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BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

IF there were a woman in the world who might be formed and fitted to reconcile Kenelm Chillingly to the sweet troubles of love and the pleasant bickerings of wedded life, one might reasonably suppose that that woman could be found in Cecilia Travers. An only daughter and losing her mother in childhood, she had been raised to the mistress-ship of a household at an age in which most girls are still putting their dolls to bed; and thus had early acquired that sense of responsibility, accompanied with the habits of self-reliance, which seldom fails to give a certain nobility to character; though almost as often, in the case of women, it steals away the tender gentleness which constitutes the charm of their sex.

It had not done so in the instance of Cecilia Travers, because she was so womanlike that even the exercise of power could not make her manlike. There was in the depth of her nature such an instinct of sweetness that wherever her mind toiled and wandered it gathered and hoarded honey.

She had one advantage over most girls in the same rank of life,—she had not been taught to fritter away such capacities for culture as Providence gave her in the sterile nothingnesses which are called feminine accomplishments. She did not paint figures out of drawing in meagre water-colours; she had not devoted years of her life to the inflicting on polite audiences the boredom of Italian bravuras, which they could hear better sung by a third-rate professional singer in a metropolitan music-hall. I am afraid she had no other female accomplishments than those by which the sempstress or embroideress earns her daily bread. That sort of work she loved, and she did it deftly.

But if she had not been profitlessly plagued by masters, Cecilia Travers had been singularly favoured by her father's choice of a teacher: no great merit in him either. He had a prejudice against professional governesses, and it chanced that among his own family connections was a certain Mrs. Champion, a lady of some literary distinction, whose husband had held a high situation in one of our

public offices, and living, much to his satisfaction, up to a very handsome income, had died, much to the astonishment of others, without leaving a farthing behind him.

Fortunately, there were no children to provide for. A small government pension was allotted to the widow; and as her husband's house had been made by her one of the pleasantest in London, she was popular enough to be invited by numerous friends to their country seats; among others, by Mr. Travers. She came intending to stay a fortnight. At the end of that time she had grown so attached to Cecilia, and Cecilia to her, and her presence had become so pleasant and so useful to her host, that the Squire entreated her to stay and undertake the education of his daughter. Mrs. Campion, after some hesitation, gratefully consented; and thus Cecilia, from the age of eight to her present age of nineteen, had the inestimable advantage of living in constant companionship with a woman of richly cultivated mind, accustomed to hear the best criticisms on the best books, and adding to no small accomplishment in literature the refinement of manners and that sort of prudent judgment which result from habitual intercourse with an intellectual and gracefully world-wise circle of society: so that Cecilia herself, without being at all blue or pedantic, became one of those rare young women with whom a well-educated man can converse on equal terms; from whom he gains as much as he can impart to her; while a man who, not caring much about books, is still gentleman enough to value good breeding, felt a relief in exchanging the forms of his native language without the shock of hearing that a bishop was "a swell" or a croquet-party "awfully jolly."

In a word, Cecilia was one of those women whom Heaven forms for man's helpmate; who, if he were born to rank and wealth, would, as his partner, reflect on them a new dignity, and add to their enjoyment by bringing forth their duties; who, not less if the husband she chose were poor and struggling, would encourage, sustain, and soothe him, take her own share of his burdens, and temper the bitterness of life with the all-recompensing sweetness of her smile.

Little, indeed, as yet had she ever thought of love or of lovers. She had not even formed to herself any of those ideals which float before the eyes of most girls when they enter their teens. But of two things she felt inly convinced: first, that she could never wed where she did not love; and secondly, that where she did love it would be for life.

And now I close this sketch with a picture of the girl herself. She has just come into her room from inspecting the preparations for the evening entertainment which her father is to give to his tenants and rural neighbours.

She has thrown aside her straw hat, and put down the large basket which she has emptied of flowers. She pauses before the glass, smoothing back the ruffled bands of her hair,—hair of a dark, soft chestnut, silky and luxuriant,—never polluted, and never, so long as she lives, to be polluted by auricomous cosmetics, far from that delicate darkness, every tint of the colours traditionally dedicated to the locks of Judas.

Her complexion, usually of that soft bloom which inclines to paleness, is now heightened into glow by exercise and sunlight. The features are small and feminine; the eyes dark with long lashes; the mouth singularly beautiful, with a dimple on either side, and parted now in a half-smile at some pleasant recollection, giving a glimpse of small teeth glistening as pearls. But the peculiar charm of her face is in an expression of serene happiness, that sort of happiness which seems as if it had never been interrupted by a sorrow, had never been troubled by a sin,—that holy kind of happiness which belongs to innocence, the light reflected from a heart and conscience alike at peace.

CHAPTER II.

IT was a lovely summer evening for the Squire's rural entertainment. Mr. Travers had some guests staying with him: they had dined early for the occasion, and were now grouped with their host a little before six o'clock on the lawn. The house was of irregular architecture, altered or added to at various periods from the reign of Elizabeth to that of Victoria: at one end, the oldest part, a gable with mullion windows; at the other, the newest part, a flat-roofed wing, with modern sashes opening to the ground, the intermediate part much hidden by a veranda covered with creepers in full bloom. The lawn was a spacious table-land facing the west, and backed by a green and gentle hill, crowned with the ruins of an ancient priory. On one side of the lawn stretched a flower-garden and pleasure-ground, originally planned by Repton; on the opposite angles of the sward were placed two large marquees,—one for dancing, the other for supper. Towards the south the view was left open, and commanded the prospect of an old English park, not of the stateliest character; not intersected with ancient avenues, nor clothed with profitless fern as lairs for deer: but the park of a careful agriculturist, uniting profit with show, the sward duly drained and nourished, fit to fatten bullocks in an incredibly short time, and somewhat spoilt to the eye by subdivisions of wire fence. Mr. Travers was renowned for skilful husbandry, and the

general management of land to the best advantage. He had come into the estate while still in childhood, and thus enjoyed the accumulations of a long minority. He had entered the Guards at the age of eighteen, and having more command of money than most of his contemporaries, though they might be of higher rank and the sons of richer men, he had been much courted and much plundered. At the age of twenty-five he found himself one of the leaders of fashion, renowned chiefly for reckless daring where-ever honour could be plucked out of the nettle danger: a steeple-chaser, whose exploits made a quiet man's hair stand on end; a rider across country, taking leaps which a more cautious huntsman carefully avoided. Known at Paris as well as in London, he had been admired by ladies whose smiles had cost him duels, the marks of which still remained in glorious scars on his person. No man ever seemed more likely to come to direst grief before attaining the age of thirty, for at twenty-seven all the accumulations of his minority were gone; and his estate, which, when he came of age, was scarcely three thousand a year, but entirely at his own disposal, was mortgaged up to its eyes.

His friends began to shake their heads and call him "poor fellow;" but, with all his wild faults, Leopold Travers had been wholly pure from the two vices out of which a man does not often redeem himself. He had never drunk and he had never gambled. His nerves were not broken, his brain was not besotted. There was plenty of health in him yet, mind and body. At the critical period of his life he married for love, and his choice was a most felicitous one. The lady had no fortune; but though handsome and high-born, she had no taste for extravagance, and no desire for other society than that of the man she loved. So when he said, "Let us settle in the country and try our best to live on a few hundreds, lay by, and keep the old place out of the market," she consented with a joyful heart: and marvel it was to all how this wild Leopold Travers did settle down; did take to cultivating his home farm with his men from sunrise to sunset like a common tenant-farmer; did contrive to pay the interest on the mortgages, and keep his head above water. After some years of pupilage in this school of thrift, during which his habits became formed and his whole character braced, Leopold Travers suddenly found himself again rich, through the wife whom he had so prudently married without other dower than her love and her virtues. Her only brother, Lord Eagleton, a Scotch peer, had been engaged in marriage to a young lady, considered to be a rare prize in the lottery of wedlock. The marriage was broken off under very disastrous circumstances; but the young lord, good-looking and agreeable, was naturally expected to seek speedy consolation in some other alliance. Nevertheless he did not do so: he became a confirmed invalid, and died single, leaving to his sister all in his power to save from the distant kinsman who succeeded to his lands and title,—a goodly sum, which not only sufficed to pay off the mortgages on Neesdale Park but bestowed on its owner a surplus which the practical knowledge of country life that he had acquired enabled him to devote with extraordinary profit to the general improvement of his estate. He replaced tumble-down old farm buildings with new constructions on the most approved principles; bought or pensioned off certain slovenly incompetent tenants; threw sundry petty holdings into large farms suited to the buildings he constructed; purchased here and there small bits of land, commodious to the farms they adjoined, and completing the integrity of his ring-fence; stubbed up profitless woods which diminished the value of neighbouring arables by obstructing sun and air and harbouring legions of rabbits; and then, seeking tenants of enterprise and capital, more than doubled his original yearly rental, and perhaps more than tripled the market value of his property. Simultaneously with this acquisition of fortune, he emerged from the inhospitable and unsocial obscurity which his previous poverty had compelled, took an active part in county business, proved himself an excellent speaker at public meetings, subscribed liberally to the hunt, and occasionally joined in it,—a less bold but a wiser rider than of yore. In short, as Themistocles boasted that he could make a small state great, so Leopold Travers might boast with equal truth, that, by his energies, his judgment, and the weight of his personal character, he had made the owner of a property which had been at his accession to it of third-rate rank in the county a personage so considerable that no knight of the shire against whom he declared could have been elected, and if he had determined to stand himself he would have been chosen free of expense.

But he said, on being solicited to become a candidate, "When a man once gives himself up to the care and improvement of a landed estate, he has no time and no heart for anything else. An estate is an income or a kingdom, according as the owner chooses to take it. I take it as a kingdom, and I cannot be /roi faineant/, with a steward for /maire du palais/. A king does not go into the House of Commons."

Three years after this rise in the social ladder, Mrs. Travers was seized with congestion of the lungs followed by pleurisy, and died after less than a week's illness. Leopold never wholly recovered her loss. Though still young and always handsome, the idea of another wife, the love of another woman, were notions which he dismissed from his mind with a quiet scorn. He was too masculine a creature to parade grief. For some weeks, indeed, he shut himself up in his own room, so rigidly secluded that he would not see even his daughter. But one morning he appeared in his fields as usual, and from that day resumed his old habits, and gradually renewed that cordial interchange of hospitalities which had popularly distinguished him since his accession to wealth. Still people felt that the man was changed; he was more taciturn, more grave: if always just in his dealings, he took the harder side of justice,

where in his wife's time he had taken the gentler. Perhaps, to a man of strong will, the habitual intercourse with an amiable woman is essential for those occasions in which Will best proves the fineness of its temper by the facility with which it can be bent.

It may be said that Leopold Travers might have found such intercourse in the intimate companionship of his own daughter. But she was a mere child when his wife died, and she grew up to womanhood too insensibly for him to note the change. Besides, where a man has found a wife his all-in-all, a daughter can never supply her place. The very reverence due to children precludes unrestrained confidence; and there is not that sense of permanent fellowship in a daughter which a man has in a wife,—any day a stranger may appear and carry her off from him. At all events Leopold did not own in Cecilia the softening influence to which he had yielded in her mother. He was fond of her, proud of her, indulgent to her; but the indulgence had its set limits. Whatever she asked solely for herself he granted; whatever she wished for matters under feminine control—the domestic household, the parish school, the alms-receiving poor—obtained his gentlest consideration. But when she had been solicited by some offending out-of-door dependant or some petty defaulting tenant to use her good offices in favour of the culprit, Mr. Travers checked her interference by a firm "No," though uttered in a mild accent, and accompanied with a masculine aphorism to the effect that "there would be no such things as strict justice and disciplined order in the world if a man yielded to a woman's pleadings in any matter of business between man and man." From this it will be seen that Mr. Lethbridge had overrated the value of Cecilia's alliance in the negotiation respecting Mrs. Bawtrey's premium and shop.

CHAPTER III.

IF, having just perused what has thus been written on the biographical antecedents and mental characteristics of Leopold Travers, you, my dear reader, were to be personally presented to that gentleman as he now stands, the central figure of the group gathered round him, on his terrace, you would probably be surprised,—nay, I have no doubt you would say to yourself, "Not at all the sort of man I expected." In that slender form, somewhat below the middle height; in that fair countenance which still, at the age of forty-eight, retains a delicacy of feature and of colouring which is of almost womanlike beauty, and, from the quiet placidity of its expression, conveys at first glance the notion of almost womanlike mildness,—it would be difficult to recognize a man who in youth had been renowned for reckless daring, in maturer years more honourably distinguished for steadfast prudence and determined purpose, and who, alike in faults or in merits, was as emphatically masculine as a biped in trousers can possibly be.

Mr. Travers is listening to a young man of about two and twenty, the eldest son of the richest nobleman of the county, and who intends to start for the representation of the shire at the next general election, which is close at hand. The Hon. George Belvoir is tall, inclined to be stout, and will look well on the hustings. He has had those pains taken with his education which an English peer generally does take with the son intended to succeed to the representation of an honourable name and the responsibilities of high station. If eldest sons do not often make as great a figure in the world as their younger brothers, it is not because their minds are less cultivated, but because they have less motive power for action. George Belvoir was well read, especially in that sort of reading which befits a future senator,—history, statistics, political economy, so far as that dismal science is compatible with the agricultural interest. He was also well-principled, had a strong sense of discipline and duty, was prepared in politics firmly to uphold as right whatever was proposed by his own party, and to reject as wrong whatever was proposed by the other. At present he was rather loud and noisy in the assertion of his opinions,—young men fresh from the University generally are. It was the secret wish of Mr. Travers that George Belvoir should become his son-in-law; less because of his rank and wealth (though such advantages were not of a nature to be despised by a practical man like Leopold Travers) than on account of those qualities in his personal character which were likely to render him an excellent husband.

Seated on wire benches, just without the veranda, but shaded by its fragrant festoons, were Mrs. Campion and three ladies, the wives of neighbouring squires. Cecilia stood a little apart from them, bending over a long-backed Skye terrier, whom she was teaching to stand on his hind legs.

But see, the company are arriving! How suddenly that green space, ten minutes ago so solitary, has become animated and populous!

Indeed the park now presented a very lively appearance: vans, carts, and farmers' chaises were seen in crowded procession along the winding road; foot-passengers were swarming towards the house in all directions. The herds and flocks in the various enclosures stopped grazing to stare at the unwonted invaders of their pasture: yet the orderly nature of their host imparted a respect for order to his ruder

visitors; not even a turbulent boy attempted to scale the fences, or creep through their wires; all threaded the narrow turnstiles which gave egress from one subdivision of the sward to another.

Mr. Travers turned to George Belvoir: "I see old farmer Steen's yellow gig. Mind how you talk to him, George. He is full of whims and crotchets, and if you once brush his feathers the wrong way he will be as vindictive as a parrot. But he is the man who must second you at the nomination. No other tenant-farmer carries the same weight with his class."

"I suppose," said George, "that if Mr. Steen is the best man to second me at the hustings, he is a good speaker?"

"A good speaker? in one sense he is. He never says a word too much. The last time he seconded the nomination of the man you are to succeed, this was his speech: 'Brother Electors, for twenty years I have been one of the judges at our county cattle-show. I know one animal from another. Looking at the specimens before us to-day none of them are as good of their kind as I've seen elsewhere. But if you choose Sir John Hogg you'll not get the wrong sow by the ear!'"

"At least," said George, after a laugh at this sample of eloquence unadorned, "Mr. Steen does not err on the side of flattery in his commendations of a candidate. But what makes him such an authority with the farmers? Is he a first-rate agriculturist?"

"In thrift, yes!—in spirit, no! He says that all expensive experiments should be left to gentlemen farmers. He is an authority with other tenants: firstly, because he is a very keen censor of their landlords; secondly, because he holds himself thoroughly independent of his own; thirdly, because he is supposed to have studied the political bearings of questions that affect the landed interest, and has more than once been summoned to give his opinion on such subjects to Committees of both Houses of Parliament. Here he comes. Observe, when I leave you to talk to him: firstly, that you confess utter ignorance of practical farming; nothing enrages him like the presumption of a gentleman farmer like myself: secondly, that you ask his opinion on the publication of Agricultural Statistics, just modestly intimating that you, as at present advised, think that inquisitorial researches into a man's business involve principles opposed to the British Constitution. And on all that he may say as to the shortcomings of landlords in general, and of your father in particular, make no reply, but listen with an air of melancholy conviction. How do you do, Mr. Steen, and how's the mistress? Why have you not brought her with you?"

"My good woman is in the straw again, Squire. Who is that youngster?"

"Hist! let me introduce Mr. Belvoir."

Mr. Belvoir offers his hand.

"No, sir!" vociferates Steen, putting both his own hands behind him. "No offence, young gentleman. But I don't give my hand at first sight to a man who wants to shake a vote out of it. Not that I know anything against you. But, if you be a farmer's friend rabbits are not, and my lord your father is a great one for rabbits."

"Indeed you are mistaken there!" cries George, with vehement earnestness. Mr. Travers gave him a nudge, as much as to say, "Hold your tongue." George understood the hint, and is carried off meekly by Mr. Steen down the solitude of the plantations.

The guests now arrived fast and thick. They consisted chiefly not only of Mr. Travers's tenants, but of farmers and their families within the range of eight or ten miles from the Park, with a few of the neighbouring gentry and clergy.

It was not a supper intended to include the labouring class; for Mr. Travers had an especial dislike to the custom of exhibiting peasants at feeding-time, as if they were so many tamed animals of an inferior species. When he entertained work-people, he made them comfortable in their own way; and peasants feel more comfortable when not invited to be stared out of countenance.

"Well, Lethbridge," said Mr. Travers, "where is the young gladiator you promised to bring?"

"I did bring him, and he was by my side not a minute ago. He has suddenly given me the slip: 'abiiit, evasit, erupit.' I was looking round for him in vain when you accosted me."

"I hope he has not seen some guest of mine whom he wants to fight."

"I hope not," answered the Parson, doubtfully. "He's a strange fellow. But I think you will be pleased with him; that is, if he can be found. Oh, Mr. Saunderson, how do you do? Have you seen your visitor?"

"No, sir, I have just come. My mistress, Squire, and my three girls; and this is my son."

"A hearty welcome to all," said the graceful Squire; (turning to Saunderson junior), "I suppose you are fond of dancing. Get yourself a partner. We may as well open the ball."

"Thank you, sir, but I never dance," said Saunderson junior, with an air of austere superiority to an amusement which the March of Intellect had left behind.

"Then you'll have less to regret when you are grown old. But the band is striking up; we must adjourn to the marquee. George" (Mr. Belvoir, escaped from Mr. Steen, had just made his appearance), "will you give your arm to Cecilia, to whom I think you are engaged for the first quadrille?"

"I hope," said George to Cecilia, as they walked towards the marquee, "that Mr. Steen is not an average specimen of the electors I shall have to canvass. Whether he has been brought up to honour his own father and mother I can't pretend to say, but he seems bent upon teaching me not to honour mine. Having taken away my father's moral character upon the unfounded allegation that he loved rabbits better than mankind, he then assailed my innocent mother on the score of religion, and inquired when she was going over to the Church of Rome, basing that inquiry on the assertion that she had taken away her custom from a Protestant grocer and conferred it on a Papist."

"Those are favourable signs, Mr. Belvoir. Mr. Steen always prefaces a kindness by a great deal of incivility. I asked him once to lend me a pony, my own being suddenly taken lame, and he seized that opportunity to tell me that my father was an impostor in pretending to be a judge of cattle; that he was a tyrant, screwing his tenants in order to indulge extravagant habits of hospitality; and implied that it would be a great mercy if we did not live to apply to him, not for a pony, but for parochial relief. I went away indignant. But he sent me the pony. I am sure he will give you his vote."

"Meanwhile," said George, with a timid attempt at gallantry, as they now commenced the quadrille, "I take encouragement from the belief that I have the good wishes of Miss Travers. If ladies had votes, as Mr. Mill recommends, why, then—"

"Why, then, I should vote as Papa does," said Miss Travers, simply. "And if women had votes, I suspect there would be very little peace in any household where they did not vote as the man at the head of it wished them."

"But I believe, after all," said the aspirant to Parliament, seriously, "that the advocates for female suffrage would limit it to women independent of masculine control, widows and spinsters voting in right of their own independent tenements."

"In that case," said Cecilia, "I suppose they would still generally go by the opinion of some man they relied on, or make a very silly choice if they did not."

"You underrate the good sense of your sex."

"I hope not. Do you underrate the good sense of yours, if, in far more than half the things appertaining to daily life, the wisest men say, 'Better leave /them/ to the /women/'? But you're forgetting the figure, /cavalier seul/."

"By the way," said George, in another interval of the dance, "do you know a Mr. Chillingly, the son of Sir Peter, of Exmundham, in Westshire?"

"No; why do you ask?"

"Because I thought I caught a glimpse of his face: it was just as Mr. Steen was bearing me away down that plantation. From what you say, I must suppose I was mistaken."

"Chillingly! But surely some persons were talking yesterday at dinner about a young gentleman of that name as being likely to stand for Westshire at the next election, but who had made a very unpopular and eccentric speech on the occasion of his coming of age."

"The same man: I was at college with him,—a very singular character. He was thought clever; won a prize or two; took a good degree: but it was generally said that he would have deserved a much higher one if some of his papers had not contained covert jests either on the subject or the examiners. It is a dangerous thing to set up as a humourist in practical life,—especially public life. They say Mr. Pitt had naturally a great deal of wit and humour, but he wisely suppressed any evidence of those qualities in his Parliamentary speeches. Just like Chillingly, to turn into ridicule the important event of festivities in honour of his coming of age,—an occasion that can never occur again in the whole course of his life."

"It was bad taste," said Cecilia, "if intentional. But perhaps he was misunderstood, or taken by

surprise."

"Misunderstood,—possibly; but taken by surprise,—no. The coolest fellow I ever met. Not that I have met him very often. Latterly, indeed, at Cambridge he lived much alone. It was said that he read hard. I doubt that; for my rooms were just over his, and I know that he was much more frequently out of doors than in. He rambled a good deal about the country on foot. I have seen him in by-lanes a dozen miles distant from the town when I have been riding back from the hunt. He was fond of the water, and pulled a mighty strong oar, but declined to belong to our University crew; yet if ever there was a fight between undergraduates and bargemen, he was sure to be in the midst of it. Yes, a very great oddity indeed, full of contradictions, for a milder, quieter fellow in general intercourse you could not see; and as for the jests of which he was accused in his examination papers, his very face should have acquitted him of the charge before any impartial jury of his countrymen."

"You sketch quite an interesting picture of him," said Cecilia. "I wish we did know him: he would be worth seeing."

"And, once seen, you would not easily forget him,—a dark, handsome face, with large melancholy eyes, and with one of those spare slender figures which enable a man to disguise his strength, as a fraudulent billiard-player disguises his play."

The dance had ceased during this conversation, and the speakers were now walking slowly to and fro the lawn amid the general crowd.

"How well your father plays the part of host to these rural folks!" said George, with a secret envy. "Do observe how quietly he puts that shy young farmer at his ease, and now how kindly he deposits that lame old lady on the bench, and places the stool under her feet. What a canvasser he would be! and how young he still looks, and how monstrous handsome!"

This last compliment was uttered as Travers, having made the old lady comfortable, had joined the three Miss Saundersons, dividing his pleasant smile equally between them; and seemingly unconscious of the admiring glances which many another rural beauty directed towards him as he passed along. About the man there was a certain indescribable elegance, a natural suavity free from all that affectation, whether of forced heartiness or condescending civility, which too often characterizes the well-meant efforts of provincial magnates to accommodate themselves to persons of inferior station and breeding. It is a great advantage to a man to have passed his early youth in that most equal and most polished of all democracies,—the best society of large capitals. And to such acquired advantage Leopold Travers added the inborn qualities that please.

Later in the evening Travers, again accosting Mr. Lethbridge, said, "I have been talking much to the Saundersons about that young man who did us the inestimable service of punishing your ferocious parishioner, Tom Bowles; and all I hear so confirms the interest your own account inspired me with that I should really like much to make his acquaintance. Has not he turned up yet?"

"No; I fear he must have gone. But in that case I hope you will take his generous desire to serve my poor basket-maker into benevolent consideration."

"Do not press me; I feel so reluctant to refuse any request of yours. But I have my own theory as to the management of an estate, and my system does not allow of favour. I should wish to explain that to the young stranger himself; for I hold courage in such honour that I do not like a brave man to leave these parts with an impression that Leopold Travers is an ungracious churl. However, he may not have gone. I will go and look for him myself. Just tell Cecilia that she has danced enough with the gentry, and that I have told Farmer Turby's son, a fine young fellow and a capital rider across country, that I expect him to show my daughter that he can dance as well as he rides."

CHAPTER IV.

QUITTING Mr. Lethbridge, Travers turned with quick step towards the more solitary part of the grounds. He did not find the object of his search in the walks of the plantation; and, on taking the circuit of his demesne, wound his way back towards the lawn through a sequestered rocky hollow in the rear of the marquee, which had been devoted to a fernery. Here he came to a sudden pause; for, seated a few yards before him on a gray crag, and the moonlight full on his face, he saw a solitary man, looking upwards with a still and mournful gaze, evidently absorbed in abstract contemplation.

Recalling the description of the stranger which he had heard from Mr. Lethbridge and the Saundersons, Mr. Travers felt sure that he had come on him at last. He approached gently; and, being much concealed by the tall ferns, Kenelm (for that itinerant it was) did not see him advance, until he

felt a hand on his shoulder, and, turning round, beheld a winning smile and heard a pleasant voice.

"I think I am not mistaken," said Leopold Travers, "in assuming you to be the gentleman whom Mr. Lethbridge promised to introduce to me, and who is staying with my tenant, Mr. Saunderson?"

Kenelm rose and bowed. Travers saw at once that it was the bow of a man in his own world, and not in keeping with the Sunday costume of a petty farmer. "Nay," said he, "let us talk seated;" and placing himself on the crag, he made room for Kenelm beside him.

"In the first place," resumed Travers, "I must thank you for having done a public service in putting down the brute force which has long tyrannized over the neighbourhood. Often in my young days I have felt the disadvantage of height and sinews, whenever it would have been a great convenience to terminate dispute or chastise insolence by a resort to man's primitive weapons; but I never more lamented my physical inferiority than on certain occasions when I would have given my ears to be able to thrash Tom Bowles myself. It has been as great a disgrace to my estate that that bully should so long have infested it as it is to the King of Italy not to be able with all his armies to put down a brigand in Calabria."

"Pardon me, Mr. Travers, but I am one of those rare persons who do not like to hear ill of their friends. Mr. Thomas Bowles is a particular friend of mine."

"Eh!" cried Travers, aghast. "'Friend!' you are joking."

"You would not accuse me of joking if you knew me better. But surely you have felt that there are few friends one likes more cordially, and ought to respect more heedfully, than the enemy with whom one has just made it up."

"You say well, and I accept the rebuke," said Travers, more and more surprised. "And I certainly have less right to abuse Mr. Bowles than you have, since I had not the courage to fight him. To turn to another subject less provocative. Mr. Lethbridge has told me of your amiable desire to serve two of his young parishioners, Will Somers and Jessie Wiles, and of your generous offer to pay the money Mrs. Bawtrey demands for the transfer of her lease. To that negotiation my consent is necessary, and that consent I cannot give. Shall I tell you why?"

"Pray do. Your reasons may admit of argument."

"Every reason admits of argument," said Mr. Travers, amused at the calm assurance of a youthful stranger in anticipating argument with a skilful proprietor on the management of his own property. "I do not, however, tell you my reasons for the sake of argument, but in vindication of my seeming want of courtesy towards yourself. I have had a very hard and a very difficult task to perform in bringing the rental of my estate up to its proper value. In doing so, I have been compelled to adopt one uniform system, equally applied to my largest and my pettiest holdings. That system consists in securing the best and safest tenants I can, at the rents computed by a valuer in whom I have confidence. To this system, universally adopted on my estate, though it incurred much unpopularity at first, I have at length succeeded in reconciling the public opinion of my neighbourhood. People began by saying I was hard; they now acknowledge I am just. If I once give way to favour or sentiment, I unhinge my whole system. Every day I am subjected to moving solicitations. Lord Twostars, a keen politician, begs me to give a vacant farm to a tenant because he is an excellent canvasser, and has always voted straight with the party. Mrs. Fourstars, a most benevolent woman, entreats me not to dismiss another tenant, because he is in distressed circumstances and has a large family; very good reasons perhaps for my excusing him an arrear, or allowing him a retiring pension, but the worst reasons in the world for letting him continue to ruin himself and my land. Now, Mrs. Bawtrey has a small holding on lease at the inadequate rent of L8 a year. She asks L45 for its transfer, but she can't transfer the lease without my consent; and I can get L12 a year as a moderate rental from a large choice of competent tenants. It will better answer me to pay her the L45 myself, which I have no doubt the incoming tenant would pay me back, at least in part; and if he did not, the additional rent would be good interest for my expenditure. Now, you happen to take a sentimental interest, as you pass through the village, in the loves of a needy cripple whose utmost industry has but served to save himself from parish relief, and a giddy girl without a sixpence, and you ask me to accept these very equivocal tenants instead of substantial ones, and at a rent one-third less than the market value. Suppose that I yielded to your request, what becomes of my reputation for practical, business-like justice? I shall have made an inroad into the system by which my whole estate is managed, and have invited all manner of solicitations on the part of friends and neighbours, which I could no longer consistently refuse, having shown how easily I can be persuaded into compliance by a stranger whom I may never see again. And are you sure, after all, that, if you did prevail on me, you would do the individual good you aim at? It is, no doubt, very pleasant to think one has made a young couple happy. But if that young couple fail in keeping the little shop to which you would transplant them (and nothing more likely: peasants seldom become good

shopkeepers), and find themselves, with a family of children, dependent solely, not on the arm of a strong labourer, but the ten fingers of a sickly cripple, who makes clever baskets, for which there is but slight and precarious demand in the neighbourhood, may you not have insured the misery of the couple you wished to render happy?"

"I withdraw all argument," said Kenelm, with an aspect so humiliated and dejected, that it would have softened a Greenland bear, or a Counsel for the Prosecution. "I am more and more convinced that of all the shams in the world that of benevolence is the greatest. It seems so easy to do good, and it is so difficult to do it. Everywhere, in this hateful civilized life, one runs one's head against a system. A system, Mr. Travers, is man's servile imitation of the blind tyranny of what in our ignorance we call 'Natural Laws,' a mechanical something through which the world is ruled by the cruelty of General Principles, to the utter disregard of individual welfare. By Natural Laws creatures prey on each other, and big fishes eat little ones upon system. It is, nevertheless, a hard thing for the little fish. Every nation, every town, every hamlet, every occupation, has a system, by which, somehow or other, the pond swarms with fishes, of which a great many inferiors contribute to increase the size of a superior. It is an idle benevolence to keep one solitary gudgeon out of the jaws of a pike. Here am I doing what I thought the simplest thing in the world, asking a gentleman, evidently as good-natured as myself, to allow an old woman to let her premises to a deserving young couple, and paying what she asks for it out of my own money. And I find that I am running against a system, and invading all the laws by which a rental is increased and an estate improved. Mr. Travers, you have no cause for regret in not having beaten Tom Bowles. You have beaten his victor, and I now give up all dream of further interference with the Natural Laws that govern the village which I have visited in vain. I had meant to remove Tom Bowles from that quiet community. I shall now leave him to return to his former habits,—to marry Jessie Wiles, which he certainly will do, and—"

"Hold!" cried Mr. Travers. "Do you mean to say that you can induce Tom Bowles to leave the village?"

"I had induced him to do it, provided Jessie Wiles married the basket-maker; but, as that is out of the question, I am bound to tell him so, and he will stay."

"But if he left, what would become of his business? His mother could not keep it on; his little place is a freehold; the only house in the village that does not belong to me, or I should have ejected him long ago. Would he sell the premises to me?"

"Not if he stays and marries Jessie Wiles. But if he goes with me to Luscombe and settles in that town as a partner to his uncle, I suppose he would be too glad to sell a house of which he can have no pleasant recollections. But what then? You cannot violate your system for the sake of a miserable forge."

"It would not violate my system if, instead of yielding to a sentiment, I gained an advantage; and, to say truth, I should be very glad to buy that forge and the fields that go with it."

"'Tis your affair now, not mine, Mr. Travers. I no longer presume to interfere. I leave the neighbourhood to-morrow: see if you can negotiate with Mr. Bowles. I have the honour to wish you a good evening."

"Nay, young gentleman, I cannot allow you to quit me thus. You have declined apparently to join the dancers, but you will at least join the supper. Come!"

"Thank you sincerely, no. I came here merely on the business which your system has settled."

"But I am not sure that it is settled." Here Mr. Travers wound his arm within Kenelm's, and looking him full in the face, said, "I know that I am speaking to a gentleman at least equal in rank to myself, but as I enjoy the melancholy privilege of being the older man, do not think I take an unwarrantable liberty in asking if you object to tell me your name. I should like to introduce you to my daughter, who is very partial to Jessie Wiles and to Will Somers. But I can't venture to inflame her imagination by designating you as a prince in disguise."

"Mr. Travers, you express yourself with exquisite delicacy. But I am just starting in life, and I shrink from mortifying my father by associating my name with a signal failure. Suppose I were an anonymous contributor, say, to 'The Londoner,' and I had just brought that highly intellectual journal into discredit by a feeble attempt at a good-natured criticism or a generous sentiment, would that be the fitting occasion to throw off the mask, and parade myself to a mocking world as the imbecile violator of an established system? Should I not, in a moment so untoward, more than ever desire to merge my insignificant unit in the mysterious importance which the smallest Singular obtains when he makes himself a Plural, and speaks not as 'I,' but as 'We'? /We/ are insensible to the charm of young ladies;

/We/ are not bribed by suppers; /We/, like the witches of 'Macbeth,' have no name on earth; /We/ are the greatest wisdom of the greatest number; /We/ are so upon system; /We/ salute you, Mr. Travers, and depart unassailable."

Here Kenelm rose, doffed and replaced his hat in majestic salutation, turned towards the entrance of the fernery, and found himself suddenly face to face with George Belvoir, behind whom followed, with a throng of guests, the fair form of Cecilia. George Belvoir caught Kenelm by the hand, and exclaimed, "Chillingly! I thought I could not be mistaken."

"Chillingly!" echoed Leopold Travers from behind. "Are you the son of my old friend Sir Peter?"

Thus discovered and environed, Kenelm did not lose his wonted presence of mind; he turned round to Leopold Travers, who was now close in his rear, and whispered, "If my father was your friend, do not disgrace his son. Do not say I am a failure. Deviate from your system, and let Will Somers succeed Mrs. Bawtrey." Then reverting his face to Mr. Belvoir, he said tranquilly, "Yes; we have met before."

"Cecilia," said Travers, now interposing, "I am happy to introduce to you as Mr. Chillingly, not only the son of an old friend of mine, not only the knight-errant of whose gallant conduct on behalf of your protegee Jessie Wiles we have heard so much, but the eloquent arguer who has conquered my better judgment in a matter on which I thought myself infallible. Tell Mr. Lethbridge that I accept Will Somers as a tenant for Mrs. Bawtrey's premises."

Kenelm grasped the Squire's hand cordially. "May it be in my power to do a kind thing to you, in spite of any system to the contrary!"

"Mr. Chillingly, give your arm to my daughter. You will not now object to join the dancers?"

CHAPTER V.

CECILIA stole a shy glance at Kenelm as the two emerged from the fernery into the open space of the lawn. His countenance pleased her. She thought she discovered much latent gentleness under the cold and mournful gravity of its expression; and, attributing the silence he maintained to some painful sense of an awkward position in the abrupt betrayal of his incognito, sought with womanly tact to dispel his supposed embarrassment.

"You have chosen a delightful mode of seeing the country this lovely summer weather, Mr. Chillingly. I believe such pedestrian exercises are very common with university students during the long vacation."

"Very common, though they generally wander in packs like wild dogs or Australian dingoes. It is only a tame dog that one finds on the road travelling by himself; and then, unless he behaves very quietly, it is ten to one that he is stoned as a mad dog."

"But I am afraid, from what I hear, that you have not been travelling very quietly."

"You are quite right, Miss Travers, and I am a sad dog if not a mad one. But pardon me: we are nearing the marquee; the band is striking up, and, alas! I am not a dancing dog."

He released Cecilia's arm, and bowed.

"Let us sit here a while, then," said she, motioning to a garden-bench. "I have no engagement for the next dance, and, as I am a little tired, I shall be glad of a reprieve."

Kenelm sighed, and, with the air of a martyr stretching himself on the rack, took his place beside the fairest girl in the county.

"You were at college with Mr. Belvoir?"

"I was."

"He was thought clever there?"

"I have not a doubt of it."

"You know he is canvassing our county for the next election. My father takes a warm interest in his success, and thinks he will be a useful member of Parliament."

"Of that I am certain. For the first five years he will be called pushing, noisy, and conceited, much

sneered at by men of his own age, and coughed down on great occasions; for the five following years he will be considered a sensible man in committees, and a necessary feature in debate; at the end of those years he will be an under-secretary; in five years more he will be a Cabinet Minister, and the representative of an important section of opinions; he will be an irreproachable private character, and his wife will be seen wearing the family diamonds at all the great parties. She will take an interest in politics and theology; and if she die before him, her husband will show his sense of wedded happiness by choosing another lady, equally fitted to wear the family diamonds and to maintain the family consequences."

In spite of her laughter, Cecilia felt a certain awe at the solemnity of voice and manner with which Kenelm delivered these oracular sentences, and the whole prediction seemed strangely in unison with her own impressions of the character whose fate was thus shadowed out.

"Are you a fortune-teller, Mr. Chillingly?" she asked, falteringly, and after a pause.

"As good a one as any whose hand you could cross with a shilling."

"Will you tell me my fortune?"

"No; I never tell the fortunes of ladies, because your sex is credulous, and a lady might believe what I tell her. And when we believe such and such is to be our fate, we are too apt to work out our life into the verification of the belief. If Lady Macbeth had disbelieved in the witches, she would never have persuaded her lord to murder Duncan."

"But can you not predict me a more cheerful fortune than that tragical illustration of yours seems to threaten?"

"The future is never cheerful to those who look on the dark side of the question. Mr. Gray is too good a poet for people to read nowadays, otherwise I should refer you to his lines in the 'Ode to Eton College,'—

"See how all around us wait
The ministers of human fate,
And black Misfortune's baleful train."

"Meanwhile it is something to enjoy the present. We are young; we are listening to music; there is no cloud over the summer stars; our conscience is clear; our hearts untroubled: why look forward in search of happiness? shall we ever be happier than we are at this moment?"

Here Mr. Travers came up. "We are going to supper in a few minutes," said he; "and before we lose sight of each other, Mr. Chillingly, I wish to impress on you the moral fact that one good turn deserves another. I have yielded to your wish, and now you must yield to mine. Come and stay a few days with me, and see your benevolent intentions carried out."

Kenelm paused. Now that he was discovered, why should he not pass a few days among his equals? Realities or shams might be studied with squires no less than with farmers; besides, he had taken a liking to Travers. That graceful /ci-devant/ Wildair, with the slight form and the delicate face, was unlike rural squires in general. Kenelm paused, and then said frankly,—

"I accept your invitation. Would the middle of next week suit you?"

"The sooner the better. Why not to-morrow?"

"To-morrow I am pre-engaged to an excursion with Mr. Bowles. That may occupy two or three days, and meanwhile I must write home for other garments than those in which I am a sham."

"Come any day you like."

"Agreed."

"Agreed; and, hark! the supper-bell."

"Supper," said Kenelm, offering his arm to Miss Travers,— "supper is a word truly interesting, truly poetical. It associates itself with the entertainments of the ancients, with the Augustan age, with Horace and Maecenas; with the only elegant but too fleeting period of the modern world; with the nobles and wits of Paris, when Paris had wits and nobles; with Moliere and the warm-hearted Duke who is said to have been the original of Moliere's Misanthrope; with Madame de Sevigne and the Racine whom that inimitable letter-writer denied to be a poet; with Swift and Bolingbroke; with Johnson,

Goldsmith, and Garrick. Epochs are signaled by their eatings. I honour him who revives the Golden Age of suppers." So saying, his face brightened.

CHAPTER VI.

KENELM CHILLINGLY, ESQ., TO SIR PETER CHILLINGLY, BART., ETC.

MY DEAR FATHER,—I am alive and unmarried. Providence has watched over me in these respects; but I have had narrow escapes. Hitherto I have not acquired much worldly wisdom in my travels. It is true that I have been paid two shillings as a day labourer, and, in fact, have fairly earned at least six shillings more; but against that additional claim I generously set off, as an equivalent, my board and lodging. On the other hand, I have spent forty-five pounds out of the fifty which I devoted to the purchase of experience. But I hope you will be a gainer by that investment. Send an order to Mr. William Somers, basket-maker, Graveleigh, ——shire, for the hampers and game-baskets you require, and I undertake to say that you will save twenty per cent on that article (all expenses of carriage deducted) and do a good action into the bargain. You know, from long habit, what a good action is worth better than I do. I dare say you will be more pleased to learn than I am to record the fact that I have been again decoyed into the society of ladies and gentlemen, and have accepted an invitation to pass a few days at Neesdale Park with Mr. Travers,—christened Leopold, who calls you "his old friend,"—a term which I take for granted belongs to that class of poetic exaggeration in which the "dears" and "darlings" of conjugal intercourse may be categorized. Having for that visit no suitable garments in my knapsack, kindly tell Jenkes to forward me a portmanteau full of those which I habitually wore as Kenelm Chillingly, directed to me at "Neesdale Park, near Beaverston." Let me find it there on Wednesday.

I leave this place to-morrow morning in company with a friend of the name of Bowles: no relation to the reverend gentleman of that name who held the doctrine that a poet should bore us to death with fiddle-faddle minutia of natural objects in preference to that study of the insignificant creature Man, in his relations to his species, to which Mr. Pope limited the range of his inferior muse; and who, practising as he preached, wrote some very nice verses, to which the Lake school and its successors are largely indebted. My Mr. Bowles has exercised his faculty upon Man, and has a powerful inborn gift in that line which only requires cultivation to render him a match for any one. His more masculine nature is at present much obscured by that passing cloud which, in conventional language, is called "a hopeless attachment." But I trust, in the course of our excursion, which is to be taken on foot, that this vapour may consolidate by motion, as some old-fashioned astronomers held that the nebula does consolidate into a matter-of-fact world. Is it Rochefoucauld who says that a man is never more likely to form a hopeful attachment for one than when his heart is softened by a hopeless attachment to another? May it be long, my dear father, before you condole with me on the first or congratulate me on the second.

Your affectionate son,

KENELM.

Direct to me at Mr. Travers's. Kindest love to my mother.

The answer to this letter is here subjoined as the most convenient place for its insertion, though of course it was not received till some days after the date of my next chapter.

SIR PETER CHILLINGLY, BART., TO KENELM CHILLINGLY, ESQ.

MY DEAR Boy,—With this I despatch the portmanteau you require to the address that you give. I remember well Leopold Travers when he was in the Guards,—a very handsome and a very wild young fellow. But he had much more sense than people gave him credit for, and frequented intellectual society; at least I met him very often at my friend Campion's, whose house was then the favourite rendezvous of distinguished persons. He had very winning manners, and one could not help taking an interest in him. I was very glad when I heard he had married and reformed. Here I beg to observe that a man who contracts a taste for low company may indeed often marry, but he seldom reforms when he does so. And, on the whole, I should be much pleased to hear that the experience which has cost you forty-five pounds had convinced you that you might be better employed than earning two, or even six shillings as a day-labourer.

I have not given your love to your mother, as you requested. In fact, you have placed me in a very

false position towards that other author of your eccentric being. I could only guard you from the inquisition of the police and the notoriety of descriptive hand-bills by allowing my lady to suppose that you had gone abroad with the Duke of Clairville and his family. It is easy to tell a fib, but it is very difficult to untell it. However, as soon as you have made up your mind to resume your normal position among ladies and gentlemen, I should be greatly obliged if you would apprise me. I don't wish to keep a fib on my conscience a day longer than may be necessary to prevent the necessity of telling another.

From what you say of Mr. Bowles's study of Man, and his inborn talent for that scientific investigation, I suppose that he is a professed Metaphysician, and I should be glad of his candid opinion upon the Primary Basis of Morals, a subject upon which I have for three years meditated the consideration of a critical paper. But having lately read a controversy thereon between two eminent philosophers, in which each accuses the other of not understanding him, I have resolved for the present to leave the Basis in its unsettled condition.

You rather alarm me when you say you have had a narrow escape from marriage. Should you, in order to increase the experience you set out to acquire, decide on trying the effect of a Mrs. Chillingly upon your nervous system, it would be well to let me know a little beforehand, so that I might prepare your mother's mind for that event. Such household trifles are within her special province; and she would be much put out if a Mrs. Chillingly dropped on her unawares.

This subject, however, is too serious to admit of a jest even between two persons who understand, so well as you and I do, the secret cipher by which each other's outward style of jest is to be gravely interpreted into the irony which says one thing and means another. My dear boy, you are very young; you are wandering about in a very strange manner, and may, no doubt, meet with many a pretty face by the way, with which you may fancy that you fall in love. You cannot think me a barbarous, tyrant if I ask you to promise me, on your honour, that you will not propose to any young lady before you come first to me and submit the case to my examination and approval. You know me too well to suppose that I should unreasonably withhold my consent if convinced that your happiness was at stake. But while what a young man may fancy to be love is often a trivial incident in his life, marriage is the greatest event in it; if on one side it may involve his happiness, on the other side it may insure his misery. Dearest, best, and oddest of sons, give me the promise I ask, and you will free my breast from a terribly anxious thought which now sits on it like a nightmare.

Your recommendation of a basket-maker comes opportunely. All such matters go through the bailiff's hands, and it was but the other day that Green was complaining of the high prices of the man he employed for hampers and game-baskets. Green shall write to your protegee.

Keep me informed of your proceedings as much as your anomalous character will permit; so that nothing may diminish my confidence that the man who had the honour to be christened Kenelm will not disgrace his name, but acquire the distinction denied to a Peter.

Your affectionate father.

CHAPTER VII.

VILLAGERS lie abed on Sundays later than on workdays, and no shutter was unclosed in a window of the rural street through which Kenelm Chillingly and Tom Bowles went, side by side, in the still soft air of the Sabbath morn. Side by side they went on, crossing the pastoral glebe-lands, where the kine still drowsily reclined under the bowery shade of glinting chestnut leaves; and diving thence into a narrow lane or by-road, winding deep between lofty banks all tangled with convolvulus and wild-rose and honeysuckle.

They walked in silence, for Kenelm, after one or two vain attempts at conversation, had the tact to discover that his companion was in no mood for talk; and being himself one of those creatures whose minds glide easily into the dreamy monologue of revery, he was not displeased to muse on undisturbed, drinking quietly into his heart the subdued joy of the summer morn, with the freshness of its sparkling dews, the wayward carol of its earliest birds, the serene quietude of its limpid breezy air. Only when they came to fresh turnings in the road that led towards the town to which they were bound, Tom Bowles stepped before his companion, indicating the way by a monosyllable or a gesture. Thus they journeyed for hours, till the sun attained power, and a little wayside inn near a hamlet invited Kenelm to the thought of rest and food.

"Tom," said he then, rousing from his revery, "what do you say to breakfast?"

Answered Tom sullenly, "I am not hungry; but as you like."

"Thank you, then we will stop here a while. I find it difficult to believe that you are not hungry, for you are very strong, and there are two things which generally accompany great physical strength: the one is a keen appetite; the other is—though you may not suppose it, and it is not commonly known—a melancholic temperament."

"Eh!—a what?"

"A tendency to melancholy. Of course you have heard of Hercules: you know the saying 'as strong as Hercules'?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, I was first led to the connection between strength, appetite, and melancholy, by reading in an old author named Plutarch that Hercules was among the most notable instances of melancholy temperament which the author was enabled to quote. That must have been the traditional notion of the Herculean constitution; and as for appetite, the appetite of Hercules was a standard joke of the comic writers. When I read that observation it set me thinking, being myself melancholic and having an exceedingly good appetite. Sure enough, when I began to collect evidence, I found that the strongest men with whom I made acquaintance, including prize-fighters and Irish draymen, were disposed to look upon life more on the shady than the sunny side of the way; in short, they were melancholic. But the kindness of Providence allowed them to enjoy their meals, as you and I are about to do." In the utterance of this extraordinary crotchet Kenelm had halted his steps; but now striding briskly forward he entered the little inn, and after a glance at its larder, ordered the whole contents to be brought out and placed within a honeysuckle arbour which he spied in the angle of a bowling-green at the rear of the house.

In addition to the ordinary condiments of loaf and butter and eggs and milk and tea, the board soon groaned beneath the weight of pigeon-pie, cold ribs of beef, and shoulder of mutton, remains of a feast which the members of a monthly rustic club had held there the day before. Tom ate little at first; but example is contagious, and gradually he vied with his companion in the diminution of the solid viands before him. Then he called for brandy.

"No," said Kenelm. "No, Tom; you have promised me friendship, and that is not compatible with brandy. Brandy is the worst enemy a man like you can have; and would make you quarrel even with me. If you want a stimulus I allow you a pipe. I don't smoke myself, as a rule, but there have been times in my life when I required soothing, and then I have felt that a whiff of tobacco stills and softens one like the kiss of a little child. Bring this gentleman a pipe."

Tom grunted, but took to the pipe kindly, and in a few minutes, during which Kenelm left him in silence, a lowering furrow between his brows smoothed itself away.

Gradually he felt the sweetening influences of the day and the place, of the merry sunbeams at play amid the leaves of the arbour, of the frank perfume of the honeysuckle, of the warble of the birds before they sank into the taciturn repose of a summer noon.

It was with a reluctant sigh that he rose at last, when Kenelm said, "We have yet far to go: we must push on."

The landlady, indeed, had already given them a hint that she and the family wanted to go to church, and to shut up the house in their absence. Kenelm drew out his purse, but Tom did the same with a return of cloud on his brow, and Kenelm saw that he would be mortally offended if suffered to be treated as an inferior; so each paid his due share, and the two men resumed their wandering. This time it was along a by-path amid fields, which was a shorter cut than the lane they had previously followed, to the main road to Luscombe. They walked slowly till they came to a rustic foot-bridge which spanned a gloomy trout-stream, not noisy, but with a low, sweet murmur, doubtless the same stream beside which, many miles away, Kenelm had conversed with the minstrel. Just as they came to this bridge there floated to their ears the distant sound of the hamlet church-bell.

"Now let us sit here a while and listen," said Kenelm, seating himself on the baluster of the bridge. "I see that you brought away your pipe from the inn, and provided yourself with tobacco: refill the pipe and listen."

Tom half smiled and obeyed.

"O friend," said Kenelm, earnestly, and after a long pause of thought, "do you not feel what a blessed thing it is in this mortal life to be ever and anon reminded that you have a soul?"

Tom, startled, withdrew the pipe from his lips, and muttered,—

"Eh!"

Kenelm continued,—

"You and I, Tom, are not so good as we ought to be: of that there is no doubt; and good people would say justly that we should now be within yon church itself rather than listening to its bell. Granted, my friend, granted; but still it is something to hear that bell, and to feel by the train of thought which began in our innocent childhood, when we said our prayers at the knees of a mother, that we were lifted beyond this visible Nature, beyond these fields and woods and waters, in which, fair though they be, you and I miss something; in which neither you nor I are as happy as the kine in the fields, as the birds on the bough, as the fishes in the water: lifted to a consciousness of a sense vouchsafed to you and to me, not vouchsafed to the kine, to the bird, and the fish,—a sense to comprehend that Nature has a God, and Man has a life hereafter. The bell says that to you and to me. Were that bell a thousand times more musical it could not say that to beast, bird, and fish. Do you understand me, Tom?"

Tom remains silent for a minute, and then replies, "I never thought of it before; but, as you put it, I understand."

"Nature never gives to a living thing capacities not practically meant for its benefit and use. If Nature gives to us capacities to believe that we have a Creator whom we never saw, of whom we have no direct proof, who is kind and good and tender beyond all that we know of kind and good and tender on earth, it is because the endowment of capacities to conceive such a Being must be for our benefit and use: it would not be for our benefit and use if it were a lie. Again, if Nature has given to us a capacity to receive the notion that we live again, no matter whether some of us refuse so to believe, and argue against it,—why, the very capacity to receive the idea (for unless we receive it we could not argue against it) proves that it is for our benefit and use; and if there were no such life hereafter, we should be governed and influenced, arrange our modes of life, and mature our civilization, by obedience to a lie, which Nature falsified herself in giving us the capacity to believe. You still understand me?"

"Yes; it bothers me a little, for you see I am not a parson's man; but I do understand."

"Then, my friend, study to apply,—for it requires constant study,—study to apply that which you understand to your own case. You are something more than Tom Bowles, the smith and doctor of horses; something more than the magnificent animal who rages for his mate and fights every rival: the bull does that. You are a soul endowed with the capacity to receive the idea of a Creator so divinely wise and great and good that, though acting by the agency of general laws, He can accommodate them to all individual cases, so that—taking into account the life hereafter, which He grants to you the capacity to believe—all that troubles you now will be proved to you wise and great and good either in this life or the other. Lay that truth to your heart, friend, now—before the bell stops ringing; recall it every time you hear the church-bell ring again. And oh, Tom, you have such a noble nature!—"

"I—I! don't jeer me,—don't."

"Such a noble nature; for you can love so passionately, you can war so fiercely, and yet, when convinced that your love would be misery to her you love, can resign it; and yet, when beaten in your war, can so forgive your victor that you are walking in this solitude with him as a friend, knowing that you have but to drop a foot behind him in order to take his life in an unguarded moment; and rather than take his life, you would defend it against an army. Do you think I am so dull as not to see all that? and is not all that a noble nature?"

Tom Bowles covered his face with his hands, and his broad breast heaved.

"Well, then, to that noble nature I now trust. I myself have done little good in life. I may never do much; but let me think that I have not crossed your life in vain for you and for those whom your life can colour for good or for bad. As you are strong, be gentle; as you can love one, be kind to all; as you have so much that is grand as Man,—that is, the highest of God's works on earth,—let all your acts attach your manhood to the idea of Him, to whom the voice of the bell appeals. Ah! the bell is hushed; but not your heart, Tom,—that speaks still."

Tom was weeping like a child.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOW when our two travellers resumed their journey, the relationship between them had undergone a change; nay, you might have said that their characters were also changed. For Tom found himself

pouring out his turbulent heart to Kenelm, confiding to this philosophical scoffer at love all the passionate humanities of love,—its hope, its anguish, its jealousy, its wrath,—the all that links the gentlest of emotions to tragedy and terror. And Kenelm, listening tenderly, with softened eyes, uttered not one cynic word,—nay, not one playful jest. He, felt that the gravity of all he heard was too solemn for mockery, too deep even for comfort. True love of this sort was a thing he had never known, never wished to know, never thought he could know, but he sympathized in it not the less. Strange, indeed, how much we do sympathize, on the stage, for instance, or in a book, with passions that have never agitated ourselves! Had Kenelm jested or reasoned or preached, Tom would have shrunk at once into dreary silence; but Kenelm said nothing, save now and then, as he rested his arm, brother-like, on the strong man's shoulder, he murmured, "Poor fellow!" So, then, when Tom had finished his confessions, he felt wondrously relieved and comforted. He had cleansed his bosom of the perilous stuff that weighed upon the heart.

Was this good result effected by Kenelm's artful diplomacy, or by that insight into human passions vouchsafed unconsciously to himself, by gleams or in flashes, to this strange man who surveyed the objects and pursuits of his fellows with a yearning desire to share them, murmuring to himself, "I cannot, I do not stand in this world; like a ghost I glide beside it, and look on"?

Thus the two men continued their way slowly, amid soft pastures and yellowing cornfields, out at length into the dusty thoroughfares of the main road. That gained, their talk insensibly changed its tone: it became more commonplace; and Kenelm permitted himself the license of those crotchets by which he extracted a sort of quaint pleasantry out of commonplace itself; so that from time to time Tom was startled into the mirth of laughter. This big fellow had one very agreeable gift, which is only granted, I think, to men of genuine character and affectionate dispositions,—a spontaneous and sweet laugh, manly and frank, but not boisterous, as you might have supposed it would be. But that sort of laugh had not before come from his lips, since the day on which his love for Jessie Wiles had made him at war with himself and the world.

The sun was setting when from the brow of a hill they beheld the spires of Luscombe, imbedded amid the level meadows that stretched below, watered by the same stream that had wound along their more rural pathway, but which now expanded into stately width, and needed, to span it, a mighty bridge fit for the convenience of civilized traffic. The town seemed near, but it was full two miles off by road.

"There is a short cut across the fields beyond that stile, which leads straight to my uncle's house," said Tom; "and I dare say, sir, that you will be glad to escape the dirty suburb by which the road passes before we get into the town."

"A good thought, Tom. It is very odd that fine towns always are approached by dirty suburbs; a covert symbolical satire, perhaps, on the ways to success in fine towns. Avarice or ambition go through very mean little streets before they gain the place which they jostle the crowd to win,—in the Townhall or on 'Change. Happy the man who, like you, Tom, finds that there is a shorter and a cleaner and a pleasanter way to goal or to resting-place than that through the dirty suburbs!"

They met but few passengers on their path through the fields,—a respectable, staid, elderly couple, who had the air of a Dissenting minister and his wife; a girl of fourteen leading a little boy seven years younger by the hand; a pair of lovers, evidently lovers at least to the eye of Tom Bowles; for, on regarding them as they passed unheeding him, he winced, and his face changed. Even after they had passed, Kenelm saw on the face that pain lingered there: the lips were tightly compressed, and their corners gloomily drawn down.

Just at this moment a dog rushed towards them with a short quick bark,—a Pomeranian dog with pointed nose and pricked ears. It hushed its bark as it neared Kenelm, sniffed his trousers, and wagged its tail.

"By the sacred Nine," cried Kenelm, "thou art the dog with the tin tray! where is thy master?"

The dog seemed to understand the question, for it turned its head significantly; and Kenelm saw, seated under a lime-tree, at a good distance from the path, a man, with book in hand, evidently employed in sketching.

"Come this way," he said to Tom: "I recognize an acquaintance. You will like him." Tom desired no new acquaintance at that moment, but he followed Kenelm submissively.

CHAPTER IX.

"YOU see we are fated to meet again," said Kenelm, stretching himself at his ease beside the

Wandering Minstrel, and motioning Tom to do the same. "But you seem to add the accomplishment of drawing to that of verse-making! You sketch from what you call Nature?"

"From what I call Nature! yes, sometimes."

"And do you not find in drawing, as in verse-making, the truth that I have before sought to din into your reluctant ears; namely, that Nature has no voice except that which man breathes into her out of his mind? I would lay a wager that the sketch you are now taking is rather an attempt to make her embody some thought of your own, than to present her outlines as they appear to any other observer. Permit me to judge for myself." And he bent over the sketch-book. It is often difficult for one who is not himself an artist nor a connoisseur to judge whether the pencilled jottings in an impromptu sketch are by the hand of a professed master or a mere amateur. Kenelm was neither artist nor connoisseur, but the mere pencil-work seemed to him much what might be expected from any man with an accurate eye who had taken a certain number of lessons from a good drawing-master. It was enough for him, however, that it furnished an illustration of his own theory. "I was right," he cried triumphantly. "From this height there is a beautiful view, as it presents itself to me; a beautiful view of the town, its meadows, its river, harmonized by the sunset; for sunset, like gilding, unites conflicting colours, and softens them in uniting. But I see nothing of that view in your sketch. What I do see is to me mysterious."

"The view you suggest," said the minstrel, "is no doubt very fine, but it is for a Turner or a Claude to treat it. My grasp is not wide enough for such a landscape."

"I see indeed in your sketch but one figure, a child."

"Hist! there she stands. Hist! while I put in this last touch."

Kenelm strained his sight, and saw far off a solitary little girl, who was tossing something in the air (he could not distinguish what), and catching it as it fell. She seemed standing on the very verge of the upland, backed by rose-clouds gathered round the setting sun; below lay in confused outlines the great town. In the sketch those outlines seemed infinitely more confused, being only indicated by a few bold strokes; but the figure and face of the child were distinct and lovely. There was an ineffable sentiment in her solitude; there was a depth of quiet enjoyment in her mirthful play, and in her upturned eyes.

"But at that distance," asked Kenelm, when the wanderer had finished his last touch, and, after contemplating it, silently closed his book, and turned round with a genial smile, "but at that distance, how can you distinguish the girl's face? How can you discover that the dim object she has just thrown up and recaught is a ball made of flowers? Do you know the child?"

"I never saw her before this evening; but as I was seated here she was straying around me alone, weaving into chains some wild-flowers which she had gathered by the hedgerows yonder, next the high road; and as she strung them she was chanting to herself some pretty nursery rhymes. You can well understand that when I heard her thus chanting I became interested, and as she came near me I spoke to her, and we soon made friends. She told me she was an orphan, and brought up by a very old man distantly related to her, who had been in some small trade and now lived in a crowded lane in the heart of the town. He was very kind to her, and being confined himself to the house by age or ailment he sent her out to play in the fields on summer Sundays. She had no companions of her own age. She said she did not like the other little girls in the lane; and the only little girl she liked at school had a grander station in life, and was not allowed to play with her, and so she came out to play alone; and as long as the sun shines and the flowers bloom, she says she never wants other society."

"Tom, do you hear that? As you will be residing in Luscombe, find out this strange little girl, and be kind to her, Tom, for my sake."

Tom put his large hand upon Kenelm's, making no other answer; but he looked hard at the minstrel, recognized the genial charm of his voice and face, and slid along the grass nearer to him.

The minstrel continued: "While the child was talking to me I mechanically took the flower-chains from her hands, and not thinking what I was about, gathered them up into a ball. Suddenly she saw what I had done, and instead of scolding me for spoiling her pretty chains, which I richly deserved, was delighted to find I had twisted them into a new plaything. She ran off with the ball, tossing it about till, excited with her own joy, she got to the brow of the hill, and I began my sketch."

"Is that charming face you have drawn like hers?"

"No; only in part. I was thinking of another face while I sketched, but it is not like that either; in fact, it is one of those patchworks which we call 'fancy heads,' and I meant it to be another version of a thought that I had just put into rhyme when the child came across me."

"May we hear the rhyme?"

"I fear that if it did not bore yourself it would bore your friend."

"I am sure not. Tom, do you sing?"

"Well, I /have/ sung," said Tom, hanging his head sheepishly, "and I should like to hear this gentleman."

"But I do not know these verses, just made, well enough to sing them; it is enough if I can recall them well enough to recite." Here the minstrel paused a minute or so as if for recollection, and then, in the sweet clear tones and the rare purity of enunciation which characterized his utterance, whether in recital or song, gave to the following verses a touching and a varied expression which no one could discover in merely reading them.

THE FLOWER-GIRL BY THE CROSSING.

"By the muddy crossing in the crowded streets
Stands a little maid with her basket full of posies,
Proffering all who pass her choice of knitted sweets,
Tempting Age with heart's-ease, courting Youth with roses.

"Age disdains the heart's-ease,
Love rejects the roses;
London life is busy,—
Who can stop for posies?"

"One man is too grave, another is too gay;
This man has his hothouse, that man not a penny:
Flowerets too are common in the month of May,
And the things most common least attract the many.

"Ill, on London crossings,
Fares the sale of posies;
Age disdains the heart's-ease,
Youth rejects the roses."

When the verse-maker had done, he did not pause for approbation, nor look modestly down, as do most people who recite their own verses, but unaffectedly thinking much more of his art than his audience, hurried on somewhat disconsolately,—

"I see with great grief that I am better at sketching than rhyming. Can you" (appealing to Kenelm) "even comprehend what I mean by the verses?"

KENELM.—"Do you comprehend, Tom?"

TOM (in a whisper).—"No."

KENELM.—"I presume that by his flower-girl our friend means to represent not only poetry, but a poetry like his own, which is not at all the sort of poetry now in fashion. I, however, expand his meaning, and by his flower-girl I understand any image of natural truth or beauty for which, when we are living the artificial life of crowded streets, we are too busy to give a penny."

"Take it as you please," said the minstrel, smiling and sighing at the same time; "but I have not expressed in words that which I did mean half so well as I have expressed it in my sketch-book."

"Ah! and how?" asked Kenelm.

"The image of my thought in the sketch, be it poetry or whatever you prefer to call it, does not stand forlorn in the crowded streets: the child stands on the brow of the green hill, with the city stretched in confused fragments below, and, thoughtless of pennies and passers-by, she is playing with the flowers she has gathered; but in play casting them heavenward, and following them with heavenward eyes."

"Good!" muttered Kenelm, "good!" and then, after a long pause, he added, in a still lower mutter, "Pardon me that remark of mine the other day about a beefsteak. But own that I am right: what you call a sketch from Nature is but a sketch of your own thought."

CHAPTER X.

THE child with the flower-ball had vanished from the brow of the hill; sinking down amid the streets below, the rose-clouds had faded from the horizon; and night was closing round, as the three men entered the thick of the town. Tom pressed Kenelm to accompany him to his uncle's, promising him a hearty welcome and bed and board, but Kenelm declined. He entertained a strong persuasion that it would be better for the desired effect on Tom's mind that he should be left alone with his relations that night, but proposed that they should spend the next day together, and agreed to call at the veterinary surgeon's in the morning.

When Tom quitted them at his uncle's door, Kenelm said to the minstrel, "I suppose you are going to some inn; may I accompany you? We can sup together, and I should like to hear you talk upon poetry and Nature."

"You flatter me much; but I have friends in the town, with whom I lodge, and they are expecting me. Do you not observe that I have changed my dress? I am not known here as the 'Wandering Minstrel.'"

Kenelm glanced at the man's attire, and for the first time observed the change. It was still picturesque in its way, but it was such as gentlemen of the highest rank frequently wear in the country,—the knickerbocker costume,—very neat, very new, and complete, to the square-toed shoes with their latches and buckles.

"I fear," said Kenelm, gravely, "that your change of dress betokens the neighbourhood of those pretty girls of whom you spoke in an earlier meeting. According to the Darwinian doctrine of selection, fine plumage goes far in deciding the preference of Jenny Wren and her sex, only we are told that fine-feathered birds are very seldom songsters as well. It is rather unfair to rivals when you unite both attractions."

The minstrel laughed. "There is but one girl in my friend's house,—his niece; she is very plain, and only thirteen. But to me the society of women, whether ugly or pretty, is an absolute necessity; and I have been trudging without it for so many days that I can scarcely tell you how my thoughts seemed to shake off the dust of travel when I found myself again in the presence of—"

"Petticoat interest," interrupted Kenelm. "Take care of yourself. My poor friend with whom you found me is a grave warning against petticoat interest, from which I hope to profit. He is passing through a great sorrow; it might have been worse than sorrow. My friend is going to stay in this town. If you are staying here too, pray let him see something of you. It will do him a wondrous good if you can beguile him from this real life into the gardens of poetland; but do not sing or talk of love to him."

"I honour all lovers," said the minstrel, with real tenderness in his tone, "and would willingly serve to cheer or comfort your friend, if I could; but I am bound elsewhere, and must leave Luscombe, which I visit on business—money business—the day after to-morrow."

"So, too, must I. At least give us both some hours of your time to-morrow."

"Certainly; from twelve to sunset I shall be roving about,—a mere idler. If you will both come with me, it will be a great pleasure to myself. Agreed! Well, then, I will call at your inn to-morrow at twelve; and I recommend for your inn the one facing us,—The Golden Lamb. I have heard it recommended for the attributes of civil people and good fare."

Kenelm felt that he here received his /conge/, and well comprehended the fact that the minstrel, desiring to preserve the secret of his name, did not give the address of the family with whom he was a guest.

"But one word more," said Kenelm. "Your host or hostess, if resident here, can, no doubt, from your description of the little girl and the old man her protector, learn the child's address. If so, I should like my companion to make friends with her. Petticoat interest there at least will be innocent and safe. And I know nothing so likely to keep a big, passionate heart like Tom's, now aching with a horrible void, occupied and softened, and turned to directions pure and gentle, as an affectionate interest in a little child."

The minstrel changed colour: he even started. "Sir, are you a wizard that you say that to me?"

"I am not a wizard, but I guess from your question that you have a little child of your own. So much the better: the child may keep you out of much mischief. Remember the little child. Good evening."

Kenelm crossed the threshold of The Golden Lamb, engaged his room, made his ablutions, ordered, and, with his usual zest, partook of his evening meal; and then, feeling the pressure of that melancholic

temperament which he so strangely associated with Herculean constitutions, roused himself up, and, seeking a distraction from thought, sauntered forth into the gaslit streets.

It was a large handsome town,—handsomer than Tor-Hadham, on account of its site in a valley surrounded by wooded hills, and watered by the fair stream whose windings we have seen as a brook,—handsomer, also, because it boasted a fair cathedral, well cleared to the sight, and surrounded by venerable old houses, the residences of the clergy or of the quiet lay gentry with mediaeval tastes. The main street was thronged with passengers,—some soberly returning home from the evening service; some, the younger, lingering in pleasant promenade with their sweethearts or families, or arm in arm with each other, and having the air of bachelors or maidens unattached. Through this street Kenelm passed with inattentive eye. A turn to the right took him towards the cathedral and its surroundings. There all was solitary. The solitude pleased him, and he lingered long, gazing on the noble church lifting its spires and turrets into the deep blue starry air.

Musingly, then, he strayed on, entering a labyrinth of gloomy lanes, in which, though the shops were closed, many a door stood open, with men of the working class lolling against the threshold, idly smoking their pipes, or women seated on the doorsteps gossiping, while noisy children were playing or quarrelling in the kennel. The whole did not present the indolent side of an English Sabbath in the pleasantest and rosiest point of view. Somewhat quickening his steps, he entered a broader street, attracted to it involuntarily by a bright light in the centre. On nearing the light he found that it shone forth from a gin-palace, of which the mahogany doors opened and shut momentarily as customers went in and out. It was the handsomest building he had seen in his walk, next to that of the cathedral. "The new civilization versus the old," murmured Kenelm. As he so murmured, a hand was laid on his arm with a sort of timid impudence. He looked down and saw a young face, but it had survived the look of youth; it was worn and hard, and the bloom on it was not that of Nature's giving. "Are you kind to-night?" asked a husky voice.

"Kind!" said Kenelm, with mournful tones and softened eyes, "kind! Alas, my poor sister mortal! if pity be kindness, who can see you and not be kind?"

The girl released his arm, and he walked on. She stood some moments gazing after him till out of sight, then she drew her hand suddenly across her eyes, and retracing her steps, was, in her turn, caught hold of by a rougher hand than hers, as she passed the gin-palace. She shook off the grasp with a passionate scorn, and went straight home. Home! is that the right word? Poor sister mortal!

CHAPTER XI.

AND now Kenelm found himself at the extremity of the town, and on the banks of the river. Small squalid houses still lined the bank for some way, till, nearing the bridge, they abruptly ceased, and he passed through a broad square again into the main street. On the other side of the street there was a row of villa-like mansions, with gardens stretching towards the river.

All around in the thoroughfare was silent and deserted. By this time the passengers had gone home. The scent of night-flowers from the villa-gardens came sweet on the starlit air. Kenelm paused to inhale it, and then lifting his eyes, hitherto downcast, as are the eyes of men in meditative moods, he beheld, on the balcony of the nearest villa, a group of well-dressed persons. The balcony was unusually wide and spacious. On it was a small round table, on which were placed wine and fruits. Three ladies were seated round the table on wire-work chairs, and on the side nearest to Kenelm, one man. In that man, now slightly turning his profile, as if to look towards the river, Kenelm recognized the minstrel. He was still in his picturesque knickerbocker dress, and his clear-cut features, with the clustering curls of hair, and Rubens-like hue and shape of beard, had more than their usual beauty, softened in the light of skies, to which the moon, just risen, added deeper and fuller radiance. The ladies were in evening dress, but Kenelm could not distinguish their faces hidden behind the minstrel. He moved softly across the street, and took his stand behind a buttress in the low wall of the garden, from which he could have full view of the balcony, unseen himself. In this watch he had no other object than that of a vague pleasure. The whole grouping had in it a kind of scenic romance, and he stopped as one stops before a picture.

He then saw that of the three ladies one was old; another was a slight girl of the age of twelve or thirteen; the third appeared to be somewhere about seven or eight and twenty. She was dressed with more elegance than the others. On her neck, only partially veiled by a thin scarf, there was the glitter of jewels; and, as she now turned her full face towards the moon, Kenelm saw that she was very handsome,—a striking kind of beauty, calculated to fascinate a poet or an artist,—not unlike Raphael's Fornarina, dark, with warm tints.

Now there appeared at the open window a stout, burly, middle-aged gentleman, looking every inch of him a family man, a moneyed man, sleek and prosperous. He was bald, fresh-coloured, and with light whiskers.

"Holloa," he said, in an accent very slightly foreign, and with a loud clear voice, which Kenelm heard distinctly, "is it not time for you to come in?"

"Don't be so tiresome, Fritz," said the handsome lady, half petulantly, half playfully, in the way ladies address the tiresome spouses they lord it over. "Your friend has been sulking the whole evening, and is only just beginning to be pleasant as the moon rises."

"The moon has a good effect on poets and other mad folks, I dare say," said the bald man, with a good-humoured laugh. "But I can't have my little niece laid up again just as she is on the mend: Annie, come in."

The girl obeyed reluctantly. The old lady rose too.

"Ah, Mother, you are wise," said the bald man; "and a game at euchre is safer than poetizing in night air." He wound his arm round the old lady with a careful fondness, for she moved with some difficulty as if rather lame. "As for you two sentimentalist and moon-gazers, I give you ten minutes' time,—not more, mind."

"Tyrant!" said the minstrel.

The balcony now held only two forms,—the minstrel and the handsome lady. The window was closed, and partially veiled by muslin draperies, but Kenelm caught glimpses of the room within. He could see that the room, lit by a lamp on the centre table and candles elsewhere, was decorated and fitted up with cost and in a taste not English. He could see, for instance, that the ceiling was painted, and the walls were not papered, but painted in panels between arabesque pilasters.

"They are foreigners," thought Kenelm, "though the man does speak English so well. That accounts for playing euchre of a Sunday evening, as if there were no harm in it. Euchre is an American game. The man is called Fritz. Ah! I guess—Germans who have lived a good deal in America; and the versemaker said he was at Luscombe on pecuniary business. Doubtless his host is a merchant, and the versemaker in some commercial firm. That accounts for his concealment of name, and fear of its being known that he was addicted in his holiday to tastes and habits so opposed to his calling."

While he was thus thinking, the lady had drawn her chair close to the minstrel, and was speaking to him with evident earnestness, but in tones too low for Kenelm to hear. Still it seemed to him, by her manner and by the man's look, as if she were speaking in some sort of reproach, which he sought to deprecate. Then he spoke, also in a whisper, and she averted her face for a moment; then she held out her hand, and the minstrel kissed it. Certainly, thus seen, the two might well be taken for lovers; and the soft night, the fragrance of the flowers, silence and solitude, stars and moon light, all girt them as with an atmosphere of love. Presently the man rose and leaned over the balcony, propping his cheek on his hand, and gazing on the river. The lady rose too, and also leaned over the balustrade, her dark hair almost touching the auburn locks of her companion.

Kenelm sighed. Was it from envy, from pity, from fear? I know not; but he sighed.

After a brief pause, the lady said, still in low tones, but not too low this time to escape Kenelm's fine sense of hearing,—

"Tell me those verses again. I must remember every word of them when you are gone."

The man shook his head gently, and answered, but inaudibly.

"Do," said the lady; "set them to music later; and the next time you come I will sing them. I have thought of a title for them."

"What?" asked the minstrel.

"Love's quarrel."

The minstrel turned his head, and their eyes met, and, in meeting, lingered long. Then he moved away, and with face turned from her and towards the river, gave the melody of his wondrous voice to the following lines:—

LOVE'S QUARREL.

"Standing by the river, gazing on the river,
See it paved with starbeams,—heaven is at our feet;
Now the wave is troubled, now the rushes quiver;
Vanished is the starlight: it was a deceit.

"Comes a little cloudlet 'twixt ourselves and heaven,
And from all the river fades the silver track;
Put thine arms around me, whisper low, 'Forgiven!'
See how on the river starlight settles back."

When he had finished, still with face turned aside, the lady did not, indeed, whisper "Forgiven," nor put her arms around him; but, as if by irresistible impulse, she laid her hand lightly on his shoulder.

The minstrel started.

There came to his ear,—he knew not from whence, from whom,—

"Mischief! mischief! Remember the little child!"

"Hush!" he said, staring round. "Did you not hear a voice?"

"Only yours," said the lady.

"It was our guardian angel's, Amalie. It came in time. We will go within."

CHAPTER XII.

THE next morning betimes Kenelm visited Tom at his uncle's home. A comfortable and respectable home it was, like that of an owner in easy circumstances. The veterinary surgeon himself was intelligent, and apparently educated beyond the range of his calling; a childless widower, between sixty and seventy, living with a sister, an old maid. They were evidently much attached to Tom, and delighted by the hope of keeping him with them. Tom himself looked rather sad, but not sullen, and his face brightened wonderfully at first sight of Kenelm. That oddity made himself as pleasant and as much like other people as he could in conversing with the old widower and the old maid, and took leave, engaging Tom to be at his inn at half past twelve, and spend the day with him and the minstrel. He then returned to the Golden Lamb, and waited there for his first visitant; the minstrel. That votary of the muse arrived punctually at twelve o'clock. His countenance was less cheerful and sunny than usual. Kenelm made no allusion to the scene he had witnessed, nor did his visitor seem to suspect that Kenelm had witnessed it or been the utterer of that warning voice.

KENELM.—"I have asked my friend Tom Bowles to come a little later, because I wished you to be of use to him, and, in order to be so, I should suggest how."

THE MINSTREL.—"Pray do."

KENELM.—"You know that I am not a poet, and I do not have much reverence for verse-making merely as a craft."

THE MINSTREL.—"Neither have I."

KENELM.—"But I have a great reverence for poetry as a priesthood. I felt that reverence for you when you sketched and talked priesthood last evening, and placed in my heart—I hope forever while it beats—the image of the child on the sunlit hill, high above the abodes of men, tossing her flower-ball heavenward and with heavenward eyes."

The singer's cheek coloured high, and his lip quivered: he was very sensitive to praise; most singers are.

Kenelm resumed, "I have been educated in the Realistic school, and with realism I am discontented, because in realism as a school there is no truth. It contains but a bit of truth, and that the coldest and hardest bit of it, and he who utters a bit of truth and suppresses the rest of it tells a lie."

THE MINSTREL (slyly).—"Does the critic who says to me, 'Sing of beefsteak, because the appetite for food is a real want of daily life, and don't sing of art and glory and love, because in daily life a man may do without such ideas,'—tell a lie?"

KENELM.—"Thank you for that rebuke. I submit to it. No doubt I did tell a lie,—that is, if I were quite

in earnest in my recommendation, and if not in earnest, why—"

THE MINSTREL.—"You belied yourself."

KENELM.—"Very likely. I set out on my travels to escape from shams, and begin to discover that I am a sham /par excellence/. But I suddenly come across you, as a boy dulled by his syntax and his vulgar fractions suddenly comes across a pleasant poem or a picture-book, and feels his wits brighten up. I owe you much: you have done me a world of good."

"I cannot guess how."

"Possibly not, but you have shown me how the realism of Nature herself takes colour and life and soul when seen on the ideal or poetic side of it. It is not exactly the words that you say or sing that do me the good, but they awaken within me new trains of thought, which I seek to follow out. The best teacher is the one who suggests rather than dogmatizes, and inspires his listener with the wish to teach himself. Therefore, O singer! whatever be the worth in critical eyes of your songs, I am glad to remember that you would like to go through the world always singing."

"Pardon me: you forget that I added, 'if life were always young, and the seasons were always summer.'"

"I do not forget. But if youth and summer fade for you, you leave youth and summer behind you as you pass along,—behind in hearts which mere realism would make always old, and counting their slothful beats under the gray of a sky without sun or stars; wherefore I pray you to consider how magnificent a mission the singer's is,—to harmonize your life with your song, and toss your flowers, as your child does, heavenward, with heavenward eyes. Think only of this when you talk with my sorrowing friend, and you will do him good, as you have done me, without being able to guess how a seeker after the Beautiful, such as you, carries us along with him on his way; so that we, too, look out for beauty, and see it in the wild-flowers to which we had been blind before."

Here Tom entered the little sanded parlour where this dialogue had been held, and the three men sallied forth, taking the shortest cut from the town into the fields and woodlands.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHETHER or not his spirits were raised by Kenelm's praise and exhortations, the minstrel that day talked with a charm that spellbound Tom, and Kenelm was satisfied with brief remarks on his side tending to draw out the principal performer.

The talk was drawn from outward things, from natural objects,—objects that interest children, and men who, like Tom Bowles, have been accustomed to view surroundings more with the heart's eye than the mind's eye. This rover about the country knew much of the habits of birds and beasts and insects, and told anecdotes of them with a mixture of humour and pathos, which fascinated Tom's attention, made him laugh heartily, and sometimes brought tears into his big blue eyes.

They dined at an inn by the wayside, and the dinner was mirthful; then they wended their way slowly back. By the declining daylight their talk grew somewhat graver, and Kenelm took more part in it. Tom listened mute,—still fascinated. At length, as the town came in sight, they agreed to halt a while, in a bosky nook soft with mosses and sweet with wild thyme.

There, as they lay stretched at their ease, the birds hymning vesper songs amid the boughs above, or dropping, noiseless and fearless, for their evening food on the swards around them, the wanderer said to Kenelm, "You tell me that you are no poet, yet I am sure you have a poet's perception: you must have written poetry?"

"Not I; as I before told you, only school verses in dead languages: but I found in my knapsack this morning a copy of some rhymes, made by a fellow-collegian, which I put into my pocket meaning to read them to you both. They are not verses like yours, which evidently burst from you spontaneously, and are not imitated from any other poets. These verses were written by a Scotchman, and smack of imitation from the old ballad style. There is little to admire in the words themselves, but there is something in the idea which struck me as original, and impressed me sufficiently to keep a copy, and somehow or other it got into the leaves of one of the two books I carried with me from home."

"What are those books? Books of poetry both, I will venture to wager—"

"Wrong! Both metaphysical, and dry as a bone. Tom, light your pipe, and you, sir, lean more at ease

on your elbow; I should warn you that the ballad is long. Patience!"

"Attention!" said the minstrel.

"Fire!" added Tom.

Kenelm began to read,—and he read well.

LORD RONALD'S BRIDE.

PART I.

"WHY gathers the crowd in the market-place
Ere the stars have yet left the sky?"
"For a holiday show and an act of grace,—
At the sunrise a witch shall die."

"What deed has she done to deserve that doom?
Has she blighted the standing corn,
Or rifled for philters a dead man's tomb,
Or rid mothers of babes new-born?"

"Her pact with the fiend was not thus revealed,
She taught sinners the Word to hear;
The hungry she fed, and the sick she healed,
And was held as a Saint last year.

"But a holy man, who at Rome had been,
Had discovered, by book and bell,
That the marvels she wrought were through arts unclean,
And the lies of the Prince of Hell.

"And our Mother the Church, for the dame was rich,
And her husband was Lord of Clyde,
Would fain have been mild to this saint-like witch
If her sins she had not denied.

"But hush, and come nearer to see the sight,
Sheriff, halberds, and torchmen,—look!
That's the witch standing mute in her garb of white,
By the priest with his bell and book."

So the witch was consumed on the sacred pyre,
And the priest grew in power and pride,
And the witch left a son to succeed his sire
In the halls and the lands of Clyde.

And the infant waxed comely and strong and brave,
But his manhood had scarce begun,
When his vessel was launched on the northern wave
To the shores which are near the sun.

PART II.

Lord Ronald has come to his halls in Clyde
With a bride of some unknown race;
Compared with the man who would kiss that bride
Wallace wight were a coward base.

Her eyes had the glare of the mountain-cat
When it springs on the hunter's spear,
At the head of the board when that lady sate
Hungry men could not eat for fear.

And the tones of her voice had that deadly growl
Of the bloodhound that scents its prey;
No storm was so dark as that lady's scowl
Under tresses of wintry gray.

"Lord Ronald! men marry for love or gold,
Mickle rich must have been thy bride!"

"Man's heart may be bought, woman's hand be sold,
On the banks of our northern Clyde.

"My bride is, in sooth, mickle rich to me
Though she brought not a groat in dower,
For her face, couldst thou see it as I do see,
Is the fairest in hall or bower!"

Quoth the bishop one day to our lord the king,
"Satan reigns on the Clyde alway,
And the taint in the blood of the witch doth cling
To the child that she brought to day.

"Lord Ronald hath come from the Paynim land
With a bride that appals the sight;
Like his dam she hath moles on her dread right hand,
And she turns to a snake at night.

"It is plain that a Scot who can blindly dote
On the face of an Eastern ghoul,
And a ghoul who was worth not a silver groat,
Is a Scot who has lost his soul.

"It were wise to have done with this demon tree
Which has teemed with such caukered fruit;
Add the soil where it stands to my holy See,
And consign to the flames its root."

"Holy man!" quoth King James, and he laughed, "we know
That thy tongue never wags in vain,
But the Church cist is full, and the king's is low,
And the Clyde is a fair domain.

"Yet a knight that's bewitched by a laidly fere
Needs not much to dissolve the spell;
We will summon the bride and the bridegroom here
Be at hand with thy book and bell."

PART III.

Lord Ronald stood up in King James's court,
And his dame by his dauntless side;
The barons who came in the hopes of sport
Shook with fright when they saw the bride.

The bishop, though armed with his bell and book,
Grew as white as if turned to stone;
It was only our king who could face that look,
But he spoke with a trembling tone.

"Lord Ronald, the knights of thy race and mine
Should have mates in their own degree;
What parentage, say, hath that bride of thine
Who hath come from the far countree?

"And what was her dowry in gold or land,
Or what was the charm, I pray,
That a comely young gallant should woo the hand
Of the ladye we see to-day?"

And the lords would have laughed, but that awful dame
Struck them dumb with her thunder-frown:
"Saucy king, did I utter my father's name,
Thou wouldst kneel as his liegeman down.

"Though I brought to Lord Ronald nor lands nor gold,

Nor the bloom of a fading cheek;
Yet, were I a widow, both young and old
Would my hand and my dowry seek.

"For the wish that he covets the most below,
And would hide from the saints above,
Which he dares not to pray for in weal or woe,
Is the dowry I bring my love.

"Let every man look in his heart and see
What the wish he most lusts to win,
And then let him fasten his eyes on me
While he thinks of his darling sin."

And every man—bishop, and lord, and king
Thought of what he most wished to win,
And, fixing his eye on that grewsome thing,
He beheld his own darling sin.

No longer a ghoul in that face he saw;
It was fair as a boy's first love:
The voice that had curdled his veins with awe
Was the coo of the woodland dove.

Each heart was on flame for the peerless dame
At the price of the husband's life;
Bright claymores flash out, and loud voices shout,
"In thy widow shall be my wife."

Then darkness fell over the palace hall,
More dark and more dark it fell,
And a death-groan boomed hoarse underneath the pall,
And was drowned amid roar and yell.

When light through the lattice-pane stole once more,
It was gray as a wintry dawn,
And the bishop lay cold on the regal floor,
With a stain on his robes of lawn.

Lord Ronald was standing beside the dead,
In the scabbard he plunged his sword,
And with visage as wan as the corpse, he said,
"Lo! my ladye hath kept her word.

"Now I leave her to others to woo and win,
For no longer I find her fair;
Could I look on the face of my darling sin,
I should see but a dead man's there.

"And the dowry she brought me is here returned,
For the wish of my heart has died,
It is quenched in the blood of the priest who burned
My sweet mother, the Saint of Clyde."

Lord Ronald strode over the stony floor,
Not a hand was outstretched to stay;
Lord Ronald has passed through the gaping door,
Not an eye ever traced the way.

And the ladye, left widowed, was prized above
All the maidens in hall and bower,
Many bartered their lives for that ladye's love,
And their souls for that ladye's dower.

God grant that the wish which I dare not pray
Be not that which I lust to win,
And that ever I look with my first dismay
On the face of my darling sin!

As he ceased, Kenelm's eye fell on Tom's face upturned to his own, with open lips, an intent stare, and paled cheeks, and a look of that higher sort of terror which belongs to awe. The man, then recovering himself, tried to speak, and attempted a sickly smile, but neither would do. He rose abruptly and walked away, crept under the shadow of a dark beech-tree, and stood there leaning against the trunk.

"What say you to the ballad?" asked Kenelm of the singer.

"It is not without power," answered he.

"Ay, of a certain kind."

The minstrel looked hard at Kenelm, and dropped his eyes, with a heightened glow on his cheek.

"The Scotch are a thoughtful race. The Scot who wrote this thing may have thought of a day when he saw beauty in the face of a darling sin; but, if so, it is evident that his sight recovered from that glamour. Shall we walk on? Come, Tom."

The minstrel left them at the entrance of the town, saying, "I regret that I cannot see more of either of you, as I quit Luscombe at daybreak. Here, by the by, I forgot to give it before, is the address you wanted."

KENELM.—"Of the little child. I am glad you remembered her."

The minstrel again looked hard at Kenelm, this time without dropping his eyes. Kenelm's expression of face was so simply quiet that it might be almost called vacant.

Kenelm and Tom continued to walk on towards the veterinary surgeon's house, for some minutes silently. Then Tom said in a whisper, "Did you not mean those rhymes to hit me here—/here/?" and he struck his breast.

"The rhymes were written long before I saw you, Tom; but it is well if their meaning strike us all. Of you, my friend, I have no fear now. Are you not already a changed man?"

"I feel as if I were going through a change," answered Tom, in slow, dreary accents. "In hearing you and that gentleman talk so much of things that I never thought of, I felt something in me,—you will laugh when I tell you,—something like a bird."

"Like a bird,—good!—a bird has wings."

"Just so."

"And you felt wings that you were unconscious of before, fluttering and beating themselves as against the wires of a cage. You were true to your instincts then, my dear fellow-man,—instincts of space and Heaven. Courage!—the cage-door will open soon. And now, practically speaking, I give you this advice in parting: You have a quick and sensitive mind which you have allowed that strong body of yours to incarcerate and suppress. Give that mind fair play. Attend to the business of your calling diligently; the craving for regular work is the healthful appetite of mind: but in your spare hours cultivate the new ideas which your talk with men who have been accustomed to cultivate the mind more than the body has sown within you. Belong to a book-club, and interest yourself in books. A wise man has said, 'Books widen the present by adding to it the past and the future.' Seek the company of educated men and educated women too; and when you are angry with another, reason with him: don't knock him down; and don't be knocked down yourself by an enemy much stronger than yourself,—Drink. Do all this, and when I see you again you will be—"

"Stop, sir,—you will see me again?"

"Yes, if we both live, I promise it."

"When?"

"You see, Tom, we have both of us something in our old selves which we must work off. You will work off your something by repose, and I must work off mine, if I can, by moving about. So I am on my travels. May we both have new selves better than the old selves, when we again shake hands! For your part try your best, dear Tom, and Heaven prosper you."

"And Heaven bless you!" cried Tom, fervently, with tears rolling unheeded from his bold blue eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THOUGH Kenelm left Luscombe on Tuesday morning, he did not appear at Neesdale Park till the Wednesday, a little before the dressing-bell for dinner. His adventures in the interim are not worth repeating. He had hoped he might fall in again with the minstrel, but he did not.

His portmanteau had arrived, and he heaved a sigh as he cased himself in a gentleman's evening dress. "Alas! I have soon got back again into my own skin."

There were several other guests in the house, though not a large party,—they had been asked with an eye to the approaching election,—consisting of squires and clergy from remoter parts of the county. Chief among the guests in rank and importance, and rendered by the occasion the central object of interest, was George Belvoir.

Kenelm bore his part in this society with a resignation that partook of repentance.

The first day he spoke very little, and was considered a very dull young man by the lady he took in to dinner. Mr. Travers in vain tried to draw him out. He had anticipated much amusement from the eccentricities of his guest, who had talked volubly enough in the fernery, and was sadly disappointed. "I feel," he whispered to Mrs. Champion, "like poor Lord Pomfret, who, charmed with Punch's lively conversation, bought him, and was greatly surprised that, when he had once brought him home, Punch would not talk."

"But your Punch listens," said Mrs. Champion, "and he observes."

George Belvoir, on the other hand, was universally declared to be very agreeable. Though not naturally jovial, he forced himself to appear so,—laughing loud with the squires, and entering heartily with their wives and daughters into such topics as county-balls and croquet-parties; and when after dinner he had, Cato-like, 'warmed his virtue with wine,' the virtue came out very lustily in praise of good men,—namely, men of his own party,—and anathemas on bad men,—namely, men of the other party.

Now and then he appealed to Kenelm, and Kenelm always returned the same answer, "There is much in what you say."

The first evening closed in the usual way in country houses. There was some lounging under moonlight on the terrace before the house; then there was some singing by young lady amateurs, and a rubber of whist for the elders; then wine-and-water, hand-candlesticks, a smoking-room for those who smoked, and bed for those who did not.

In the course of the evening, Cecilia, partly in obedience to the duties of hostess and partly from that compassion for shyness which kindly and high-bred persons entertain, had gone a little out of her way to allure Kenelm forth from the estranged solitude he had contrived to weave around him. In vain for the daughter as for the father. He replied to her with the quiet self-possession which should have convinced her that no man on earth was less entitled to indulgence for the gentlemanlike infirmity of shyness, and no man less needed the duties of any hostess for the augmentation of his comforts, or rather for his diminished sense of discomfort; but his replies were in monosyllables, and made with the air of a man who says in his heart, "If this creature would but leave me alone!"

Cecilia, for the first time in her life, was piqued, and, strange to say, began to feel more interest about this indifferent stranger than about the popular, animated, pleasant George Belvoir, who she knew by womanly instinct was as much in love with her as he could be.

Cecilia Travers that night on retiring to rest told her maid, smilingly, that she was too tired to have her hair done; and yet, when the maid was dismissed, she looked at herself in the glass more gravely and more discontentedly than she had ever looked there before; and, tired though she was, stood at the window gazing into the moonlit night for a good hour after the maid left her.

CHAPTER XV.

KENELM CHILLINGLY has now been several days a guest at Neesdale Park. He has recovered speech; the other guests have gone, including George Belvoir. Leopold Travers has taken a great fancy to Kenelm. Leopold was one of those men, not uncommon perhaps in England, who, with great mental energies, have little book-knowledge, and when they come in contact with a book-reader who is not a pedant feel a pleasant excitement in his society, a source of interest in comparing notes with him, a

constant surprise in finding by what venerable authorities the deductions which their own mother-wit has drawn from life are supported, or by what cogent arguments derived from books those deductions are contravened or upset. Leopold Travers had in him that sense of humour which generally accompanies a strong practical understanding (no man, for instance, has more practical understanding than a Scot, and no man has a keener susceptibility to humour), and not only enjoyed Kenelm's odd way of expressing himself, but very often mistook Kenelm's irony for opinion spoken in earnest.

Since his early removal from the capital and his devotion to agricultural pursuits, it was so seldom that Leopold Travers met a man by whose conversation his mind was diverted to other subjects than those which were incidental to the commonplace routine of his life that he found in Kenelm's views of men and things a source of novel amusement, and a stirring appeal to such metaphysical creeds of his own as had been formed unconsciously, and had long reposed unexamined in the recesses of an intellect shrewd and strong, but more accustomed to dictate than to argue. Kenelm, on his side, saw much in his host to like and to admire; but, reversing their relative positions in point of years, he conversed with Travers as with a mind younger than his own. Indeed, it was one of his crotchety theories that each generation is in substance mentally older than the generation preceding it, especially in all that relates to science; and, as he would say, "The study of life is a science, and not an art."

But Cecilia,—what impression did she create upon the young visitor? Was he alive to the charm of her rare beauty, to the grace of a mind sufficiently stored for commune with those who love to think and to imagine, and yet sufficiently feminine and playful to seize the sportive side of realities, and allow their proper place to the trifles which make the sum of human things? An impression she did make, and that impression was new to him and pleasing. Nay, sometimes in her presence and sometimes when alone, he fell into abstracted consultations with himself, saying, "Kenelm Chillingly, now that thou hast got back into thy proper skin, dost thou not think that thou hadst better remain there? Couldst thou not be contented with thy lot as erring descendant of Adam, if thou couldst win for thy mate so faultless a descendant of Eve as now flits before thee?" But he could not abstract from himself any satisfactory answer to the question he had addressed to himself.

Once he said abruptly to Travers, as, on their return from their rambles, they caught a glimpse of Cecilia's light form bending over the flower-beds on the lawn, "Do you admire Virgil?"

"To say truth I have not read Virgil since I was a boy; and, between you and me, I then thought him rather monotonous."

"Perhaps because his verse is so smooth in its beauty?"

"Probably. When one is very young one's taste is faulty; and if a poet is not faulty, we are apt to think he wants vivacity and fire."

"Thank you for your lucid explanation," answered Kenelm, adding musingly to himself, "I am afraid I should yawn very often if I were married to a Miss Virgil."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE house of Mr. Travers contained a considerable collection of family portraits, few of them well painted, but the Squire was evidently proud of such evidences of ancestry. They not only occupied a considerable space on the walls of the reception rooms, but swarmed into the principal sleeping-chambers, and smiled or frowned on the beholder from dark passages and remote lobbies. One morning, Cecilia, on her way to the china closet, found Kenelm gazing very intently upon a female portrait consigned to one of those obscure receptacles by which through a back staircase he gained the only approach from the hall to his chamber.

"I don't pretend to be a good judge of paintings," said Kenelm, as Cecilia paused beside him; "but it strikes me that this picture is very much better than most of those to which places of honour are assigned in your collection. And the face itself is so lovely that it would add an embellishment to the princeliest galleries."

"Yes," said Cecilia, with a half-sigh. "The face is lovely, and the portrait is considered one of Lely's rarest masterpieces. It used to hang over the chimney-piece in the drawing-room. My father had it placed here many years ago."

"Perhaps because he discovered it was not a family portrait?"

"On the contrary,—because it grieves him to think it is a family portrait. Hush! I hear his footstep:

don't speak of it to him; don't let him see you looking at it. The subject is very painful to him."

Here Cecilia vanished into the china closet and Kenelm turned off to his own room.

What sin committed by the original in the time of Charles II. but only discovered in the reign of Victoria could have justified Leopold Travers in removing the most pleasing portrait in the house from the honoured place it had occupied, and banishing it to so obscure a recess? Kenelm said no more on the subject, and indeed an hour afterwards had dismissed it from his thoughts. The next day he rode out with Travers and Cecilia. Their way passed through quiet shady lanes without any purposed direction, when suddenly, at the spot where three of those lanes met on an angle of common ground, a lonely gray tower, in the midst of a wide space of grass-land which looked as if it had once been a park, with huge boles of pollarded oak dotting the space here and there, rose before them.

"Cissy!" cried Travers, angrily reining in his horse and stopping short in a political discussion which he had forced upon Kenelm, "Cissy! How comes this? We have taken the wrong turn! No matter, I see there," pointing to the right, "the chimney-pots of old Mondell's homestead. He has not yet promised his vote to George Belvoir. I'll go and have a talk with him. Turn back, you and Mr. Chillingly,—meet me at Turner's Green, and wait for me there till I come. I need not excuse myself to you, Chillingly. A vote is a vote." So saying, the Squire, whose ordinary riding-horse was an old hunter, halted, turned, and, no gate being visible, put the horse over a stiff fence and vanished in the direction of old Mondell's chimney-pots. Kenelm, scarcely hearing his host's instructions to Cecilia and excuses to himself, remained still and gazing on the old tower thus abruptly obtruded on his view.

Though no learned antiquarian like his father, Kenelm had a strange fascinating interest in all relics of the past; and old gray towers, where they are not church towers, are very rarely to be seen in England. All around the old gray tower spoke with an unutterable mournfulness of a past in ruins: you could see remains of some large Gothic building once attached to it, rising here and there in fragments of deeply buttressed walls; you could see in a dry ditch, between high ridges, where there had been a fortified moat: nay, you could even see where once had been the bailey hill from which a baron of old had dispensed justice. Seldom indeed does the most acute of antiquarians discover that remnant of Norman times on lands still held by the oldest of Anglo-Norman families. Then, the wild nature of the demesne around; those ranges of sward, with those old giant oak-trunks, hollowed within and pollarded at top,—all spoke, in unison with the gray tower, of a past as remote from the reign of Victoria as the Pyramids are from the sway of the Viceroy of Egypt.

"Let us turn back," said Miss Travers; "my father would not like me to stay here."

"Pardon me a moment. I wish my father were here; he would stay till sunset. But what is the history of that old tower? a history it must have."

"Every home has a history, even a peasant's hut," said Cecilia. "But do pardon me if I ask you to comply with my father's request. I at least must turn back."

Thus commanded, Kenelm reluctantly withdrew his gaze from the ruin and regained Cecilia, who was already some paces in return down the lane.

"I am far from a very inquisitive man by temperament," said Kenelm, "so far as the affairs of the living are concerned. But I should not care to open a book if I had no interest in the past. Pray indulge my curiosity to learn something about that old tower. It could not look more melancholy and solitary if I had built it myself."

"Its most melancholy associations are with a very recent past," answered Cecilia. "The tower, in remote times, formed the keep of a castle belonging to the most ancient and once the most powerful family in these parts. The owners were barons who took active share in the Wars of the Roses. The last of them sided with Richard III., and after the battle of Bosworth the title was attained, and the larger portion of the lands was confiscated. Loyalty to a Plantagenet was of course treason to a Tudor. But the regeneration of the family rested with their direct descendants, who had saved from the general wreck of their fortunes what may be called a good squire's estate,—about, perhaps, the same rental as my father's, but of much larger acreage. These squires, however, were more looked up to in the county than the wealthiest peer. They were still by far the oldest family in the county; and traced in their pedigree alliances with the most illustrious houses in English history. In themselves too for many generations they were a high-spirited, hospitable, popular race, living unostentatiously on their income, and contented with their rank of squires. The castle, ruined by time and siege, they did not attempt to restore. They dwelt in a house near to it, built about Elizabeth's time, which you could not see, for it lies in a hollow behind the tower,—a moderate-sized, picturesque, country gentleman's house. Our family intermarried with them,—the portrait you saw was a daughter of their house,—and very proud was any squire in the county of intermarriage with the Fletwodes."

"Fletwode,—that was their name? I have a vague recollection of having heard the name connected with some disastrous—oh, but it can't be the same family: pray go on."

"I fear it is the same family. But I will finish the story as I have heard it. The property descended at last to one Bertram Fletwode, who, unfortunately, obtained the reputation of being a very clever man of business. There was some mining company in which, with other gentlemen in the county, he took great interest; invested largely in shares; became the head of the direction—"

"I see; and was of course ruined."

"No; worse than that: he became very rich; and, unhappily, became desirous of being richer still. I have heard that there was a great mania for speculations just about that time. He embarked in these, and prospered, till at last he was induced to invest a large share of the fortune thus acquired in the partnership of a bank which enjoyed a high character. Up to that time he had retained popularity and esteem in the county; but the squires who shared in the adventures of the mining company, and knew little or nothing about other speculations in which his name did not appear, professed to be shocked at the idea of a Fletwode of Fletwode being ostensibly joined in partnership with a Jones of Clapham in a London bank."

"Slow folks, those country squires,—behind the progress of the age. Well?"

"I have heard that Bertram Fletwode was himself very reluctant to take this step, but was persuaded to do so by his son. This son, Alfred, was said to have still greater talents for business than the father, and had been not only associated with but consulted by him in all the later speculations which had proved so fortunate. Mrs. Champion knew Alfred Fletwode very well. She describes him as handsome, with quick, eager eyes; showy and imposing in his talk; immensely ambitious, more ambitious than avaricious,—collecting money less for its own sake than for that which it could give,—rank and power. According to her it was the dearest wish of his heart to claim the old barony, but not before there could go with the barony a fortune adequate to the lustre of a title so ancient, and equal to the wealth of modern peers with higher nominal rank."

"A poor ambition at the best; of the two I should prefer that of a poet in a garret. But I am no judge. Thank Heaven I have no ambition. Still, all ambition, all desire to rise, is interesting to him who is ignominiously contented if he does not fall. So the son had his way, and Fletwode joined company with Jones on the road to wealth and the peerage; meanwhile did the son marry? if so, of course the daughter of a duke or a millionaire. Tuft-hunting, or money-making, at the risk of degradation and the workhouse. Progress of the age!"

"No," replied Cecilia, smiling at this outburst, but smiling sadly, "Fletwode did not marry the daughter of a duke or a millionaire; but still his wife belonged to a noble family,—very poor, but very proud. Perhaps he married from motives of ambition, though not of gain. Her father was of much political influence that might perhaps assist his claim to the barony. The mother, a woman of the world, enjoying a high social position, and nearly related to a connection of ours,—Lady Glenalvon."

"Lady Glenalvon, the dearest of my lady friends! You are connected with her?"

"Yes; Lord Glenalvon was my mother's uncle. But I wish to finish my story before my father joins us. Alfred Fletwode did not marry till long after the partnership in the bank. His father, at his desire, had bought up the whole business, Mr. Jones having died. The bank was carried on in the names of Fletwode and Son. But the father had become merely a nominal or what I believe is called a 'sleeping' partner. He had long ceased to reside in the county. The old house was not grand enough for him. He had purchased a palatial residence in one of the home counties; lived there in great splendour; was a munificent patron of science and art; and in spite of his earlier addictions to business-like speculations he appears to have been a singularly accomplished, high-bred gentleman. Some years before his son's marriage, Mr. Fletwode had been afflicted with partial paralysis, and his medical attendant enjoined rigid abstention from business. From that time he never interfered with his son's management of the bank. He had an only daughter, much younger than Alfred. Lord Eagleton, my mother's brother, was engaged to be married to her. The wedding-day was fixed,—when the world was startled by the news that the great firm of Fletwode and Son had stopped payment; is that the right phrase?"

"I believe so."

"A great many people were ruined in that failure. The public indignation was very great. Of course all the Fletwode property went to the creditors. Old Mr. Fletwode was legally acquitted of all other offence than that of overconfidence in his son. Alfred was convicted of fraud,—of forgery. I don't, of course, know the particulars, they are very complicated. He was sentenced to a long term of servitude, but died

the day he was condemned; apparently by poison, which he had long secreted about his person. Now you can understand why my father, who is almost gratuitously sensitive on the point of honour, removed into a dark corner the portrait of Arabella Fletwode,—his own ancestress, but also the ancestress of a convicted felon: you can understand why the whole subject is so painful to him. His wife's brother was to have married the felon's sister; and though, of course, that marriage was tacitly broken off by the terrible disgrace that had befallen the Fletwodes, yet I don't think my poor uncle ever recovered the blow to his hopes. He went abroad, and died in Madeira of a slow decline."

"And the felon's sister, did she die too?"

"No; not that I know of. Mrs. Champion says that she saw in a newspaper the announcement of old Mr. Fletwode's death, and a paragraph to the effect that after that event Miss Fletwode had sailed from Liverpool to New York."

"Alfred Fletwode's wife went back, of course, to her family?"

"Alas! no,—poor thing! She had not been many months married when the bank broke; and among his friends her wretched husband appears to have forged the names of the trustees to her marriage settlement, and sold out the sums which would otherwise have served her as a competence. Her father, too, was a great sufferer by the bankruptcy, having by his son-in-law's advice placed a considerable portion of his moderate fortune in Alfred's hands for investment, all of which was involved in the general wreck. I am afraid he was a very hard-hearted man: at all events his poor daughter never returned to him. She died, I think, even before the death of Bertram Fletwode. The whole story is very dismal."

"Dismal indeed, but pregnant with salutary warnings to those who live in an age of progress. Here you see a family of fair fortune, living hospitably, beloved, revered, more looked up to by their neighbours than the wealthiest nobles; no family not proud to boast alliance with it. All at once, in the tranquil record of this happy race, appears that darling of the age, that hero of progress,—a clever man of business. He be contented to live as his fathers! He be contented with such trifles as competence, respect, and love! Much too clever for that. The age is money-making,—go with the age! He goes with the age. Born a gentleman only, he exalts himself into a trader. But at least he, it seems, if greedy, was not dishonest. He was born a gentleman, but his son was born a trader. The son is a still cleverer man of business; the son is consulted and trusted. Aha! He too goes with the age; to greed he links ambition. The trader's son wishes to return—what? to the rank of gentleman?—gentleman! nonsense! everybody is a gentleman nowadays,—to the title of Lord. How ends it all! Could I sit but for twelve hours in the innermost heart of that Alfred Fletwode; could I see how, step by step from his childhood, the dishonest son was avariciously led on by the honest father to depart from the old /vestigia/ of Fletwodes of Fletwode,—scorning The Enough to covet The More, gaining The More to sigh, 'It is not The Enough,'—I think I might show that the age lives in a house of glass, and had better not for its own sake throw stones on the felon!"

"Ah, but, Mr. Chillingly, surely this is a very rare exception in the general—"

"Rare!" interrupted Kenelm, who was excited to a warmth of passion which would have startled his most intimate friend, if indeed an intimate friend had ever been vouchsafed to him,—"rare! nay, how common—I don't say to the extent of forgery and fraud, but to the extent of degradation and ruin—is the greed of a Little More to those who have The Enough! is the discontent with competence, respect, and love, when catching sight of a money-bag! How many well-descended county families, cursed with an heir who is called a clever man of business, have vanished from the soil! A company starts, the clever man joins it one bright day. Pouf! the old estates and the old name are powder. Ascend higher. Take nobles whose ancestral titles ought to be to English ears like the sound of clarions, awakening the most slothful to the scorn of money-bags and the passion for renown. Lo! in that mocking dance of death called the Progress of the Age, one who did not find Enough in a sovereign's revenue, and seeks The Little More as a gambler on the turf by the advice of blacklegs! Lo! another, with lands wider than his greatest ancestors ever possessed, must still go in for The Little More, adding acre to acre, heaping debt upon debt! Lo! a third, whose name, borne by his ancestors, was once the terror of England's foes,—the landlord of a hotel! A fourth,—but why go on through the list? Another and another still succeeds; each on the Road to Ruin, each in the Age of Progress. Ah, Miss Travers! in the old time it was through the Temple of Honour that one passed to the Temple of Fortune. In this wise age the process is reversed. But here comes your father."

"A thousand pardons!" said Leopold Travers. "That numskull Mondell kept me so long with his old-fashioned Tory doubts whether liberal politics are favourable to agricultural prospects. But as he owes a round sum to a Whig lawyer I had to talk with his wife, a prudent woman; convinced her that his own agricultural prospects were safest on the Whig side of the question; and, after kissing his baby and shaking his hand, booked his vote for George Belvoir,—a plumper."

"I suppose," said Kenelm to himself, and with that candour which characterized him whenever he talked to himself, "that Travers has taken the right road to the Temple, not of Honour, but of honours, in every country, ancient or modern, which has adopted the system of popular suffrage."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE next day Mrs. Campion and Cecilia were seated under the veranda. They were both ostensibly employed on two several pieces of embroidery, one intended for a screen, the other for a sofa-cushion; but the mind of neither was on her work.

MRS. CAMPION.—"Has Mr. Chillingly said when he means to take leave?"

CECILIA.—"Not to me. How much my dear father enjoys his conversation!"

MRS. CAMPION.—"Cynicism and mockery were not so much the fashion among young men in your father's day as I suppose they are now, and therefore they seem new to Mr. Travers. To me they are not new, because I saw more of the old than the young when I lived in London, and cynicism and mockery are more natural to men who are leaving the world than to those who are entering it."

CECILIA.—"Dear Mrs. Campion, how bitter you are, and how unjust! You take much too literally the jesting way in which Mr. Chillingly expresses himself. There can be no cynicism in one who goes out of his way to make others happy."

MRS. CAMPION.—"You mean in the whim of making an ill-assorted marriage between a pretty village flirt and a sickly cripple, and settling a couple of peasants in a business for which they are wholly unfitted."

CECILIA.—"Jessie Wiles is not a flirt, and I am convinced that she will make Will Somers a very good wife, and that the shop will be a great success."

MRS. CAMPION.—"We shall see. Still, if Mr. Chillingly's talk belies his actions, he may be a good man, but he is a very affected one."

CECILIA.—"Have I not heard you say that there are persons so natural that they seem affected to those who do not understand them?"

Mrs. Campion raised her eyes to Cecilia's face, dropped them again over her work, and said, in grave undertones,—"Take care, Cecilia."

"Take care of what?"

"My dearest child, forgive me; but I do not like the warmth with which you defend Mr. Chillingly."

"Would not my father defend him still more warmly if he had heard you?"

"Men judge of men in their relations to men. I am a woman, and judge of men in their relations to women. I should tremble for the happiness of any woman who joined her fate with that of Kenelm Chillingly."

"My dear friend, I do not understand you to-day."

"Nay; I did not mean to be so solemn, my love. After all, it is nothing to us whom Mr. Chillingly may or may not marry. He is but a passing visitor, and, once gone, the chances are that we may not see him again for years."

Thus speaking, Mrs. Campion again raised her eyes from her work, stealing a sidelong glance at Cecilia; and her mother-like heart sank within her, on noticing how suddenly pale the girl had become, and how her lips quivered. Mrs. Campion had enough knowledge of life to feel aware that she had committed a grievous blunder. In that earliest stage of virgin affection, when a girl is unconscious of more than a certain vague interest in one man which distinguishes him from others in her thoughts,—if she hears him unjustly disparaged, if some warning against him is implied, if the probability that he will never be more to her than a passing acquaintance is forcibly obtruded on her,—suddenly that vague interest, which might otherwise have faded away with many another girlish fancy, becomes arrested, consolidated; the quick pang it occasions makes her involuntarily, and for the first time, question herself, and ask, "Do I love?" But when a girl of a nature so delicate as that of Cecilia Travers can ask herself the question, "Do I love?" her very modesty, her very shrinking from acknowledging that any power over her thoughts for weal or for woe can be acquired by a man, except through the sanction of

that love which only becomes divine in her eyes when it is earnest and pure and self-devoted, makes her prematurely disposed to answer "yes." And when a girl of such a nature in her own heart answers "yes" to such a question, even if she deceive herself at the moment, she begins to cherish the deceit till the belief in her love becomes a reality. She has adopted a religion, false or true, and she would despise herself if she could be easily converted.

Mrs. Champion had so contrived that she had forced that question upon Cecilia, and she feared, by the girl's change of countenance, that the girl's heart had answered "yes."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHILE the conversation just narrated took place, Kenelm had walked forth to pay a visit to Will Somers. All obstacles to Will's marriage were now cleared away; the transfer of lease for the shop had been signed, and the banns were to be published for the first time on the following Sunday. We need not say that Will was very happy. Kenelm then paid a visit to Mrs. Bowles, with whom he stayed an hour. On reentering the Park, he saw Travers, walking slowly, with downcast eyes and his hands clasped behind him (his habit when in thought). He did not observe Kenelm's approach till within a few feet of him, and he then greeted his guest in listless accents, unlike his usual cheerful tones.

"I have been visiting the man you have made so happy," said Kenelm.

"Who can that be?"

"Will Somers. Do you make so many people happy that your reminiscence of them is lost in their number?"

Travers smiled faintly, and shook his head.

Kenelm went on. "I have also seen Mrs. Bowles, and you will be pleased to hear that Tom is satisfied with his change of abode: there is no chance of his returning to Graveleigh; and Mrs. Bowles took very kindly to my suggestion that the little property you wish for should be sold to you, and, in that case, she would remove to Luscombe to be near her son."

"I thank you much for your thought of me," said Travers, "and the affair shall be seen to at once, though the purchase is no longer important to me. I ought to have told you three days ago, but it slipped my memory, that a neighbouring squire, a young fellow just come into his property, has offered to exchange a capital farm, much nearer to my residence, for the lands I hold in Graveleigh, including Saunderson's farm and the cottages: they are quite at the outskirts of my estate, but run into his, and the exchange will be advantageous to both. Still I am glad that the neighbourhood should be thoroughly rid of a brute like Tom Bowles."

"You would not call him brute if you knew him; but I am sorry to hear that Will Somers will be under another landlord."

"It does not matter, since his tenure is secured for fourteen years."

"What sort of man is the new landlord?"

"I don't know much of him. He was in the army till his father died, and has only just made his appearance in the county. He has, however, already earned the character of being too fond of the other sex: it is well that pretty Jessie is to be safely married."

Travers then relapsed into a moody silence from which Kenelm found it difficult to rouse him. At length the latter said kindly,—

"My dear Mr. Travers, do not think I take a liberty if I venture to guess that something has happened this morning which troubles or vexes you. When that is the case, it is often a relief to say what it is, even to a confidant so unable to advise or to comfort as myself."

"You are a good fellow, Chillingly, and I know not, at least in these parts, a man to whom I would unburden myself more freely. I am put out, I confess; disappointed unreasonably, in a cherished wish, and," he added, with a slight laugh, "it always annoys me when I don't have my own way."

"So it does me."

"Don't you think that George Belvoir is a very fine young man?"

"Certainly."

"I/ call him handsome; he is steadier, too, than most men of his age, and of his command of money; and yet he does not want spirit nor knowledge of life. To every advantage of rank and fortune he adds the industry and the ambition which attain distinction in public life."

"Quite true. Is he going to withdraw from the election after all?"

"Good heavens, no!"

"Then how does he not let you have your own way?"

"It is not he," said Travers, peevishly; "it is Cecilia. Don't you understand that George is precisely the husband I would choose for her; and this morning came a very well written manly letter from him, asking my permission to pay his addresses to her."

"But that is your own way so far."

"Yes, and here comes the balk. Of course I had to refer it to Cecilia, and she positively declines, and has no reasons to give; does not deny that George is good-looking and sensible, that he is a man of whose preference any girl might be proud; but she chooses to say she cannot love him, and when I ask why she cannot love him, has no other answer than that 'she cannot say.' It is too provoking."

"It is provoking," answered Kenelm; "but then Love is the most dunderheaded of all the passions; it never will listen to reason. The very rudiments of logic are unknown to it. 'Love has no wherefore,' says one of those Latin poets who wrote love-verses called elegies,—a name which we moderns appropriate to funeral dirges. For my own part, I can't understand how any one can be expected voluntarily to make up his mind to go out of his mind. And if Miss Travers cannot go out of her mind because George Belvoir does, you could not argue her into doing so if you talked till doomsday."

Travers smiled in spite of himself, but he answered gravely, "Certainly, I would not wish Cissy to marry any man she disliked, but she does not dislike George; no girl could: and where that is the case, a girl so sensible, so affectionate, so well brought up, is sure to love, after marriage, a thoroughly kind and estimable man, especially when she has no previous attachment,—which, of course, Cissy never had. In fact, though I do not wish to force my daughter's will, I am not yet disposed to give up my own. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"I am the more inclined to a marriage so desirable in every way, because when Cissy comes out in London, which she has not yet done, she is sure to collect round her face and her presumptive inheritance all the handsome fortune-hunters and titled /vauriens/; and if in love there is no wherefore, how can I be sure that she may not fall in love with a scamp?"

"I think you may be sure of that," said Kenelm. "Miss Travers has too much mind."

"Yes, at present; but did you not say that in love people go out of their mind?"

"True! I forgot that."

"I am not then disposed to dismiss poor George's offer with a decided negative, and yet it would be unfair to mislead him by encouragement. In fact, I'll be hanged if I know how to reply."

"You think Miss Travers does not dislike George Belvoir, and if she saw more of him may like him better, and it would be good for her as well as for him not to put an end to that, chance?"

"Exactly so."

"Why not then write: 'My dear George,—You have my best wishes, but my daughter does not seem disposed to marry at present. Let me consider your letter not written, and continue on the same terms as we were before.' Perhaps, as George knows Virgil, you might find your own schoolboy recollections of that poet useful here, and add, /Varium et mutabile semper femina/; hackneyed, but true."

"My dear Chillingly, your suggestion is capital. How the deuce at your age have you contrived to know the world so well?"

Kenelm answered in the pathetic tones so natural to his voice, "By being only a looker-on; alas!"

Leopold Travers felt much relieved after he had written his reply to George. He had not been quite so ingenuous in his revelation to Chillingly as he may have seemed. Conscious, like all proud and fond fathers, of his daughter's attractions, he was not without some apprehension that Kenelm himself might entertain an ambition at variance with that of George Belvoir: if so, he deemed it well to put an end to

such ambition while yet in time: partly because his interest was already pledged to George; partly because, in rank and fortune, George was the better match; partly because George was of the same political party as himself,—while Sir Peter, and probably Sir Peter's heir, espoused the opposite side; and partly also because, with all his personal liking to Kenelm, Leopold Travers, as a very sensible, practical man of the world, was not sure that a baronet's heir who tramped the country on foot in the dress of a petty farmer, and indulged pugilistic propensities in martial encounters with stalwart farriers, was likely to make a safe husband and a comfortable son-in-law. Kenelm's words, and still more his manner, convinced Travers that any apprehensions of rivalry that he had previously conceived were utterly groundless.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE same evening, after dinner (during that lovely summer month they dined at Neesdale Park at an unfashionably early hour), Kenelm, in company with Travers and Cecilia, ascended a gentle eminence at the back of the gardens, on which there were some picturesque ivy-grown ruins of an ancient priory, and commanding the best view of a glorious sunset and a subject landscape of vale and wood, rivulet and distant hills.

"Is the delight in scenery," said Kenelm, "really an acquired gift, as some philosophers tell us? Is it true that young children and rude savages do not feel it; that the eye must be educated to comprehend its charm, and that the eye can be only educated through the mind?"

"I should think your philosophers are right," said Travers. "When I was a schoolboy, I thought no scenery was like the flat of a cricket ground; when I hunted at Melton, I thought that unpicturesque country more beautiful than Devonshire. It is only of late years that I feel a sensible pleasure in scenery for its own sake, apart from associations of custom or the uses to which we apply them."

"And what say you, Miss Travers?"

"I scarcely know what to say," answered Cecilia, musingly. "I can remember no time in my childhood when I did not feel delight in that which seemed to me beautiful in scenery, but I suspect that I vaguely distinguished one kind of beauty from another. A common field with daisies and buttercups was beautiful to me then, and I doubt if I saw anything more beautiful in extensive landscapes."

"True," said Kenelm: "it is not in early childhood that we carry the sight into distance: as is the mind so is the eye; in early childhood the mind revels in the present, and the eye rejoices most in the things nearest to it. I don't think in childhood that we—

"Watched with wistful eyes the setting sun."

"Ah! what a world of thought in that word 'wistful!'" murmured Cecilia, as her gaze riveted itself on the western heavens, towards which Kenelm had pointed as he spoke, where the enlarging orb rested half its disk on the rim of the horizon.

She had seated herself on a fragment of the ruin, backed by the hollows of a broken arch. The last rays of the sun lingered on her young face, and then lost themselves in the gloom of the arch behind. There was a silence for some minutes, during which the sun had sunk. Rosy clouds in thin flakes still floated, momentarily waning: and the eve-star stole forth steadfast, bright, and lonely,—nay, lonely not now; that sentinel has aroused a host.

Said a voice, "No sign of rain yet, Squire. What will become of the turnips?"

"Real life again! Who can escape it?" muttered Kenelm, as his eye rested on the burly figure of the Squire's bailiff.

"Ha! North," said Travers, "what brings you here? No bad news, I hope?"

"Indeed, yes, Squire. The Durham bull—"

"The Durham bull! What of him? You frighten me."

"Taken bad. Colic."

"Excuse me, Chillingly," cried Travers; "I must be off. A most valuable animal, and no one I can trust to doctor him but myself."

"That's true enough," said the bailiff, admiringly. "There's not a veterinary in the county like the Squire."

Travers was already gone, and the panting bailiff had hard work to catch him up.

Kenelm seated himself beside Cecilia on the ruined fragment.

"How I envy your father!" said he.

"Why just at this moment,—because he knows how to doctor the bull?" said Cecilia, with a sweet low laugh.

"Well, that is something to envy. It is a pleasure to relieve from pain any of God's creatures,—even a Durham bull."

"Indeed, yes. I am justly rebuked."

"On the contrary you are to be justly praised. Your question suggested to me an amiable sentiment in place of the selfish one which was uppermost in my thoughts. I envied your father because he creates for himself so many objects of interest; because while he can appreciate the mere sensuous enjoyment of a landscape and a sunset, he can find mental excitement in turnip crops and bulls. Happy, Miss Travers, is the Practical Man."

"When my dear father was as young as you, Mr. Chillingly, I am sure that he had no more interest in turnips and bulls than you have. I do not doubt that some day you will be as practical as he is in that respect."

"Do you think so—sincerely?"

Cecilia made no answer.

Kenelm repeated the question.

"Sincerely, then, I do not know whether you will take interest in precisely the same things that interest my father; but there are other things than turnips and cattle which belong to what you call 'practical life,' and in these you will take interest, as you took in the fortunes of Will Somers and Jessie Wiles."

"That was no practical interest. I got nothing by it. But even if that interest were practical,—I mean productive, as cattle and turnip crops are,—a succession of Somerses and Wileses is not to be hoped for. History never repeats itself."

"May I answer you, though very humbly?"

"Miss Travers, the wisest man that ever existed never was wise enough to know woman; but I think most men ordinarily wise will agree in this, that woman is by no means a humble creature, and that when she says she 'answers very humbly,' she does not mean what she says. Permit me to entreat you to answer very loftily."

Cecilia laughed and blushed. The laugh was musical; the blush was—what? Let any man, seated beside a girl like Cecilia at starry twilight, find the right epithet for that blush. I pass it by epithetless. But she answered, firmly though sweetly,—

"Are there not things very practical, and affecting the happiness, not of one or two individuals, but of innumerable thousands, in which a man like Mr. Chillingly cannot fail to feel interest, long before he is my father's age?"

"Forgive me: you do not answer; you question. I imitate you, and ask what are those things as applicable to a man like Mr. Chillingly?"

Cecilia gathered herself up, as with the desire to express a great deal in short substance, and then said,—

"In the expression of thought, literature; in the conduct of action, politics."

Kenelm Chillingly stared, dumfounded. I suppose the greatest enthusiast for woman's rights could not assert more reverentially than he did the cleverness of women; but among the things which the cleverness of woman did not achieve, he had always placed "laconics." "No woman," he was wont to say, "ever invented an axiom or a proverb."

"Miss Travers," he said at last, "before we proceed further, vouchsafe to tell me if that very terse reply of yours is spontaneous and original; or whether you have not borrowed it from some book which I have not chanced to read?"

Cecilia pondered honestly, and then said, "I don't think it is from any book; but I owe so many of my thoughts to Mrs. Champion, and she lived so much among clever men, that—"

"I see it all, and accept your definition, no matter whence it came. You think I might become an author or a politician. Did you ever read an essay by a living author called 'Motive Power'?"

"No."

"That essay is designed to intimate that without motive power a man, whatever his talents or his culture, does nothing practical. The mainsprings of motive power are Want and Ambition. They are absent from my mechanism. By the accident of birth I do not require bread and cheese; by the accident of temperament and of philosophical culture I care nothing about praise or blame. But without want of bread and cheese, and with a most stolid indifference to praise and blame, do you honestly think that a man will do anything practical in literature or politics? Ask Mrs. Champion."

"I will not ask her. Is the sense of duty nothing?"

"Alas! we interpret duty so variously. Of mere duty, as we commonly understand the word, I do not think I shall fail more than other men. But for the fair development of all the good that is in us, do you believe that we should adopt some line of conduct against which our whole heart rebels? Can you say to the clerk, 'Be a poet'? Can you say to the poet, 'Be a clerk'? It is no more to the happiness of a man's being to order him to take to one career when his whole heart is set on another, than it is to order him to marry one woman when it is to another woman that his heart will turn."

Cecilia here winced and looked away. Kenelm had more tact than most men of his age,—that is, a keener perception of subjects to avoid; but then Kenelm had a wretched habit of forgetting the person he talked to and talking to himself. Utterly oblivious of George Belvoir, he was talking to himself now. Not then observing the effect his /mal-a-propos/ dogma had produced on his listener, he went on, "Happiness is a word very lightly used. It may mean little; it may mean much. By the word happiness I would signify, not the momentary joy of a child who gets a plaything, but the lasting harmony between our inclinations and our objects; and without that harmony we are a discord to ourselves, we are incompletions, we are failures. Yet there are plenty of advisers who say to us, 'It is a duty to be a discord.' I deny it."

Here Cecilia rose and said in a low voice, "It is getting late. We must go homeward."

They descended the green eminence slowly, and at first in silence. The bats, emerging from the ivied ruins they left behind, flitted and skimmed before them, chasing the insects of the night. A moth, escaping from its pursuer, alighted on Cecilia's breast, as if for refuge.

"The bats are practical," said Kenelm; "they are hungry, and their motive power to-night is strong. Their interest is in the insects they chase. They have no interest in the stars; but the stars lure the moth."

Cecilia drew her slight scarf over the moth, so that it might not fly off and become a prey to the bats. "Yet," said she, "the moth is practical too."

"Ay, just now, since it has found an asylum from the danger that threatened it in its course towards the stars."

Cecilia felt the beating of her heart, upon which lay the moth concealed. Did she think that a deeper and more tender meaning than they outwardly expressed was couched in these words? If so, she erred. They now neared the garden gate, and Kenelm paused as he opened it. "See," he said, "the moon has just risen over those dark firs, making the still night stiller. Is it not strange that we mortals, placed amid perpetual agitation and tumult and strife, as if our natural element, conceive a sense of holiness in the images antagonistic to our real life; I mean in images of repose? I feel at the moment as if I suddenly were made better, now that heaven and earth have suddenly become yet more tranquil. I am now conscious of a purer and sweeter moral than either I or you drew from the insect you have sheltered. I must come to the poets to express it,—

"The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow;
The devotion to something afar

From the sphere of our sorrow.'

"Oh, that something afar! that something afar! never to be reached on this earth,—never, never!"

There was such a wail in that cry from the man's heart that Cecilia could not resist the impulse of a divine compassion. She laid her hand on his, and looked on the dark wildness of his upward face with eyes that Heaven meant to be wells of comfort to grieving man. At the light touch of that hand Kenelm started, looked down, and met those soothing eyes.

"I am happy to tell you that I have saved my Durham," cried out Mr. Travers from the other side of the gate.

CHAPTER XX.

AS Kenelm that night retired to his own room, he paused on the landing-place opposite to the portrait which Mr. Travers had consigned to that desolate exile. This daughter of a race dishonoured in its extinction might well have been the glory of the house she had entered as a bride. The countenance was singularly beautiful, and of a character of beauty eminently patrician; there was in its expression a gentleness and modesty not often found in the female portraits of Sir Peter Lely, and in the eyes and in the smile a wonderful aspect of innocent happiness.

"What a speaking homily," soliloquized Kenelm, addressing the picture, "against the ambition thy fair descendant would awake in me, art thou, O lovely image! For generations thy beauty lived in this canvas, a thing of joy, the pride of the race it adorned. Owner after owner said to admiring guests, 'Yes, a fine portrait, by Lely; she was my ancestress,—a Fletwode of Fletwode.' Now, lest guests should remember that a Fletwode married a Travers thou art thrust out of sight; not even Lely's art can make thee of value, can redeem thine innocent self from disgrace. And the last of the Fletwodes, doubtless the most ambitious of all, the most bent on restoring and regilding the old lordly name, dies a felon; the infamy of one living man is so large that it can blot out the honour of the dead." He turned his eyes from the smile of the portrait, entered his own room, and, seating himself by the writing-table, drew blotting-book and note-paper towards him, took up the pen, and instead of writing fell into deep reverie. There was a slight frown on his brow, on which frowns were rare. He was very angry with himself.

"Kenelm," he said, entering into his customary dialogue with that self, "it becomes you, forsooth, to moralize about the honour of races which have no affinity with you. Son of Sir Peter Chillingly, look at home. Are you quite sure that you have not said or done or looked a something that may bring trouble to the hearth on which you are received as guest? What right had you to be moaning forth your egotisms, not remembering that your words fell on compassionate ears, and that such words, heard at moonlight by a girl whose heart they move to pity, may have dangers for her peace? Shame on you, Kenelm! shame! knowing too what her father's wish is; and knowing too that you have not the excuse of desiring to win that fair creature for yourself. What do you mean, Kenelm? I don't hear you; speak out. Oh, 'that I am a vain coxcomb to fancy that she could take a fancy to me:' well, perhaps I am; I hope so earnestly; and at all events, there has been and shall be no time for much mischief. We are off to-morrow, Kenelm; bestir yourself and pack up, write your letters, and then 'put out the light,—put out /the/ light!'"

But this converser with himself did not immediately set to work, as agreed upon by that twofold one. He rose and walked restlessly to and fro the floor, stopping ever and anon to look at the pictures on the walls.

Several of the worst painted of the family portraits had been consigned to the room tenanted by Kenelm, which, though both the oldest and largest bed-chamber in the house, was always appropriated to a bachelor male guest, partly because it was without dressing-room, remote, and only approached by the small back-staircase, to the landing-place of which Arabella had been banished in disgrace; and partly because it had the reputation of being haunted, and ladies are more alarmed by that superstition than men are supposed to be. The portraits on which Kenelm now paused to gaze were of various dates, from the reign of Elizabeth to that of George III., none of them by eminent artists, and none of them the effigies of ancestors who had left names in history,—in short, such portraits as are often seen in the country houses of well-born squires. One family type of features or expression pervaded most of these portraits; features clear-cut and hardy, expression open and honest. And though not one of those dead men had been famous, each of them had contributed his unostentatious share, in his own simple way, to the movements of his time. That worthy in ruff and corselet had manned his own ship at his own cost against the Armada; never had been repaid by the thrifty Burleigh the expenses which had harassed him and diminished his patrimony; never had been even knighted. That gentleman with short straight

hair, which overhung his forehead, leaning on his sword with one hand, and a book open in the other hand, had served as representative of his county town in the Long Parliament, fought under Cromwell at Marston Moor, and, resisting the Protector when he removed the "bauble," was one of the patriots incarcerated in "Hell hole." He, too, had diminished his patrimony, maintaining two troopers and two horses at his own charge, and "Hell hole" was all he got in return. A third, with a sleeker expression of countenance, and a large wig, flourishing in the quiet times of Charles II., had only been a justice of the peace, but his alert look showed that he had been a very active one. He had neither increased nor diminished his ancestral fortune. A fourth, in the costume of William III.'s reign, had somewhat added to the patrimony by becoming a lawyer. He must have been a successful one. He is inscribed "Sergeant-at-law." A fifth, a lieutenant in the army, was killed at Blenheim; his portrait was that of a very young and handsome man, taken the year before his death. His wife's portrait is placed in the drawing-room because it was painted by Kneller. She was handsome too, and married again a nobleman, whose portrait, of course, was not in the family collection. Here there was a gap in chronological arrangement, the lieutenant's heir being an infant; but in the time of George II. another Travers appeared as the governor of a West India colony. His son took part in a very different movement of the age. He is represented old, venerable, with white hair, and underneath his effigy is inscribed, "Follower of Wesley." His successor completes the collection. He is in naval uniform; he is in full length, and one of his legs is a wooden one. He is Captain, R.N., and inscribed, "Fought under Nelson at Trafalgar." That portrait would have found more dignified place in the reception-rooms if the face had not been forbiddingly ugly, and the picture itself a villanous daub.

"I see," said Kenelm, stopping short, "why Cecilia Travers has been reared to talk of duty as a practical interest in life. These men of a former time seem to have lived to discharge a duty, and not to follow the progress of the age in the chase of a money-bag,—except perhaps one, but then to be sure he was a lawyer. Kenelm, rouse up and listen to me; whatever we are, whether active or indolent, is not my favourite maxim a just and a true one; namely, 'A good man does good by living'? But, for that, he must be a harmony and not a discord. Kenelm, you lazy dog, we must pack up."

Kenelm then refilled his portmanteau, and labelled and directed it to Exmundham, after which he wrote these three notes:—

NOTE I.

TO THE MARCHIONESS OF GLENALVON.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND MONITRESS,—I have left your last letter a month unanswered. I could not reply to your congratulations on the event of my attaining the age of twenty-one. That event is a conventional sham, and you know how I abhor shams and conventions. The truth is that I am either much younger than twenty-one or much older. As to all designs on my peace in standing for our county at the next election, I wished to defeat them, and I have done so; and now I have commenced a course of travel. I had intended on starting to confine it to my native country. Intentions are mutable. I am going abroad. You shall hear of my whereabouts. I write this from the house of Leopold Travers, who, I understand from his fair daughter, is a connection of yours; a man to be highly esteemed and cordially liked.

No, in spite of all your flattering predictions, I shall never be anything in this life more distinguished than what I am now. Lady Glenalvon allows me to sign myself her grateful friend,

K. C.

NOTE II.

DEAR COUSIN MIVERS,—I am going abroad. I may want money; for, in order to rouse motive power within me, I mean to want money if I can. When I was a boy of sixteen you offered me money to write attacks upon veteran authors for "The Londoner." Will you give me money now for a similar display of that grand New Idea of our generation; namely, that the less a man knows of a subject the better he understands it? I am about to travel into countries which I have never seen, and among races I have never known. My arbitrary judgments on both will be invaluable to "The Londoner" from a Special Correspondent who shares your respect for the anonymous, and whose name is never to be divulged. Direct your answer by return to me, /poste restante/, Calais.

Yours truly,

K. C.

NOTE III.

MY DEAR FATHER,—I found your letter here, whence I depart to-morrow. Excuse haste. I go abroad, and shall write to you from Calais.

I admire Leopold Travers very much. After all, how much of self-balance there is in a true English gentleman! Toss him up and down where you will, and he always alights on his feet,—a gentleman. He has one child, a daughter named Cecilia,—handsome enough to allure into wedlock any mortal whom Decimus Roach had not convinced that in celibacy lay the right "Approach to the Angels." Moreover, she is a girl whom one can talk with. Even you could talk with her. Travers wishes her to marry a very respectable, good-looking, promising gentleman, in every way "suitable," as they say. And if she does, she will rival that pink and perfection of polished womanhood, Lady Glenalvon. I send you back my portmanteau. I have pretty well exhausted my experience-money, but have not yet encroached on my monthly allowance. I mean still to live upon that, eking it out, if necessary, by the sweat of my brow or brains. But if any case requiring extra funds should occur,—a case in which that extra would do such real good to another that I feel /you/ would do it,—why, I must draw a check on your bankers. But understand that is your expense, not mine, and it is /you/ who are to be repaid in Heaven. Dear father, how I do love and honour you every day more and more! Promise you not to propose to any young lady till I come first to you for consent!—oh, my dear father, how could you doubt it? how doubt that I could not be happy with any wife whom you could not love as a daughter? Accept that promise as sacred. But I wish you had asked me something in which obedience was not much too facile to be a test of duty. I could not have obeyed you more cheerfully if you had asked me to promise never to propose to any young lady at all. Had you asked me to promise that I would renounce the dignity of reason for the frenzy of love, or the freedom of man for the servitude of husband, then I might have sought to achieve the impossible; but I should have died in the effort!—and thou wouldst have known that remorse which haunts the bed of the tyrant.

Your affectionate son,

K. C.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next morning Kenelm surprised the party at breakfast by appearing in the coarse habiliments in which he had first made his host's acquaintance. He did not glance towards Cecilia when he announced his departure; but, his eye resting on Mrs. Champion, he smiled, perhaps a little sadly, at seeing her countenance brighten up and hearing her give a short sigh of relief. Travers tried hard to induce him to stay a few days longer, but Kenelm was firm. "The summer is wearing away," said he, "and I have far to go before the flowers fade and the snows fall. On the third night from this I shall sleep on foreign soil."

"You are going abroad, then?" asked Mrs. Champion.

"Yes."

"A sudden resolution, Mr. Chillingly. The other day you talked of visiting the Scotch lakes."

"True; but, on reflection, they will be crowded with holiday tourists, many of whom I shall probably know. Abroad I shall be free, for I shall be unknown."

"I suppose you will be back for the hunting season," said Travers.

"I think not. I do not hunt foxes."

"Probably we shall at all events meet in London," said Travers. "I think, after long rustication, that a season or two in the bustling capital may be a salutary change for mind as well as for body; and it is time that Cecilia were presented and her court-dress specially commemorated in the columns of the 'Morning Post.'"

Cecilia was seemingly too busied behind the tea-urn to heed this reference to her debut.

"I shall miss you terribly," cried Travers, a few moments afterwards, and with a hearty emphasis. "I declare that you have quite unsettled me. Your quaint sayings will be ringing in my ears long after you are gone."

There was a rustle as of a woman's dress in sudden change of movement behind the tea-urn.

"Cissy," said Mrs. Champion, "are we ever to have our tea?"

"I beg pardon," answered a voice behind the urn. "I hear Pompey" (the Skye terrier) "whining on the lawn. They have shut him out. I will be back presently."

Cecilia rose and was gone. Mrs. Campion took her place at the tea-urn.

"It is quite absurd of Cissy to be so fond of that hideous dog," said Travers, petulantly.

"Its hideousness is its beauty," returned Mrs. Campion, laughing. "Mr. Belvoir selected it for her as having the longest back and the shortest legs of any dog he could find in Scotland."

"Ah, George gave it to her; I forgot that," said Travers, laughing pleasantly.

It was some minutes before Miss Travers returned with the Skye terrier, and she seemed to have recovered her spirits in regaining that ornamental accession to the party; talking very quickly and gayly, and with flushed cheeks, like a young person excited by her own overflow of mirth.

But when, half an hour afterwards, Kenelm took leave of her and Mrs. Campion at the hall-door, the flush was gone, her lips were tightly compressed, and her parting words were not audible. Then, as his figure (side by side with her father, who accompanied his guest to the lodge) swiftly passed across the lawn and vanished amid the trees beyond, Mrs. Campion wound a mother-like arm around her waist and kissed her. Cecilia shivered and turned her face to her friend smiling; but such a smile,—one of those smiles that seem brimful of tears.

"Thank you, dear," she said meekly; and, gliding away towards the flower-garden, lingered a while by the gate which Kenelm had opened the night before. Then she went with languid steps up the green slopes towards the ruined priory.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KENELM CHILLINGLY — VOLUME 03 ***

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