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Frank Frankfort Moore**

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DAIREEN

Volume 2 of 2

By Frank Frankfort Moore



^D "At her feet was Oswin Markham."



DAIREEN

BY

FRANK FRANKFORT MOORE

AUTHOR OF

'FLYING FROM A SHADOW' 'MATE OF THE JESSICA' 'SOJOURNERS TOGETHER' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1879



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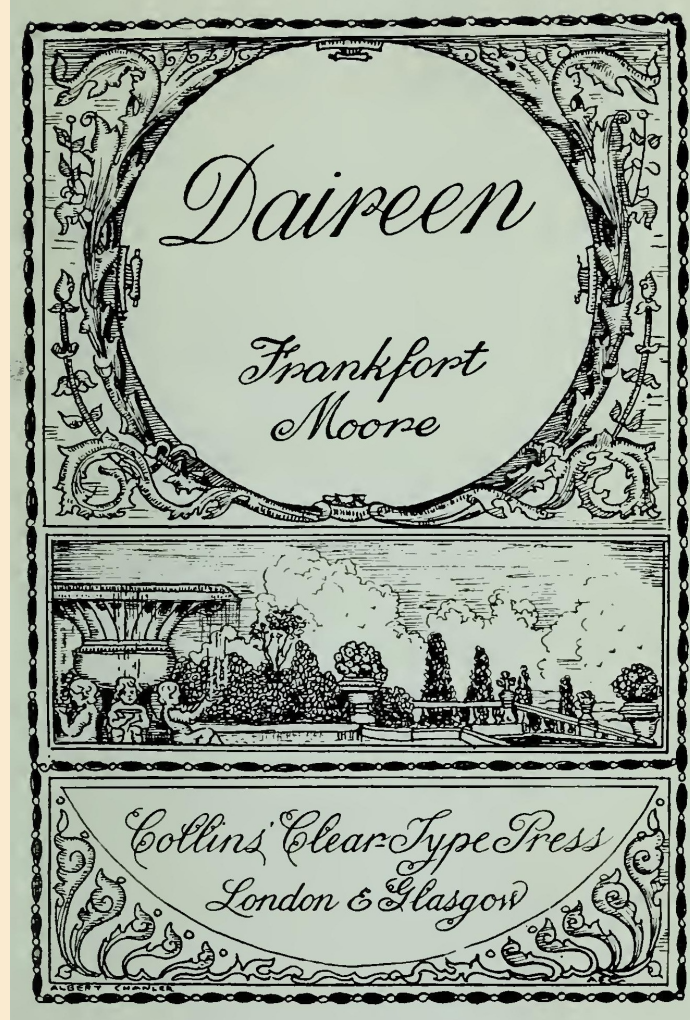
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(Transcriber's Note: Chapters XX to XXIV were taken from a print copy of a different edition as these chapters were missing from the 1880 print edition from which the rest of the Project Gutenberg edition was taken. In the inserted four chapters it will be noted that the normal double quotation marks were printed as single quote marks.)

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CHAPTER XXIII.

I have heard of your paintings too.

Hamlet. His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me,
Lest... what I have to do
Will want true colour....
Do you see nothing there?

Queen. No, nothing but ourselves.

Hamlet. Why, look you there...
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal.
Hamlet.

I AM so glad to be beside some one who can tell me all I want to know' said Lottie, looking up to Colonel Gerald's bronzed face when Mrs. Crawford and Markham had walked on.

'My dear Lottie, you know very well that you know as much as I do,' he answered, smiling down at her.

'Oh, Colonel Gerald, how can you say such a thing?' she cried innocently. 'You know I am always getting into scrapes through my simplicity.'

'You have managed to get out of a good many in your time, my dear. Is it by the same means you got out of them, Lottie-your simplicity?'

'Oh, you are as amusing as ever,' laughed the young thing. 'But you must not be hard upon poor little me, now that I want to ask you so much. Will you tell me, like a dear good colonel—I know you can if you choose—what is the mystery about this Mr. Markham?'

'Mystery? I don't hear of any mystery about him.'

'Why, all your friends came out in the some steamer as he did. They must have told you. Everybody here is talking about him. That's why I want him for our theatricals: everyone will come to see him.'

'Well, if the mystery, whatever it may be, remains unrevealed up to the night of the performance, you will have a house all the more crowded.'

'But I want to know all about it for myself. Is it really true that he had fallen overboard from another ship, and was picked up after being several weeks at sea?'

'You would be justified in calling that a mystery, at any rate,' said Colonel Gerald.

'That is what some people here are saying, I can assure you,' she cried quickly. 'Others say that he was merely taken aboard the steamer at St. Helena, after having been wrecked; but that is far too unromantic.'

'Oh, yes, far too unromantic.'

'Then you do know the truth? Oh, please tell it to me. I have always said I was sure it was true that a girl on the steamer saw him floating on the horizon with an unusually powerful pilot-glass.'

'Rather mysterious for a fellow to be floating about on the horizon with a pilot-glass, Lottie.'

'What a shame to make fun of me, especially as our performance is in the cause of charity, and I want Mr. Markham's name to be the particular attraction! Do tell me if he was picked up at sea.'

'I believe he was.'

'How really lovely! Floating about on a wreck and only restored after great difficulty! Our room should be filled to the doors. But what I can't understand, Colonel Gerald, is where he gets the money he lives on here. He could not have had much with him when he was picked up. But people say he is very rich.'

'Then no doubt people have been well informed, my dear. But all I know is that this Mr. Markham was on

his way from New Zealand, or perhaps Australia, and his vessel having foundered, he was picked up by the "Cardwell Castle" and brought to the Cape. He had a note for a few hundred pounds in his pocket which he told me he got cashed here without any difficulty, and he is going to England in a short time. Here we are at the room where these pictures are said to be hanging. Be sure you keep up the mystery, Lottie.'

'Ah, you have had your little chat, I hope,' said Mrs. Crawford, waiting at the door of Government House until Colonel Gerald and Lottie had come up.

'A delightful little chat, as all mine with Colonel Gerald are,' said Lottie, passing over to Mr. Markham. 'Are you going inside to see the pictures, Mrs. Crawford?'

'Not just yet, my dear; we must find Miss Gerald,' said Mrs. Crawford, who had no particular wish to remain in close attachment to Miss Vincent for the rest of the evening.

'Mr. Markham and I are going in,' said Lottie. 'I do so dote upon pictures, and Mr. Markham can explain them I know; so *au revoir*.'

She kissed the dainty tips of her gloves and passed up to the small piazza at the House, near where Major Crawford and some of the old Indians were sitting drinking their brandy and soda and revolving many memories.

'Let us not go in for a while, Mr. Markham,' she said. 'Let us stay here and watch them all. Isn't it delightfully cool here? How tell me all that that dreadful old Mrs. Crawford was saying to you about me.'

'Upon my word,' said Markham smiling, 'it *is* delightfully cool up here.'

'I know she said ever so much; she does so about everyone who has at any time run against her and her designs. She's always designing.'

'And you ran against her, you think?'

'Of course I did,' cried Lottie, turning round and giving an almost indignant look at the man beside her. 'And she has been saying nasty things about me ever since; only of course they have never injured me, as people get to understand her in a very short time. But what did she say just now?'

'Nothing, I can assure you, that was not very much in favour of the theatrical idea I have just promised to work out with you, Miss Vincent: she told me you were a—a capital actress.'

'She said that, did she? Spiteful old creature! Just see how she is all smiles and friendliness to Mr. Harwood because she thinks he will say something about her husband's appointment and the satisfaction it is giving in the colony in his next letter to the "Trumpeter." That is Colonel Gerald's daughter with them now, is it not?'

'Yes, that is Miss Gerald,' answered Markham, looking across the lawn to where Daireen was standing with Mr. Harwood and some of the tennis-players as Mrs. Crawford and her companion came up with Mr. Glaston, whom they had discovered and of whom the lady had taken possession. The girl was standing beneath the broad leaf of a plantain with the red sunlight falling behind her and lighting up the deep ravine of the mountain beyond. Oswin thought he had never before seen her look so girlishly lovely.

'How people here do run after every novelty!' remarked Miss Vincent, who was certainly aware that she herself was by no means a novelty. 'Just because they never happen to have seen that girl before, they mob her to death. Isn't it too bad? What extremes they go to in their delight at having found something new! I actually heard a gentleman say to-day that he thought Miss Gerald's face perfect. Could anything be more absurd, when one has only to see her complexion to know that it is extremely defective, while her nose is— are you going in to the pictures so soon?'

'Well, I think so,' said Markham. 'If we don't see them now it will be too dark presently.'

'Why, I had no idea you were such a devotee of Art,' she cried. 'Just let me speak to papa for a moment and I will submit myself to your guidance.' And she tripped away to where the surgeon-general was smoking among the old Indians.

Oswin Markham waited at the side of the balcony, and then Mrs. Crawford with her entire party came up, Mr. Glaston following with Daireen, who said, just as she was beside Mr. Markham, 'We are all going to view the pictures, Mr. Markham; won't you join us?'

'I am only waiting for Miss Vincent,' he answered. Then Daireen and her companion passed into the room containing the four works meant to be illustrative of that perfect conception of a subject, and of the only true method of its treatment, which were the characteristics assigned to themselves by a certain section of painters with whom Mr. Glaston enjoyed communion.

The pictures had, by Mr. Glaston's direction, been hung in what would strike an uncultured mind as being an eccentric fashion. But, of course, there was a method in it. Each painting was placed obliquely at a window; the natural view which was to be obtained at a glance outside being supposed to have a powerful influence upon the mind of a spectator in preparing him to receive the delicate symbolism of each work.

'One of our theories is, that a painting is not merely an imitation of a part of nature, but that it becomes, if perfectly worked out in its symbolism, a pure creation of Nature herself,' said Mr. Glaston airily, as he condescended to explain his method of arrangement to his immediate circle. There were only a few people in the room when Mrs. Crawford's party entered. Mr. Glaston knew, of course, that Harwood was there, but he felt that he could, with these pictures about him, defy all the criticism of the opposing school.

'It is a beautiful idea,' said Mrs. Crawford; 'is it not, Colonel Gerald?'

'Capital idea,' said the colonel.

'Rubbish!' whispered Harwood to Markham, who entered at this moment with Lottie Vincent.

'The absurdity—the wickedness—of hanging pictures in the popular fashion is apparent to every thoughtful mind,' said the prophet of Art. 'Putting pictures of different subjects in a row and asking the public to admire them is something too terrible to think about. It is the act of a nation of barbarians. To hold a concert and perform at the same instant selections from Verdi, Wagner, Liszt, and the Oxford music-hall would be as consistent with the principles of Art as these Gallery exhibitions of pictures.'

'How delightful!' cried Lottie, lifting up her four-buttoned gloves in true enthusiasm. 'I have often thought

exactly what he says, only I have never had courage to express myself.'

'It needs a good deal of courage,' remarked Harwood.

'What a pity it is that people will continue to be stupid!' said Mrs. Crawford. 'For my own part, I will never enter an Academy exhibition again. I am ashamed to confess that I have never missed a season when I had the chance, but now I see the folly of it all. What a lovely scene that is in the small black frame! Is it not, Daireen?'

'Ah, you perceive the Idea?' said Mr. Glaston as the girl and Mrs. Crawford stood before a small picture of a man and a woman in a pomegranate grove in a grey light, the man being in the act of plucking the fruit. 'You understand, of course, the symbolism of the pomegranate and the early dawn-light among the boughs?'

'It is a darling picture,' said Lottie effusively.

'I never saw such carelessness in drawing before,' said Harwood so soon as Mr. Glaston and his friends had passed on to another work.

'The colour is pretty fair, but the drawing is ruffianly.'

'Ah, you terrible critic!' cried Lottie.

'You spoil one's enjoyment of the pictures. But I quite agree with you; they are fearful daubs,' she added in a whisper. 'Let us stay here and listen to the gushing of that absurd old woman; we need not be in the back row in looking at that wonderful work they are crowding about.'

'I am not particularly anxious to stand either in the front or the second row,' said Harwood. 'The pavement in the picture is simply an atrocity. I saw the thing before.'

So Harwood, Lottie, and Markham stood together at one of the open windows, through which were borne the brazen strains of the distant band, and the faint sounds of the laughter of the lawn-tennis players, and the growls of the old Indians on the balcony. Daireen and the rest of the party had gone to the furthest window from which at an oblique angle one of the pictures was placed. Miss Vincent and Harwood soon found themselves chatting briskly; but Markham stood leaning against the wall behind them, with his eyes fixed upon Daireen, who was looking in a puzzled way at the picture. Markham wondered what was the element that called for this puzzled—almost troubled expression upon her face, but he could not see anything of the work.

'How very fine, is it not, George?' said Mrs. Crawford to Colonel Gerald as they stood back to gaze upon the painting.

'I think I'll go out and have a smoke,' replied the colonel smiling.

Mrs. Crawford cast a reproachful glance towards him as he turned away, but Mr. Glaston seemed oblivious to every remark.

'Is it not wonderful, Daireen?' whispered Mrs. Crawford to the girl.

'Yes,' said Daireen, 'I think it is—wonderful,' and the expression upon her face became more troubled still.

The picture was composed of a single figure—a half-naked, dark-skinned female with large limbs and wild black hair. She was standing in a high-roofed oriental kiosk upon a faintly coloured pavement, gazing with fierce eyes upon a decoration of the wall, representing a battle in which elephants and dromedaries were taking part. Through one of the arched windows of the building a purple hill with a touch of sunset crimson upon its ridge was seen, while the Evening Star blazed through the dark blue of the higher heaven.

Daireen looked into the picture, and when she saw the wild face of the woman she gave a shudder, though she scarcely knew why.

'All but the face,' she said. 'It is too terrible—there is nothing of a woman about it.'

'My dear child, that is the chief wonder of the picture,' said Mr. Glaston. 'You recognise the subject, of course?'

'It might be Cleopatra,' said Daireen dubiously.

'Oh, hush, hush! never think of such a thing again,' said Mr. Glaston with an expression that would have meant horror if it had not been tempered with pity. 'Cleopatra is vulgar—vulgar—popular. That is Aholibah.'

'You remember, of course, my dear,' said Mrs. Crawford; 'she is a young woman in the Bible—one of the old parts—Daniel or Job or Hezekiah, you know. She was a Jewess or an Egyptian or something of that sort, like Judith, the young person who drove a nail into somebody's brain—they were always doing disagreeable things in those days. I can't recollect exactly what this dreadful creature did, but I think it was somehow connected with the head of John the Baptist.'

'Oh, no, no,' said Daireen, still keeping her eyes fixed upon the face of the figure as though it had fascinated her.

'Aholibah the painter has called it,' said

Mr. Glaston. 'But it is the symbolism of the picture that is most valuable. Wonderful thought that is of the star—Astarte, you know—shedding the light by which the woman views the picture of one of her lovers.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Mrs. Crawford in a shocked way, forgetting for the moment that they were talking on Art. Then she recollected herself and added apologetically, 'They were dreadful young women, you know, dear.'

'Marvellous passion there is in that face,' continued the young man. 'It contains a lifetime of thought—of suffering. It is a poem—it is a precious composition of intricate harmonies.'

'Intricate! I should think it is,' said Harwood to Lottie, in the distant window.

'Hush!' cried the girl, 'the high-priest is beginning to speak.'

'The picture is perhaps the only one in existence that may be said to be the direct result of the three arts as they are termed, though we prefer to think that there is not the least distinction between the methods of painting, poetry, and music,' said Mr. Glaston. 'I chanced to drop in to the studio of my friend who painted this, and I found him in a sad state of despondency. He had nearly all of the details of the picture filled in; the figure was as perfect as it is at present—all except the expression of the face. "I have been thinking about it

for days," said the poor fellow, and I could see that his face was haggard with suffering; "but only now and again has the expression I want passed across my mind, and I have been unable to catch it." I looked at the unfinished picture,' continued Mr. Glaston, 'and I saw what he wanted. I stood before the picture in silence for some time, and then I composed and repeated a sonnet which I fancied contained the missing expression of passion. He sprang up and seized my hand, and his face brightened with happiness: I had given him the absent idea, and I left him painting enthusiastically. A few days after, however, I got a line from him entreating me to come to him. I was by his side in an hour, and I found him in his former state of despondency. "It has passed away again," he said, "and I want you to repeat your sonnet." Unfortunately I had forgotten every line of the sonnet, and when I told him so he was in agony. But I begged of him not to despair. I brought the picture and placed it before me on a piano. I looked at it and composed an impromptu that I thought suggested the exact passion he wanted for the face. The painter stood listening with his head bowed down to his hands. When I ended he caught up the picture. "I see it all clearly," he cried; "you have saved me—you have saved the picture." Two days afterwards he sent it to me finished as it is now.'

'Wonderful! is it not, Daireen?' said Mrs. Crawford, as the girl turned away after a little pause.

'The face,' said Daireen gently; 'I don't want ever to see it again. Let us look at something else.'

They turned away to the next picture; but Markham, who had been observing the girl's face, and had noticed that little shudder come over her, felt strangely interested in the painting, whatever it might be, that had produced such an impression upon her. He determined to go unobserved over to the window where the work was hanging so soon as everyone would have left it.

'It requires real cleverness to compose such a story as that of Mr. Glaston's,' said Lottie Vincent to Mr. Harwood.

'It sounded to me all along like a clever bit of satire, and I daresay it was told to him as such,' said Harwood. 'It only needed him to complete the nonsense by introducing another of the fine arts in the working out of that wonderfully volatile expression.'

'Which is that?' said Lottie; 'do tell me, like a good fellow,' and she laid the persuasive finger of a four-buttoned glove upon his arm.

'Certainly. I will finish the story for you,' said Harwood, giving the least little imitation of the lordly manner of Mr. Glaston. 'Yes, my friend the painter sent a telegram to me a few years after I had performed that impromptu, and I was by his side in an hour. I found him at least twenty years older in appearance, and he was searching with a lighted candle in every corner of the studio for that expression of passion which had once more disappeared.

What could I do? I had exhausted the auxiliaries of poetry and music, but fortunately another art remained to me; you have heard of the poetry of motion? In an instant I had mounted the table and had gone through a breakdown of the most æsthetic design, when I saw his face lighten—his grey hairs turned once more to black—long artistic oily black. "I have found it," he cried, seizing the hearthbrush and dipping it into the paint just as I completed the final attitude: it was found—but—what is the matter, Miss Vincent?'

'Look!' she whispered. 'Look at Mr. Markham.'

'Good heavens!' cried Harwood, starting up, 'is he going to fall? No, he has steadied himself by the window. I thought he was beside us.'

'He went over to the picture a second ago, and I saw that pallor come over him,' said Lottie.

Harwood hastened to where Oswin Markham was standing, his white face turned away from the picture, and his hand clutching the rail of a curtain.

'What is the matter, Markham?' said Harwood quietly. 'Are you faint?'

Markham turned his eyes upon him with a startled expression, and a smile that was not a smile came upon his face.

'Faint? yes,' he said. 'This room after the air. I'll be all right. Don't make a scene, for God's sake.'

'There is no need,' said Harwood. 'Sit down here, and I'll get you a glass of brandy.'

'Not here,' said Markham, giving the least little side glance towards the picture. 'Not here, but at the open window.'

Harwood helped him over to the open window, and he fell into a seat beside it and gazed out at the lawn-tennis players, quite regardless of Lottie Vincent standing beside him and enquiring how he felt.

In a few minutes Harwood returned with some brandy in a glass.

'Thanks, my dear fellow,' said the other, drinking it off eagerly. 'I feel better now—all right, in fact.'

'This, of course, you perceive,' came the voice of Mr. Glaston from the group who were engrossed over the wonders of the final picture,—'This is an exquisite example of a powerful mind endeavouring to subdue the agony of memory. Observe the symbolism of the grapes and vine leaves.'

In the warm sunset light outside the band played on, and Miss Vincent flitted from group to group with the news that this Mr. Markham had added to the romance which was already associated with his name, by fainting in the room with the pictures. She was considerably surprised and mortified to see him walking with Miss Gerald to the colonel's carriage in half an hour afterwards.

'I assure you,' she said to some one who was laughing at her,—'I assure you I saw him fall against the window at the side of one of the pictures. If he was not in earnest, he will make our theatricals a great success, for he must be a splendid actor.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument.

So much was our love
We would not understand what was most fit.

She is so conjunctive to my life and soul
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her.

How should I your true love know
From another one?—*Hamlet.*

ALL was not well with Mr. Standish MacDermot in these days. He was still a guest at that pleasant little Dutch cottage of Colonel Gerald's at Mowbray, and he received invitations daily to wherever Daireen and her father were going. This was certainly all that he could have expected to make him feel at ease in the strange land; but somehow he did not feel at ease. He made himself extremely pleasant everywhere he went, and he was soon a general favourite, though perhaps the few words Mrs. Crawford now and again let fall on the subject of his parentage had as large an influence as his own natural charm of manner in making the young Irishman popular. Ireland was a curious place most of the people at the Cape thought. They had heard of its rebellions and of its secret societies, and they had thus formed an idea that the island was something like a British colony of which the aborigines had hardly been subdued. The impression that Standish was the son of one of the kings of the land, who, like the Indian maharajahs, they believed, were allowed a certain revenue and had their titles acknowledged by the British Government, was very general; and Standish had certainly nothing to complain of as to his treatment. But still all was not well with Standish.

He had received a letter from his father a week after his arrival imploring him to return to the land of his sires, for The MacDermot had learned from the ancient bard O'Brian, in whom the young man had confided, that Standish's destination was the Cape, and so he had been able to write to some address. The MacDermot promised to extend his forgiveness to his son, and to withdraw his threat of disinheritance, if he would return; and he concluded his letter by drawing a picture of the desolation of the neighbourhood owing to the English projectors of a railway and a tourists' hotel having sent a number of surveyors to the very woods of Innishdermot to measure and plan and form all sorts of evil intentions about the region. Under these trying circumstances, The Mac-Dermot implored his son to grant him the consolation of his society once more. What was still more surprising to Standish was the enclosure in the letter of an order for a considerable sum of money, for he fancied that his father had previously exhausted every available system of leverage for the raising of money.

But though it was very sad for Standish to hear of the old man sitting desolate beside the lonely hearth of Innishdermot castle, he made up his mind not to return to his home. He had set out to work in the world, and he would work, he said. He would break loose from this pleasant life he was at present leading, and he would work. Every night he made this resolution, though as yet the concrete form of the thought as to what sort of work he meant to set about had not suggested itself. He would work nobly and manfully for her, he swore, and he would never tell her of his love until he could lay his work at her feet and tell her that it had been done all for her. Meantime he had gone to that garden party at Government House and to several other entertainments, while nearly every day he had been riding by the side of Daireen over The Flats or along the beautiful road to Wynberg.

And all the time that Standish was resolving not to open his lips in an endeavour to express to Daireen all that was in his heart, another man was beginning to feel that it would be necessary to take some step to reveal himself to the girl. Arthur Harwood had been analyzing his own heart every day since he had gazed out to the far still ocean from the mountain above Funchal with Daireen beside him, and now he fancied he knew every thought that was in his heart.

He knew that he had been obliged to deny himself in his youth the luxury of love. He had been working himself up to his present position by his own industry and the use of the brains that he felt must be his capital in life, and he knew he dared not even think of falling in love. But, when he had passed the age of thirty and had made a name and a place for himself in the world, he was aware that he might let his affections go fetterless; but, alas, it seemed that they had been for too long in slavery: they refused to taste the sweets of freedom, and it appeared that his nature had become hard and unsympathetic. But it was neither, he knew in his own soul, only he had been standing out of the world of softness and of sympathy, and had built up for himself unconsciously an ideal whose elements were various and indefinable, his imagination only making it a necessity that not one of these elements of his ideal should be possible to be found in the nature of any of the women with whom he was acquainted and whom he had studied.

When he had come to know Daireen Gerald—and he fancied he had come to know her—he felt that he was no longer shut out from the world of love with his cold ideal. He had thought of her day by day aboard the steamer as he had thought of no girl hitherto in his life, and he had waited for her to think of him and to become conscious that he loved her. Considering that one of the most important elements of his vague ideal was a complete and absolute unconsciousness of any passion, it was scarcely consistent for him now to expect that Daireen should ever perceive the feeling of his secret heart.

He had, however, made up his mind to remain at the Cape instead of going on to the Castaway Islands; and he had written long and interesting letters to the newspaper which he represented, on the subject of the attitude of the Kafir chief who, he heard, had been taking an attitude. Then he had had several opportunities of riding the horse that Colonel Gerald had placed at his disposal; but though he had walked and conversed frequently with the daughter of Colonel Gerald, he felt that it would be necessary for him to speak more directly what he at least fancied was in his heart; so that while poor Standish was swearing every night to keep his secret, Mr. Harwood was thinking by what means he could contrive to reveal himself and find out what were the girl's feelings with regard to himself.

In the firmness of his resolution Standish was one afternoon, a few days after the garden party, by the side of Daireen on the furthest extremity of The Flats, where there was a small wood of pines growing in a sandy soil of a glittering whiteness. They pulled up their horses here amongst the trees, and Daireen looked out at the white plain beyond; but poor Standish could only gaze upon her wistful face.

'I like it,' she said musingly. 'I like that snow. Don't you think it is snow, Standish?'

'It is exactly the same,' he answered. 'I can feel a chill pass over me as I look upon it. I hate it.'

'Oh!' cried the girl, 'don't say that when I have said I like it.'

'Why should that matter?' he said sternly, for he was feeling his resolution very strong within him.

She laughed. 'Why, indeed? Well, hate it as much as you wish, Standish, it won't interfere with my loving it, and thinking of how I used to enjoy the white winters at home. Then, you know, I used to be thinking of places like this—places with plants like those aloes that the sun is glittering over.'

'And why I hate it,' said Standish, 'is because it puts me in mind of the many wretched winters I spent in the miserable idleness of my home. While others were allowed some chance of making their way in the world—making names for themselves—there was I shut up in that gaol. I have lost every chance I might have had—everyone is before me in the race.'

'In what race, Standish? In the race for fame?'

'Yes, for fame,' cried Standish; 'not that I value fame for its own sake,' he added. 'No, I don't covet it, except that—Daireen, I think there is nothing left for me in the world—I am shut out from every chance of reaching anything. I was wretched at home, but I feel even more wretched here.'

'Why should you do that, Standish?' she asked, turning her eyes upon him. 'I am sure everyone here is very kind.'

'I don't want their kindness, Daireen; it is their kindness that makes me feel an impostor. What right have I to receive their kindness? Yes, I had better take my father's advice and return by next mail. I am useless in the world—it doesn't want me.'

'Don't talk so stupidly—so wickedly,' said the girl gravely. 'You are not a coward to set out in the world and turn back discouraged even before you have got anything to discourage you.'

'I am no coward,' he said; 'but everything has been too hard for me. I am a fool—a wretched fool to have set my heart—my soul, upon an object I can never reach.'

'What do you mean, Standish? You haven't set your heart upon anything that you may not gain in time. You will, I know, if you have courage, gain a good and noble name for yourself.'

'Of what use would it be to me, Daireen? It would only be a mockery to me—a bitter mockery unless—Oh, Daireen, it must come, you have forced it from me—I will tell you and then leave you for ever—Daireen, I don't care for anything in the world but to have you love me—a little, Daireen. What would a great name be to me unless—'

'Hush, Standish,' said the girl with her face flushed and almost angry. 'Do not ever speak to me like this again. Why should all our good friendship come to an end?' She had softened towards the close of her sentence, and she was now looking at him in tenderness.

'You have forced me to speak,' he said. 'God knows how I have struggled to hold my secret deep down in my heart—how I have sworn to hold it, but it forced itself out—we are not masters of ourselves, Daireen. Now tell me to leave you—I am prepared for it, for my dream, I knew, was bound to vanish at a touch.'

'Considering that I am four miles from home and in a wood, I cannot tell you to do that,' she said with a laugh, for all her anger had been driven away. 'Besides that, I like you far too well to turn you away; but, Standish, you must never talk so to me again. Now, let us return.'

'I know I must not, because I am a beggar,' he said almost madly. 'You will love some one who has had a chance of making a name for himself in the world. I have had no chance.'

'Standish, I am waiting for you to return.'

'Yes, I have seen them sitting beside you aboard the steamer,' continued Standish bitterly, 'and I knew well how it would be.' He looked at her almost fiercely. 'Yes, I knew it—you have loved one of them.'

Daireen's face flushed fearfully and then became deathly pale as she looked at him. She did not utter a word, but looked into his face steadily with an expression he had never before seen upon hers. He became frightened.

'Daireen—dearest Daireen, forgive me,' he cried. 'I am a fool—no, worse—I don't know what I say. Daireen, pity me and forgive me. Don't look at me that way, for God's sake. Speak to me.'

'Come away,' she said gently. 'Come away, Standish.'

'But tell me you forgive me, Daireen,' he pleaded.

'Come away,' she said.

She turned her horse's head towards the track which was made through that fine white sand and went on from amongst the pines. He followed her with a troubled mind, and they rode side by side over the long flats of heath until they had almost reached the lane of cactus leading to Mowbray. In a few minutes they would be at the Dutch cottage, and yet they had not interchanged a word. Standish could not endure the silence any longer. He pulled up his horse suddenly.

'Daireen,' he said. 'I have been a fool—a wicked fool, to talk to you as I did. I cannot go on until you say you forgive me.'

Then she turned round and smiled on him, holding out her hand.

'We are very foolish, Standish,' she said. 'We are both very foolish. Why should I think anything of what you said? We are still good friends, Standish.'

'God bless you!' he cried, seizing her hand fervently. 'I will not make myself a fool again.' 'And I,' said the girl, 'I will not be a fool again.'

So they rode back together. But though Standish had received forgiveness he was by no means satisfied with the girl's manner. There was an expression that he could not easily read in that smile she had given him. He had meant to be very bitter towards her, but had not expected her to place him in a position requiring forgiveness. She had forgiven him, it was true, but then that smile of hers—what was that sad wistful expression upon her face? He could not tell, but he felt that on the whole he had not gained much by the resolutions he had made night after night. He was inclined to be dissatisfied with the result of his morning's ride, nor was this feeling perceptibly decreased by seeing beneath one of the broad-leaved trees that surrounded the cottage the figure of Mr. Arthur Harwood by the side of Colonel Gerald.

Harwood came forward as Daireen reined up on the avenue.

'I have come to say good-bye to you,' he said, looking up to her face.

'Good-bye?' she answered. 'Why, you haven't said good-morning yet.'

Mr. Harwood was a clever man and he knew it; but his faculty for reading what was passing in another person's mind did not bring him happiness always. He had made use of what he meant to be a test sentence to Daireen, and the result of his observation of its effect was not wholly pleasant to him. He had hoped for a little flush—a little trembling of the hand, but neither had come; a smile was on her face, and the pulses of the hand she held out to him were unruffled. He knew then that the time had not yet come for him to reveal himself.

But why should you say good-bye?' she asked after she had greeted him.

'Well, perhaps I should only say *au revoir*, though, upon my word, the state of the colony is becoming so critical that one going up country should always say good-bye. Yes, my duties call me to leave all this pleasant society, Miss Gerald. I am going among the Zulus for a while.'

'I have every confidence in you, Mr. Harwood,' she said. 'You will return in safety. We will miss you greatly, but I know how much the people at home will be benefited by hearing the result of your visit; so we resign ourselves to your absence. But indeed we shall miss you.'

'And if a treacherous assegai should transfix me, I trust my fate will draw a single tear,' he said.

There was a laugh as Daireen rode round to dismount and Harwood went in to lunch. It was very pleasant chat he felt, but he was as much dissatisfied with her laugh as Standish had been with her smile.

CHAPTER XXV.

Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused.

Yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love.

... he repulsed—a short tale to make—
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness; and by this declension
Into the madness.—*Hamlet*.

THE very pleasantness of the lunch Harwood had at the Dutch cottage made his visit seem more unsatisfactory to him. He had come up to the girl with that sentence which should surely have sounded pathetic even though spoken with indifference. He was beside her to say good-bye. He had given her to understand that he was going amongst the dangers of a disturbed part of the country, but the name of the barbarous nation had not made her cheek pale. It was well enough for himself to make light of his adventurous undertaking, but he did not think that her smiles in telling him that she would miss him were altogether becoming.

Yes, as he rode towards Cape Town he felt that the time had not yet come for him to reveal himself to Daireen Gerald. He would have to be patient, as he had been for years.

Thus far he had found out negatively how Daireen felt towards himself: she liked him, he knew, but only as most women liked him, because he could tell them in an agreeable way things that they wanted to know—because he had travelled everywhere and had become distinguished. He was not a conceited man, but he knew exactly how he stood in the estimation of people, and it was bitter for him to reflect that he did not stand differently with regard to Miss Gerald. But he had not attempted to discover what were Daireen's feelings respecting any one else. He was well aware that Mrs. Crawford was anxious to throw Mr. Glaston in the way of the girl as much as possible; but he felt that it would take a long time for Mr. Glaston to make up his mind to sacrifice himself at Daireen's feet, and Daireen was far too sensible to be imposed upon by his artistic flourishes. As for this young Mr. Standish Macnamara, Harwood saw at once that Daireen regarded him with a friendliness that precluded the possibility of love, so he did not fear the occupation of the girl's heart by Standish. But when Harwood began to think of Oswin Markham—he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs behind him, and Oswin Markham himself trotted up, looking dusty and fatigued.

"I thought I should know your animal," said Markham, "and I made an effort to overtake you, though I meant to go easily into the town."

Harwood looked at him and then at his horse.

"You seem as if you owed yourself a little ease," he said. "You must have done a good deal in the way of riding, judging from your appearance."

"A great deal too much," replied Markham. "I have been on the saddle since breakfast."

"You have been out every morning for the past three days before I have left my room. I was quite surprised when I heard it, after the evidence you gave at the garden party of your weakness."

"Of my weakness, yes," said Markham, with a little laugh. "It was wretchedly weak to allow myself to be affected by the change from the open air to that room, but it felt stifling to me."

"I didn't feel the difference to be anything considerable," said Harwood; "so the fact of your being overcome by it proves that you are not in a fit state to be playing with your constitution. Where did you ride to-day?"

"Where? Upon my word I have not the remotest idea," said Markham. "I took the road out to Simon's Bay, but I pulled up at a beach on the nearer side of it, and remained there for a good while."

"Nothing could be worse than riding about in this aimless sort of way. Here you are completely knocked up now, as you have been for the past three evenings. Upon my word, you seem indifferent as to whether or not you ever leave the colony alive. You are simply trifling with yourself."

"You are right, I suppose," said Markham wearily. "But what is a fellow to do in Cape Town? One can't remain inactive beyond a certain time."

"It is only within the past three days you have taken up this roving notion," said Harwood. "It is in fact only since that Government House affair." Markham turned and looked at him eagerly for a moment. "Yes, since your weakness became apparent to yourself, you have seemed bound to prove your strength to the furthest. But you are pushing it too far, my boy. You'll find out your mistake."

"Perhaps so," laughed the other. "Perhaps so. By the way, is it true that you are going up country, Harwood?"

"Quite true. The fact is that affairs are becoming critical with regard to our relations with the Zulus, and unless I am greatly mistaken, this colony will be the centre of interest before many months have passed."

"There is nothing I should like better than to go up with you, Harwood."

Harwood shook his head. "You are not strong enough, my boy," he said.

There was a pause before Markham said slowly:

"No, I am not strong enough."

Then they rode into Cape Town together, and dismounted at their hotel; and, certainly, as he walked up the stairs to his room, Oswin Markham looked anything but strong enough to undertake a journey into the Veldt. Doctor Campion would probably have spoken unkindly to him had he seen him now, haggard and weary, with his day spent on an exposed road beneath a hot sun.

"He is anything but strong enough," said Harwood to himself as he watched the other man; and then he recollected the tone in which Markham had repeated those words, "I am not strong enough." Was it possible, he asked himself, that Markham meant that his strength of purpose was not sufficiently great? He thought over this question for some time, and the result of his reflection was to make him wish that he had not thought the conduct of that defiant chief of such importance as demanded the personal observation of the representative of the *Dominant Trumpeter*. He felt that he would like to search out the origin of the weakness of Mr. Oswin Markham.

But all the time these people were thinking their thoughts and making their resolutions upon various subjects, Mr. Algernon Glaston was remaining in the settled calm of artistic rectitude. He was awaiting with patience the arrival of his father from the Salamander Archipelago, though he had given the prelate of that interesting group to understand that circumstances would render it impossible for his son to remain longer than a certain period at the Cape, so that if he desired the communion of his society it would be necessary to allow the mission work among the Salamanders to take care of itself. For Mr. Glaston was by no means unaware of the sacrifice he was in the habit of making annually for the sake of passing a few weeks with his father in a country far removed from all artistic centres. The Bishop of the Calapash Islands and Metropolitan of the Salamander Archipelago had it several times urged upon him that his son was a marvel of filial duty for undertaking this annual journey, so that he, no doubt, felt convinced of the fact; and though this visit added materially to the expenses of his son's mode of life, which, of course, were defrayed by the bishop, yet the bishop felt that this addition was, after all, trifling compared with the value of the sentiment of filial affection embodied in the annual visit to the Cape.

Mr. Glaston had allowed his father a margin of three weeks for any impediments that might arise to prevent his leaving the Salamanders, but a longer space he could not, he assured his father, remain awaiting his arrival from the sunny islands of his see. Meantime he was dining out night after night with his friends at the Cape, and taking daily drives and horse-exercise for the benefit of his health. Upon the evening when Harwood and Markham entered the hotel together, Mr. Glaston was just departing to join a dinner-party which was to assemble at the house of a certain judge, and as Harwood was also to be a guest, he was compelled to dress hastily.

Oswin Markham was not, however, aware of the existence of the hospitable judge, so he remained in the hotel. He was tired almost to a point of prostration after his long aimless ride, but a bath and a dinner revived him, and after drinking his coffee he threw himself upon a sofa and slept for some hours. When he awoke it was dark, and then lighting a cigar he went out to the balcony that ran along the upper windows, and seated himself in the cool air that came landwards from the sea.

He watched the soldiers in white uniform crossing the square; he saw the Malay population who had been making a holiday, returning to their quarter of the town, the men with their broad conical straw hats, the women with marvellously coloured shawls; he saw the coolies carrying their burdens, and the Hottentots and the Kafirs and all the races blended in the motley population of Cape Town. He glanced listlessly at all, thinking his own thoughts undisturbed by any incongruity of tongues or of races beneath him, and he was only awakened from the reverie into which he had fallen by the opening of one of the windows near him and the appearance on the balcony of Algernon Glaston in his dinner dress and smoking a choice cigar.

The generous wine of the generous judge had made Mr. Glaston particularly courteous, for he drew his chair almost by the side of Markham's and inquired after his health.

"Harwood was at that place to-night," he said, "and he mentioned that you were killing yourself. Just like these newspaper fellows to exaggerate fearfully for the sake of making a sensation. You are all right now, I think."

"Quite right," said Markham. "I don't feel exactly like an elephant for vigour, but you know what it is to feel strong without having any particular strength. I am that way."

"Dreadfully brutal people I met to-night," continued Mr. Glaston reflectively. "Sort of people Harwood could get on with. Talking actually about some wretched savage—some Zulu chief or other from whom they expect great things; as if the action of a ruffianly barbarian could affect any one. It was quite disgusting talk. I certainly would have come away at once only I was lucky enough to get by the side of a girl who seems to know something of Art—a Miss Vincent—she is quite fresh and enthusiastic on the subject—quite a child indeed."

Markham thought it prudent to light a fresh cigar from the end of the one he had smoked, at the interval left by Mr. Glaston for his comment, so that a vague "indeed" was all that came through his closed lips.

"Yes, she seems rather a tractable sort of little thing. By the way, she mentioned something about your having become faint at Government House the other day, before you had seen all my pictures."

"Ah, yes," said Markham. "The change from the open air to that room."

"Ah, of course. Miss Vincent seems to understand something of the meaning of the pictures. She was particularly interested in one of them, which, curiously enough, is the most wonderful of the collection. Did you study them all?"

"No, not all; the fact was, that unfortunate weakness of mine interfered with my scrutiny," said Markham. "But the single glance I had at one of the pictures convinced me that it was a most unusual work. I felt greatly interested in it."

"That was the Aholibah, no doubt."

"Yes, I heard your description of how it came to be painted."

"Ah, but that referred only to the marvellous expression of the face—so saturate—so devoured—with passion. You saw how Miss Gerald turned away from it with a shudder?"

"Why did she do that?" said Markham.

"Heaven knows," said Glaston, with a little sneer.

"Heaven knows," said Markham, after a pause and without any sneer.

"She could not understand it," continued Glaston. "All that that face means cannot be apprehended in a glance. It has a significance of its own—it is a symbol of a passion that withers like a fire—a passion that can destroy utterly all the beauty of a life that might have been intense with beauty. You are not going away, are you?"

Markham had risen from his seat and turned away his head, grasping the rail of the balcony. It was some moments before he started and looked round at the other man. "I beg your pardon," he said; "I'm not going away, I am greatly interested. Yes, I caught a glimpse of the expression of the face."

"It is a miracle of power," continued Glaston. "Miss Gerald felt, but she could not understand why she should feel, its power."

There was a long pause, during which Markham stared blankly across the square, and the other leant back in his chair and watched the curling of his cigar clouds through the still air. From the garrison at the castle there came to them the sound of a bugle-call.

"I am greatly interested in that picture," said Markham at length. "I should like to know all the details of its working out."

"The expression of the face——"

"Ah, I know all of that. I mean the scene—that hill seen through the arch—the pavement of the oriental apartment—the—the figure—how did the painter bring them together?"

"That is of little consequence in the study of the elements of the symbolism," said Mr. Glaston.

"Yes, of course it is; but still I should like to know."

"I really never thought of putting any question to the painter about these matters," replied Glaston. "He had travelled in the East, and the kiosk was amongst his sketches; as for the model of the figure, if I do not mistake, I saw the study for the face in an old portfolio of his he brought from Sicily."

"Ah, indeed."

"But these are mere accidents in the production of the picture. The symbolism is the picture."

Again there was a pause, and the chatter of a couple of Malays in the street became louder, and then fainter, as the speakers drew near and passed away.

"Glaston," said Markham at length, "did you remove the pictures from Government House?"

"They are in one of my rooms," said Glaston. "Would you think it a piece of idle curiosity if I were to step upstairs and take a look at that particular work?"

"You could not see it by lamplight. You can study them all in the morning."

"But I feel in the mood just now, and you know how much depends upon the mood."

"My room is open," said Glaston. "But the idea that has possessed you is absurd."

"I dare say, I dare say, but I have become interested in all that you have told me; I must try and—and understand the symbolism."

He left the balcony before Mr. Glaston had made up his mind as to whether there was a touch of sarcasm in his voice uttering the final sentence.

"Not worse than the rest of the uneducated world," murmured the Art prophet condescendingly.

But in Mr. Glaston's private room upstairs Oswin Markham was standing holding a lighted lamp up to that interesting picture and before that wonderful symbolic expression upon the face of the figure; the rest of the room was in darkness. He looked up to the face that the lamplight gloated over. The remainder of the picture was full of reflections of the light.

"A power that can destroy utterly all the beauty of a life," he said, repeating the analysis of Mr. Glaston. He continued looking at it before he repeated another of that gentleman's sentences—"She felt, but could not understand, its power." He laid the lamp on the table and walked over to the darkened window and gazed out. But once more he returned to the picture. "A passion that can destroy utterly all the beauty of life," he said again. "Utterly! that is a lie!" He remained with his eyes upon the picture for some moments, then he lifted the lamp and went to the door. At the door he stopped, glanced at the picture and laughed.

In the Volsunga Saga there is an account of how a jealous woman listens outside the chamber where a man whom she once loved is being murdered in his wife's arms; hearing the cry of the wife in the chamber the woman at the door laughs. A man beside her says, "Thou dost not laugh because thy heart is made glad, or why moves that pallor upon thy face?"

Oswin Markham left the room and thanked Mr. Glaston for having gratified his whim.

CHAPTER XXVI.

... What he spake, though it lacked form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood.

Purpose is but the slave to memory.
Most necessary 'tis that we forget.—*Hamlet.*

THE long level rays of the sun that was setting in crimson splendour were touching the bright leaves of the silver-fir grove on one side of the ravine traversing the slope of the great peaked hill which makes the highest point of Table Mountain, but the other side was shadowy. The flat face of the precipice beneath the long ridge of the mountain was full of fantastic gleams of red in its many crevices, and far away a thin waterfall seemed a shimmering band of satin floating downwards through a dark bed of rocks. Table Bay was lying silent and with hardly a sparkle upon its ripples from where the outline of Robbin Island was seen at one arm of its crescent to the white sand of the opposite shore. The vineyards of the lower slope, beneath which the red road crawled, were dim and colourless, for the sunset bands had passed away from them and flared only upon the higher slopes.

Upon the summit of the ridge of the silver-fir ravine Daireen Gerald sat looking out to where the sun was losing itself among the ridges of the distant kloof, and at her feet was Oswin Markham. Behind them rose the rocks of the Peak with their dark green herbage. Beneath them the soft rustle of a songless bird was heard through the foliage.

But it remains to be told how those two persons came to be watching together the phenomenon of sunset from the slope.

It was Mrs. Crawford who had upon the very day after the departure of Arthur Harwood organised one of those little luncheon parties which are so easily organised and give promise of pleasures so abundant. She

had expressed to Mr. Harwood the grief she felt at his being compelled by duty to depart from the midst of their circle, just as she had said to Mr. Markham how bowed down she had been at the reflection of his leaving the steamer at St. Helena; and Harwood had thanked her for her kind expressions, and made a mental resolve that he would say something sarcastic regarding the Army Boot Commission in his next communication to the *Dominant Trumpeter*. But the hearing of the gun of the mail steamer that was to convey the special correspondent to Natal was the pleasantest sensation Mrs. Crawford had experienced for long. She had been very anxious on Harwood's account for some time. She did not by any means think highly of the arrangement which had been made by Colonel Gerald to secure for one of his horses an amount of exercise by allowing Mr. Harwood to ride it; for she was well aware that Mr. Harwood would think it quite within the line of his duty to exercise the animal at times when Miss Gerald would be riding out. She knew that most girls liked Mr. Harwood, and whatever might be Mr. Harwood's feelings towards the race that so complimented him, she could not doubt that he admired to a perilous point the daughter of Colonel Gerald. If, then, the girl would return his feeling, what would become of Mrs. Crawford's hopes for Mr. Glaston?

It was the constant reflection upon this question that caused the sound of the mail gun to fall gratefully upon the ears of the major's wife. Harwood was to be away for more than a month at any rate, and in a month much might be accomplished, not merely by a special correspondent, but by a lady with a resolute mind and a strategical training. So she had set her mind to work, and without delay had organised what gave promise of being a delightful little lunch, issuing half a dozen invitations only three days in advance.

Mr. Algernon Glaston had, after some persuasion, promised to join the party. Colonel Gerald and his daughter expressed the happiness they would have at being present, and Mr. Standish Macnamara felt certain that nothing could interfere with his delight. Then there were the two daughters of a member of the Legislative Council who were reported to look with fond eyes upon the son of one of the justices of the Supreme Court, a young gentleman who was also invited. Lastly, by what Mrs. Crawford considered a stroke of real constructive ability, Mr. Oswin Markham and Miss Lottie Vincent were also begged to allow themselves to be added to the number of the party. Mrs. Crawford disliked Lottie, but that was no reason why Lottie should not exercise the tactics Mrs. Crawford knew she possessed, to take care of Mr. Oswin Markham for the day.

They would have much to talk about regarding the projected dramatic entertainment of the young lady, so that Mr. Glaston should be left solitary in that delightful listless after-space of lunch, unless indeed—and the contingency was, it must be confessed, suggested to the lady—Miss Gerald might chance to remain behind the rest of the party; in that case it would not seem beyond the bounds of possibility that the weight of Mr. Glaston's loneliness would be endurable.

Everything had been carried out with that perfect skill which can be gained only by experience. The party had driven from Mowbray for a considerable way up the hill. The hampers had been unpacked and the lunch partaken of in a shady nook which was supposed to be free from the venomous reptiles that make picnics somewhat risky enjoyments in sunny lands; and then the young people had trooped away to gather Venus-hair ferns at the waterfall, or silver leaves from the grove, or bronze-green lizards, or some others of the offspring of nature which have come into existence solely to meet the requirements of collectors. Mr. Glaston and Daireen followed more leisurely, and Mrs. Crawford's heart was happy. The sun would be setting in an hour, she reflected, and she had great confidence in the effect of fine sunsets upon the hearts of lovers—. nay, upon the raw material that might after a time develop into the hearts of lovers. She was quite satisfied seeing the young people depart, for she was not aware how much more pleasant than Oswin Markham Lottie Vincent had found Mr. Glaston at that judge's dinner-party a few evenings previous, nor how much more plastic than Miss Gerald Mr. Glaston had found Lottie Vincent upon the same occasion.

Mrs. Crawford did not think it possible that Lottie could be so clever, even if she had had the inclination, as to effect the separation of the party as it had been arranged. But Lottie had by a little manouvre waited at the head of the ravine until Mr. Glaston and Daireen had come up, and then she had got into conversation with Mr. Glaston upon a subject that was a blank to the others, so that they had walked quietly on together until that pleasant space at the head of the ravine was reached. There Daireen had seated herself to watch the west become crimson with sunset, and at her feet Oswin had cast himself to watch her face.

Had Mrs. Crawford been aware of this, she would scarcely perhaps have been so pleasant to her friend Colonel Gerald, or to her husband far down on the slope.

It was very silent at the head of that ravine. The delicate splash of the water that trickled through the rocks far away was distinctly heard. The rosy bands that had been about the edges of the silver leaves had passed off. Daireen's face was at last left in shadow, and she turned to watch the rays move upwards, until soon only the dark Peak was enwound in the red light that made its forehead like the brows of an ancient Bacchanal encircled with a rose-wreath. Then quickly the red dwindled away, until only a single rose-leaf was upon the highest point; an instant more and it had passed, leaving the hill dark and grim in outline against the pale blue.

Then succeeded that time of silent conflict between light and darkness—a time of silence and of wonder.

Upon the slope of the Peak it was silent enough. The girl's eyes went out across the shadowy plain below to where the water was shining in its own gray light, but she uttered not a word. The man leant his head upon his hand as he looked up to her face.

"What is the 'Ave' you are breathing to the sunset, Miss Gerald?" he said at length, and she gave a little start and looked at him. "What is the vesper hymn your heart has been singing all this time?"

She laughed. "No hymn, no song."

"I saw it upon your face," he said. "I saw its melody in your eyes; and yet—yet I cannot understand it—I am too gross to be able to translate it. I suppose if a man had sensitive hearing the wind upon the blades of grass would make good music to him, but most people are dull to everything but the rolling of barrels and such-like music."

"I had not even a musical thought," said the girl. "I am afraid that if all I thought were translated into words, the result would be a jumble: you know what that means."

"Yes. Heaven is a jumble, isn't it? A bit of wonderful blue here, and a shapeless cloud there—a few faint breaths of music floating about a place of green, and an odour of a field of flowers. Yes, all dreams are jumbles."

"And I was dreaming?" she said. "Yes, I dare say my confusion of thought without a single idea may be called by courtesy a dream."

"And now have you awakened?"

"Dreams must break and dissolve some time, I suppose, Mr. Markham."

"They must, they must," he said. "I wonder when will my awaking come."

"Have you a dream?" she asked, with a laugh.

"I am living one," he answered.

"Living one?"

"Living one. My life has become a dream to me. How am I beside you? How is it possible that I could be beside you? Either of two things must be a dream—either my past life is a dream, or I am living one in this life."

"Is there so vast a difference between them?" she asked, looking at him. His eyes were turned away from her.

"Vast? Vast?" he repeated musingly. Then he rose to his feet and looked out oceanwards. "I don't know what is vast," he said. Then he looked down to her. "Miss Gerald, I don't believe that my recollection of my past is in the least correct. My memory is a falsehood utterly. For it is quite impossible that this body of mine—this soul of mine—could have passed through such a change as I must have passed through if my memory has got anything of truth in it. My God! my God! The recollections that come to me are, I know, impossible."

"I don't understand you, Mr. Markham," said Daireen.

Once more he threw himself on the short tawny herbage beside her.

"Have you not heard of men being dragged back when they have taken a step beyond the barrier that hangs between life and death—men who have had one foot within the territory of death?"

"I have heard of that."

"And you know it is not the same old life that a man leads when he is brought from that dominion of death. He begins life anew. He knows nothing of the past. He laughs at the faces that were once familiar to him; they mean nothing to him. His past is dead. Think of me, child. Day by day I suffered all the agonies of death and hell, and shall I not have granted to me that most righteous gift of God? Shall not my past be utterly blotted out? Yes, these vague memories that I have are the memories of a dream. God has not been so just to me as to others, for there are some realities of the past still with me I know, and thus I am at times led to think it might be possible that all my recollections are true—but no, it is impossible—utterly impossible." Again he leapt to his feet and clasped his hands over his head. "Child—child, if you knew all, you would pity me," he said, in a tone no louder than a whisper.

She had never heard anything so pitiful before. Seeing the agony of the man, and hearing him trying to convince himself of that at which his reason rebelled, was terribly pitiful to her. She never before that moment knew how she felt towards this man to whom she had given life.

"What can I say of comfort to you?" she said. "You have all the sympathy of my heart. Why will you not ask me to help you? What is my pity?"

He knelt beside her. "Be near me," he said. "Let me look at you now. Is there not a bond between us?—such a bond as binds man to his God? You gave me my life as a gift, and it will be a true life now. God had no pity for me, but you have more than given me your pity. The life you have given me is better than the life given me by God."

"Do not say that," she said. "Do not think that I have given you anything. It is your God who has changed you through those days of terrible suffering."

"Yes, the suffering is God's gift," he cried bitterly. "Torture of days and nights, and then not utter forgetfulness. After passing through the barrier of death, I am denied the blessings that should come with death."

"Why should you wish to forget anything of the past?" she asked. "Has everything been so very terrible to you?"

"Terrible?" he said, clasping his hands over one of his knees and gazing out to the conflict of purple and shell-pink in the west. "No, nothing was terrible. I am no Corsair with a hundred romantic crimes to give me so much remorseful agony as would enable me to act the part of Count Lara with consistency. I am no Lucifer encircled with a halo of splendid wickedness. It is only the change that has passed over me since I felt myself looking at you that gives me this agony of thought. Wasted time is my only sin—hours cast aside—years trampled upon. I lived for myself as I had a chance—as thousands of others do, and it did not seem to me anything terrible that I should make my father's days miserable to him. I did not feel myself to be the curse to him that I now know myself to have been. I was a curse to him. He had only myself in the world—no other son, and yet I could leave him to die alone—yes, and to die offering me his forgiveness—offering it when it was not in my power to refuse to accept it. This is the memory that God will not take away. Nay, I tell you it seems that instead of being blotted out by my days of suffering it is but intensified."

He had bowed down his face upon his hands as he sat there. Her eyes were full of tears of sympathy and compassion—she felt with him, and his sufferings were hers.

"I pity you—with all my soul I pity you," she said, laying her hand upon his shoulder.

He turned and took her hand, holding it not with a fervent grasp; but in his face that looked up to her tearful eyes there was a passion of love and adoration.

"As a man looks to his God I look to you," he said. "Be near me that the life you have given me may be good. Let me think of you, and the dead Past shall bury its dead."

What answer could she make to him? The tears continued to come to her eyes as she sat while he looked into her face.

"You know," she said—"you know I feel for you. You know that I understand you."

"Not all," he said slowly. "I am only beginning to understand myself; I have never done so in all my life hitherto."

Then they watched the delicate shadowy dimness—not gray, but full of the softest azure—begin to swathe the world beneath them. The waters of the bay were reflecting the darkening sky, and out over the ocean horizon a single star was beginning to breathe through the blue.

"Daireen," he said at length, "is the bond between us one of love?"

There was no passion in his voice, nor was his hand that held hers trembling as he spoke. She gave no start at his words, nor did she withdraw her hand. Through the silence the splash of the waterfall above them was heard clearly. She looked at him through the long pause.

"I do not know," she said. "I cannot answer you yet—No, not yet—not yet."

"I will not ask," he said quietly. "Not yet—not yet." And he dropped her hand.

Then he rose and looked out to that star, which was no longer smothered in the splendid blue of the heavens, but was glowing in passion until the waters beneath caught some of its rays.

There was a long pause before a voice sounded behind them on the slope—the musical voice of Miss Lottie Vincent.

"Did you ever see such a sentimental couple?" she cried, raising her hands with a very pretty expression of mock astonishment. "Watching the twilight as if you were sitting for your portraits, while here we have been searching for you over hill and dale. Have we not, Mr. Glaston?"

Mr. Glaston thought it unnecessary to corroborate a statement made with such evident ingenuousness.

"Well, your search met with its reward, I hope, Miss Vincent," said Oswin.

"What, in finding you?"

"I am not so vain as to fancy it possible that you should accept that as a reward, Miss Vincent," he replied.

The young lady gave him a glance that was meant to read his inmost soul. Then she laughed.

"We must really hasten back to good Mamma Crawford," she said, with a seriousness that seemed more frivolous than her frivolity. "Every one will be wondering where we have been."

"Lucky that you will be able to tell them," remarked Oswin.

"How?" she said quickly, almost apprehensively.

"Why, you know you can say 'Over hill, over dale,' and so satisfy even the most sceptical in a moment."

Miss Lottie made a little pause, then laughed again; she did not think it necessary to make any reply.

And so they all went down by the little track along the edge of the ravine, and the great Peak became darker above them as the twilight dwindled into evening.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I have remembrances of yours—
... words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich.

Hamlet.... You do remember all the circumstance?
Horatio. Remember it, my lord?
Hamlet. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep.

... poor Ophelia,
Divided from herself and her fair judgment.

Sleep rock thy brain,
And never come mischance.—*Hamlet.*

MRS. Crawford was not in the least apprehensive of the safety of the young people who had been placed under her care upon this day. She had been accustomed in the good old days at Arradambad, when the scorching inhabitants had lifted their eyes unto the hills, and had fled to their cooling slopes, to organise little open-air tiffins for the benefit of such young persons as had come out to visit the British Empire in the East under the guidance of the major's wife, and the result of her experience went to prove that it was quite unnecessary to be in the least degree nervous regarding the ultimate welfare of the

young persons who were making collections of the various products of Nature. It was much better for the young persons to learn self-dependence, she thought, and though many of the maidens under her care had previously, through long seasons at Continental watering-places, become acquainted with a few of the general points to be observed in maintaining a course of self-dependence, yet the additional help that came to them from the hills was invaluable.

As Mrs. Crawford now gave a casual glance round the descending party, she felt that her skill as a tactician was not on the wane. They were walking together, and though Lottie was of course chatting away as flippantly as ever, yet both Markham and Mr. Glaston was very silent, she saw, and her conclusions were as rapid as those of an accustomed campaigner should be. Mr. Glaston had been talking to Daireen in the twilight, so that Lottie's floss-chat was a trouble to him; while Oswin Markham was wearied with having listened for nearly an hour to her inanities, and was seeking for the respite of silence.

"You naughty children, to stray away in that fashion!" she cried. "Do you fancy you had permission to lose yourselves like that?"

"Did we lose ourselves, Miss Vincent?" said Markham.

"We certainly did not," said Lottie, and then Mrs. Crawford's first suggestions were confirmed: Lottie and Markham spoke of themselves, while Daireen and Mr. Glaston were mute.

"It was very naughty of you," continued the matron. "Why, in India, if you once dared do such a thing——"

"We should do it for ever," cried Lottie. "Now, you know, my dear good Mrs. Crawford, I have been in India, and I have had experience of your picnics when we were at the hills—oh, the most delightful little affairs—every one used to look forward to them."

Mrs. Crawford laughed gently as she patted Lottie on the cheek. "Ah, they were now and again successes, were they not? How I wish Daireen had been with us."

"Egad, she would not be with us now, my dear," said the major. "Eh, George, what do you say, my boy?"

"For shame, major," cried Mrs. Crawford, glancing towards Lottie.

"Eh, what?" said the bewildered Boot Commissioner, who meant to be very gallant indeed. It was some moments before he perceived how Miss Vincent could construe his words, and then he attempted an explanation, which made matters worse. "My dear, I assure you I never meant that your attractions were not—not—ah—most attractive, they were, I assure you—you were then most attractive."

"And so far from having waned," said Colonel Gerald, "it would seem that every year has but——"

"Why, what on earth is the meaning of this raid of compliments on poor little me?" cried the young lady in the most artless manner, glancing from the major to the colonel with uplifted hands.

"Let us hasten to the carriages, and leave these old men to talk their nonsense to each other," said Mrs. Crawford, putting her arm about one of the daughters of the member of the Legislative Council—a young lady who had found the companionship of Standish Macnamara quite as pleasant as her sister had the guidance of the judge's son up the ravine—and so they descended to where the carriages were waiting to take them towards Cape Town. Daireen and her father were to walk to the Dutch cottage, which was but a short distance away, and with them, of course, Standish.

"Good-bye, my dear child," said Mrs. Crawford, embracing Daireen, while the others talked in a group. "You are looking pale, dear, but never mind; I will drive out and have a long chat with you in a couple of days," she whispered, in a way she meant to be particularly impressive.

Then the carriage went off, and Daireen put her hand through her father's arm, and walked silently in the silent evening to the house among the aloes and Australian oaks, through whose leaves the fireflies were flitting in myriads.

"She is a good woman," said Colonel Gerald. "An exceedingly good woman, only her long experience of the sort of girls who used to be sent out to her at India has made her rather misjudge the race, I think."

"She is so good," said Daireen. "Think of all the trouble she was at to-day for our sake."

"Yes, for our sake," laughed her father. "My dear Dolly, if you could only know the traditions our old station retains of Mrs. Crawford, you would think her doubly good. The trouble she has gone to for the sake of her friends—her importations by every mail—is simply astonishing. But what did you think of that charming Miss Van der Veldt you took such care of, Standish, my boy? Did you make much progress in Cape Dutch?"

But Standish could not answer in the same strain of pleasantry. He was thinking too earnestly upon the visions his fancy had been conjuring up during the entire evening—visions of Mr. Glaston sitting by the side of Daireen gazing out to that seductive, though by no means uncommon, phenomenon of sunset. He had often wished, when at the waterfall gathering Venus-hair for Miss Van der Veldt, that he could come into possession of the power of Joshua at the valley of Gibeon to arrest the descent of the orb. The possibly disastrous consequences to the planetary system seemed to him but trifling weighed against the advantages that would accrue from the fact of Mr. Glaston's being deprived of a source of conversation that was both fruitful and poetical. Standish knew well, without having read Wordsworth, that the twilight was sovereign of one peaceful hour; he had in his mind quite a store of unuttered poetical observations upon sunset, and he felt that Mr. Glaston might possibly be possessed of similar resources which he could draw upon when occasion demanded such a display. The thought of Mr. Glaston sitting at the feet of Daireen, and with her drinking in of the glory of the west, was agonising to Standish, and so he could not enter into Colonel Gerald's pleasantry regarding the attractive daughter of the member of the Legislative Council.

When Daireen had shut the door of her room that night and stood alone in the darkness, she found the relief that she had been seeking since she had come down from the slope of that great Peak—relief that could not be found even in the presence of her father, who had been everything to her a few days before. She found relief in being alone with her thoughts in the silence of the night. She drew aside the curtains of her window, and looked out up to that Peak which was towering amongst the brilliant stars. She could know exactly the spot upon the edge of the ravine where she had been sitting—where they had been sitting. What did it all mean? she asked herself. She could not at first recollect any of the words she had heard upon that slope, she

could not even think what they should mean, but she had a childlike consciousness of happiness mixed with fear. What was the mystery that had been unfolded to her up there? What was the revelation that had been made to her? She could not tell. It seemed wonderful to her how she could so often have looked up to that hill without feeling anything of what she now felt gazing up to its slope.

It was all too wonderful for her to understand. She had a consciousness of nothing but that all was wonderful. She could not remember any of his words except those he had last uttered. The bond between them—was it of love? How could she tell? What did she know of love? She could not answer him when he had spoken to her, nor was she able even now, as she stood looking out to those brilliant stars that crowned the Peak and studded the dark edges of the slope which had been lately overspread with the poppy-petals of sunset. It was long before she went into her bed, but she had arrived at no conclusion to her thoughts—all that had happened seemed mysterious; and she knew not whether she felt happy beyond all the happiness she had ever known, or sad beyond the sadness of any hour of her life. Her sleep swallowed up all her perplexity.

But the instant she awoke in the bright morning she went softly over to the window and looked out from a corner of her blind to that slope and to the place where they had sat. No, it was not a dream. There shone the silver leaves and there sparkled the waterfall. It was the loveliest hill in the world, she felt—lovelier even than the purple heather-clad Slieve Docas. This was a terrible thought to suggest itself to her mind, she felt all the time she was dressing, but still it remained with her and refused to be shaken off.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
... her election
Hath sealed thee for herself.

Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me.

Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records...
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Unmixed with baser matter; yes, by heaven!—*Hamlet.*

COLONEL Gerald was well aware of Mrs. Crawford's strategical skill, and he had watched its development and exercise during the afternoon of that pleasant little luncheon party on the hill. He remembered what she had said to him so gravely at the garden-party at Government House regarding the responsibility inseparable from the guardianship of Daireen at the Cape, and he knew that Mrs. Crawford had in her mind, when she organised the party to the hill, such precepts as she had previously enunciated. He had watched and admired her cleverness in arranging the collecting expeditions, and he felt that her detaining of Mr. Glaston as she had under some pretext until all the others but Daireen had gone up the ravine was a master stroke. But at this point Colonel Gerald's observation ended. His imagination had been much less vivid than either Mrs. Crawford's or Standish's. He did not attribute any subtle influence to the setting sun, nor did he conjure up any vision of Mr. Glaston sitting at the feet of Daireen and uttering words that the magic of the sunset glories alone could inspire.

The fact was that he knew much better than either Mrs. Crawford or Standish how his daughter felt towards Mr. Glaston, and he was not in the least concerned in the result of her observation of the glowing west by the side of the Art prophet. When Mrs. Crawford looked narrowly into the girl's face on her descent Colonel Gerald had only laughed; he did not feel any distressing weight of responsibility on the subject of the guardianship of his daughter, for he had not given a single thought to the accident of his daughter's straying up the ravine with Algernon Glaston, nor was he impressed by his daughter's behaviour on the day following. They had driven out together to pay some visits, and she had been even more affectionate to him than usual, and he justified Mrs. Crawford's accusation of his ignorance and the ignorance of men generally, by feeling, from this fact, more assured that Daireen had passed unscathed through the ordeal of sunset and the drawing on of twilight on the mount.

On the next day to that on which they had paid their visits, however, Daireen seemed somewhat abstracted in her manner, and when her father asked her if she would ride with him and Standish to The Flats she, for the first time, brought forward a plea—the plea of weariness—to be allowed to remain at home.

Her father looked at her, not narrowly nor with the least glance of suspicion, only tenderly, as he said:

“Certainly, stay at home if you wish, Dolly. You must not overtax yourself, or we shall have to get a nurse for you.”

He sat by her side on the chair on the stoep of the Dutch cottage and put his arm about her. In an instant

she had clasped him round the neck and had hidden her face upon his shoulder in something like hysterical passion. He laughed and patted her on the back in mock protest at her treatment. It was some time before she unwound her arms and he got upon his feet, declaring that he would not submit to such rough handling. But all the same he saw that her eyes were full of tears; and as he rode with Standish over the sandy plain made bright with heath, he thought more than once that there was something strange in her action and still stranger in her tears.

Standish, however, felt equal to explaining everything that seemed unaccountable. He felt there could be no doubt that Daireen was wearying of these rides with him: he was nothing more than a brother—a dull, wearisome, commonplace brother to her, while such fellows as Glaston, who had made fame for themselves, having been granted the opportunity denied to others, were naturally attractive to her. Feeling this, Standish once more resolved to enter upon that enterprise of work which he felt to be ennobling. He would no longer linger here in silken-folded idleness, he would work—work—work—steadfastly, nobly, to win her who was worth all the labour of a man's life. Yes, he would no longer remain inactive as he had been, he would—well, he lit another cigar and trotted up to the side of Colonel Gerald.

But Daireen, after the departure of her father and Standish, continued sitting upon the chair under the lovely creeping plants that twined themselves around the lattice of the projecting roof. It was very cool in the gracious shade while all the world outside was red with heat. The broad leaves of the plants in the garden were hanging languidly, and the great black bees plunged about the mighty roses that were bursting into bloom with the first breath of the southern summer. From the brink of the little river at the bottom of the avenue of Australian oaks the chatter of the Hottentot washerwomen came, and across the intervening space of short tawny grass a Malay fruitman passed, carrying his baskets slung on each end of a bamboo pole across his shoulders.

She looked out at the scene—so strange to her even after the weeks she had been at this place; all was strange to her—as the thoughts that were in her mind. It seemed to her that she had been but one day at this place, and yet since she had heard the voice of Oswin Markham how great a space had passed! All the days she had been here were swallowed up in the interval that had elapsed since she had seen this man—since she had seen him? Why, there he was before her very eyes, standing by the side of his horse with the bridle over his arm. There he was watching her while she had been thinking her thoughts.

She stood amongst the blossoms of the trellis, white and lovely as a lily in a land of red sun. He felt her beauty to be unutterably gracious to look upon. He threw his bridle over a branch and walked up to her.

“I have come to say good-bye,” he said as he took her hand.

These were the same words that she had heard from Harwood a few days before and that had caused her to smile. But now the hand Markham was not holding was pressed against her heart. Now she knew all. There was no mystery between them. She knew why her heart became still after beating tumultuously for a few seconds; and he, though he had not designed the words with the same object that Harwood had, and though he spoke them without the same careful observance of their effect, in another instant had seen what was in the girl's heart.

“To say good-bye?” she repeated mechanically.

“For a time, yes; for a long time it will seem to me—for a month.”

He saw the faint smile that came to her face, and how her lips parted as a little sigh of relief passed through them.

“For a month?” she said, and now she was speaking in her own voice, and sitting down. “A month is not a long time to say good-bye for, Mr. Markham. But I am so sorry that papa is gone out for his ride on The Flats.”

“I am fortunate in finding even you here, then,” he said.

“Fortunate! Yes,” she said. “But where do you mean to spend this month?” she continued, feeling that he was now nothing more than a visitor.

“It is very ridiculous—very foolish,” he replied. “I promised, you know, to act in some entertainment Miss Vincent has been getting up, and only yesterday her father received orders to proceed to Natal; but as all the fellows who had promised her to act are in the company of the Bayonetteers that has also been ordered off, no difference will be made in her arrangements, only that the performance will take place at Pietermaritzburg instead of at Cape Town. But she is so unreasonable as to refuse to release me from my promise, and I am bound to go with them.”

“It is a compliment to value your services so highly, is it not?”

“I would be glad to sacrifice all the gratification I find from thinking so for the sake of being released. She is both absurd and unreasonable.”

“So it would certainly strike any one hearing only of this,” said Daireen. “But it will only be for a month, and you will see the place.”

“I would rather remain seeing this place,” he said. “Seeing that hill above us.” She flushed as though he had told her in those words that he was aware of how often she had been looking up to that slope since they had been there together—

There was a long pause, through which the voices and laughter of the women at the river-bank were heard.

“Daireen,” said the man, who stood up bareheaded before her. “Daireen, that hour we sat up there upon that slope has changed all my thoughts of life. I tell you the life which you restored to me a month ago I had ceased to regard as a gift. I had come to hope that it would end speedily. You cannot know how wretched I was.”

“And now?” she said, looking up to him. “And now?”

“Now,” he answered. “Now—what can I tell you? If I were to be cut off from life and happiness now, I should stand before God and say that I have had all the happiness that can be joined to one life on earth. I have had that one hour with you, and no God or man can take it from me: I have lived that hour, and none can

make me unlive it. I told you I would say no word of love to you then, but I have come to say the word now. Child, I dared not love you as I was—I had no thought worthy to be devoted to loving you. God knows how I struggled with all my soul to keep myself from doing you the injustice of thinking of you; but that hour at your feet has given me something of your divine nature, and with that which I have caught from you, I can love you. Daireen, will you take the love I offer you? It is yours—all yours."

He was not speaking passionately, but when she looked up and saw his face haggard with earnestness she was almost frightened—she would have been frightened if she had not loved him as she now knew she did. "Speak," he said, "speak to me—one word."

"One word?" she repeated. "What one word can I say?"

"Tell me all that is in your heart, Daireen."

She looked up to him again. "All?" she said with a little smile. "All? No, I could never tell you all. You know a little of it. That is the bond between us."

He turned away and actually took a few steps from her. On his face was an expression that could not easily have been read. But in an instant he seemed to recover himself. He took her hand in his.

"My darling," he said, "the Past has buried its dead. I shall make myself worthy to think of you—I swear it to you. You shall have a true man to love." He was almost fierce in his earnestness, and her hand that he held was crushed for an instant. Then he looked into her face with tenderness. "How have you come to answer my love with yours?" he said almost wonderingly. "What was there in me to make you think of my existence for a single instant?"

She looked at him. "You were—you," she said, offering him the only explanation in her power. It had seemed to her easy enough to explain as she looked at him. Who else was worth loving with this love in all the world, she thought. He alone was worthy of all her heart.

"My darling, my darling," he said, "I am unworthy to have a single thought of you."

"You are indeed if you continue talking so," she said with a laugh, for she felt unutterably happy.

"Then I will not talk so. I will make myself worthy to think of you by—by—thinking of you. For a month, Daireen,—for a month we can only think of each other. It is better that I should not see you until the last tatter of my old self is shred away."

"It cannot be better that you should go away," she said. "Why should you go away just as we are so happy?"

"I must go, Daireen," he said. "I must go—and now. I would to God I could stay! but believe me, I cannot, darling; I feel that I must go."

"Because you made that stupid promise?" she said.

"That promise is nothing. What is such a promise to me now? If I had never made it I should still go."

He was looking down at her as he spoke. "Do not ask me to say anything more. There is nothing more to be said. Will you forget me in a month, do you think?"

Was it possible that there was a touch of anxiety in the tone of his question? she thought for an instant. Then she looked into his face and laughed.

"God bless you, Daireen!" he said tenderly, and there was sadness rather than passion in his voice.

"God keep you, Daireen! May nothing but happiness ever come to you!"

He held out his hand to her, and she laid her own trustfully in his.

"Do not say good-bye," she pleaded. "Think that it is only for a month—less than a month, it must be. You can surely be back in less than a month."

"I can," he replied; "I can, and I will be back within a month, and then— God keep you, Daireen, for ever!"

He was holding her hand in his own with all gentleness. His face was bent down close to hers, but he did not kiss her face, only her hand. He crushed it to his lips, and then dropped it. She was blinded with her tears, so that she did not see him hasten away through the avenue of oaks. She did not even hear his horse's tread, nor could she know that he had not once turned round to give her a farewell look.

It was some minutes before she seemed to realise that she was alone. She sprang to her feet and stood looking out over those deathly silent broad leaves, and those immense aloes, that seemed to be the plants in a picture of a strange region. She heard the laughter of the Hottentot women at the river, and the unmusical shriek of a bird in the distance. She clasped her hands over her head, looking wistfully through the foliage of the oaks, but she did not utter a word. He was gone, she knew now, for she felt a loneliness that overwhelmed every other feeling. She seemed to be in the middle of a bare and joyless land. The splendid shrubs that branched before her eyes seemed dead, and the silence of the warm scented air was a terror to her.

He was gone, she knew, and there was nothing left for her but this loneliness. She went into her room in the cottage and seated herself upon her little sofa, hiding her face in her hands, and she felt it good to pray for him—for this man whom she had come to love, she knew not how. But she knew she loved him so that he was a part of her own life, and she felt that it would always be so. She could scarcely think what her life had been before she had seen him. How could she ever have fancied that she loved her father before this man had taught her what it was to love? Now she felt how dear beyond all thought her father was to her. It was not merely love for himself that she had learnt from Oswin Markham, it was the power of loving truly and perfectly that he had taught her.

Thus she dreamed until she heard the pleasant voice of her friend Mrs. Crawford in the hall. Then she rose and wondered if every one would not notice the change that had passed over her. Was it not written upon her face? Would not every touch of her hand—every word of her voice, betray it?

Then she lifted up her head and felt equal to facing even Mrs. Crawford, and to acknowledging all that she believed the acute observation of that lady would read from her face as plainly as from the page of a book.

But it seemed that Mrs. Crawford's eyes were heavy this afternoon, for though she looked into Daireen's

face and kissed her cheek affectionately, she made no accusation.

"I am lucky in finding you all alone, my dear," she said. "It is so different ashore from aboard ship. I have not really had one good chat with you since we landed. George is always in the way, or the major, you know—ah, you think I should rather say the colonel and Jack, but indeed I think of your father only as Lieutenant George. And you enjoyed our little lunch on the hill, I hope? I thought you looked pale when you came down. Was it not a most charming sunset?"

"It was indeed," said Daireen, straining her eyes to catch a glimpse through the window of the slope where the red light had rested.

"I knew you would enjoy it, my dear. Mr. Glaston is such good company—ah, that is, of course, to a sympathetic mind. And I don't think I am going too far, Daireen, when I say that I am sure he was in company with a sympathetic mind the evening before last."

Mrs. Crawford was smiling as one smiles passing a graceful compliment.

"I think he was," said Daireen. "Miss Vincent and he always seemed pleased with each other's society."

"Miss Vincent?—Lottie Vincent?" cried the lady in a puzzled but apprehensive way. "What do you mean, Daireen? Lottie Vincent?"

"Why, you know Mr. Glaston and Miss Vincent went away from us, among the silver leaves, and only returned as we were coming down the hill."

Mrs. Crawford was speechless for some moments. Then she looked at the girl, saying, "*We,—who were we?*"

"Mr. Markham and myself," replied Daireen without faltering.

"Ah, indeed," said the other pleasantly. Then there was a pause before she added, "That ends my association with Lottie Vincent. The artful, designing little creature! Daireen, you have no idea what good nature it required on my part to take any notice of that girl, knowing so much as I do of her; and this is how she treats me! Never mind; I have done with her." Seeing the girl's puzzled glance, Mrs. Crawford began to recollect that it could not be expected that Daireen should understand the nature of Lottie's offence; so she added, "I mean, you know, dear, that that girl is full of spiteful, designing tricks upon every occasion. And yet she had the effrontery to come to me yesterday to beg of me to take charge of her while her father would be at Natal. But I was not quite so weak. Never mind; she leaves tomorrow, thank goodness, and that is the last I mean to see of her. But about Mr. Markham: I hope you do not think I had anything to say in the matter of letting you be with him, Daireen. I did not mean it, indeed."

"I am sure of it," said Daireen quietly—so quietly that Mrs. Crawford began to wonder could it be possible that the girl wished to show that she had been aware of the plans which had been designed on her behalf. Before she had made up her mind, however, the horses of Colonel Gerald and Standish were heard outside, and in a moment afterwards the colonel entered the room.

"Papa," said Daireen almost at once, "Mr. Markham rode out to see you this afternoon."

"Ah, indeed? I am sorry I missed him," he said quietly. But Mrs. Crawford stared at the girl, wondering what was coming.

"He came to say good-bye, papa."

Mrs. Crawford's heart began to beat again.

"What, is he returning to England?" asked the colonel.

"Oh, no; he is only about to follow Mr. Harwood's example and go up to Natal."

"Then he need not have said good-bye, anymore than Harwood," remarked the colonel; and his daughter felt it hard to restrain herself from throwing her arms about his neck.

"Ah," said Mrs. Crawford, "Miss Lottie has triumphed! This Mr. Markham will go up in the steamer with her, and will probably act with her in this theatrical nonsense she is always getting up."

"He is to act with her certainly," said Daireen. "Ah! Lottie has made a success at last," cried the elder lady. "Mr. Markham will suit her admirably. They will be engaged before they reach Algoa Bay."

"My dear Kate, why will you always jump at conclusions?" said the colonel. "Markham is a fellow of far too much sense to be in the least degree led by such a girl as Lottie."

Daireen had hold of her father's arm, and when he had spoken she turned round and kissed him. But it was not at all unusual for her to kiss him in this fashion on his return from a ride.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Haply the seas and countries different
With variable objects shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brain still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself.—*Hamlet*

HE had got a good deal to think about, this Mr. Oswin Markham, as he stood on the bridge of the steamer that was taking him round the coast to Natal, and looked back at that mountain whose strange shape had never seemed stranger than it did from the distance of the Bay.

Table Mountain was of a blue dimness, and the white walls of the houses at its base were quite hidden; Robbin Island lighthouse had almost dwindled out of sight; and in the water, through the bright red gold shed from a mist in the west that the falling sun saturated with light, were seen the black heads of innumerable seals swimming out from the coastway of rocks. Yes, Mr. Oswin Markham had certainly a good deal to think about as he looked back to the flat-ridged mountain, and, mentally, upon all that had taken place since he had first seen its ridges a few weeks before.

He had thought it well to talk of love to that girl who had given him the gift of the life he was at present breathing—to talk to her of love and to ask her to love him. Well, he had succeeded; she had put her hand trustfully in his and had trusted him with all her heart, he knew; and yet the thought of it did not make him happy. His heart was not the heart of one who has triumphed. It was only full of pity for the girl who had listened to him and replied to him.

And for himself he felt what was more akin to shame than any other feeling—shame, that, knowing all he did of himself, he had still spoken those words to the girl to whom he owed the life that was now his.

“God! was it not forced upon me when I struggled against it with all my soul?” he said, in an endeavour to strangle his bitter feeling. “Did not I make up my mind to leave the ship when I saw what was coming upon me, and was I to be blamed if I could not do so? Did not I rush away from her without a word of farewell? Did not we meet by chance that night in the moonlight? Were those words that I spoke to her thought over? Were not they forced from me against my own will, and in spite of my resolution?” There could be no doubt that if any one acquainted with all the matters to which he referred had been ready to answer him, a satisfactory reply would have been received by him to each of his questions. But though, of course, he was aware of this, yet he seemed to find it necessary to alter the ground of the argument he was advancing for his own satisfaction. “I have a right to forget the wretched past,” he said, standing upright and looking steadfastly across the glowing waters. “Have not I died for the past? Is not this life a new one? It is God's justice that I am carrying out by forgetting all. The past is past, and the future in all truth and devotion is hers.”

There were, indeed, some moments of his life—and the present was one of them—when he felt satisfied in his conscience by assuring himself, as he did now, that as God had taken away all remembrance of the past from many men who had suffered the agonies of death, he was therefore entitled to let his past life and its recollections drift away on that broken mast from which he had been cut in the middle of the ocean; but the justice of the matter had not occurred to him when he got that bank order turned into money at the Cape, nor at the time when he had written to the agents of his father's property in England, informing them of his escape. He now stood up and spoke those words of his, and felt their force, until the sun, whose outline had all the afternoon been undefined in the mist, sank beneath the horizon, and the gorgeous colours drifted round from his sinking place and dwindled into the dark green of the waters. He watched the sunset, and though Lottie Vincent came to his side in her most playful mood, her fresh and artless young nature found no response to its impulses in him. She turned away chilled, but no more discouraged than a little child, who, desirous of being instructed on the secret of the creative art embodied in the transformation of a handkerchief into a rabbit, finds its mature friend reflecting upon a perplexing point in the theory of Unconscious Cerebration. Lottie knew that her friend Mr. Oswin Markham sometimes had to think about matters of such a nature as caused her little pleasantries to seem incongruous. She thought that now she had better turn to a certain Lieutenant Clifford, who, she knew, had no intricate mental problems to work out; and she did turn to him, with great advantage to herself, and, no doubt, to the officer as well. However forgetful Oswin Markham may have been of his past life, he could still recollect a few generalities that had struck him in former years regarding young persons of a nature similar to this pretty little Miss Vincent's. She had insisted on his fulfilling his promise to act with her, and he would fulfil it with a good grace; but at this point his contract terminated; he would not be tempted into making another promise to her which he might find much more embarrassing to carry out with consistency.

It had been a great grief to Lottie to be compelled, through the ridiculous treatment of her father by the authorities in ordering him to Natal, to transfer her dramatic entertainment from Cape Town to Pietermaritzburg. However, as she had sold a considerable number of tickets to her friends, she felt that “the most deserving charity,” the augmentation of whose funds was the avowed object of the entertainment, would be benefited in no inconsiderable degree by the change of venue. If the people of Pietermaritzburg would steadfastly decline to supply her with so good an audience as the Cape Town people, there still would be a margin of profit, since her friends who had bought tickets on the understanding that the performance would take place where it was at first intended, did not receive their money back. How could they expect such a concession, Lottie asked, with innocent indignation; and begged to be informed if it was her fault that her father was ordered to Natal. Besides this one unanswerable query, she reminded those who ventured to make a timid suggestion regarding the returns, that it was in aid of a most deserving charity the tickets had been sold, so that it would be an act of injustice to give back a single shilling that had been paid for the tickets. Pursuing this very excellent system, Miss Lottie had to the credit of the coming performance a considerable sum which would provide against the contingencies of a lack of dramatic enthusiasm amongst the inhabitants of Pietermaritzburg.

It was at the garden-party at Government House that Markham had by accident mentioned to Lottie that he had frequently taken part in dramatic performances for such-like objects as Lottie's was designed to succour, and though he at first refused to be a member, of her company, yet at Mrs. Crawford's advocacy of the claims of the deserving object, he had agreed to place his services and experience at the disposal of the originator of the benevolent scheme.

At Cape Town he had not certainly thrown himself very heartily into the business of creating a part in the drama which had been selected. He was well aware that if a good performance of the nature designed by Lottie is successful, a bad performance is infinitely more so; and that any attempt on the side of an amateur

to strike out a new character from an old part is looked upon with suspicion, and is generally attended with disaster; so he had not given himself any trouble in the matter.

"My dear Miss Vincent," he had said in reply to a pretty little remonstrance from the young lady, "the department of study requiring most attention in a dramatic entertainment of this sort is the financial. Sell all the tickets you can, and you will be a greater benefactress to the charity than if you acted like a Kemble."

Lottie had taken his advice; but still she made up her mind that Mr. Markham's name should be closely associated with the entertainment, and consequently, with her own name. Had she not been at pains to put into circulation certain stories of the romance surrounding him, and thus disposed of an unusual number of stalls? For even if one is not possessed of any dramatic inclinations, one is always ready to pay a price for looking at a man who has been saved from a shipwreck, or who has been the co-respondent in some notorious law case.

When the fellows of the Bayonetteers, who had been indulging in a number of surmises regarding Lottie's intentions with respect to Markham, heard that the young lady's father had been ordered to proceed to Natal without delay, the information seemed to give them a good deal of merriment. The man who offered four to one that Lottie should not be able to get any lady friend to take charge of her in Cape Town until her father's return, could get no one to accept his odds; but his proposal of three to one that she would get Markham to accompany her to Natal was eagerly taken up; so that there were several remarks made at the mess reflecting upon the acuteness of Mr. Markham's perception when it was learned that he was going with the young lady and her father.

"You see," remarked the man who had laid the odds, "I knew something of Lottie in India, and I knew what she was equal to."

"Lottie is a devilish smart child, by Jove," said one of the losers meditatively.

"Yes, she has probably cut her eye-teeth some years ago," hazarded another subaltern.

There was a considerable pause before a third of this full bench delivered final judgment as the result of the consideration of the case.

"Poor beggar!" he remarked; "poor beggar! he's a finished coon."

And that Mr. Oswin Markham was, indeed, a man whose career had been defined for him by another in the plainest possible manner, no member of the mess seemed to doubt.

During the first couple of days of the voyage round the coast, when Miss Lottie would go to the side of Mr. Markham for the purpose of consulting him on some important point of detail in the intended performance, the shrewd young fellows of the regiment of Bayonetteers pulled their phantom shreds of moustaches, and brought the muscles of their faces about the eyes into play to a remarkable extent, with a view of assuring one another of the possession of an unusual amount of sagacity by the company to which they belonged. But when, after the third day of rehearsals, Lottie's manner of gentle persuasiveness towards them altered to nasty bitter upbraidings of the young man who had committed the trifling error of overlooking an entire scene here and there in working out the character he was to bring before the audience, and to a most hurtful glance of scorn at the other aspirant who had marked off in the margin of his copy of the play all the dialogue he was to speak, but who, unfortunately, had picked up a second copy belonging to a young lady in which another part had been similarly marked, so that he had, naturally enough, perfected himself in the dialogue of the lady's rôle without knowing a letter of his own—when, for such trifling slips as these, Lottie was found to be so harsh, the deep young fellows made their facial muscles suggest a doubt as to whether it might not be possible that Markham was of a sterner and less malleable nature than they had at first believed him.

The fact was that since Lottie had met with Oswin Markham she had been in considerable perplexity of mind. She had found out that he was in by no means indigent circumstances; but even with her guileless, careless perceptions, she was not long in becoming aware that he was not likely to be moulded according to her desires; so, while still behaving in a fascinating manner towards him, she had had many agreeable half-hours with Mr. Glaston, who was infinitely more plastic, she could see; but so soon as the order had come for her father to go up to Natal she had returned in thought to Oswin Markham, and had smiled to see the grins upon the expressive faces of the officers of the Bayonetteers when she found herself by the side of Oswin Markham. She rather liked these grins, for she had an idea—in her own simple way, of course—that there is a general tendency on the part of young people to associate when their names have been previously associated. She knew that the fact of her having persuaded this Mr. Markham to accompany her to Natal would cause his name to be joined with hers pretty frequently, and in her innocence she had no objection to make to this.

As for Markham himself, he knew perfectly well what remarks people would make on the subject of his departure in the steamer with Lottie Vincent; he knew before he had been a day on the voyage that the Bayonetteers regarded him as somewhat deficient in firmness; but he felt that there was no occasion for him to be utterly broken down in spirit on account of this opinion being held by the Bayonetteers. He was not so blind but that he caught a glimpse now and again of a facial distortion on the part of a member of the company. He felt that it was probable these far-seeing fellows would be disappointed at the result of their surmises.

And indeed the fellows of the regiment were beginning, before the voyage was quite over, to feel that this Mr. Oswin Markham was not altogether of the yielding nature which they had ascribed to him on the grounds of his having promised Lottie Vincent to accompany her and her father to Natal at this time. About Lottie herself there was but one opinion expressed, and that was of such a character as any one disposed to ingratiate himself with the girl by means of flattery would hardly have hastened to communicate to her; for the poor little thing had been so much worried of late over the rehearsals which she was daily conducting aboard the steamer, that, failing to meet with any expression of sympathy from Oswin Markham, she had spoken very freely to some of the company in comment upon their dramatic capacity, and not even an amateur actor likes to receive unreserved comment of an unfavourable character upon his powers.

"She is a confounded little humbug," said one of the subalterns to Oswin in confidence on the last day of the voyage. "Hang me if I would have had anything to say to this deuced mummery if I had known what sort of a girl she was. By George, you should hear the stories Kirkham has on his fingers' ends about her in India."

Oswin laughed quietly. "It would be rash, if not cruel, to believe all the stories that are told about girls in India," he said. "As for Miss Vincent, I believe her to be a charming girl—as an actress."

"Yes," said the lieutenant, who had not left his grinder on English literature long enough to forget all that he had learned of the literature of the past century—"yes; she is an actress among girls, and a girl among actresses."

"Good," said Oswin; "very good. What is it that somebody or other remarked about Lord Chesterfield as a wit?"

"Never mind," said the other, ceasing the laugh he had commenced. "What I say about Lottie is true."

CHAPTER XXX.

This world is not for aye, nor'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change;
For'tis a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.

Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

... so you must take your husbands.

It is our trick. Nature her custom holds
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone
The woman will be out.—*Hamlet*.

OF course," said Lottie, as she stood by the side of Oswin Markham when the small steamer which had been specially engaged to take the field-officers of the Bayonetteers over the dreaded bar of Durban harbour was approaching the quay—"of course we shall all go together up to Pietermaritzburg. I have been there before, you know. We shall have a coach all to ourselves from Durban." She looked up to his face with only the least questioning expression upon her own. But Mr. Markham thought that he had made quite enough promises previously: it would be unwise to commit himself even in so small a detail as the manner of the journey from the port of Durban to the garrison town of Pietermaritzburg, which he knew was at a distance of upwards of fifty miles.

"I have not the least idea what I shall do when we land," he said. "It is probable that I shall remain at the port for some days. I may as well see all that there is on view in this part of the colony."

This was very distressing to the young lady.

"Do you mean to desert me?" she asked somewhat reproachfully.

"Desert you?" he said in a puzzled way. "Ah, those are the words in a scene in your part, are they not?"

Lottie became irritated almost beyond the endurance of a naturally patient soul.

"Do you mean to leave me to stand alone against all my difficulties, Mr. Markham?"

"I should be sorry to do that, Miss Vincent. If you have difficulties, tell me what they are; and if they are of such a nature that they can be curtailed by me, you may depend upon my exerting myself."

"You know very well what idiots these Bayonetteers are," cried Lottie.

"I know that most of them have promised to act in your theatricals," replied Markham quietly; and Lottie tried to read his soul in another of her glances to discover the exact shade of the meaning of his words, but she gave up the quest.

"Of course you can please yourself, Mr. Markham," she said, with a coldness that was meant to appal him.

"And I trust that I may never be led to do so at the expense of another," he remarked.

"Then you will come in our coach?" she cried, brightening up.

"Pray do not descend to particulars when we are talking in this vague way on broad matters of sentiment, Miss Vincent."

"But I must know what you intend to do at once."

"At once? I intend to go ashore, and try if it is possible to get a dinner worth eating. After that—well, this is Tuesday, and on Thursday week your entertainment will take place; before that day you say you want three rehearsals, then I will agree to be by your side at Pietermaritzburg on Saturday next."

This business-like arrangement was not what Lottie on leaving Cape Town had meant to be the result of the voyage to Natal. There was a slight pause before she asked:

"What do you mean by treating me in this way? I always thought you were my friend. What will papa say if

you leave me to go up there alone?"

This was a very daring bit of dialogue on the part of Miss Lottie, but they were nearing the quay where she knew Oswin would be free; aboard the mail steamer of course he was—well, scarcely free. But Mr. Markham was one of those men who are least discomfited by a daring stroke. He looked steadfastly at the girl so soon as she uttered her words.

"The problem is too interesting to be allowed to pass, Miss Vincent," he said. "We shall do our best to have it answered. By Jove, doesn't that man on the quay look like Harwood? It is Harwood indeed, and I thought him among the Zulus."

The first man caught sight of on the quay was indeed the special correspondent of the *Dominant Trumpeter*. Lottie's manner changed instantly on seeing him, and she gave one of her girlish laughs on noticing the puzzled expression upon his face as he replied to her salutations while yet afar. She was very careful to keep by the side of Oswin until the steamer was at the quay; and when at last Harwood recognised the features of the two persons who had been saluting him, she saw him look with a little smile first to herself, then to Oswin, and she thought it prudent to give a small guilty glance downwards and to repeat her girlish laugh.

Oswin saw Harwood's glance and heard Lottie's laugh. He also heard the young lady making an explanation of certain matters, to which Harwood answered with a second little smile.

"Kind? Oh, exceedingly kind of him to come so long a distance for the sake of assisting you. Nothing could be kinder."

"I feel it to be so indeed," said Miss Vincent. "I feel that I can never repay Mr. Markham."

Again that smile came to Mr. Harwood as he said: "Do not take such a gloomy view of the matter, my dear Miss Vincent; perhaps on reflection some means may be suggested to you."

"What can you mean?" cried the puzzled little thing, tripping away.

"Well, Harwood, in spite of your advice to me, you see I am here not more than a week behind yourself."

"And you are looking better than I could have believed possible for any one in the condition you were in when I left," said Harwood. "Upon my word, I did not expect much from you as I watched you go up the stairs at the hotel after that wild ride of yours to and from no place in particular. But, of course, there are circumstances under which fellows look knocked up, and there are others that combine to make them seem quite the contrary; now it seems to me you are subject to the influence of the latter just at present." He glanced as if by accident over to where Lottie was making a pleasant little fuss about some articles of her luggage.

"You are right," said Markham—"quite right. I have reason to be particularly elated just now, having got free from that steamer and my fellow-passengers."

"Why, the fellows of the Bayonetteers struck me as being particularly good company," said Harwood.

"And so they were. Now I must look after this precious portmanteau of mine."

"And assist that helpless little creature to look after hers," muttered Harwood when the other had left him. "Poor little Lottie! is it possible that you have landed a prize at last? Well, no one will say that you don't deserve something for your years of angling."

Mr. Harwood felt very charitably inclined just at this instant, for his reflections on the behaviour of Markham during the last few days they had been at the same hotel at Cape Town had not by any means been quieted since they had parted. He was sorry to be compelled to leave Cape Town without making any discovery as to the mental condition of Markham. Now, however, he knew that Markham had been strong enough to come on to Natal, so that the searching out of the problem of his former weakness would be as uninteresting as it would be unprofitable. If there should chance to be any truth in that vague thought which had been suggested to him as to the possibility of Markham having become attached to Daireen Gerald, what did it matter now? Here was Markham, having overcome his weakness, whatever it may have been, by the side of Lottie Vincent; not indeed appearing to be in great anxiety regarding the welfare of the young lady's luggage which was being evil-treated, but still by her side, and this made any further thought on his behalf unnecessary.

Mr. Markham had given his portmanteau into the charge of one of the Natal Zulus, and then he turned to Harwood.

"You don't mind my asking you what you are doing at Durban instead of being at the other side of the Tugela?" he said.

"The Zulus of this province require to be treated of most carefully in the first instance, before the great question of Zulus in their own territory can be fully understood by the British public," replied the correspondent. "I am at present making the Zulu of Durban my special study. I suppose you will be off at once to Pietermaritzburg?"

"No," said Markham. "I intend remaining at Durban to study the—the Zulu characteristics for a few days."

"But Lottie—I beg your pardon—Miss Vincent is going on at once."

There was a little pause, during which Markham stared blankly at his friend.

"What on earth has that got to say to my remaining here?" he said.

Harwood looked at him and felt that Miss Lottie was right, even on purely artistic grounds, in choosing Oswin Markham as one of her actors.

"Nothing—nothing of course," he replied to Markham's question.

But Miss Lottie had heard more than a word of this conversation. She tripped up to Mr. Harwood.

"Why don't you make some inquiry about your old friends, you most ungrateful of men?" she cried. "Oh, I have such a lot to tell you. Dear old Mrs. Crawford was in great grief about your going away, you know—oh, such great grief that she was forced to give a picnic the second day after you left, for fear we should all have broken down utterly."

"That was very kind of Mrs. Crawford," said Harwood; "and it only remains for me to hope fervently that the required effect was produced."

"So far as I was concerned, it was," said Lottie. "But it would never do for me to speak for other people."

"Other people?"

"Yes, other people—the charming Miss Gerald, for instance; I cannot speak for her, but Mr. Markham certainly can, for he lay at her feet during the entire of the afternoon when every one else had wandered away up the ravine. Yes, Mr. Markham will tell you to a shade what her feelings were upon that occasion. Now, bye-bye. You will come to our little entertainment next week, will you not? And you will turn up on Saturday for rehearsal?" she added, smiling at Oswin, who was looking more stern than amused. "Don't forget—Saturday. You should be very grateful for my giving you liberty for so long."

Both men went ashore together without a word; nor did they fall at once into a fluent chat when they set out for the town, which was more than two miles distant; for Mr. Harwood was thinking out another of the problems which seemed to suggest themselves to him daily from the fact of his having an acute ear for discerning the shades of tone in which his friends uttered certain phrases. He was just now engaged linking fancy unto fancy, thinking if it was a little impulse of girlish jealousy, meant only to give a mosquito-sting to Oswin Markham, that had caused Miss Lottie Vincent to make that reference to Miss Gerald, or if it was a piece of real bitterness designed to wound deeply. It was an interesting problem, and Mr. Harwood worked at its solution very patiently, weighing all his recollections of past words and phrases that might tend to a satisfactory result.

But the greatest amount of satisfaction was not afforded to Mr. Harwood by the pursuit of the intricacies of the question he had set himself to work out, but by the reflection that at any rate Markham's being at Natal and not within easy riding distance of a picturesque Dutch cottage at Mowbray, was a certain good. What did it signify now if Markham had previously been too irresolute to tear himself away from the association of that cottage? Had he not afterwards proved himself sufficiently strong? And if this strength had come to him through any conversation he might have had with Miss Gerald on the hillside to which Lottie had alluded, or elsewhere, what business was it to anybody? Here was Markham—there was Durban, and this was satisfactory. Only—what did Lottie mean exactly by that little bit of spitefulness or bitterness?

CHAPTER XXXI.

Polonius. The actors are come hither, my lord.

Hamlet. Buz, buz.

Polonius. Upon my honour.

Hamlet. Then came each actor on his ass.

Polonius. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, scene individable or poem unlimited... these are the only men.

Being thus benetted round with villanies,—
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play,—I sat me down.
... Wilt thou know
The effect...?—*Hamlet.*

UPON the evening of the Thursday week after the arrival of that steamer with two companies of the Bayonetteers at Durban, the town of Pietermaritzburg was convulsed with the prospect of the entertainment that was to take place in its midst, for Miss Lottie Vincent had not passed the preceding week in a condition of dramatic abstraction. She was by no means so wrapped up in the part she had undertaken to represent as to be unable to give the necessary attention to the securing of an audience.

It would seem to a casual *entrepreneur* visiting Pietermaritzburg that a large audience might be assured for an entertainment possessing even the minimum of attractiveness, for the town appears to be of an immense size—that is, for a South African town. The colonial Romulus and Remus have shown at all times very lordly notions on the subject of boundaries, and, being subject to none of those restrictions as to the cost of every square foot of territory which have such a cramping influence upon the founders of municipalities at home, they exercise their grand ideas in the most extensive way. The streets of an early colonial town are broad roads, and the spaces between the houses are so great as almost to justify the criticism of those narrow-minded visitors who call the town straggling. At one time Pietermaritzburg may have been straggling, but it certainly did not strike Oswin Markham as being so when he saw it now for the first time on his arrival. He

felt that it had got less of a Dutch look about it than Cape Town, and though that towering and overshadowing impression which Table Mountain gives to Cape Town was absent, yet the circle of hills about Pietermaritzburg seemed to him—and his fancy was not particularly original—to give the town almost that nestling appearance which by tradition is the natural characteristic of an English village.

But if an *entrepreneur* should calculate the probable numerical value of an audience in Pietermaritzburg from a casual walk through the streets, he would find that his assumption had been founded upon an erroneous basis. The streets are long and in fact noble, but the inhabitants available for fulfilling the duties of an audience at a dramatic entertainment are out of all proportion few. Two difficulties are to be contended with in making up audiences in South Africa: the first is getting the people in, and the second is keeping people out. As a rule the races of different colour do not amalgamate with sufficient ease to allow of a mixed audience being pervaded with a common sympathy. A white man seated between a Hottentot and a Kafir will scarcely be brought to admit that he has had a pleasant evening, even though the performance on the stage is of a choice character. A single Zulu will make his presence easily perceptible in a room full of white people, even though he should remain silent and in a secluded corner; while a Hottentot, a Kafir, and a Zulu constitute a *bouquet d'Afrique*, the savour of which is apt to divert the attention of any one in their neighbourhood from the realistic effect of a garden scene upon the stage.

Miss Lottie, being well aware that the audience-forming material in the town was small in proportion to the extent of the streets, set herself with her usual animation about the task of disposing of the remaining tickets. She fancied that she understood something of the system to be pursued with success amongst the burghers. She felt it to be her duty to pay a round of visits to the houses where she had been intimate in the days of her previous residence at the garrison; and she contrived to impress upon her friends that the ties of old acquaintance should be consolidated by the purchase of a number of her tickets. She visited several families who, she knew, had been endeavouring for a long time to work themselves into the military section of the town's society, and after hinting to them that the officers of the Bayonetteers would remain in the lowest spirits until they had made the acquaintance of the individual members of each of those families, she invariably disposed of a ticket to the individual member whose friendship was so longed for at the garrison. As for the tradesmen of the town, she managed without any difficulty, or even without forgetting her own standing, to make them aware of the possible benefits that would accrue to the business of the town under the patronage of the officers of the Bayonetteers; and so, instead of having to beg of the tradesmen to support the deserving charity on account of which she was taking such a large amount of trouble, she found herself thanked for the permission she generously accorded to these worthy men to purchase places for the evening.

She certainly deserved well of the deserving charity, and the old field-officers, who rolled their eyes and pulled their moustaches, recollecting the former labours of Miss Lottie, had got as imperfect a knowledge of the proportions of her toil and reward as the less good-natured of their wives who alluded to the trouble she was taking as if it was not wholly disinterested. Lottie certainly took a vast amount of trouble, and if Oswin Markham only appeared at the beginning of each rehearsal and left at the conclusion, the success of the performance was not at all jeopardised by his action.

For the entire week preceding the evening of the performance little else was talked about in all sections of Maritzburgian society but the prospects of its success. The ladies in the garrison were beginning to be wearied of the topic of theatricals, and the colonel of the Bayonetteers was heard to declare that he would not submit any longer to have the regimental parades only half-officered day by day, and that the plea of dramatic study would be insufficient in future to excuse an absentee. But this vigorous action was probably accelerated by the report that reached him of a certain lieutenant, who had only four lines to speak in the play, having escaped duty for the entire week on the grounds of the necessity for dramatic study.

At last the final nail was put in the fastenings of the scenery on the stage, which a number of the Royal Engineers, under the guidance of two officers and a clerk of the works, had erected; the footlights were after considerable difficulty coaxed into flame. The officers of the garrison and their wives made an exceedingly good front row in the stalls, and a number of the sergeants and privates filled up the back seats, ready to applaud, without reference to their merits at the performance, their favourite officers when they should appear on the stage; the intervening seats were supposed to be booked by the general audience, and their punctuality of attendance proved that Lottie's labours had not been in vain.

Mr. Harwood having tired of Durban, had been some days in the town, and he walked from the hotel with Markham; for Mr. Markham, though the part he was to play was one of most importance in the drama, did not think it necessary to hang about the stage for the three hours preceding the lifting of the curtain, as most of the Bayonetteers who were to act believed to be prudent. Harwood took a seat in the second row of stalls, for he had promised Lottie and one of the other young ladies who was in the cast, to give each of them a candid opinion upon their representations. For his own part he would have preferred giving his opinion before seeing the representations, for he knew what a strain would be put upon his candour after they were over.

When the orchestra—which was a great feature of the performance—struck up an overture, the stage behind the curtain was crowded with figures in top-boots and with noble hats encircled with ostrich feathers—the element of brigandage entering largely into the construction of the drama of the evening. Each of the figures carried a small pamphlet which he studied every now and again, for in spite of the many missed parades, a good deal of uncertainty as to the text of their parts pervaded the minds of the histrionic Bayonetteers. Before the last notes of the overture had crashed, Lottie Vincent, radiant in pearl powder and pencilled eyebrows, wearing a plain muslin dress and white satin shoes, her fair hair with a lovely white rose shining amongst its folds, tripped out. Her character in the first act being that of a simple village maiden, she was dressed with becoming consistency, every detail down to those white satin shoes being, of course, in keeping with the ordinary attire of simple village maidens wherever civilisation has spread.

“For goodness' sake leave aside your books,” she said to the young men as she came forward. “Do you mean to bring them out with you and read from them? Surely after ten rehearsals you might be perfect.”

“Hang me, if I haven't a great mind not to appear at all in this rot,” said one of the gentlemen in the top-

boots to his companions. He had caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror a minute previously and he did not like the picture. "If it was not for the sake of the people who have come I'd cut the whole affair."

"She has done nothing but bully," remarked a second of these desperadoes in top-boots.

"All because that fellow Markham has shown himself to be no idiot," said a third.

"Count Rodolph loves her, but I'll spare him not: he dies to-night," remarked another, but he was only refreshing his memory on the dialogue he was to speak.

When the gentleman who was acting as prompter saw that the stage was cleared, he gave the signal for the orchestra to play the curtain up. At the correct moment, and with a perfection of stage management that would have been creditable to any dramatic establishment in the world, as one of the Natal newspapers a few days afterwards remarked with great justice, the curtain was raised, and an excellent village scene was disclosed to the enthusiastic audience. Two of the personages came on at once, and so soon as their identity was clearly established, the soldiers began to applaud, which was doubtless very gratifying to the two officers, from a regimental standpoint, though it somewhat interfered with the progress of the scene. The prompter, however, hastened to the aid of the young men who had lost themselves in that whirlwind of applause, and the dialogue began to run easily.

Lottie had made for herself a little loophole in the back drop-scene through which she observed the audience. She saw that the place was crowded to the doors—English-speaking and Dutch-speaking burghers were in the central seats; she smiled as she noticed the aspirants to garrison intimacies crowding up as close as possible to the officers' wives in the front row, and she wondered if it would be necessary to acknowledge any of them for longer than a week. Then she saw Harwood with the faintest smile imaginable upon his face, as the young men on the stage repeated the words of their parts without being guilty either of the smallest mistake or the least dramatic spirit; and this time she wondered if, when she would be going through her part and she would look towards Harwood, she should find the same sort of smile upon his face. She rather thought not. Then, as the time for her call approached, she hastened round to her entrance, waiting until the poor stuff the two young men were speaking came to an end; then, not a second past her time, she entered, demure and ingenuous as all village maidens in satin slippers must surely be.

She was not disappointed in her reception by the audience. The ladies in the front stalls who had spoken, it might be, unkindly of her in private, now showed their good nature in public, and the field officers forgot all the irregularities she had caused in the regiment and welcomed her heartily; while the tradesmen in the middle rows made their applause a matter of business. The village maiden with the satin shoes smiled in the timid, fluttered, dovelike way that is common amongst the class, and then went on with her dialogue. She felt altogether happy, for she knew that the young lady who was to appear in the second scene could not possibly meet with such an expression of good feeling as she had obtained from the audience.

And now the play might be said to have commenced in earnest. It was by no means a piece of French frivolity, this drama, but a genuine work of English art as it existed thirty years ago, and it was thus certain to commend itself to the Pietermaritzburghers who liked solidity even when it verged upon stolidity.

Throne or Spouse was the title of the play, and if its incidents were somewhat improbable and its details utterly impossible, it was not the less agreeable to the audience. The two young men who had appeared in top-boots on the village green had informed each other, the audience happily overhearing, that they had been out hunting with a certain Prince, and that they had got separated from their companions.

They embraced the moment as opportune for the discussion of a few court affairs, such as the illness of the monarch, and the Prince's prospects of becoming his successor, and then they thought it would be as well to try and find their way back to the court; so off they went. Then Miss Vincent came on the village green and reminded herself that her name was Marie and that she was a simple village maiden; she also recalled the fact that she lived alone with her mother in Yonder Cottage. It seemed to give her considerable satisfaction to reflect that, though poor, she was, and she took it upon her to say that her mother was also, strictly virtuous, and she wished to state in the most emphatic terms that though she was wooed by a certain Count Rodolph, yet, as she did not love him, she would never be his. Lottie was indeed very emphatic at this part, and her audience applauded her determination as Marie. Curiously enough, she had no sooner expressed herself in this fashion than one of the Bayonetteers entered, and at the sight of him Lottie called out, "Ah, he is here! Count Rodolph!" This the audience felt was a piece of subtle constructive art on the part of the author. Then the new actor replied, "Yes, Count Rodolph is here, sweet Marie, where he would ever be, by the side of the fairest village maiden," etc.

The new actor was attired in one of the broad hats of the period—whatever it may have been—with a long ostrich feather. He had an immense black moustache, and his eyebrows were exceedingly heavy. He also wore top-boots, a long sword, and a black cloak, one fold of which he now and again threw over his left shoulder when it worked its way down his arm. It was not surprising that further on in the drama the Count was found to be a dissembler; his costume fostered any proclivities in this way that might otherwise have remained dormant.

The village maiden begged to know why the Count persecuted her with his attentions, and he replied that he did so on account of his love for her. She then assured him that she could never bring herself to look on him with favour; and this naturally drew from him the energetic declaration of his own passion for her. He concluded by asking her to be his: she cried with emphasis, "Never!" He repeated his application, and again she cried "Never!" and told him to begone. "You shall be mine," he cried, catching her by the arm. "Wretch, leave me," she said, in all her village-maiden dignity; he repeated his assertion, and clasped her round the waist with ardour. Then she shrieked for help, and a few simple villagers rushed hurriedly on the stage, but the Count drew his sword and threatened with destruction any one who might advance. The simple villagers thought it prudent to retire. "Ha! now, proud Marie, you are in my power," said the Count. "Is there no one to save me?" shrieked Marie. "Yes, here is some one who will save you or perish in the attempt," came a voice from the wings, and with an agitation pervading the sympathetic orchestra, a respectable young man in a green hunting-suit with a horn by his side and a drawn sword in his hand, rushed on, and was received with an outburst of applause from the audience who, in Pietermaritzburg, as in every place else, are ever on the

side of virtue. This new actor was Oswin Markham, and it seemed that Lottie's stories regarding the romance associated with his appearance were successful, for not only was there much applause, but a quiet hum of remark was heard amongst the front stalls, and it was some moments before the business of the stage could be proceeded with.

So soon as he was able to speak, the Count wished to know who was the intruder that dared to face one of the nobles of the land, and the intruder replied in general terms, dwelling particularly upon the fact that only those were noble who behaved nobly. He expressed an inclination to fight with the Count, but the latter declined to gratify him on account of the difference there was between their social standing, and he left the stage saying, "Farewell, proud beauty, we shall meet again." Then he turned to the stranger, and, laying his hand on his sword-hilt after he had thrown his cloak over his shoulder, he cried, "We too shall meet again."

The stranger then made some remarks to himself regarding the manner in which he was stirred by Marie's beauty. He asked her who she was, and she replied, truthfully enough, that she was a simple village maiden, and that she lived in Yonder Cottage. He then told her that he was a member of the Prince's retinue, and that he had lost his way at the hunt; and he begged the girl to conduct him to Yonder Cottage. The girl expressed her pleasure at being able to show him some little attention, but she remarked that the stranger would find Yonder Cottage very humble. She assured him, however, of the virtue of herself, and again went so far as to speak for her mother. The stranger then made a nice little speech about the constituents of true nobility, and went out with Marie as the curtain fell.

The next scene was laid in Yonder Cottage; the virtuous mother being discovered knitting, and whiling away the time by talking to herself of the days when she was nurse to the late Queen. Then Marie and the stranger entered, and there was a pleasant family party in Yonder Cottage. The stranger was evidently struck with Marie, and the scene ended by his swearing to make her his wife. The next act showed the stranger in his true character as the Prince; his royal father has heard of his attachment to Marie, and not being an enthusiast on the subject of simple village maidens becoming allied to the royal house, he threatens to cut off the entail of the kingdom—which it appeared he had power to do—if the Prince does not relinquish Marie, and he dies leaving a clause in his will to this effect.

The Prince rushes to Yonder Cottage—hears that Marie is carried off by the Count—rescues her—marries her—and then the virtuous mother confesses that the Prince is her own child, and Marie is the heiress to the throne. No one appeared to dispute the story—Marie is consequently Queen and her husband King, having through his proper treatment of the girl gained the kingdom; and the curtain falls on general happiness, Count Rodolph having committed suicide.

"Nothing could have been more successful," said Lottie, all tremulous with excitement, to Oswin, as they went off together amid a tumult of applause, which was very sweet to her ears.

"I think it went off very well indeed," said Oswin. "Your acting was perfection, Miss Vincent."

"Call me Marie," she said playfully. "But we must really go before the curtain; hear how they are applauding."

"I think we have had enough of it," said Oswin.

"Come along," she cried; "I dislike it above all things, but there is nothing for it."

The call for Lottie and Oswin was determined, so after the soldiers had called out their favourite officers, Oswin brought the girl forward, and the enthusiasm was very great. Lottie then went off, and for a few moments Markham remained alone upon the stage. He was most heartily applauded, and, after acknowledging the compliment, he was just stepping back, when from the centre of the seats a man's voice came, loud and clear:

"Bravo, old boy! you're a trump wherever you turn up."

There was a general moving of heads, and some laughter in the front rows.

But Oswin Markham looked from where he was standing on the stage down to the place whence that voice seemed to come. He neither laughed nor smiled, only stepped back behind the curtain.

The stage was now crowded with the actors and their friends; everybody was congratulating everybody else. Lottie was in the highest spirits.

"Could anything have been more successful?" she cried again to Oswin Markham. He looked at her without answering for some moments. "I don't know," he said at last. "Successful? perhaps so."

"What on earth do you mean?" she asked; "are you afraid of the Natal critics?"

"No, I can't say I am."

"Of what then?"

"There is a person at the door who wishes to speak to you, Mr. Markham," said one of the servants coming up to Oswin. "He says he doesn't carry cards, but you will see his name here," and he handed Oswin an envelope.

Oswin Markham read the name on the envelope and crushed it into his pocket, saying to the servant:

"Show the—gentleman up to the room where I dressed."

So Miss Lottie did not become aware of the origin of Mr. Markham's doubt as to the success of the great drama *Throne or Spouse*.

Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty if you deny your griefs to your friend.

... tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night.

Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.

This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate.—*Hamlet.*

IN the room where he had assumed the dress of the part he had just played, Oswin Markham was now standing idle, and without making any attempt to remove the colour from his face or the streaks from his eyebrows. He was still in the dress of the Prince when the door was opened and a man entered the room eagerly.

"By Jingo! yes, I thought you'd see me," he cried before he had closed the door. All the people outside—and there were a good many—who chanced to hear the tone of the voice knew that the speaker was the man who had shouted those friendly words when Oswin was leaving the stage. "Yes, old fellow," he continued, slapping Markham on the back and grasping him by the hand, "I thought I might venture to intrude upon you. Right glad I was to see you, though, by heavens! I thought I should have shouted out when I saw you—you, of all people, here. Tell us how it comes, Oswin. How the deuce do you appear at this place? Why, what's the matter with you? Have you talked so much in that tall way on the boards that you haven't a word left to say here? You weren't used to be dumb in the good old days—good old nights, my boy."

"You won't give me a chance," said Oswin; and he did not even smile in response to the other's laughter.

"There then, I've dried up," said the stranger. "But, by my soul, I tell you I'm glad to see you. It seems to me, do you know, that I'm drunk now, and that when I sleep off the fit you'll be gone. I've fancied queer things when I've been drunk, as you well know. But it's you yourself, isn't it?"

"One need have no doubt about your identity," said Oswin. "You talk in the same infernally muddled way that ever Harry Despard used to talk."

"That's like yourself, my boy," cried the man, with a loud laugh. "I'm beginning to feel that it's you indeed, though you are dressed up like a Prince—by heavens! you played the part well. I couldn't help shouting out what I did for a lark. I wondered what you'd think when you heard my voice. But how did you manage to turn up at Natal? tell me that. You left us to go up country, didn't you?"

"It's a long story," replied Oswin. "Very long, and I am bound to change this dress. I can't go about in this fashion for ever."

"No more you can," said the other. "And the sooner you get rid of those togs the better, for by God, it strikes me that they give you a wrong impression about yourself. You're not so hearty by a long way as you used to be. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll go on to the hotel and wait there until you are in decent rig. I'll only be in this town until to-morrow evening, and we must have a night together."

For the first time since the man had entered the room Oswin brightened up.

"Only till to-morrow night, Hal?" he cried. "Then we must have a few jolly hours together before we part. I won't let you even go to the hotel now. Stay here while I change, like a decent fellow."

"Now that sounds like your old form, my boy; hang me if I don't stay with you. Is that a flask in the portmanteau? It is, by Jingo, and if it's not old Irish may I be—and cigars too. Yes, I will stay, old fellow, for auld langsyne. This is like auld langsyne, isn't it? Why, where are you off to?"

"I have to give a message to some one in another room," said Oswin, leaving the man alone. He was a tall man, apparently about the same age as Markham. So much of his face as remained unconcealed by a shaggy, tawny beard and whiskers was bronzed to a copper colour. His hair was short and tawny, and his mouth was very coarse. His dress was not shabby, but the largeness of the check on the pattern scarcely argued the possession of a subdued taste on the part of the wearer.

He had seated himself upon a table in the room though there were plenty of chairs, and when Oswin went out he filled the flask cup and emptied it with a single jerk of his head; then he snatched up the hat which had been worn by Oswin on the stage; he threw it into the air and caught it on one of his feet, then with a laugh he kicked it across the floor.

But Oswin had gone to the room where Captain Howard, who had acted as stage manager, was smoking after the labours of the evening. "Howard," said Markham, "I must be excused from your supper to-night."

"Nonsense," said Howard. "It would be too ridiculous for us to have a supper if you who have done the most work to-night should be away. What's the matter? Have you a doctor's certificate?"

"The fact is a—a—sort of friend of mine—a man I knew pretty intimately some time ago, has turned up here most unexpectedly."

"Then bring your sort of friend with you."

"Quite impossible," said Markham quickly. "He is not the kind of man who would make the supper agreeable either to himself or to any one else. You will explain to the other fellows how I am compelled to be away."

"But you'll turn up some time in the course of the night, won't you?"

"I am afraid to say I shall. The fact is, my friend requires a good deal of attention to be given to him in the course of a friendly night. If I can manage to clear myself of him in decent time I'll be with you."

"You must manage it," said Howard as Oswin went back to the room, where he found his friend struggling to pull on the green doublet in which the Prince had appeared in the opening scene of the play.

"Hang me if I couldn't do the part like one o'clock," he cried; "the half of it is in the togs. You weren't loud enough, Oswin, when you came on; you wouldn't have brought down the gods even at Ballarat. This is how you should have done it: 'I'll save you or——'"

"For Heaven's sake don't make a fool of yourself, Hal."

"I was only going to show you how it should be done to rouse the people; and as for making a fool of myself——"

"You have done that so often you think it not worth the caution. Come now, stuff those things into the portmanteau, and I'll have on my mufti in five minutes."

"And then off to the hotel, and you bet your pile, as we used to say at Chokeneck Gulch, we'll have more than a pint bottle of Bass. By the way, how about your bronze; does the good old governor still stump up?"

"My allowance goes regularly to Australia," said Oswin, with a stern look coming to his face.

"And where else should it go, my boy? By the way, that's a tidy female that showed what neat ankles she had as Marie. By my soul, I envied you squeezing her. 'What right has he to squeeze her?' I said to myself, and then I thought if——"

"But you haven't told me how you came here," said Oswin, interrupting him.

"No more I did. It's easily told, my lad. It was getting too warm for me in Melbourne, and as I had still got some cash I thought I'd take a run to New York city—at least that's what I made up my mind to do when I awoke one fine morning in the cabin of the *Virginia* brig a couple of hundred miles from Cape Howe. I remembered going into a saloon one evening and finding a lot of men giving general shouts, but beyond that I had no idea of anything."

"That's your usual form," said Oswin. "So you are bound for New York?"

"Yes, the skipper of the *Virginia* had made Natal one of his ports, and there we put in yesterday, so I ran up to this town, under what you would call an inspiration, or I wouldn't be here now ready to slip the tinsel from as many bottles of genuine Moët as you choose to order. But you—what about yourself?"

"I am here, my Hal, to order as many bottles as you can slip the tinsel off," cried Oswin, his face flushed more deeply than when it had been rouged before the footlights.

"Spoken in your old form, by heavens!" cried the other, leaping from the table. "You always were a gentleman amongst us, and you never failed us in the matter of drink. Hang me if I don't let the *Virginia* brig—go—to—to New York without me; I'll stay here in company of my best friend."

"Come along," said Oswin, leaving the room. "Whether you go or stay we'll have a night of it at the hotel."

They passed out together and walked up to the hotel, hearing all the white population discussing the dramatic performance of the evening, for it had created a considerable stir in the town. There was no moon, but the stars were sparkling over the dark blue of the hills that almost encircle the town. Tall Zulus stood, as they usually do after dark, talking at the corners in their emphatic language, while here and there smaller white men speaking Cape Dutch passed through the streets smoking their native cigars.

"Just what you would find in Melbourne or in the direction of Geelong, isn't it, Oswin?" said the stranger, who had his arm inside Markham's.

"Yes, with a few modifications," said Oswin.

"Why, hang it all, man," cried the other. "You aren't getting sentimental, are you? A fellow would think from the way you've been talking in that low, hollow, parson's tone that you weren't glad I turned up. If you're not, just say so. You won't need to give Harry Despard a nod after you've given him a wink."

"What an infernal fool you do make of yourself," said Oswin. "You know that I'm glad to have you beside me again, old fellow,—yes, devilish glad. Confound it, man, do you fancy I've no feeling—no recollection? Haven't we stood by each other in the past, and won't we do it in the future?"

"We will, by heavens, my lad! and hang me if I don't smash anything that comes on the table tonight except the sparkling. And look here, the *Virginia* brig may slip her cable and be off to New York. I'll stand by you while you stay here, my boy. Yes, say no more, my mind is made up."

"Spoken like a man!" cried Oswin, with a sudden start. "Spoken like a man! and here we are at the hotel. We'll have one of our old suppers together, Hal——"

"Or perish in the attempt," shouted the other.

The stranger went upstairs, while Oswin remained below to talk to the landlord about some matters that occupied a little time.

Markham and Harwood had a sitting-room for their exclusive use in the hotel, but it was not into this room that Oswin brought his guest, it was into another apartment at a different quarter of the house. The stranger threw his hat into a corner and himself down upon a sofa with his legs upon a chair that he had tilted back.

"Now we'll have a general shout," he said. "Ask all the people in the house what they'll drink. If you acted the Prince on the stage to-night, I'll act the part here now. I've got the change of a hundred samples of the Sydney mint, and I want to ease myself of them. Yes, we'll have a general shout."

"A general shout in a Dutchman's house? My boy, this isn't a Ballarat saloon," said Oswin. "If we hinted such a thing we'd be turned into the street. Here is a bottle of the sparkling by way of opening the campaign."

"I'll open the champagne and you open the campaign, good! The sight of you, Oswin, old fellow—well, it makes me feel that life is a joke. Fill up your glass and we'll drink to the old times. And now tell me all about

yourself. How did you light here, and what do you mean to do? Have you had another row in the old quarter?"

Oswin had drained his glass of champagne and had stretched himself upon the second sofa. His face seemed pale almost to ghastliness, as persons' faces do after the use of rouge. He gave a short laugh when the other had spoken.

"Wait till after supper," he cried. "I haven't a word to throw to a dog until after supper."

"Curse that Prince and his bluster on the stage; you're as hoarse as a rook now, Oswin," remarked the stranger.

In a brief space the curried crayfish and penguins' eggs, which form the opening dishes of a Cape supper, appeared; and though Oswin's friend seemed to have an excellent appetite, Markham himself scarcely ate anything. It did not, however, appear that the stranger's comfort was wholly dependent upon companionship. He ate and drank and talked loudly whether Oswin fasted or remained mute; but when the supper was removed and he lighted a cigar, he poured out half a bottle of champagne into a tumbler, and cried:

"Now, my gallant Prince, give us all your eventful history since you left Melbourne five months ago, saying you were going up country. Tell us how you came to this place, whatever its infernal Dutch name is."

And Oswin Markham, sitting at the table, told him.

But while this *tête-à-tête* supper was taking place at the hotel, the messroom of the Bayonetteers was alight, and the regimental cook had excelled himself in providing dishes that were wholly English, without the least colonial flavour, for the officers and their guests, among whom was Harwood.

Captain Howard's apology for Markham was not freely accepted, more especially as Markham did not put in an appearance during the entire of the supper. Harwood was greatly surprised at his absence, and the story of a friend having suddenly turned up he rejected as a thing devised as an excuse. He did not return to the hotel until late—more than an hour past midnight. He paused outside the hotel door for some moments, hearing the sound of loud laughter and a hoarse voice singing snatches of different songs.

"What is the noisy party upstairs?" he asked of the man who opened the door.

"That is Mr. Markham and his friend, sir. They have taken supper together," said the servant.

Harwood did not express the surprise he felt. He took his candle, and went to his own room, and, as he smoked a cigar before going to bed, he heard the intermittent sounds of the laughter and the singing.

"I shall have a talk with this old friend of Mr. Markham's in the morning," he said, after he had stated another of his problems to sleep over.

Markham and he had been accustomed to breakfast together in their sitting-room since they had come up from Durban; but when Harwood awoke the next morning, and came in to breakfast, he found only one cup upon the table.

"Why is there not a cup for Mr. Markham?" he asked of the servant.

"Mr. Markham, sir, left with his friend for Durban at four o'clock this morning," said the man.

"What, for Durban?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Markham had ordered a Cape cart and team to be here at that time. I thought you might have awakened as they were leaving."

"No, I did not," said Mr. Harwood quietly; and the servant left the room.

Here was something additional for the special correspondent of the *Dominant Trumpeter* to ponder over and reduce to the terms of a problem. He reflected upon his early suspicions of Oswin Markham. Had he not even suggested that Markham's name was probably something very different from what he had called himself? Mr. Harwood knew well that men have a curious tendency to call themselves by the names of the persons to whom bank orders are made payable, and he believed that such a subtle sympathy might exist between the man who had been picked up at sea and the document that was found in his possession. Yes, Mr. Harwood felt that his instincts were not perhaps wholly in error regarding Mr. Oswin Markham, cleverly though he had acted the part of the Prince in that stirring drama on the previous evening.

On the afternoon of the following day, however, Oswin Markham entered the hotel at Pietermaritzburg and walked into the room where Harwood was working up a letter for his newspaper, descriptive of life among the Zulus.

"Good heavens!" cried the "special," starting up; "I did not expect you back so soon. Why, you could only have stayed a few hours at the port."

"It was enough for me," said Oswin, a smile lighting up his pale face; "quite enough for me. I only waited to see the vessel with my friend aboard safely over the bar. Then I returned."

"You went away from here in something of a hurry, did you not, Markham?"

Oswin laughed as he threw himself into a chair.

"Yes, something of a hurry. My friend is—let us say, eccentric. We left without going to bed the night before last. Never mind, Harwood, old fellow; he is gone, and here I am now, ready for anything you propose—an excursion across the Tugela or up to the Transvaal—anywhere—anywhere—I'm free now and myself again."

"Free?" said Harwood curiously. "What do you mean by free?"

Oswin looked at him mutely for a moment, then he laughed, saying:

"Free—yes, free from that wretched dramatic affair. Thank Heaven, it's off my mind!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Horatio. My lord, the King your father.

Hamlet. The King—my father?

Horatio. Season your admiration for a while.

In what particular thought to work I know not;
But in the gross and scope of mine opinion
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

Our last King,
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,
... by a sealed compact
Did forfeit... all those his lands
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror.

Hamlet.

MY son," said The Macnamara, "you ought to be ashamed of your threatment of your father. The like of your threatment was never known in the family of the Macnamaras, or, for that matter, of the O'Dermots. A stain has been thrown upon the family that centuries can't wash out."

"It is no stain either upon myself or our family for me to have set out to do some work in the world," said Standish proudly, for he felt capable of maintaining the dignity of labour. "I told you that I would not pass my life in the idleness of Innishdermot. I———"

"It's too much for me, Standish O'Dermot Macnamara—to hear you talk lightly of Innishdermot is too much for the blood of the representative of the ancient race. Don't, my boy, don't."

"I don't talk lightly of it; when you told me it was gone from us I felt it as deeply as any one could feel it."

"It's one more wrong added to the grievances of our thrampled country," cried the hereditary monarch of the islands with fervour. "And yet you have never sworn an oath to be revenged. You even tell me that you mean to be in the pay of the nation that has done your family this wrong—that has thrampled The Macnamara into the dust. This is the bitterest stroke of all."

"I have told you all," said Standish. "Colonel Gerald was kinder to me than words could express. He is going to England in two months, but only to remain a week, and then he will leave for the Castaway Islands. He has already written to have my appointment as private secretary confirmed, and I shall go at once to have everything ready for his arrival. It's not much I can do, God knows, but what I can do I will for him. I'll work my best."

"Oh, this is bitter—bitter—to hear a Macnamara talk of work; and just now, too, when the money has come to us."

"I don't want the money," said Standish indignantly.

"Ye're right, my son, so far. What signifies fifteen thousand pounds when the feelings of an ancient family are outraged?"

"But I can't understand how those men had power to take the land, if you did not wish to give it to them, for their railway and their hotel."

"It's more of the oppression, my son—more of the thrampling of our country into the dust. I rejected their offers with scorn at first; but I found out that they could get power from the oppressors of our country to buy every foot of the ground at the price put on it by a man they call an arbitrator—so between thraitors and arbitrators I knew I couldn't hold out. With tears in my eyes I signed the papers, and now all the land from the mouth of Suangorm to Innishdermot is in the hands of the English company—all but the castle—thank God they couldn't wrest that from me. If you'd only been by me, Standish, I would have held out against them all; but think of the desolate old man sitting amongst the ruins of his home and the tyrants with the gold—I could do nothing."

"And then you came out here. Well, father, I'm glad to see you, and Colonel Gerald will be so too, and—Daireen."

"Aye," said The Macnamara. "Daireen is here too. And have you been talking to the lovely daughter of the Gerald, my boy? Have you been confessing all you confessed to me, on that bright day at Innishdermot? Have you——"

"Look here, father," said Standish sternly; "you must never allude to anything that you forced me to say then. It was a dream of mine, and now it is past."

"You can hold your head higher than that now, my boy," said The Macnamara proudly. "You're not a beggar now, Standish; money's in the family."

"As if money could make any difference," said Standish.

"It makes all the difference in the world, my boy," said The Macnamara; but suddenly recollecting his principles, he added, "That is, to some people; but a Macnamara without a penny might aspire to the hand of the noblest in the land. Oh, here she comes—the bright snowdrop of Glenmara—the arbutus-berry of Craig-Innish; and her father too—oh, why did he turn to the Saxons?"

The Macnamara, Prince of Innishdermot, Chief of the Islands and Lakes, and King of all Munster, was standing with his son in the coffee-room of the hotel, having just come ashore from the steamer that had brought him out to the Cape. The patriot had actually left his land for the first time in his life, and had proceeded to the colony in search of his son, and he found his son waiting for him at the dock gates.

That first letter which Standish received from his father had indeed been very piteous, and if the young man had not been so resolute in his determination to work, he would have returned to Innishdermot once more, to comfort his father in his trials. But the next mail brought a second communication from The Macnamara to say that he could endure no longer the desolation of the lonely hearth of his ancestral castle, but would set out in search of his lost offspring through all the secret places of the earth. Considering that he had posted this letter to the definite address of his offspring, the effect of the vagueness of his expressed resolution was somewhat lessened.

Standish received the letter with dismay, and Colonel Gerald himself felt a little uneasiness at the prospect of having The Macnamara quartered upon him for an uncertain period. He was well aware of the largeness of the ideas of The Macnamara on many matters, and in regard to the question of colonial hospitality he felt that the views of the hereditary prince would be liberal to an inconvenient degree. It was thus with something akin to consternation that he listened to the eloquent letter which Standish read with flushed face and trembling hands.

"We shall be very pleased to see The Macnamara here," said Colonel Gerald; and Daireen laughed, saying she could not believe that Standish's father would ever bring himself to depart from his kingdom. It was on the next day that Colonel Gerald had an interview of considerable duration with Standish on a matter of business, he said; and when it was over and the young man's qualifications had been judged of, Standish found himself in a position either to accept or decline the office of private secretary to the new governor of the lovely Castaway group. With tears he left the presence of the governor, and went to his room to weep the fullness from his mind and to make a number of firm resolutions as to his future of hard work; and that very evening Colonel Gerald had written to the Colonial Office nominating Standish to the appointment; so that the matter was considered settled, and Standish felt that he did not fear to face his father.

But when Standish had met The Macnamara on the arrival of the mail steamer a week after he had received that letter stating his intentions, the young man learned, what apparently could not be included in a letter without proving harassing to its eloquence, that the extensive lands along the coastway of the lough had been sold to an English company of speculators who had come to the conclusion that a railway made through the picturesque district would bring a fortune to every one who might be so fortunate as to have money invested in the undertaking. So a railway was to be made, and a gigantic hotel built to overlook the lough. The shooting and fishing rights—in fact every right and every foot of ground, had been sold for a large sum to the company by The Macnamara. And though Standish had at first felt the news as a great blow to him, he subsequently became reconciled to it, for his father's appearance at the Cape with several thousand pounds was infinitely more pleasing to him than if the representative of The Macnamaras had come in his former condition, which was simply one of borrowing powers.

"It's the snowdrop of Glenmara," said The Macnamara, kissing the hand of Daireen as he met her at the door of the room. "And you, George, my boy," he continued, turning to her father; "I may shake hands with you as a friend, without the action being turned to mean that I forgive the threatment my country has received from the nation whose pay you are still in. Yes, only as a friend I shake hands with you, George."

"That is a sufficient ground for me, Macnamara," said the colonel. "We won't go into the other matters just now."

"I cannot believe that this is Cape Town," said Daireen. "Just think of our meeting here to-day. Oh, if we could only have a glimpse of the dear old Slieve Docas!"

"Why shouldn't you see it, white dove?" said The Macnamara in Irish to the girl, whose face brightened at the sound of the tongue that brought back so many pleasant recollections to her. "Why shouldn't you?" he continued, taking from one of the boxes of his luggage an immense bunch of purple heather in gorgeous bloom. "I gathered it for you from the slope of the mountain. It brings you the scent of the finest hill in the world."

The girl caught the magnificent bloom in both her hands and put her face down to it. As the first breath of the hill she loved came to her in this strange land they saw her face lighten. Then she turned away and buried her head in the scents of the hills—in the memories of the mountains and the lakes, while The Macnamara spoke on in the musical tongue that lived in her mind associated with all the things of the land she loved.

"And Innishdermot," said Colonel Gerald at length, "how is the seat of our kings?"

"Alas, my country! thrampled on—betrayed—crushed to the ground!" said The Macnamara. "You won't believe it, George—no, you won't. They have spoiled me of all I possessed—they have driven me out of the country that my sires ruled when the oppressors were walking about in the skins of wild beasts. Yes, George, Innishdermot is taken from me and I've no place to shelter me."

Colonel Gerald began to look grave and to feel much graver even than he looked. The Macnamara shelterless was certainly a subject for serious consideration.

"Yes," said Standish, observing the expression on his face, "you would wonder how any company could find it profitable to pay fifteen thousand pounds for the piece of land. That is what the new railway people paid my father."

Once more the colonel's face brightened, but The Macnamara stood up proudly, saying:

"Pounds! What are pounds to the feelings of a true patriot? What can money do to heal the wrongs of a race?"

"Nothing," said the colonel; "nothing whatever. But we must hasten out to our cottage. I'll get a coolie to take your luggage to the railway station. We shall drive out. My dear Dolly, come down from yonder mountain height where you have gone on wings of heather. I'll take out the bouquet for you."

"No," said Daireen. "I'll not let any one carry it for me."

And they all went out of the hotel to the carriage.

The *maître d'hôtel*, who had been listening to the speech of The Macnamara in wonder, and had been finally mystified by the Celtic language, hastened to the visitors' book in which The Macnamara had written his name; but this last step certainly did not tend to make everything clear, for in the book was written:

"Macnamara, Prince of the Isles, Chief of Innish-dermot and the Lakes, and King of Munster."

"And with such a nose!" said the *maître d'hôtel*.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Tis sweet and commendable in your nature,
To give these... duties to your father.

In that and all things we show our duty.

King. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes?
What wouldst thou have?

Laertes. Your leave and favour to return—*Hamlet.*

TO these four exiles from Erin sitting out on the stoep of the Dutch cottage after dinner very sweet it was to dream of fatherland. The soft light through which the broad-leaved, motionless plants glimmered was, of course, not to be compared with the long dwindling twilights that were wont to overhang the slopes of Lough Suangorm; and that mighty peak which towered above them, flanked by the long ridge of Table Mountain, was a poor thing in the eyes of those who had witnessed the glories of the heather-swathed Slieve Docas.

The cries of the bullock wagoners, which were faintly heard from the road, did not interfere with the musings of any of the party, nor with the harangue of The Macnamara.

Very pleasant it was to hear The Macnamara talk about his homeless condition as attributable to the long course of oppression persisted in by the Saxon Monarchy—at least so Colonel Gerald thought, for in a distant colony a harangue on the subject of British tyranny in Ireland does not sound very vigorous, any more than does a burning revolutionary ode when read a century or so after the revolution has taken place.

But poor Standish, who had spent a good many years of his life breathing in of the atmosphere of harangue, began to feel impatient at his sire's eloquence. Standish knew very well that his father had made a hard bargain with the railway and hotel company that had bought the land; nay, he even went so far as to conjecture that the affectionate yearning which had caused The Macnamara to come out to the colony in search of his son might be more plainly defined as an impulse of prudence to escape from certain of his creditors before they could hear of his having received a large sum of money. Standish wondered how Colonel Gerald could listen to all that his father was saying when he could not help being conscious of the nonsense of it all, for the young man was not aware of the pleasant memories of his youth that were coming back to the colonel under the influence of The Macnamara's speech.

The next day, however, Standish had a conversation of considerable length with his father, and The Macnamara found that he had made rapid progress in his knowledge of the world since he had left his secluded home. In the face of his father he insisted on his father's promising to remove from the Dutch cottage at the end of a few days. The Macnamara's notions of hospitality were very large, and he could not see why Colonel Gerald should have the least feeling except of happiness in entertaining a shelterless monarch; but Standish was firm, and Colonel Gerald did not resist so stoutly as The Macnamara felt he should have done; so that at the end of the week Daireen and her father were left alone for the first time since they had come together at the Cape.

They found it very agreeable to be able to sit together and ride together and talk without reserve. Standish Macnamara was, beyond doubt, very good company, and his father was even more inclined to be sociable, but no one disputed the wisdom of the young man's conduct in curtailing his visit and his father's to the Dutch cottage. The Macnamara had his pockets filled with money, and as Standish knew that this was a strange experience for him, he resolved that the weight of responsibility which the preservation of so large a sum was bound to entail, should be reduced; so he took a cottage at Rondebosch for his father and himself, and even went the length of buying a horse. The lordliness of the ideas of the young man who had only had a few months' experience of the world greatly impressed his father, and he paid for everything without a murmur.

Standish had, at the intervals of his father's impassioned discourses, many a long and solitary ride and many a lengthened reverie amongst the pines that grow beside The Flats. The resolutions he made as to his life at the Castaway group were very numerous, and the visions that floated before his eyes were altogether very agreeable. He was beginning to feel that he had accomplished a good deal of that ennobling hard work in the world which he had resolved to set about fulfilling. His previous resolutions had not been made

carelessly: he had grappled with adverse Fate, he felt, and was he not getting the better of this contrary power?

But not many days after the arrival of The Macnamara another personage of importance made his appearance in Cape Town. The Bishop of the Calapash Islands and Metropolitan of the Salamander Archipelago had at last found a vessel to convey him to where his dutiful son was waiting for him.

The prelate felt that he had every reason to congratulate himself upon the opportuneness of his arrival, for Mr. Glaston assured his father, after the exuberance of their meeting had passed away, that if the vessel had not appeared within the course of another week, he would have been compelled to defer the gratification of his filial desires for another year.

"A colony is endurable for a week," said Mr. Glaston; "it is wearisome at the end of a fortnight; but a month spent with colonists has got a demoralising effect that years perhaps may fail to obliterate."

The bishop felt that indeed he had every reason to be thankful that unfavourable winds had not prolonged the voyage of his vessel.

Mrs. Crawford was, naturally enough, one of the first persons at the Cape to visit the bishop, for she had known him years before—she had indeed known most Colonial celebrities in her time—and she took the opportunity to explain to him that Colonel Gerald had been counting the moments until the arrival of the vessel from the Salamanders, so great was his anxiety to meet with the Metropolitan of that interesting archipelago, with whom he had been acquainted a good many years before. This was very gratifying to the bishop, who liked to be remembered by his friends; he had an idea that even the bishop of a distant colony runs a chance of being forgotten in the world unless he has written an heretical book, so he was glad when, a few days after his arrival at Cape Town, he received a visit from Colonel Gerald and an invitation to dinner.

This was very pleasing to Mrs. Crawford, for, of course, Algernon Glaston was included in the invitation, and she contrived without any difficulty that he should be seated by the side of Miss Gerald. Her skill was amply rewarded, she felt, when she observed Mr. Glaston and Daireen engaged in what sounded like a discussion on the musical landscapes of Liszt; to be engaged—even on a discussion of so subtle a nature—was something, Mrs. Crawford thought.

In the course of this evening, she herself, while the bishop was smiling upon Daireen in a way that had gained the hearts, if not the souls, of the Salamanderians, got by the side of Mr. Glaston, intent upon following up the advantage the occasion offered.

"I am so glad that the bishop has taken a fancy to Daireen," she said. "Daireen is a dear good girl—is she not?"

Mr. Glaston raised his eyebrows and touched the extreme point of his moustache before he answered a question so pronounced. "Ah, she is—improving," he said slowly. "If she leaves this place at once she may improve still."

"She wants some one to be near her capable of moulding her tastes—don't you think?"

"She *needs* such a one. I should not like to say *wants*," remarked Mr. Glaston.

"I am sure Daireen would be very willing to learn, Mr. Glaston; she believes in you, I know," said Mrs. Crawford, who was proceeding on an assumption of the broad principles she had laid down to Daireen regarding the effect of flattery upon the race. But her words did not touch Mr. Glaston deeply: he was accustomed to be believed in by girls.

"She has taste—some taste," he replied, though the concession was not forced from him by Mrs. Crawford's revelation to him. "Yes; but of what value is taste unless it is educated upon the true principles of Art?"

"Ah, what indeed?"

"Miss Gerald's taste is as yet only approaching the right tracks of culture. One shudders, anticipating the effect another month of life in such a place as this may have upon her. For my own part, I do not suppose that I shall be myself again for at least a year after I return. I feel my taste utterly demoralised through the two months of my stay here; and I explained to my father that it will be necessary for him to resign his see if he wishes to have me near him at all. It is quite impossible for me to come out here again. The three months' absence from England that my visit entails is ruinous to me."

"I have always thought of your self-sacrifice as an example of true filial duty, Mr. Glaston. I know that Daireen thinks so as well."

But Mr. Glaston did not seem particularly anxious to talk of Daireen.

"Yes; my father must resign his see," he continued.

"The month I have just passed has left too terrible recollections behind it to allow of my running a chance of its being repeated. The only person I met in the colony who was not hopelessly astray was that Miss Vincent."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Crawford, almost shocked. "Oh, Mr. Glaston! you surely do not mean that! Good gracious!—Lottie Vincent!"

"Miss Vincent was the only one who, I found, had any correct idea of Art; and yet, you see, how she turned out."

"Turned out? I should think so indeed. Lottie Vincent was always turning out since the first time I met her."

"Yes; the idea of her acting in company of such a man as this Markham—a man who had no hesitation in going to view a picture by candlelight—it is too distressing."

"My dear Mr. Glaston, I think they will get on very well together. You do not know Lottie Vincent as I know her. She has behaved with the most shocking ingratitude towards me. But we are parted now, and I shall take good care she does not impose upon me again."

"It scarcely matters how one's social life is conducted if one's artistic life is correct," said Mr. Glaston.

At this assertion, which she should have known to be one of the articles of Mr. Glaston's creed, Mrs. Crawford gave a little start. She thought it better, however, not to question its soundness. As a matter of fact, the bishop himself, if he had heard his son enunciate such a precept, would not have questioned its

soundness; for Mr. Glaston spake as one having authority, and most people whose robustness was not altogether mental, believed his Gospel of Art.

"No doubt what you say is—ah—very true," said Mrs. Crawford. "But I do wish, Mr. Glaston, that you could find time to talk frequently to Daireen on these subjects. I should be so sorry if the dear child's ideas were allowed to run wild. Your influence might work wonders with her. There is no one here now who can interfere with you."

"Interfere with me, Mrs. Crawford?"

"I mean, you know, that Mr. Harwood, with his meretricious cleverness, might possibly—ah—well, you know how easily girls are led."

"If there would be a possibility of Miss Gerald's being influenced in a single point by such a man as that Mr. Harwood, I fear not much can be hoped for her," said Mr. Glaston.

"We should never be without hope," said Mrs. Crawford. "For my own part, I hope a great deal—a very great deal—from your influence over Daireen; and I am exceedingly happy that the bishop seems so pleased with her."

The good bishop was indeed distributing his benedictory smiles freely, and Daireen came in for a share of his favours. Her father wondered at the prodigality of the churchman's smiles; for as a chaplain he was not wont to be anything but grave. The colonel did not reflect that while smiling may be a grievous fault in a chaplain, it can never be anything but ornamental to a bishop.

A few days afterwards Mrs. Crawford called upon the bishop, and had an interesting conversation with him on the subject of his son's future—a question to which of late the bishop himself had given a good deal of thought; for in the course of his official investigations on the question of human existence he had been led to believe that the duration of life has at all times been uncertain; he had more than once communicated this fact to dusky congregations, and by reducing the application of the painful truth, he had come to feel that the life of even a throned bishop is not exempt from the fatalities of mankind.

As the bishop's son was accustomed to spend half of the revenues of his father's see, his father was beginning to have an anxiety about the future of the young man; for he did not think that his successor to the prelacy of the Calapash Islands would allow Mr. Glaston to draw, as usual, upon the income accruing to the office. The bishop was not so utterly unworldly in his notions but that he knew there exist other means of amassing wealth than by writing verses in a pamphlet-magazine, or even composing delicate impromptus in minor keys for one's own hearing. His son had not felt it necessary to occupy his mind with any profession, so that his future was somewhat difficult to foresee with any degree of clearness.

Mrs. Crawford, however, spoke many comforting words to the bishop regarding a provision for his son's future. Daireen Gerald, she assured him, besides being one of the most charming girls in the world, was the only child of her father, and her father's estates in the South of Ireland were extensive and profitable.

When Mrs. Crawford left him, the bishop felt glad that he had smiled so frequently upon Miss Gerald. He had heard that no kindly smile was bestowed in vain, but the truth of the sentiment had never before so forced itself upon his mind. He smiled again in recollection of his previous smiles. He felt that indeed Miss Gerald was a charming girl, and Mrs. Crawford was most certainly a wonderful woman; and it can scarcely be doubted that the result of the bishop's reflections proved the possession on his part of powerful mental resources, enabling him to arrive at subtle conclusions on questions of perplexity.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Too much of water had'st thou, poor Ophelia.

How can that be unless she drowned herself?

If the man go to this water... it is, will he, nill he, he goes; mark you that.—*Hamlet*.

STANDISH Macnamara had ridden to the Dutch cottage, but he found it deserted. Colonel Gerald, one of the servants informed him, had early in the day driven to Simon's Town, and had taken Miss Gerald with him, but they would both return in the evening. Sadly the young man turned away, and it is to be feared that his horse had a hard time of it upon The Flats. The waste of sand was congenial with his mood, and so was the rapid motion.

But while he was riding about in an aimless way, Daireen and her father were driving along the lovely road that runs at the base of the low hills which form a mighty causeway across the isthmus between Table Bay and Simon's Bay. Colonel Gerald had received a message that the man-of-war which had been stationed at the chief of the Castaway group had called at Simon's Bay; he was anxious to know how the provisional government was progressing under the commodore of those waters whose green monotony is broken by the gentle cliff's of the Castaways, and Daireen had been allowed to accompany her father to the naval station.

The summer had not yet advanced sufficiently far to make tawny the dark green coarse herbage of the hillside, and the mass of rich colouring lent by the heaths and the prickly-pear hedges made Daireen almost

jealous for the glories of the slopes of Glenmara. For some distance over the road the boughs of Australian oaks in heavy foliage were leaning; but when Constantia and its evenly set vineyards were passed some distance, Daireen heard the sound of breaking waves, and in an instant afterwards the road bore them down to the water's edge at Kalk Bay, a little rocky crescent enclosing green sparkling waves. Upon a pebbly beach a few fishing-boats were drawn up, and the outlying spaces were covered with drying nets, the flavour of which was much preferable to that of the drying fish that were near.

On still the road went until it lost itself upon the mighty beaches of False Bay. Down to the very brink of the great green waves that burst in white foam and clouds of mist upon the sand the team of the wagonette was driven, and on along the snowy curve for miles until Simon's Bay with its cliffs were reached, and the horses were pulled up at the hotel in the single street of Simon's Town at the base of the low ridge of the purple hill.

"You will not be lonely, Dolly," said Colonel Gerald as he left the hotel after lunch to meet the commander of the man-of-war of which the yellow-painted hull and long streaming pennon could be seen from the window, opposite the fort at the farthest arm of the bay.

"Lonely?" said the girl. "I hope I may, for I feel I would like a little loneliness for a change. I have not been lonely since I was at Glenmara listening to Murrough O'Brian playing a dirge. Run away now, papa, and you can tell me when we are driving home what the Castaways are really like."

"I'll make particular inquiries as to the possibilities of lawn-tennis," said her father, as he went down the steps to the red street.

Daireen saw a sergeant's party of soldiers carry arms to the colonel, though he wore no uniform and had not been at this place for years; but even less accustomed observers than the men would have known that he was a soldier. Tall, straight, and with bright gray eyes somewhat hollower than they had been twenty years before, he looked a soldier in every point—one who had served well and who had yet many years of service before him.

How noble he looked, Daireen thought, as he kissed his hand up to her. And then she thought how truly great his life had been. Instead of coming home after his time of service had expired, he had continued at his post in India, unflinching beneath the glare of the sun overhead or from the scorching of the plain underfoot; and here he was now, not going home to rest for the remainder of his life, but ready to face an arduous duty on behalf of his country. She knew that he had been striving through all these years to forget in the work he was accomplishing the one grief of his life. She had often seen him gazing at her face, and she knew why he had sighed as he turned away.

She had not meant to feel lonely in her father's absence, but her thoughts somehow were not of that companionable kind which, coming to one when alone, prevent one's feeling lonely.

She picked up the visitors' book and read all the remarks that had been written in English for the past years; but even the literature of an hotel visitor's book fails at some moments to relieve a reader's mind. She turned over the other volumes, one of which was the Commercial Code of Signals, and the other a Dutch dictionary. She read one of Mr. Harwood's letters in a back number of the *Dominant Trumpeter*, and she found that she could easily recall the circumstances under which, in various conversations, he had spoken to her every word of that column and a quarter. She wondered if special correspondents write out every night all the remarks that they have heard during the day. But even the attempt to solve this problem did not make her feel brisk.

What was the thought which was hovering about her, and which she was trying to avoid by all the means in her power? She could not have defined it. The boundaries of that thought were too vague to be outlined by words.

She glanced out of the window for a while, and then walked to the door and looked over the iron balcony at the head of the steps. Only a few people were about the street. Gazing out seawards, she saw a signal flying from the peak of the man-of-war, and in a few minutes she saw a boat put off and row steadily for the shore near the far-off fort at the headland. She knew the boat was to convey her father aboard the vessel. She stood there watching it until it had landed and was on its way back with her father in the stern.

Then she went along the road until she had left the limits of the town, and was standing between the hill and the sea. Very lovely the sea looked from where it was breaking about the rocks beneath her, out to the horizon which was undefined in the delicate mist that rose from the waters.

She stood for a long time tasting of the freshness of the breeze. She could see the man-of-war's boat making its way through the waves until it at last reached the ship, and then she seemed to have lost the object of her thoughts. She turned off the road and got upon the sloping beach along which she walked some distance.

She had met no one since she had left the hotel, and the coast of the Bay round to the farthest headland seemed deserted; but somehow her mood of loneliness had gone from her as she stood at the brink of those waters whose music was as the sound of a song of home heard in a strange land. What was there to hinder her from thinking that she was standing at the uttermost headland of Lough Suangorm, looking out once more upon the Atlantic?

She crossed a sandy hollow and got upon a ledge of rocks, up to which the sea was beating. Here she seated herself, and sent her eyes out seawards to where the war-ship was lying, and then that thought which had been near her all the day came upon her. It was not of the Irish shore that the glad waters were laving. It was only of some words that had been spoken to her. "For a month we will think of each other," were the words, and she reflected that now this month had passed. The month that she had promised to think of him had gone, but it had not taken with it her thoughts of the man who had uttered those words.

She looked out dreamily across the green waves, wondering if he had returned. Surely he would not let a day pass without coming to her side to ask her if she had thought of him during the month. And what answer would she give him? She smiled.

"Love, my love," she said, "when have I ceased to think of you? When shall I cease to think of you?"

The tears forced themselves into her eyes with the pure intensity of her passion. She sat there dreaming

her dreams and thinking her thoughts until she seemed only to hear the sound of the waters of the distance; the sound of the breaking waves seemed to have passed away. It was this sudden consciousness that caused her to awake from her reverie. She turned and saw that the waves were breaking on the beach *behind her*—the rock where she was sitting was surrounded with water, and every plunge of the advancing tide sent a swirl of water through the gulf that separated the rocks from the beach.

In an instant she had started to her feet. She saw the death that was about her. She looked to the rock where she was standing. The highest, ledge contained a barnacle. She knew it was below the line of high water, and now not more than a couple of feet of the ledge were uncovered. A little cry of horror burst from her, and at the same instant the boom of a gun came across the water from the man-of-war; she looked and saw that the boat was on its way to the shore again. In another half-minute a second report sounded, and she knew that they were firing a salute to her father. They were doing this while his daughter was gazing at death in the face.

Could they see her from the boat? It seemed miles away, but she took off her white jacket and standing up waved it. Not the least sign was made from the boat. The report of the guns echoed along the shore mingling with her cries. But a sign was given from the water: a wave flung its spray clear over the rock. She knew what it meant.

She saw in a moment what chance she had of escape. The water between the rock and the shore was not yet very deep. If she could bear the brunt of the wild rush of the waves that swept into the hollow she could make her way ashore.

In an instant she had stepped down to the water, still holding on by the rocks. A moment of stillness came and she rushed through the waves, but that sand—it sank beneath her first step, and she fell backwards, then came another swirl of eddying waves that plunged through the gulf and swept her away with their force, out past the rock she had been on. One cry she gave as she felt herself lost.

The boom of the saluting gun doing honour to her father was the sound she heard as the cruel foam flashed into her face.

But at her cry there started up from behind a rock far ashore the figure of a man. He looked about him in a bewildered way. Then he made a rush for the beach, seeing the toy the waves were heaving about. He plunged in up to his waist.

“Damn the sand!” he cried, as he felt it yield. He bent himself against the current and took advantage of every relapse of the tide to rush a few steps onward. He caught the rock and swung himself round to the seaward side. Then he waited until the next wave brought that helpless form near him. He did not leave his hold of the rock, but before the backward sweep came he clutched the girl's dress. Then came a struggle between man and wave. The man conquered. He had the girl on one of his arms, and had placed her upon the rock for an instant. Then he swung himself to the shoreward side, caught her up again, and stumbling, and sinking, and battling with the current, he at last gained a sound footing.

Daireen was exhausted but not insensible. She sat upon the dry sand where the man had placed her, and she drew back the wet hair from her face. Then she saw the man stand by the edge of the water and shake his fist at it.

“It's not the first time I've licked you singlehanded,” he said, “and it'll not be the last. Your bullying roar won't wash here.” Then he seemed to catch sight of something on the top of a wave. “Hang me if you'll get even her hat,” he said, and once more he plunged in. The hat was farther out than the girl had been, and he had more trouble in securing it. Daireen saw that his head was covered more than once, and she was in great distress. At last, however, he struggled to the beach with the hat in his hand. It was very terrible to the girl to see him turn, squeezing the water from his hair, and curse the sea and all that pertained to it.

Suddenly, however, he looked round and walked up to where she was now standing. He handed her the hat as though he had just picked it up from the sand. Then he looked at her.

“Miss,” he said, “I believe I'm the politest man in this infernal colony; if I was rude to you just now I ask your pardon. I'm afraid I pulled you about.”

“You saved me from drowning,” said Daireen. “If you had not come to me I should be dead now.”

“I didn't do it for your sake,” said the man. “I did it because that's my enemy”—he pointed to the sea—“and I wouldn't lose a chance of having a shy at him. It's my impression he's only second best this time again. Never mind. How do you feel, miss?”

“Only a little tired,” said Daireen. “I don't think I could walk back to the hotel.”

“You won't need,” said the man. “Here comes a Cape cart and two ancient swells in it. If they don't give you a seat, I'll smash the whole contrivance.”

“Oh!” cried Daireen joyfully; “it is papa—papa himself.”

“Not the party with the brass buttons?” said the man. “All right, I'll hail them.”

Colonel Gerald sprang from the Cape cart in which he was driving with the commodore of the naval station.

“Good God, Daireen, what does this mean?” he cried, looking from the girl to the man beside her.

But Daireen, regardless of her dripping condition, threw herself into his arms, and the stranger turned away whistling. He reached the road and shook his head confidentially at the commodore, who was standing beside the Cape cart.

“Touching thing to be a father, eh, Admiral?” he said.

“Stop, sir,” said the commodore. “You must wait till this is explained.”

“Must I?” said the man. “Who is there here that will keep me?”

“What can I say to you, sir?” cried Colonel Gerald, coming up and holding out his hand to the stranger. “I have no words to thank you.”

“Well, as to that, General,” said the man, “it seems to me the less that's said the better. Take my advice and get the lady something to drink—anything that teetotallers won't allow is safe to be wholesome.”

"Come to my house," said the commodore. "Miss Gerald will find everything there."

"You bet you'll find something in the spirituous way at the admiral's quarters, miss," remarked the stranger, as Daireen was helped into the vehicle. "No, thank you, General, I'll walk to the hotel where I put up."

"Pray let me call upon you before I leave," said Colonel Gerald.

"Delighted to see you, General; if you come within the next two hours, I'll slip the tinsel off a bottle of Moët with you. Now, don't wait here. If you had got a pearly stream of salt water running down your spine you wouldn't wait; would they, miss? Aw revaw."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.

O limèd soul, that, struggling to be free,
Art more engaged.

Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.—*Hamlet*.

QUITE three hours had passed before Colonel Gerald was able to return to the hotel. The stranger was sitting in the coffee-room with a tumbler and a square bottle of cognac in front of him as the colonel entered.

"Ah, General," cried the stranger, "you are come. I was sorry I said two hours, you know, because, firstly, I might have known that at the admiral's quarters the young lady would get as many doses as would make her fancy something was the matter with her; and, secondly, because I didn't think that they would take three hours to dry a suit of tweed like this. You see it, General; this blooming suit is a proof of the low state of morality that exists in this colony. The man I bought it from took an oath that it wouldn't shrink, and yet, just look at it. It's a wicked world this we live in, General. I went to bed while the suit was being dried, and I believe they kept the fire low so that they may charge me with the bed. And how is the young lady?"

"I am happy to say that she has quite recovered from the effects of her exhaustion and her wetting," said Colonel Gerald. "Had you not been near, and had you not had that brave heart you showed, my daughter would have been lost. But I need not say anything to you—you know how I feel."

"We may take it for granted," said the man.

"Nothing that either of us could say would make it plainer, at any rate. You don't live in this city, General?"

"No, I live near Cape Town, where I am now returning with my daughter," said Colonel Gerald.

"That's queer," said the man. "Here am I too not living here and just waiting to get the post-cart to bring me to Cape Town."

"I need scarcely say that I should be delighted if you would accept a seat with me," remarked the colonel.

"Don't say that if there's not a seat to spare, General."

"But, my dear sir, we have two seats to spare. Can I tell my man to put your portmanteau in?"

"Yes, if he can find it," laughed the stranger. "Fact is, General, I haven't any property here except this tweed suit two sizes too small for me now. But these trousers have got pockets, and the pockets hold a good many sovereigns without bursting. I mean to set up a portmanteau in Cape Town. Yes, I'll take a seat with you so far."

The stranger was scarcely the sort of man Colonel Gerald would have chosen to accompany him under ordinary circumstances, but now he felt towards the rough man who had saved the life of his daughter as he would towards a brother.

The wagonette drove round to the commodore's house for Daireen, and the stranger expressed very frankly the happiness he felt at finding her nothing the worse for her accident.

And indeed she did not seem to have suffered greatly; she was a little paler, and the commodore's people insisted on wrapping her up elaborately.

"It was so very foolish of me," she said to the stranger, when they had passed out of Simon's Town and were going rapidly along the road to Wynberg. "It was so very foolish indeed to sit down upon that rock and forget all about the tide. I must have been there an hour."

"Ah, miss," said the man, "I'll take my oath it wasn't of your pa you were thinking all that time. Ah, these young fellows have a lot to answer for."

This was not very subtle humour, Colonel Gerald felt; he found himself wishing that his daughter had owed her life to a more refined man; but on the whole he was just as glad that a man of sensitiveness had not been in the place of this coarse stranger upon that beach a few hours before.

"I don't think I am wrong in believing that you have travelled a good deal," said Colonel Gerald, in some

anxiety lest the stranger might pursue his course of humorous banter.

"Travelled?" said the stranger. "Perhaps I have. Yes, sir, I have travelled, not excursionised. I've knocked about God's footstool since I was a boy, and yet it seems to me that I'm only beginning my travels. I've been —"

And the stranger continued telling of where he had been until the oak avenue at Mowbray was reached. He talked very freshly and frankly of every place both in the Northern and Southern hemispheres. The account of his travels was very interesting, though perhaps to the colonel's servant it was the most entertaining.

"I have taken it for granted that you have no engagement in Cape Town," said Colonel Gerald as he turned the horses down the avenue. "We shall be dining in a short time, and I hope you will join us."

"I don't want to intrude, General," said the man. "But I allow that I could dine heartily without going much farther. As for having an appointment in Cape Town—I don't know a single soul in the colony—not a soul, sir—unless—why, hang it all, who's that standing on the walk in front of us?—I'm a liar, General; I do know one man in the colony; there he stands, for if that isn't Oswin Markham I'll eat him with relish."

"It is indeed Markham," said Colonel Gerald. "And you know him?"

"Know him?" the stranger laughed. "Know him?" Then as the wagonette pulled up beside where Markham was standing in front of the house, the stranger leapt down, saying, as he clapped Oswin on the shoulder, "The General asks me if I know you, old boy; answer for me, will you?"

But Oswin Markham was staring blankly from the man to Daireen and her father.

"You told me you were going to New York," he said at last.

"And so I was when you packed me aboard the *Virginia* brig so neatly at Natal, but the *Virginia* brig put into Simon's Bay and cut her cable one night, leaving me ashore. It's Providence, Oswin—Providence."

Oswin had allowed his hand to be taken by the man, who was the same that had spent the night with him in the hotel at Pietermaritzburg. Then he turned as if from a fit of abstraction, to Daireen and the colonel.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times," he said. "But this meeting with Mr. Despard has quite startled me."

"Mr. Despard," said the colonel, "I must ever look on as one of my best friends, though we met to-day for the first time. I owe him a debt that I can never repay—my daughter's life."

Oswin turned and grasped the hand of the man whom he had called Mr. Despard, before they entered the house together.

Daireen went in just before Markham; they had not yet exchanged a sentence, but when her father and Despard had entered one of the rooms, she turned, saying:

"A month—a month yesterday."

"More," he answered; "it must be more."

The girl laughed low as she went on to her room. But when she found herself apart from every one, she did not laugh. She had her own preservation from death to reflect upon, but it occupied her mind less than the thought that came to her shaping itself into the words, "He has returned."

The man of whom she was thinking was standing pale and silent in a room where much conversation was floating, for Mr. Harwood had driven out with Markham from Cape Town, and he had a good deal to say on the Zulu question, which was beginning to be no question. The Macnamara had also come to pass the evening with Colonel Gerald, and he was not silent. Oswin watched Despard and the hereditary monarch speaking together, and he saw them shake hands. Harwood was in close conversation with Colonel Gerald, but he was not so utterly absorbed in his subject but that he could notice how Markham's eyes were fixed upon the stranger. The terms of a new problem were suggesting themselves to Mr. Harwood.

Then Daireen entered the room, and greeted Mr. Harwood courteously—much too courteously for his heart's desire. He did not feel so happy as he should have done, when she laughed pleasantly and reminded him of her prophecy as to his safe return. He felt as he had done on that morning when he had said good-bye to her: his time had not yet come. But what was delaying that hour he yearned for? She was now standing beside Markham, looking up to his face as she spoke to him. She was not smiling at him. What could these things mean? Harwood asked himself—Lottie Vincent's spiteful remark with reference to Daireen at the lunch that had taken place on the hillside in his absence—Oswin's remark about not being strong enough to leave the associations of Cape Town—this quiet meeting without smiles or any of the conventionalities of ordinary acquaintance—what did all these mean? Mr. Harwood felt that he had at last got before him the terms of a question the working out of which was more interesting to him than any other that could be propounded. And he knew also that this man Despard was an important auxiliary to its satisfactory solution.

"Dove of Glenmara, let me look upon your sweet face again, and say that you are not hurt," cried The Macnamara, taking the girl by both her hands and looking into her face. "Thank God you are left to be the pride of the old country. We are not here to weep over this new sorrow. What would life be worth to us if anything had happened to the pulse of our hearts? Glenmara would be desolate and Slieve Docas would sit in ashes."

The Macnamara pressed his lips to the girl's forehead as a condescending monarch embraces a favoured subject.

"Bravo, King! you'd make a fortune with that sort of sentiment on the boards; you would, by heavens!" said Mr. Despard with an unmodulated laugh.

The Macnamara seemed to take this testimony as a compliment, for he smiled, though the remark did not appear to strike any one else as being imbued with humour. Harwood looked at the man curiously; but Markham was gazing in another direction without any expression upon his face.

In the course of the evening the Bishop of the Calapash Islands dropped in. His lordship had taken a house in the neighbourhood for so long as he would be remaining in the colony; and since he had had that interview with Mrs. Crawford, his visits to his old friend Colonel Gerald were numerous and unconventional. He, too, smiled upon Daireen in his very pleasantest manner, and after hearing from the colonel—who felt perhaps that some little explanation of the stranger's presence might be necessary—of Daireen's accident, the bishop

spoke a few words to Mr. Despard and shook hands with him—an honour which Mr. Despard sustained without emotion.

In spite of these civilities, however, this evening was unlike any that the colonel's friends had spent at the cottage. The bishop only remained for about an hour, and Harwood and Markham soon afterwards took their departure.

"I'll take a seat with you, Oswin, my boy," said Despard. "We'll be at the same hotel in Cape Town, and we may as well all go together."

And they did all go together.

"Fine fellow, the colonel, isn't he?" remarked Despard, before they had got well out of the avenue. "I called him general on chance when I saw him for the first time to-day—you're never astray in beginning at general and working your way down, with these military nobs. And the bishop is a fine old boy too—rather too much palm-oil and glycerine about him, though—too smooth and shiny for my taste. I expect he does a handsome trade amongst the Salamanders. A smart bishop could make a fortune there, I know. And then the king—the Irish king as he calls himself—well, maybe he's the best of the lot."

There did not seem to be anything in Mr. Despard's opening speech that required an answer. There was a considerable pause before Harwood remarked quietly: "By the way, Mr. Despard, I think I saw you some time ago. I have a good recollection for faces."

"Did you?" said Despard. "Where was it? At 'Frisco or Fiji? South Carolina or South Australia?"

"I am not recalling the possibilities of such faraway memories," said Harwood. "But if I don't mistake, you were the person in the audience at Pietermaritzburg who made some remark complimentary to Markham."

The man laughed. "You are right, mister. I only wonder I didn't shout out something before, for I never was so taken aback as when I saw him come out as that Prince. A shabby trick it was you played on me the next morning, Oswin—I say it was infernally shabby. You know what he did, mister: when I had got to the outside of more than one bottle of Moët, and so wasn't very clear-headed, he packed me into one of the carts, drove me to Durban before daylight, and sent me aboard the *Virginia* brig that I had meant to leave. That wasn't like friendship, was it?"

But upon this delicate question Mr. Harwood did not think it prudent to deliver an opinion. Markham himself was mute, yet this did not seem to have a depressing effect upon Mr. Despard. He gave a *résumé* of the most important events in the voyage of the *Virginia* brig, and described very graphically how he had unfortunately become insensible to the fact that the vessel was leaving Simon's Bay on the previous morning; so that when he awoke, the *Virginia* brig was on her way to New York city, while he was on a sofa in the hotel surrounded by empty bottles.

When Markham was alone with this man in a room at the hotel at Cape Town, Despard became even more talkative.

"By heavens, Oswin," he said, "you have changed your company a bit since you were amongst us; generals, bishops, and kings—kings, by jingo—seem to be your chums here. Well, don't you think that I don't believe you to be right. You were never of our sort in Australia—we all felt you to be above us, and treated you so—making a pigeon of you now and again, but never looking on ourselves as your equal. By heavens, I think now that I have got in with these people and seem to get on so well with them, I'll turn over a new leaf."

"Do you mean to stay here longer than this week?" asked Oswin.

"This week? I'll not leave for another month—another six months, maybe. I've money, my boy, and—suppose we have something to drink—something that will sparkle?"

"I don't mean to drink anything," Oswin replied.

"You must have something," Despard insisted. "You must admit that though the colonel is a glorious old boy, he didn't do the hospitable in the liquid way. But I'll keep in with the lot of them. I'll go out to see the colonel and his pretty daughter now and again. Ah, by George, that pretty daughter seems to have played the mischief with some of the young fellows about here. 'Sir,' says the king of Ireland to me, 'I fale more than I can till ye: the swate girl ye saved is to be me sonn's broide.' This looked well enough for the king, and we got very great friends, as you saw. But then the bishop comes up to me and, says he, 'Sir, allow me to shake you by the hand. You do not know how I feel towards that young lady who owes her life to your bravery.' I looked at him seriously: 'Bishop,' said I, 'I can't encourage this sort of thing. You might be her father.' Well, my boy, you never saw anything so flustered as that bishop became; it was more than a minute before he could tell me that it was his son who had the tender heart about the girl. That bishop didn't ask me to dine with him; though the king did, and I'm going out to him to-morrow evening."

"You are going to him?" said Markham.

"To be sure I am. He agreed with me about the colonel's hospitality in the drink way. 'You'll find it different in my house,' said the king; and I think you know, Oswin, that the king and me have one point in common."

"Good-night," said Markham, going to the door. "No, I told you I did not mean to drink anything."

He left Mr. Despard on the sofa smoking the first of a box of cigars he had just ordered.

"He's changed—that boy is," said Despard. "He wouldn't have gone out in that fashion six months ago. But what the deuce has changed him? that's what I'd like to know. He wants to get me away from here—that's plain—plain? by George, it's ugly. But here I am settled for a few months at least if—hang that waiter, is he never going to bring me that bottle of old Irish?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass....'S blood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.—*Hamlet*.

OSWIN Markham sat in his own room in the hotel. The window was open, and through it from the street below came the usual sounds of Cape Town—terrible Dutch mingling with Malay and dashed with Kafir. It was not the intensity of a desire to listen to this polyglot mixture that caused Markham to go upon the balcony and stand looking out to the night.

He reflected upon what had passed since he had been in this place a month before. He had gone up to Natal, and in company of Harwood he had had a brief hunting expedition. He had followed the spoor of the gemsbok over veldt and through kloof, sleeping in the house of the hospitable boers when chance offered; but all the time he had been possessed of one supreme thought—one supreme hope that made his life seem a joyous thing—he had looked forward to this day—the day when he would have returned, when he would again be able to look into the face that moved like a phantom before him wherever he went. And he had returned—for this—this looking, not into her face, but into the street below him, while he thought if it would not be better for him to step out beyond the balcony—out into the blank that would follow his casting of himself down.

He came to the conclusion that it would not be better to step beyond the balcony. A thought seemed to strike him as he stood out there. He returned to his chamber and threw himself on his bed, but he did not remain passive for long; once more he stepped into the air, and now he had need to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief.

It was an hour afterwards that he undressed himself; but the bugle at the barracks had sounded a good many times before he fell asleep.

Mr. Harwood, too, had an hour of reflection when he went to his room; but his thoughts were hardly of the excitable type of Markham's; they had, however, a definite result, which caused him to seek out Mr. Despard in the morning.

Mr. Despard had just finished a light and salutary breakfast consisting of a glass of French brandy in a bottle of soda-water, and he was smoking another sample of that box of cigars on the balcony.

"Good-morning to you, mister," he said, nodding as Harwood came, as if by chance, beside him.

"Ah, how do you do?" said Harwood. "Enjoying your morning smoke, I see. Well, I hope you are nothing the worse for your plunge yesterday."

"No, sir, nothing; I only hope that Missy out there will be as sound. I don't think they insisted on her drinking enough afterwards."

"Ah, perhaps not. Your friend Markham has not come down yet, they tell me."

"He was never given to running ties with the sun," said Mr. Despard.

"He told me you were a particular friend of his in Australia?" continued Mr. Harwood.

"Yes, men very soon get to be friends out there; but Oswin and myself were closer than brothers in every row and every lark."

"Of which you had, no doubt, a good many?"

"A good few, yes; a few that wouldn't do to be printed specially as prizes for young ladies' boarding-schools—not but what the young ladies would read them if they got the chance."

"Few fellows would care to write their autobiographies and go into the details of their life," said Harwood. "I suppose you got into trouble now and again?"

"Trouble? Well, yes, when the money ran short, and there was no balance at the bank; that's real trouble, let me tell you."

"It certainly is; but I mean, did you not sometimes need the friendly offices of a lawyer after a wild few days?"

"Sir," said Despard, throwing away the end of his cigar, "if your idea of a wild few days is housebreaking or manslaughter, it wasn't ours, I can tell you. No, my boy, we never took to bushranging; and though I've had my turn with Derringer's small cannons when I was at Chokeneck Gulch, it was only because it was the custom of the country. No, sir; Oswin, though he seems to have turned against me here, will still have my good word, for I swear to you he never did anything that made the place too hot for him, though I don't suppose that if he was in a competitive examination for a bishopric the true account of his life in Melbourne would help him greatly."

"There are none of us here who mean to be bishops," laughed Harwood. "But I understood from a few words Markham let fall that—well, never mind, he is a right good fellow, as I found when we went up country together a couple of weeks ago. By the way, do you mean to remain here long, Mr. Despard?"

"Life is short, mister, and I've learned never to make arrangements very far in advance. I've about eighty sovereigns with me, and I'll stay here till they're spent."

"Then your stay will be proportionate to your spending powers."

"In an inverse ratio, as they used to say at school," said Despard.

When Mr. Harwood went into the room he reflected that on the whole he had not gained much information from Mr. Despard; and Mr. Despard reflected that on the whole Mr. Harwood had not got much information by his system of leading questions.

About half an hour afterwards Markham came out upon the balcony, and gave a little unaccountable start

on seeing its sole occupant.

"Hallo, my boy! have you turned up at last?" cried Despard. "Our good old Calapash friend will tell you that unless you get up with the lark you'll never do anything in the world. You should have been here a short time ago to witness the hydraulic experiments."

"The what?" said Markham.

"Hydraulic experiments. The patent pump of the *Dominant Trumpeter* was being tested upon me. Experiments failed, not through any incapacity of the pump, but through the contents of the reservoir worked upon not running free enough in the right direction."

"Was Mr. Harwood here?"

"He was, my boy. And he wanted to know all about how we lived in Melbourne."

"And you told him——"

"To get up a little earlier in the morning when he wants to try his pumping apparatus. But what made you give that start? Don't you know that all I could tell would be some of our old larks, and he wouldn't have thought anything the worse of you on account of them? Hang it all, you don't mean to say you're going into holy orders, that you mind having any of the old times brought back? If you do, I'm afraid that it will be awkward for you if I talk in my ordinary way. I won't bind myself not to tell as many of our larks as chime in with the general conversation. I only object on principle to be pumped."

"Talk away," said Oswin spasmodically. "Tell of all our larks. How could I be affected by anything you may tell of them?"

"Bravo! That's what I say. Larks are larks. There was no manslaughter nor murder. No, there was no murder."

"No, there was no murder," said Markham.

The other burst into a laugh that startled a Malay in the street below.

"By heavens, from the way you said that one would fancy there had been a murder," he cried.

Then there was a long pause, which was broken by Markham.

"You still intend to go out to dine with that man you met yesterday?" he said.

"Don't call him a man, Oswin; you wouldn't call a bishop a man, and why call a king one. Yes, I have ordered a horse that is said to know the way across those Flats without a pocket compass."

"Where did you say the house was?"

"It's near a place called Rondebosch. I remember the locality well, though it's ten years since I was there. The shortest way back is through a pine-wood at the far end of The Flats—you know that place, of course."

"I know The Flats. And you mean to come through the pine-wood?"

"I do mean it. It's a nasty place to ride through, but the horse always goes right in a case like that, and I'll give him his head."

"Take care that you have your own at that time," said Markham. "The house of the Irishman is not like Colonel Gerald's."

"I hope not, for a more thirsty evening I never spent than at your friend's cottage. The good society hardly made up for the want of drink. It put me in mind of the story of the man that found the pearls when he was starving in the desert. What are bishops and kings to a fellow if he is thirsty?"

"You will leave the house to return here between eleven and twelve, I suppose?" said Oswin.

"Well, I should say that about eleven will see me on my way."

"And you will go through the pine-wood?"

"I will, my boy, and across The Flats until I pass the little river—it's there still, I suppose. And now suppose I buy you a drink?"

But Oswin Markham declined to be the object of such a purchase. He went back to his own room, and threw himself on his bed, where he remained for more than an hour. Then he rose and wiped his forehead.

He pulled down some books that he had bought, and tried to read bits of one or two. He sat diligently down as if he meant to go through a day's reading, but he did not appear to be in the mood for applying himself to anything. He threw the books aside and turned over some newspapers; but these did not seem to engross him any more than the books had done. He lay back in his chair, and after a while his restlessness subsided: he had fallen asleep.

It was the afternoon before he awoke with a sudden start. He heard the sound of voices in the street below his window. He went forward, and, looking out, was just in time to see Harry Despard mounting his horse at the hotel door.

"I will be back about midnight," he said to the porter of the hotel, and then he trotted off.

Markham heard the sound of the horse's hoofs die away on the street, and he repeated the man's words: "About midnight."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

To desperation turn my trust and hope.

What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow?

I'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce whereon but sipping
... he...
Chaunted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable.

The drink—the drink—... the foul practice
Hath turned itself on me; lo, here I lie...
I can no more: the King—the King's to blame.—*Hamlet.*

OSWIN Markham dined at the hotel late in the evening, and when he was in the act Harwood came into the room dressed for a dinner-party at Greenpoint to which he had been invited.

"Your friend Mr. Despard is not here?" said Harwood, looking around the room. "I wanted to see him for a moment to give him a few words of advice that may be useful to him. I wish to goodness you would speak to him, Markham; he has been swaggering about in a senseless way, talking of having his pockets full of sovereigns, and in the hearing of every stranger that comes into the hotel. In the bar a few hours ago he repeated his boast to the Malay who brought him his horse. Now, for Heaven's sake, tell him that unless he wishes particularly to have a bullet in his head or a khris in his body some of these nights, he had better hold his tongue about his wealth—that is what I meant to say to him."

"And you are right," cried Oswin, starting up suddenly. "He has been talking in the hearing of men who would do anything for the sake of a few sovereigns. What more likely than that some of them should follow him and knock him down? That will be his end, Harwood."

"It need not be," replied Harwood. "If you caution him, he will most likely regard what you say to him."

"I will caution him—if I see him again," said Markham; then Harwood left the room, and Markham sat down again, but he did not continue his dinner. He sat there staring at his plate. "What more likely?" he muttered. "What more likely than that he should be followed and murdered by some of these men? If his body should be found with his pockets empty, no one could doubt it."

He sat there for a considerable time—until the streets had become dark; then he rose and went up to his own room for a while, and finally he put on his hat and left the hotel.

He looked at his watch as he walked to the railway station, and saw that he would be just in time to catch a train leaving for Wynberg. He took a ticket for the station on the Cape Town side of Mowbray, where he got out.

He walked from the station to the road and again looked at his watch: it was not yet nine o'clock; and then he strolled aside upon a little foot-track that led up the lower slopes of the Peak above Mowbray. The night was silent and moonless. Upon the road only at intervals came the rumbling of bullock wagons and the shouts of the Kafir drivers. The hill above him was sombre and untouched by any glance of light, and no breeze stirred up the scents of the heath. He walked on in the silence until he had come to the ravine of silver firs. He passed along the track at the edge and was soon at the spot where he had sat at the feet of Daireen a month before. He threw himself down on the short coarse grass just as he had done then, and every moment of the hour they had passed together came back to him. Every word that had been spoken, every thought that had expressed itself upon that lovely face which the delicate sunset light had touched—all returned to him.

What had he said to her? That the past life he had lived was blotted out from his mind? Yes, he had tried to make himself believe that; but now how Fate had mocked him! He had been bitterly forced to acknowledge that the past was a part of the present. His week so full of bitterest suffering had not formed a dividing line between the two lives he fancied might be his.

"Is this the justice of God?" he cried out now to the stars, clasping his hands in agony above his head. "It is unjust. My life would have been pure and good now, if I had been granted my right of forgetfulness. But I have been made the plaything of God." He stood with his hands clasped on his head for long. Then he gave a laugh. "Bah!" he said; "man is master of his fate. I shall do myself the justice that God has denied me."

He came down from that solemn mount, and crossed the road at a nearer point than the Mowbray avenue.

He soon found himself by the brink of that little river which flowed past Rondebosch and Mowbray. He got beneath the trees that bordered its banks, and stood for a long time in the dead silence of the night. The mighty dog-lilies were like pictures beneath him; and only now and again came some of those mysterious sounds of night—the rustling of certain leaves when all the remainder were motionless, the winnowing of the wings of some night creature whose form remained invisible, the sudden stirring of ripples upon the river without a cause being apparent—the man standing there heard all, and all appeared mysterious to him. He wondered how he could have so often been by night in places like this, without noticing how mysterious the silence was—how mysterious the strange sounds.

He walked along by the bank of the slow river, until he was just opposite Mowbray. A little bridge with rustic rails was, he knew, at hand, by which he would cross the stream—for he must cross it. But before he had reached it, he heard a sound. He paused. Could it be possible that it was the sound of a horse's hoofs?

There he waited until something white passed from under the trees and reached the bridge, standing between him and the other side of the river—something that barred his way. He leant against the tree nearest to him, for he seemed to be falling to the ground, and then through the stillness of the night the voice of Daireen came singing a snatch of song—his song. She was on the little bridge and leaning upon the rail. In a few moments she stood upright, and listlessly walked under the trees where he was standing, though she could not see him.

“Daireen,” he said gently, so that she might not be startled; and she was not startled, she only walked backwards a few steps until she was again at the bridge.

“Did any one speak?” she said almost in a whisper. And then he stood before her while she laughed with happiness.

“Why do you stand there?” he said in a tone of wonder. “What was it sent you to stand there between me and the other side of that river?”

“I said to papa that I would wait for him here. He went to see Major Crawford part of the way to the house where the Crawfords are staying; but what can be keeping him from returning I don't know. I promised not to go farther than the avenue, and I have just been here a minute.”

He looked at her standing there before him. “Oh God! oh God!” he said, as he reflected upon what his own thoughts had been a moment before. “Daireen, you are an angel of God—that angel which stood between the living and the dead. Stay near me. Oh, child! what do I not owe to you? my life—the peace of my soul for ever and ever. And yet—must we speak no word of love together, Daireen?”

“Not one—here,” she said. “Not one—only—ah, my love, my love, why should we speak of it? It is all my life—I breathe it—I think it—it is myself.”

He looked at her and laughed. “This moment is ours,” he said with tremulous passion. “God cannot pluck it from us. It is an immortal moment, if our souls are immortal. Child, can God take you away from me before I have kissed you on the mouth?” He held her face between his hands and kissed her. “Darling, I have taken your white soul into mine,” he said.

Then they stood apart on that bridge.

“And now,” she said, “you must never frighten me with your strange words again. I do not know what you mean sometimes, but then that is because I don't know very much. I feel that you are good and true, and I have trusted you.”

“I will be true to you,” he said gently. “I will die loving you better than any hope man has of heaven. Daireen, never dream, whatever may happen, that I shall not love you while my soul lives.”

“I will believe you,” she said; and then voices were heard coming down the lane of aloes at the other side of the river—voices and the sound of a horse's hoofs. Colonel Gerald and Major Crawford were coming along leading a horse, across whose saddle lay a black mass. Oswin Markham gave a start. Then Daireen's father hastened forward to where she was standing.

“Child,” he said quickly, “go back—go back to the house. I will come to you in a few minutes.”

“What is the matter, papa?” she asked. “No one is hurt?—Major Crawford is not hurt?”

“No, no, he is here; but go, Daireen—go at once.”

She turned and went up the avenue without a word. But she saw that Oswin was not looking at her—that he was grasping the rail of the bridge while he gazed to where the horse with its burden stood a few yards away among the aloes.

“I am glad you chance to be here, Markham,” said Colonel Gerald hurriedly. “Something has happened—that man Despard—”

“Not dead—not murdered!” gasped Oswin, clutching the rail with both hands.

“Murdered? no; how could he be murdered? he must have fallen from his horse among the trees.”

“And he is dead—he is dead?”

“Calm yourself, Markham,” said the colonel; “he is not dead.”

“Not in that sense, my boy,” laughed Major Crawford. “By gad, if we could leave the brute up to the neck in the river here for a few hours I fancy he would be treated properly. Hold him steady, Markham.”

Oswin put his hand mechanically to the feet of the man who was lying helplessly across the saddle.

“Not dead, not dead,” he whispered.

“Only dead drunk, unless his skull is fractured, my boy,” laughed the major. “We'll take him to the stables, of course, George?”

“No, no, to the house,” said Colonel Gerald.

“Run on and get the key of the stables, George,” said the major authoritatively. “Don't you suppose in any way that your house is to be turned into an hospital for dipsomaniacs. Think of the child.”

Colonel Gerald made a little pause, and then hastened forward to awaken the groom to get the key of the stables, which were some distance from the cottage.

“By gad, Markham, I'd like to spill the brute into that pond,” whispered the major to Oswin, as they waited for the colonel's return.

“How did you find him? Did you see any accident?” asked Oswin.

“We met the horse trotting quietly along the avenue without a rider, and when we went on among the trees we found the fellow lying helpless. George said he was killed, but I knew better. Irish whisky, my boy, was what brought him down, and you will find that I am right.”

They let the man slide from the saddle upon a heap of straw when the stable door was opened by the half-dressed groom.

“Not dead, Jack?” said Colonel Gerald as a lantern was held to the man's face. Only the major was looking at the man; Markham could not trust himself even to glance towards him.

"Dead?" said the major. "Why, since we have laid him down I have heard him frame three distinct oaths. Have you a bucket of water handy, my good man? No, it needn't be particularly clean. Ah, that will do. Now, if you don't hear a choice selection of colonial blasphemy, he's dead and, by gad, sir, so am I."

The major's extensive experience of the treatment of colonial complaints had, as the result proved, led him to form a correct if somewhat hasty diagnosis of the present case. Not more than a gallon of the water had been thrown upon the man before he recovered sufficient consciousness to allow of his expressing himself with freedom on the subject of his treatment.

"I told you so," chuckled the major. "Fill the bucket again, my man."

Colonel Gerald could only laugh now that his fears had been dispelled. He hastened to the house to tell Daireen that there was no cause for alarm.

By the time the second bucketful had been applied, in pursuance of the major's artless system of resuscitation, Despard was sitting up talking of the oppressions under which a certain nation was groaning. He was sympathetic and humorous in turn; weeping after particular broken sentences, and chuckling with laughter after other parts of his speech.

"The Irish eloquence and the Irish whisky have run neck and neck for the fellow's soul," said the major. "If we hadn't picked him up he would be in a different state now. Are you going back to Cape Town to-night, Markham?"

"I am," said Oswin.

"That's lucky. You mustn't let George have his way in this matter. This brute would stay in the cottage up there for a month."

"He must not do that," cried Markham eagerly.

"No, my boy; so you will drive with him in the Cape cart to the hotel. He will give you no trouble if you lay him across the floor and keep your feet well down upon his chest. Put one of the horses in, my man," continued the major, turning to the groom. "You will drive in with Mr. Markham, and bring the cart back."

Before Colonel Gerald had returned from the house a horse was harnessed to the Cape cart, Despard had been lifted up and placed in an easy attitude against one of the seats. And only a feeble protest was offered by the colonel.

"My dear Markham," he said, "it was very lucky you were passing where my daughter saw you. You know this man Despard—how could I have him in my house?"

"In your house!" cried Markham. "Thank God I was here to prevent that."

The Cape cart was already upon the avenue and the lamps were lighted. But a little qualm seemed to come to the colonel.

"Are you sure he is not injured—that he has quite recovered from any possible effects?" he said.

Then came the husky voice of the man.

"Go'night, king, go'night. I'm alright—horse know's way. We're tram'led on, king—'pressed people—but wormil turn—wormil turn—never mind—Go save Ireland—green flag litters o'er us—tread th' land that bore us—go'night."

The cart was in motion before the man's words had ceased.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Look you lay home to him:
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with.

What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.

I must leave thee, love...
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, below'd, and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife.—*Hamlet.*

OSWIN Markham lay awake nearly all that night after he had reached the hotel. His thoughts were not of that even nature whose proper sequence is sleep. He thought of all that had passed since he had left the room he was lying in now. What had been on his mind on leaving this room—what had his determination been?

"For her," he said; "for her. It would have been for her. God keep me—God pity me!"

The morning came with the sound of marching soldiers in the street below; with the cry of bullock-wagon-drivers and the rattle of the rude carts; with the morning and the sounds of life—the breaking of the deadly silence of the night—sleep came to the man.

It was almost midday before he awoke, and for some time after opening his eyes he was powerless to recollect anything that had happened during the night; his awakening now was as his return to consciousness on board the *Cardwell Castle*,—a great blank seemed to have taken place in his life—the time of unconsciousness was a gulf that all his efforts of memory could not at first bridge.

He looked around the room, and his first consciousness was the recollection of what his thoughts of the previous evening had been when he had slept in the chair before the window and had awakened to see Despard ride away. He failed at once to remember anything of the interval of night; only with that one recollection burning on his brain he looked at his right hand.

In a short time he remembered everything. He knew that Despard was in the hotel. He dressed himself and went downstairs, and found Harwood in the coffee-room, reading sundry documents with as anxious an expression of countenance as a special correspondent ever allows himself to assume.

“What is the news?” Markham asked, feeling certain that something unusual had either taken place or was seen by the prophetic vision of Harwood to be looming in the future.

“War,” said Harwood, looking up. “War, Markham. I should never have left Natal. They have been working up to the point for the last few months, as I saw; but now there is no hope for a peaceful settlement.”

“The Zulu chief is not likely to come to terms now?” said Markham.

“Impossible,” replied the other. “Quite impossible. In a few days there will, no doubt, be a call for volunteers.”

“For volunteers?” Markham repeated. “You will go up country at once, I suppose?” he added.

“Not quite as a volunteer, but as soon as I receive my letters by the mail that arrives in a few days, I shall be off to Durban, at any rate.”

“And you will be glad of it, no doubt. You told me you liked doing war-correspondence.”

“Did I?” said Harwood; and after a little pause he added slowly: “It’s a tiring life this I have been leading for the past fifteen years, Markham. I seem to have cut myself off from the sympathies of life. I seem to have been only a looker-on in the great struggles—the great pleasures—of life. I am supposed to have no more sympathies than Babbage’s calculator that records certain facts without emotion, and I fancied I had schooled myself into this cold apathy in looking at things; but I don’t think I have succeeded in cutting myself off from all sympathies. No, I shall not be glad of this war. Never mind. By the way, are you going out to Dr. Glaston’s to-night?”

“I have got a card for his dinner, but I cannot tell what I may do. I am not feeling myself, just now.”

“You certainly don’t look yourself, Markham. You are haggard, and as pale as if you had not got any sleep for nights. You want the constitution of your friend Mr. Despard, who is breakfasting in the bar.”

“What, is it possible he is out of his room?” cried Markham, in surprise.

“Why, he was waiting here an hour ago when I came down, and in the meantime he had been buying a suit of garments, he said, that gallant check of his having come to grief through the night.”

Harwood spoke the words at the door and then he left the room.

Oswin was not for long left in solitary occupation, however, for in a few moments the door was flung open, and Despard entered with a half-empty tumbler in his hand. He came forward with a little chuckling laugh and stood in front of Oswin without speaking. He looked with his blood-shot eyes into Oswin’s cold pale face, and then burst into a laugh so hearty that he was compelled to leave the tumbler upon the table, not having sufficient confidence in his ability to grasp it under the influence of his excitement. Then he tapped Markham on the shoulder, crying:

“Well, old boy, have you got over that lark of last night? Like the old times, wasn’t it? You did the fatherly by me, I believe, though hang me if I remember what happened after I had drunk the last glass of old Irish with our friend the king. How the deuce did I get in with the teetotal colonel who, the boots has been telling me, lent me his cart? That’s what I should like to know. And where were you, my boy, all the night?”

“Despard,” said Markham, “I have borne with your brutal insults long enough. I will not bear them any longer. When you have so disgraced both yourself and me as you did last night, it is time to bring matters to a climax. I cannot submit to have you thrust yourself upon my friends as you have done. You behaved like a brute.”

Despard seated himself and wiped his eyes. “I did behave like a brute,” he said. “I always do, I know—and you know too, Oswin. Never mind. Tell me what you want—what am I to do?”

“You must leave the colony,” said Oswin quickly, almost eagerly. “I will give you money, and a ticket to England to-day. You must leave this place at once.”

“And so I will—so I will,” said the man from behind his handkerchief. “Yes, yes, Oswin, I’ll leave the colony—I will—when I become a teetotaler.” He took down his handkerchief, and put it into his pocket with a hoarse laugh. “Come, my boy,” he said in his usual voice, “come; we’ve had quite enough of that sort of bullying. Don’t think you’re talking to a boy, Master Oswin. Who looks on a man as anything the worse for getting drunk now and again? You don’t; you can’t afford to. How often have I not helped you as you helped me? Tell me that.”

“In the past—the accursed past,” said Oswin, “I may have made myself a fool—yes, I did, but God knows that I have suffered for it. Now all is changed. I was willing to tolerate you near me since we met this time, hoping that you would think fit, when you were in a new place and amongst new people, to change your way of life. But last night showed me that I was mistaken. You can never be received at Colonel Gerald’s again.”

“Indeed?” said the man. “You should break the news gently to a fellow. You might have thrown me into a fit by coming down like that. Hark you here, Mr. Markham. I know jolly well that I will be received there and welcomed too. I’ll be received everywhere as well as you, and hang me, if I don’t go everywhere. These

people are my friends as well as yours. I've done more for them than ever you did, and they know that."

"Fool, fool!" said Oswin bitterly.

"We'll see who's the fool, my boy. I know my advantage, don't you be afraid. The Irish king has a son, hasn't he? well, I was welcome with him last night. The Lord Bishop of Calapash has another blooming male offspring, and though he hasn't given me an invite to his dinner this evening, yet, hang me, if he wouldn't hug me if I went with the rest of you swells. Hang me, if I don't try it at any rate—it will be a lark at least. Dine with a bishop—by heaven, sir, it would be a joke—I'll go, oh, Lord, Lord!" Oswin stood motionless looking at him. "Yes," continued Despard, "I'll have a jolly hour with his lordship the bishop. I'll fill up my glass as I did last night, and we'll drink the same toast together—we'll drink to the health of the Snowdrop of Glenmara, as the king called her when he was very drunk; we'll drink to the fair Daireen. Hallo, keep your hands off!—Curse you, you're choking me! There!" Oswin, before the girl's name had more than passed the man's lips, had sprung forward and clutched him by the throat; only by a violent effort was he cast off, and now both men stood trembling with passion face to face.

"What the deuce do you mean by this sort of treatment?" cried Despard.

"Despard," said Oswin slowly, "you know me a little, I think. I tell you if you ever speak that name again in my presence you will repent it. You know me from past experience, and I have not utterly changed."

The man looked at him with an expression that amounted to wonderment upon his face. Then he threw himself back in his chair, and an uncontrollable fit of laughter seized him. He lay back and almost yelled with his insane laughter. When he had recovered himself and had wiped the tears from his eyes, he saw Oswin was gone. And this fact threw him into another convulsive fit. It was a long time before he was able to straighten his collar and go to the bar for a glass of French brandy.

The last half-hour had made Oswin Markham very pale. He had eaten no breakfast, and he was reminded of this by the servant to whom he had given directions to have his horse brought to the door.

"No," he said, "I have not eaten anything. Get the horse brought round quickly, like a good fellow."

He stood erect in the doorway until he heard the sound of hoofs. Then he went down the steps and mounted, turning his horse's head towards Wynberg. He galloped along the red road at the base of the hill, and only once he looked up, saying, "For the last time—the last."

He reached the avenue at Mowbray and dismounted, throwing the bridle over his arm as he walked slowly between the rows of giant aloes. In another moment he came in sight of the Dutch cottage. He paused under one of the Australian oaks, and looked towards the house. "Oh, God, God, pity me!" he cried in agony so intense that it could not relieve itself by any movement or the least motion.

He threw the bridle over a low branch and walked up to the house. His step was heard. She stood before him in the hall—white and flushed in turn as he went towards her. He was not flushed; he was still deadly white. He had startled her, he knew, for the hand she gave him was trembling like a dove's bosom.

"Papa is gone part of the way back to Simon's Town with the commodore who was with us this morning," she said. "But you will come in and wait, will you not?"

"I cannot," he said. "I cannot trust myself to go in—even to look at you, Daireen."

"Oh, God!" she said, "you are ill—your face—your voice——"

"I am not ill, Daireen. I have an hour of strength—such strength as is given to men when they look at Death in the face and are not moved at all. I kissed you last night——"

"And you will now," she said, clasping his arm tenderly. "Dearest, do not speak so terribly—do not look so terrible—so like—ah, that night when you looked up to me from the water."

"Daireen, why did I do that? Why did you pluck me from that death to give me this agony of life—to give yourself all the bitterness that can come to any soul? Daireen, I kissed you only once, and I can never kiss you again. I cannot be false to you any longer after having touched your pure spirit. I have been false to you—false, not by my will—but because to me God denied what He gave to others—others to whom His gift was an agony—that divine power to begin life anew. My past still clings to me, Daireen—it is not past—it is about and around me still—it is the gulf that separates us, Daireen."

"Separates us?" she said blankly, looking at him.

"Separates us," he repeated, "as heaven and hell are separated. We have been the toys—the playthings, of Fate. If you had not looked out of your cabin that night, we should both be happy now. And then how was it we came to love each other and to know it to be love? I struggled against it, but I was as a feather upon the wind. Ah, God has given us this agony of love, for I am here to look on you for the last time—to beseech of you to hate me, and to go away knowing that you love me."

"No, no, not to go away—anything but that. Tell me all—I can forgive all."

"I cannot bring my lips to frame my curse," he said after a little pause. "But you shall hear it, and, Daireen, pity me as you pitied me when I looked to God for hope and found none. Child—give me your eyes for the last time."

She held him clasped with her white hands, and he saw that her passion made her incapable of understanding his words. She looked up to him whispering, "The last time—no, no—not the last time—not the last."

She was in his arms. He looked down upon her face, but he did not kiss it. He clenched his teeth as he unwound her arms from him.

"One word may undo the curse that I have bound about your life," he said. "Take the word, Daireen—the blessed word for you and me—*Forget*. Take it—it is my last blessing."

She was standing before him. She saw his face there, and she gave a cry, covering her own face with her hands, for the face she saw was that which had looked up to her from the black waters.

Was he gone?

From the river bank came the sounds of the native women, from the garden the hum of insects, and from

the road the echo of a horse's hoofs passing gradually away.

Was it a dream—not only this scene of broad motionless leaves, and these sounds she heard, but all the past months of her life?

Hours went by leaving her motionless in that seat, and then came the sound of a horse—she sprang up. He was returning—it was a dream that had given her this agony of parting.

“Daireen, child, what is the matter?” asked her father, whose horse it was she had heard.

She looked up to his face.

“Papa,” she said very gently, “it is over—all—all over—for ever—I have only you now.”

“My dear little Dolly, tell me all that troubles you.”

“Nothing troubles me now, papa. I have you near me, and I do not mind anything else.”

“Tell me all, Daireen.”

“I thought I loved some one else, papa—Oswin—Oswin Markham. But he is gone now, and I know you are with me. You will always be with me.”

“My poor little Dolly,” said Colonel Gerald, “did he tell you that he loved you?”

“He did, papa; but you must ask me no more. I shall never see him again!”

“Perfectly charming!” said Mrs. Crawford, standing at the door. “The prettiest picture I have seen for a long time—father and daughter in each other's arms. But, my dear George, are you not yet dressed for the bishop's dinner? Daireen, my child, did you not say you would be ready when I would call for you? I am quite disappointed, and I would be angry only you look perfectly lovely this evening—like a beautiful lily. The dear bishop will be so charmed, for you are one of his favourites. Now do make haste, and I entreat of you to be particular with your shades of gray.”

CHAPTER XL.

... A list of... resolute

For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't.

My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalléd play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep;
Thus runs the world away.—*Hamlet.*

THE Bishop of the Calapash Islands and Metropolitan of the Salamander Archipelago was smiling very tranquilly upon his guests as they arrived at his house, which was about two miles from Mowbray. But the son of the bishop was not smiling—he, in fact, seldom smiled; there was a certain breadth of expression associated with such a manifestation of feeling that was inconsistent with his ideas of subtlety of suggestion. He was now endeavouring to place his father's guests at ease by looking only slightly bored by their presence, giving them to understand that he would endure them around him for his father's sake, so that there should be no need for them to be at all anxious on his account. A dinnerparty in a colony was hardly that sort of social demonstration which Mr. Glaston would be inclined to look forward to with any intensity of feeling; but the bishop, having a number of friends at the Cape, including a lady who was capable of imparting some very excellent advice on many social matters, had felt it to be a necessity to give this little dinnerparty, and his son had only offered such a protest against it as satisfied his own conscience and prevented the possibility of his being consumed for days after with a gnawing remorse.

The bishop had his own ideas of entertaining his guests—a matter which his son brought under his consideration after the invitations had been issued.

“There is not such a thing as a rising tenor in the colony, I am sure,” said Mr. Glaston, whose experience of perfect social entertainment was limited to that afforded by London drawing-rooms. “If we had a rising tenor, there would be no difficulty about these people.”

“Ah, no, I suppose not,” said the bishop. “But I was thinking, Algernon, that if you would allow your pictures to be hung for the evening, and explain them, you know, it would be interesting.”

“What, by lamplight? They are not drop-scenes of a theatre, let me remind you.”

“No, no; but you see your theories of explanation would be understood by our good friends as well by lamplight as by daylight, and I am sure every one would be greatly interested.” Mr. Glaston promised his father to think over the matter, and his father expressed his gratitude for this concession. “And as for myself,” continued the bishop, giving his hands the least little rub together, “I would suggest reading a few notes on a most important subject, to which I have devoted some attention lately. My notes I would propose

heading 'Observations on Phenomena of Automatic Cerebration amongst some of the Cannibal Tribes of the Salamander Archipelago.' I have some excellent specimens of skulls illustrative of the subject."

Mr. Glaston looked at his father for a considerable time without speaking; at last he said quietly, "I think I had better show my pictures."

"And my paper—my notes?"

"Impossible," said the young man, rising. "Utterly Impossible;" and he left the room.

The bishop felt slightly hurt by his son's manner. He had treasured up his notes on the important observations he had made in an interesting part of his diocese, and he had looked forward with anxiety to a moment when he could reveal the result of his labours to the world, and yet his son had, when the opportunity presented itself, declared the revelation impossible. The bishop felt slightly hurt.

Now, however, he had got over his grievance, and he was able to smile as usual upon each of his guests.

The dinner-party was small and select. There were two judges present, one of whom brought his wife and a daughter. Then there were two members of the Legislative Council, one with a son, the other with a daughter; a clergyman who had attained to the dizzy ecclesiastical eminence of a colonial deanery, and his partner in the dignity of his office. The Macnamara and Standish were there, and Mr. Harwood, together with the Army Boot Commissioner and Mrs. Crawford, the last of whom arrived with Colonel Gerald and Daireen.

Mrs. Crawford had been right. The bishop was charmed with Daireen, and so expressed himself while he took her hand in his and gave her the benediction of a smile. Poor Standish, seeing her so lovely as she was standing there, felt his soul full of love and devotion. What was all the rest of the world compared with her, he thought; the aggregate beauty of the universe, including the loveliness of the Miss Van der Veldt who was in the drawing-room, was insignificant by the side of a single curl of Daireen's wonderful hair. Mr. Harwood looked towards her also, but his thoughts were somewhat more complicated than those of Standish.

"Is not Daireen perfection?" whispered Mrs. Crawford to Algernon Glaston.

The bishop's son glanced at the girl critically.

"I cannot understand that band of black velvet with a pearl in front of it," he said. "I feel it to be a mistake—yes, it is an error for which I am sorry; I begin to fear it was designed only as a bold contrast. It is sad—very sad."

Mrs. Crawford was chilled. She had never seen Daireen look so lovely. She felt for more than a moment that she was all unmeet for a wife, so child-like she seemed. And now the terrible thought suggested itself to Mrs. Crawford: what if Mr. Glaston's opinion was, after all, fallible? might it be possible that his judgment could be in error? The very suggestion of such a thought sent a cold thrill of fear through her. No, no: she would not admit such a possibility.

The dinner was proceeded with, after the fashion of most dinners, in a highly satisfactory manner. The guests were arranged with discrimination in accordance with a programme of Mrs. Crawford's, and the conversation was unlimited.

Much to the dissatisfaction of The Macnamara the men went to the drawing-room before they had remained more than ten minutes over their claret. One of the young ladies of the colony had been induced to sing with the judge's son a certain duet called "La ci darem la mano;" and this was felt to be extremely agreeable by every one except the bishop's son. The bishop thanked the young lady very much, and then resumed his explanation to a group of his guests of the uses of some implements of war and agriculture brought from the tribes of the Salamander Archipelago.

Three of the pictures of Mr. Glaston's collection were hung in the room, the most important being that marvellous Aholibah: it was placed upon a small easel at the farthest end of the room, a lamp being at each side. A group had gathered round the picture, and Mr. Glaston with the utmost goodnature repeated the story of its creation. Daireen had glanced towards the picture, and again that little shudder came over her.

She was sitting in the centre of the room upon an ottoman beside Mrs. Crawford and Mr. Harwood. Standish was in a group at the lower end, while his father was demonstrating how infinitely superior were the weapons found in the bogs of Ireland to the Salamander specimens. The bishop moved gently over to Daireen and explained to her the pleasure it would be giving every one in the room if she would consent to sing something.

At once Daireen rose and went to the piano. A song came to her lips as she laid her hand upon the keys of the instrument, and her pure earnest voice sang the words that came back to her:—

From my life the light has waned:
Every golden gleam that shone
Through the dimness now has gone:
Of all joys has one remained?
Stays one gladness I have known?
Day is past; I stand, alone,
Here beneath these darkened skies,
Asking—"Doth a star arise?"

She ended with a passion that touched every one who heard her, and then there was a silence for some moments, before the door of the room was pushed open to the wall, and a voice said, "Bravo, my dear, bravo!" in no weak tones.

All eyes turned towards the door. Mr. Despard entered, wearing an ill-made dress-suit, with an enormous display of shirt-front, big studs, and a large rose in his button-hole.

"I stayed outside till the song was over," he said. "Bless your souls, I've got a feeling for music, and hang

me if I've heard anything that could lick that tune." Then he nodded confidentially to the bishop. "What do you say, Bishop? What do you say, King? am I right or wrong? Why, we're all here—all of our set—the colonel too—how are you, Colonel?—and the editor—how we all do manage to meet somehow! Birds of a feather—you know. Make yourselves at home, don't mind me."

He walked slowly up the room smiling rather more broadly than the bishop was in the habit of doing, on all sides. He did not stop until he was opposite the picture of Aholibah on the easel. Here he did stop. He seemed to be even more appreciative of pictorial art than of musical. He bent forward, gazing into that picture, regardless of the embarrassing silence there was in the room while every one looked towards him. He could not see how all eyes were turned upon him, so absorbed had he become before that picture.

The bishop was now certainly not smiling. He walked slowly to the man's side.

"Sir," said the bishop, "you have chosen an inopportune time for a visit. I must beg of you to retire."

Then the man seemed to be recalled to consciousness. He glanced up from the picture and looked into the bishop's face. He pointed with one hand to the picture, and then threw himself back in a chair with a roar of laughter.

"By heavens, this is a bigger surprise than seeing Oswin himself," he cried. "Where is Oswin?—not here?—he should be here—he must see it."

It was Harwood's voice that said, "What do you mean?"

"Mean, Mr. Editor?" said Despard. "Mean? Haven't I told you what I mean? By heavens, I forgot that I was at the Cape—I thought I was still in Melbourne! Good, by Jingo, and all through looking at that bit of paint!"

"Explain yourself, sir?" said Harwood.

"Explain?" said the man. "That there explains itself. Look at that picture. The woman in that picture is Oswin Markham's wife, the Italian he brought to Australia, where he left her. That's plain enough. A deucedly fine woman she is, though they never did get on together. Hallo! What's the matter with Missy there? My God! she's going to faint."

But Daireen Gerald did not faint. Her father had his arm about her.

"Papa," she whispered faintly,— "Papa, take me home."

"My darling," said Colonel Gerald. "Do not look like that. For God's sake, Daireen, don't look like that." They were standing outside waiting for the carriage to come up; for Daireen had walked from the room without faltering.

"Do not mind me," she said. "I am strong—yes—very—very strong."

He lifted her into the carriage, and was at the point of entering himself, when the figure of Mrs. Crawford appeared among the palm plants.

"Good heavens, George! what is the meaning of this?" she said in a whisper.

"Go back!" cried Colonel Gerald sternly. "Go back! This is some more of your work. You shall never see my child again!"

He stepped into the carriage. The major's wife was left standing in the porch thunderstruck at such a reproach coming from the colonel. Was this the reward of her labour—to stand among the palms, listening to the passing away of the carriage wheels?

It was not until the Dutch cottage had been reached that Daireen, in the darkness of the room, laid her head upon her father's shoulder.

"Papa," she whispered again, "take me home—let us go home together."

"My darling, you are at home now."

"No, papa, I don't mean that; I mean home—I home—Glenmara."

"I will, Daireen: we shall go away from here. We shall be happy together in the old house."

"Yes," she said. "Happy—happy."

"What do you mean, sir?" said the *maître d'hôtel*, referring to a question put to him by Despard, who had been brought away from the bishop's house by Harwood in a diplomatically friendly manner. "What do you mean? Didn't Mr. Markham tell you he was going?"

"Going—where?" said Harwood.

"To Natal, sir? I felt sure that he had told you, though he didn't speak to us. Yes, he left in the steamer for Natal two hours ago."

"Squaring everything?" asked Despard.

"Sir!" said the *maître*; "Mr. Markham was a gentleman."

"It was half a sovereign he gave you then," remarked Despard. Then turning to Harwood, he said: "Well, Mr. Editor, this is the end of all, I fancy. We can't expect much after this. He's gone now, and I'm infernally sorry for him, for Oswin was a good sort. By heavens, didn't I burst in on the bishop's party like a greased shrapnel? I had taken a little better than a glass of brandy before I went there, so I was in good form. Yes, Paulina is the name of his wife. He had picked her up in Italy or thereabouts. That's what made his friends send him off to Australia. He was punished for his sins, for that woman made his life a hell to him. Now we'll take the tinsel off a bottle of Moët together."

"No," said Harwood; "not to-night."

He left the room and went upstairs, for now indeed this psychological analyst had an intricate problem to work out. It was a long time before he was able to sleep.

Colonel Gerald to take at once. If Daireen had made a mistake, it was sad, to be sure, but there was no reason why it might not be retrieved, Mrs. Crawford felt; and she fell asleep without any wrath in her heart against her old friend George Gerald.

And Arthur Harwood, as he stood in his room at the hotel and looked out to the water of Table Bay, had the truth very strongly forced upon him that things had gone far wrong indeed, and with a facility of error that was terrifying. He felt that he alone could fully appreciate how terribly astray everything had gone. He saw in a single glance all of the past; and his scrupulously just conscience did not fail to give him credit for having at least surmised something of the truth that had just been brought to light. From the first—even before he had seen the man—he had suspected Oswin Markham; and, subsequently, had he not perceived—or at any rate fancied that he perceived—something of the feeling that existed between Markham and Daireen?

His conscience gave him ample credit for his perception; but after all, this was an unsatisfactory set-off against the weight of his reflections on the subject of the general error of affairs that concerned him closely, not the least of which was the unreasonable conduct of the Zulu monarch who had rejected the British ultimatum, and who thus necessitated the presence of a special correspondent in his dominions. Harwood, seeing the position of everything at a glance, had come to the conclusion that it would be impossible for him, until some months had passed, to tell Daireen all that he believed was in his heart. He knew that she had loved that man whom she had saved from death, and who had rewarded her by behaving as a ruffian towards her; still Mr. Harwood, like Mrs. Crawford, felt that her mistake was not irretrievable. But if he himself were now compelled by the conduct of this wretched savage to leave Cape Town for an indefinite period, how should he have an opportunity of pointing out to Daireen the direction in which her happiness lay? Mr. Harwood was not generously disposed towards the Zulu monarch.

Upon descending to the coffee-room in the morning, he found Mr. Despard sitting somewhat moodily at the table. Harwood was beginning to think, now that Mr. Despard's mission in life had been performed, there could be no reason why his companionship should be sought. But Mr. Despard was not at all disposed to allow his rapidly conceived friendship for Harwood to be cut short.

"Hallo, Mr. Editor, you're down at last, are you?" he cried. "The colonel didn't go up to, your room, you bet, though he did to me—fine old boy is he, by my soul—plenty of good work in him yet."

"The colonel? Was Colonel Gerald here?" asked Harwood.

"He was, Mr. Editor; he was here just to see me, and have a friendly morning chat. We've taken to each other, has the colonel and me."

"He heard that Markham had gone? You told him, no doubt?"

"Mr. Editor, sir," said Despard, rising to his feet and keeping himself comparatively steady by grasping the edge of the table,—"*Mr. Editor, there are things too sacred to be divulged even to the Press. There are feelings—emotions—chords of the human heart—you know all that sort of thing—the bond of friendship between the colonel and me is something like that. What I told him will never be divulged while I'm sober. Oswin had his faults, no doubt, but for that matter I have mine. Which of us is perfect, Mr. Editor? Why, here's this innocent-looking lad that's coming to me with another bottle of old Irish, hang me if he isn't a walking receptacle of bribery and corruption! What, are you off?*"

Mr. Harwood was off, nor did he think if necessary to go through the formality of shaking hands with the moraliser at the table.

It was on the day following that Mrs. Crawford called at Colonel Gerald's cottage at Mowbray. She gave a start when she saw that the little hall was blocked up with packing-cases. One of them was an old military camp-box, and upon the end of it was painted in dimly white letters the name "*Lieutenant George Gerald.*" Seeing it now as she had often seen it in the days at the Indian station, the poor old campaigner sat down on a tin uniform-case and burst into tears.

"Kate, dear good Kate," said Colonel Gerald, laying his hand on her shoulder. "What is the matter, my dear girl?"

"Oh, George, George!" sobbed the lady, "look at that case there—look at it, and think of the words you spoke to me two nights ago. Oh, George, George!"

"God forgive me, Kate, I was unjust—ungenerous. Oh, Kate, you do not know how I had lost myself as the bitter truth was forced upon me. You have forgiven me long ago, have you not?"

"I have, George," she said, putting her hand in his. "God knows I have forgiven you. But what is the meaning of this? You are not going away, surely?"

"We leave by the mail to-morrow, Kate," said the colonel.

"Good gracious, is it so bad as that?" asked the lady, alarmed.

"Bad? there is nothing bad now, my dear. We only feel—Dolly and myself—that we must have a few months together amongst our native Irish mountains before we set out for the distant Castaways."

Mrs. Crawford looked into his face earnestly for some moments. "Poor darling little Dolly," she said in a voice full of compassion; "she has met with a great grief, but I pray that all may yet be well. I will not see her now, but I will say farewell to her aboard the steamer to-morrow. Give her my love, George. God knows how dear she is to me."

Colonel Gerald put his arms about his old friend and kissed her silently.

Upon the afternoon of the next day the crowd about the stern of the mail steamer which was at the point of leaving for England was very large. But it is only necessary to refer to a few of the groups on the deck. Colonel Gerald and his old friend Major Crawford were side by side, while Daireen and the major's wife were standing apart looking together up to the curved slopes of the tawny Lion's Head that half hid the dark, flat face of Table Mountain. Daireen was pale almost to whiteness, and as her considerate friend said some agreeable words to her she smiled faintly, but the observant Standish felt that her smile was not real, it was only a phantom of the smiles of the past which had lived upon her face. Standish was beside his father, who had been so fortunate as to obtain the attention of Mr. Harwood for the story of the wrongs he had suffered

through the sale of his property in Ireland.

"What is there left for me in the counthry of my sires that bled?" he inquired with an emphasis that almost amounted to passion. "The sthrangers that have torn the land away from us thrample us into the dust. No, sir, I'll never return to be thrampled upon; I'll go with my son to the land of our exile—the distant Castaway isles, where the flag of freedom may yet burn as a beacon above the thunderclouds of our enemies. Return to the land that has been torn from us? Never."

Standish, who could have given a very good guess as to the number of The Macnamara's creditors awaiting his return with anxiety, if not impatience, moved away quickly, and Daireen noticed his action. She whispered a word to Mrs. Crawford, and in another instant she and Standish were together. She gave him her hand, and each looked into the other's face speechlessly for a few moments. On her face there was a faint tender smile, but his was full of passionate entreaty, the force of which made his eyes tremulous.

"Standish, dear old Standish," she said; "you alone seem good and noble and true. You will not forget all the happy days we have had together."

"Forget them?" said Standish. "Oh, Daireen, if you could but know all—if you could but know how I think of every day we have passed together. What else is there in the world worth thinking about? Oh, Daireen, you know that I have always thought of you only—that I will always think of you."

"Not yet, Standish," she whispered. "Do not say anything to me—no, nothing—yet. But you will write every week, and tell me how the Castaway people are getting on, until we come out to you at the islands."

"Daireen, do all the days we have passed together at home—on the lough—on the mountain, go for nothing?" he cried almost sadly. "Oh, my darling, surely we cannot part in this way. Your life is not wrecked."

"No, no, not wrecked," she said with a start, and he knew she was struggling to be strong.

"You will be happy, Daireen, you will indeed, after a while. And you will give me a word of hope now—one little word to make me happy."

She looked at him—tearfully—lovingly. "Dear Standish, I can only give you one word. Will it comfort you at all if I say *Hope*, Standish?"

"My darling, my love! I knew it would come right in the end. The world I knew could not be so utterly forsaken by God but that everything should come right."

"It is only one word I have given you," she said.

"But what a word, Daireen! oh, the dearest and best word I ever heard breathed. God bless you, darling! God bless you!"

He did not make any attempt to kiss her: he only held her white hand tightly for an instant and looked into her pure, loving eyes.

"Now, my boy, good-bye," said Colonel Gerald, laying his hand upon Standish's shoulder. "You will leave next week for the Castaways, and you will, I know, be careful to obey to the letter the directions of those in command until I come out to you. You must write a complete diary, as I told you—ah, there goes the gun! Daireen, here is Mr. Harwood waiting to shake hands with you."

Mr. Harwood's hand was soon in the girl's.

"Good-bye, Miss Gerald. I trust you will sometimes give me a thought," he said quietly.

"I shall never forget you, Mr. Harwood," she said as she returned his grasp.

In another instant, as it seemed to the group on the shore, the good steamer passing out of the bay had dwindled down to that white piece of linen which a little hand waved over the stern.

"Mr. Harwood," said Mrs. Crawford, as the special correspondent brought the major's wife to a wagonette,—"Mr. Harwood, I fear we have been terribly wrong. But indeed all the wrong was not mine. You, I know, will not blame me."

"I blame you, Mrs. Crawford? Do not think of such a thing," said Harwood. "No; no one is to blame. Fate was too much for both of us, Mrs. Crawford. But all is over now. All the past days with her near us are now no more than pleasant memories. I go round to Natal in two days, and then to my work in the camp."

"Oh, Mr. Harwood, what ruffians there are in this world!" said the lady just before they parted. Mr. Harwood smiled his acquiescence. His own experience in the world had led him to arrive unassisted at a similar conclusion.

Arthur Harwood kept his work and left by the steamer for Natal two days afterwards; and in the same steamer Mr. Despard took passage also, declaring his intention to enlist on the side of the Zulus. Upon reaching Algoa Bay, however, he went ashore and did not put in an appearance at the departure of the steamer from the port; so that Mr. Harwood was deprived of his companionship, which had hitherto been pretty close, but which promised to become even more so. As there was in the harbour a small vessel about to proceed to Australia, the anxiety of the special correspondent regarding the future of the man never reached a point of embarrassment.

The next week Standish Macnamara, accompanied by his father, left for the Castaway Islands, where he was to take up his position as secretary to the new governor of the sunny group. Standish was full of eagerness to begin his career of hard and noble work in the world. He felt that there would be a large field for the exercise of his abilities in the Castaways, and with the word that Daireen had given him living in his heart to inspire all his actions, he felt that there was nothing too hard for him to accomplish, even to compelling his father to return to Ireland before six months should have passed.

It was on a cool afternoon towards the end of this week, that Mrs. Crawford was walking under the trees in the gardens opposite Government House, when she heard a pleasant little musical laugh behind her, accompanied by the pat of dainty little high-heeled shoes.

"Dear, good Mrs. Crawford, why will you walk so terribly fast? It quite took away the breath of poor little me to follow you," came the voice of Lottie Vincent. Mrs. Crawford turned, and as she was with a friend, she could not avoid allowing her stout hand to be touched by one of Lottie's ten-buttoned gloves. "Ah, you are

surprised to see me," continued the young lady. "I am surprised myself to find myself here, but papa would not hear of my remaining at Natal when he went on to the frontier with the regiment, so I am staying with a friend in Cape Town. Algernon is here, but the dear boy is distressed by the number of people. Poor Algy is so sensitive."

"Poor who?" cried Mrs. Crawford.

"Oh, good gracious, what have I said?" exclaimed the artless little thing, blushing very prettily, and appearing as tremulous as a fluttered dove. "Ah, my dear Mrs. Crawford, I never thought of concealing it from you for a moment. I meant to tell you the first of any one in the world—I did indeed."

"To tell me what?" asked the major's wife sternly.

"Surely you know that the dear good bishop has given his consent to—to—do help me out of my difficulty of explaining, Mrs. Crawford."

"To your becoming the wife of his son?"

"I knew you would not ask me to say it all so terribly plainly," said Lottie. "Ah yes, dear Algy was too importunate for poor little me to resist; I pitied him and promised to become his for ever. We are devoted to each other, for there is no bond so fast as that of artistic sympathy, Mrs. Crawford. I meant to write and thank you for your dear good-natured influence, which, I know, brought about his proposal. It was all due, I frankly acknowledge, to your kindness in bringing us together upon the day of that delightful lunch we had at the grove of silver leaves. How can I ever thank you? But there is darling Algy looking quite bored. I must rush to him," she continued, as she saw Mrs. Crawford about to speak. Lottie did not think it prudent to run the risk of hearing Mrs. Crawford refer to certain little Indian affairs connected with Lottie's residence at that agreeable station on the Himalayas; so she kissed the tips of her gloves, and tripped away to where Mr. Algernon Glaston was sitting on one of the garden seats.

"She is a wicked girl," said Mrs. Crawford to her companion. "She has at last succeeded in finding some one foolish enough to be entrapped by her. Never mind, she has conquered—I admit that. Oh, this world, this world!"

And there can hardly be a doubt that Miss Lottie Vincent, all things considered, might be said to have conquered. She was engaged to marry Algernon Glaston, the son of the Bishop of the Calapash Islands and Metropolitan of the Salamander Group, and this to Lottie meant conquest.

Of Oswin Markham only a few words need be spoken to close this story, such as it is. Oswin Markham was once more seen by Harwood. Two months after the outbreak of the war the special correspondent, in the exercise of his duty, was one night riding by the Tugela, where a fierce engagement had taken place between the Zulus and the British troops. The dead, black and white, were lying together—assagai and rifle intermixed. Harwood looked at the white upturned faces of the dead men that the moonlight made more ghastly, and amongst those faces he saw the stern clear-cut features of Oswin Markham. He was in the uniform of a Natal volunteer. Harwood gave a start, but only one; he stood above the dead man for a long time, lost in his own thoughts. Then the pioneers, who were burying the dead, came up.

"Poor wretch, poor wretch!" he said slowly, standing there in the moonlight. "Poor wretch!... If she had never seen him... if... Poor child!"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DAIREEN. VOLUME 2 OF 2 ***

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