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BOOK SIXTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

WHEREIN MR. CAXTON IS PROFOUNDLY METAPHYSICAL.

"Life," said my father, in his most dogmatical tone, "is a certain quantity in time, which may be regarded in two ways,—First, as life integral; Second, as life fractional. Life integral is that complete whole expressive of a certain value, large or small, which each man possesses in himself. Life fractional is that same whole seized upon and invaded by other people, and subdivided amongst them. They who get a large slice of it say, 'A very valuable life this!' Those who get but a small handful say, 'So, so; nothing very great!' Those who get none of it in the scramble exclaim, 'Good for nothing!'"

"I don't understand a word you are saying," growled Captain Roland.

My father surveyed his brother with compassion: "I will make it all clear, even to your understanding. When I sit down by myself in my study, having carefully locked the door on all of you, alone with my books and thoughts, I am in full possession of my integral life. I am /totus, teres, atque rotundus/,—a whole human being, equivalent in value, we will say, for the sake of illustration, to a fixed round sum, L100 for example. But when I go forth into the common apartment, each of those to whom I am of any worth whatsoever puts his finger into the bag that contains me, and takes out of me what he wants. Kitty requires me to pay a bill; Pisistratus to save him the time and trouble of looking into a score or two of books; the children to tell them stories, or play at hide-and-seek; and so on throughout the circle to which I have incautiously given myself up for plunder and subdivision. The L100 which I represented in my study is now parcelled out; I am worth L40 or L50 to Kitty, L20 to Pisistratus, and perhaps 30s. to the children. This is life fractional. And I cease to be an integral till once more returning to my study, and again closing the door on all existence but my own. Meanwhile, it is perfectly clear that to those who, whether I am in the study or whether I am in the common sitting-room, get nothing at all out of me, I am not worth a farthing. It must be wholly indifferent to a native of Kamschatka whether Austin Caxton be or be not razed out of the great account-book of human beings.

"Hence," continued my father,—“hence it follows that the more fractional a life be—that is, the greater the number of persons among whom it can be subdivided—why, the more there are to say, 'A very valuable life that!' Thus the leader of a political party, a conqueror, a king, an author, who is amusing hundreds or thousands or millions, has a greater number of persons whom his worth interests and affects than a Saint Simeon Stylites could have when he perched himself at the top of a column; although, regarded each in himself, Saint Simeon, in his grand mortification of flesh, in the idea that he thereby pleased his Divine Benefactor, might represent a larger sum of moral value per se than Bonaparte or Voltaire.”

PISISTRATUS.—“Perfectly clear, sir; but I don't see what it has to do with 'My Novel.'”

MR. CAXTON.—“Everything. Your novel, if it is to be a full and comprehensive survey of the 'Quicquid agunt homines' (which it ought to be, considering the length and breadth to which I foresee, from the slow development of your story, you meditate extending and expanding it), will embrace the two views of existence,—the integral and the fractional. You have shown us the former in Leonard, when he is sitting in his mother's cottage, or resting from his work by the little fount in Riccabocca's garden. And in harmony with that view of his life, you have surrounded him with comparative integrals, only subdivided by the tender hands of their immediate families and neighbours,—your squires and parsons, your Italian exile and his Jemima. With all these, life is, more or less, the life natural, and this is always, more or less, the life integral. Then comes the life artificial, which is always, more or less, the life fractional. In the life natural, wherein we are swayed but by our own native impulses and desires, subservient only to the great silent law of Virtue (which has pervaded the universe since it swung out of chaos), a man is of worth from what he is in himself,—Newton was as worthy before the apple fell from the tree as when all Europe applauded the discoverer of the Principle of Gravity. But in the life artificial we are only of worth inasmuch as we affect others; and, relative to that life, Newton rose in value more than a million per cent when down fell the apple from which ultimately sprang up his discovery. In order to keep civilization going and spread over the world the light of human intellect, we have certain desires within us, ever swelling beyond the ease and independence which belongs to us as integrals. Cold man as Newton might be (he once took a lady's hand in his own, Kitty, and used her forefinger for his tobacco-stopper,—great philosopher!), cold as he might be, he was yet moved into giving his discoveries to the world, and that from motives very little differing in their quality from the motives that make Dr. Squills communicate articles to the 'Phrenological Journal' upon the skulls of Bushmen and wombats. For it is the property of light to travel. When a man has light in him, forth it must go. But the first passage of genius from its integral state (in which it has been reposing on its own wealth) into the fractional is usually through a hard and vulgar pathway. It leaves behind it the reveries of solitude,—that self-contemplating rest which may be called the Visionary,—and enters suddenly into the state that may be called the Positive and Actual. There it sees the operations of money on the outer life; sees all the ruder and commoner springs of action; sees ambition without nobleness, love without romance; is hustled about and ordered and trampled and cowed,—in short, it passes an apprenticeship with some Richard Avenel, and does not detect what good and what grandeur, what addition even to the true poetry of the social universe, fractional existences like Richard Avenel's bestow; for the pillars that support society are like those of the Court of the Hebrew Tabernacle,—they are of brass, it is true, but they are filleted with silver. From such intermediate state Genius is expelled and driven on its way, and would have been so in this case had Mrs. Fairfield (who is but the representative of the homely natural affections, strongest ever in true genius,—for light is warm) never crushed Mr. Avenel's moss rose on her sisterly bosom. Now, forth from this passage and defile of transition into the larger world, must Genius go on, working out its natural destiny amidst things and forms the most artificial. Passions that move and influence the world are at work around it. Often lost sight of itself, its very absence is a silent contrast to the agencies present. Merged and vanished for a while amidst the Practical World, yet we ourselves feel all the while that it is there; is at work amidst the workings around it. This practical world that effaces it rose out of some genius that has gone before; and so each man of genius, though we never come across him, as his operations proceed in places remote from our thoroughfares, is yet influencing the practical world that ignores him, for ever and ever. That is GENIUS! We can't describe it in books; we can only hint and suggest it by the accessories which we artfully heap about it. The entrance of a true Probationer into the terrible ordeal of Practical Life is like that into the miraculous cavern, by which, legend informs us, Saint Patrick converted Ireland.”

BLANCHE.—“What is that legend? I never heard of it.”

MR. CAXTON.—“My dear, you will find it in a thin folio at the right on entering my study, written by Thomas Messingham, and called 'Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum,' etc. The account therein is confirmed by the relation of an honest soldier, one Louis Ennius, who had actually entered the cavern. In short, the truth of the legend is undeniable, unless you mean to say, which I can't for a moment suppose, that Louis Ennius was a liar. Thus it runs: Saint Patrick, finding that the Irish pagans were incredulous as to his pathetic assurances of the pains and torments destined to those who did not expiate their sins in

this world, prayed for a miracle to convince them. His prayer was heard; and a certain cavern, so small that a man could not stand up therein at his ease, was suddenly converted into a Purgatory, comprehending tortures sufficient to convince the most incredulous. One unacquainted with human nature might conjecture that few would be disposed to venture voluntarily into such a place; on the contrary, pilgrims came in crowds. Now, all who entered from vain curiosity or with souls unprepared perished miserably; but those who entered with deep and earnest faith, conscious of their faults, and if bold, yet humble, not only came out safe and sound, but purified, as if from the waters of a second baptism. See Savage and Johnson at night in Fleet Street,—and who shall doubt the truth of Saint Patrick's Purgatory!" Therewith my father sighed; closed his Lucian, which had lain open on the table, and would read none but "good books" for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER II.

On their escape from the prison to which Mr. Avenel had condemned them, Leonard and his mother found their way to a small public-house that lay at a little distance from the town, and on the outskirts of the high road. With his arm round his mother's waist, Leonard supported her steps, and soothed her excitement. In fact, the poor woman's nerves were greatly shaken, and she felt an uneasy remorse at the injury her intrusion had inflicted on the young man's worldly prospects. As the shrewd reader has guessed already, that infamous tinker was the prime agent of evil in this critical turn in the affairs of his quondam customer; for, on his return to his haunts around Hazeldean and the Casino, the tinker had hastened to apprise Mrs. Fairfield of his interview with Leonard, and, on finding that she was not aware that the boy was under the roof of his uncle, the pestilent vagabond (perhaps from spite against Mr. Avenel, or perhaps from that pure love of mischief by which metaphysical critics explain the character of Iago, and which certainly formed a main element in the idiosyncrasy of Mr. Sprott) had so impressed on the widow's mind the haughty demeanour of the uncle, and the refined costume of the nephew, that Mrs. Fairfield had been seized with a bitter and insupportable jealousy. There was an intention to rob her of her boy!—he was to be made too fine for her. His silence was now accounted for. This sort of jealousy, always more or less a feminine quality, is often very strong amongst the poor; and it was the more strong in Mrs. Fairfield, because, lone woman that she was, the boy was all in all to her. And though she was reconciled to the loss of his presence, nothing could reconcile her to the thought that his affections should be weaned from her. Moreover, there were in her mind certain impressions, of the justice of which the reader may better judge hereafter, as to the gratitude—more than ordinarily filial—which Leonard owed to her. In short, she did not like, as she phrased it, "to be shaken off;" and after a sleepless night she resolved to judge for herself, much moved thereto by the malicious suggestions to that effect made by Mr. Sprott, who mightily enjoyed the idea of mortifying the gentlemen by whom he had been so disrespectfully threatened with the treadmill. The widow felt angry with Parson Dale and with the Riccaboccas: she thought they were in the plot against her; she communicated, therefore, her intentions to none, and off she set, performing the journey partly on the top of the coach, partly on foot. No wonder that she was dusty, poor woman!

"And, oh, boy!" said she, half sobbing, "when I got through the lodge-gates, came on the lawn, and saw all that power o' fine folk, I said to myself, says I—for I felt fritted—I'll just have a look at him and go back. But ah, Lenny, when I saw thee, looking so handsome, and when thee turned and cried 'Mother,' my heart was just ready to leap out o' my mouth, and so I could not help hugging thee, if I had died for it. And thou wert so kind, that I forgot all Mr. Sprott had said about Dick's pride, or thought he had just told a fib about that, as he had wanted me to believe a fib about thee. Then Dick came up—and I had not seen him for so many years—and we come o' the same father and mother; and so—and so—" The widow's sobs here fairly choked her. "Ah," she said, after giving vent to her passion, and throwing her arms round Leonard's neck, as they sat in the little sanded parlour of the public-house,—"ah, and I've brought thee to this. Go back; go back, boy, and never mind me."

With some difficulty Leonard pacified poor Mrs. Fairfield, and got her to retire to bed; for she was, indeed, thoroughly exhausted. He then stepped forth into the road; musingly. All the stars were out; and Youth, in its troubles, instinctively looks up to the stars. Folding his arms, Leonard gazed on the heavens, and his lips murmured.

From this trance, for so it might be called, he was awakened by a voice in a decidedly London accent; and, turning hastily round, saw Mr. Avenel's very gentlemanlike butler.

Leonard's first idea was that his uncle had repented, and sent in search of him. But the butler seemed as much surprised at the rencontre as himself: that personage, indeed, the fatigues of the day being

over, was accompanying one of Mr. Gunter's waiters to the public-house (at which the latter had secured his lodging), having discovered an old friend in the waiter, and proposing to regale himself with a cheerful glass, and- THAT of course—abuse of his present situation.

"Mr. Fairfield!" exclaimed the butler, while the waiter walked discreetly on.

Leonard looked, and said nothing. The butler began to think that some apology was due for leaving his plate and his pantry, and that he might as well secure Leonard's propitiatory influence with his master.

"Please, sir," said he, touching his hat, "I was just a showing Mr. Giles the way to the Blue Bells, where he puts up for the night. I hope my master will not be offended. If you are a going back, sir, would you kindly mention it?"

"I am not going back, Jarvis," answered Leonard, after a pause; "I am leaving Mr. Avenel's house, to accompany my mother,—rather suddenly. I should be very much obliged to you if you would bring some things of mine to me at the Blue Bells. I will give you the list, if you will step with me to the inn."

Without waiting for a reply, Leonard then turned towards the inn, and made his humble inventory: item, the clothes he had brought with him from the Casino; item, the knapsack that had contained them; item, a few books, ditto; item, Dr. Riccabocca's watch; item, sundry manuscripts, on which the young student now built all his hopes of fame and fortune. This list he put into Mr. Jarvis's hand.

"Sir," said the butler, twirling the paper between his finger and thumb, "you're not a going for long, I hope?" and he looked on the face of the young man, who had always been "civil spoken to him," with as much curiosity and as much compassion as so apathetic and princely a personage could experience in matters affecting a family less aristocratic than he had hitherto condescended to serve.

"Yes," said Leonard, simply and briefly; "and your master will no doubt excuse you for rendering me this service." Mr. Jarvis postponed for the present his glass and chat with the waiter, and went back at once to Mr. Avenel. That gentleman, still seated in his library, had not been aware of the butler's absence; and when Mr. Jarvis entered and told him that he had met Mr. Fairfield, and communicating the commission with which he was intrusted, asked leave to execute it, Mr. Avenel felt the man's inquisitive eye was on him, and conceived new wrath against Leonard for a new humiliation to his pride. It was awkward to give no explanation of his nephew's departure, still more awkward to explain. After a short pause, Mr. Avenel said sullenly, "My nephew is going away on business for some time,—do what he tells you;" and then turned his back, and lighted his cigar.

"That beast of a boy," said he, soliloquizing, "either means this as an affront, or an overture: if an affront, he is, indeed, well got rid of; if an overture, he will soon make a more respectful and proper one. After all, I can't have too little of relations till I have fairly secured Mrs. M'Catchley. An Honourable! I wonder if that makes me an Honourable too? This cursed Debrett contains no practical information on those points."

The next morning the clothes and the watch with which Mr. Avenel presented Leonard were returned, with a note meant to express gratitude, but certainly written with very little knowledge of the world; and so full of that somewhat over-resentful pride which had in earlier life made Leonard fly from Hazeldean, and refuse all apology to Randal, that it is not to be wondered at that Mr. Avenel's last remorseful feelings evaporated in ire. "I hope he will starve!" said the uncle, vindictively.

CHAPTER III.

"Listen to me, my dear mother," said Leonard the next morning, as, with knapsack on his shoulder and Mrs. Fairfield on his arm, he walked along the high road; "I do assure you from my heart that I do not regret the loss of favours which I see plainly would have crushed out of me the very sense of independence. But do not fear for me; I have education and energy,—I shall do well for myself, trust me.—No, I cannot, it is true, go back to our cottage; I cannot be a gardener again. Don't ask me,—I should be discontented, miserable. But I will go up to London! That's the place to make a fortune and a name: I will make both. Oh, yes, trust me, I will. You shall soon be proud of your Leonard; and then we will always live together,—always! Don't cry," "But what can you do in Lunnon,—such a big place, Lenny?"

"What! Every year does not some lad leave our village, and go and seek his fortune, taking with him but health and strong hands? I have these, and I have more: I have brains and thoughts and hopes, that—again I say, No, no; never fear for me!"

The boy threw back his head proudly; there was something sublime in his young trust in the future.

"Well. But you will write to Mr. Dale or to me? I will get Mr. Dale or the good mounseer (now I know they were not agin me) to read your letters."

"I will, indeed!"

"And, boy, you have nothing in your pockets. We have paid Dick; these, at least, are my own, after paying the coach fare." And she would thrust a sovereign and some shillings into Leonard's waistcoat pocket.

After some resistance, he was forced to consent.

"And there's a sixpence with a hole in it. Don't part with that, Lenny; it will bring thee good luck."

Thus talking, they gained the inn where the three roads met, and from which a coach went direct to the Casino. And here, without entering the inn, they sat on the greensward by the hedgerow, waiting the arrival of the coach—Mrs. Fairfield was much subdued in spirits, and there was evidently on her mind something uneasy,—some struggle with her conscience. She not only upbraided herself for her rash visit, but she kept talking of her dead Mark. And what would he say of her, if he could see her in heaven?

"It was so selfish in me, Lenny."

"Pooh, pooh! Has not a mother a right to her child?"

"Ay, ay, ay!" cried Mrs. Fairfield. "I do love you as a child,—my own child. But if I was not your mother, after all, Lenny, and cost you all this—oh, what would you say of me then?"

"Not my own mother!" said Leonard, laughing as he kissed her. "Well, I don't know what I should say then differently from what I say now,—that you, who brought me up and nursed and cherished me, had a right to my home and my heart, wherever I was."

"Bless thee!" cried Mrs. Fairfield, as she pressed him to her heart. "But it weighs here,—it weighs," she said, starting up.

At that instant the coach appeared, and Leonard ran forward to inquire if there was an outside place. Then there was a short bustle while the horses were being changed; and Mrs. Fairfield was lifted up to the roof of the vehicle, so all further private conversation between her and Leonard ceased. But as the coach whirled away, and she waved her hand to the boy, who stood on the road-side gazing after her, she still murmured, "It weighs here,—it weighs!"

CHAPTER IV.

Leonard walked sturdily on in the high road to the Great City. The day was calm and sunlit, but with a gentle breeze from gray hills at the distance; and with each mile that he passed, his step seemed to grow more firm, and his front more elate. Oh, it is such joy in youth to be alone with one's daydreams! And youth feels so glorious a vigour in the sense of its own strength, though the world be before and—against it! Removed from that chilling counting-house, from the imperious will of a patron and master, all friendless, but all independent, the young adventurer felt a new being, felt his grand nature as Man. And on the Man rushed the genius long interdicted and thrust aside,—rushing back, with the first breath of adversity, to console—no! the Man needed not consolation,—to kindle, to animate, to rejoice! If there is a being in the world worthy of our envy, after we have grown wise philosophers of the fireside, it is not the palled voluptuary, nor the careworn statesman, nor even the great prince of arts and letters, already crowned with the laurel, whose leaves are as fit for poison as for garlands; it is the young child of adventure and hope. Ay, and the emptier his purse, ten to one but the richer his heart, and the wider the domains which his fancy enjoys as he goes on with kingly step to the Future.

Not till towards the evening did our adventurer slacken his pace and think of rest and refreshment.

There, then, lay before him on either side the road those wide patches of uninclosed land which in England often denote the entrance to a village. Presently one or two neat cottages came in sight; then a small farmhouse, with its yard and barns. And some way farther yet, he saw the sign swinging before an inn of some pretensions,—the sort of inn often found on a long stage between two great towns commonly called "The Halfway House." But the inn stood back from the road, having its own separate sward in front, whereon was a great beech-tree (from which the sign extended) and a rustic arbour; so that to gain the inn, the coaches that stopped there took a sweep from the main thoroughfare. Between our pedestrian and the inn there stood, naked and alone, on the common land, a church; our ancestors never would have chosen that site for it; therefore it was a modern church,—modern Gothic; handsome to an eye not versed in the attributes of ecclesiastical architecture, very barbarous to an eye that was. Somehow or other the church looked cold and raw and uninviting. It looked a church for show, —much too big for the scattered hamlet, and void of all the venerable associations which give their peculiar and unspeakable atmosphere of piety to the churches in which succeeding generations have knelt and worshipped. Leonard paused and surveyed the edifice with an unlearned but poetical gaze; it dissatisfied him. And he was yet pondering why, when a young girl passed slowly before him, her eyes fixed on the ground, opened the little gate that led into the churchyard, and vanished. He did not see the child's face; but there was something in her movements so utterly listless, forlorn, and sad that his heart was touched. What did she there? He approached the low wall with a noiseless step, and looked over it wistfully.

There by a grave, evidently quite recent, with no wooden tomb nor tombstone like the rest, the little girl had thrown herself, and she was sobbing loud and passionately. Leonard opened the gate, and approached her with a soft step. Mingled with her sobs, he heard broken sentences, wild and vain, as all human sorrowings over graves must be.

"Father! oh, Father, do you not really hear me? I am so lone, so lone! Take me to you,—take me!" And she buried her face in the deep grass.

"Poor child!" said Leonard, in a half whisper,—"he is not there. Look above!"

The girl did not heed him; he put his arm round her waist gently; she made a gesture of impatience and anger, but she would not turn her face, and she clung to the grave with her hands.

After clear, sunny days the dews fall more heavily; and now, as the sun set, the herbage was bathed in a vaporous haze,—a dim mist rose around. The young man seated himself beside her, and tried to draw the child to his breast. Then she turned eagerly, indignantly, and pushed him aside with jealous arms. He profaned the grave! He understood her with his deep poet-heart, and rose. There was a pause. Leonard was the first to break it.

"Come to your home with me, my child, and we will talk of him by the way."

"Him! Who are you? You did not know him!" said the girl, still with anger. "Go away! Why do you disturb me? I do no one harm. Go! go!"

"You do yourself harm, and that will grieve him if he sees you yonder! Come!"

The child looked at him through her blinding tears, and his face softened and soothed her.

"Go!" she said, very plaintively, and in subdued accents. "I will but stay a minute more. I—I have so much to say yet."

Leonard left the churchyard, and waited without; and in a short time the child came forth, waived him aside as he approached her, and hurried away. He followed her at a distance, and saw her disappear within the inn.

CHAPTER V.

"Hip-Hip-Hurrah!" Such was the sound that greeted our young traveller as he reached the inn door,—a sound joyous in itself, but sadly out of harmony with the feelings which the child sobbing on the tombless grave had left at his heart. The sound came from within, and was followed by thumps and stamps, and the jingle of glasses. A strong odour of tobacco was wafted to his olfactory sense. He

hesitated a moment at the threshold.

Before him, on benches under the beech-tree and within the arbour, were grouped sundry athletic forms with "pipes in the liberal air."

The landlady, as she passed across the passage to the taproom, caught sight of his form at the doorway, and came forward. Leonard still stood irresolute. He would have gone on his way, but for the child: she had interested him strongly.

"You seem full, ma'am," said he. "Can I have accommodation for the night?"

"Why, indeed, sir," said the landlady, civilly, "I can give you a bedroom, but I don't know where to put you meanwhile. The two parlours and the tap-room and the kitchen are all choke-full. There has been a great cattle-fair in the neighbourhood, and I suppose we have as many as fifty farmers and drovers stopping here."

"As to that, ma'am, I can sit in the bedroom you are kind enough to give me; and if it does not cause you much trouble to let me have some tea there, I should be glad; but I can wait your leisure. Do not put yourself out of the way for me."

The landlady was touched by a consideration she was not much habituated to receive from her bluff customers. "You speak very handsome, sir, and we will do our best to serve you, if you will excuse all faults. This way, sir." Leonard lowered his knapsack, stepped into the passage, with some difficulty forced his way through a knot of sturdy giants in top-boots or leathern gaiters, who were swarming in and out the tap-room, and followed his hostess upstairs to a little bedroom at the top of the house.

"It is small, sir, and high," said the hostess, apologetically. "But there be four gentlemen farmers that have come a great distance, and all the first floor is engaged; you will be more out of the noise here."

"Nothing can suit me better. But, stay,—pardon me;" and Leonard, glancing at the garb of the hostess, observed she was not in mourning. "A little girl whom I saw in the churchyard yonder, weeping very bitterly—is she a relation of yours? Poor child! she seems to have deeper feelings than are common at her age."

"Ah, sir," said the landlady, putting the corner of her apron to her eyes, "it is a very sad story. I don't know what to do. Her father was taken ill on his way to Lunnon, and stopped here, and has been buried four days. And the poor little girl seems to have no relations—and where is she to go? Laryer Jones says we must pass her to Marybone parish, where her father lived last; and what's to become of her then? My heart bleeds to think on it."

Here there rose such an uproar from below, that it was evident some quarrel had broken out; and the hostess, recalled to her duties, hastened to carry thither her propitiatory influences.

Leonard seated himself pensively by the little lattice. Here was some one more alone in the world than he; and she, poor orphan, had no stout man's heart to grapple with fate, and no golden manuscripts that were to be as the "Open-Sesame" to the treasures of Aladdin. By and by, the hostess brought him up a tray with tea and other refreshments, and Leonard resumed his inquiries. "No relatives?" said he; "surely the child must have some kinsfolk in London? Did her father leave no directions, or was he in possession of his faculties?"

"Yes, sir; he was quite reasonable like to the last. And I asked him if he had not anything on his mind, and he said, 'I have.' And I said, 'Your little girl, sir?' And he answered me, 'Yes, ma'am;' and laying his head on his pillow, he wept very quietly. I could not say more myself, for it set me off to see him cry so meekly; but my husband is harder nor I, and he said, 'Cheer up, Mr. Digby; had not you better write to your friends?'

"'Friends!' said the gentleman, in such a voice! 'Friends I have but one, and I am going to Him! I cannot take her there!' Then he seemed suddenly to recollect himself, and called for his clothes, and rummaged in the pockets as if looking for some address, and could not find it. He seemed a forgetful kind of gentleman, and his hands were what I call helpless hands, sir! And then he gasped out, 'Stop, stop! I never had the address. Write to Lord Les—', something like Lord Lester, but we could not make out the name. Indeed he did not finish it, for there was a rush of blood to his lips; and though he seemed sensible when he recovered (and knew us and his little girl too, till he went off smiling), he never spoke word more."

"Poor man," said Leonard, wiping his eyes. "But his little girl surely remembers the name that he did not finish?"

"No. She says he must have meant a gentleman whom they had met in the Park not long ago, who was very kind to her father, and was Lord something; but she don't remember the name, for she never saw him before or since, and her father talked very little about any one lately, but thought he should find some kind friends at Screwstown, and travelled down there with her from Lunnon. But she supposes he was disappointed, for he went out, came back, and merely told her to put up the things, as they must go back to Lunnon. And on his way there he—died. Hush, what's that? I hope she did not overhear us. No, we were talking low. She has the next room to your'n, sir. I thought I heard her sobbing. Hush!"

"In the next room? I hear nothing. Well, with your leave, I will speak to her before I quit you. And had her father no money with him?"

"Yes, a few sovereigns, sir; they paid for his funeral, and there is a little left still,—enough to take her to town; for my husband said, says he, 'Hannah, the widow gave her mite, and we must not take the orphan's;' and my husband is a hard man, too, sir—bless him!"

"Let me take your hand, ma'am. God reward you both." "La, sir! why, even Dr. Dosewell said, rather grumpily though, 'Never mind my bill; but don't call me up at six o'clock in the morning again, without knowing a little more about people.' And I never afore knew Dr. Dosewell go without his bill being paid. He said it was a trick o' the other doctor to spite him."

"What other doctor?"

"Oh, a very good gentleman, who got out with Mr. Digby when he was taken ill, and stayed till the next morning; and our doctor says his name is Morgan, and he lives in Lunnou, and is a homy—something."

"Homicide," suggested Leonard, ignorantly.

"Ah, homicide; something like that, only a deal longer and worse. But he left some of the tiniest little balls you ever see, sir, to give the child; but, bless you, they did her no good,—how should they?"

"Tiny balls, oh—homoeopathist—I understand. And the doctor was kind to her; perhaps he may help her. Have you written to him?"

"But we don't know his address, and Lunnon is a vast place, sir."

"I am going to London and will find it out."

"Ah, sir, you seem very kind; and sin' she must go to Lunnon (for what can we do with her here?—she's too genteel for service), I wish she was going with you."

"With me!" said Leonard, startled,—"with me! Well, why not?"

"I am sure she comes of good blood, sir. You would have known her father was quite the gentleman, only to see him die, sir. He went off so kind and civil like, as if he was ashamed to give so much trouble,—quite a gentleman, if ever there was one. And so are you, sir, I'm sure," said the land lady, courtesying; "I know what gentlefolk be. I've been a housekeeper in the first of families in this very shire, sir, though I can't say I've served in Lunnon; and so, as gentlefolks know each other, I 've no doubt you could find out her relations. Dear, dear! Coming, coming!"

Here there were loud cries for the hostess, and she hurried away. The farmers and drovers were beginning to depart, and their bills were to be made out and paid. Leonard saw his hostess no more that night. The last Hip-hip-hurrah was heard,—some toast, perhaps to the health of the county members,—and the chamber of woe beside Leonard's rattled with the shout. By and by, silence gradually succeeded the various dissonant sounds below. The carts and gigs rolled away; the clatter of hoofs on the road ceased; there was then a dumb dull sound as of locking-up, and low, humming voices below, and footsteps mounting the stairs to bed, with now and then a drunken hiccough or maudlin laugh, as some conquered votary of Bacchus was fairly carried up to his domicile.

All, then, at last was silent, just as the clock from the church sounded the stroke of eleven.

Leonard, meanwhile, had been looking over his manuscripts. There was first a project for an improvement on the steam-engine,—a project that had long lain in his mind, begun with the first knowledge of mechanics that he had gleaned from his purchases of the tinker. He put that aside now,—it required too great an effort of the reasoning faculty to re-examine.

He glanced less hastily over a collection of essays on various subjects, —some that he thought indifferent, some that he thought good. He then lingered over a collection of verses written in his best

hand with loving care,—verses first inspired by his perusal of Nora's melancholy memorials. These verses were as a diary of his heart and his fancy,— those deep, unwitnessed struggles which the boyhood of all more thoughtful natures has passed in its bright yet murky storm of the cloud and the lightning-flash, though but few boys pause to record the crisis from which slowly emerges Man. And these first desultory grapplings with the fugitive airy images that flit through the dim chambers of the brain had become with each effort more sustained and vigorous, till the phantoms were spelled, the flying ones arrested, the Immaterial seized, and clothed with Form. Gazing on his last effort, Leonard felt that there at length spoke forth the poet. It was a work which though as yet but half completed, came from a strong hand; not that shadow trembling on unsteady waters, which is but the pale reflex and imitation of some bright mind, sphered out of reach and afar, but an original substance,— a life, a thing of the Creative Faculty,—breathing back already the breath it had received. This work had paused during Leonard's residence with Mr. Avenel, or had only now and then, in stealth, and at night, received a rare touch. Now, as with a fresh eye he reperused it, and with that strange, innocent admiration, not of self—for a man's work is not, alas! himself,—it is the beautified and idealized essence, extracted he knows not how from his own human elements of clay; admiration known but to poets,—their purest delight, often their sole reward. And then with a warmer and more earthly beat of his full heart, he rushed in fancy to the Great City, where all rivers of fame meet, but not to be merged and lost, sallying forth again, individualized and separate, to flow through that one vast Thought of God which we call THE WORLD.

He put up his papers; and opened his window, as was his ordinary custom, before he retired to rest,— for he had many odd habits; and he loved to look out into the night when he prayed. His soul seemed to escape from the body—to mount on the air, to gain more rapid access to the far Throne in the Infinite—when his breath went forth among the winds, and his eyes rested fixed on the stars of heaven.

So the boy prayed silently; and after his prayer he was about, lingeringly, to close the lattice, when he heard distinctly sobs close at hand. He paused, and held his breath, then looked gently out; the casement next his own was also open. Someone was also at watch by that casement,—perhaps also praying. He listened yet more intently, and caught, soft and low, the words, "Father, Father, do you hear me now?"

CHAPTER VI.

Leonard opened his door and stole towards that of the room adjoining; for his first natural impulse had been to enter and console. But when his touch was on the handle, he drew back. Child though the mourner was, her sorrows were rendered yet more sacred from intrusion by her sex. Something, he knew not what, in his young ignorance, withheld him from the threshold. To have crossed it then would have seemed to him profanation. So he returned, and for hours yet he occasionally heard the sobs, till they died away, and childhood wept itself to sleep.

But the next morning, when he heard his neighbour astir, he knocked gently at her door: there was no answer. He entered softly, and saw her seated very listlessly in the centre of the room,—as if it had no familiar nook or corner as the rooms of home have, her hands drooping on her lap, and her eyes gazing desolately on the floor. Then he approached and spoke to her.

Helen was very subdued, and very silent. Her tears seemed dried up; and it was long before she gave sign or token that she heeded him. At length, however, he gradually succeeded in rousing her interest; and the first symptom of his success was in the quiver of her lip, and the overflow of her downcast eyes.

By little and little he wormed himself into her confidence; and she told him in broken whispers her simple story. But what moved him the most was, that beyond her sense of loneliness she did not seem to feel her own unprotected state. She mourned the object she had nursed and heeded and cherished, for she had been rather the protectress than the protected to the helpless dead. He could not gain from her any more satisfactory information than the landlady had already imparted, as to her friends and prospects; but she permitted him passively to look among the effects her father had left, save only that, if his hand touched something that seemed to her associations especially holy, she waved him back, or drew it quickly away. There were many bills receipted in the name of Captain Digby, old yellow faded music-scores for the flute, extracts of Parts from Prompt Books, gay parts of lively comedies, in which heroes have so noble a contempt for money,—fit heroes for a Sheridan and a Farquhar; close by these were several pawnbroker's tickets; and, not arrayed smoothly, but crumpled up, as if with an indignant nervous clutch of the helpless hands, some two or three letters. He asked Helen's permission to glance

at these, for they might afford a clue to friends. Helen gave the permission by a silent bend of the head. The letters, however, were but short and freezing answers from what appeared to be distant connections or former friends, or persons to whom the deceased had applied for some situation. They were all very disheartening in their tone. Leonard next endeavoured to refresh Helen's memory as to the name of the nobleman which had been last on her father's lips; but there he failed wholly. For it may be remembered that Lord L'Estrange, when he pressed his loan on Mr. Digby, and subsequently told that gentleman to address him at Mr. Egerton's, had, from a natural delicacy, sent the child on, that she might not witness the charity bestowed on the father; and Helen said truly that Mr. Digby had sunk latterly into an habitual silence on all his affairs. She might have heard her father mention the name, but she had not treasured it up; all she could say was, that she should know the stranger again if she met him, and his dog too. Seeing that the child had grown calm, Leonard was then going to leave the room, in order to confer with the hostess, when she rose suddenly, though noiselessly, and put her little hand in his, as if to detain him. She did not say a word; the action said all,—said, "Do not desert me." And Leonard's heart rushed to his lips, and he answered to the action, as he bent down, and kissed her cheek, "Orphan, will you go with me? We have one Father yet to both of us, and He will guide us on earth. I am fatherless like you." She raised her eyes to his, looked at him long, and then leaned her head confidingly on his strong young shoulder.

CHAPTER VII.

At noon that same day the young man and the child were on their road to London. The host had at first a little demurred at trusting Helen to so young a companion; but Leonard, in his happy ignorance, had talked so sanguinely of finding out this lord, or some adequate protectors for the child; and in so grand a strain, though with all sincerity, had spoken of his own great prospects in the metropolis (he did not say what they were!) that had he been the craftiest impostor he could not more have taken in the rustic host. And while the landlady still cherished the illusive fancy that all gentlefolks must know each other in London, as they did in a county, the landlord believed, at least, that a young man so respectably dressed, although but a foot-traveller, who talked in so confident a tone, and who was so willing to undertake what might be rather a burdensome charge, unless he saw how to rid himself of it, would be sure to have friends older and wiser than himself, who would judge what could best be done for the orphan.

And what was the host to do with her? Better this volunteered escort, at least, than vaguely passing her on from parish to parish, and leaving her friendless at last in the streets of London. Helen, too, smiled for the first time on being asked her wishes, and again put her hand in Leonard's. In short, so it was settled.

The little girl made up a bundle of the things she most prized or needed. Leonard did not feel the additional load, as he slung it to his knapsack; the rest of the luggage was to be sent to London as soon as Leonard wrote (which he promised to do soon) and gave an address.

Helen paid her last visit to the churchyard; and she joined her companion as he stood on the road, without the solemn precincts. And now they had gone on some hours; and when he asked her if she were tired, she still answered "No." But Leonard was merciful, and made their day's journey short; and it took them some days to reach London. By the long lonely way they grew so intimate, at the end of the second day, they called each other brother and sister; and Leonard, to his delight, found that as her grief, with the bodily movement and the change of scene, subsided from its first intensesness and its insensibility to other impressions, she developed a quickness of comprehension far beyond her years. Poor child! that had been forced upon her by Necessity. And she understood him in his spiritual consolations, half poetical, half religious; and she listened to his own tale, and the story of his self-education and solitary struggles,—those, too, she understood. But when he burst out with his enthusiasm, his glorious hopes, his confidence in the fate before them, then she would shake her head very quietly and very sadly. Did she comprehend them! Alas! perhaps too well. She knew more as to real life than he did. Leonard was at first their joint treasurer; but before the second day was over, Helen seemed to discover that he was too lavish; and she told him so, with a prudent grave look, putting her hand on his arm as he was about to enter an inn to dine; and the gravity would have been comic, but that the eyes through their moisture were so meek and grateful. She felt he was about to incur that ruinous extravagance on her account. Somehow or other, the purse found its way into her keeping, and then she looked proud and in her natural element.

Ah! what happy meals under her care were provided; so much more enjoyable than in dull, sanded

inn-parlours, swarming with flies, and reeking with stale tobacco. She would leave him at the entrance of a village, bound forward, and cater, and return with a little basket and a pretty blue jug—which she had bought on the road,—the last filled with new milk; the first with new bread, and some special dainty in radishes or water-tresses. And she had such a talent for finding out the prettiest spot whereon to halt and dine: sometimes in the heart of a wood,—so still, it was like a forest in fairy tales, the hare stealing through the alleys, or the squirrel peeping at them from the boughs; sometimes by a little brawling stream, with the fishes seen under the clear wave, and shooting round the crumbs thrown to them. They made an Arcadia of the dull road up to their dread Thermopylae, the war against the million that waited them on the other side of their pass through Tempo.

"Shall we be as happy when we are great?" said Leonard, in his grand simplicity.

Helen sighed, and the wise little head was shaken.

CHAPTER VIII.

At last they came within easy reach of London; but Leonard had resolved not to enter the metropolis fatigued and exhausted, as a wanderer needing refuge, but fresh and elate, as a conqueror coming in triumph to take possession of the capital. Therefore they halted early in the evening of the day preceding this imperial entry, about six miles from the metropolis, in the neighbourhood of Ealing (for by that route lay their way). They were not tired on arriving at their inn. The weather was singularly lovely, with that combination of softness and brilliancy which is only known to the rare true summer days of England; all below so green, above so blue,—days of which we have about six in the year, and recall vaguely when we read of Robin Hood and Maid Marian, of Damsel and Knight in Spenser's golden Summer Song, or of Jacques, dropped under the oak-tree, watching the deer amidst the dells of Ardennes. So, after a little pause at their inn, they strolled forth, not for travel but pleasure, towards the cool of sunset, passing by the grounds that once belonged to the Duke of Kent, and catching a glimpse of the shrubs and lawns of that beautiful domain through the lodge-gates; then they crossed into some fields, and came to a little rivulet called the Brent. Helen had been more sad that day than on any during their journey,—perhaps because, on approaching London, the memory of her father became more vivid; perhaps from her precocious knowledge of life, and her foreboding of what was to befall them, children that they both were. But Leonard was selfish that day; he could not be influenced by his companion's sorrow; he was so full of his own sense of being, and he already caught from the atmosphere the fever that belongs to anxious capitals.

"Sit here, sister," said he, imperiously, throwing himself under the shade of a pollard-tree that overhung the winding brook, "sit here and talk."

He flung off his hat, tossed back his rich curls, and sprinkled his brow from the stream that eddied round the roots of the tree that bulged out, bald and gnarled, from the bank and delved into the waves below. Helen quietly obeyed him, and nestled close to his side.

"And so this London is really very vast,—VERY?" he repeated inquisitively.

"Very," answered Helen, as, abstractedly, she plucked the cowslips near her, and let them fall into the running waters. "See how the flowers are carried down the stream! They are lost now. London is to us what the river is to the flowers, very vast, very strong;" and she added, after a pause, "very cruel!"

"Cruel! Ah, it has been so to you; but now—now I will take care of you!" he smiled triumphantly; and his smile was beautiful both in its pride and its kindness. It is astonishing how Leonard had altered since he had left his uncle's. He was both younger and older; for the sense of genius, when it snaps its shackles, makes us both older and wiser as to the world it soars to, younger and blinder as to the world it springs from.

"And it is not a very handsome city, either, you say?"

"Very ugly indeed," said Helen, with some fervour; "at least all I have seen of it."

"But there must be parts that are prettier than others? You say there are parks: why should not we lodge near them and look upon the green trees?"

"That would be nice," said Helen, almost joyously; "but—" and here the head was shaken—"there are

no lodgings for us except in courts and alleys."

"Why?"

"Why?" echoed Helen, with a smile, and she held up the purse.

"Pooh! always that horrid purse; as if, too, we were not going to fill it! Did not I tell you the story of Fortunio? Well, at all events, we will go first to the neighbourhood where you last lived, and learn there all we can; and then the day after to-morrow I will see this Dr. Morgan, and find out the lord."

The tears started to Helen's soft eyes. "You want to get rid of me soon, brother."

"I! Ah, I feel so happy to have you with me it seems to me as if I had pined for you all my life, and you had come at last; for I never had brother nor sister nor any one to love, that was not older than myself, except—"

"Except the young lady you told me of," said Helen, turning away her face; for children are very jealous.

"Yes, I loved her, love her still. But that was different," said Leonard. "I could never have talked to her as to you: to you I open my whole heart; you are my little Muse, Helen: I confess to you my wild whims and fancies as frankly as if I were writing poetry." As he said this, a step was heard, and a shadow fell over the stream. A belated angler appeared on the margin, drawing his line impatiently across the water, as if to worry some dozing fish into a bite before it finally settled itself for the night. Absorbed in his occupation, the angler did not observe the young persons on the sward under the tree, and he halted there, close upon them.

"Curse that perch!" said he, aloud.

"Take care, sir," cried Leonard; for the man, in stepping back, nearly trod upon Helen.

The angler turned. "What 's the matter? Hist! you have frightened my perch. Keep still, can't you?"

Helen drew herself out of the way, and Leonard remained motionless. He remembered Jackeymo, and felt a sympathy for the angler.

"It is the most extraordinary perch, that!" muttered the stranger, soliloquizing. "It has the devil's own luck. It must have been born with a silver spoon in its mouth, that damned perch! I shall never catch it,—never! Ha! no, only a weed. I give it up." With this, he indignantly jerked his rod from the water and began to disjoint it. While leisurely engaged in this occupation, he turned to Leonard.

"Humph! are you intimately acquainted with this stream, sir?"

"No," answered Leonard. "I never saw it before."

ANGLER, (solemnly).—"Then, young man, take my advice, and do not give way to its fascinations. Sir, I am a martyr to this stream; it has been the Delilah of my existence."

LEONARD (interested, the last sentence seemed to him poetical).—"The Delilah! sir, the Delilah!"

ANGLER.—"The Delilah. Young man, listen, and be warned by example. When I was about your age, I first came to this stream to fish. Sir, on that fatal day, about three p.m., I hooked up a fish,—such a big one, it must have weighed a pound and a half. Sir, it was that length; "and the angler put finger to wrist. "And just when I had got it nearly ashore, by the very place where you are sitting, on that shelving bank, young man, the line broke, and the perch twisted himself among those roots, and—cacodaemon that he was—ran off, hook and all. Well, that fish haunted me; never before had I seen such a fish. Minnows I had caught in the Thames and elsewhere, also gudgeons, and occasionally a dace. But a fish like that—a PERCH, all his fins up, like the sails of a man-of-war—a monster perch,—a whale of a perch! No, never till then had I known what leviathans lie hid within the deeps. I could not sleep till I had returned; and again, sir,—I caught that perch. And this time I pulled him fairly out of the water. He escaped; and how did he escape? Sir, he left his eye behind him on the hook. Years, long years, have passed since then; but never shall I forget the agony of that moment."

LEONARD.—"To the perch, sir?"

ANGLER.—"Perch! agony to him! He enjoyed it. Agony to me! I gazed on that eye, and the eye looked as sly and as wicked as if it were laughing in my face. Well, sir, I had heard that there is no better bait for a perch than a perch's eye. I adjusted that eye on the hook, and dropped in the line gently. The water was unusually clear; in two minutes I saw that perch return. He approached the hook; he

recognized his eye, frisked his tail, made a plunge, and, as I live, carried off the eye, safe and sound; and I saw him digesting it by the side of that water-lily. The mocking fiend! Seven times since that day, in the course of a varied and eventful life, have I caught that perch, and seven times has that perch escaped."

LEONARD (astonished).—"It can't be the same perch; perches are very tender fish. A hook inside of it, and an eye hooked out of it—no perch could withstand such havoc in its constitution."

ANGLER (with an appearance of awe).—"It does seem supernatural. But it is that perch; for hark ye, sir, there is ONLY ONE perch in the whole brook! All the years I have fished here, I have never caught another perch; and this solitary inmate of the watery element I know by sight better than I knew my own lost father. For each time that I have raised it out of the water, its profile has been turned to me, and I have seen with a shudder that it has had only—One Eye! It is a most mysterious and a most diabolical phenomenon, that perch! It has been the ruin of my prospects in life. I was offered a situation in Jamaica: I could not go with that perch left here in triumph. I might afterwards have had an appointment in India, but I could not put the ocean between myself and that perch: thus have I frittered away my existence in the fatal metropolis of my native land. And once a week from February to December I come hither. Good heavens! if I should catch the perch at last, the occupation of my existence will be gone."

Leonard gazed curiously at the angler, as the last thus mournfully concluded. The ornate turn of his periods did not suit with his costume. He looked wofully threadbare and shabby,—a genteel sort of shabbiness too,—shabbiness in black. There was humour in the corners of his lip; and his hands, though they did not seem very clean—indeed his occupation was not friendly to such niceties—were those of a man who had not known manual labour. His face was pale and puffed, but the tip of the nose was red. He did not seem as if the watery element was as familiar to himself as to his Delilah, the perch.

"Such is Life!" recommenced the angler, in a moralizing tone, as he slid his rod into its canvas case. "If a man knew what it was to fish all one's life in a stream that has only one perch, to catch that one perch nine times in all, and nine times to see it fall back into the water, plump,—if a man knew what it was, why, then"—here the angler looked over his shoulder full at Leonard—"why then, young sir, he would know what human life is to vain ambition. Good-evening."

Away he went treading over the daisies and kingcups. Helen's eyes followed him wistfully.

"What a strange person!" said Leonard, laughing.

"I think he is a very wise one," murmured Helen; and she came close up to Leonard, and took his hand in both hers, as if she felt already that he was in need of the Comforter,—the line broken, and the perch lost!

CHAPTER IX.

At noon the next day, London stole upon them through a gloomy, thick, oppressive atmosphere; for where is it that we can say London bursts on the sight? It stole on them through one of its fairest and most gracious avenues of approach,—by the stately gardens of Kensington, along the side of Hyde Park, and so on towards Cumberland Gate.

Leonard was not the least struck. And yet with a very little money, and a very little taste, it would be easy to render this entrance to London as grand and as imposing as that to Paris from the Champs Elysees. As they came near the Edgware Road, Helen took her new brother by the hand and guided him; for she knew all that neighbourhood, and she was acquainted with a lodging near that occupied by her father (to that lodging itself she could not have gone for the world), where they might be housed cheaply.

But just then the sky, so dull and overcast since morning, seemed one mass of black cloud. There suddenly came on a violent storm of rain. The boy and girl took refuge in a covered mews, in a street running out of the Edgware Road. This shelter soon became crowded; the two young pilgrims crept close to the wall, apart from the rest, Leonard's arm round Helen's waist, sheltering her from the rain that the strong wind contending with it beat in through the passage. Presently a young gentleman of better mien and dress than the other refugees entered, not hastily, but rather with a slow and proud step, as if, though he deigned to take shelter, he scorned to run to it. He glanced somewhat haughtily

at the assembled group, passed on through the midst of it, came near Leonard, took off his hat, and shook the rain from its brim. His head thus uncovered, left all his features exposed; and the village youth recognized, at the first glance, his old victorious assailant on the green at Hazeldean.

CHAPTER IX.

Yet Randal Leslie was altered. His dark cheek was as thin as in boyhood, and even yet more wasted by intense study and night vigils; but the expression of his face was at once more refined and manly, and there was a steady concentrated light in his eye, like that of one who has been in the habit of bringing all his thoughts to one point. He looked older than he was. He was dressed simply in black, a colour which became him; and altogether his aspect and figure were, not showy indeed, but distinguished. He looked to the common eye a gentleman; and to the more observant a scholar.

Helter-skelter! pell-mell! the group in the passage now pressed each on each, now scattered on all sides, making way, rushing down the mews, against the walls, as a fiery horse darted under shelter. The rider, a young man with a very handsome face, and dressed with that peculiar care which we commonly call dandyism, cried out, good-humouredly, "Don't be afraid; the horse sha'n't hurt any of you. A thousand pardons—so ho! so ho!" He patted the horse, and it stood as still as a statue, filling up the centre of the passage. The groups resettled; Randal approached the rider.

"Frank Hazeldean!"

"Ah, is it indeed Randal Leslie?"

Frank was off his horse in a moment, and the bridle was consigned to the care of a slim 'prentice-boy holding a bundle.

"My dear fellow, how glad I am to see you. How lucky it was that I should turn in here. Not like me either, for I don't much care for a ducking. Staying in town, Randal?"

"Yes; at your uncle's, Mr. Egerton. I have left Oxford."

"For good?"

"For good."

"But you have not taken your degree, I think? We Etonians all considered you booked for a double-first. Oh, we have been so proud of your fame,—you carried off all the prizes."

"Not all; but some, certainly. Mr. Egerton offered me my choice,—to stay for my degree, or to enter at once into the Foreign Office. I preferred the end to the means. For, after all, what good are academical honours but as the entrance to life? To enter now is to save a step in a long way, Frank."

"Ah, you were always ambitious, and you will make a great figure, I am sure."

"Perhaps so—if I work for it. Knowledge is power." Leonard started.

"And you!" resumed Randal, looking with some curious attention at his old schoolfellow. "You never came to Oxford. I did hear you were going into the army."

"I am in the Guards," said Frank, trying hard not to look too conceited as he made that acknowledgment. "The governor pished a little, and would rather I had come to live with him in the old Hall, and take to farming. Time enough for that, eh? By Jove, Randal, how pleasant a thing is life in London! Do you go to Almack's to-night?"

"No; Wednesday is a holiday in the House. There is a great parliamentary dinner at Mr. Egerton's. He is in the Cabinet now, you know; but you don't see much of your uncle, I think."

"Our sets are different," said the young gentleman, in a tone of voice worthy of Brummel. "All those parliamentary fellows are devilish dull. The rain's over. I don't know whether the governor would like me to call at Grosvenor Square; but pray come and see me. Here's my card to remind you; you must dine at our mess. Such capital fellows! What day will you fix?"

"I will call and let you know. Don't you find it rather expensive in the Guards? I remember that you

thought the governor, as you call him, used to chafe a little when you wrote for more pocket-money; and the only time I ever saw you with tears in your eyes was when Mr. Hazeldean, in sending you L5, reminded you that his estates were not entailed,—were at his own disposal, and they should never go to an extravagant spendthrift. It was not a pleasant threat that, Frank."

"Oh!" cried the young man, colouring deeply. "It was not the threat that pained me; it was that my father could think so meanly of me as to fancy that—Well, well, but those were schoolboy days. And my father was always more generous than I deserved. We must see a great deal of each other, Randal. How good-natured you were at Eton, making my longs and shorts for me; I shall never forget it. Do call soon."

Frank swung himself into his saddle, and rewarded the slim youth with half-a-crown,—a largess four times more ample than his father would have deemed sufficient. A jerk of the reins and a touch of the heel, off bounded the fiery horse and the gay young rider. Randal mused, and as the rain had now ceased, the passengers under shelter dispersed and went their way. Only Randal, Leonard, and Helen remained behind. Then, as Randal, still musing, lifted his eyes, they fell full upon Leonard's face. He started, passed his hand quickly over his brow, looked again, hard and piercingly; and the change in his pale cheek to a shade still paler, a quick compression and nervous gnawing of his lip, showed that he too recognized an old foe. Then his glance ran over Leonard's dress, which was somewhat dust-stained, but far above the class amongst which the peasant was born. Randal raised his brows in surprise, and with a smile slightly supercilious—the smile stung Leonard—and with a slow step, Randal left the passage, and took his way towards Grosvenor Square. The Entrance of Ambition was clear to him.

Then the little girl once more took Leonard by the hand, and led him through rows of humble, obscure, dreary streets. It seemed almost like an allegory personified, as the sad, silent child led on the penniless and low-born adventurer of genius by the squalid shops and through the winding lanes, which grew meaner and meaner, till both their forms vanished from the view.

CHAPTER X.

"But do come; change your dress, return and dine with me; you will have just time, Harley. You will meet the most eminent men of our party; surely they are worth your study, philosopher that you affect to be."

Thus said Audley Egerton to Lord L'Estrange, with whom he had been riding (after the toils of his office). The two gentlemen were in Audley's library,—Mr. Egerton, as usual, buttoned up, seated in his chair, in the erect posture of a man who scorns "inglorious ease;" Harley, as usual, thrown at length on the sofa., his long hair in careless curls, his neckcloth loose, his habiliments flowing simplex munditiis, indeed, his grace all his own; seemingly negligent, never slovenly; at ease everywhere and with every one, even with Mr. Audley Egerton, who chilled or awed the ease out of most people.

"Nay, my dear Audley, forgive me. But your eminent men are all men of one idea, and that not a diverting one, politics! politics! politics! The storm in the saucer."

"But what is your life, Harley?—the saucer without the storm?"

"Do you know, that's very well said, Audley? I did not think you had so much liveliness of repartee. Life! life! it is insipid, it is shallow, —no launching Argosies in the saucer. Audley, I have the oddest fancy—"

"That of course," said Audley, dryly; "you never had any other. What is the new one?"

HARLEY (with great gravity).—"Do you believe in Mesmerism?"

AUDLEY.—"Certainly not."

HARLEY.—"If it were in the power of an animal magnetizer to get me out of my own skin into somebody's else! That's my fancy! I am so tired of myself,—so tired! I have run through all my ideas,—know every one of them by heart. When some pretentious impostor of an idea perks itself up and says, 'Look at me,—I 'm a new acquaintance,' I just give it a nod, and say 'Not at all, you have only got a new coat on; you are the same old wretch that has bored me these last twenty years; get away.' But if one could be in a new skin, if I could be for half-an-hour your tall porter, or one of your eminent matter-of-

fact men, I should then really travel into a new world.' Every man's brain must be a world in itself, eh? If I could but make a parochial settlement even in yours, Audley,— run over all your thoughts and sensations. Upon my life, I 'll go and talk to that French mesmerizer about it."

[If, at the date in which Lord L'Estrange held this conversation with Mr. Egerton, Alfred de Musset had written his comedies, we should suspect that his lordship had plagiarized from one of them the whimsical idea that he here vents upon Audley. In repeating it, the author at least cannot escape from the charge of obligation to a writer whose humour is sufficiently opulent to justify the loan.]

AUDLEY (who does not seem to like the notion of having his thoughts and sensations rummaged, even by his friend, and even in fancy)—"Pooh, pooh, pooh! Do talk like a man of sense."

HARLEY.—"Man of sense! Where shall I find a model? I don't know a man of sense!—never met such a creature. Don't believe it ever existed. At one time I thought Socrates must have been a man of sense: a delusion; he would stand gazing into the air, and talking to his Genius from sunrise to sunset. Is that like a man of sense? Poor Audley! how puzzled he looks! Well, I'll try and talk sense to oblige you. And first" (here Harley raised himself on his elbow),—"first, is it true, as I have heard vaguely, that you are paying court to the sister of that infamous Italian traitor?"

"Madame di Negra? No: I am not paying court to her," answered Audley, with a cold smile. "But she is very handsome; she is very clever; she is useful to me,—I need not say how or why; that belongs to my metier as a politician. But I think, if you will take my advice, or get your friend to take it, I could obtain from her brother, through my influence with her, some liberal concessions to your exile. She is very anxious to know where he is."

"You have not told her?"

"No; I promised you I would keep that secret."

"Be sure you do; it is only for some mischief, some snare, that she could desire such information. Concessions! pooh! This is no question of concessions, but of rights."

"I think you should leave your friend to judge of that."

"Well, I will write to him. Meanwhile, beware of this woman. I have heard much of her abroad, and she has the character of her brother for duplicity and—"

"Beauty," interrupted Audley, turning the conversation with practised adroitness. "I am told that the count is one of the handsomest men in Europe, much handsomer than his sister still, though nearly twice her age. Tut, tut, Harley; fear not for me. I am proof against all feminine attractions. This heart is dead."

"Nay, nay; it is not for you to speak thus,—leave that to me. But even I will not say it. The heart never dies. And you; what have you lost?— a wife; true: an excellent, noble-hearted woman. But was it love that you felt for her? Envious man, have you ever loved?"

"Perhaps not, Harley," said Audley, with a sombre aspect and in dejected accents; "very few men ever have loved, at least as you mean by the word. But there are other passions than love that kill the heart, and reduce us to mechanism."

While Egerton spoke, Harley turned aside, and his breast heaved. There was a short silence; Audley was the first to break it.

"Speaking of my lost wife, I am sorry that you do not approve what I have done for her young kinsman, Randal Leslie."

HARLEY (recovering himself with an effort).—"Is it true kindness to bid him exchange manly independence for the protection of an official patron?"

AUDLEY.—"I did not bid him. I gave him his choice. At his age, I should have chosen as he has done."

HARLEY.—"I trust not; I think better of you. But answer me one question frankly, and then I will ask another. Do you mean to make this young man your heir?"

AUDLEY (with a slight embarrassment).—"Heir, pooh! I am young still. I may live as long as he—time enough to think of that."

HARLEY.—"Then now to my second question. Have you told this youth plainly that he may look to you for influence, but not for wealth?"

AUDLEY (firmly).—"I think I have; but I shall repeat it more emphatically."

HARLEY.—"Then I am satisfied as to your conduct, but not as to his. For he has too acute an intellect not to know what it is to forfeit independence; and, depend on it, he has made his calculations, and would throw you into the bargain in any balance that he could strike in his favour. You go by your experience in judging men; I by my instincts. Nature warns us as it does the inferior animals,—only we are too conceited, we bipeds, to heed her. My instincts of soldier and gentleman recoil from that old young man. He has the soul of the Jesuit. I see it in his eye, I hear it in the tread of his foot; /volto sciolto/ he has not; /i pensieri stretti/ he has. Hist! I hear now his step in the hall. I should know it from a thousand. That's his very touch on the handle of the door."

Randal Leslie entered. Harley—who, despite his disregard for forms, and his dislike to Randal, was too high-bred not to be polite to his junior in age or inferior in rank—rose and bowed. But his bright piercing eyes did not soften as they caught and bore down the deeper and more latent fire in Randal's. Harley did not resume his seat, but moved to the mantelpiece, and leaned against it.

RANDAL.—"I have fulfilled your commissions, Mr. Egerton. I went first to Maida Hill, and saw Mr. Burley. I gave him the check, but he said it was too much, and he should return half to the banker; he will write the article as you suggested. I then—"

AUDLEY.—"Enough, Randal! we will not fatigue Lord L'Estrange with these little details of a life that displeases him,—the life political."

HARLEY.—"But these details do not displease me; they reconcile me to my own life. Go on, pray, Mr. Leslie."

Randal had too much tact to need the cautioning glance of Mr. Egerton. He did not continue, but said with a soft voice, "Do you think, Lord L'Estrange, that the contemplation of the mode of life pursued by others can reconcile a man to his own, if he had before thought it needed a reconciler?" Harley looked pleased, for the question was ironical; and if there was a thing in the world he abhorred, it was flattery.

"Recollect your Lucretius, Mr. Leslie, the /Suave mare/, etc., 'pleasant from the cliff to see the mariners tossed on the ocean.' Faith, I think that sight reconciles one to the cliff, though, before, one might have been teased by the splash from the spray, and deafened by the scream of the sea-gulls. But I leave you, Audley. Strange that I have heard no more of my soldier! Remember I have your promise when I come to claim it. Good-by, Mr. Leslie, I hope that Burley's article will be worth the check."

Lord L'Estrange mounted his horse, which was still at the door, and rode through the Park. But he was no longer now unknown by sight. Bows and nods saluted him on every side.

"Alas, I am found out, then," said he to himself. "That terrible Duchess of Knaresborough, too—I must fly my coun try." He pushed his horse into a canter, and was soon out of the Park. As he dismounted at his father's sequestered house, you would have hardly supposed him the same whimsical, fantastic, but deep and subtle humourist that delighted in perplexing the material Audley, for his expressive face was unutterably serious. But the moment he came into the presence of his parents, the countenance was again lighted and cheerful. It brightened the whole room like sunshine.

CHAPTER XI.

"Mr. Leslie," said Egerton, when Harley had left the library, "you did not act with your usual discretion in touching upon matters connected with politics in the presence of a third party."

"I feel that already, sir; my excuse is, that I held Lord L'Estrange to be your most intimate friend."

"A public man, Mr. Leslie, would ill serve his country if he were not especially reserved towards his private friends—when they do not belong to his party."

"But pardon me my ignorance. Lord Lansmere is so well known to be one of your supporters, that I fancied his son must share his sentiments, and be in your confidence."

Egerton's brows slightly contracted, and gave a stern expression to a countenance always firm and decided. He however answered in a mild tone,

"At the entrance into political life, Mr. Leslie, there is nothing in which a young man of your talents should be more on his guard than thinking for himself; he will nearly always think wrong. And I believe that is one reason why young men of talent disappoint their friends, and remain so long out of office."

A haughty flush passed over Randal's brow, and faded away quickly; he bowed in silence.

Egerton resumed, as if in explanation, and even in kindly apology,

"Look at Lord L'Estrange himself. What young man could come into life with brighter auspices? Rank, wealth, high animal spirits (a great advantage those same spirits, Mr. Leslie), courage, self-possession, scholarship as brilliant perhaps as your own; and now see how his life is wasted! Why? He always thought fit to think for himself. He could never be broken into harness, and never will be. The state coach, Mr. Leslie, requires that all the horses should pull together."

"With submission, sir," answered Randal, "I should think that there were other reasons why Lord L'Estrange, whatever be his talents—and of these you must be indeed an adequate judge—would never do anything in public life."

"Ay, and what?" said Egerton, quickly.

"First," said Randal, shrewdly, "private life has done too much for him. What could public life give to one who needs nothing? Born at the top of the social ladder, why should he put himself voluntarily at the last step, for the sake of climbing up again? And secondly, Lord L'Estrange seems to me a man in whose organization /sentiment/ usurps too large a share for practical existence."

"You have a keen eye," said Audley, with some admiration,—"keen for one so young. Poor Harley!"

Mr. Egerton's last words were said to himself. He resumed quickly,

"There is something on my mind, my young friend. Let us be frank with each other. I placed before you fairly the advantages and disadvantages of the choice I gave you. To take your degree with such honours as no doubt you would have won, to obtain your fellowship, to go to the Bar, with those credentials in favour of your talents,—this was one career. To come at once into public life, to profit by my experience, avail yourself of my interest, to take the chances of rise or fall with a party,—this was another. You chose the last. But in so doing, there was a consideration which might weigh with you, and on which, in stating your reasons for your option, you were silent."

"What is that, sir?"

"You might have counted on my fortune, should the chances of party fail you: speak, and without shame if so; it would be natural in a young man, who comes from the elder branch of the House whose heiress was my wife."

"You wound me, Mr. Egerton," said Randal, turning away.

Mr. Egerton's cold glance followed Randal's movements; the face was hid from the glance, and the statesman's eye rested on the figure, which is often as self-betraying as the countenance itself. Randal baffled Mr. Egerton's penetration,—the young man's emotion might be honest pride and pained and generous feeling, or it might be something else. Egerton continued slowly,

"Once for all, then, distinctly and emphatically, I say, never count upon that; count upon all else that I can do for you, and forgive me when I advise harshly or censure coldly; ascribe this to my interest in your career. Moreover, before decision becomes irrevocable, I wish you to know practically all that is disagreeable or even humiliating in the first subordinate steps of him who, without wealth or station, would rise in public life. I will not consider your choice settled till the end of a year at least,—your name will be kept on the college books till then; if on experience you should prefer to return to Oxford, and pursue the slower but surer path to independence and distinction, you can. And now give me your hand, Mr. Leslie, in sign that you forgive my bluntness: it is time to dress."

Randal, with his face still averted, extended his hand. Mr. Egerton held it a moment, then dropping it, left the room. Randal turned as the door closed; and there was in his dark face a power of sinister passion, that justified all Harley's warnings. His lips moved, but not audibly; then as if struck by a sudden thought, he followed Egerton into the hall.

"Sir," said he, "I forgot to say, that on returning from Maida Hill, I took shelter from the rain under a covered passage, and there I met unexpectedly with your nephew, Frank Hazeldean."

"Ah!" said Egerton, indifferently, "a fine young man; in the Guards. It is a pity that my brother has such antiquated political notions; he should put his son into parliament, and under my guidance; I could

push him. Well, and what said Frank?"

"He invited me to call on him. I remember that you once rather cautioned me against too intimate an acquaintance with those who have not got their fortunes to make."

"Because they are idle, and idleness is contagious. Right,—better not to be too intimate with a young Guardsman."

"Then you would not have me call on him, sir? We were rather friends at Eton; and if I wholly reject his overtures, might he not think that you—"

"I!" interrupted Egerton. "Ah, true; my brother might think I bore him a grudge; absurd. Call then, and ask the young man here. Yet still, I do not advise intimacy." Egerton turned into his dressing-room. "Sir," said his valet, who was in waiting, "Mr. Levy is here,—he says by appointment; and Mr. Grinders is also just come from the country."

"Tell Mr. Grinders to come in first," said Egerton, seating himself. "You need not wait; I can dress without you. Tell Mr. Levy I will see him in five minutes."

Mr. Grinders was steward to Audley Egerton.

Mr. Levy was a handsome man, who wore a camellia in his button-hole; drove, in his cabriolet, a high-stepping horse that had cost L200; was well known to young men of fashion, and considered by their fathers a very dangerous acquaintance.

CHAPTER XII.

As the company assembled in the drawing-rooms, Mr. Egerton introduced Randal Leslie to his eminent friends in a way that greatly contrasted the distant and admonitory manner which he had exhibited to him in private. The presentation was made with that cordiality and that gracious respect, by which those who are in station command notice for those who have their station yet to win.

"My dear lord, let me introduce to you a kinsman of my late wife's" (in a whisper),—"the heir to the elder branch of her family. Stanmore, this is Mr. Leslie, of whom I spoke to you. You, who were so distinguished at Oxford, will not like him the worse for the prizes he gained there. Duke, let me present to you Mr. Leslie. The duchess is angry with me for deserting her balls; I shall hope to make my peace, by providing myself with a younger and livelier substitute. Ah, Mr. Howard, here is a young gentleman just fresh from Oxford, who will tell us all about the new sect springing up there. He has not wasted his time on billiards and horses."

Leslie was received with all that charming courtesy which is the /To
Kalon/ of an aristocracy.

After dinner, conversation settled on politics. Randal listened with attention, and in silence, till Egerton drew him gently out; just enough, and no more,—just enough to make his intelligence evident, and without subjecting him to the charge of laying down the law. Egerton knew how to draw out young men,—a difficult art. It was one reason why he was so peculiarly popular with the more rising members of his party.

The party broke up early.

"We are in time for Almack's," said Egerton, glancing at the clock, "and I have a voucher for you; come."

Randal followed his patron into the carriage. By the way Egerton thus addressed him,

"I shall introduce you to the principal leaders of society; know them and study them: I do not advise you to attempt to do more,—that is, to attempt to become the fashion. It is a very expensive ambition: some men it helps, most men it ruins. On the whole, you have better cards in your hands. Dance or not as it pleases you; don't flirt. If you flirt people will inquire into your fortune,—an inquiry that will do you little good; and flirting entangles a young man into marrying. That would never do. Here we are."

In two minutes more they were in the great ballroom, and Randal's eyes were dazzled with the lights, the diamonds, the blaze of beauty. Audley presented him in quick succession to some dozen ladies, and

then disappeared amidst the crowd. Randal was not at a loss: he was without shyness; or if he had that disabling infirmity, he concealed it. He answered the languid questions put to him with a certain spirit that kept up talk, and left a favourable impression of his agreeable qualities. But the lady with whom he got on the best was one who had no daughters out, a handsome and witty woman of the world,—Lady Frederick Coniers.

It is your first ball at Almack's then, Mr. Leslie?"

"My first."

"And you have not secured a partner? Shall I find you one? What do you think of that pretty girl in pink?"

"I see her—but I cannot think of her."

"You are rather, perhaps, like a diplomatist in a new court, and your first object is to know who is who."

"I confess that on beginning to study the history of my own day I should like to distinguish the portraits that illustrate the memoir."

"Give me your arm, then, and we will come into the next room. We shall see the different notabilites enter one by one, and observe without being observed. This is the least I can do for a friend of Mr. Egerton's."

"Mr. Egerton, then," said Randal,—as they threaded their way through the space without the rope that protected the dancers,—*"Mr. Egerton has had the good fortune to win your esteem even for his friends, however obscure?"*

"Why, to say truth, I think no one whom Mr. Egerton calls his friend need long remain obscure, if he has the ambition to be otherwise; for Mr. Egerton holds it a maxim never to forget a friend nor a service."

"Ah, indeed!" said Randal, surprised.

"And therefore," continued Lady Frederick, "as he passes through life, friends gather round him. He will rise even higher yet. Gratitude, Mr. Leslie, is a very good policy."

"Hem," muttered Mr. Leslie.

They had now gained the room where tea and bread and butter were the homely refreshments to the habitudes of what at that day was the most exclusive assembly in London. They ensconced themselves in a corner by a window, and Lady Frederick performed her task of cicerone with lively ease, accompanying each notice of the various persons who passed panoramically before them with sketch and anecdote, sometimes good-natured, generally satirical, always graphic and amusing.

By and by Frank Hazeldean, having on his arm a young lady of haughty air and with high though delicate features, came to the tea-table.

"The last new Guardsman," said Lady Frederick; "very handsome, and not yet quite spoiled. But he has got into a dangerous set."

RANDAL.—*"The young lady with him is handsome enough to be dangerous."*

LADY FREDERICK (laughing).—*"No danger for him there,—as yet at least. Lady Mary (the Duke of Knaresborough's daughter) is only in her second year. The first year, nothing under an earl; the second, nothing under a baron. It will be full four years before she comes down to a commoner. Mr. Hazeldean's danger is of another kind. He lives much with men who are not exactly /mauvais ton/, but certainly not of the best taste. Yet he is very young; he may extricate himself,—leaving half his fortune behind him. What, he nods to you! You know him?"*

"Very well; he is nephew to Mr. Egerton."

"Indeed! I did not know that. Hazeldean is a new name in London. I heard his father was a plain country gentleman, of good fortune, but not that he was related to Mr. Egerton."

"Half-brother."

"Will Mr. Egerton pay the young gentleman's debts? He has no sons himself."

RANDAL.—"Mr. Egerton's fortune comes from his wife, from my family, —from a Leslie, not from a Hazeldean." Lady Frederick turned sharply, looked at Randal's countenance with more attention than she had yet vouchsafed to it, and tried to talk of the Leslies. Randal was very short there.

An hour afterwards, Randal, who had not danced, was still in the refreshment-room, but Lady Frederick had long quitted him. He was talking with some old Etonians who had recognized him, when there entered a lady of very remarkable appearance, and a murmur passed through the room as she appeared.

She might be three or four and twenty. She was dressed in black velvet, which contrasted with the alabaster whiteness of her throat and the clear paleness of her complexion, while it set off the diamonds with which she was profusely covered. Her hair was of the deepest jet, and worn simply braided. Her eyes, too, were dark and brilliant, her features regular and striking; but their expression, when in repose, was not prepossessing to such as love modesty and softness in the looks of woman. But when she spoke and smiled, there was so much spirit and vivacity in the countenance, so much fascination in the smile, that all which might before have marred the effect of her beauty strangely and suddenly disappeared.

"Who is that very handsome woman?" asked Randal. "An Italian,— a Marchesa something," said one of the Etonians.

"Di Negra," suggested another, who had been abroad: "she is a widow; her husband was of the great Genoese family of Negra,—a younger branch of it."

Several men now gathered thickly around the fair Italian. A few ladies of the highest rank spoke to her, but with a more distant courtesy than ladies of high rank usually show to foreigners of such quality as Madame di Negra. Ladies of rank less elevated seemed rather shy of her,—that might be from jealousy. As Randal gazed at the marchesa with more admiration than any woman, perhaps, had before excited in him, he heard a voice near him say,

"Oh, Madame di Negra is resolved to settle amongst us, and marry an Englishman."

"If she can find one sufficiently courageous," returned a female voice.

"Well, she's trying hard for Egerton, and he has courage enough for anything."

The female voice replied, with a laugh, "Mr Egerton knows the world too well, and has resisted too many temptations to be—"

"Hush! there he is."

Egerton came into the room with his usual firm step and erect mien. Randal observed that a quick glance was exchanged between him and the marchesa; but the minister passed her by with a bow.

Still Randal watched, and, ten minutes afterwards, Egerton and the marchesa were seated apart in the very same convenient nook that Randal and Lady Frederick had occupied an hour or so before.

"Is this the reason why Mr. Egerton so insultingly warns me against counting on his fortune?" muttered Randal. "Does he mean to marry again?"

Unjust suspicion!—for, at that moment, these were the words that Audley Egerton was dropping forth from his lips of bronze,

"Nay, dear madam, do not ascribe to my frank admiration more gallantry than it merits. Your conversation charms me, your beauty delights me; your society is as a holiday that I look forward to in the fatigues of my life. But I have done with love, and I shall never marry again."

"You almost pique me into trying to win, in order to reject you," said the Italian, with a flash from her bright eyes.

"I defy even you," answered Audley, with his cold hard smile. "But to return to the point. You have more influence, at least, over this subtle ambassador; and the secret we speak of I rely on you to obtain me. Ah, Madam, let us rest friends. You see I have conquered the unjust prejudices against you; you are received and feted everywhere, as becomes your birth and your attractions. Rely on me ever, as I on you. But I shall excite too much envy if I stay here longer, and am vain enough to think that I may injure you if I provoke the gossip of the ill-natured. As the avowed friend, I can serve you; as the supposed lover, No—" Audley rose as he said this, and, standing by the chair, added carelessly, "—propos, the sum you do me the honour to borrow will be paid to your bankers to-morrow."

"A thousand thanks! my brother will hasten to repay you."

Audley bowed. "Your brother, I hope, will repay me in person, not before. When does he come?"

"Oh, he has again postponed his visit to London; he is so much needed in Vienna. But while we are talking of him, allow me to ask if your friend, Lord L'Estrange, is indeed still so bitter against that poor brother of mine?"

"Still the same."

"It is shameful!" cried the Italian, with warmth; "what has my brother ever done to him that he should actually intrigue against the count in his own court?"

"Intrigue! I think you wrong Lord L'Estrange; he but represented what he believed to be the truth, in defence of a ruined exile."

"And you will not tell me where that exile is, or if his daughter still lives?"

"My dear marchesa, I have called you friend, therefore I will not aid L'Estrange to injure you or yours. But I call L'Estrange a friend also; and I cannot violate the trust that—" Audley stopped short, and bit his lip. "You understand me," he resumed, with a more genial smile than usual; and he took his leave.

The Italian's brows met as her eye followed him; then, as she too rose, that eye encountered Randal's.

"That young man has the eye of an Italian," said the marchesa to herself, as she passed by him into the ballroom.

CHAPTER XIII.

Leonard and Helen settled themselves in two little chambers in a small lane. The neighbourhood was dull enough, the accommodation humble; but their landlady had a smile. That was the reason, perhaps, why Helen chose the lodgings: a smile is not always found on the face of a landlady when the lodger is poor. And out of their windows they caught sight of a green tree, an elm, that grew up fair and tall in a carpenter's yard at the rear. That tree was like another smile to the place. They saw the birds come and go to its shelter; and they even heard, when a breeze arose, the pleasant murmur of its boughs.

Leonard went the same evening to Captain Digby's old lodgings, but he could learn there no intelligence of friends or protectors for Helen. The people were rude and surly, and said that the captain still owed them L1 17s. The claim, however, seemed very disputable, and was stoutly denied by Helen. The next morning Leonard set out in search of Dr. Morgan. He thought his best plan was to inquire the address of the doctor at the nearest chemist's, and the chemist civilly looked into the "Court Guide," and referred him to a house in Bulstrode Street, Manchester Square. To this street Leonard contrived to find his way, much marvelling at the meanness of London: Screwstown seemed to him the handsomer town of the two.

A shabby man-servant opened the door, and Leonard remarked that the narrow passage was choked with boxes, trunks, and various articles of furniture. He was shown into a small room containing a very large round table, whereon were sundry works on homoeopathy, Parry's "Cymbrian Plutarch," Davies's "Celtic Researches," and a Sunday news paper. An engraved portrait of the illustrious Hahnemann occupied the place of honour over the chimneypiece. In a few minutes the door to an inner room opened, and Dr. Morgan appeared, and said politely, "Come in, sir."

The doctor seated himself at a desk, looked hastily at Leonard, and then at a great chronometer lying on the table. "My time's short, sir,—going abroad: and now that I am going, patients flock to me. Too late. London will repent its apathy. Let it!"

The doctor paused majestically, and not remarking on Leonard's face the consternation he had anticipated, he repeated peevishly, "I am going abroad, sir, but I will make a synopsis of your case, and leave it to my successor. Hum!"

"Hair chestnut; eyes—what colour? Look this way,—blue, dark blue.

Hem! Constitution nervous. What are the symptoms?"

"Sir," began Leonard, "a little girl—"

DR. MORGAN (impatiently).—"Little girl; never mind the history of your sufferings; stick to the symptoms,—stick to the symptoms."

LEONARD.—"YOU mistake me, Doctor, I have nothing the matter with me. A little girl—"

DR. MORGAN.—"Girl again! I understand! it is she who is ill. Shall I go to her? She must describe her own symptoms,—I can't judge from your talk. You'll be telling me she has consumption, or dyspepsia, or some such disease that don't exist: mere allopathic inventions,—symptoms, sir, symptoms."

LEONARD (forcing his way).—"You attended her poor father, Captain Digby, when he was taken ill in the coach with you. He is dead, and his child is an orphan."

DR. MORGAN (fumbling in his medical pocket-book).—"Orphan! nothing for orphans, especially if inconsolable, like aconite and chamomilla."

[It may be necessary to observe that homoeopathy professes to deal with our moral affections as well as with our physical maladies, and has a globule for every sorrow.]

With some difficulty Leonard succeeded in bringing Helen to the recollection of the homoeopathist, stating how he came in charge of her, and why he sought Dr. Morgan.

The doctor was much moved.

"But, really," said he, after a pause, "I don't see how I can help the poor child. I know nothing of her relations. This Lord Les—whatever his name is—I know of no lords in London. I knew lords, and physicked them too, when I was a blundering allopathist. There was the Earl of Lansmere,—has had many a blue pill from me, sinner that I was. His son was wiser; never would take physic. Very clever boy was Lord L'Estrange—"

"Lord L'Estrange! that name begins with Les—"

"Stuff! He's always abroad,—shows his sense. I'm going abroad too. No development for science in this horrid city,—full of prejudices, sir, and given up to the most barbarous allopathical and phlebotomical propensities. I am going to the land of Hahnemann, sir,—sold my good-will, lease, and furniture, and have bought in on the Rhine. Natural life there, sir,—homeopathy needs nature: dine at one o'clock, get up at four, tea little known, and science appreciated. But I forget. Cott! what can I do for the orphan?"

"Well, sir," said Leonard, rising, "Heaven will give me strength to support her."

The doctor looked at the young man attentively. "And yet," said he, in a gentler voice, "you, young man, are, by your account, a perfect stranger to her, or were so when you undertook to bring her to London. You have a good heart, always keep it. Very healthy thing, sir, a good heart,—that is, when not carried to excess. But you have friends of your own in town?"

LEONARD.—"Not yet, sir; I hope to make them."

DOCTOR.—"Pless me, you do? How?—I can't make any."

Leonard coloured and hung his head. He longed to say, "Authors find friends in their readers,—I am going to be an author." But he felt that the reply would savour of presumption, and held his tongue.

The doctor continued to examine him, and with friendly interest. "You say you walked up to London: was that from choice or economy?"

LEONARD.—"Both, sir."

DOCTOR.—"Sit down again, and let us talk. I can give you a quarter of an hour, and I'll see if I can help either of you, provided you tell me all the symptoms,—I mean all the particulars."

Then, with that peculiar adroitness which belongs to experience in the medical profession, Dr. Morgan, who was really an acute and able man, proceeded to put his questions, and soon extracted from Leonard the boy's history and hopes. But when the doctor, in admiration at a simplicity which contrasted so evident an intelligence, finally asked him his name and connections, and Leonard told them, the homoeopathist actually started. "Leonard Fairfield, grandson of my old friend, John Avenel of Lansmere! I must shake you by the hand. Brought up by Mrs. Fairfield!—"

"Ah, now I look, strong family likeness,—very strong"

The tears stood in the doctor's eyes. "Poor Nora!" said he.

"Nora! Did you know my aunt?"

"Your aunt! Ah! ah! yes, yes! Poor Nora! she died almost in these arms,—so young, so beautiful. I remember it as if yesterday."

The doctor brushed his hand across his eyes, and swallowed a globule; and before the boy knew what he was about, had, in his benevolence, thrust another between Leonard's quivering lips.

A knock was heard at the door.

"Ha! that 's my great patient," cried the doctor, recovering his self- possession,— "must see him. A chronic case, excellent patient,—tic, sir, tic. Puzzling and interesting. If I could take that tic with me, I should ask nothing more from Heaven. Call again on Monday; I may have something to tell you then as to yourself. The little girl can't stay with you,—wrong and nonsensical! I will see after her. Leave me your address,—write it here. I think I know a lady who will take charge of her. Good-by. Monday next, ten o'clock." With this, the doctor thrust out Leonard, and ushered in his grand patient, whom he was very anxious to take with him to the banks of the Rhine.

Leonard had now only to discover the nobleman whose name had been so vaguely uttered by poor Captain Digby. He had again recourse to the "Court Guide;" and finding the address of two or three lords the first syllable of whose titles seemed similar to that repeated to him, and all living pretty near to each other, in the regions of Mayfair, he ascertained his way to that quarter, and, exercising his mother-wit, inquired at the neighbouring shops as to the personal appearance of these noblemen. Out of consideration for his rusticity, he got very civil and clear answers; but none of the lords in question corresponded with the description given by Helen. One was old, another was exceedingly corpulent, a third was bedridden,—none of them was known to keep a great dog. It is needless to say that the name of L'Estrange (no habitant of London) was not in the "Court Guide." And Dr. Morgan's assertion that that person was always abroad unluckily dismissed from Leonard's mind the name the homoeopathist had so casually mentioned. But Helen was not disappointed when her young protector returned late in the day, and told her of his ill-success. Poor child! she was so pleased in her heart not to be separated from her new brother; and Leonard was touched to see how she had contrived, in his absence, to give a certain comfort and cheerful grace to the bare room devoted to himself. She had arranged his few books and papers so neatly, near the window, in sight of the one green elm. She had coaxed the smiling landlady out of one or two extra articles of furniture, especially a walnut-tree bureau, and some odds and ends of ribbon, with which last she had looped up the curtains. Even the old rush-bottom chairs had a strange air of elegance, from the mode in which they were placed. The fairies had given sweet Helen the art that adorns a home, and brings out a smile from the dingiest corner of hut and attic.

Leonard wondered and praised. He kissed his blushing ministrant gratefully, and they sat down in joy to their abstemious meal; when suddenly his face was overclouded,—there shot through him the remembrance of Dr. Morgan's words, "The little girl can't stay with you, —wrong and nonsensical. I think I know a lady who will take charge of her."

"Ah," cried Leonard, sorrowfully, "how could I forget?" And he told Helen what grieved him. Helen at first exclaimed that she would not go. Leonard, rejoiced, then began to talk as usual of his great prospects; and, hastily finishing his meal, as if there were no time to lose, sat down at once to his papers. Then Helen contemplated him sadly, as he bent over his delightful work. And when, lifting his radiant eyes from his manuscripts, he exclaimed, "No, no, you shall not go. This must succeed,—and we shall live together in some pretty cottage, where we can see more than one tree,"—then Helen sighed, and did not answer this time, "No, I will not go."

Shortly after she stole from the room, and into her own; and there, kneeling down, she prayed, and her prayer was somewhat this, "Guard me against my own selfish heart; may I never be a burden to him who has shielded me."

Perhaps as the Creator looks down on this world, whose wondrous beauty beams on us more and more, in proportion as our science would take it from poetry into law,—perhaps He beholds nothing so beautiful as the pure heart of a simple loving child.

CHAPTER XIV.

Leonard went out the next day with his precious manuscripts. He had read sufficient of modern literature to know the names of the principal London publishers; and to these he took his way with a bold step, though a beating heart.

That day he was out longer than the last; and when he returned, and came into the little room, Helen uttered a cry, for she scarcely recognized him,—there was on his face so deep, so silent, and so concentrated a despondency. He sat down listlessly, and did not kiss her this time, as she stole towards him. He felt so humbled. He was a king deposed.

He take charge of another life! He!

She coaxed him at last into communicating his day's chronicle. The reader beforehand knows too well what it must be to need detailed repetition. Most of the publishers had absolutely refused to look at his manuscripts; one or two had good-naturedly glanced over and returned them at once with a civil word or two of flat rejection. One publisher alone —himself a man of letters, and who in youth had gone through the same bitter process of disillusion that now awaited the village genius— volunteered some kindly though stern explanation and counsel to the unhappy boy. This gentleman read a portion of Leonard's principal poem with attention, and even with frank admiration. He could appreciate the rare promise that it manifested. He sympathized with the boy's history, and even with his hopes; and then he said, in bidding him farewell,

"If I publish this poem for you, speaking as a trader, I shall be a considerable loser. Did I publish all I admire, out of sympathy with the author, I should be a ruined man. But suppose that, impressed as I really am with the evidence of no common poetic gifts in this manuscript, I publish it, not as a trader, but a lover of literature, I shall in reality, I fear, render you a great disservice, and perhaps unfit your whole life for the exertions on which you must rely for independence."

"How, sir?" cried Leonard. "Not that I would ask you to injure yourself for me," he added, with proud tears in his eyes.

"How, my young friend? I will explain. There is enough talent in these verses to induce very flattering reviews in some of the literary journals. You will read these, find yourself proclaimed a poet, will cry 'I am on the road to fame.' You will come to me, 'And my poem, how does it sell?' I shall point to some groaning shelf, and say, 'Not twenty copies! The journals may praise, but the public will not buy it.' 'But you will have got a name,' you say. Yes, a name as a poet just sufficiently known to make every man in practical business disinclined to give fair trial to your talents in a single department of positive life; none like to employ poets;—a name that will not put a penny in your purse,—worse still, that will operate as a barrier against every escape into the ways whereby men get to fortune. But having once tasted praise, you will continue to sigh for it: you will perhaps never again get a publisher to bring forth a poem, but you will hanker round the purlieu of the Muses, scribble for periodicals, fall at last into a bookseller's drudge. Profits will be so precarious and uncertain, that to avoid debt may be impossible; then, you who now seem so ingenuous and so proud, will sink deeper still into the literary mendicant, begging, borrowing—"

"Never! never! never!" cried Leonard, veiling his face with his hands.

"Such would have been my career," continued the publisher; "but I luckily had a rich relative, a trader, whose calling I despised as a boy, who kindly forgave my folly, bound me as an apprentice, and here I am; and now I can afford to write books as well as sell them.

"Young man, you must have respectable relations,—go by their advice and counsel; cling fast to some positive calling. Be anything in this city rather than poet by profession."

"And how, sir, have there ever been poets? Had they other callings?"

"Read their biography, and then—envy them!"

Leonard was silent a moment; but lifting his head, answered loud and quickly, "I have read their biography. True, their lot was poverty,— perhaps hunger. Sir, I—envy them!"

"Poverty and hunger are small evils," answered the bookseller, with a grave, kind smile. "There are worse,—debt and degradation, and— despair."

"No, sir, no, you exaggerate; these last are not the lot of all poets."

"Right, for most of our greatest poets had some private means of their own. And for others—why, all who have put into a lottery have not drawn blanks. But who could advise another man to set his whole hope of fortune on the chance of a prize in a lottery? And such a lottery!" groaned the publisher,

glancing towards sheets and reams of dead authors, lying, like lead, upon his shelves.

Leonard clutched his manuscripts to his heart, and hurried away.

"Yes," he muttered, as Helen clung to him, and tried to console,—“yes, you were right: London is very vast, very strong, and very cruel;” and his head sank lower and lower yet upon his bosom.

The door was flung widely open, and in, unannounced, walked Dr. Morgan.

The child turned to him, and at the sight of his face she remembered her father; and the tears that for Leonard's sake she had been trying to suppress found way.

The good doctor soon gained all the confidence of these two young hearts; and after listening to Leonard's story of his paradise lost in a day, he patted him on the shoulder and said, “Well, you will call on me on Monday, and we will see. Meanwhile, borrow these of me!”—and he tried to slip three sovereigns into the boy's hand. Leonard was indignant. The bookseller's warning flashed on him. Mendicancy! Oh, no, he had not yet come to that! He was almost rude and savage in his rejection; and the doctor did not like him the less for it.

“You are an obstinate mule,” said the homoeopathist, reluctantly putting up his sovereigns. “Will you work at something practical and prosy, and let the poetry rest a while?”

“Yes,” said Leonard, doggedly. “I will work.”

“Very well, then. I know an honest bookseller, and he shall give you some employment; and meanwhile, at all events, you will be among books, and that will be some comfort.”

Leonard's eyes brightened. “A great comfort, sir.” He pressed the hand he had before put aside to his grateful heart.

“But,” resumed the doctor, seriously, “you really feel a strong predisposition to make verses?”

“I did, sir.”

“Very bad symptom indeed, and must be stopped before a relapse! Here, I have cured three prophets and ten poets with this novel specific.”

While thus speaking he had got out his book and a globule. “*Agaricus muscarius* dissolved in a tumbler of distilled water,—teaspoonful whenever the fit comes on. Sir, it would have cured Milton himself.”

“And now for you, my child,” turning to Helen, “I have found a lady who will be very kind to you. Not a menial situation. She wants some one to read to her and tend on her; she is old and has no children. She wants a companion, and prefers a girl of your age to one older. Will this suit you?”

Leonard walked away.

Helen got close to the doctor's ear, and whispered, “No, I cannot leave him now,—he is so sad.”

“Cott!” grunted the doctor, “you two must have been reading ‘Paul and Virginia.’ If I could but stay in England, I would try what *ignatia* would do in this case,—interesting experiment! Listen to me, little girl, and go out of the room, you, sir.”

Leonard, averting his face, obeyed. Helen made an involuntary step after him; the doctor detained and drew her on his knee.

“What's your Christian name?—I forget.”

“Helen.”

“Helen, listen. In a year or two you will be a young woman, and it would be very wrong then to live alone with that young man. Meanwhile you have no right to cripple all his energies. He must not have you leaning on his right arm,—you would weigh it down. I am going away, and when I am gone there will be no one to help you, if you reject the friend I offer you. Do as I tell you, for a little girl so peculiarly susceptible (a thorough *pulsatilla* constitution) cannot be obstinate and egotistical.”

“Let me see him cared for and happy, sir,” said she, firmly, “and I will go where you wish.”

“He shall be so; and to-morrow, while he is out, I will come and fetch you. Nothing so painful as leave-taking, shakes the nervous system, and is a mere waste of the animal economy.”

Helen sobbed aloud; then, writhing from the doctor, she exclaimed, "But he may know where I am? We may see each other sometimes? Ah, sir, it was at my father's grave that we first met, and I think Heaven sent him to me. Do not part us forever."

"I should have a heart of stone if I did," cried the doctor, vehemently; "and Miss Starke shall let him come and visit you once a week. I'll give her something to make her. She is naturally indifferent to others. I will alter her whole constitution, and melt her into sympathy—with rhododendron and arsenic!"

CHAPTER XV.

Before he went the doctor wrote a line to "Mr. Prickett, Bookseller, Holborn," and told Leonard to take it the next morning, as addressed. "I will call on Prickett myself tonight and prepare him for your visit. But I hope and trust you will only have to stay there a few days."

He then turned the conversation, to communicate his plans for Helen. Miss Starke lived at Highgate,—a worthy woman, stiff and prim, as old maids sometimes are; but just the place for a little girl like Helen, and Leonard should certainly be allowed to call and see her.

Leonard listened and made no opposition,—now that his day-dream was dispelled, he had no right to pretend to be Helen's protector. He could have prayed her to share his wealth and his fame; his penury and his drudgery—no.

It was a very sorrowful evening,—that between the adventurer and the child. They sat up late, till their candle had burned down to the socket; neither did they talk much; but his hand clasped hers all the time, and her head pillowed it self on his shoulder. I fear when they parted it was not for sleep.

And when Leonard went forth the next morning, Helen stood at the street door watching him depart—slowly, slowly. No doubt, in that humble lane there were many sad hearts; but no heart so heavy as that of the still, quiet child, when the form she had watched was to be seen no more, and, still standing on the desolate threshold, she gazed into space, and all was vacant.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Prickett was a believer in homeopathy, and declared, to the indignation of all the apothecaries round Holborn, that he had been cured of a chronic rheumatism by Dr. Morgan. The good doctor had, as he promised, seen Mr. Prickett when he left Leonard, and asked him as a favour to find some light occupation for the boy, that would serve as an excuse for a modest weekly salary. "It will not be for long," said the doctor: "his relations are respectable and well off. I will write to his grandparents, and in a few days I hope to relieve you of the charge. Of course, if you don't want him, I will repay what he costs meanwhile."

Mr. Prickett, thus prepared for Leonard, received him very graciously; and, after a few questions, said Leonard was just the person he wanted to assist him in cataloguing his books, and offered him most handsomely £1 a week for the task.

Plunged at once into a world of books vaster than he had ever before won admission to, that old divine dream of knowledge, out of which poetry had sprung, returned to the village student at the very sight of the venerable volumes. The collection of Mr. Prickett was, however, in reality by no means large; but it comprised not only the ordinary standard works, but several curious and rare ones. And Leonard paused in making the catalogue, and took many a hasty snatch of the contents of each tome, as it passed through his hands. The bookseller, who was an enthusiast for old books, was pleased to see a kindred feeling (which his shop-boy had never exhibited) in his new assistant; and he talked about rare editions and scarce copies, and initiated Leonard into many of the mysteries of the bibliographer.

Nothing could be more dark and dingy than the shop. There was a booth outside, containing cheap books and odd volumes, round which there was always an attentive group; within, a gas-lamp burned night and day.

But time passed quickly to Leonard. He missed not the green fields, he forgot his disappointments, he ceased to remember even Helen. O strange passion of knowledge! nothing like thee for strength and devotion!

Mr. Prickett was a bachelor, and asked Leonard to dine with him on a cold shoulder of mutton. During dinner the shop-boy kept the shop, and Mr. Prickett was really pleasant, as well as loquacious. He took a liking to Leonard, and Leonard told him his adventures with the publishers, at which Mr. Prickett rubbed his hands and laughed, as at a capital joke. "Oh, give up poetry, and stick to a shop," cried he; "and to cure you forever of the mad whim to be author, I'll just lend you the 'Life and Works of Chatterton.' You may take it home with you and read before you go to bed. You'll come back quite a new man to-morrow."

Not till night, when the shop was closed, did Leonard return to his lodging. And when he entered the room, he was struck to the soul by the silence, by the void. Helen was gone!

There was a rose-tree in its pot on the table at which he wrote, and by it a scrap of paper, on which was written,

DEAR, dear brother Leonard, God bless you. I will let you know when we can meet again.
Take care of this rose, Brother, and don't forget poor

HELEN.

Over the word "forget" there was a big round blistered spot that nearly effaced the word.

Leonard leaned his face on his hands, and for the first time in his life he felt what solitude really is. He could not stay long in the room. He walked out again, and wandered objectless to and fro the streets. He passed that stiller and humbler neighbourhood, he mixed with the throng that swarmed in the more populous thoroughfares. Hundreds and thousands passed him by, and still—still such solitude.

He came back, lighted his candle, and resolutely drew forth the "Chatterton" which the bookseller had lent him. It was an old edition, in one thick volume. It had evidently belonged to some contemporary of the poet's,—apparently an inhabitant of Bristol,—some one who had gathered up many anecdotes respecting Chatterton's habits, and who appeared even to have seen him, nay, been in his company; for the book was interleaved, and the leaves covered with notes and remarks, in a stiff clear hand,—all evincing personal knowledge of the mournful immortal dead. At first, Leonard read with an effort; then the strange and fierce spell of that dread life seized upon him,—seized with pain and gloom and terror,—this boy dying by his own hand, about the age Leonard had attained himself. This wondrous boy, of a genius beyond all comparison the greatest that ever yet was developed and extinguished at the age of eighteen,—self-taught, self-struggling, self-immolated. Nothing in literature like that life and that death!

With intense interest Leonard perused the tale of the brilliant imposture, which had been so harshly and so absurdly construed into the crime of a forgery, and which was (if not wholly innocent) so akin to the literary devices always in other cases viewed with indulgence, and exhibiting, in this, intellectual qualities in themselves so amazing, —such patience, such forethought, such labour, such courage, such ingenuity,—the qualities that, well directed, make men great, not only in books, but action. And, turning from the history of the imposture to the poems themselves, the young reader bent before their beauty, literally awed and breathless. How this strange Bristol boy tamed and mastered his rude and motley materials into a music that comprehended every tune and key, from the simplest to the sublimest! He turned back to the biography; he read on; he saw the proud, daring, mournful spirit alone in the Great City, like himself. He followed its dismal career, he saw it falling with bruised and soiled wings into the mire. He turned again to the later works, wrung forth as tasks for bread,—the satires without moral grandeur, the politics without honest faith. He shuddered and sickened as he read. True, even here his poet mind appreciated (what perhaps only poets can) the divine fire that burned fitfully through that meaner and more sordid fuel,—he still traced in those crude, hasty, bitter offerings to dire Necessity the hand of the young giant who had built up the stately verse of Rowley. But alas! how different from that "mighty line." How all serenity and joy had fled from these later exercises of art degraded into journey-work! Then rapidly came on the catastrophe,—the closed doors, the poison, the suicide, the manuscripts torn by the hands of despairing wrath, and strewed round the corpse upon the funereal floors. It was terrible! The spectre of the Titan boy (as described in the notes written on the margin), with his haughty brow, his cynic smile, his lustrous eyes, haunted all the night the baffled and solitary child of song.

CHAPTER XVII.

It will often happen that what ought to turn the human mind from some peculiar tendency produces the opposite effect. One would think that the perusal in the newspaper of some crime and capital punishment would warn away all who had ever meditated the crime, or dreaded the chance of detection. Yet it is well known to us that many a criminal is made by pondering over the fate of some predecessor in guilt. There is a fascination in the Dark and Forbidden, which, strange to say, is only lost in fiction. No man is more inclined to murder his nephews, or stifle his wife, after reading "Richard the Third" or "Othello." It is the reality that is necessary to constitute the danger of contagion. Now, it was this reality in the fate and life and crowning suicide of Chatterton that forced itself upon Leonard's thoughts, and sat there like a visible evil thing, gathering evil like cloud around it. There was much in the dead poet's character, his trials, and his doom, that stood out to Leonard like a bold and colossal shadow of himself and his fate. Alas! the book seller, in one respect, had said truly. Leonard came back to him the next day a new man; and it seemed even to himself as if he had lost a good angel in losing Helen. "Oh, that she had been by my side!" thought he. "Oh, that I could have felt the touch of her confiding hand; that, looking up from the scathed and dreary ruin of this life, that had sublimely lifted itself from the plain, and sought to tower aloft from a deluge, her mild look had spoken to me of innocent, humble, unaspiring childhood! Ah! If indeed I were still necessary to her,—still the sole guardian and protector,—then could I say to myself; 'Thou must not despair and die! Thou hast her to live and to strive for.' But no, no! Only this vast and terrible London,—the solitude of the dreary garret, and those lustrous eyes, glaring alike through the throng and through the solitude."

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the following Monday Dr. Morgan's shabby man-servant opened the door to a young man in whom he did not at first remember a former visitor. A few days before, embrowned with healthful travel, serene light in his eye, simple trust on his careless lip, Leonard Fairfield had stood at that threshold. Now again he stood there, pale and haggard, with a cheek already hollowed into those deep anxious lines that speak of working thoughts and sleepless nights; and a settled sullen gloom resting heavily on his whole aspect.

"I call by appointment," said the boy, testily, as the servant stood irresolute. The man gave way. "Master is just gone out to a patient: please to wait, sir;" and he showed him into the little parlour. In a few moments, two other patients were admitted. These were women, and they began talking very loud. They disturbed Leonard's unsocial thoughts. He saw that the door into the doctor's receivingroom was half open, and, ignorant of the etiquette which holds such penetralia as sacred, he walked in to escape from the gossips. He threw himself into the doctor's own wellworn chair, and muttered to himself, "Why did he tell me to come? What new can he think of for me? And if a favour, should I take it? He has given me the means of bread by work: that is all I have a right to ask from him, from any man,—all I should accept."

While thus soliloquizing, his eye fell on a letter lying open on the table. He started. He recognized the handwriting,—the same as that of the letter which had inclosed. L50 to his mother,—the letter of his grandparents. He saw his own name: he saw something more,—words that made his heart stand still, and his blood seem like ice in his veins. As he thus stood aghast, a hand was laid on the letter, and a voice, in an angry growl, muttered, "How dare you come into my room, and pe reading my letters? Er-r-r!"

Leonard placed his own hand on the doctor's firmly, and said, in a fierce tone, "This letter relates to me, belongs to me, crushes me. I have seen enough to know that. I demand to read all,—learn all."

The doctor looked round, and seeing the door into the waiting-room still open, kicked it to with his foot, and then said, under his breath, "What have you read? Tell me the truth."

"Two lines only, and I am called—I am called—" Leonard's frame shook from head to foot, and the veins on his forehead swelled like cords. He could not complete the sentence. It seemed as if an ocean was rolling up through his brain, and roaring in his ears. The doctor saw at a glance that there was physical danger in his state, and hastily and soothingly answered, "Sit down, sit down; calm yourself; you shall know all,—read all; drink this water;" and he poured into a tumbler of the pure liquid a drop

or two from a tiny phial.

Leonard obeyed mechanically, for he was no longer able to stand. He closed his eyes, and for a minute or two life seemed to pass from him; then he recovered, and saw the good doctor's gaze fixed on him with great compassion. He silently stretched forth his hand towards the letter. "Wait a few moments," said the physician, judiciously, "and hear me meanwhile. It is very unfortunate you should have seen a letter never meant for your eye, and containing allusions to a secret you were never to have known. But if I tell you more, will you promise me, on your word of honour, that you will hold the confidence sacred from Mrs. Fairfield, the Avenels,—from all? I myself am pledged to conceal a secret, which I can only share with you on the same condition."

"There is nothing," announced Leonard, indistinctly, and with a bitter smile on his lip,— "nothing, it seems, that I should be proud to boast of. Yes, I promise; the letter, the letter!"

The doctor placed it in Leonard's right hand, and quietly slipped to the wrist of the left his forefinger and thumb, as physicians are said to do when a victim is stretched on the rack. "Pulse decreasing," he muttered; "wonderful thing, aconite!" Meanwhile Leonard read as follows, faults in spelling and all:—

DR. MORGAN

SIR,—I received your favur duly, and am glad to hear that the pore boy is safe and Well. But he has been behaving ill, and ungrateful to my good son Richard, who is a credit to the whole Famuly and has made himself a Gentleman and Was very kind and good to the boy, not knowing who and What he is—God forbid! I don't want never to see him again—the boy. Pore John was ill and Restless for days afterwards. John is a pore cretur now, and has had paralyticks. And he Talked of nothing but Nora—the boy's eyes were so like his Mother's. I cannot, cannot see the Child of Shame. He can't cum here—for our Lord's sake, sir, don't ask it—he can't, so Respectable as we've always been!—and such disgrace! Base born! base born! Keep him where he is, bind him prentis, I'll pay anything for That. You says, sir, he's clever, and quick at learning; so did Parson Dale, and wanted him to go to Collidge and make a Figur,—then all would cum out. It would be my death, sir; I could not sleep in my grave, sir. Nora, that we were all so proud of. Sinful creturs that we are! Nora's good name that we've saved, now gone, gone. And Richard, who is so grand, and who was so fond of pore, pore Nora! He would not hold up his Head again. Don't let him make a Figur in the world; let him be a tradesman, as we were afore him,—any trade he takes to,—and not cross us no more while he lives. Then I shall pray for him, and wish him happy. And have not we had enuff of bringing up children to be above their birth? Nora, that I used to say was like the first lady o' the land-oh, but we were rightly punished! So now, sir, I leave all to you, and will Pay all you want for the boy. And be sure that the secret's kept. For we have never heard from the father, and, at leest, no one knows that Nora has a, living son but I and my daughter Jane, and Parson Dale and you—and you Two are good Gentlemen—and Jane will keep her word, and I am old, and shall be in my grave Soon, but I hope it won't be while pore John needs me. What could he do without me? And if that got wind, it would kill me straght, sir. Pore John is a helpless cretur, God bless him. So no more from your servant in all dooty,

M. AVENEL.

Leonard laid down this letter very calmly, and, except by a slight heaving at his breast, and a deathlike whiteness of his lips, the emotions he felt were undetected. And it is a proof how much exquisite goodness there was in his heart that the first words he spoke were, "Thank Heaven!"

The doctor did not expect that thanksgiving, and he was so startled that he exclaimed, "For what?"

"I have nothing to pity or excuse in the woman I knew and honoured as a mother. I am not her son—her—" He stopped short.

"No: but don't be hard on your true mother,—poor Nora!"

Leonard staggered, and then burst into a sudden paroxysm of tears.

"Oh, my own mother! my dead mother! Thou for whom I felt so mysterious a love,—thou from whom I took this poet soul! pardon me, pardon me! Hard on thee! Would that thou wert living yet, that I might comfort thee! What thou must have suffered!"

These words were sobbed forth in broken gasps from the depth of his heart. Then he caught up the letter again, and his thoughts were changed as his eyes fell upon the writer's shame and fear, as it

were, of his very existence. All his native haughtiness returned to him. His crest rose, his tears dried. "Tell her," he said, with stern, unfaltering voice, "tell Mrs. Avenel that she is obeyed; that I will never seek her roof, never cross her path, never disgrace her wealthy son. But tell her, also, that I will choose my own way in life,—that I will not take from her a bribe for concealment. Tell her that I am nameless, and will yet make a name."

A name! Was this but an idle boast, or was it one of those flashes of conviction which are never belied, lighting up our future for one lurid instant, and then fading into darkness?

"I do not doubt it, my brave boy," said Dr. Morgan, growing exceedingly Welsh in his excitement; "and perhaps you may find a father, who—"

"Father! who is he, what is he? He lives, then! But he has deserted me,—he must have betrayed her! I need him not. The law gives me no father."

The last words were said with a return of bitter anguish: then, in a calmer tone, he resumed, "But I should know who he is—as another one whose path I may not cross."

Dr. Morgan looked embarrassed, and paused in deliberation. "Nay," said he, at length, "as you know so much, it is surely best that you should know all."

The doctor then proceeded to detail, with some circumlocution, what we will here repeat from his account more succinctly.

Nora Avenel, while yet very young, left her native village, or rather the house of Lady Lansinere, by whom she had been educated and brought up, in order to accept the place of companion to a lady in London. One evening she suddenly presented herself at her father's house, and at the first sight of her mother's face she fell down insensible. She was carried to bed. Dr. Morgan (then the chief medical practitioner of the town) was sent for. That night Leonard came into the world, and his mother died. She never recovered her senses, never spoke intelligibly from the time she entered the house. "And never, therefore, named your father," said Dr. Morgan. "We knew not who he was."

"And how," cried Leonard, fiercely,— "how have they dared to slander this dead mother? How knew they that I—was—was—was not the child of wedlock?"

"There was no wedding-ring on Nora's finger, never any rumour of her marriage; her strange and sudden appearance at her father's house; her emotions on entrance, so unlike those natural to a wife returning to a parent's home,—these are all the evidence against her. But Mrs. Avenel deemed them strong, and so did I. You have a right to think we judged too harshly,—perhaps we did."

"And no inquiries were ever made?" said Leonard, mournfully, and after a long silence,— "no inquiries to learn who was the father of the motherless child?"

"Inquiries! Mrs. Avenel would have died first. Your grandmother's nature is very rigid. Had she come from princes, from Cadwallader himself," said the Welshman, "she could not more have shrunk from the thought of dishonour. Even over her dead child, the child she had loved the best, she thought but how to save that child's name and memory from suspicion. There was luckily no servant in the house, only Mark Fairfield and his wife (Nora's sister): they had arrived the same day on a visit.

"Mrs. Fairfield was nursing her own infant two or three months old; she took charge of you; Nora was buried and the secret kept. None out of the family knew of it but myself and the curate of the town,— Mr. Dale. The day after your birth, Mrs. Fairfield, to prevent discovery, moved to a village at some distance. There her child died; and when she returned to Hazeldean, where her husband was settled, you passed as the son she had lost. Mark, I know, was as a father to you, for he had loved Nora: they had been children together."

"And she came to London,—London is strong and cruel," muttered Leonard. "She was friendless and deceived. I see all,—I desire to know no more. This father—he must in deed have been like those whom I have read of in books. To love, to wrong her,—that I can conceive; but then to leave, to abandon; no visit to her grave, no remorse, no search for his own child. Well, well; Mrs. Avenel was right. Let us think of him no more."

The man-servant knocked at the door, and then put in his head. "Sir, the ladies are getting very impatient, and say they'll go."

"Sir," said Leonard, with a strange calm return to the things about him, "I ask your pardon for taking up your time so long. I go now. I will never mention to my moth—I mean to Mrs. Fairfield—what I have learned, nor to any one. I will work my way somehow. If Mr. Prickett will keep me, I will stay with him

at present; but I repeat, I cannot take Mrs. Avenel's money and be bound apprentice. Sir, you have been good and patient with me,—Heaven reward you."

The doctor was too moved to answer. He wrung Leonard's hand, and in another minute the door closed upon the nameless boy. He stood alone in the streets of London; and the sun flashed on him, red and menacing, like the eye of a foe!

CHAPTER XIX.

Leonard did not appear at the shop of Mr. Prickett that day. Needless it is to say where he wandered, what he suffered, what thought, what felt. All within was storm. Late at night he returned to his solitary lodging. On his table, neglected since the morning, was Helen's rose-tree. It looked parched and fading. His heart smote him: he watered the poor plant,—perhaps with his tears.

Meanwhile Dr. Morgan, after some debate with himself whether or not to apprise Mrs. Avenel of Leonard's discovery and message, resolved to spare her an uneasiness and alarm that might be dangerous to her health, and unnecessary in itself. He replied shortly, that she need not fear Leonard's coming to her house; that he was disinclined to bind himself an apprentice, but that he was provided for at present; and in a few weeks, when Dr. Morgan heard more of him through the tradesman by whom he was employed, the doctor would write to her from Germany. He then went to Mr. Prickett's, told the willing bookseller to keep the young man for the present,—to be kind to him, watch over his habits and conduct, and report to the doctor in his new home, on the Rhine, what avocation he thought Leonard would be best suited for, and most inclined to adopt. The charitable Welshman divided with the bookseller the salary given to Leonard, and left a quarter of his moiety in advance. It is true that he knew he should be repaid on applying to Mrs. Avenel; but being a man of independent spirit himself, he so sympathized with Leonard's present feelings, that he felt as if he should degrade the boy did he maintain him, even secretly, out of Mrs. Avenel's money,—money intended not to raise, but keep him down in life. At the worst, it was a sum the doctor could afford, and he had brought the boy into the world. Having thus, as he thought, safely provided for his two young charges, Helen and Leonard, the doctor then gave himself up to his final preparations for departure. He left a short note for Leonard with Mr. Prickett, containing some brief advice, some kind cheering; a postscript to the effect that he had not communicated to Mrs. Avenel the information Leonard had acquired, and that it were best to leave her in that ignorance; and six small powders to be dissolved in water, and a teaspoonful every fourth hour,— "Sovereign against rage and sombre thoughts," wrote the doctor.

By the evening of the next day Dr. Morgan, accompanied by his pet patient with the chronic tic, whom he had talked into exile, was on the steamboat on his way to Ostend.

Leonard resumed his life at Mr. Prickett's; but the change in him did not escape the bookseller. All his ingenuous simplicity had deserted him. He was very distant and very taciturn; he seemed to have grown much older. I shall not attempt to analyze metaphysically this change. By the help of such words as Leonard may himself occasionally let fall, the reader will dive into the boy's heart, and see how there the change had worked, and is working still. The happy, dreamy peasant-genius gazing on Glory with inebriate, undazzled eyes is no more. It is a man, suddenly cut off from the old household holy ties,—conscious of great powers, and confronted on all sides by barriers of iron, alone with hard Reality and scornful London; and if he catches a glimpse of the lost Helicon, he sees, where he saw the Muse, a pale melancholy spirit veiling its face in shame,—the ghost of the mournful mother, whose child has no name, not even the humblest, among the family of men.

On the second evening after Dr. Morgan's departure, as Leonard was just about to leave the shop, a customer stepped in with a book in his hand, which he had snatched from the shop-boy, who was removing the volumes for the night from the booth without.

"Mr. Prickett, Mr. Prickett!" said the customer, "I am ashamed of you. You presume to put upon this work, in two volumes, the sum of eight shillings."

Mr. Prickett stepped forth from the Cimmerian gloom of some recess, and cried, "What! Mr. Burley, is that you? But for your voice, I should not have known you."

"Man is like a book, Mr. Prickett; the commonalty only look to his binding. I am better bound, it is very true." Leonard glanced towards the speaker, who now stood under the gas-lamp, and thought he recognized his face. He looked again. Yes; it was the perch-fisher whom he had met on the banks of the

Brent, and who had warned him of the lost fish and the broken line.

MR. BURLEY (continuing).—"But the 'Art of Thinking'!—you charge eight shillings for the 'Art of Thinking.'"

MR. PRICKETT.—"Cheap enough, Mr. Burley. A very clean copy."

MR. BURLEY.—"Usurer! I sold it to you for three shillings. It is more than one hundred and fifty per cent you propose to gain from my 'Art of Thinking.'"

MR. PRICKETT (stuttering and taken aback).—"You sold it to me! Ah, now I remember. But it was more than three shillings I gave. You forget,— two glasses of brandy-and-water."

MR. BURLEY.—"Hospitality, sir, is not to be priced. If you sell your hospitality, you are not worthy to possess my 'Art of Thinking.' I resume it. There are three shillings, and a shilling more for interest. No; on second thoughts, instead of that shilling, I will return your hospitality: and the first time you come my way you shall have two glasses of brandy-and-water."

Mr. Prickett did not look pleased, but he made no objection; and Mr. Burley put the book into his pocket, and turned to examine the shelves. He bought an old jest-book, a stray volume of the Comedies of Destouches, paid for them, put them also into his pocket, and was sauntering out, when he perceived Leonard, who was now standing at the doorway.

"Hem! who is that?" he asked, whispering Mr. Prickett. "A young assistant of mine, and very clever."

Mr. Burley scanned Leonard from top to toe.

"We have met before, sir. But you look as if you had returned to the Brent, and been fishing for my perch."

"Possibly, sir," answered Leonard. "But my line is tough, and is not yet broken, though the fish drags it amongst the weeds, and buries itself in the mud."

He lifted his hat, bowed slightly, and walked on.

"He is clever," said Mr. Burley to the bookseller: "he understands allegory."

MR. PRICKETT.—"Poor youth! He came to town with the idea of turning author: you know what that is, Mr. Burley."

MR. BURLEY (with an air of superb dignity).—"Bibliopole, yes! An author is a being between gods and men, who ought to be lodged in a palace, and entertained at the public charge upon ortolans and Tokay. He should be kept lapped in down, and curtained with silken awnings from the cares of life, have nothing to do but to write books upon tables of cedar, and fish for perch from a gilded galley. And that 's what will come to pass when the ages lose their barbarism and know their benefactors. Meanwhile, sir, I invite you to my rooms, and will regale you upon brandy-and-water as long as I can pay for it; and when I cannot—you shall regale me."

Mr. Prickett muttered, "A very bad bargain indeed," as Mr. Burley, with his chin in the air, stepped into the street.

CHAPTER XX.

At first Leonard had always returned home through the crowded thoroughfares,—the contact of numbers had animated his spirits. But the last two days, since the discovery of his birth, he had taken his way down the comparatively unpeopled path of the New Road.

He had just gained that part of this outskirts in which the statuaries and tomb-makers exhibit their gloomy wares, furniture alike for gardens and for graves,—and, pausing, contemplated a column, on which was placed an urn, half covered with a funeral mantle, when his shoulder was lightly tapped, and, turning quickly, he saw Mr. Burley standing behind him.

"Excuse me, sir, but you understand perch-fishing; and since we find ourselves on the same road, I should like to be better acquainted with you. I hear you once wished to be an author. I am one."

Leonard had never before, to his knowledge, seen an author, and a mournful smile passed his lips as he surveyed the perch-fisher.

Mr. Burley was indeed very differently attired since the first interview by the brooklet. He looked much less like an author,—but more perhaps like a perch-fisher. He had a new white hat, stuck on one side of his head, a new green overcoat, new gray trousers, and new boots. In his hand was a whalebone stick, with a silver handle. Nothing could be more vagrant, devil-me-Garish, and, to use a slang word, tigerish, than his whole air. Yet, vulgar as was his costume, he did not himself seem vulgar, but rather eccentric, lawless,—something out of the pale of convention. His face looked more pale and more puffed than before, the tip of his nose redder; but the spark in his eye was of a livelier light, and there was self-enjoyment in the corners of his sensual, humorous lip.

"You are an author, sir," repeated Leonard. "Well; and what is your report of the calling? Yonder column props an urn. The column is tall, and the urn is graceful. But it looks out of place by the roadside: what say you?"

MR. BURLEY.—"It would look better in the churchyard."

LEONARD.—"So I was thinking. And you are an author!"

MR. BURLEY.—"Ah, I said you had a quick sense of allegory. And so you think an author looks better in a churchyard, when you see him but as a muffled urn under the moonshine, than standing beneath the gas-lamp in a white hat, and with a red tip to his nose. Abstractedly, you are right. But, with your leave, the author would rather be where he is. Let us walk on." The two men felt an interest in each other, and they walked some yards in silence.

"To return to the urn," said Mr. Burley,—"you think of fame and churchyards. Natural enough, before illusion dies; but I think of the moment, of existence,—and I laugh at fame. Fame, sir—not worth a glass of cold-without! And as for a glass of warm, with sugar—and five shillings in one's pocket to spend as one pleases—what is there in Westminster Abbey to compare with it?"

"Talk on, sir,—I should like to hear you talk. Let me listen and hold my tongue." Leonard pulled his hat over his brows, and gave up his moody, questioning, turbulent mind to his new acquaintance.

And John Burley talked on. A dangerous and fascinating talk it was,— the talk of a great intellect fallen; a serpent trailing its length on the ground, and showing bright, shifting, glorious hues, as it grovelled,—a serpent, yet without the serpent's guile. If John Burley deceived and tempted, he meant it not,—he crawled and glittered alike honestly. No dove could be more simple.

Laughing at fame, he yet dwelt with an eloquent enthusiasm on the joy of composition. "What do I care what men without are to say and think of the words that gush forth on my page?" cried he. "If you think of the public, of urns, and laurels, while you write, you are no genius; you are not fit to be an author. I write because it rejoices me, because it is my nature. Written, I care no more what becomes of it than the lark for the effect that the song has on the peasant it wakes to the plough. The poet, like the lark, sings 'from his watch-tower in the skies.' Is this true?"

"Yes, very true!"

"What can rob us of this joy? The bookseller will not buy; the public will not read. Let them sleep at the foot of the ladder of the angels, —we climb it all the same. And then one settles down into such good-tempered Lucianic contempt for men. One wants so little from them, when one knows what one's self is worth, and what they are. They are just worth the coin one can extract from them, in order to live.

"Our life—that is worth so much to us. And then their joys, so vulgar to them, we can make them golden and kingly. Do you suppose Burns drinking at the alehouse, with his boors around him, was drinking, like them, only beer and whiskey? No, he was drinking nectar; he was imbibing his own ambrosial thoughts,—shaking with the laughter of the gods. The coarse human liquid was just needed to unlock his spirit from the clay,— take it from jerkin and corduroys, and wrap it in the 'singing robes' that floated wide in the skies: the beer or the whiskey needed but for that, and then it changed at once into the drink of Hebe. But come, you have not known this life,—you have not seen it. Come, give me this night. I have moneys about me,—I will fling them abroad as liberally as Alexander himself, when he left to his share but hope. Come!"

"Whither?"

"To my throne. On that throne last sat Edmund Kean, mighty mime! I am his successor. We will see whether in truth these wild sons of genius, who are cited but 'to point a moral and adorn a tale,' were

objects of compassion. Sober-suited tits to lament over a Savage or a Morland, a Porson and a Burns!"

"Or a Chatterton," said Leonard, gloomily.

"Chatterton was an impostor in all things; he feigned excesses that he never knew. He a bacchanalian, a royster! HE! No. We will talk of him. Come!"

Leonard went.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Room! And the smoke-reek, and the gas glare of it! The whitewash of the walls, and the prints thereon of the actors in their mime-ropes, and stage postures,—actors as far back as their own lost Augustan era, when the stage was a real living influence on the manners and the age! There was Betterton, in wig and gown,—as Cato, moralizing on the soul's eternity, and halting between Plato and the dagger. There was Woodward as "The Fine Gentleman," with the inimitable rake-hell in which the heroes of Wycherly and Congreve and Farquhar live again. There was jovial Quin as Falstaff, with round buckler and "fair round belly." There was Colley Cibber in brocade, taking snuff as with "his Lord," the thumb and forefinger raised in air, and looking at you for applause. There was Macklin as Shylock, with knife in hand: and Kemble in the solemn weeds of the Dane; and Kean in the place of honour over the chimney-piece.

When we are suddenly taken from practical life, with its real workday men, and presented to the portraits of those sole heroes of a world Fantastic and Phantasmal, in the garments wherein they did "strut and fret their hour upon the stage," verily there is something in the sight that moves an inner sense within ourselves,—for all of us have an inner sense of some existence, apart from the one that wears away our days: an existence that, afar from St. James's and St. Giles's, the Law Courts and Exchange, goes its way in terror or mirth, in smiles or in tears, through a vague magic-land of the poets. There, see those actors—they are the men who lived it—to whom our world was the false one, to whom the Imaginary was the Actual! And did Shakspeare himself, in his life, ever hearken to such applause as thundered round the personators of his airy images? Vague children of the most transient of the arts, fleet shadows on running waters, though thrown down from the steadfast stars, were ye not happier than we who live in the Real? How strange you must feel in the great circuit that ye now take through eternity! No prompt-books, no lamps, no acting Congreve and Shakspeare there! For what parts in the skies have your studies on the earth fitted you? Your ultimate destinies are very puzzling. Hail to your effigies, and pass we on!

There, too, on the whitewashed walls, were admitted the portraits of ruder rivals in the arena of fame,—yet they, too, had known an applause warmer than his age gave to Shakspeare; the Champions of the Ring,—Cribb and Molyneux and Dutch Sam. Interspersed with these was an old print of Newmarket in the early part of the last century, and sundry engravings from Hogarth. But poets, oh, they were there too! poets who might be supposed to have been sufficiently good fellows to be at home with such companions,—Shakspeare, of course, with his placid forehead; Ben Jonson, with his heavy scowl; Burns and Byron cheek by jowl. But the strangest of all these heterogeneous specimens of graphic art was a full-length print of William Pitt!—William Pitt, the austere and imperious. What the deuce did he do there amongst prize-fighters and actors and poets? It seemed an insult to his grand memory. Nevertheless there he was, very erect, and with a look of ineffable disgust in his upturned nostrils. The portraits on the sordid walls were very like the crambo in the minds of ordinary men,—very like the motley pictures of the FAMOUS hung up in your parlour, O my Public! Actors and prize-fighters, poets and statesmen, all without congruity and fitness, all whom you have been to see or to hear for a moment, and whose names have stared out in your newspapers, O my public!

And the company? Indescribable! Comedians, from small theatres, out of employ; pale, haggard-looking boys, probably the sons of worthy traders, trying their best to break their fathers' hearts; here and there the marked features of a Jew. Now and then you might see the curious puzzled face of some greenhorn about town, or perhaps a Cantab; and men of grave age, and grayhaired, were there, and amongst them a wondrous proportion of carbuncled faces and bottle-noses. And when John Burley entered, there was a shout that made William Pitt shake in his frame. Such stamping and hallooing, and such hurrahs for "Burley John." And the gentleman who had filled the great high leathern chair in his absence gave it up to John Burley; and Leonard, with his grave, observant eye, and lip half sad and half scornful, placed himself by the side of his introducer. There was a nameless, expectant stir through the

assembly, as there is in the pit of the opera when some great singer advances to the lamps, and begins, "Di tanti palpiti." Time flies. Look at the Dutch clock over the door. Half-an-hour. John Burley begins to warm. A yet quicker light begins to break from his Eye; his voice has a mellow luscious roll in it.

"He will be grand to-night," whispered a thin man, who looked like a tailor, seated on the other side of Leonard. Time flies,—an hour. Look again at the Dutch clock. John Burley is grand, he is in his zenith, at his culminating point. What magnificent drollery! what luxuriant humour! How the Rabelais shakes in his easy-chair! Under the rush and the roar of this fun (what word else shall describe it?) the man's intellect is as clear as gold sand under a river. Such wit and such truth, and, at times, such a flood of quick eloquence! All now are listeners,—silent, save in applause.

And Leonard listened too. Not, as he would some nights ago, in innocent unquestioning delight. No; his mind has passed through great sorrow, great passion, and it comes out unsettled, inquiring, eager, brooding over joy itself as over a problem. And the drink circulates, and faces change; and there are gabbling and babbling; and Burley's head sinks in his bosom, and he is silent. And up starts a wild, dissolute, bacchanalian glee for seven voices. And the smoke-reek grows denser and thicker, and the gaslight looks dizzy through the haze. And John Burley's eyes reel.

Look again at the Dutch clock. Two hours have gone. John Burley has broken out again from his silence, his voice thick and husky, and his laugh cracked; and he talks, O ye gods! such rubbish and ribaldry; and the listeners roar aloud, and think it finer than before. And Leonard, who had hitherto been measuring himself in his mind against the giant, and saying inly, "He soars out of my reach," finds the giant shrink smaller and smaller, and saith to himself, "He is but of man's common standard after all!"

Look again at the Dutch clock. Three hours have passed. Is John Burley now of man's common standard? Man himself seems to have vanished from the scene,—his soul stolen from him, his form gone away with the fumes of the smoke, and the nauseous steam from that fiery bowl. And Leonard looked round, and saw but the swine of Circe,—some on the floor, some staggering against the walls, some hugging each other on the tables, some fighting, some bawling, some weeping. The divine spark had fled from the human face; the Beast is everywhere growing more and snore out of the thing that had been Man. And John Burley, still unconquered, but clean lost to his senses, fancies himself a preacher, and draws forth the most lugubrious sermon upon the brevity of life that mortal ever beard, accompanied with unctuous sobs; and now and then in the midst of balderdash gleams out a gorgeous sentence, that Jeremy Taylor might have envied, drivelling away again into a cadence below the rhetoric of a Muggletonian. And the waiters choked up the doorway, listening and laughing, and prepared to call cabs and coaches; and suddenly some one turned off the gaslight, and all was dark as pitch,—howls and laughter, as of the damned, ringing through the Pandemonium. Out from the black atmosphere stepped the boy-poet; and the still stars rushed on his sight, as they looked over the grimy roof-tops.

CHAPTER XXII.

Well, Leonard, this is the first time thou hast shown that thou hast in thee the iron out of which true manhood is forged and shaped. Thou hast the power to resist. Forth, unebriate, unpolluted, he came from the orgy, as yon star above him came from the cloud.

He had a latch-key to his lodgings. He let himself in and walked noiselessly up the creaking wooden stair. It was dawn. He passed on to his window and threw it open. The green elm-tree from the carpenter's yard looked as fresh and fair as if rooted in solitude, leagues away from the smoke of Babylon.

"Nature, Nature!" murmured Leonard, "I hear thy voice now. This stills, this strengthens. But the struggle is very dread. Here, despair of life,—there, faith in life. Nature thinks of neither, and lives serenely on."

By and by a bird slid softly from the heart of the tree, and dropped on the ground below out of sight. But Leonard heard its carol. It awoke its companions; wings began to glance in the air, and the clouds grew red towards the east.

Leonard sighed and left the window. On the table, near Helen's rose-tree, which he bent over wistfully, lay a letter. He had not observed it before. It was in Helen's hand. He took it to the light, and

read it by the pure, healthful gleams of morn:—

IVY LODGE.

Oh, my dear brother Leonard, will this find you well, and (more happy I dare not say, but) less sad than when we parted? I write kneeling, so that it seems to me as if I wrote and prayed at the same time. You may come and see me to-morrow evening, Leonard. Do come, do,—we shall walk together in this pretty garden; and there is an arbour all covered with jessamine and honeysuckle, from which we can look down on London. I have looked from it so many times,— so many—trying if I can guess the roofs in our poor little street, and fancying that I do see the dear elm-tree.

Miss Starke is very kind to me; and I think after I have seen you, that I shall be happy here,—that is, if you are happy.

Your own grateful sister,

HELEN.

P. S.—Any one will direct you to our house; it lies to the left near the top of the hill, a little way down a lane that is overhung on one side with chestnut-trees and lilacs. I shall be watching for you at the gate.

Leonard's brow softened, he looked again like his former self. Up from the dark sea at his heart smiled the meek face of a child, and the waves lay still as at the charm of a spirit.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"And what is Mr. Burley, and what has he written?" asked Leonard of Mr. Prickett, when he returned to the shop.

Let us reply to that question in our own words, for we know more about Mr. Burley than Mr. Prickett does.

John Burley was the only son of a poor clergyman, in a village near Ealing, who had scraped and saved and pinched, to send his son to an excellent provincial school in a northern county, and thence to college. At the latter, during his first year, young Burley was remarked by the undergraduates for his thick shoes and coarse linen, and remarkable to the authorities for his assiduity and learning. The highest hopes were entertained of him by the tutors and examiners. At the beginning of the second year his high animal spirits, before kept down by study, broke out. Reading had become easy to him. He knocked off his tasks with a facile stroke, as it were. He gave up his leisure hours to Symposia by no means Socratical. He fell into an idle, hard-drinking set. He got into all kinds of scrapes. The authorities were at first kind and forbearing in their admonitions, for they respected his abilities, and still hoped he might become an honour to the University. But at last he went drunk into a formal examination, and sent in papers, after the manner of Aristophanes, containing capital jokes upon the Dons and Big-wigs themselves. The offence was the greater and seemed the more premeditated for being clothed in Greek. John Burley was expelled. He went home to his father's a miserable man, for, with all his follies, he had a good heart. Removed from ill example, his life for a year was blameless. He got admitted as usher into the school in which he had received instruction as a pupil. This school was in a large town. John Burley became member of a club formed among the tradesmen, and spent three evenings a week there. His astonishing convivial and conversational powers began to declare themselves. He grew the oracle of the club; and, from being the most sober, peaceful assembly in which grave fathers of a family ever smoked a pipe or sipped a glass, it grew under Mr. Burley's auspices the parent of revels as frolicking and frantic as those out of which the old Greek Goat Song ever tipsily rose. This would not do. There was a great riot in the streets one night, and the next morning the usher was dismissed. Fortunately for John Burley's conscience, his father had died before this happened,—died believing in the reform of his son. During his ushership Mr. Burley had scraped acquaintance with the editor of the county newspaper, and given him some capital political articles; for Burley was, like Parr and Porson, a notable politician. The editor furnished him with letters to the journalists in London, and John came to the metropolis and got employed on a very respectable newspaper. At college he had known Audley Egerton, though but slightly: that gentleman was then just rising into repute in

parliament. Burley sympathized with some question on which Audley had distinguished himself, and wrote a very good article thereon,—an article so good that Egerton inquired into the authorship, found out Burley, and resolved in his own mind to provide for him whenever he himself came into office. But Burley was a man whom it was impossible to provide for. He soon lost his connection with the news paper. First, he was so irregular that he could never be depended upon. Secondly, he had strange, honest, eccentric twists of thinking, that could coalesce with the thoughts of no party in the long run. An article of his, inadvertently admitted, had horrified all the proprietors, staff, and readers of the paper. It was diametrically opposite to the principles the paper advocated, and compared its pet politician to Catiline. Then John Burley shut himself up and wrote books. He wrote two or three books, very clever, but not at all to the popular taste,—abstract and learned, full of whims that were caviare to the multitude, and larded with Greek. Nevertheless they obtained for him a little money, and among literary men some reputation. Now Audley Egerton came into power, and got him, though with great difficulty,—for there were many prejudices against this scampish, harum-scarum son of the Muses,—a place in a public office. He kept it about a month, and then voluntarily resigned it. "My crust of bread and liberty!" quoth John Burley, and he vanished into a garret. From that time to the present he lived—Heaven knows how! Literature is a business, like everything else; John Burley grew more and more incapable of business. "He could not do task-work," he said; he wrote when the whim seized him, or when the last penny was in his pouch, or when he was actually in the spunging-house or the Fleet,—migrations which occurred to him, on an average, twice a year. He could generally sell what he had actually written, but no one would engage him beforehand. Editors of magazines and other periodicals were very glad to have his articles, on the condition that they were anonymous; and his style was not necessarily detected, for he could vary it with the facility of a practised pen. Audley Egerton continued his best supporter, for there were certain questions on which no one wrote with such force as John Burley,— questions connected with the metaphysics of politics, such as law reform and economical science. And Audley Egerton was the only man John Burley put himself out of the way to serve, and for whom he would give up a drinking bout and do task-work; for John Burley was grateful by nature, and he felt that Egerton had really tried to befriend him. Indeed, it was true, as he had stated to Leonard by the Brent, that even after he had resigned his desk in the London office, he had had the offer of an appointment in Jamaica, and a place in India, from the minister. But probably there were other charms than those exercised by the one-eyed perch that kept him to the neighbourhood of London. With all his grave faults of character and conduct, John Burley was not without the fine qualities of a large nature. He was most resolutely his own enemy, it is true, but he could hardly be said to be any one else's. Even when he criticised some more fortunate writer, he was good-humoured in his very satire: he had no bile, no envy. And as for freedom from malignant personalities, he might have been a model to all critics. I must except politics, however, for in these he could be rabid and savage. He had a passion for independence, which, though pushed to excess, was not without grandeur. No lick-platter, no parasite, no toad-eater, no literary beggar, no hunter after patronage and subscriptions; even in his dealings with Audley Egerton, he insisted on naming the price for his labours. He took a price, because, as the papers required by Audley demanded much reading and detail, which was not at all to his taste, he considered himself entitled fairly to something more than the editor of the journal wherein the papers appeared was in the habit of giving. But he assessed this extra price himself, and as he would have done to a bookseller. And when in debt and in prison, though he knew a line to Egerton would have extricated him, he never wrote that line. He would depend alone on his pen,—dipped it hastily in the ink, and scrawled himself free. The most debased point about him was certainly the incorrigible vice of drinking, and with it the usual concomitant of that vice,—the love of low company. To be King of the Bohemians, to dazzle by his wild humour, and sometimes to exalt by his fanciful eloquence, the rude, gross natures that gathered round him,—this was a royalty that repaid him for all sacrifice of solid dignity; a foolscap crown that he would not have changed for an emperor's diadem. Indeed, to appreciate rightly the talents of John Burley, it was necessary to hear him talk on such occasions. As a writer, after all, he was now only capable of unequal desultory efforts; but as a talker, in his own wild way, he was original and matchless. And the gift of talk is one of the most dangerous gifts a man can possess for his own sake,—the applause is so immediate, and gained with so little labour. Lower and lower and lower had sunk John Burley, not only in the opinion of all who knew his name, but in the habitual exercise of his talents. And this seemed wilfully—from choice. He would write for some unstamped journal of the populace, out of the pale of the law, for pence, when he could have got pounds from journals of high repute. He was very fond of scribbling off penny ballads, and then standing in the street to hear them sung. He actually once made himself the poet of an advertising tailor, and enjoyed it excessively. But that did not last long, for John Burley was a Pittite,—not a Tory, he used to say, but a Pittite. And if you had heard him talk of Pitt, you would never have known what to make of that great statesman. He treated him as the German commentators do Shakspeare, and invested him with all imaginary meanings and objects, that would have turned the grand practical man into a sibyl. Well, he was a Pittite; the tailor a fanatic for Thelwall and Cobbett. Mr. Burley wrote a poem wherein Britannia appeared to the tailor, complimented him highly on the art he exhibited in adorning the persons of her sons; and bestowing upon him a gigantic mantle, said that he, and he

alone, might be enabled to fit it to the shoulders of living men. The rest of the poem was occupied in Mr. Snip's unavailing attempts to adjust this mantle to the eminent politicians of the day, when, just as he had sunk down in despair, Britannia reappeared to him, and consoled him with the information that he had done all mortal man could do, and that she had only desired to convince pigmies that no human art could adjust to THEIR proportions the mantle of William Pitt. /Sic itur ad astra/,—she went back to the stars, mantle and all! Mr. Snip was exceedingly indignant at this allegorical effusion, and with wrathful shears cut the tie between himself and his poet.

Thus, then, the reader has, we trust, a pretty good idea of John Burley, —a specimen of his genus not very common in any age, and now happily almost extinct, since authors of all degrees share in the general improvement in order, economy, and sober decorum, which has obtained in the national manners. Mr. Prickett, though entering into less historical detail than we have done, conveyed to Leonard a tolerably accurate notion of the man, representing him as a person of great powers and learning, who had thoroughly thrown himself away.

Leonard did not, however, see how much Mr. Burley himself was to be blamed for his waste of life; he could not conceive a man of genius voluntarily seating himself at the lowest step in the social ladder. He rather supposed he had been thrust down there by Necessity.

And when Mr. Prickett, concluding, said, "Well, I should think Burley would cure you of the desire to be an author even more than Chatterton," the young man answered gloomily, "Perhaps," and turned to the book-shelves.

With Mr. Prickett's consent, Leonard was released earlier than usual from his task, and a little before sunset he took his way to Highgate. He was fortunately directed to take the new road by the Regent's Park, and so on through a very green and smiling country. The walk, the freshness of the air, the songs of the birds, and, above all, when he had got half-way, the solitude of the road, served to rouse him from his stern and sombre meditations. And when he came into the lane overhung with chestnut-trees, and suddenly caught sight of Helen's watchful and then brightening face, as she stood by the wicket, and under the shadow of cool, murmurous boughs, the blood rushed gayly through his veins, and his heart beat loud and gratefully.

CHAPTER XXIV.

She drew him into the garden with such true childlike joy. Now behold them seated in the arbour,—a perfect bower of sweets and blossoms; the wilderness of roof-tops and spires stretching below, broad and far; London seen dim and silent, as in a dream.

She took his hat from his brows gently, and looked him in the face with tearful penetrating eyes.

She did not say, "You are changed." She said, "Why, why did I leave you?" and then turned away.

"Never mind me, Helen. I am man, and rudely born; speak of yourself. This lady is kind to you, then?"

"Does she not let me see you? Oh, very kind,—and look here."

Helen pointed to fruits and cakes set out on the table. "A feast, brother."

And she began to press her hospitality with pretty winning ways, more playful than was usual to her, and talking very fast, and with forced, but silvery, laughter.

By degrees she stole him from his gloom and reserve; and though he could not reveal to her the cause of his bitterest sorrow, he owned that he had suffered much. He would not have owned that to another living being. And then, quickly turning from this brief confession, with assurances that the worst was over, he sought to amuse her by speaking of his new acquaintance with the perch-fisher. But when he spoke of this man with a kind of reluctant admiration, mixed with compassionate yet gloomy interest, and drew a grotesque, though subdued, sketch of the wild scene in which he had been spectator, Helen grew alarmed and grave.

"Oh, brother, do not go there again,—do not see more of this bad man."

"Bad!—no! Hopeless and unhappy, he has stooped to stimulants and oblivion—but you cannot

understand these things, my pretty preacher."

"Yes, I do, Leonard. What is the difference between being good and bad? The good do not yield to temptations, and the bad do."

The definition was so simple and so wise that Leonard was more struck with it than he might have been by the most elaborate sermon by Parson Dale.

"I have often murmured to myself since I lost you, 'Helen was my good angel; '—say on. For my heart is dark to myself, and while you speak light seems to dawn on it."

This praise so confused Helen that she was long before she could obey the command annexed to it. But, by little and little, words came to both more frankly. And then he told her the sad tale of Chatterton, and waited, anxious to hear her comments.

"Well," he said, seeing that she remained silent, "how can I hope, when this mighty genius laboured and despaired? What did he want, save birth and fortune and friends and human justice?"

"Did he pray to God?" asked Helen, drying her tears. Again Leonard was startled. In reading the life of Chatterton he had not much noted the scepticism, assumed or real, of the ill-fated aspirer to earthly immortality. At Helen's question, that scepticism struck him forcibly. "Why do you ask that, Helen?"

"Because, when we pray often, we grow so very, very patient," answered the child. "Perhaps, had he been patient a few months more, all would have been won by him, as it will be by you, brother, for you pray, and you will be patient."

Leonard bowed his head in deep thought, and this time the thought was not gloomy. Then out from that awful life there glowed another passage, which before he had not heeded duly, but regarded rather as one of the darkest mysteries in the fate of Chatterton.

At the very time the despairing poet had locked himself up in his garret, to dismiss his soul from its earthly ordeal, his genius had just found its way into the light of renown. Good and learned and powerful men were preparing to serve and save him. Another year—nay, perchance another month—and he might have stood acknowledged sublime in the foremost ranks of his age.

"Oh, Helen!" cried Leonard, raising his brows, from which the cloud had passed, "why, indeed, did you leave me?"

Helen started in her turn as he repeated this regret, and in her turn grew thoughtful. At length she asked him if he had written for the box which had belonged to her father and been left at the inn.

And Leonard, though a little chafed at what he thought a childish interruption to themes of graver interest, owned, with self-reproach, that he had forgotten to do so. Should he not write now to order the box to be sent to her at Miss Starke's?

"No; let it be sent to you. Take care of it. I should like to know that something of mine is with you; and perhaps I may not stay here long."

"Not stay here? That you must, my dear Helen,—at least as long as Miss Starke will keep you, and is kind. By and by" (added Leonard, with something of his former sanguine tone) "I may yet make my way, and we shall have our cottage to ourselves. But—oh, Helen!—I forgot—you wounded me; you left your money with me. I only found it in my drawers the other day. Fie! I have brought it back."

"It was not mine,—it is yours. We were to share together,—you paid all; and how can I want it here, too?" But Leonard was obstinate; and as Helen mournfully received back all that of fortune her father had bequeathed to her, a tall female figure stood at the entrance of the arbour, and said, in a voice that scattered all sentiment to the winds, "Young man, it is time to go."

CHAPTER XXV.

"Already?" said Helen, with faltering accents, as she crept to Miss Starke's side while Leonard rose and bowed. "I am very grateful to you, madam," said he, with the grace that comes from all refinement of idea, "for allowing me to see Miss Helen. Do not let me abuse your kindness."

Miss Starke seemed struck with his look and manner, and made a stiff half courtesy.

A form more rigid than Miss Starke's it was hard to conceive. She was like the Grim White Woman in the nursery ballads. Yet, apparently, there was a good-nature in allowing the stranger to enter her trim garden, and providing for him and her little charge those fruits and cakes which belied her aspect. "May I go with him to the gate?" whispered Helen, as Leonard had already passed up the path.

"You may, child; but do not loiter. And then come back, and lock up the cakes and cherries, or Patty will get at them."

Helen ran after Leonard.

"Write to me, brother,—write to me; and do not, do not be friends with this man, who took you to that wicked, wicked place."

"Oh, Helen, I go from you strong enough to brave worse dangers than that," said Leonard, almost gayly.

They kissed each other at the little wicket gate, and parted.

Leonard walked home under the summer moonlight, and on entering his chamber looked first at his rose-tree. The leaves of yesterday's flowers lay strewn around it; but the tree had put forth new buds.

"Nature ever restores," said the young man. He paused a moment, and added, "Is it that Nature is very patient?" His sleep that night was not broken by the fearful dreams he had lately known. He rose refreshed, and went his way to his day's work,—not stealing along the less crowded paths, but with a firm step, through the throng of men. Be bold, adventurer,—thou hast more to suffer! Wilt thou sink? I look into thy heart, and I cannot answer.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK "MY NOVEL" — VOLUME 06 ***

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