, and am silent."

At least, I think the passage ran thus—for I cut it out of a newspaper afterwards, and long, remembered it. What an age it seems since—that one play, to which Francis took us. And what a strange, dim dream, has become the impression it left; something like that I always have in reading of Thekla and Max; of love so true and strong—so perfect in its holy strength, that neither parting, grief, nor death, have any power over it. Love, which makes you feel that once to have possessed it, must be bliss unutterable, unalienable—better than any happiness or prosperity that this world could give—better than anything in the world or out of it, except the love of God.

I sometimes think of this Katherine in this play, when she refuses to let her lover barter conscience for life, but when the test comes, says to him, herself, "No, *die!*" Also, of that scene in Wallenstein, when Thekla bids her lover be faithful to his honour and his country, not to her—when, just for one minute, he holds her tight,

tight in his arms—Max, I mean. Death, afterwards, could not have been so very hard.

I am beginning to give up—strange, perhaps, that it should have lasted so long—my belief in the possible happiness of life. Apparently, people were never meant to be happy. Small flashes of pleasantness come and go; or, it may be that in some few lives, are ecstatic moments, such as this I have been thinking of, and then it is all over. But many people go plodding along to old age, in a dull, straight road, with little sorrow and no joy. Is my life to be such as this? Probably. Then the question arises, what am I to do with it?

It sometimes crosses my mind what Doctor Urquhart said, about his life being "owed." All our lives are, in one sense: to ourselves, to our fellow-creatures, or to God; or, is there some point of union which includes all three? If I only could find it out!

Perhaps, according to Colin Granton's lately learned doctrine—I know whence learned—it is the having something to do. Something to be, your fine preachers of self-culture would suggest; but self-culture is often no better than idealised egotism; people sick of themselves want something to do.

Yesterday, driving with papa along the edges of the camp, where we never go now, I caught sight of the slope where the hospital is, and could even distinguish the poor fellows sitting in the sun, or lounging about in their blue hospital clothes. It made me think of Smyrna and Scutari.

No; while there is so much misery and sin in the world, a man has no right to lull himself to sleep in a paradise of self-improvement and self-enjoyment; in which there is but one supreme Adam, one perfect specimen of humanity, namely himself. He ought 'to go out and work—fight, if it must be, wherever duty calls him. Nay, even a woman has hardly any right, in these days, to sit still and dream. The life of action is nobler than the life of thought.

So I keep reasoning with myself. If I could only find a good and adequate reason for some things which perplex me sorely, about myself and—other people, it would be a great comfort.

To-day, among a heap of notes which papa gave me to make candle-lighters of, I found this note, which I kept, the handwriting being peculiar,—and I have a few crotchets about handwriting.

"Dear Sir:—

"Press of business, and other unforeseen circumstances, with which I am fettered, make it impossible for me to accept any invitations at present. I hope you will believe that I can never forget the hospitalities of Rockmount, and that I am ever most gratefully

"Your faithful servant,

"Max Urquhart."

Can he, then, mean our acquaintance to cease? Should we be a hindrance in his busy, useful life—such a frivolous family as ours? It may be so. Yet I fear papa will be hurt.

This afternoon, though it was Sunday, I could not stay in the house or garden, but went out, far out upon the moor, and walked till I was weary. Then I sat me down upon a heather-bush, all in a heap, my arms clasped round my knees, trying to think out this hard question—what is to become of me; what am I to do with my life? It lies before me, apparently as bleak, barren and monotonous as these miles of moorland—stretching on and on in dull undulations, or dead flats, till a range of low hills ends all! Yet, sometimes, this wild region has looked quite different. I remember describing it once—how beautiful it was, how breezy and open, with the ever-changing tints of the moor, the ever-shifting and yet always steadfast arch of the sky. Today I found it all colourless, blank, and cold; its monotony almost frightened me. I could do nothing but crouch on my heather-bush and cry.

Tears do one good occasionally. When I dried mine, the hot weight on the top of my head seemed lighter. If there had been anybody to lay a cool hand there, and say, "Poor child, never mind!" it might have gone away. But there was no one: Lisa was the only one who ever "petted" me.

I thought, I would go home and write a long letter to Lisa.

Just as I was rising from my heather-bush, my favourite haunt, being as round as a mushroom, as soft as a velvet cushion, and hidden by two great furze-bushes, from the road—I heard footsteps approaching. Having no mind to be discovered in that gipsy plight, I crouched down again.

People's footsteps are so different, it is often easy to recognize them. This, I think, I should have known anywhere—quick, regular, determined; rather hasty, as if no time could be lost; as if, according to the proverb, it would never "let the grass grow under it." Crouching lower, I listened; I heard him stop and speak to an old woman, who had been coming up the road towards the village. No words were distinguishable, but the voice—I could not have mistaken it—it is not like our English voices.

What a strange feeling it is, listening to people's steps or voices, when they do not know you are near them. Something like being a ghost, and able to watch them—perhaps watch over them—without its being unnatural or wrong.

He stood talking—I should say, Doctor Urquhart stood talking—for several minutes. The other voice, by its querulousness, I guessed to be poor Mrs. Cartwright's; but it softened by degrees, and then I heard distinctly her earnest "thank'ee, Doctor—God bless'ee, sir," as he walked away, and vanished over the slope of the hill. She looked after him a minute, and then, turning, toddled on her way.

When I overtook her, which was not for some time, she told me the whole story of her troubles,—and how good Doctor Urquhart had been. Also, the whole story about her poor daughter—at least as much as is known about it. Mrs. Cartwright thinks she is still somewhere in London, and Doctor Urquhart has promised to find her out, if he can. I don't understand much about these sort of dreadful things—Penelope never thought it right to tell us: but I can see that what Doctor Urquhart has said has given great comfort to the mother of unfortunate Lydia.

"Miss," said the old woman, with the tears running down, "the Doctor's been an angel of goodness to me, and there's many a one in these parts as can say the same—though he be only a stranger, here to-day and gone to-morrow, as one may say. Eh, dear, it'll be an ill day for many a poor body when he goes."

I am glad I saw him—glad I heard all this. Somehow, hearing of things like this makes one feel quieter.

It does not much matter after all—it does not, indeed! I never wanted anybody to think about me, to care for me—half as much as somebody to look up to—to be satisfied in—to honour and reverence. I can do that—still!

Like a fool, I have been crying again, till I ought, properly, to tear this leaf out, and begin again afresh. No, I will not. Nobody will ever see it, and it does no harm to any human being.

“God bless him,” the old woman said. I might say something of the like sort, too. For he did me a deal of good: he was very kind to me.

CHAPTER XIII. HER STORY.

Papa and Penelope are out to dinner—I, myself, was out yesterday, and did not return till they were gone; so I sit up for them; and, meantime, shall amuse myself with writing here.

The last date was Sunday, and now it is only Tuesday, but much seems to have happened between. And yet nothing really has happened but two quiet days at the Cedars, and one gay evening—or people would call it gay.

It has been the talk of the neighbourhood for weeks—this amateur concert at the camp. We got our invitation, of course. The such and such Regiments (I forget which, all but one) presenting their compliments to the Reverend William Henry and the Misses Johnston, and requesting their company; but papa shook his head, and Penelope was indifferent. Then I gave up all idea of going, if I ever had any.

The surprise was almost pleasant when Mrs. Granton, coming in, declared she would take me herself, as it was quite necessary I should have a little gaiety to keep me from moping after Lisabel. Papa consented, and I went.

Driving along over the moors was pleasant, too—even though it snowed a little. I found myself laughing back at Colin, who sat on the box, occasionally turning to shake the white flakes off him like a great Polar bear. His kindly, hearty face was quite refreshing to behold.

I have a habit of growing attached to places, independently of the persons connected with them. Thus, I cannot imagine any time when it would not be an enjoyment to drive up to the hall-door of the Cedars, sweeping round in the wide curve that Colin is so proud of making his carriage-wheels describe: to look back up the familiar hill-side, where the winter sun is shining on that slope of trees,—-then run into the house, through the billiard-room, and out again by the dining-room windows, on to the broad terrace. There, if there is any sunshine, you will be sure to get it,—any wind, it will blow in your face; any bit of colour or landscape beauty, you will catch it on this green lawn; the grand old cedars—the distant fir-woods, lying in a still mass of dark blue shadow, or standing up, one by one, cut out sharply against the brilliant west. Whether it is any meteorological peculiarity I know not; but it seems to me as if, whatever the day has been, there is always a fair sunset at the Cedars.

I love the place. If I went away for years—if I never saw it again—I should always love it and remember it. Mrs. Granton too, for she seems an integral part of the picture. Her small, elderly figure, trotting in and out of the rooms; her clear loud voice—she is a little deaf—along the upstairs passages; her perpetual activity—I think she is never quiet but when she is asleep. Above all, her unvarying goodness and cheerfulness—truly the Cedars would not be the Cedars without my dear old lady!

I don't think she ever knew how fond I was of her, even as a little girl. Nobody could help it; never anybody had to do with Mrs. Granton without becoming fond of her. She is almost the only person living of whom I never heard anyone speak an unkind word; because she herself never speaks an ill word of any human being. Every one she knows, is “the kindest creature,” “the nicest creature,” “the cleverest creature” —I do believe if you presented to her Diabolus himself, she would only call him “poor creature;” would suggest that his temper must have aggravated by the unpleasant place he had to live in, and set about some plan for improving his complexion, and concealing his horns and tail.

At dinner, I took my favourite seat, where, seen through this greatest of the three windows,—a cedar with its “broad, green layers of shade,” is intersected by a beech—still faintly yellow—as I have seen it, autumn after autumn, from the same spot. It seemed just like old times. I felt happy; as if something pleasant were about to happen, and said as much.

Mrs. Granton looked delighted.

“I am sure, my dear, I hope so. And I trust we shall see you here very often indeed. Only think, you have never been since the night of the ball. What a deal has happened between then and now.”

I had already been thinking the same.

It must be curious to any one who, like our Lisa, had married a stranger and not an old acquaintance, to analyse afterwards the first impressions of a first meeting—most likely brought about by the merest chance. Curious to try and recall the face you then viewed critically, carelessly, or with the most absolute indifference —how it gradually altered and altered, till only by a special effort can memory reproduce the pristine image, and trace the process by which it has become what it is now—a face by itself, its peculiarities pleasant, its plainnesses sacred, and its beauties beautiful above all faces in the world.

In the course of the afternoon, Colin was turned out, that is corporeally, for his mother talked about him the whole time of his absence, a natural weakness rather honourable than pardonable. She has been very long a widow, and never had any child but Colin.

During our gossip, she asked me if we had seen Doctor Urquhart lately, and I said no.

“Ah, that is just like him. Such an odd creature. He will keep away for days and weeks, and then turn up as unexpectedly, as he did here yesterday. By the by, he inquired after you—if you were better. Colin had told him you were ill.”

I testified my extreme surprise and denial of this.

“Oh, but you looked ill. You were just like a ghost the day Mrs. Treherne was at Rockmount—my son noticed it ay, you need not flush up so angrily—it was only my Colin's anxiety about you—he was always fond of his old play-fellow.”

I smiled, and said his old play-fellow was very much obliged to him.

So, this business is not so engrossing, but that Doctor Urquhart can find time to pay visits somewhere. And he had been inquiring for me. Still he might have made the inquiry at our own door. Ought people, even if they do lead a busy life, to forget ordinary courtesy—accepting hospitality, and neglecting it—cultivating acquaintance and then dropping it. I think not; all the respect in the world cannot make one put aside one's common sense judgment of another's actions. Perhaps the very respect makes one more tenacious that no single action should be even questionable. I did think, then, and even to-day I have thought sometimes, that Doctor Urquhart has been somewhat in the wrong towards us at Rockmount. But as to acknowledging it to any of them at home—never!

Mrs. Granton discussed him a little, and spoke gratefully of Colin's obligations to him, and what a loss it would be for Colin when the regiment left the camp.

“How fortunate that your brother-in-law sold out when he did. He could not well have done so now, when there is a report of their being ordered on active service shortly. Colin says we are likely to have war again, but I do hope not.”

“Yes,” I said.

And just then Colin came to fetch me to the greenhouses to choose a camellia for my hair.

Likely to have war again! When Mrs. Granton left me to dress, I sat over my bed-room fire, thinking—I hardly know what. All sorts of visions went flitting through my mind—of scenes I have heard talked about, in hospital, in battle, on the battle-field afterwards. Especially one, which Augustus has often described, when he woke up, stiff and cold, on the moonlight plain, from under his dead horse, and saw Dr. Urquhart standing over him.

Colin whistling through the corridor,—Mrs.

Granton's lively “Are you ready, my dear?” made me conscious that this would not do.

I stood up, and dressed myself in the silver-gray silk I wore at the ball; I tried to stick the red camellia in my hair, but the buds all broke off under my fingers, and I had to go down without it. It was all the same. I did not much care. However, Colin insisted on going with a lantern to hunt for another flower, and his mother took, a world of pains to fasten it in, and make me look “pretty.”

They were so kind—it was wicked not to try and enjoy one's self.

Driving along in the sharp, clear twilight, till we caught sight of the long lines of lamps which make the camp so picturesque at night time, I found that compelling one's self to be gay sometimes makes one so.

We committed all sorts of blunders in-the k—came across a sentry who challenged us, and, nobody thinking of giving the password, had actually levelled his gun, and was proceeding in the gravest manner to do his duty and fire upon us—when our coachman shrieked, and Colin jumped out; which he had to do a dozen times, tramping the snow with his thin boots, to his mother's great uneasiness—and laughing all the time—before we discovered the goal of our hopes—the concert-room. Almost anyone else would have grown cross, but this good mother and son have the gayest spirits and the best tempers imaginable. The present—the present is, after all, the only thing certain. I began to feel as cheery as they.

Giving up our ticket to the most gentlemanly of sergeants, we entered the concert-room. Such a blaze of scarlet—such a stirring of pretty heads, between—such a murmur of merry chat. For the first minute, coming out of the dark—it dazzled me. I grew sick and could see nothing: but when we were quietly seated, I looked round.

There were many of our neighbours and acquaintances whom I knew by sight or to bow to—and that was all. I could see every corner of the room—still that was all.

The audience seemed in a state of exuberant enjoyment, especially if they had a bit of scarlet beside them, which nearly everybody had, except ourselves.

“You'll be quite ashamed of poor Colin in his plain black, Dora, my dear?”

Not very likely—as I told her, with my heart warmly gratefully to Colin, who had been so attentive, thoughtful, and kind.

Altogether a gay and pretty scene. Grave persons might possibly eschew it or condemn it—but no, a large liberal spirit judges all things liberally, and would never see evil in anything but sin.

I sat—enjoying all I could. But more than once ghastly imaginations intruded—picturing these young officers otherwhere than here, with their merry moustached faces pressed upon the reddened grass, their goodly limbs lopped and mangled, or worse, themselves, their kindly, lightsome selves, changed into what soldiers are—must be—in battle, fiends rather than men, bound to execute that slaughter which is the absolute necessity of war. To be the slain or the slayer—which is most horrible? To think of a familiar hand—brother's or husband's—dropping down powerless, nothing but clay; or of clasping, kissing it, returned with red blood upon it—the blood of some one else's husband or brother!

To have gone on pondering thus would have been dangerous. Happily, I stopped myself before all self-control was gone.

The first singer was a slim youth, who, facing the footlights with an air of fierce determination, and probably more inward cowardice than he would have felt towards a regiment of Russians, gave us, in a rather

uncertain tenor, his resolution to “love no more,”—which was vehemently applauded—and vanished. Next came “The Chough and Crow,” executed very independently, none of the vocalists being agreed as to their “opening day.” Afterwards, the first soprano, a professional, informed us with shrill expression, that—“Oh, yes, she must have something to love,”—which I am sure I hope she had, poor body! There was a duet, of some sort, and then the *primo tenore* came on for an Italian song.

Poor youth!—a fourth-rate opera-singer might have done it better; but 'tis mean to criticise: he did his best; and when, after a grand roulade, he popped down, with all his heart and lungs, upon the last note, there arose a cordial English cheer, to which he responded with an awkward duck of the head, and a delighted smile; very unprofessional, but altogether pleasant and natural.

The evening was now half over. Mrs. Granton thought I was looking tired, and Colin wrapped my feet up in his fur coat, for it was very cold. They were afraid I was not enjoying myself, so I bent my whole appreciative faculties to the comical-faced young officer who skipped forward, hugging his violin, which he played with such total self-oblivious enjoyment that he was the least nervous and the most successful of all the amateurs; the timid young officer with the splendid bass voice, who was always losing his place and putting his companions out; and the solemn young officer who marched up to the piano-forte as if it were a Redan, and pounded away at a heavy sonata as if' feeling that England expected him to do his duty; which he did, and was deliberately retreating, when, in that free-and-easy way with which audience and stage intermingled, some one called him:—

“Ansdell, you're wanted!”

“Who wants me?”

“Urquhart.” At least I was almost sure that was the name.

There was a good deal more of singing and playing; then “God save the Queen,” with a full chorus and military hand. That grand old tune is always exciting; it was so, especially, here to-night.

Likely to have war. If so, a year hence, where might be all these gay young fellows, whispering and flirting with pretty girls, walked about the room by proud mothers and sisters! I never thought of it, never understood it, till now—I who used to ridicule and despise soldiers! These mothers—these sisters!—they might not have felt it for themselves, but my heart felt bursting. I could hardly stand.

We were some time in getting out to the door through the long line of epaulets and swords, the owners of which—I beg their pardon, but cannot help saying it—were not too civil; until a voice behind cried:—

“Do make way there—how do you expect those ladies to push past you?”

And a courteous helping hand was held out to Mrs. Granton, as any gentleman ought to any lady—especially an old lady.

“Doctor, is that you? What a scramble this is! Now, will you assist my young friend here?”

Then—and not till then, I am positive—he recognised me.

Something has happened to him—something has altered him very much. I felt certain of that on the very first glimpse I caught of his face. It shocked me so that I never said “how d'ye do?” I never even put out my hand. Oh that I had!

He scarcely spoke, and we lost him in the crowd almost immediately.

There was a great confusion of carriages. Colin ran hither and thither, but could not find ours. Some minutes after, we were still out in the bitter night; Mrs. Granton talking to somebody, I standing by myself. I felt very desolate and cold.

“How long have you had that cough?”

I knew who it was, and turned round. We shook hands.

“You had no business out here on such a night. Why did you come?”

Somehow, the sharpness did not offend me, though it was rare in Doctor Urquhart, who is usually extremely gentle in his way of speech.

I told him my cough was nothing—it was indeed as much nervousness as cold, though of course I did not confess that—and then another fit came on, leaving me all shaking and trembling.

“You ought not to have come: is there nobody to take better care of you, child?—No—don't speak. You must submit, if you please.”

He took off a plaid he had about him, and wrapped me up in it, close and warm. I resisted a little, and then yielded.—

“You must!”

What could one do but yield? Protesting again, I was bidden to “hold my tongue.”

“Never mind me!—I am used to all weathers;—I'm not a little delicate creature like you.”

I said, laughing, I was a great deal stronger than he had any notion of—but as he had begun our acquaintance by taking professional care of me, he might just as well continue it; and it certainly was a little colder here than it was that night at the Cedars.

“Yes.”

Here Colin came up, to say “we had better walk on to meet the carriage, rather than wait for it.” He and Doctor Urquhart exchanged a few words, then he took his mother on one arm—good Colin, he never neglects his old mother—and offered me the other.

“Let me take care of Miss Theodora,” said Doctor Urquhart, rather decidedly. “Will you come?”

I am sure he meant me to come. I hope it was not rude to Colin, but I could not help coming, I could not help taking his arm. It was such a long time since we had met.

But I held my tongue, as I had been bidden: indeed, nothing came into my head to say. Doctor Urquhart made one only observation, and that not particularly striking:—

“What sort of shoes have you got on?”

“Thick ones.”

“That is right. You ought not to trifle with your health.”

Why should one be afraid of speaking the truth right out, when a word would often save so much of misunderstanding, doubt, and pain? Why should one shrink from being the first to say that word, when there is no wrong in it, when in all one's heart there is not a feeling that one need be ashamed of before any good man or woman, or—I humbly hope—before God?

I determined to speak out.

“Doctor Urquhart, why have you never been to see us since the wedding? It has grieved papa.”

My candour must have surprised him; I felt him start. When he replied, it was in that peculiar nervous tone I know so well—which always seems to take away my nervousness, and makes me feel that for the moment I am the stronger of the two.

“I am very sorry. I would not on any account grieve your papa.”

“Will you come, then, some day this week?”

“Thank you, but I cannot promise.”

A possibility struck me.

“Papa is rather peculiar. He vexes people, sometimes, when they are not thoroughly acquainted with him. Has he vexed you in any way?”

“I assure you, no.”

After a little hesitation, determined to get at the truth, I asked:—

“Have I vexed you?”

“You! What an idea!”

It did seem, at this moment, preposterous, almost absurd. I could have laughed at it. I believe I did laugh. Oh, when one has been angry or grieved with a friend, and all of a sudden the cloud clears off—one hardly knows how or why, but it certainly is gone, perhaps never existed—save in imagination—what an infinite relief it is! How cheerful one feels, and yet humbled; ashamed, yet inexpressibly content. So glad, so satisfied to have only one's self to blame.

I asked Doctor Urquhart what he had been doing all this while? that I understood he had been a good deal engaged; was it about the barrack business, and his memorial?

“Partly,” he said; expressing some surprise at my remembering it.

Perhaps I ought not to have referred to it. And yet that is not a fair code of friendship. When a friend tells you his affairs, he makes them yours, and you have a right to ask about them afterwards. I longed to ask,—longed to know all and everything. For by every carriage-lamp we passed, I saw that his face was not as it used to be, that there was on it a settled shadow of pain, anxiety—almost anguish.

I have only known Doctor Urquhart three months, yet in those three months I have seen him every week, often twice and thrice a-week, and owing to the pre-occupation of the rest of the family, almost all his society has devolved on me. He and I have often and often sat talking, or in “playing decorum” to Augustus and Lisabel, walked up and down the garden together for hours at a time. Also, from my brother-in-law, always most open and enthusiastic on the subject, I have heard about Doctor Urquhart nearly everything that could be told.

All this will account for my feeling towards him, after so short an intimacy, as people usually feel, I suppose, after a friendship of years.

As I have said, something must have happened to make such a change in him. It touched me to the quick. Why not, at least, ask the question, which I should have asked in a minute of anybody else,—so simple and natural was it.—

“Have you been quite well since we saw you?”

“Yes.—No, not exactly. Why do you ask?”

“Because I thought you looked as if you had been ill.”

“Thank you, no. But I have had a great deal of anxious business on hand.”

More than that he did not say, nor had I a right to ask. No right! What was I, to be wanting rights—to feel that in some sense I deserved them—that if I had them I should know how to use them. For it is next to impossible to be so sorry about one's friends without having also some little power to do them good, if they would only give you leave.

All this while Colin and his mother were running hither and thither in search of the carriage, which had disappeared again. As we stood, a blast of moorland wind almost took my breath away. Doctor Urquhart turned, and wrapped me up closer.

“What must be done? You will get your death of cold, and I cannot shelter you. Oh, if I could!”

Then I took courage. There was only a minute more. Perhaps, and the news of threatened war darted through my mind like an arrow—perhaps the last minute we might ever be together in all our lives. My life—I did not recollect it just then, but his, busy indeed, yet so wandering, solitary, and homeless—he once told me that ours was the only family hearth he had been familiar at for twenty years. No, I am sure it was not wrong, either to think what I thought, or to say it.

“Doctor Urquhart, I wish you would come to Rockmount. It would do you good, and papa good, and all of us; for we are rather dull now Lisabel is gone. Do come.”

I waited for an answer, but none was given. No excuse, or apology, or even polite acknowledgment. Politeness!—that would have been the sharpest unkindness of all.

Then they overtook us, and the chance was over.

Colin advanced, but Doctor Urquhart put me into the carriage himself, and as Colin was restoring the plaid, said rather irritably:—“No, no, let her wrap herself in it, going home.”

Not another word passed between us, except that, as I remembered afterwards, just before they came up, he had said, “Good-bye,” hastily adding to it, “God bless you.”

Some people's words—people who usually express very little—rest in one's mind strangely. Why should he say “God bless you?” Why did he call me “child?”

I sent back his plaid by Colin next morning, with a message of thanks, and that “it had kept me very warm.” I wonder if I shall ever see Doctor Urquhart again?

And yet it is not the seeing one's friends, the having them within reach, the hearing of and from them, which makes them ours—many a one has all that, and yet has nothing. It is the believing in them, the depending on them; assured that they are true and good to the core, and therefore could not but be good and true towards everybody else —ourselves included. Ay, whether we deserve it or not. It is not our deserts which are in question, but their goodness, which, once settled, the rest follows as a matter of course. They would be untrue to themselves if they were insincere or untrue to us. I have half-a-dozen friends, living within half-a-dozen miles, whom I feel further off from than I should from Doctor Urquhart if he lived at the Antipodes.

He never uses words lightly. He never would have said “God bless you!” if he had not specially wished God to bless me—poor me! a foolish, ignorant, thoughtless child.

Only a child—not a bit better nor wiser than a child: full of all binds of childish naughtinesses, angers, petulances, doubts—oh, if I knew he was at this minute sitting in our parlour, and I could run down and sit beside him, tell him all the hard things I have been thinking of him of late, and beg his pardon; asking him to be a faithful friend to me, and help me to grow into a better woman than I am ever likely to become—what an unutterable comfort it would be!

A word or two more about my pleasant morning at the Cedars, and then I must close my desk and see that the study-fire is all right—papa likes a good fire when he comes home.

There they are! what a loud ring! it made me jump from my chair. This must be finished to-morrow, when ——

END OF VOL. I.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LIFE FOR A LIFE, VOLUME 1 (OF 3) ***

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