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CHAPTER XIII.

The next day I had just dismissed the last of my visiting patients, and was about to enter my carriage and commence my round, when I received a twisted note containing but these words:—

Call on me to-day, as soon as you can.

M. Poyntz.

A few minutes afterwards I was in Mrs. Poyntz's drawing-room.

"Well, Allen Fenwick" said she, "I do not serve friends by halves. No thanks! I but adhere to a principle I have laid down for myself. I spent last evening with the Ashleighs. Lilian is certainly much altered,— very weak, I fear very ill, and I believe very unskilfully treated by Dr. Jones. I felt that it was my duty to insist on a change of physician; but there was something else to consider before deciding who that physician should be. I was bound, as your confidante, to consult your own scruples of honour. Of course I could not say point-blank to Mrs. Ashleigh, 'Dr. Fenwick admires your daughter, would you object to him as a son-in-law?' Of course I could not touch at all on the secret with which you intrusted me; but I have not the less arrived at a conclusion, in agreement with my previous belief, that not being a woman of the world, Annie Ashleigh has none of the ambition which women of the world would conceive for a daughter who has a good fortune and considerable beauty; that her predominant anxiety is for her child's happiness, and her predominant fear is that her child will die. She would never oppose any attachment which Lilian might form; and if that attachment were for one who had preserved her daughter's life, I believe her own heart would gratefully go with her daughter's. So far, then, as honour is concerned, all scruples vanish."

I sprang from my seat, radiant with joy. Mrs. Poyntz dryly continued: "You value yourself on your common-sense, and to that I address a few words of counsel which may not be welcome to your romance. I said that I did not think you and Lilian would suit each other in the long run; reflection confirms me in that supposition. Do not look at me so incredulously and so sadly. Listen, and take heed. Ask yourself what, as a man whose days are devoted to a laborious profession, whose ambition is

entwined with its success, whose mind must be absorbed in its pursuits,—ask yourself what kind of a wife you would have sought to win; had not this sudden fancy for a charming face rushed over your better reason, and obliterated all previous plans and resolutions. Surely some one with whom your heart would have been quite at rest; by whom your thoughts would have been undistracted from the channels into which your calling should concentrate their flow; in short, a serene companion in the quiet holiday of a trustful home! Is it not so?"

"You interpret my own thoughts when they have turned towards marriage. But what is there in Lilian Ashleigh that should mar the picture you have drawn?"

"What is there in Lilian Ashleigh which in the least accords with the picture? In the first place, the wife of a young physician should not be his perpetual patient. The more he loves her, and the more worthy she may be of love, the more her case will haunt him wherever he goes. When he returns home, it is not to a holiday; the patient he most cares for, the anxiety that most gnaws him, awaits him there."

"But, good heavens! why should Lilian Ashleigh be a perpetual patient? The sanitary resources of youth are incalculable. And—"

"Let me stop you; I cannot argue against a physician in love! I will give up that point in dispute, remaining convinced that there is something in Lilian's constitution which will perplex, torment, and baffle you. It was so with her father, whom she resembles in face and in character. He showed no symptoms of any grave malady. His outward form was, like Lilian's, a model of symmetry, except in this, that, like hers, it was too exquisitely delicate; but when seemingly in the midst of perfect health, at any slight jar on the nerves he would become alarmingly ill. I was sure that he would die young, and he did so."

"Ay, but Mrs. Ashleigh said that his death was from brain-fever, brought on by over-study. Rarely, indeed, do women so fatigue the brain. No female patient, in the range of my practice, ever died of purely mental exertion."

"Of purely mental exertion, no; but of heart emotion, many female patients, perhaps? Oh, you own that! I know nothing about nerves; but I suppose that, whether they act on the brain or the heart, the result to life is much the same if the nerves be too finely strung for life's daily wear and tear. And this is what I mean, when I say you and Lilian will not suit. As yet, she is a mere child; her nature undeveloped, and her affections therefore untried. You might suppose that you had won her heart; she might believe that she gave it to you, and both be deceived. If fairies nowadays condescended to exchange their offspring with those of mortals, and if the popular tradition did not represent a fairy changeling as an ugly peevish creature, with none of the grace of its parents, I should be half inclined to suspect that Lilian was one of the elfin people. She never seems at home on earth; and I do not think she will ever be contented with a prosaic earthly lot. Now I have told you why I do not think she will suit you. I must leave it to yourself to conjecture how far you would suit her. I say this in due season, while you may set a guard upon your impulse; while you may yet watch, and weigh, and meditate; and from this moment on that subject I say no more. I lend advice, but I never throw it away."

She came here to a dead pause, and began putting on her bonnet and scarf, which lay on the table beside her. I was a little chilled by her words, and yet more by the blunt, shrewd, hard look and manner which aided the effect of their delivery; but the chill melted away in the sudden glow of my heart when she again turned towards me and said,—

"Of course you guess, from these preliminary cautions, that you are going into danger? Mrs. Ashleigh wishes to consult you about Lilian, and I propose to take you to her house."

"Oh, my friend, my dear friend, how can I ever repay you?" I caught her hand, the white firm hand, and lifted it to my lips.

She drew it somewhat hastily away, and laying it gently on my shoulder, said, in a soft voice, "Poor Allen, how little the world knows either of us! But how little perhaps we know ourselves! Come, your carriage is here? That is right; we must put down Dr. Jones publicly and in all our state."

In the carriage Mrs. Poyntz told me the purport of that conversation with Mrs. Ashleigh to which I owed my re-introduction to Abbots' House. It seems that Mr. Vigors had called early the morning after my first visit! had evinced much discomposure on hearing that I had been summoned! dwelt much on my injurious treatment of Dr. Lloyd, whom, as distantly related to himself, and he (Mr. Vigors) being distantly connected with the late Gilbert Ashleigh, he endeavoured to fasten upon his listener as one of her husband's family, whose quarrel she was bound in honour to take up. He spoke of me as an infidel "tainted with French doctrines," and as a practitioner rash and presumptuous; proving his own freedom from presumption and rashness by flatly deciding that my opinion must be wrong. Previously to Mrs.

Ashleigh's migration to L——, Mr. Vigors had interested her in the pretended phenomena of mesmerism. He had consulted a clairvoyante, much esteemed by poor Dr. Lloyd, as to Lilian's health, and the clairvoyante had declared her to be constitutionally predisposed to consumption. Mr. Vigors persuaded Mrs. Ashleigh to come at once with him and see this clairvoyante herself, armed with a lock of Lilian's hair and a glove she had worn, as the media of mesmeric rapport.

The clairvoyante, one of those I had publicly denounced as an impostor, naturally enough denounced me in return. On being asked solemnly by Mr. Vigors "to look at Dr. Fenwick and see if his influence would be beneficial to the subject," the sibyl had become violently agitated, and said that, "when she looked at us together, we were enveloped in a black cloud; that this portended affliction and sinister consequences; that our rapport was antagonistic." Mr. Vigors then told her to dismiss my image, and conjure up that of Dr. Jones. Therewith the somnambule became more tranquil, and said: "Dr. Jones would do well if he would be guided by higher lights than his own skill, and consult herself daily as to the proper remedies. The best remedy of all would be mesmerism. But since Dr. Lloyd's death, she did not know of a mesmerist, sufficiently gifted, in affinity with the patient." In fine, she impressed and awed Mrs. Ashleigh, who returned in haste, summoned Dr. Jones, and dismissed myself.

"I could not have conceived Mrs. Ashleigh to be so utterly wanting in common-sense," said I. "She talked rationally enough when I saw her."

"She has common-sense in general, and plenty of the sense most common," answered Mrs. Poyntz; "but she is easily led and easily frightened wherever her affections are concerned, and therefore, just as easily as she had been persuaded by Mr. Vigors and terrified by the somnambule, I persuaded her against the one, and terrified her against the other. I had positive experience on my side, since it was clear that Lilian had been getting rapidly worse under Dr. Jones's care. The main obstacles I had to encounter in inducing Mrs. Ashleigh to consult you again were, first, her reluctance to disoblige Mr. Vigors, as a friend and connection of Lilian's father; and, secondly, her sentiment of shame in re-inviting your opinion after having treated you with so little respect. Both these difficulties I took on myself. I bring you to her house, and, on leaving you, I shall go on to Mr. Vigors, and tell him what is done is my doing, and not to be undone by him; so that matter is settled. Indeed, if you were out of the question, I should not suffer Mr. Vigors to re-introduce all these mummeries of clairvoyance and mesmerism into the precincts of the Hill. I did not demolish a man I really liked in Dr. Lloyd, to set up a Dr. Jones, whom I despise, in his stead. Clairvoyance on Abbey Hill, indeed! I saw enough of it before."

"True; your strong intellect detected at once the absurdity of the whole pretence,—the falsity of mesmerism, the impossibility of clairvoyance."

"No, my strong intellect did nothing of the kind. I do not know whether mesmerism be false or clairvoyance impossible; and I don't wish to know. All I do know is, that I saw the Hill in great danger,—young ladies allowing themselves to be put to sleep by gentlemen, and pretending they had no will of their own against such fascination! Improper and shocking! And Miss Brabazon beginning to prophesy, and Mrs. Leopold Smythe questioning her maid (whom Dr. Lloyd declared to be highly gifted) as to all the secrets of her friends. When I saw this, I said, 'The Hill is becoming demoralized; the Hill is making itself ridiculous; the Hill must be saved!' I remonstrated with Dr. Lloyd as a friend; he remained obdurate. I annihilated him as an enemy, not to me but to the State. I slew my best lover for the good of Rome. Now you know why I took your part,—not because I have any opinion, one way or the other, as to the truth or falsehood of what Dr. Lloyd asserted; but I have a strong opinion that, whether they be true or false, his notions were those which are not to be allowed on the Hill. And so, Allen Fenwick, that matter was settled."

Perhaps at another time I might have felt some little humiliation to learn that I had been honoured with the influence of this great potentate not as a champion of truth, but as an instrument of policy; and I might have owned to some twinge of conscience in having assisted to sacrifice a fellow-seeker after science—misled, no doubt, but preferring his independent belief to his worldly interest—and sacrifice him to those deities with whom science is ever at war,—the Prejudices of a Clique sanctified into the Proprieties of the World. But at that moment the words I heard made no perceptible impression on my mind. The gables of Abbots' House were visible above the evergreens and lilacs; another moment, and the carriage stopped at the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Ashleigh received us in the dining-room. Her manner to me, at first, was a little confused and shy. But my companion soon communicated something of her own happy ease to her gentler friend. After a short conversation we all three went to Lilian, who was in a little room on the ground-floor, fitted up as her study. I was glad to perceive that my interdict of the deathchamber had been respected.

She reclined on a sofa near the window, which was, however, jealously closed; the light of the bright May-day obscured by blinds and curtains; a large fire on the hearth; the air of the room that of a hot-house,—the ignorant, senseless, exploded system of nursing into consumption those who are confined on suspicion of it! She did not heed us as we entered noiselessly; her eyes were drooped languidly on the floor, and with difficulty I suppressed the exclamation that rose to my lips on seeing her. She seemed within the last few days so changed, and on the aspect of the countenance there was so profound a melancholy! But as she slowly turned at the sound of our footsteps, and her eyes met mine, a quick blush came into the wan cheek, and she half rose, but sank back as if the effort exhausted her. There was a struggle for breath, and a low hollow cough. Was it possible that I had been mistaken, and that in that cough was heard the warning knell of the most insidious enemy to youthful life?

I sat down by her side; I lured her on to talk of indifferent subjects,—the weather, the gardens, the bird in the cage, which was placed on the table near her. Her voice, at first low and feeble, became gradually stronger, and her face lighted up with a child's innocent, playful smile. No, I had not been mistaken! That was no lymphatic, nerveless temperament, on which consumption fastens as its lawful prey; here there was no hectic pulse, no hurried waste of the vital flame. Quietly and gently I made my observations, addressed my questions, applied my stethoscope; and when I turned my face towards her mother's anxious, eager eyes, that face told my opinion; for her mother sprang forward, clasped my hand, and said, through her struggling tears,—

"You smile! You see nothing to fear?"

"Fear! No, indeed! You will soon be again yourself, Miss Ashleigh, will you not?"

"Yes," she said, with her sweet laugh, "I shall be well now very soon. But may I not have the window open; may I not go into the garden? I so long for fresh air."

"No, no, darling," exclaimed Mrs. Ashleigh, "not while the east winds last. Dr. Jones said on no account. On no account, Dr. Fenwick, eh?"

"Will you take my arm, Miss Ashleigh, for a few turns up and down the room?" said I. "We will then see how far we may rebel against Dr. Jones."

She rose with some little effort, but there was no cough. At first her step was languid; it became lighter and more elastic after a few moments.

"Let her come out," said I to Mrs. Ashleigh. "The wind is not in the east, and, while we are out, pray bid your servant lower to the last bar in the grate that fire,—only fit for Christmas."

"But—"

"Ah, no buts! He is a poor doctor who is not a stern despot."

So the straw hat and mantle were sent for. Lilian was wrapped with unnecessary care, and we all went forth into the garden. Involuntarily we took the way to the Monk's Well, and at every step Lilian seemed to revive under the bracing air and temperate sun. We paused by the well.

"You do not feel fatigued, Miss Ashleigh?"

"No."

"But your face seems changed. It is grown sadder."

"Not sadder."

"Sadder than when I first saw it,—saw it when you were seated here!" I said this in a whisper. I felt her hand tremble as it lay on my arm.

"You saw me seated here!"

"Yes. I will tell you how some day."

Lilian lifted her eyes to mine, and there was in them that same surprise which I had noticed on my first visit,—a surprise that perplexed me, blended with no displeasure, but yet with a something of vague alarm.

We soon returned to the house.

Mrs. Ashleigh made me a sign to follow her into the drawing-room, leaving Mrs. Poyntz with Lilian.

"Well?" said she, tremblingly.

"Permit me to see Dr. Jones's prescriptions. Thank you. Ay, I thought so. My dear madam, the mistake here has been in depressing nature instead of strengthening; in narcotics instead of stimulants. The main stimulants which leave no reaction are air and light. Promise me that I may have my own way for a week,—that all I recommend will be implicitly heeded?"

"I promise. But that cough,—you noticed it?"

"Yes. The nervous system is terribly lowered, and nervous exhaustion is a strange impostor; it imitates all manner of complaints with which it has no connection. The cough will soon disappear! But pardon my question. Mrs. Poyntz tells me that you consulted a clairvoyants about your daughter. Does Miss Ashleigh know that you did so?"

"No; I did not tell her."

"I am glad of that. And pray, for Heaven's sake, guard her against all that may set her thinking on such subjects. Above all, guard her against concentrating attention on any malady that your fears erroneously ascribe to her. It is amongst the phenomena of our organization that you cannot closely rivet your consciousness on any part of the frame, however healthy, but it will soon begin to exhibit morbid sensibility. Try to fix all your attention on your little finger for half an hour, and before the half hour is over the little finger will be uneasy, probably even painful. How serious, then, is the danger to a young girl, at the age in which imagination is most active, most intense, if you force upon her a belief that she is in danger of a mortal disease! It is a peculiarity of youth to brood over the thought of early death much more resignedly, much more complacently, than we do in maturer years. Impress on a young imaginative girl, as free from pulmonary tendencies as you and I are, the conviction that she must fade away into the grave, and though she may not actually die of consumption, you instil slow poison into her system. Hope is the natural aliment of youth. You impoverish nourishment where you discourage hope. As soon as this temporary illness is over, reject for your daughter the melancholy care which seems to her own mind to mark her out from others of her age. Rear her for the air, which is the kindest life-giver; to sleep with open windows: to be out at sunrise. Nature will do more for her than all our drugs can do. You have been hitherto fearing Nature; now trust to her."

Here Mrs. Poyntz joined us, and having, while I had been speaking, written my prescription and some general injunctions, I closed my advice with an appeal to that powerful protectress.

"This, my dear madam, is a case in which I need your aid, and I ask it. Miss Ashleigh should not be left with no other companion than her mother. A change of faces is often as salutary as a change of air. If you could devote an hour or two this very evening to sit with Miss Ashleigh, to talk to her with your usual cheerfulness, and—"

"Annie," interrupted Mrs. Poyntz, "I will come and drink tea with you at half-past seven, and bring my knitting; and perhaps, if you ask him, Dr. Fenwick will come too! He can be tolerably entertaining when he likes it."

"It is too great a tax on his kindness, I fear," said Mrs. Ashleigh. "But," she added cordially, "I should be grateful indeed if he would spare us an hour of his time."

I murmured an assent which I endeavoured to make not too joyous.

"So that matter is settled," said Mrs. Poyntz; "and now I shall go to Mr. Vigors and prevent his further interference."

"Oh, but, Margaret, pray don't offend him,—a connection of my poor dear Gilbert's. And so tetchy! I am sure I do not know how you'll manage to—"

"To get rid of him? Never fear. As I manage everything and everybody," said Mrs. Poyntz, bluntly. So she kissed her friend on the forehead, gave me a gracious nod, and, declining the offer of my carriage, walked with her usual brisk, decided tread down the short path towards the town.

Mrs. Ashleigh timidly approached me, and again the furtive hand bashfully insinuated the hateful fee.

"Stay," said I; "this is a case which needs the most constant watching. I wish to call so often that I should seem the most greedy of doctors if my visits were to be computed at guineas. Let me be at ease

to effect my cure; my pride of science is involved in it. And when amongst all the young ladies of the Hill you can point to none with a fresher bloom, or a fairer promise of healthful life, than the patient you intrust to my care, why, then the fee and the dismissal. Nay, nay; I must refer you to our friend Mrs. Poyntz. It was so settled with her before she brought me here to displace Dr. Jones." Therewith I escaped.

CHAPTER XV.

In less than a week Lilian was convalescent; in less than a fortnight she regained her usual health,—nay, Mrs. Ashleigh declared that she had never known her daughter appear so cheerful and look so well. I had established a familiar intimacy at Abbots' House; most of my evenings were spent there. As horse exercise formed an important part of my advice, Mrs. Ashleigh had purchased a pretty and quiet horse for her daughter; and, except the weather was very unfavourable, Lilian now rode daily with Colonel Poyntz, who was a notable equestrian, and often accompanied by Miss Jane Poyntz, and other young ladies of the Hill. I was generally relieved from my duties in time to join her as she returned homewards. Thus we made innocent appointments, openly, frankly, in her mother's presence, she telling me beforehand in what direction excursions had been planned with Colonel Poyntz, and I promising to fall in with the party—if my avocations would permit. At my suggestion, Mrs. Ashleigh now opened her house almost every evening to some of the neighbouring families; Lilian was thus habituated to the intercourse of young persons of her own age. Music and dancing and childlike games made the old house gay. And the Hill gratefully acknowledged to Mrs. Poyntz, "that the Ashleighs were indeed a great acquisition."

But my happiness was not unchecked. In thus unselfishly surrounding Lilian with others, I felt the anguish of that jealousy which is inseparable from those earlier stages of love, when the lover as yet has won no right to that self-confidence which can only spring from the assurance that he is loved.

In these social reunions I remained aloof from Lilian. I saw her courted by the gay young admirers whom her beauty and her fortune drew around her,—her soft face brightening in the exercise of the dance, which the gravity of my profession rather than my years forbade to join; and her laugh, so musically subdued, ravishing my ear and fretting my heart as if the laugh were a mockery on my sombre self and my presumptuous dreams. But no, suddenly, shyly, her eyes would steal away from those about her, steal to the corner in which I sat, as if they missed me, and, meeting my own gaze, their light softened before they turned away; and the colour on her cheek would deepen, and to her lip there came a smile different from the smile that it shed on others. And then—and then—all jealousy, all sadness vanished, and I felt the glory which blends with the growing belief that we are loved.

In that diviner epoch of man's mysterious passion, when ideas of perfection and purity, vague and fugitive before, start forth and concentrate themselves round one virgin shape,—that rises out from the sea of creation, welcomed by the Hours and adorned by the Graces,—how the thought that this archetype of sweetness and beauty singles himself from the millions, singles himself for her choice, ennobles and lifts up his being! Though after-experience may rebuke the mortal's illusion, that mistook for a daughter of Heaven a creature of clay like himself, yet for a while the illusion has grandeur. Though it comes from the senses which shall later oppress and profane it, the senses at first shrink into shade, awed and hushed by the presence that charms them. All that is brightest and best in the man has soared up like long-dormant instincts of Heaven, to greet and to hallow what to him seems life's fairest dream of the heavenly! Take the wings from the image of Love, and the god disappears from the form!

Thus, if at moments jealous doubt made my torture, so the moment's relief from it sufficed for my rapture. But I had a cause for disquiet less acute but less varying than jealousy.

Despite Lilian's recovery from the special illness which had more immediately absorbed my care, I remained perplexed as to its cause and true nature. To her mother I gave it the convenient epithet of "nervous;" but the epithet did not explain to myself all the symptoms I classified by it. There was still, at times, when no cause was apparent or conjecturable, a sudden change in the expression of her countenance, in the beat of her pulse; the eye would become fixed, the bloom would vanish, the pulse would sink feebler and feebler till it could be scarcely felt; yet there was no indication of heart disease, of which such sudden lowering of life is in itself sometimes a warning indication. The change would pass away after a few minutes, during which she seemed unconscious, or, at least, never spoke—never appeared to heed what was said to her. But in the expression of her countenance there was no

character of suffering or distress; on the contrary, a wondrous serenity, that made her beauty more beautiful, her very youthfulness younger; and when this spurious or partial kind of syncope passed, she recovered at once without effort, without acknowledging that she had felt faint or unwell, but rather with a sense of recruited vitality, as the weary obtain from a sleep. For the rest her spirits were more generally light and joyous than I should have premised from her mother's previous description. She would enter mirthfully into the mirth of young companions round her: she had evidently quick perception of the sunny sides of life; an infantine gratitude for kindness; an infantine joy in the trifles that amuse only those who delight in tastes pure and simple. But when talk rose into graver and more contemplative topics, her attention became earnest and absorbed; and sometimes a rich eloquence, such as I have never before nor since heard from lips so young, would startle me first into a wondering silence, and soon into a disapproving alarm: for the thoughts she then uttered seemed to me too fantastic, too visionary, too much akin to the vagaries of a wild though beautiful imagination. And then I would seek to check, to sober, to distract fancies with which my reason had no sympathy, and the indulgence of which I regarded as injurious to the normal functions of the brain.

When thus, sometimes with a chilling sentence, sometimes with a half-sarcastic laugh, I would repress outpourings frank and musical as the songs of a forest-bird, she would look at me with a kind of plaintive sorrow,—often sigh and shiver as she turned away. Only in those modes did she show displeasure; otherwise ever sweet and docile, and ever, if, seeing that I had pained her, I asked forgiveness, humbling herself rather to ask mine, and brightening our reconciliation with her angel smile. As yet I had not dared to speak of love; as yet I gazed on her as the captive gazes on the flowers and the stars through the gratings of his cell, murmuring to himself, "When shall the doors unclose?"

CHAPTER XVI.

It was with a wrath suppressed in the presence of the fair ambassadress, that Mr. Vigors had received from Mrs. Poyntz the intelligence that I had replaced Dr. Jones at Abbots' House not less abruptly than Dr. Jones had previously supplanted me. As Mrs. Poyntz took upon herself the whole responsibility of this change, Mr. Vigors did not venture to condemn it to her face; for the Administrator of Laws was at heart no little in awe of the Autocrat of Proprieties; as Authority, howsoever established, is in awe of Opinion, howsoever capricious.

To the mild Mrs. Ashleigh the magistrate's anger was more decidedly manifested. He ceased his visits; and in answer to a long and deprecatory letter with which she endeavoured to soften his resentment and win him back to the house, he replied by an elaborate combination of homily and satire. He began by excusing himself from accepting her invitations, on the ground that his time was valuable, his habits domestic; and though ever willing to sacrifice both time and habits where he could do good, he owed it to himself and to mankind to sacrifice neither where his advice was rejected and his opinion contemned. He glanced briefly, but not hastily, at the respect with which her late husband had deferred to his judgment, and the benefits which that deference had enabled him to bestow. He contrasted the husband's deference with the widow's contumely, and hinted at the evils which the contumely would not permit him to prevent. He could not presume to say what women of the world might think due to deceased husbands, but even women of the world generally allowed the claims of living children, and did not act with levity where their interests were concerned, still less where their lives were at stake. As to Dr. Jones, he, Mr. Vigors, had the fullest confidence in his skill. Mrs. Ashleigh must judge for herself whether Mrs. Poyntz was as good an authority upon medical science as he had no doubt she was upon shawls and ribbons. Dr. Jones was a man of caution and modesty; he did not indulge in the hollow boasts by which charlatans decoy their dupes; but Dr. Jones had privately assured him that though the case was one that admitted of no rash experiments, he had no fear of the result if his own prudent system were persevered in. What might be the consequences of any other system, Dr. Jones would not say, because he was too high-minded to express his distrust of the rival who had made use of underhand arts to supplant him. But Mr. Vigors was convinced, from other sources of information (meaning, I presume, the oracular prescience of his clairvoyants), that the time would come when the poor young lady would herself insist on discarding Dr. Fenwick, and when "that person" would appear in a very different light to many who now so fondly admired and so reverentially trusted him. When that time arrived, he, Mr. Vigors, might again be of use; but, meanwhile, though he declined to renew his intimacy at Abbots' House, or to pay unavailing visits of mere ceremony, his interest in the daughter of his old friend remained undiminished, nay, was rather increased by compassion; that he should silently keep his eye upon her; and whenever anything to her advantage suggested itself to him, he should not be deterred by the slight with which Mrs. Ashleigh had treated his judgment from calling

on her, and placing before her conscience as a mother his ideas for her child's benefit, leaving to herself then, as now, the entire responsibility of rejecting the advice which he might say, without vanity, was deemed of some value by those who could distinguish between sterling qualities and specious pretences.

Mrs. Ashleigh's was that thoroughly womanly nature which instinctively leans upon others. She was diffident, trustful, meek, affectionate. Not quite justly had Mrs. Poyntz described her as "commonplace weak," for though she might be called weak, it was not because she was commonplace; she had a goodness of heart, a sweetness of disposition, to which that disparaging definition could not apply. She could only be called commonplace inasmuch as in the ordinary daily affairs of life she had a great deal of ordinary daily commonplace good-sense. Give her a routine to follow, and no routine could be better adhered to. In the allotted sphere of a woman's duties she never seemed in fault. No household, not even Mrs. Poyntz's, was more happily managed. The old Abbots' House had merged its original antique gloom in the softer character of pleasing repose. All her servants adored Mrs. Ashleigh; all found it a pleasure to please her; her establishment had the harmony of clockwork; comfort diffused itself round her like quiet sunshine round a sheltered spot. To gaze on her pleasing countenance, to listen to the simple talk that lapsed from her guileless lips, in even, slow, and lulling murmur, was in itself a respite from "eating cares." She was to the mind what the colour of green is to the eye. She had, therefore, excellent sense in all that relates to every-day life. There, she needed not to consult another; there, the wisest might have consulted her with profit. But the moment anything, however trivial in itself, jarred on the routine to which her mind had grown wedded, the moment an incident hurried her out of the beaten track of woman's daily life, then her confidence forsook her; then she needed a confidant, an adviser; and by that confidant or adviser she could be credulously lured or submissively controlled. Therefore, when she lost, in Mr. Vigers, the guide she had been accustomed to consult whenever she needed guidance, she turned; helplessly and piteously, first to Mrs. Poyntz, and then yet more imploringly to me, because a woman of that character is never quite satisfied without the advice of a man; and where an intimacy more familiar than that of his formal visits is once established with a physician, confidence in him grows fearless and rapid, as the natural result of sympathy concentrated on an object of anxiety in common between himself and the home which opens its sacred recess to his observant but tender eye. Thus Mrs. Ashleigh had shown me Mr. Vigers's letter, and, forgetting that I might not be as amiable as herself, besought me to counsel her how to conciliate and soften her lost husband's friend and connection. That character clothed him with dignity and awe in her soft forgiving eyes. So, smothering my own resentment, less perhaps at the tone of offensive insinuation against myself than at the arrogance with which this prejudiced intermeddler implied to a mother the necessity of his guardian watch over a child under her own care, I sketched a reply which seemed to me both dignified and placatory, abstaining from all discussion, and conveying the assurance that Mrs. Ashleigh would be at all times glad to hear, and disposed to respect, whatever suggestion so esteemed a friend of her husband would kindly submit to her for the welfare of her daughter.

There all communication had stopped for about a month since the date of my reintroduction to Abbots' House. One afternoon I unexpectedly met Mr. Vigers at the entrance of the blind lane, I on my way to Abbots' House, and my first glance at his face told me that he was coming from it, for the expression of that face was more than usually sinister; the sullen scowl was lit into significant menace by a sneer of unmistakable triumph. I felt at once that he had succeeded in some machination against me, and with ominous misgivings quickened my steps.

I found Mrs. Ashleigh seated alone in front of the house, under a large cedar-tree that formed a natural arbour in the centre of the sunny lawn. She was perceptibly embarrassed as I took my seat beside her.

"I hope," said I, forcing a smile, "that Mr. Vigers has not been telling you that I shall kill my patient, or that she looks much worse than she did under Dr. Jones's care?"

"No," she said. "He owned cheerfully that Lilian had grown quite strong, and said, without any displeasure, that he had heard how gay she had been, riding out and even dancing,—which is very kind in him, for he disapproves of dancing, on principle."

"But still I can see he has said something to vex or annoy you; and, to judge by his countenance when I met him in the lane, I should conjecture that that something was intended to lower the confidence you so kindly repose in me."

"I assure you not; he did not mention your name, either to me or to Lilian. I never knew him more friendly; quite like old times. He is a good man at heart, very, and was much attached to my poor husband."

"Did Mr. Ashleigh profess a very high opinion of Mr. Vigers?"

"Well, I don't quite know that, because my dear Gilbert never spoke to me much about him. Gilbert was naturally very silent. But he shrank from all trouble—all worldly affairs—and Mr. Vigors managed his estate, and inspected his steward's books, and protected him through a long lawsuit which he had inherited from his father. It killed his father. I don't know what we should have done without Mr. Vigors, and I am so glad he has forgiven me."

"Hem! Where is Miss Ashleigh? Indoors?"

"No; somewhere in the grounds. But, my dear Dr. Fenwick, do not leave me yet; you are so very, very kind, and somehow I have grown to look upon you quite as an old friend. Something has happened which has put me out, quite put me out."

She said this wearily and feebly, closing her eyes as if she were indeed put out in the sense of extinguished.

"The feeling of friendship you express," said I, with earnestness, "is reciprocal. On my side it is accompanied by a peculiar gratitude. I am a lonely man, by a lonely fireside, no parents, no near kindred, and in this town, since Dr. Faber left it, without cordial intimacy till I knew you. In admitting me so familiarly to your hearth, you have given me what I have never known before since I came to man's estate,—a glimpse of the happy domestic life; the charm and relief to eye, heart, and spirit which is never known but in households cheered by the face of woman. Thus my sentiment for you and yours is indeed that of an old friend; and in any private confidence you show me, I feel as if I were no longer a lonely man, without kindred, without home."

Mrs. Ashleigh seemed much moved by these words, which my heart had forced from my lips; and, after replying to me with simple unaffected warmth of kindness, she rose, took my arm, and continued thus as we walked slowly to and fro the lawn: "You know, perhaps, that my poor husband left a sister, now a widow like myself, Lady Haughton."

"I remember that Mrs. Poyntz said you had such a sister-in-law, but I never heard you mention Lady Haughton till now. Well!"

"Well, Mr. Vigors has brought me a letter from her, and it is that which has put me out. I dare say you have not heard me speak before of Lady Haughton, for I am ashamed to say I had almost forgotten her existence. She is many years older than my husband was; of a very different character. Only came once to see him after our marriage. Hurt me by ridiculing him as a bookworm; offended him by looking a little down on me, as a nobody without spirit and fashion, which was quite true. And, except by a cold and unfeeling letter of formal condolence after I lost my dear Gilbert, I have never heard from her since I have been a widow, till to-day. But, after all, she is my poor husband's sister, and his eldest sister, and Lilian's aunt; and, as Mr. Vigors says, 'Duty is duty.'"

Had Mrs. Ashleigh said "Duty is torture," she could not have uttered the maxim with more mournful and despondent resignation.

"And what does this lady require of you, which Mr. Vigors deems it your duty to comply with?"

"Dear me! What penetration! You have guessed the exact truth. But I think you will agree with Mr. Vigors. Certainly I have no option; yes, I must do it."

"My penetration is in fault now. Do what? Pray explain."

"Poor Lady Haughton, six months ago, lost her only son, Sir James. Mr. Vigors says he was a very fine young man, of whom any mother would have been proud. I had heard he was wild; Mr. Vigors says, however, that he was just going to reform, and marry a young lady whom his mother chose for him, when, unluckily, he would ride a steeplechase, not being quite sober at the time, and broke his neck. Lady Haughton has been, of course, in great grief. She has retired to Brighton; and she wrote to me from thence, and Mr. Vigors brought the letter. He will go back to her to-day."

"Will go back to Lady Haughton? What! Has he been to her? Is he, then, as intimate with Lady Haughton as he was with her brother?"

"No; but there has been a long and constant correspondence. She had a settlement on the Kirby Estate,—a sum which was not paid off during Gilbert's life; and a very small part of the property went to Sir James, which part Mr. Ashleigh Sumner, the heir-at-law to the rest of the estate, wished Mr. Vigors, as his guardian, to buy during his minority, and as it was mixed up with Lady Haughton's settlement her consent was necessary as well as Sir James's. So there was much negotiation, and, since then, Ashleigh Sumner has come into the Haughton property, on poor Sir James's decease; so that complicated all affairs between Mr. Vigors and Lady Haughton, and he has just been to Brighton to see

her. And poor Lady Haughton, in short, wants me and Lilian to go and visit her. I don't like it at all. But you said the other day you thought sea air might be good for Lilian during the heat of the summer, and she seems well enough now for the change. What do you think?"

"She is well enough, certainly. But Brighton is not the place I would recommend for the summer; it wants shade, and is much hotter than L——"

"Yes; but unluckily Lady Haughton foresaw that objection, and she has a jointure-house some miles from Brighton, and near the sea. She says the grounds are well wooded, and the place is proverbially cool and healthy, not far from St. Leonard's Forest. And, in short, I have written to say we will come. So we must, unless, indeed, you positively forbid it."

"When do you think of going?"

"Next Monday. Mr. Vigors would make me fix the day. If you knew how I dislike moving when I am once settled; and I do so dread Lady Haughton, she is so fine, and so satirical! But Mr. Vigors says she is very much altered, poor thing! I should like to show you her letter, but I had just sent it to Margaret—Mrs. Poyntz—a minute or two before you came. She knows something of Lady Haughton. Margaret knows everybody. And we shall have to go in mourning for poor Sir James, I suppose; and Margaret will choose it, for I am sure I can't guess to what extent we should be supposed to mourn. I ought to have gone in mourning before—poor Gilbert's nephew—but I am so stupid, and I had never seen him. And—But oh, this is kind! Margaret herself,—my dear Margaret!"

We had just turned away from the house, in our up-and-down walk; and Mrs. Poyntz stood immediately fronting us. "So, Anne, you have actually accepted this invitation—and for Monday next?"

"Yes. Did I do wrong?"

"What does Dr. Fenwick say? Can Lilian go with safety?"

I could not honestly say she might not go with safety, but my heart sank like lead as I answered,—

"Miss Ashleigh does not now need merely medical care; but more than half her cure has depended on keeping her spirits free from depression. She may miss the cheerful companionship of your daughter, and other young ladies of her own age. A very melancholy house, saddened by a recent bereavement, without other guests; a hostess to whom she is a stranger, and whom Mrs. Ashleigh herself appears to deem formidable,—certainly these do not make that change of scene which a physician would recommend. When I spoke of sea air being good for Miss Ashleigh, I thought of our own northern coasts at a later time of the year, when I could escape myself for a few weeks and attend her. The journey to a northern watering-place would be also shorter and less fatiguing; the air there more invigorating."

"No doubt that would be better," said Mrs. Poyntz, dryly; "but so far as your objections to visiting Lady Haughton have been stated, they are groundless. Her house will not be melancholy; she will have other guests, and Lilian will find companions, young like herself,—young ladies—and young gentlemen too!"

There was something ominous, something compassionate, in the look which Mrs. Poyntz cast upon me, in concluding her speech, which in itself was calculated to rouse the fears of a lover. Lilian away from me, in the house of a worldly-fine lady—such as I judged Lady Haughton to be—surrounded by young gentlemen, as well as young ladies, by admirers, no doubt, of a higher rank and more brilliant fashion than she had yet known! I closed my eyes, and with strong effort suppressed a groan.

"My dear Annie, let me satisfy myself that Dr. Fenwick really does consent to this journey. He will say to me what he may not to you. Pardon me, then, if I take him aside for a few minutes. Let me find you here again under this cedar-tree."

Placing her arm in mine, and without waiting for Mrs. Ashleigh's answer, Mrs. Poyntz drew me into the more sequestered walk that belted the lawn; and when we were out of Mrs. Ashleigh's sight and hearing, said,—

"From what you have now seen of Lilian Ashleigh, do you still desire to gain her as your wife?"

"Still? Ob, with an intensity proportioned to the fear with which I now dread that she is about to pass away from my eyes—from my life!"

"Does your judgment confirm the choice of your heart? Reflect before you answer."

"Such selfish judgment as I had before I knew her would not confirm but oppose it. The nobler

judgment that now expands all my reasonings, approves and seconds my heart. No, no; do not smile so sarcastically. This is not the voice of a blind and egotistical passion. Let me explain myself if I can. I concede to you that Lilian's character is undeveloped; I concede to you, that amidst the childlike freshness and innocence of her nature, there is at times a strangeness, a mystery, which I have not yet traced to its cause. But I am certain that the intellect is organically as sound as the heart, and that intellect and heart will ultimately—if under happy auspices—blend in that felicitous union which constitutes the perfection of woman. But it is because she does, and may for years, may perhaps always, need a more devoted, thoughtful care than natures less tremulously sensitive, that my judgment sanctions my choice; for whatever is best for her is best for me. And who would watch over her as I should?"

"You have never yet spoken to Lilian as lovers speak?"

"Oh, no, indeed."

"And, nevertheless, you believe that your affection would not be unreturned?"

"I thought so once; I doubt now,—yet, in doubting, hope. But why do you alarm me with these questions? You, too, forebode that in this visit I may lose her forever?"

"If you fear that, tell her so, and perhaps her answer may dispel your fear."

"What! now, already, when she has scarcely known me a month. Might I not risk all if too premature?"

"There is no almanac for love. With many women love is born the moment they know they are beloved. All wisdom tells us that a moment once gone is irrevocable. Were I in your place, I should feel that I approached a moment that I must not lose. I have said enough; now I shall rejoin Mrs. Ashleigh."

"Stay—tell me first what Lady Haughton's letter really contains to prompt the advice with which you so transport, and yet so daunt, me when you proffer it."

"Not now; later, perhaps,—not now. If you wish to see Lilian alone, she is by the Old Monk's Well; I saw her seated there as I passed that way to the house."

"One word more,—only one. Answer this question frankly, for it is one of honour. Do you still believe that my suit to her daughter would not be disapproved of by Mrs. Ashleigh?"

"At this moment I am sure it would not; a week hence I might not give you the same answer."

So she passed on with her quick but measured tread, back through the shady walk, on to the open lawn, till the last glimpse of her pale gray robe disappeared under the boughs of the cedar-tree. Then, with a start, I broke the irresolute, tremulous suspense in which I had vainly endeavoured to analyze my own mind, solve my own doubts, concentrate my own will, and went the opposite way, skirting the circle of that haunted ground,—as now, on one side its lofty terrace, the houses of the neighbouring city came full and close into view, divided from my fairy-land of life but by the trodden murmurous thoroughfare winding low beneath the ivied parapets; and as now, again, the world of men abruptly vanished behind the screening foliage of luxuriant June.

At last the enchanted glade opened out from the verdure, its borders fragrant with syringa and rose and woodbine; and there, by the gray memorial of the gone Gothic age, my eyes seemed to close their unquiet wanderings, resting spell-bound on that image which had become to me the incarnation of earth's bloom and youth.

She stood amidst the Past, backed by the fragments of walls which man had raised to seclude him from human passion, locking, under those lids so downcast, the secret of the only knowledge I asked from the boundless Future.

Ah! what mockery there is in that grand word, the world's fierce war-cry,—Freedom! Who has not known one period of life, and that so solemn that its shadows may rest over all life hereafter, when one human creature has over him a sovereignty more supreme and absolute than Orient servitude adores in the symbols of diadem and sceptre? What crest so haughty that has not bowed before a hand which could exalt or humble! What heart so dauntless that has not trembled to call forth the voice at whose sound open the gates of rapture or despair! That life alone is free which rules, and suffices for itself. That life we forfeit when we love!

CHAPTER XVII.

How did I utter it? By what words did my heart make itself known? I remember not. All was as a dream that falls upon a restless, feverish night, and fades away as the eyes unclose on the peace of a cloudless heaven, on the bliss of a golden sun. A new morrow seemed indeed upon the earth when I woke from a life-long yesterday,—her dear hand in mine, her sweet face bowed upon my breast.

And then there was that melodious silence in which there is no sound audible from without; yet within us there is heard a lulling celestial music, as if our whole being, grown harmonious with the universe, joined from its happy deeps in the hymn that unites the stars.

In that silence our two hearts seemed to make each other understood, to be drawing nearer and nearer, blending by mysterious concord into the completeness of a solemn union, never henceforth to be rent asunder.

At length I said softly: "And it was here on this spot that I first saw you,—here that I for the first time knew what power to change our world and to rule our future goes forth from the charm of a human face!"

Then Lilian asked me timidly, and without lifting her eyes, how I had so seen her, reminding me that I promised to tell her, and had never yet done so.

And then I told her of the strange impulse that had led me into the grounds, and by what chance my steps had been diverted down the path that wound to the glade; how suddenly her form had shone upon my eyes, gathering round itself the rose hues of the setting sun, and how wistfully those eyes had followed her own silent gaze into the distant heaven.

As I spoke, her hand pressed mine eagerly, convulsively, and, raising her face from my breast, she looked at me with an intent, anxious earnestness. That look!—twice before it had thrilled and perplexed me.

"What is there in that look, oh, my Lilian, which tells me that there is something that startles you,—something you wish to confide, and yet shrink from explaining? See how, already, I study the fair book from which the seal has been lifted! but as yet you must aid me to construe its language."

"If I shrink from explaining, it is only because I fear that I cannot explain so as to be understood or believed. But you have a right to know the secrets of a life which you would link to your own. Turn your face aside from me; a reproving look, an incredulous smile, chill—oh, you cannot guess how they chill me, when I would approach that which to me is so serious and so solemnly strange."

I turned my face away, and her voice grew firmer as, after a brief pause, she resumed,—

"As far back as I can remember in my infancy, there have been moments when there seems to fall a soft hazy veil between my sight and the things around it, thickening and deepening till it has the likeness of one of those white fleecy clouds which gather on the verge of the horizon when the air is yet still, but the winds are about to rise; and then this vapour or veil will suddenly open, as clouds open, and let in the blue sky."

"Go on," I said gently, for here she came to a stop. She continued, speaking somewhat more hurriedly,—

"Then, in that opening, strange appearances present themselves to me, as in a vision. In my childhood these were chiefly landscapes of wonderful beauty. I could but faintly describe them then; I could not attempt to describe them now, for they are almost gone from my memory. My dear mother chid me for telling her what I saw, so I did not impress it on my mind by repeating it. As I grew up, this kind of vision—if I may so call it—became much less frequent, or much less distinct; I still saw the soft veil fall, the pale cloud form and open, but often what may then have appeared was entirely forgotten when I recovered myself, waking as from a sleep. Sometimes, however, the recollection would be vivid and complete; sometimes I saw the face of my lost father; sometimes I heard his very voice, as I had seen and heard him in my early childhood, when he would let me rest for hours beside him as he mused or studied, happy to be so quietly near him, for I loved him, oh, so dearly! and I remember him so distinctly, though I was only in my sixth year when he died. Much more recently—indeed, within the last few months—the images of things to come are reflected on the space that I gaze into as clearly as in a glass. Thus, for weeks before I came hither, or knew that such a place existed, I saw distinctly the old House, yon trees, this sward, this moss-grown Gothic fount; and, with the sight, an impression was conveyed to me that in the scene before me my old childlike life would pass into some solemn change.

So that when I came here, and recognized the picture in my vision, I took an affection for the spot,—an affection not without awe, a powerful, perplexing interest, as one who feels under the influence of a fate of which a prophetic glimpse has been vouchsafed. And in that evening, when you first saw me, seated here—"

"Yes, Lilian, on that evening—"

"I saw you also, but in my vision—yonder, far in the deeps of space,—and—and my heart was stirred as it had never been before; and near where your image grew out from the cloud I saw my father's face, and I heard his voice, not in my ear, but as in my heart, whispering—"

"Yes, Lilian—whispering—what?"

"These words,—only these,—'Ye will need one another.' But then, suddenly, between my upward eyes and the two forms they had beheld, there rose from the earth, obscuring the skies, a vague, dusky vapour, undulous, and coiling like a vast serpent,—nothing, indeed, of its shape and figure definite, but of its face one abrupt glare; a flash from two dread luminous eyes, and a young head, like the Medusa's, changing, more rapidly than I could have drawn breath, into a grinning skull. Then my terror made me bow my head, and when I raised it again, all that I had seen was vanished. But the terror still remained, even when I felt my mother's arm round me and heard her voice. And then, when I entered the house, and sat down again alone, the recollection of what I had seen—those eyes, that face, that skull—grew on me stronger and stronger till I fainted, and remember no more, until my eyes, opening, saw you by my side, and in my wonder there was not terror. No, a sense of joy, protection, hope, yet still shadowed by a kind of fear or awe, in recognizing the countenance which had gleamed on me from the skies before the dark vapour had risen, and while my father's voice had murmured, 'Ye will need one another.' And now—and now—will you love me less that you know a secret in my being which I have told to no other,—cannot construe to myself? Only—only, at least, do not mock me; do not disbelieve me! Nay, turn from me no longer now: now I ask to meet your eyes. Now, before our hands can join again, tell me that you do not despise me as untruthful, do not pity me as insane."

"Hush, hush!" I said, drawing her to my breast. "Of all you tell me we will talk hereafter. The scales of our science have no weights fine enough for the gossamer threads of a maiden's pure fancies. Enough for me—for us both—if out from all such illusions start one truth, told to you, lovely child, from the heavens; told to me, ruder man, on the earth; repeated by each pulse of this heart that woos you to hear and to trust,—now and henceforth through life unto death, 'Each has need of the other,'—I of you, I of you! my Lilian! my Lilian!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

In spite of the previous assurance of Mrs. Poyntz, it was not without an uneasy apprehension that I approached the cedar-tree, under which Mrs. Ashleigh still sat, her friend beside her. I looked on the fair creature whose arm was linked in mine. So young, so singularly lovely, and with all the gifts of birth and fortune which bend avarice and ambition the more submissively to youth and beauty, I felt as if I had wronged what a parent might justly deem her natural lot.

"Oh, if your mother should disapprove!" said I, falteringly. Lilian leaned on my arm less lightly. "If I had thought so," she said with her soft blush, "should I be thus by your side?"

So we passed under the boughs of the dark tree, and Lilian left me and kissed Mrs. Ashleigh's cheek; then, seating herself on the turf, laid her head on her mother's lap. I looked on the Queen of the Hill, whose keen eye shot over me. I thought there was a momentary expression of pain or displeasure on her countenance; but it passed. Still there seemed to me something of irony, as well as of triumph or congratulation, in the half-smile with which she quitted her seat, and in the tone with which she whispered, as she glided by me to the open sward, "So, then, it is settled."

She walked lightly and quickly down the lawn. When she was out of sight I breathed more freely. I took the seat which she had left, by Mrs. Ashleigh's side, and said, "A little while ago I spoke of myself as a man without kindred, without home, and now I come to you and ask for both."

Mrs. Ashleigh looked at me benignly, then raised her daughter's face from her lap, and whispered, "Lilian;" and Lilian's lips moved, but I did not hear her answer. Her mother did. She took Lilian's hand, simply placed it in mine, and said, "As she chooses, I choose; whom she loves, I love."

CHAPTER XIX.

From that evening till the day Mrs. Ashleigh and Lilian went on the dreaded visit, I was always at their house, when my avocations allowed me to steal to it; and during those few days, the happiest I had ever known, it seemed to me that years could not have more deepened my intimacy with Lilian's exquisite nature, made me more reverential of its purity, or more enamoured of its sweetness. I could detect in her but one fault, and I rebuked myself for believing that it was a fault. We see many who neglect the minor duties of life, who lack watchful forethought and considerate care for others, and we recognize the cause of this failing in levity or egotism. Certainly, neither of those tendencies of character could be ascribed to Lilian. Yet still in daily trifles there was something of that neglect, some lack of that care and forethought. She loved her mother with fondness and devotion, yet it never occurred to her to aid in those petty household cares in which her mother centred so much of habitual interest. She was full of tenderness and pity to all want and suffering, yet many a young lady on the Hill was more actively beneficent,—visiting the poor in their sickness, or instructing their children in the Infant Schools. I was persuaded that her love for me was deep and truthful; it was clearly void of all ambition; doubtless she would have borne, unflinching and contented, whatever the world considers to be a sacrifice and privation,—yet I should never have expected her to take her share in the troubles of ordinary life. I could never have applied to her the homely but significant name of helpmate. I reproach myself while I write for noticing such defect—if defect it were—in what may be called the practical routine of our positive, trivial, human existence. No doubt it was this that had caused Mrs. Poyntz's harsh judgment against the wisdom of my choice. But such chiller shade upon Lilian's charming nature was reflected from no inert, unamiable self-love. It was but the consequence of that self-absorption which the habit of reverie had fostered. I cautiously abstained from all allusion to those visionary deceptions, which she had confided to me as the truthful impressions of spirit, if not of sense. To me any approach to what I termed "superstition" was displeasing; any indulgence of fantasies not within the measured and beaten track of healthful imagination more than displeased me in her,—it alarmed. I would not by a word encourage her in persuasions which I felt it would be at present premature to reason against, and cruel indeed to ridicule. I was convinced that of themselves these mists round her native intelligence, engendered by a solitary and musing childhood, would subside in the fuller daylight of wedded life. She seemed pained when she saw how resolutely I shunned a subject dear to her thoughts. She made one or two timid attempts to renew it, but my grave looks sufficed to check her. Once or twice indeed, on such occasions, she would turn away and leave me, but she soon came back; that gentle heart could not bear one unkindlier shade between itself and what it loved. It was agreed that our engagement should be, for the present, confided only to Mrs. Poyntz. When Mrs. Ashleigh and Lilian returned, which would be in a few weeks at furthest, it should be proclaimed; and our marriage could take place in the autumn, when I should be most free for a brief holiday from professional toils.

So we parted—as lovers part. I felt none of those jealous fears which, before we were affianced, had made me tremble at the thought of separation, and had conjured up irresistible rivals. But it was with a settled, heavy gloom that I saw her depart. From earth was gone a glory; from life a blessing.

CHAPTER XX.

During the busy years of my professional career, I had snatched leisure for some professional treatises, which had made more or less sensation, and one of them, entitled "The Vital Principle; its Waste and Supply," had gained a wide circulation among the general public. This last treatise contained the results of certain experiments, then new in chemistry, which were adduced in support of a theory I entertained as to the re-invigoration of the human system by principles similar to those which Liebig has applied to the replenishment of an exhausted soil,—namely, the giving back to the frame those essentials to its nutrition, which it has lost by the action or accident of time; or supplying that special pabulum or energy in which the individual organism is constitutionally deficient; and neutralizing or counterbalancing that in which it super-abounds,—a theory upon which some eminent physicians have more recently improved with signal success. But on these essays, slight and suggestive, rather than dogmatic, I set no value. I had been for the last two years engaged on a work of much wider range, endeared to me by a far bolder ambition,—a work upon which I fondly hoped to found an enduring reputation as a severe and original physiologist. It was an Inquiry into Organic Life, similar in comprehensiveness of survey to that by which the illustrious Muller, of Berlin, has enriched the science of our age; however inferior, alas! to that august combination of thought and learning in the judgment

which checks presumption, and the genius which adorns speculation. But at that day I was carried away by the ardour of composition, and I admired my performance because I loved my labour. This work had been entirely laid aside for the last agitated month; now that Lilian was gone, I resumed it earnestly, as the sole occupation that had power and charm enough to rouse me from the aching sense of void and loss.

The very night of the day she went, I reopened my manuscript. I had left off at the commencement of a chapter Upon Knowledge as derived from our Senses. As my convictions on this head were founded on the well-known arguments of Locke and Condillac against innate ideas, and on the reasonings by which Hume has resolved the combination of sensations into a general idea to an impulse arising merely out of habit, so I set myself to oppose, as a dangerous concession to the sentimentalities or mysticism of a pseudo-philosophy, the doctrine favoured by most of our recent physiologists, and of which some of the most eminent of German metaphysicians have accepted the substance, though refining into a subtlety its positive form,—I mean the doctrine which Muller himself has expressed in these words:—

"That innate ideas may exist cannot in the slightest degree be denied: it is, indeed, a fact. All the ideas of animals, which are induced by instinct, are innate and immediate: something presented to the mind, a desire to attain which is at the same time given. The new-born lamb and foal have such innate ideas, which lead them to follow their mother and suck the teats. Is it not in some measure the same with the intellectual ideas of man?"[1]

To this question I answered with an indignant "No!" A "Yes" would have shaken my creed of materialism to the dust. I wrote on rapidly, warmly. I defined the properties and meted the limits of natural laws, which I would not admit that a Deity himself could alter. I clamped and soldered dogma to dogma in the links of my tinkered logic, till out from my page, to my own complacent eye, grew Intellectual Man, as the pure formation of his material senses; mind, or what is called soul, born from and nurtured by them alone; through them to act, and to perish with the machine they moved. Strange, that at the very time my love for Lilian might have taught me that there are mysteries in the core of the feelings which my analysis of ideas could not solve, I should so stubbornly have opposed as unreal all that could be referred to the spiritual! Strange, that at the very time when the thought that I might lose from this life the being I had known scarce a month had just before so appalled me, I should thus complacently sit down to prove that, according to the laws of the nature which my passion obeyed, I must lose for eternity the blessing I now hoped I had won to my life! But how distinctly dissimilar is man in his conduct from man in his systems! See the poet reclined under forest boughs, conning odes to his mistress; follow him out into the world; no mistress ever lived for him there![2] See the hard man of science, so austere in his passionless problems; follow him now where the brain rests from its toil, where the heart finds its Sabbath—what child is so tender, so yielding, and soft?

But I had proved to my own satisfaction that poet and sage are dust, and no more, when the pulse ceases to beat. And on that consolatory conclusion my pen stopped.

Suddenly, beside me I distinctly heard a sigh,—a compassionate, mournful sigh. The sound was unmistakable. I started from my seat, looked round, amazed to discover no one,—no living thing! The windows were closed, the night was still. That sigh was not the wail of the wind. But there, in the darker angle of the room, what was that? A silvery whiteness, vaguely shaped as a human form, receding, fading, gone! Why, I know not—for no face was visible, no form, if form it were, more distinct than the colourless outline,—why, I know not, but I cried aloud, "Lilian! Lilian!" My voice came strangely back to my own ear; I paused, then smiled and blushed at my folly. "So I, too, have learned what is superstition," I muttered to myself. "And here is an anecdote at my own expense (as Muller frankly tells us anecdotes of the illusions which would haunt his eyes, shut or open),—an anecdote I may quote when I come to my chapter on the Cheats of the Senses and Spectral Phantasms." I went on with my book, and wrote till the lights waned in the gray of the dawn. And I said then, in the triumph of my pride, as I laid myself down to rest, "I have written that which allots with precision man's place in the region of nature; written that which will found a school, form disciples; and race after race of those who cultivate truth through pure reason shall accept my bases if they enlarge my building." And again I heard the sigh, but this time it caused no surprise. "Certainly," I murmured, "a very strange thing is the nervous system!" So I turned on my pillow, and, wearied out, fell asleep.

[1] Muller's "Elements of Physiology," vol. ii. p. 134. Translated by Dr. Baley.

[2] Cowley, who wrote so elaborate a series of amatory poems, is said "never to have been in love but once, and then he never had resolution to tell his passion."—Johnson's "Lives of the Poets:" COWLEY.

CHAPTER XXI.

The next day, the last of the visiting patients to whom my forenoons were devoted had just quitted me, when I was summoned in haste to attend the steward of a Sir Philip Derval not residing at his family seat, which was about five miles from L—. It was rarely indeed that persons so far from the town, when of no higher rank than this applicant, asked my services.

But it was my principle to go wherever I was summoned; my profession was not gain, it was healing, to which gain was the incident, not the essential. This case the messenger reported as urgent. I went on horseback, and rode fast; but swiftly as I cantered through the village that skirted the approach to Sir Philip Derval's park, the evident care bestowed on the accommodation of the cottagers forcibly struck me. I felt that I was on the lands of a rich, intelligent, and beneficent proprietor. Entering the park, and passing before the manor-house, the contrast between the neglect and the decay of the absentee's stately Hall and the smiling homes of his villagers was disconsolately mournful.

An imposing pile, built apparently by Vanbrugh, with decorated pilasters, pompous portico, and grand perron (or double flight of stairs to the entrance), enriched with urns and statues, but discoloured, mildewed, chipped, half-hidden with unpruned creepers and ivy. Most of the windows were closed with shutters, decaying for want of paint; in some of the casements the panes were broken; the peacock perched on the shattered balustrade, that fenced a garden overgrown with weeds. The sun glared hotly on the place, and made its ruinous condition still more painfully apparent. I was glad when a winding in the park-road shut the house from my sight. Suddenly I emerged through a copse of ancient yew-trees, and before me there gleamed, in abrupt whiteness, a building evidently designed for the family mausoleum, classical in its outline, with the blind iron door niched into stone walls of massive thickness, and surrounded by a funereal garden of roses and evergreens, fenced with an iron rail, party-gilt.

The suddenness with which this House of the Dead came upon me heightened almost into pain, if not into awe, the dismal impression which the aspect of the deserted home in its neighbourhood had made. I spurred my horse, and soon arrived at the door of my patient, who lived in a fair brick house at the other extremity of the park.

I found my patient, a man somewhat advanced in years, but of a robust conformation, in bed: he had been seized with a fit, which was supposed to be apoplectic, a few hours before; but was already sensible, and out of immediate danger. After I had prescribed a few simple remedies, I took aside the patient's wife, and went with her to the parlour below stairs, to make some inquiry about her husband's ordinary regimen and habits of life. These seemed sufficiently regular; I could discover no apparent cause for the attack, which presented symptoms not familiar to my experience. "Has your husband ever had such fits before?"

"Never!"

"Had he experienced any sudden emotion? Had he heard any unexpected news; or had anything happened to put him out?"

The woman looked much disturbed at these inquiries. I pressed them more urgently. At last she burst into tears, and clasping my hand, said, "Oh, doctor, I ought to tell you—I sent for you on purpose—yet I fear you will not believe me: my good man has seen a ghost!"

"A ghost!" said I, repressing a smile. "Well, tell me all, that I may prevent the ghost coming again."

The woman's story was prolix. Its substance was this Her husband, habitually an early riser, had left his bed that morning still earlier than usual, to give directions about some cattle that were to be sent for sale to a neighbouring fair. An hour afterwards he had been found by a shepherd, near the mausoleum, apparently lifeless. On being removed to his own house, he had recovered speech, and bidding all except his wife leave the room, he then told her that on walking across the park towards the cattle-sheds, he had seen what appeared to him at first a pale light by the iron door of the mausoleum. On approaching nearer, this light changed into the distinct and visible form of his master, Sir Philip Derval, who was then abroad,—supposed to be in the East, where he had resided for many years. The impression on the steward's mind was so strong, that he called out, "Oh, Sir Philip!" when looking still more intently, he perceived that the face was that of a corpse. As he continued to gaze, the apparition seemed gradually to recede, as if vanishing into the sepulchre itself. He knew no more; he became unconscious. It was the excess of the poor woman's alarm, on hearing this strange tale, that made her resolve to send for me instead of the parish apothecary. She fancied so astounding a cause for her husband's seizure could only be properly dealt with by some medical man reputed to have more than

ordinary learning; and the steward himself objected to the apothecary in the immediate neighbourhood, as more likely to annoy him by gossip than a physician from a comparative distance.

I took care not to lose the confidence of the good wife by parading too quickly my disbelief in the phantom her husband declared that he had seen; but as the story itself seemed at once to decide the nature of the fit to be epileptic, I began to tell her of similar delusions which, in my experience, had occurred to those subjected to epilepsy, and finally soothed her into the conviction that the apparition was clearly reducible to natural causes. Afterwards, I led her on to talk about Sir Philip Derval, less from any curiosity I felt about the absent proprietor than from a desire to re-familiarize her own mind to his image as a living man. The steward had been in the service of Sir Philip's father, and had known Sir Philip himself from a child. He was warmly attached to his master, whom the old woman described as a man of rare benevolence and great eccentricity, which last she imputed to his studious habits. He had succeeded to the title and estates as a minor. For the first few years after attaining his majority, he had mixed much in the world. When at Derval Court his house had been filled with gay companions, and was the scene of lavish hospitality; but the estate was not in proportion to the grandeur of the mansion, still less to the expenditure of the owner. He had become greatly embarrassed; and some love disappointment (so it was rumoured) occurring simultaneously with his pecuniary difficulties, he had suddenly changed his way of life, shut himself up from his old friends, lived in seclusion, taking to books and scientific pursuits, and as the old woman said vaguely and expressively, "to odd ways." He had gradually by an economy that, towards himself, was penurious, but which did not preclude much judicious generosity to others, cleared off his debts; and, once more rich, he had suddenly quitted the country, and taken to a life of travel. He was now about forty-eight years old, and had been eighteen years abroad. He wrote frequently to his steward, giving him minute and thoughtful instructions in regard to the employment, comforts, and homes of the peasantry, but peremptorily ordering him to spend no money on the grounds and mansion, stating as a reason why the latter might be allowed to fall into decay, his intention to pull it down whenever he returned to England.

I stayed some time longer than my engagements well warranted at my patient's house, not leaving till the sufferer, after a quiet sleep, had removed from his bed to his armchair, taken food, and seemed perfectly recovered from his attack.

Riding homeward, I mused on the difference that education makes, even pathologically, between man and man. Here was a brawny inhabitant of rural fields, leading the healthiest of lives, not conscious of the faculty we call imagination, stricken down almost to Death's door by his fright at an optical illusion, explicable, if examined, by the same simple causes which had impressed me the night before with a moment's belief in a sound and a spectre,—me who, thanks to sublime education, went so quietly to sleep a few minutes after, convinced that no phantom, the ghostliest that ear ever heard or eye ever saw, can be anything else but a nervous phenomenon.

CHAPTER XXII.

That evening I went to Mrs. Poyntz's; it was one of her ordinary "reception nights," and I felt that she would naturally expect my attendance as "a proper attention."

I joined a group engaged in general conversation, of which Mrs. Poyntz herself made the centre, knitting as usual,—rapidly while she talked, slowly when she listened.

Without mentioning the visit I had paid that morning, I turned the conversation on the different country places in the neighbourhood, and then incidentally asked, "What sort of a man is Sir Philip Derval? Is it not strange that he should suffer so fine a place to fall into decay?" The answers I received added little to the information I had already obtained. Mrs. Poyntz knew nothing of Sir Philip Derval, except as a man of large estates, whose rental had been greatly increased by a rise in the value of property he possessed in the town of L—, and which lay contiguous to that of her husband. Two or three of the older inhabitants of the Hill had remembered Sir Philip in his early days, when he was gay, high-spirited, hospitable, lavish. One observed that the only person in L— whom he had admitted to his subsequent seclusion was Dr. Lloyd, who was then without practice, and whom he had employed as an assistant in certain chemical experiments.

Here a gentleman struck into the conversation. He was a stranger to me and to L—, a visitor to one of the dwellers on the Hill, who had asked leave to present him to its queen as a great traveller and an accomplished antiquary.

Said this gentleman: "Sir Philip Derval? I know him. I met him in the East. He was then still, I believe, very fond of chemical science; a clever, odd, philanthropical man; had studied medicine, or at least practised it; was said to have made many marvellous cures. I became acquainted with him in Aleppo. He had come to that town, not much frequented by English travellers, in order to inquire into the murder of two men, of whom one was his friend and the other his countryman."

"This is interesting," said Mrs. Poyntz, dryly. "We who live on this innocent Hill all love stories of crime; murder is the pleasantest subject you could have hit on. Pray give us the details."

"So encouraged," said the traveller, good-humouredly, "I will not hesitate to communicate the little I know. In Aleppo there had lived for some years a man who was held by the natives in great reverence. He had the reputation of extraordinary wisdom, but was difficult of access; the lively imagination of the Orientals invested his character with the fascinations of fable,—in short, Haroun of Aleppo was popularly considered a magician. Wild stories were told of his powers, of his preternatural age, of his hoarded treasures. Apart from such disputable titles to homage, there seemed no question, from all I heard, that his learning was considerable, his charities extensive, his manner of life irreproachably ascetic. He appears to have resembled those Arabian sages of the Gothic age to whom modern science is largely indebted,—a mystic enthusiast, but an earnest scholar. A wealthy and singular Englishman, long resident in another part of the East, afflicted by some languishing disease, took a journey to Aleppo to consult this sage, who, among his other acquirements, was held to have discovered rare secrets in medicine,—his countrymen said in 'charms.' One morning, not long after the Englishman's arrival, Haroun was found dead in his bed, apparently strangled, and the Englishman, who lodged in another part of the town, had disappeared; but some of his clothes, and a crutch on which he habitually supported himself, were found a few miles distant from Aleppo, near the roadside. There appeared no doubt that he, too, had been murdered, but his corpse could not be discovered. Sir Philip Derval had been a loving disciple of this Sage of Aleppo, to whom he assured me he owed not only that knowledge of medicine which, by report, Sir Philip possessed, but the insight into various truths of nature, on the promulgation of which, it was evident, Sir Philip cherished the ambition to found a philosophical celebrity for himself."

"Of what description were those truths of nature?" I asked, somewhat sarcastically.

"Sir, I am unable to tell you, for Sir Philip did not inform me, nor did I much care to ask; for what may be revered as truths in Asia are usually despised as dreams in Europe. To return to my story: Sir Philip had been in Aleppo a little time before the murder; had left the Englishman under the care of Haroun. He returned to Aleppo on hearing the tragic events I have related, and was busy in collecting such evidence as could be gleaned, and instituting inquiries after our missing countryman at the time I myself chanced to arrive in the city. I assisted in his researches, but without avail. The assassins remained undiscovered. I do not myself doubt that they were mere vulgar robbers. Sir Philip had a darker suspicion of which he made no secret to me; but as I confess that I thought the suspicion groundless, you will pardon me if I do not repeat it. Whether since I left the East the Englishman's remains have been discovered, I know not. Very probably; for I understand that his heirs have got hold of what fortune he left,—less than was generally supposed. But it was reported that he had buried great treasures, a rumour, however absurd, not altogether inconsistent with his character."

"What was his character?" asked Mrs. Poyntz.

"One of evil and sinister repute. He was regarded with terror by the attendants who had accompanied him to Aleppo. But he had lived in a very remote part of the East, little known to Europeans, and, from all I could learn, had there established an extraordinary power, strengthened by superstitious awe. He was said to have studied deeply that knowledge which the philosophers of old called 'occult,' not, like the Sage of Aleppo, for benevolent, but for malignant ends. He was accused of conferring with evil spirits, and filling his barbaric court (for he lived in a kind of savage royalty) with charmers and sorcerers. I suspect, after all, that he was only, like myself, an ardent antiquary, and cunningly made use of the fear he inspired in order to secure his authority, and prosecute in safety researches into ancient sepulchres or temples. His great passion was, indeed, in excavating such remains, in his neighbourhood; with what result I know not, never having penetrated so far into regions infested by robbers and pestiferous with malaria. He wore the Eastern dress, and always carried jewels about him. I came to the conclusion that for the sake of these jewels he was murdered, perhaps by some of his own servants (and, indeed, two at least of his suite were missing), who then at once buried his body, and kept their own secret. He was old, very infirm; could never have got far from the town without assistance."

"You have not yet told us his name," said Mrs. Poyntz.

"His name was Grayle."

"Grayle!" exclaimed Mrs. Poyntz, dropping her work. "Louis Grayle?"

"Yes; Louis Grayle. You could not have known him?"

"Known him! No; but I have often heard my father speak of him. Such, then, was the tragic end of that strong dark creature, for whom, as a young girl in the nursery, I used to feel a kind of fearful admiring interest?"

"It is your turn to narrate now," said the traveller.

And we all drew closer round our hostess, who remained silent some moments, her brow thoughtful, her work suspended.

"Well," said she at last, looking round us with a lofty air, which seemed half defying, "force and courage are always fascinating, even when they are quite in the wrong. I go with the world, because the world goes with me; if it did not—" Here she stopped for a moment, clenched the firm white hand, and then scornfully waved it, left the sentence unfinished, and broke into another.

"Going with the world, of course we must march over those who stand against it. But when one man stands single-handed against our march, we do not despise him; it is enough to crush. I am very glad I did not see Louis Grayle when I was a girl of sixteen." Again she paused a moment, and resumed: "Louis Grayle was the only son of a usurer, infamous for the rapacity with which he had acquired enormous wealth. Old Grayle desired to rear his heir as a gentleman; sent him to Eton. Boys are always aristocratic; his birth was soon thrown in his teeth; he was fierce; he struck boys bigger than himself,—fought till he was half killed. My father was at school with him; described him as a tiger-whelp. One day he—still a fag—struck a sixth-form boy. Sixth-form boys do not fight fags; they punish them. Louis Grayle was ordered to hold out his hand to the cane; he received the blow, drew forth his schoolboy knife, and stabbed the punisher. After that, he left Eton. I don't think he was publicly expelled—to mere a child for that honour—but he was taken or sent away; educated with great care under the first masters at home. When he was of age to enter the University, old Grayle was dead. Louis was sent by his guardians to Cambridge, with acquirements far exceeding the average of young men, and with unlimited command of money. My father was at the same college, and described him again,—haughty, quarrelsome, reckless, handsome, aspiring, brave. Does that kind of creature interest you, my dears?" (appealing to the ladies).

"La!" said Miss Brabazon; "a horrid usurer's son!"

"Ay, true; the vulgar proverb says it is good to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth: so it is when one has one's own family crest on it; ut when it is a spoon on which people recognize their family crest, and cry out, 'Stolen from our plate chest,' it is a heritage that outlaws a babe in his cradle. However, young men at college who want money are less scrupulous about descent than boys at Eton are. Louis Grayle found, while at college, plenty of wellborn acquaintances willing to recover from him some of the plunder his father had extorted from theirs. He was too wild to distinguish himself by academical honours, but my father said that the tutors of the college declared there were not six undergraduates in the University who knew as much hard and dry science as wild Louis Grayle. He went into the world, no doubt, hoping to shine; but his father's name was too notorious to admit the son into good society. The Polite World, it is true, does not examine a scutcheon with the nice eye of a herald, nor look upon riches with the stately contempt of a stoic; still the Polite World has its family pride and its moral sentiment. It does not like to be cheated,—I mean, in money matters; and when the son of a man who has emptied its purse and foreclosed on its acres rides by its club-windows, hand on haunch, and head in the air, no lion has a scowl more awful, no hyena a laugh more dread, than that same easy, good-tempered, tolerant, polite, well-bred World which is so pleasant an acquaintance, so languid a friend, and—so remorseless an—enemy. In short, Louis Grayle claimed the right to be courted,—he was shunned; to be admired,—he was loathed. Even his old college acquaintances were shamed out of knowing him. Perhaps he could have lived through all this had he sought to glide quietly into position; but he wanted the tact of the well-bred, and strove to storm his way, not to steal it. Reduced for companions to needy parasites, he braved and he shocked all decorous opinion by that ostentation of excess, which made Richelieus and Lauzuns the rage. But then Richelieus and Lauzuns were dukes! He now very naturally took the Polite World into hate,—gave it scorn for scorn. He would ally himself with Democracy; his wealth could not get him into a club, but it would buy him into parliament; he could not be a Lauzun, nor, perhaps, a Mirabeau, but he might be a Danton. He had plenty of knowledge and audacity, and with knowledge and audacity a good hater is sure to be eloquent. Possibly, then, this poor Louis Grayle might have made a great figure, left his mark on his age and his name in history; but in contesting the borough, which he was sure to carry, he had to face an opponent in a real fine gentleman whom his father had ruined, cool and highbred, with a tongue like a rapier, a sneer like an adder. A quarrel of course; Louis Grayle sent a challenge. The fine gentleman, known to be no coward (fine gentlemen never are), was at first disposed to refuse with contempt. But

Grayle had made himself the idol of the mob; and at a word from Grayle, the fine gentleman might have been ducked at a pump, or tossed in a blanket,—that would have made him ridiculous; to be shot at is a trifle, to be laughed at is serious. He therefore condescended to accept the challenge, and my father was his second.

"It was settled, of course, according to English custom, that both combatants should fire at the same time, and by signal. The antagonist fired at the right moment; his ball grazed Louis Grayle's temple. Louis Grayle had not fired. He now seemed to the seconds to take slow and deliberate aim. They called out to him not to fire; they were rushing to prevent him, when the trigger was pulled, and his opponent fell dead on the field. The fight was, therefore, considered unfair; Louis Grayle was tried for his life: he did not stand the trial in person.[1] He escaped to the Continent; hurried on to some distant uncivilized lands; could not be traced; reappeared in England no more. The lawyer who conducted his defence pleaded skilfully. He argued that the delay in firing was not intentional, therefore not criminal,—the effect of the stun which the wound in the temple had occasioned. The judge was a gentleman, and summed up the evidence so as to direct the jury to a verdict against the low wretch who had murdered a gentleman; but the jurors were not gentlemen, and Grayle's advocate had of course excited their sympathy for a son of the people, whom a gentleman had wantonly insulted. The verdict was manslaughter; but the sentence emphatically marked the aggravated nature of the homicide,—three years' imprisonment. Grayle eluded the prison, but he was a man disgraced and an exile,—his ambition blasted, his career an outlaw's, and his age not yet twenty-three. My father said that he was supposed to have changed his name; none knew what had become of him. And so this creature, brilliant and daring, whom if born under better auspices we might now be all fawning on, cringing to,—after living to old age, no one knows how,—dies murdered at Aleppo, no one, you say, knows by whom."

"I saw some account of his death in the papers about three years ago," said one of the party; "but the name was misspelled, and I had no idea that it was the same man who had fought the duel which Mrs. Colonel Poyntz has so graphically described. I have a very vague recollection of the trial; it took place when I was a boy, more than forty years since. The affair made a stir at the time, but was soon forgotten."

"Soon forgotten," said Mrs. Poyntz; "ay, what is not? Leave your place in the world for ten minutes, and when you come back somebody else has taken it; but when you leave the world for good, who remembers that you had ever a place even in the parish register?"

"Nevertheless," said I, "a great poet has said, finely and truly,

"The sun of Homer shines upon us still."

"But it does not shine upon Homer; and learned folks tell me that we know no more who and what Homer was, if there was ever a single Homer at all, or rather, a whole herd of Homers, than we know about the man in the moon,—if there be one man there, or millions of men. Now, my dear Miss Brabazon, it will be very kind in you to divert our thoughts into channels less gloomy. Some pretty French air—Dr. Fenwick, I have something to say to you." She drew me towards the window. "So Annie Ashleigh writes me word that I am not to mention your engagement. Do you think it quite prudent to keep it a secret?"

"I do not see how prudence is concerned in keeping it secret one way or the other,—it is a mere matter of feeling. Most people wish to abridge, as far as they can, the time in which their private arrangements are the topic of public gossip."

"Public gossip is sometimes the best security for the due completion of private arrangements. As long as a girl is not known to be engaged, her betrothed must be prepared for rivals. Announce the engagement, and rivals are warned off."

"I fear no rivals."

"Do you not? Bold man! I suppose you will write to Lilian?"

"Certainly."

"Do so, and constantly. By-the-way, Mrs. Ashleigh, before she went, asked me to send her back Lady Haughton's letter of invitation. What for,—to show to you?"

"Very likely. Have you the letter still? May I see it?"

"Not just at present. When Lilian or Mrs. Ashleigh writes to you, come and tell me how they like their visit, and what other guests form the party."

Therewith she turned away and conversed apart with the traveller.

Her words disquieted me, and I felt that they were meant to do so, wherefore I could not guess. But there is no language on earth which has more words with a double meaning than that spoken by the Clever Woman, who is never so guarded as when she appears to be frank.

As I walked home thoughtfully, I was accosted by a young man, the son of one of the wealthiest merchants in the town. I had attended him with success some months before, in a rheumatic fever: he and his family were much attached to me.

"Ah, my dear Fenwick, I am so glad to see you; I owe you an obligation of which you are not aware,—an exceedingly pleasant travelling-companion. I came with him to-day from London, where I have been sight-seeing and holidaymaking for the last fortnight."

"I suppose you mean that you kindly bring me a patient?"

"No, only an admirer. I was staying at Fenton's Hotel. It so happened one day that I had left in the coffee-room your last work on the Vital Principle, which, by the by, the bookseller assures me is selling immensely among readers as non-professional as myself. Coming into the coffee-room again, I found a gentleman reading the book. I claimed it politely; he as politely tendered his excuse for taking it. We made acquaintance on the spot. The next day we were intimate. He expressed great interest and curiosity about your theory and your experiments. I told him I knew you. You may guess if I described you as less clever in your practice than you are in your writings; and, in short, he came with me to L—, partly to see our flourishing town, principally on my promise to introduce him to you. My mother, you know, has what she calls a *dejeuner* tomorrow,—*dejeuner* and dance. You will be there?"

"Thank you for reminding me of her invitation. I will avail myself of it if I can. Your new friend will be present? Who and what is he,—a medical student?"

"No, a mere gentleman at ease, but seems to have a good deal of general information. Very young, apparently very rich, wonderfully good-looking. I am sure you will like him; everybody must."

"It is quite enough to prepare me to like him that he is a friend of yours." And so we shook hands and parted.

[1] Mrs. Poyntz here makes a mistake in law which, though very evident, her listeners do not seem to have noticed. Her mistake will be referred to later.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was late in the afternoon of the following day before I was able to join the party assembled at the merchant's house; it was a villa about two miles out of the town, pleasantly situated amidst flower-gardens celebrated in the neighbourhood for their beauty. The breakfast had been long over; the company was scattered over the lawn,—some formed into a dance on the smooth lawn; some seated under shady awnings; others gliding amidst parterres, in which all the glow of colour took a glory yet more vivid under the flush of a brilliant sunshine; and the ripple of a soft western breeze. Music, loud and lively, mingled with the laughter of happy children, who formed much the larger number of the party.

Standing at the entrance of an arched trellis, that led from the hardier flowers of the lawn to a rare collection of tropical plants under a lofty glass dome (connecting, as it were, the familiar vegetation of the North with that of the remotest East), was a form that instantaneously caught and fixed my gaze. The entrance of the arcade was covered with parasite creepers, in prodigal luxuriance, of variegated gorgeous tints,—scarlet, golden, purple; and the form, an idealized picture of man's youth fresh from the hand of Nature, stood literally in a frame of blooms.

Never have I seen human face so radiant as that young man's. There was in the aspect an indescribable something that literally dazzled. As one continued to gaze, it was with surprise; one was forced to acknowledge that in the features themselves there was no faultless regularity; nor was the young man's stature imposing, about the middle height. But the effect of the whole was not less transcendent. Large eyes, unspeakably lustrous; a most harmonious colouring; an expression of contagious animation and joyousness; and the form itself so critically fine, that the welded strength of

its sinews was best shown in the lightness and grace of its movements.

He was resting one hand carelessly on the golden locks of a child that had nestled itself against his knees, looking up to his face in that silent loving wonder with which children regard something too strangely beautiful for noisy admiration; he himself was conversing with the host, an old gray-haired, gouty man, propped on his crutched stick, and listening with a look of mournful envy. To the wealth of the old man all the flowers in that garden owed their renewed delight in the summer air and sun. Oh, that his wealth could renew to himself one hour of the youth whose incarnation stood beside him, Lord, indeed, of Creation; its splendour woven into his crown of beauty, its enjoyments subject to his sceptre of hope and gladness.

I was startled by the hearty voice of the merchant's son. "Ah, my dear Fenwick, I was afraid you would not come,—you are late. There is the new friend of whom I spoke to you last night; let me now make you acquainted with him." He drew my arm in his, and led me up to the young man, where he stood under the arching flowers, and whom he then introduced to me by the name of Margrave.

Nothing could be more frankly cordial than Mr. Margrave's manner. In a few minutes I found myself conversing with him familiarly, as if we had been reared in the same home, and sported together in the same playground. His vein of talk was peculiar, off-hand, careless, shifting from topic to topic with a bright rapidity.

He said that he liked the place; proposed to stay in it some weeks; asked my address, which I gave to him; promised to call soon at an early hour, while my time was yet free from professional visits. I endeavoured, when I went away, to analyze to myself the fascination which this young stranger so notably exercised over all who approached him; and it seemed to me, ever seeking to find material causes for all moral effects, that it rose from the contagious vitality of that rarest of all rare gifts in highly-civilized circles,—perfect health; that health which is in itself the most exquisite luxury; which, finding happiness in the mere sense of existence, diffuses round it, like an atmosphere, the harmless hilarity of its bright animal being. Health, to the utmost perfection, is seldom known after childhood; health to the utmost cannot be enjoyed by those who overwork the brain, or admit the sure wear and tear of the passions. The creature I had just seen gave me the notion of youth in the golden age of the poets,—the youth of the careless Arcadian, before nymph or shepherdess had vexed his heart with a sigh.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The house I occupied at L— was a quaint, old-fashioned building, a corner-house. One side, in which was the front entrance, looked upon a street which, as there were no shops in it, and it was no direct thoroughfare to the busy centres of the town, was always quiet, and at some hours of the day almost deserted. The other side of the house fronted a lane; opposite to it was the long and high wall of the garden to a Young Ladies' Boarding-school. My stables adjoined the house, abutting on a row of smaller buildings, with little gardens before them, chiefly occupied by mercantile clerks and retired tradesmen. By the lane there was a short and ready access both to the high turnpike-road, and to some pleasant walks through green meadows and along the banks of a river.

This house I had inhabited since my arrival at L—, and it had to me so many attractions, in a situation sufficiently central to be convenient for patients, and yet free from noise, and favourable to ready outlet into the country for such foot or horse exercise as my professional avocations would allow me to carve for myself out of what the Latin poet calls the "solid day," that I had refused to change it for one better suited to my increased income; but it was not a house which Mrs. Ashleigh would have liked for Lilian. The main objection to it in the eyes of the "genteel" was, that it had formerly belonged to a member of the healing profession who united the shop of an apothecary to the diploma of a surgeon; but that shop had given the house a special attraction to me; for it had been built out on the side of the house which fronted the lane, occupying the greater portion of a small gravel court, fenced from the road by a low iron palisade, and separated from the body of the house itself by a short and narrow corridor that communicated with the entrance-hall. This shop I turned into a rude study for scientific experiments, in which I generally spent some early hours of the morning, before my visiting patients began to arrive. I enjoyed the stillness of its separation from the rest of the house; I enjoyed the glimpse of the great chestnut-trees, which overtopped the wall of the school-garden; I enjoyed the ease with which, by opening the glazed sash-door, I could get out, if disposed for a short walk, into the pleasant fields; and so completely had I made this sanctuary my own, that not only my man-servant

knew that I was never to be disturbed when in it, except by the summons of a patient, but even the housemaid was forbidden to enter it with broom or duster, except upon special invitation. The last thing at night, before retiring to rest, it was the man-servant's business to see that the sash-window was closed, and the gate to the iron palisade locked; but during the daytime I so often went out of the house by that private way that the gate was then very seldom locked, nor the sash-door bolted from within. In the town of L— there was little apprehension of house-robberies,—especially in the daylight,—and certainly in this room, cut off from the main building, there was nothing to attract a vulgar cupidity. A few of the apothecary's shelves and cases still remained on the walls, with, here and there, a bottle of some chemical preparation for experiment; two or three worm-eaten, wooden chairs; two or three shabby old tables; an old walnut-tree bureau without a lock, into which odds and ends were confusedly thrust, and sundry ugly-looking inventions of mechanical science, were, assuredly, not the articles which a timid proprietor would guard with jealous care from the chances of robbery. It will be seen later why I have been thus prolix in description. The morning after I had met the young stranger by whom I had been so favourably impressed, I was up as usual, a little before the sun, and long before any of my servants were astir. I went first into the room I have mentioned, and which I shall henceforth designate as my study, opened the window, unlocked the gate, and sauntered for some minutes up and down the silent lace skirting the opposite wall, and overhung by the chestnut-trees rich in the garniture of a glorious summer; then, refreshed for work, I re-entered my study, and was soon absorbed in the examination of that now well-known machine, which was then, to me at least, a novelty,—invented, if I remember right, by Dubois-Reymond, so distinguished by his researches into the mysteries of organic electricity. It is a wooden cylinder fixed against the edge of a table; on the table two vessels filled with salt and water are so placed that, as you close your hands on the cylinder, the forefinger of each hand can drop into the water; each of the vessels has a metallic plate, and communicates by wires with a galvanometer with its needle. Now the theory is, that if you clutch the cylinder firmly with the right hand, leaving the left perfectly passive, the needle in the galvanometer will move from west to south; if, in like manner, you exert the left arm, leaving the right arm passive, the needle will deflect from west to north. Hence, it is argued that the electric current is induced through the agency of the nervous system, and that, as human Will produces the muscular contraction requisite, so is it human Will that causes the deflection of the needle. I imagine that if this theory were substantiated by experiment, the discovery might lead to some sublime and un conjectured secrets of science. For human Will, thus actively effective on the electric current, and all matter, animate or inanimate, having more or less of electricity, a vast field became opened to conjecture. By what series of patient experimental deduction might not science arrive at the solution of problems which the Newtonian law of gravitation does not suffice to solve; and—But here I halt. At the date which my story has reached, my mind never lost itself long in the Cloudland of Guess.

I was dissatisfied with my experiment. The needle stirred, indeed, but erratically, and not in directions which, according to the theory, should correspond to my movement. I was about to dismiss the trial with some uncharitable contempt of the foreign philosopher's dogmas, when I heard a loud ring at my street-door. While I paused to conjecture whether my servant was yet up to attend to the door, and which of my patients was the most likely to summon me at so unseasonable an hour, a shadow darkened my window. I looked up, and to my astonishment beheld the brilliant face of Mr. Margrave. The sash to the door was already partially opened; he raised it higher, and walked into the room. "Was it you who rang at the street-door, and at this hour?" said I.

"Yes; and observing, after I had rung, that all the shutters were still closed, I felt ashamed of my own rash action, and made off rather than brave the reproachful face of some injured housemaid, robbed of her morning dreams. I turned down that pretty lane,—lured by the green of the chestnut-trees,—caught sight of you through the window, took courage, and here I am! You forgive me?" While thus speaking, he continued to move along the littered floor of the dingy room, with the undulating restlessness of some wild animal in the confines of its den, and he now went on, in short fragmentary sentences, very slightly linked together, but smoothed, as it were, into harmony by a voice musical and fresh as a sky lark's warble. "Morning dreams, indeed! dreams that waste the life of such a morning. Rosy magnificence of a summer dawn! Do you not pity the fool who prefers to lie a bed, and to dream rather than to live? What! and you, strong man, with those noble limbs, in this den! Do you not long for a rush through the green of the fields, a bath in the blue of the river?"

Here he came to a pause, standing, still in the gray light of the growing day, with eyes whose joyous lustre forestalled the sun's, and lips which seemed to laugh even in repose.

But presently those eyes, as quick as they were bright, glanced over the walls, the floor, the shelves, the phials, the mechanical inventions, and then rested full on my cylinder fixed to the table. He approached, examined it curiously, asked what it was. I explained. To gratify him I sat down and renewed my experiment, with equally ill success. The needle, which should have moved from west to south, describing an angle of from thirty degrees to forty or even fifty degrees, only made a few

troubled, undecided oscillations.

"Tut," cried the young man, "I see what it is; you have a wound in your right hand."

That was true; I had burned my hand a few days before in a chemical experiment, and the sore had not healed.

"Well," said I, "and what does that matter?"

"Everything; the least scratch in the skin of the hand produces chemical actions on the electric current, independently of your will. Let me try."

He took my place, and in a moment the needle in the galvanometer responded to his grasp on the cylinder, exactly as the inventive philosopher had stated to be the due result of the experiment.

I was startled.

"But how came you, Mr. Margrave, to be so well acquainted with a scientific process little known, and but recently discovered?"

"I well acquainted! not so. But I am fond of all experiments that relate to animal life. Electricity, especially, is full of interest."

On that I drew him out (as I thought), and he talked volubly. I was amazed to find this young man, in whose brain I had conceived thought kept one careless holiday, was evidently familiar with the physical sciences, and especially with chemistry, which was my own study by predilection. But never had I met with a student in whom a knowledge so extensive was mixed up with notions so obsolete or so crotchety. In one sentence he showed that he had mastered some late discovery by Faraday or Liebig; in the next sentence he was talking the wild fallacies of Cardan or Van Helmont. I burst out laughing at some paradox about sympathetic powders, which he enounced as if it were a recognized truth.

"Pray tell me," said I, "who was your master in physics; for a cleverer pupil never had a more crack-brained teacher."

"No," he answered, with his merry laugh, "it is not the teacher's fault. I am a mere parrot; just cry out a few scraps of learning picked up here and there. But, however, I am fond of all researches into Nature; all guesses at her riddles. To tell you the truth, one reason why I have taken to you so heartily is not only that your published work caught my fancy in the dip which I took into its contents (pardon me if I say dip, I never do more than dip into any book), but also because young — tells me that which all whom I have met in this town confirm; namely, that you are one of those few practical chemists who are at once exceedingly cautious and exceedingly bold,—willing to try every new experiment, but submitting experiment to rigid tests. Well, I have an experiment running wild in this giddy head of mine, and I want you, some day when at leisure, to catch it, fix it as you have fixed that cylinder, make something of it. I am sure you can."

"What is it?"

"Something akin to the theories in your work. You would replenish or preserve to each special constitution the special substance that may fail to the equilibrium of its health. But you own that in a large proportion of cases the best cure of disease is less to deal with the disease itself than to support and stimulate the whole system, so as to enable Nature to cure the disease and restore the impaired equilibrium by her own agencies. Thus, if you find that in certain cases of nervous debility a substance like nitric acid is efficacious, it is because the nitric acid has a virtue in locking up, as it were, the nervous energy,—that is, preventing all undue waste. Again, in some cases of what is commonly called feverish cold, stimulants like ammonia assist Nature itself to get rid of the disorder that oppresses its normal action; and, on the same principle, I apprehend, it is contended that a large average of human lives is saved in those hospitals which have adopted the supporting system of ample nourishment and alcoholic stimulants."

"Your medical learning surprises me," said I, smiling; "and without pausing to notice where it deals somewhat superficially with disputable points in general, and my own theory in particular, I ask you for the deduction you draw from your premises."

"It is simply this: that to all animate bodies, however various, there must be one principle in common,—the vital principle itself. What if there be one certain means of recruiting that principle; and what if that secret can be discovered?"

"Pshaw! The old illusion of the mediaeval empirics."

"Not so. But the mediaeval empirics were great discoverers. You sneer at Van Helmont, who sought, in water, the principle of all things; but Van Helmont discovered in his search those invisible bodies called gases. Now the principle of life must be certainly ascribed to a gas.[1] And what ever is a gas chemistry should not despair of producing! But I can argue no longer now,—never can argue long at a stretch; we are wasting the morning; and, joy! the sun is up! See! Out! come out! out! and greet the great Lifegiver face to face."

I could not resist the young man's invitation. In a few minutes we were in the quiet lane under the glinting chestnut-trees. Margrave was chanting, low, a wild tune,—words in a strange language.

"What words are those,—no European language, I think; for I know a little of most of the languages which are spoken in our quarter of the globe, at least by its more civilized races."

"Civilized race! What is civilization? Those words were uttered by men who founded empires when Europe itself was not civilized! Hush, is it not a grand old air?" and lifting his eyes towards the sun, he gave vent to a voice clear and deep as a mighty bell! The air was grand; the words had a sonorous swell that suited it, and they seemed to me jubilant and yet solemn. He stopped abruptly as a path from the lane had led us into the fields, already half-bathed in sunlight, dews glittering on the hedgerows.

"Your song," said I, "would go well with the clash of cymbals or the peal of the organ. I am no judge of melody, but this strikes me as that of a religious hymn."

"I compliment you on the guess. It is a Persian fire-worshipper's hymn to the sun. The dialect is very different from modern Persian. Cyrus the Great might have chanted it on his march upon Babylon."

"And where did you learn it?"

"In Persia itself."

"You have travelled much, learned much,—and are so young and so fresh. Is it an impertinent question if I ask whether your parents are yet living, or are you wholly lord of yourself?"

"Thank you for the question,—pray make my answer known in the town. Parents I have not,—never had."

"Never had parents!"

"Well, I ought rather to say that no parents ever owned me. I am a natural son, a vagabond, a nobody. When I came of age I received an anonymous letter, informing me that a sum—I need not say what, but more than enough for all I need—was lodged at an English banker's in my name; that my mother had died in my infancy; that my father was also dead—but recently; that as I was a child of love, and he was unwilling that the secret of my birth should ever be traced, he had provided for me, not by will, but in his life, by a sum consigned to the trust of the friend who now wrote to me; I need give myself no trouble to learn more. Faith, I never did! I am young, healthy, rich,—yes, rich! Now you know all, and you had better tell it, that I may win no man's courtesy and no maiden's love upon false pretences. I have not even a right, you see, to the name I bear. Hist! let me catch that squirrel."

With what a panther-like bound he sprang! The squirrel eluded his grasp, and was up the oak-tree; in a moment he was up the oak-tree too. In amazement I saw him rising from bough to bough; saw his bright eyes and glittering teeth through the green leaves. Presently I heard the sharp piteous cry of the squirrel, echoed by the youth's merry laugh; and down, through that maze of green, Hargrave came, dropping on the grass and bounding up, as Mercury might have bounded with his wings at his heels.

"I have caught him. What pretty brown eyes!"

Suddenly the gay expression of his face changed to that of a savage; the squirrel had wrenched itself half-loose, and bitten him. The poor brute! In an instant its neck was wrung, its body dashed on the ground; and that fair young creature, every feature quivering with rage, was stamping his foot on his victim again and again! It was horrible. I caught him by the arm indignantly. He turned round on me like a wild beast disturbed from its prey,—his teeth set, his hand lifted, his eyes like balls of fire.

"Shame!" said I, calmly; "shame on you!"

He continued to gaze on me a moment or so, his eye glaring, his breath panting; and then, as if mastering himself with an involuntary effort, his arm dropped to his side, and he said quite humbly, "I beg your pardon; indeed I do. I was beside myself for a moment; I cannot bear pain; and he looked in deep compassion for himself at his wounded hand. "Venomous brute!" And he stamped again on the body of the squirrel, already crushed out of shape.

I moved away in disgust, and walked on.

But presently I felt my arm softly drawn aside, and a voice, dulcet as the coo of a dove, stole its way into my ears. There was no resisting the charm with which this extraordinary mortal could fascinate even the hard and the cold; nor them, perhaps, the least. For as you see in extreme old age, when the heart seems to have shrunk into itself, and to leave but meagre and nipped affections for the nearest relations if grown up, the indurated egotism softens at once towards a playful child; or as you see in middle life, some misanthrope, whose nature has been soured by wrong and sorrow, shrink from his own species, yet make friends with inferior races, and respond to the caress of a dog,—so, for the worldling or the cynic, there was an attraction in the freshness of this joyous favourite of Nature,—an attraction like that of a beautiful child, spoilt and wayward, or of a graceful animal, half docile, half fierce.

"But," said I, with a smile, as I felt all displeasure gone, "such indulgence of passion for such a trifle is surely unworthy a student of philosophy!"

"Trifle," he said dolorously. "But I tell you it is pain; pain is no trifle. I suffer. Look!"

I looked at the hand, which I took in mine. The bite no doubt had been sharp; but the hand that lay in my own was that which the Greek sculptor gives to a gladiator; not large (the extremities are never large in persons whose strength comes from the just proportion of all the members, rather than the factitious and partial force which continued muscular exertion will give to one part of the frame, to the comparative weakening of the rest), but with the firm-knit joints, the solid fingers, the finished nails, the massive palm, the supple polished skin, in which we recognize what Nature designs the human hand to be,—the skilled, swift, mighty doer of all those marvels which win Nature herself from the wilderness.

"It is strange," said I, thoughtfully; "but your susceptibility to suffering confirms my opinion, which is different from the popular belief,—namely, that pain is most acutely felt by those in whom the animal organization being perfect, and the sense of vitality exquisitely keen, every injury or lesion finds the whole system rise, as it were, to repel the mischief and communicate the consciousness of it to all those nerves which are the sentinels to the garrison of life. Yet my theory is scarcely borne out by general fact. The Indian savages must have a health as perfect as yours; a nervous system as fine,—witness their marvellous accuracy of ear, of eye, of scent, probably also of touch; yet they are indifferent to physical pain; or must I mortify your pride by saying that they have some moral quality defective in you which enables them to rise superior to it?"

"The Indian savages," said Margrave, sullenly, "have not a health as perfect as mine, and in what you call vitality—the blissful consciousness of life—they are as sticks and stones compared to me."

"How do you know?"

"Because I have lived with them. It is a fallacy to suppose that the savage has a health superior to that of the civilized man,—if the civilized man be but temperate; and even if not, he has the stamina that can resist for years the effect of excesses which would destroy the savage in a month. As to the savage's fine perceptions of sense, such do not come from exquisite equilibrium of system, but are hereditary attributes transmitted from race to race, and strengthened by training from infancy. But is a pointer stronger and healthier than a mastiff, because the pointer through long descent and early teaching creeps stealthily to his game and stands to it motionless? I will talk of this later; now I suffer! Pain, pain! Has life any ill but pain?"

It so happened that I had about me some roots of the white lily, which I meant, before returning home, to leave with a patient suffering from one of those acute local inflammations, in which that simple remedy often affords great relief. I cut up one of these roots, and bound the cooling leaves to the wounded hand with my handkerchief.

"There," said I. "Fortunately if you feel pain more sensibly than others, you will recover from it more quickly." And in a few minutes my companion felt perfectly relieved, and poured out his gratitude with an extravagance of expression and a beaming delight of countenance which positively touched me.

"I almost feel," said I, "as I do when I have stilled an infant's wailing, and restored it smiling to its mother's breast."

"You have done so. I am an infant, and Nature is my mother. Oh, to be restored to the full joy of life, the scent of wild flowers, the song of birds, and this air—summer air—summer air!"

I know not why it was, but at that moment, looking at him and hearing him, I rejoiced that Lilian was not at L—. "But I came out to bathe. Can we not bathe in that stream?"

"No. You would derange the bandage round your hand; and for all bodily ills, from the least to the gravest, there is nothing like leaving Nature at rest the moment we have hit on the means which assist her own efforts at cure."

"I obey, then; but I so love the water."

"You swim, of course?"

"Ask the fish if it swim. Ask the fish if it can escape me! I delight to dive down—down; to plunge after the startled trout, as an otter does; and then to get amongst those cool, fragrant reeds and bulrushes, or that forest of emerald weed which one sometimes finds waving under clear rivers. Man! man! could you live but an hour of my life you would know how horrible a thing it is to die!"

"Yet the dying do not think so; they pass away calm and smiling, as you will one day."

"I—I! die one day—die!" and he sank on the grass, and buried his face amongst the herbage, sobbing aloud.

Before I could get through half a dozen words I meant to soothe, he had once more bounded up, dashed the tears from his eyes, and was again singing some wild, barbaric chant. Abstracting itself from the appeal to its outward sense by melodies of which the language was unknown, my mind soon grew absorbed in meditative conjectures on the singular nature, so wayward, so impulsive, which had forced intimacy on a man grave and practical as myself.

I was puzzled how to reconcile so passionate a childishness, so undisciplined a want of self-control, with an experience of mankind so extended by travel, with an education desultory and irregular indeed, but which must, at some time or other, have been familiarized to severe reasonings and laborious studies. In Margrave there seemed to be wanting that mysterious something which is needed to keep our faculties, however severally brilliant, harmoniously linked together,—as the string by which a child mechanically binds the wildflowers it gathers, shaping them at choice into the garland or the chain.

[1] "According to the views we have mentioned, we must ascribe life to a gas, that is, to an aeriform body."—Liebig: "Organic Chemistry," Mayfair's translation, p.363.—It is perhaps not less superfluous to add that Liebig does not support the views "according to which life must be ascribed to a gas," than it would be to state, had Dugald Stewart been quoted as writing, "According to the views we have mentioned the mind is but a bundle of impressions," that Dugald Stewart was not supporting, but opposing, the views of David Hume. The quotation is merely meant to show, in the shortest possible compass, that there are views entertained by speculative reasoners of our day which, according to Liebig, would lead to the inference at which Margrave so boldly arrives. Margrave is, however, no doubt, led to his belief by his reminiscences of Van Helmont, to whose discovery of gas he is referring. Van Helmont plainly affirms "that the arterial spirit of our life is of the nature of a gas;" and in the same chapter (on the fiction of elementary complexions and mixtures) says, "Seeing that the spirit of our life, since it is a gas, is most mightily and swiftly affected by any other gas," etc. He repeats the same dogma in his treatise on "Long Life," and indeed very generally throughout his writings, observing, in his chapter on the Vital Air, that the spirit of life is a salt, sharp vapour, made of the arterial blood, etc. Liebig, therefore, in confuting some modern notions as to the nature of contagion by miasma, is leading their reasonings back to that assumption in the Brawn of physiological science by which the discoverer of gas exalted into the principle of life the substance to which he first gave the name, now so familiarly known. It is nevertheless just to Van Helmont to add that his conception of the vital principle was very far from being as purely materialistic as it would seem to those unacquainted with his writings; for he carefully distinguishes that principle of life which he ascribes to a gas, and by which he means the sensuous animal life, from the intellectual immortal principle of soul. Van Helmont, indeed, was a sincere believer of Divine Revelation. "The Lord Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life," says with earnest humility this daring genius, in that noble chapter "On the completing of the mind by the 'prayer of silence,' and the loving offering tip of the heart, soul, and strength to the obedience of the Divine will," from which some of the most eloquent of recent philosophers, arguing against materialism, have borrowed largely in support and in ornament of their lofty cause.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A STRANGE STORY — VOLUME 02 ***

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